



Understanding bullying experiences and student well-being in rural primary schools

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Abstract. Bullying remains a recurring challenge within school environments, shaping children's emotional and academic well-being in complex ways. In Indonesia, particularly in rural primary school contexts, limited research has examined how children themselves interpret and make sense of their bullying experiences. This study aims to explore the forms of bullying experienced by rural primary school students and to examine how these experiences influence their emotional and academic well-being. Adopting a qualitative phenomenological design, this study involved six children aged 10–12 years who had experienced bullying in rural primary schools. Data were generated through semi-structured interviews with children, supported by interviews with teachers and parents, as well as classroom and playground observations. The data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The findings indicate that bullying is experienced through verbal, physical, and social practices embedded in everyday peer interactions. These

experiences negatively affect children's emotional well-being, manifested in fear, anxiety, emotional suppression, and social withdrawal, and undermine academic well-being through reduced motivation, concentration, and self-confidence. Supportive relationships with teachers, parents, and peers emerged as important protective factors that helped children sustain emotional stability and engagement in learning. This study highlights the importance of developing context-sensitive and supportive interventions to address bullying and promote student well-being in rural primary school settings.

Introduction

Bullying remains a significant challenge within education systems worldwide, with substantial consequences for children's emotional health and engagement in learning activities. It manifests in physical, verbal, and social forms, and has increasingly extended into cyberbullying as digital technologies become integral to the daily lives of school-aged children (Li & Hesketh, 2021). Empirical evidence indicates that bullying among students aged 10–15 continues to be prevalent across diverse cultural contexts and is associated with psychological and somatic difficulties (Biswas et al., 2020; Katsantonis et al., 2024). In Indonesia, bullying is recognized as a widespread problem among elementary school children, with verbal, social, and physical bullying being the most common forms (Dwi et al., 2021; Lestari et al., 2025). Recent studies have highlighted the phenomenon of poly-bullying, in which children experience multiple forms of bullying simultaneously, leading to negative outcomes for their subjective well-being (Borualogo et al., 2024; Borualogo et al., 2025; Savahl et al., 2024). Across contexts, bullying consistently undermines

children's well-being, affecting mental health, peer relationships, and academic outcomes (Oriol et al., 2025; Citrawan et al., 2024). These findings underscore the complex, multidimensional nature of bullying, which requires sustained attention from educators, families, and policymakers, and position student well-being as a central concern, particularly in the Indonesian context (Suhardita et al., 2024).

Ideally, schools should provide safe and supportive environments that prevent bullying and promote children's emotional and academic well-being. However, evidence from Indonesia shows a different reality. Reported cases of school violence more than doubled from 285 in 2023 to 573 in 2024, with around 31 % linked to peer bullying national assessments indicate that 36 % of students are at risk of bullying or school violence (Fauzi et al., 2025). and global data report substantial bullying among adolescents aged 13–17 (WHO, 2024). These findings suggest that many children experience bullying without adequate adult intervention, highlighting the need for in-depth research on children's perceptions and experiences of school bullying (Apriyani et al., 2025).

In recent years, growing attention to bullying has coincided with an increasing emphasis on student well-being as a key indicator of educational quality. Schools are evaluated not only on academic outcomes but also on their capacity to provide safe and supportive learning environments. Conceptually, student well-being encompasses multiple interrelated dimensions, including subjective, eudaimonic, and psychological well-being (Massarwi & Gross-Manos, 2022). Research has shown that resilience, self-compassion, and a positive self-concept act as protective factors for children's well-being (Shemesh & Heiman, 2021; Hendra et al., 2025). Nevertheless, these protective conditions are often compromised among children who experience bullying, particularly when social support and psychosocial resources are limited, leading to diminished emotional and social well-being (Dias-Viana et al., 2023; Xue et al., 2025; Ismanto et al., 2024). Family and school climates have been identified as important protective factors that mitigate the negative effects of bullying, underscoring the importance of supportive parenting and positive school environments (Riany et al., 2022).

Research further indicates that both the prevalence and forms of bullying vary across geographical contexts. Students in rural schools are more likely to encounter direct and relational forms of bullying, whereas cyberbullying is more common in urban settings with greater access to digital technologies (Rodríguez-Álvarez et al., 2022). In rural Indonesian primary schools, factors contributing to bullying include family disharmony, student physical abilities, gender, and school policies (Hadiana et al., 2025). Primary school students in rural communities are particularly vulnerable to social exclusion and victimization due to differences in community norms and social climates. Interdependent social relationships in rural, communal societies may provide emotional support while simultaneously amplifying peer-group pressure. Values such as solidarity, togetherness, and group loyalty shape the social dynamics that influence how children perceive and respond to bullying. Similar patterns have been observed in other developing countries, where limited educational resources and hierarchical social structures exacerbate the risk of bullying (Ellyson et al., 2023; Galal et al., 2019). The emotional consequences of bullying in these settings are often more severe, given restricted access to psychosocial support and lower levels of digital literacy (Lai et al., 2024). These observations emphasize the need to pay closer attention to rural settings, where close-knit community values significantly influence children's emotional and social development.

Although the relationship between bullying and children's well-being has been widely examined, research on children's own interpretations of their bullying experiences, especially in rural school contexts, remains limited. Most existing studies employ quantitative approaches, focusing on

prevalence rates, risk factors, and standardized measures of psychological well-being, providing limited insight into children's subjective interpretations and coping strategies (Horton & Lyng, 2022). School-based interventions, such as the Violence Avengers (VINGERS) program in Indonesia, have demonstrated the potential to develop anti-violent character, mitigate bullying, and promote children's well-being (Ahdhianto, 2025). To address this gap, the present study employs Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodology grounded in constructivist and hermeneutic traditions. IPA facilitates a detailed exploration of how children make sense of their experiences through systematic narrative analysis, coding, and thematic development (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Using this method, the study provides a deeper understanding of how children construct and negotiate their emotional and academic well-being after experiencing bullying in communal school environments.

Based on this background, the present study aims to investigate how children aged 10–12 in rural primary schools construct meanings of their emotional and academic well-being following experiences of bullying. The study focuses on the types of bullying encountered, children's interpretations of these experiences, and how rural social contexts shape their understanding of well-being. Theoretically, this research highlights the value of phenomenological approaches in capturing children's well-being as a multidimensional construct. Practically, the findings are expected to inform the development of more context-sensitive, responsive, and participatory educational interventions for children in rural primary schools.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design with Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore primary school children's experiences of bullying and its impact on emotional and academic well-being. This approach allowed the capture of participants' lived experiences and subjective meanings within their natural school context. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, conducting interviews, observations, and reflective interpretation throughout the research process.

Research Location and Participants

The study was conducted in rural primary schools in Indonesia, selected for their strong social and communal characteristics that influence peer interactions. Six children aged 10–12 years (five females, one male) who experienced verbal, physical, or social bullying were purposively selected. To strengthen data triangulation, class teachers and parents were included as supporting informants. Table 1 summarizes participant characteristics and data collection techniques.

Table 1. Participant Profile

| Participant Code | Age | Gender | Role | Data Collection Technique |
|------------------|-----|--------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| A1 | 10 | Female | Primary participant | Semi-structured interview |
| A2 | 11 | Female | Primary participant | Semi-structured interview |
| A3 | 12 | Male | Primary participant | Interview, observation |
| A4 | 10 | Female | Primary participant | Semi-structured interview |
| A5 | 11 | Female | Primary participant | Semi-structured interview |
| A6 | 12 | Female | Primary participant | In-depth interview, observation |
| GI | 34 | Female | Supporting informant | In-depth interview |
| G2 | 42 | Male | Supporting informant | In-depth interview |

| | | | | |
|-------|-------|--------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| W1-W6 | 32-45 | Female | Supporting informant | Short reflective discussion |
|-------|-------|--------|----------------------|-----------------------------|

Data Collection

To ensure data credibility and contextual understanding, semi-structured interviews were conducted with children, teachers, and parents, complemented by non-participant observations during class and recess to document peer interactions and bullying-related behaviors. Interviews were face-to-face in familiar settings, lasted 30–45 minutes, were guided flexibly, and were conducted over two months, with repeated follow-ups until data saturation. The integration of interviews and observations provided a comprehensive understanding of children's subjective meaning-making (Singh & Kumar, 2025).

The main focus areas of the interview questions for each participant group are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Main Focus of Interview Question

| Participant Group | Interview Focus Area | Main Points of Questions |
|-------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Children | Bullying experiences | Forms of bullying experienced (verbal, physical, social), frequency, and contexts. |
| | Emotional well-being | Feelings at school, sense of safety, fear, anxiety, emotional responses |
| | Academic well-being | Learning motivation, concentration, classroom participation, and self-confidence |
| | Coping strategies | Responses to bullying, avoidance, help-seeking, withdrawal |
| Teachers | Observation of bullying | Types of bullying observed, peer dynamics, and supervision contexts |
| | School responses | Teacher awareness, intervention strategies, and perceived challenges |
| Parents | Child behaviour at home | Emotional changes, school avoidance, academic difficulties |
| | Support strategies | Parental responses, communication with the school |

During the observation process, several recurring problems were identified in the school environment. Observations revealed verbal teasing, social exclusion, and mocking, particularly during recess and group activities. Some children appeared withdrawn, avoided peer interaction, or showed reduced classroom participation following bullying incidents. Limited adult supervision during break times was also observed, creating conditions where bullying could occur unnoticed.

Data Analysis Technique

This study employed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore how children make sense of bullying and its impact on emotional and academic well-being (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Interviews were transcribed verbatim and repeatedly read to capture both explicit narratives and emotional expressions such as fear, embarrassment, anger, and withdrawal.

Initial notes included descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments on participants' word choices, emotional responses, and social contexts. Expressions like "afraid," "don't want to go to school," and "embarrassed" were examined to understand children's interpretations of bullying and its influence on school engagement.

Analysis preserved each participant's unique experience (idiographic approach) and then identified convergent and divergent patterns across cases to develop overarching themes on emotional and academic well-being in rural primary school contexts.

Trustworthiness

The credibility of the data was ensured through member checking, in which the researcher's interpretations were validated with participants, and through prolonged engagement in the research setting, which enabled a comprehensive understanding of the children's social context. In addition, continuous reflexivity was maintained through reflective journaling to minimize potential bias and enhance transparency throughout the interpretative process.

Research Ethics

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the study, given the involvement of child participants. Written consent was obtained from parents or guardians, and children provided assent prior to participation. Participants' identities were anonymized using pseudonyms, and all research data were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. These procedures were implemented to protect children's rights, privacy, and well-being in accordance with established ethical guidelines (Askari et al., 2024).

Results and Discussion

Forms of Bullying

Bullying in this study emerged as a recurring social experience that shaped how children interacted with peers and interpreted daily school life in rural primary school settings. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with children, teachers, and parents, supported by classroom and playground observations. Triangulation of these multiple sources provided a robust view of both the forms of bullying and its emotional and academic consequences for children. This approach allowed the research to capture children's lived experiences while also verifying observations across different perspectives.

Verbal bullying was the most frequently reported form, experienced by participants A1, A2, A4, and A6. Children described repeated taunts targeting appearance, abilities, or personality traits, including being called "ugly," "stupid," or "loser." Such experiences led to reluctance to speak during lessons, emotional distress, and avoidance behaviors. Teachers noted that these taunts often occurred during periods of limited supervision, while parents observed signs of withdrawal and decreased social interaction at home. These findings indicate that verbal bullying functioned as a patterned and persistent form of aggressive communication, rather than as isolated incidents.

Physical and social bullying were also reported, highlighting how children's experiences were multifaceted. Physical bullying, experienced by participants A3 and A4, involved repeated violations of personal space and safety, such as being struck by objects or having desks kicked. Social bullying was primarily manifested through exclusion, affecting participants A1, A4, and A5, who were frequently ignored, rejected, or excluded from group activities. Children described experiences such as eating alone or being told, "Go play by yourself." Teachers and parents consistently noted these patterns, and observations confirmed that children positioned themselves at the margins of peer groups even during collaborative tasks. These results underscore that social exclusion in rural schools is embedded within the relational structure of peer groups rather than a temporary or incidental occurrence.

The findings indicate that bullying in rural primary schools represents a recurrent, structured relational pattern maintained within peer group dynamics, reinforcing the view that bullying is

rooted in power imbalances rather than merely individual behavior (Garandean et al., 2022). Triangulated data show that these power relations are enacted through verbal, physical, and social forms of bullying, shaping how children interpret themselves, position their identities, and perceive their school environment. This aligns with literature highlighting bullying as a mechanism of social exclusion with potential long-term impacts on self-identity and psychosocial well-being (Savahl et al., 2024).

Children who experience bullying develop emotional and academic meaning-making that diverges from ideal conditions of well-being (Jumra, 2025; Samara et al., 2021). Verbal bullying consistently undermines self-confidence and fosters negative self-evaluation (Palermi et al., 2022). Compared to prior studies, this research provides novel evidence on the subjective experiences of children aged 10–12 in rural schools, highlighting how recurrent bullying systematically influences emotional responses and academic engagement, particularly through social exclusion, a pattern less emphasized in urban contexts. These insights have theoretical implications for understanding peer dynamics in rural settings and practical implications for designing interventions that promote emotional safety and supportive peer relationships.

Bullying experiences often become internalized, affecting children's self-perceptions and engagement in learning (Chavers & Tufo, 2024). While this study is limited to rural primary schools, which may limit generalizability to urban or secondary schools, the findings underscore the importance of structured anti-bullying programs. Schools should implement interventions that address peer power dynamics, foster emotional support, and promote inclusive and safe school environments, thereby mitigating the negative impact of bullying on children's emotional and academic well-being.

Children's Emotional Well-Being

Emotional well-being in primary school children is commonly characterized by a sense of safety, comfort in daily activities, and the ability to engage in school without excessive tension. Under ideal conditions, children feel accepted, participate calmly in learning activities, and form social relationships with confidence. In this study, emotional well-being is understood through children's meaning-making of their emotions, reflecting how they interpret and experience daily school life. This perspective was examined through triangulated data collected from children, teachers, and parents, along with the researcher's observations, providing a holistic view of children's emotional experiences.

The findings indicate that bullying substantially altered children's perceptions of the school environment and negatively impacted their emotional well-being. Children subjected to verbal taunts, social exclusion, or physical disruptions frequently exhibited heightened tension, emotional caution, and discomfort during school activities. For instance, participant A3 stated, "*I am afraid of school,*" while repeatedly rubbing both hands, signaling elevated anxiety. A4 described suppressed distress: "*I want to cry but hold it back,*" whereas A5 reported somatic complaints linked to emotional strain: "*My stomach hurts when I go to school.*" Nonverbal cues, including lowered gaze, avoidance of eye contact, and deep, regulated breathing, further revealed that children did not consistently perceive school as a safe emotional space.

Teachers' observations reinforced these accounts. A3 was often hesitant to enter the classroom, A4 became quieter in crowded or noisy situations, and A5 frequently complained of stomachaches before lessons. Parents reported parallel patterns: A3 had difficulty sleeping when discussing school, A4 exhibited mood swings, and A5 cried more often before leaving for school. Researcher observations documented withdrawal behaviors, preference for quiet areas, and defensive bodily postures, particularly in peer-dense settings. The convergence of these multiple perspectives

illustrates that bullying disrupted children's emotional experiences across both school and home environments.

Children's emotional well-being appeared significantly diminished compared to ideal conditions. Patterns of caution, emotional tension, and bodily discomfort illustrate how bullying reshaped children's perceptions of safety and comfort at school. Rather than experiencing school as a secure and supportive space, children came to perceive it as an environment requiring constant vigilance. Triangulated data support this interpretation, aligning with research demonstrating that unsafe social climates undermine children's emotional security (Small et al., 2025).

Embodied responses, such as clasp hands, lowering gaze, or touching the face, highlight how bullying impacts both emotional and physical responses. These findings corroborate prior studies showing that bullying induces anticipatory anxiety, leading to heightened vigilance even before social interactions occur (Bonilla-Santos et al., 2022). Compared to urban school contexts reported in earlier studies, these results underscore that in rural primary schools, emotional distress from bullying may be more persistent and structurally reinforced through daily peer interactions, reflecting the contextual novelty of children's subjective experiences.

This study provides novel insights into how bullying shapes emotional meaning-making in children aged 10–12 in rural schools, emphasizing that their interpretations of school safety are closely intertwined with everyday social interactions. In practice, the findings underscore the importance of interventions that promote emotional safety, structured anti-bullying programs, and supportive peer interactions tailored to rural school contexts. Theoretically, the results extend understanding of emotional well-being by illustrating how repeated peer aggression becomes internalized, influencing both embodied and cognitive dimensions of children's school experiences.

Children's Academic Well-Being

Academic well-being in primary school children is generally reflected in sustained interest in learning, the ability to concentrate, and a sense of competence and self-confidence in completing school tasks. Under ideal conditions, children demonstrate active engagement in classroom activities, willingness to ask questions, and academic performance that reflects their potential. In this study, academic well-being is understood through children's meaning-making of the learning process, particularly how they interpret their abilities, classroom participation, and everyday learning experiences in school. Triangulation of interviews with children, teachers, and parents, alongside classroom observations, provided a robust understanding of how bullying affected these experiences.

Findings show that bullying significantly disrupted children's academic well-being. Participants reported difficulties focusing, fear of negative peer reactions, and declining engagement in schoolwork. Participant A3 stated, *"I have difficulty focusing... it's hard to focus in class,"* while A4 avoided submitting assignments due to fear: *"I'm afraid I'll be laughed at."* Participant A5 expressed frustration: *"My grades are always bad now."* Nonverbal cues, such as lowered gaze, fidgeting, and subdued speech, reinforced these experiences, highlighting how bullying interfered with children's ability to fully engage in learning activities.

Teacher observations confirmed these patterns of distraction, reluctance to participate, and declines in academic performance. Parents reported similar behaviors at home, including longer time spent on homework, increased frustration, and declining grades. Researcher observations documented hesitation to raise hands, loss of focus, and visible signs of distress during tasks. These multiple sources indicate that bullying transformed schoolwork from a cognitively and emotionally engaging activity into a source of stress, anxiety, and perceived social risk.

Children's academic well-being in this study declined markedly compared with ideal conditions. Patterns of reduced concentration, reluctance to participate, and low self-confidence indicate that bullying reshaped how children interpreted learning activities. Rather than experiencing school as a supportive environment for developing competence and social skills, children perceived academic tasks as stressful and potentially humiliating. Triangulated evidence from children, teachers, parents, and observations consistently supports this interpretation, underscoring the pervasive impact of peer aggression on academic meaning-making.

These findings align with previous research demonstrating a strong relationship between bullying and diminished academic well-being. Children who experience bullying are more likely to exhibit concentration difficulties, fear of participation, and lowered self-confidence in completing academic tasks (Álvarez & Szücs, 2023). Similarly, bullying victims tend to withdraw academically, show decreased motivation, and struggle with sustained attention. In such contexts, the classroom ceases to function as a space for academic growth and instead becomes an environment that intensifies social anxiety and fear of negative evaluation (Boulton & Macaulay, 2023).

This study provides novel insights by capturing the subjective experiences of children aged 10–12 in rural primary schools, demonstrating how bullying not only disrupts concentration and task engagement but also reshapes children's perceptions of learning opportunities. Compared to urban contexts, where social exclusion may occur more sporadically, in this rural setting, bullying generated consistent emotional and cognitive barriers to academic participation. Theoretically, these findings advance understanding of academic well-being by showing how repeated peer aggression influences children's self-perceptions and classroom behavior. Practically, they emphasize the need for structured anti-bullying programs, teacher strategies that foster supportive learning environments, and emotional support mechanisms to restore children's confidence and engagement in schoolwork.

Children's Coping Strategies

Children respond to and interpret challenging situations in the school environment through various coping strategies. Under ideal conditions, children can seek social support, express emotions openly, and use adaptive strategies to regulate stress and maintain well-being. In this study, coping strategies are understood as children's meaning-making of daily school experiences, particularly how they adapt to discomfort or stress arising from bullying. This interpretation was derived from triangulated data obtained through interviews with children, teachers, and parents, as well as the researcher's observations, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of children's responses.

The findings indicate that children predominantly employed avoidant and withdrawn coping strategies in response to bullying. Participant A3 stated, "*I pretend to be sick, so I don't have to go to school,*" reflecting the use of physical avoidance to escape distressing social environments. Participant A4 reported limiting social interaction and remaining silent in situations perceived as unsafe, saying, "*Just stay quiet... so it's over quickly.*" Similarly, A5 coped by distancing themselves from peers, often sitting in a corner of the classroom or focusing on personal belongings to avoid direct interaction. These behaviors suggest that children interpreted withdrawal, silence, and absence as means of preserving emotional stability in environments they perceived as threatening.

Teacher and parent accounts consistently supported these observations. Teachers noted that A3 was frequently sent to the school clinic during the early hours of lessons, A4 deliberately chose less visible seating positions to avoid attention, and A5 lowered their head and spoke softly in crowded social contexts. Parents reported parallel behaviors at home: A3 frequently complained of feeling "*unwell,*" A4 requested prolonged accompaniment before leaving for school, and A5 increasingly

preferred solitary activities. Researcher observations further confirmed these patterns, documenting visible relief when A3 was allowed to leave the classroom, persistent low-visibility strategies used by A4, and A5's preference for quiet areas during activity transitions. These convergent observations illustrate that coping strategies were consistent across multiple contexts.

Overall, children's coping strategies in this study were characterized by avoidance, withdrawal, and social distancing. These responses were not isolated or situational but represented consistent adaptations to the social dynamics of the school environment. While such strategies appeared to provide short-term emotional relief, they also reflected children's perceptions of limited agency and safety within peer interactions. Behaviors such as pretending to be ill, remaining silent, or sitting apart from peers demonstrate how children adaptively manage immediate threats while simultaneously constraining their engagement in both social and academic activities.

These findings align with international research showing that children subjected to bullying frequently adopt passive or avoidant coping strategies when their social environment is perceived as unresponsive or threatening (Darabos et al., 2024; Han & Zhao, 2024). Moreover, repeated reliance on avoidance may contribute to long-term challenges, such as social isolation and reduced psychosocial competence, reinforcing the interconnection between coping strategies, emotional well-being, and academic engagement (İme, 2025). This emphasizes that coping strategies, while protective in the short term, may have cumulative negative effects if children lack access to supportive relationships or adaptive skills (Widana et al., 2023).

The novelty of this study lies in capturing children's subjective coping strategies in rural primary schools, illustrating how persistent peer aggression shapes their daily emotional and academic experiences. Practically, these findings underscore the importance of interventions that provide children with adaptive coping tools, structured peer support, and teacher guidance to foster safer and more engaging school environments. By highlighting children's lived experiences, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how coping strategies function as both protective mechanisms and indicators of perceived vulnerability within rural school settings.

Bullying and Well-Being of 10–12-Year-Olds in Rural Schools

Overall, bullying strongly shaped how children aged 10–12 experienced school life in rural contexts. In these settings, where peer groups are smaller and social interactions more repetitive, verbal, physical, and social forms of bullying were highly visible and difficult to avoid, affecting children across multiple aspects of their daily experiences. The findings indicate that children faced persistent emotional tension, fear, and heightened vigilance, perceiving school not as a consistently safe environment but as a socially risky space that challenged their confidence and willingness to engage in learning activities. Academic engagement declined, manifested in reduced concentration, weakened motivation, and lowered self-confidence, reflecting the interconnected impact of bullying on both emotional and cognitive functioning.

To manage these challenges, children predominantly relied on avoidant coping strategies, such as withdrawing from peers, remaining silent, or feigning illness. While these behaviors provided short-term emotional relief, they also revealed children's perceived lack of control over peer interactions and their broader school environment. Taken together, the results highlight the complex interplay between bullying experiences, emotional well-being, academic engagement, and coping strategies, emphasizing the persistent influence of peer dynamics on children's daily lives in rural primary school contexts.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that bullying in rural primary schools functions as a recurring relational pattern involving verbal, physical, and social aggression, with profound effects on children's emotional and academic well-being. In this context, children perceive school as an environment that requires constant vigilance, which contributes to heightened emotional tension, diminished self-confidence, and reduced engagement in learning activities. As a coping response, children frequently adopt avoidant strategies such as withdrawal, silence, or feigning illness, which may provide short-term emotional relief but also reflect limited perceived control over peer interactions. These findings underscore the interconnected nature of emotional well-being, academic engagement, and coping strategies, highlighting the central role of peer dynamics in shaping children's daily school experiences. Based on these results, we recommend implementing structured anti-bullying programs, equipping teachers with strategies to foster supportive and inclusive classroom interactions, promoting peer support initiatives, and providing children with adaptive coping tools to strengthen resilience and emotional safety in rural primary schools. This conclusion not only summarizes the main findings but also provides practical guidance for improving school environments and contributes to the theoretical understanding of how rural social contexts shape children's experiences of bullying and well-being.

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