

# The Impact of Verbal Abuse in The School Environment on Self-Confidence and Communication Skills of Elementary School Student

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**Abstract.** Verbal abuse in the school environment, including insults, teasing, and bullying, negatively affects elementary school students' self-confidence and communication skills. Such abuse weakens students' confidence, leading to withdrawal from social interactions and increased isolation. It also hampers their ability to communicate effectively, limiting active participation in classroom activities. This study aims to analyze the impact of verbal abuse on students' self-confidence and communication skills. Using a literature review approach, relevant studies on verbal abuse, self-confidence, and communication skills were examined. The findings reveal a strong correlation between self-confidence and communication ability, where a decline in confidence due to verbal abuse results in reduced communication effectiveness. To mitigate these effects, interventions involving social support from peers and confidence-building programs have proven effective. Therefore, schools must implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies to foster a safe and supportive learning environment that nurtures students' emotional and social well-being.

**Keywords:** Verbal abuse, self-confidence, communication skills, elementary school students, self-confidence.

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## INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a fundamental pillar in individual development, with schools playing a central role in shaping students' social and communicative skills. However, verbal abuse in the school environment—manifesting as insults, teasing, and bullying—poses a significant threat to students' emotional well-being and academic performance. Prior studies indicate that verbal abuse can have severe psychological effects, such as anxiety, depression, and diminished self-confidence (Wolke & Lereya, 2015). Low self-confidence, in turn, affects students' ability to communicate effectively, further hindering their participation in classroom discussions and social interactions (Paulmony et al., 2022).

While existing research has explored the psychological impact of verbal abuse, most studies primarily focus on its correlation with self-confidence or emotional distress, rather than examining its direct influence on students' communication skills. Furthermore, previous research has largely investigated verbal abuse among adolescents, neglecting its prevalence and consequences in elementary school settings, where social and emotional development is at a critical stage. This research addresses this gap by specifically analyzing how verbal abuse in elementary schools affects both self-confidence and communication skills, highlighting the interplay between these factors.

Unlike previous studies that have treated self-confidence and communication skills as separate constructs, this study aims to establish a more integrated understanding of their relationship in the context of verbal abuse. By identifying how verbal mistreatment shapes young students' ability to express themselves and engage in social interactions, this research offers fresh insights into early interventions. Moreover, while many studies suggest anti-bullying programs as a solution, there is limited discussion on how such programs should be structured to specifically restore both self-confidence and communication abilities.

Thus, this study seeks to fill these research gaps by providing a nuanced perspective on the dual impact of verbal abuse, offering recommendations for targeted interventions that foster a more supportive and inclusive school environment. The findings are expected to contribute to educational policies that prioritize the psychological and communicative well-being of students, ensuring a more holistic approach to tackling verbal abuse in elementary schools.

Low self-confidence, as explained earlier, can hinder students from communicating effectively, even though good communication skills are crucial at the elementary school age for building positive social relationships and supporting their emotional development. Communication skills are essential abilities to be developed during elementary school years. According to Sangaswari et al. (2024), Good communication skills help children build positive social relationships, which impact their emotional development.

Although good communication skills are essential for building positive social relationships and supporting children's emotional development, the reality in Indonesia is that many children still experience verbal abuse at school. This phenomenon, as indicated by a survey from Wahana Visi, Indonesia, shows that as many as 33.8% of children have experienced verbal abuse (Pambudi et al., 2023). Based on this data, verbal abuse disrupts the communication process and has the potential to damage students' emotional development, which should be nurtured through healthy social interactions.

Verbal violence can occur not only between students but also between students and teachers. Research by Riyadi (2019) indicates that adverse treatment from teachers can contribute to a decline in students' self-confidence and affect their motivation to learn. Children who experience verbal violence often develop unhealthy coping mechanisms. Pambudi et al. (2023). note that some students may withdraw from social interactions, leading to isolation and lower academic performance. The psychological impact of verbal violence can also disrupt a positive learning environment. An unsupportive environment can hinder students' learning processes and interfere with their academic development (Reswita & Bernadet Buulolo, 2023)

In-depth research on the impact of verbal violence in school environments is essential. This study focuses on exploring the relationship between verbal violence, self-confidence, and students' communication skills. Peer social support can play a crucial role in mitigating the adverse effects of verbal violence. According to Putri (2018), positive relationships with peers can enhance students' self-confidence even when they experience verbal violence. However, existing studies often focus more on psychological impacts and less on communication skills. This research aims to fill that gap by examining the relationship between verbal violence and students' communication skills in greater detail.

Developing self-confidence and communication skills in students can help them cope with the effects of verbal violence. Intervention programs focused on enhancing self-confidence have shown positive results (Noer et al., 2024). In the context of inclusive education, it is crucial for all students to feel safe and supported. According to Nadhiroh and Ahmadi (2024), creating an inclusive learning environment is critical to supporting students' social and emotional development. Schools and governments need to collaborate in formulating effective policies to address verbal violence. Comprehensive anti-bullying policies can help create a safer environment for students (Arrohmati et al., 2024).

Previous research has often addressed the impacts of verbal violence on *self-confidence* and communication skills separately. This study will focus on elementary school students, where the development of self-confidence and communication skills is crucial. By understanding the effects of verbal violence, this research aims to provide recommendations for schools in designing programs that support student development. Involving students in discussions about their experiences can also be an initial step in reducing verbal violence. The role of parents is vital in creating a supportive environment. According to Fadillah et al. (2022), good communication between parents and schools can help detect and address verbal issues.

This research is expected to contribute to the literature on the impact of verbal violence in schools on students' self-confidence and communication skills. The findings may provide insights for better educational policies. Ultimately, this study aims to offer valuable insights for schools, educators, and other stakeholders about the dangers of verbal violence and its effects on students' self-confidence and communication skills, fostering a safer and more supportive school environment for all students.

## METHODOLOGY

The literature review for this study was conducted through a structured search of relevant academic sources using specific keywords aligned with the research theme to ensure the selection of pertinent literature. Criteria for inclusion were established to prioritize high-quality sources, methodologically rigorous studies, and those closely related to the research objectives. The chosen literature was critically examined to extract key theories, methodologies, findings, and research gaps. A thematic approach was applied to synthesize insights from various studies, grouping the literature based on recurring themes and trends. This process helped identify conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and empirical evidence that support the study.

### **Verbal Violence**

Verbal violence, often referred to as verbal abuse, is a form of psychological aggression that involves the use of words to humiliate, insult, or intimidate individuals. Unlike physical violence, verbal abuse does not leave visible scars, but its long-term psychological impact can be just as damaging. Recent studies indicate that verbal violence in schools significantly affects students' emotional stability, self-confidence, and social interactions, leading to anxiety, depression, and reduced academic engagement (Reswita & Buulolo, 2023; Noer et al., 2024). Verbal violence refers to abuse carried out through words, such as slander, yelling, cursing, insulting, mocking, screaming, defaming, using harsh language, and humiliating someone publicly (Erniwati & Fitriani, 2020). Valvante et al., in research by Mahal and Rahman (2021), state that verbal violence typically involves verbal behaviors where the perpetrator employs a communication pattern that includes insults or derogatory remarks. The perpetrator often engages in blaming, labeling, or scapegoating. Verbal violence can also manifest as curses, threats, insults, intimidation, accusations, and coercion (Sari, 2020). Zulkarnain (2021) explains that verbal violence consists of harsh words without physical contact, often expressed through excessive reprimanding, scolding, yelling, and cursing children in a way that diminishes their dignity, including using language inappropriate for children. Additionally, according to Lawson, verbal violence or verbal abuse is an act of humiliation, labeling someone, and engaging in communication that constitutes harassment (Fadillah, Filtri, et al., 2022)

Verbal violence falls under the category of psychological violence, classified explicitly as humiliation (Hadi et al., 2022). This is reinforced by Ihsan in research by Armiyanti et al. (2017), which states that verbal violence against children is emotional abuse or behavior that harms a child's emotions continuously, leading to adverse effects on their development. Verbal violence involves words that cause emotional pain, affecting feelings and psychological well-being (Mamesah et al., 2018). This type of verbal violence can lead to hurt feelings and cause

children to internalize the negative words spoken by their parents. For example, if a parent says a child is ugly or stupid, the child may come to believe they are indeed ugly and stupid. Although the effects may not be immediately visible, they manifest over time. Insulting and demeaning remarks are recorded in a child's memory, and over time, they can lead to a negative self-image. Children who frequently experience verbal violence may eventually lose their self-confidence, which can trigger feelings of anger and a desire for revenge and affect their social interactions. Verbal abuse, often referred to as emotional child abuse, is a form of spoken behavior that results in harmful emotional consequences. Verbal abuse occurs when parents tell their children to be quiet or not to cry. If a child begins to speak, the parent may continuously use verbal abuse, saying things like "you are stupid," "you are annoying," or "you are disrespectful." Children will remember all instances of verbal abuse if these behaviors persist over time. Verbal abuse can occur every day at home, transforming what should be the safest and most comforting place for a child into an uncomfortable environment. There is a misunderstanding in how children are viewed, as they are often seen merely as objects who must obey their parents. However, parents are not always right. (Fitriana et al., 2015).

Many parents have unrealistic expectations of their children and tend to force them to comply with their desires completely. If the child does not meet these expectations, they may face punishment. One way to increase parents' awareness about verbal violence is through counseling and education programs (Melyana Rahmawati et al., 2023). Using verbal violence, which contradicts the concept of linguistic politeness as an indicator of linguistic intelligence, is similar to disregarding communication ethics. In social interactions within society, the term "ethics" is often linked to a person's morality (Utoro et al., 2020).

Based on various perspectives on verbal violence, it can be defined as a form of psychological abuse carried out through words or language that belittles, insults, or emotionally harms an individual. Verbal violence differs from physical violence in that it does not cause physical injuries but significantly impacts the psychological well-being of the victim, especially children.

This type of violence is often considered less severe than physical violence, but its impact on psychological and emotional conditions can be much more severe. According to Cahyo (2020), Verbal violence has a more profound psychological effect because it attacks a person's self-esteem and self-confidence. Verbal violence occurring in school environments, especially against elementary school students, often has adverse effects on their emotional and social development. According to Riyadi (2019), Verbal violence in schools can be caused by various factors, including social pressure, poor communication, and the inability of students or teachers to manage emotions effectively. Verbal violence can occur between students or even between teachers and students, which can worsen the classroom learning environment.

Experiences of violence that children face during their lives can lead to long-term trauma in their lives. (Kurniasari, 2019). According to various expert opinions, verbal violence against children can lead to long-term adverse effects, including anxiety, depression, and disruptions in their social and emotional development. A survey conducted by World Vision Indonesia found that 33.8% of children have experienced verbal violence. (Pambudi et al., 2023). Based on this data, verbal violence disrupts the communication process and has the potential to harm students' emotional development, which should be fostered through healthy social interactions. In the school context, verbal violence can occur between students or between teachers and students, and this can impact children's self-esteem and communication skills.

Addressing verbal violence requires a multi-layered approach that involves awareness campaigns, stronger anti-bullying policies, and intervention programs aimed at restoring self-confidence and communication skills. Schools need to implement a culture of positive reinforcement, where constructive communication replaces harmful disciplinary language. Research suggests that when teachers and peers actively support students through affirming communication, the negative effects of verbal violence can be significantly mitigated (Putri, 2018). Additionally, incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) programs into the curriculum has been found to be effective in helping students develop resilience against verbal abuse and foster better interpersonal communication (Noer et al., 2024).

While previous research has established the detrimental impact of verbal violence, this study seeks to expand on these findings by exploring how verbal abuse directly affects both self-confidence and communication skills in elementary school students. By focusing on this dual impact, the study aims to provide concrete recommendations for intervention strategies that address both psychological well-being and communicative competence in young learners.

### **Self Confidence**

Self-confidence plays a crucial role in shaping a student's academic and social development, influencing their ability to express ideas, engage in discussions, and build relationships. It is generally defined as an individual's belief in their own abilities, a psychological trait that is shaped by various internal and external factors, including family support, peer relationships, and school environment (Ulfah & Winata, 2021). Recent studies indicate that self-confidence is closely linked to verbal violence, as repeated exposure to negative words and criticism can erode a child's belief in themselves, making them hesitant to participate in social and academic activities (Reswita & Buulolo, 2023).

Research suggests that children with low self-confidence often exhibit signs of social withdrawal, reluctance to communicate, and fear of making mistakes in public settings (Noer et al., 2024). This is particularly evident in elementary school students, who are at a formative



stage of self-identity development. When exposed to verbal violence, they may internalize negative messages, leading to self-doubt and avoidance of social interactions. A study by Nadhiroh and Ahmadi (2024) found that students who were frequently subjected to verbal abuse from teachers or peers developed a heightened sense of insecurity, affecting their motivation to learn and overall classroom engagement.

The role of family and school environments in fostering self-confidence cannot be overlooked. Parental support and positive reinforcement from teachers have been identified as key factors in helping students develop resilience against verbal abuse (Hadi et al., 2022). Children who receive encouragement and validation from their surroundings are more likely to maintain a positive self-image, even in the face of negative verbal interactions. Conversely, those who grow up in environments where criticism and harsh language are prevalent tend to struggle with self-expression and assertiveness.

One of the emerging concerns in recent research is the impact of digital communication on self-confidence. As social interactions increasingly shift to online platforms, students are exposed to new forms of verbal aggression, such as cyberbullying, which can further damage their self-esteem. Studies highlight that children who experience verbal attacks online exhibit similar psychological distress as those who face verbal violence in person, reinforcing the need for integrated intervention strategies that address both traditional and digital forms of verbal abuse (Bashir et al., 2020).

Educational institutions play a vital role in nurturing self-confidence among students by implementing programs that promote positive communication and emotional resilience. Schools that incorporate social-emotional learning (SEL) and anti-bullying policies have reported higher levels of student confidence and engagement (Putri, 2018). Encouraging students to participate in group discussions, creative expression activities, and leadership programs has also been found to boost self-confidence by providing them with opportunities to develop their voice and assertiveness in a supportive environment (Pambudi et al., 2023).

While previous studies have established the negative effects of verbal violence on self-confidence, this research aims to further explore how diminished self-confidence directly impacts communication skills in elementary school students. By understanding this relationship, the study seeks to offer practical solutions that help students rebuild their confidence and improve their ability to interact effectively in academic and social settings.

## **Communication Skills**

Communication skills refer to an individual's ability to effectively convey and receive messages in various contexts, both verbal and non-verbal. (Nurhadi & Sendy, 2018). Communication skills are defined as the ability to convey, receive, and understand information or messages in various forms, both verbal and non-verbal. (Purwanto, 2016). Communication is also a crucial part of life, considering that humans are social beings. As unique individuals, effective communication requires attention to specific rules to avoid misunderstandings in interactions. Effective communication helps us understand others and their circumstances better, allowing us to address differences, build trust and respect, and create an environment that fosters ideas, problem-solving, influence, and attention. (Sidik & Sobandi, 2018). According to Bashir et al. (2020), Effective communication involves the ability to speak, listen, write, and understand the context of conversations. In education, these skills play a crucial role in facilitating meaningful interactions between students and teachers, as well as among students themselves. Communication skills are the processes of delivering and receiving messages through various mediums, both verbal and non-verbal, with the aim of building mutual understanding. Devito emphasizes that communication is not just about speaking and listening; it also involves understanding the context and emotions behind the messages being conveyed. (Devito, 2015)

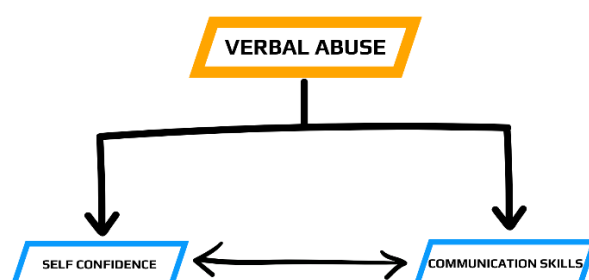
Such communication abilities are not innate but instead learned. As Miller and his colleagues say, if our culture teaches us a little about how to build relationships with others, we can realize our human potential to its full potential. (Patriana, 2014). Various factors, including both internal and external aspects of the individual, influence communication skills. Personal factors such as self-confidence, empathy, listening skills, and motivation significantly impact a person's ability to communicate. Students who are confident and possess good listening skills typically find it easier to express their ideas. (Zinsser et al., 2016). Environmental factors, such as support from teachers and classmates, a conducive environment, and school culture, also influence students' communication skills. An open and supportive environment can help students feel comfortable and more engaged in communication. (Hofmann & Mercer, 2019). Technological factors play a role as well, as the advancement of technology involves digital literacy in communication skills. Students who are accustomed to using communication technology tend to have better communication skills in digital contexts. (Bashir et al., 2020).

Communication skills can be assessed through four achievement indicators in the learning process, According to Budiono & Abdurrohman (2020), namely: a. Able to express ideas and thoughts effectively b. Able to listen effectively c. Able to convey information well d. Use excellent and compelling language.

## **DISCUSSION**



Verbal violence in school environments often poses a significant barrier to the learning process, particularly for elementary school students who are at a critical stage in their emotional and social development. Verbal abuse, such as teasing, insults, or name-calling, can damage students' self-esteem. This is consistent with the findings of Wolke and Lereya (2015), which show that children who experience verbal violence are at a higher risk of developing emotional disturbances, such as depression and anxiety.



**Figure 1.** Chart of The Effect Of Verbal Violence On Self-Confidence And Communication Skills

Children who frequently receive harsh or harmful words from their peers or teachers tend to experience a decline in self-confidence. Cahraeni (2015) also found that students who are victims of verbal violence tend to have low self-confidence, which ultimately affects their academic performance and ability to interact with peers. With diminished self-confidence, students find it harder to believe in their abilities, leading them to hesitate to participate in class activities or demonstrate initiative actively.

Low self-confidence in students directly impacts their communication skills. According to Paulmony et al. (2022), Students who feel insecure or lack self-confidence are often reluctant to participate in class discussions and presentations, even though these activities are crucial for their academic and social development. Good communication skills require the courage to express thoughts and feelings openly. When students' self-confidence diminishes due to verbal violence, they tend to withdraw from social interactions and may face challenges in articulating ideas, sharing opinions, and building positive social relationships.

Good communication skills can serve as a protective factor for students against the adverse effects of verbal violence. Students with strong communication abilities are generally better at expressing themselves, defending their arguments, and developing healthy coping mechanisms. According to Sangaswari et al. (2024), Good communication skills help children build positive social relationships, which impacts their emotional development. With strong communication, students are likely to have better relationships with peers and teachers, providing social support in the face of verbal violence. This support is crucial in rebuilding the self-confidence that may be disrupted by verbal abuse.

A conducive learning environment is essential for the development of students' communication skills. However, verbal violence can disrupt this environment. Research by Riyadi (2019) shows that verbal violence, especially from teachers, can hinder students' self-confidence and affect their motivation to learn. A supportive environment is expected to enhance students' communication skills through active discussion and collaborative learning. However, in the presence of verbal violence, students may feel anxious or afraid to speak and interact, preventing their communication skills from developing optimally.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion about the relationship between verbal violence, self-confidence, and communication skills in elementary school students, it is evident that verbal violence has a significant impact on children's psychological and social development. Verbal violence can diminish students' self-confidence, which in turn affects their communication abilities. Children who experience verbal violence are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression, which hinders their active participation in learning and social interactions. Low self-confidence resulting from verbal violence makes it more difficult for students to express their ideas and opinions, thereby hindering the development of communication skills that should be nurtured in elementary school. Good communication skills are essential for helping students build positive social relationships and support their emotional growth. A safe and inclusive school environment, with support from teachers and peers, is essential to minimize the negative impact of verbal violence and assist students in cultivating self-confidence and honing their practical communication skills. Therefore, efforts from schools, teachers, and parents are necessary to create a supportive learning environment, implement anti-violence policies, and establish intervention programs that focus on enhancing students' self-confidence and communication skills. This is expected to foster the growth and development of students who are emotionally and socially healthier and create a safe learning environment for all students.

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