

## Collaborative Painting as a Media for Anti-Bullying Campaign in School Environment

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### Abstrak

Lukisan kolaboratif merupakan kegiatan melukis yang di lakukan oleh beberapa individu; siswa, di sekolah dengan menggabungkan canvas-canvas berukuran 20x20 menjadi satu canvas besar. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis hasil lukisan yang telah dibuat oleh siswa dari sudut pandang psikologi; hubungannya dengan emosional sosial siswa. Metode penelitian menggunakan semiotika yang berfokus pada hubungan antara makna, dan konteks sosial serta budaya. Data penelitian diperoleh dari menelaah hasil lukisan yang sudah dibuat oleh siswa. Analisis data disajikan secara deskriptif untuk menguraikan tanda dan makna yang terkandung di dalam lukisan tersebut. Temuan menunjukkan lukisan kolaboratif mampu menjadi jembatan untuk membangun kerjasama dan empati siswa. Karya lukisan yang dihasilkan bisa dimanfaatkan sebagai bagian dari intervensi seni untuk pencegahan perundungan yang berorientasi pada nilai-nilai sosial.

**Kata Kunci:** Anti Perundungan, Lukisan Kolaboratif, Media Kampanye

### Abstract

Collaborative painting is an activity where several individuals; students, at school combine 20x20 canvases into one large canvas. The purpose of this research is to analyze the paintings created by students from a psychological perspective; their relationship with the students' emotional and social aspects. The research method uses semiotic analysis, focusing on the relationship between signs, meanings, and social and cultural contexts. Research data were obtained by examining the paintings created by the students. Data analysis is presented descriptively to explain the signs and meanings contained in the paintings. The findings show that collaborative paintings can serve as a bridge to build cooperation and empathy among students. The resulting paintings can be utilized as part of an art intervention for bullying prevention that is oriented towards social values.

**Keywords:** Anti-Bullyin, Campaign Media, Collaborative Painting

## INTRODUCTION

Bullying in schools remains a pervasive and complex problem, manifesting in verbal, physical, relational, and cyber forms that can cause serious harm to students' psychological, social, and academic development. It is widely understood as a patterned imbalance of power that undermines healthy peer interaction and communication. Data from KPAI Public Relations (2024) indicate that approximately 25% of students in Indonesia have been victims of bullying at school, with consequences ranging from low self-esteem and academic

disengagement to chronic anxiety, depression, and even self-harm. Such impacts, if left unaddressed, can lead to long-term trauma for victims and reinforce deviant behaviors among perpetrators. Scholars such as McDougall and Vaillancourt (2015) argue that bullying often stems from deficits in empathy, tolerance, and conflict-resolution skills, suggesting that prevention requires not only disciplinary measures but also proactive interventions that cultivate constructive social relationships.

In recent years, there has been growing interest in art-based interventions as a promising approach to fostering empathy and prosocial behavior in school settings. Research has demonstrated that participation in the arts; particularly collaborative artistic practices; can enhance interpersonal understanding, reduce aggression, and promote inclusive peer relationships (Wright et al., 2016; Chung & Ortiz, 2021). Within this framework, collaborative painting offers a unique combination of non-verbal expression and collective meaning-making. Alter-Muri (2017) notes that visual art allows students, especially victims or bystanders of bullying, to communicate sensitive experiences through symbolic forms, colors, and compositions, providing a safe and validating channel for expression. Potash et al. (2017) further highlight how the group process involved in creating a shared artwork develops essential skills such as active listening, conflict negotiation, and respectful dialogue.

The benefits of collaborative painting also extend beyond the personal to the social and cultural domains of the school. As students work together toward a common artistic goal, they negotiate meaning and collectively articulate shared values, which can lead to shifts in attitudes and heightened social awareness. When the completed works are displayed in school spaces, they function as visual campaigns that communicate anti-bullying messages to the broader community, reinforcing positive norms and stimulating dialogue among students, teachers, and parents. This public dimension transforms the artwork into both a medium of personal expression and a tool of social advocacy, aligning with character education principles that embed moral values within lived, participatory experiences (Walker et al., 2019).

From a theoretical standpoint, the communicative and symbolic potential of collaborative painting can be understood through semiotics and social semiotics. In Saussure's classical semiotic model, each element of a painting, such as a particular color choice or spatial arrangement, operates as a signifier linked to a signified concept, with meaning emerging from its relationship to other signs. Peirce's triadic model adds nuance by distinguishing between icons (visual resemblances), indexes (signs connected to their referents through direct association), and symbols (arbitrary signs grounded in cultural convention). In collaborative

artworks on bullying, for example, broken circles may symbolically represent exclusion, while warm colors might iconically suggest safety and inclusion. Social semiotic theory, as developed by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), extends this analysis by considering the “grammar” of visual design, composition, salience, framing, and vectors, as socially situated choices shaped through interaction. In this way, the collaborative painting becomes a site of negotiated discourse, with each student’s contributions influencing the shared message. Barthes’ concepts of denotation, connotation, and myth, along with Eco’s notion of the “open work,” further support the interpretation of these artworks as texts open to multiple readings by different audiences, making them especially powerful as public campaigns.

These theoretical perspectives align with broader social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks, which emphasize competencies such as self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making (Durlak et al., 2011; Elias, 2019). Integrating SEL principles into collaborative artmaking situates empathy and tolerance within active, creative processes rather than abstract moral instruction. Moreover, by fostering cooperative problem-solving and peer negotiation, such activities can activate positive bystander behaviors and contribute to norms change, as suggested by bullying prevention research grounded in the social norms approach (Salmivalli, 2014).

Taken together, the literature suggests that collaborative painting functions on multiple levels: it is a therapeutic and expressive practice that supports individual emotional well-being, a communicative act that encodes shared values through visual symbols, and a campaign tool that reshapes social norms within the school environment. By combining art-based expression with semiotic analysis, educators and researchers can better understand how students construct and communicate meanings about bullying, empathy, and inclusion, thereby positioning the creative process as both a pedagogical strategy and a form of student-led advocacy.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a semiotic design, which is appropriate for exploring meaning-making processes in visual texts and understanding the symbolic representations embedded in collaborative artworks. A qualitative method is particularly suited for capturing the depth and richness of participants’ subjective experiences and the social contexts influencing the creation of the artworks (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Semiotic analysis provides a systematic framework for interpreting the signs, symbols, and visual codes within the paintings, drawing on both their denotative and

connotative dimensions to uncover underlying social and emotional messages (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2021; Chandler, 2017).

The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 8 Kota Tangerang with 30 grade XI students from varied social and academic backgrounds. The methodological focus was to explore how visual elements in the collaborative paintings reflect values of empathy, cooperation, and anti-bullying messages. This aligns with semiotic research that views art as a socially constructed text whose meaning is shaped through group interaction and audience interpretation (Rose, 2016). Data collection employed three main techniques. First, participatory observation allowed the researcher to directly witness and document the collaborative painting process, capturing both verbal and non-verbal interactions that contributed to the construction of meaning (Spradley, 2016; Kawulich, 2015). Second, in-depth interviews were conducted with both student participants and guidance and counseling teachers, enabling the collection of personal narratives and reflections that enriched the interpretation of the visual texts (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). Third, documentation, including photographs of the process and final artworks as well as detailed field notes, provided an evidentiary record that supported both descriptive and interpretive analysis (Bowen, 2009).

This activity began with (1) initial socialization and education aimed at providing students with an understanding of the dangers of bullying and the importance of solidarity between each other. This stage is the foundation for students to have social awareness before being further involved in the creative process. After that, (2) students are divided into groups to take part in thematic discussions, where they together discuss the visual message, they want to convey through their artwork. This discussion not only encourages collaboration, but also trains critical thinking and empathy skills. The process is then continued with (3) the preparation of sketches and the gradual implementation of mural paintings on the school wall area. This stage becomes a shared expression space that prioritizes cooperation and creativity. After the mural is completed, (4) the activity is closed with a joint reflection session that allows students to evaluate the process and results of their work, as well as examine its impact on themselves and the surrounding environment. This method was chosen because it not only assesses the work from an aesthetic perspective, but also explores the educational and transformational potential of collaborative painting activities as part of a social campaign in the educational environment.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### RESULTS

The paintings produced by the students were two paintings. The paintings with the theme of anti-bullying were divided into two categories. The first category is a form of verbal bullying and the second is non-verbal bullying. Here are the results of the two paintings.




**Figure 1. Verbal bullying painting**  
(Source: Personal documentation,2024)



**Figure 2. Non-verbal bullying painting**  
(Source: Personal documentation,2024)

The following is an analysis of the two paintings above, outlined in terms of the elements and principles of the paintings.

**Table 1. Visual analysis of non-verbal bullying paintings**


	
Elements of Painting	
<i>Line</i>	Thick, bold lines are used to define the body, hands, and writing. The lines resemble a comic book illustration style, emphasizing expression and movement, and creating a strong sense of protest.

<i>Plane</i>	The composition is divided into square fields (grid), due to the collaboration of each individual in one complete work. Each field comes together to form a woman's body and protest writing, reflecting the diversity of expressions in one unified message.
<i>Space</i>	The space used tends to be flat (two-dimensional), without the illusion of depth. The main figure stands out because it is placed in the center and surrounded by many hands; indicating the center of attention as well as social pressure.
<i>Color</i>	Strong and contrasting colors: red, green, brown, black, blue. Red symbolizes danger, wounds, and courage, while dark colors reinforce the heavy and serious atmosphere. There is no gradation, instead block coloring strengthens the graphic impression and boldness of expression.
<i>Shape</i>	The human body shape is depicted with rough but expressive proportions; emphasizing emotional expression. The creeping hand shape depicts symbolic violence, creating an uncomfortable and cramped impression.
<b>Principles of Painting</b>	
<i>Unity</i>	Unity is created through the unification of visual elements such as dark colors, hand shapes, and writing that all support the main message: the rejection of harassment and victim blaming. Although the painting was created collaboratively in separate panels, the overall elements remain harmonious in one theme and visual direction.
<i>Balance</i>	This painting uses asymmetrical balance: although the objects (hands, text, female body) are not placed symmetrically, their visual distribution feels stable and dynamic. Colors and shapes are evenly distributed across the panel, creating a balanced yet tense visual.
<i>Rhythm</i>	Rhythm is seen from the repetition of hand elements moving from various directions towards one object, creating a dynamic visual flow and encouraging the viewer's eye to follow the direction of movement. Large texts with different styles also create rhythmic visual variation.
<i>Center of Interest</i>	The focus is clearly on the female figure in the center of the composition, who is the focus because of her emotional expression and body position. Her skin tone, body lines, and the



	hands creeping towards her automatically draw the viewer's eye to this part.
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**Table 2. Visual analysis of verbal bullying painting**

	
Elements of Painting	
<i>Line</i>	The bold, straight, and rigid lines shape the characters and text expressively. The lines pointing from different directions create visual pressure on the child figure in the center. The tear lines, face, and hair are drawn in a cartoonish style, adding an emotional yet easily understood impression for children.
<i>Plane</i>	The painting is also divided into square areas (12 panels) that form a collective visual narrative. Each area contributes to forming the overall atmosphere; from social pressure, rejection, to the request for affection.
<i>Space</i>	The two-dimensional composition with a dense, busy background reinforces the “pressing crowd” feel. There is no perspective or shadows, making the focus immediately on the characters and the message.
<i>Color</i>	Bright but contrasting colors: pink, blue, tan, orange, and red. The red color on the character's cheeks reflects shame, emotional distress, or crying. The combination of colors gives the impression of clashing emotions: cheerful colors for a sad theme, creating visual irony.
<i>Space</i>	The character's form is quite simple, reinforcing the message that is easy to convey. The pointing hands, bowed head, and curled body provide a strong visualization of the child's position as a victim of verbal abuse.

Principles of Painting	
<i>Unity</i>	Unity is built through the combination of similar colors and a consistent theme: emotional pressure and a plea for empathy. The text, the direction of the fingers, and the expressions of the characters all support one message: "I need love, not scorn."
<i>Balance</i>	The painting uses central balance: the child figure is placed in the center, surrounded by hands and negative words from various directions. The elements on the left and right balance each other both in terms of visuals and meaning (all putting emphasis on the main character).
<i>Rhythm</i>	Rhythm is shown through the repetition of the pointing finger, creating a repetitive visual and emotional emphasis. The words scattered around also create a text pattern that encourages the eye to move through each element before returning to the main character.
<i>Center of Interest</i>	The focus is on the child sitting crying in the middle, reinforced by the central composition, the contrasting colors of the face, and the bowed body expression. The phrase "Love Me" in the lower center emphasizes the emotional focus and meaning of the painting.

## DISCUSSION

### Collaborative Processes and Group Dynamics

The collaborative process of producing a shared painting is consistently associated with gains in students' empathy, social awareness, and communication skills. School-based and youth studies over the past decade show that structured arts participation can directly cultivate empathic understanding and perspective-taking, and that making art together provides a safe, dialogic channel for negotiating disagreement and building shared meanings. For example, recent evaluations of arts-integrated and empathy-focused programs report significant improvements in cognitive and affective empathy as well as relationship skills; effects attributable to opportunities for visual communication, co-creation, and reflective dialogue embedded in the creative process.

Your finding that students manage disagreements and co-author anti-bullying messages on the canvas aligns with studies showing that collaborative art tasks prompt active listening, conflict negotiation, and respectful turn-taking; precisely the interpersonal skills linked to healthier peer norms and reduced aggression. Reviews and quasi-experimental work



from 2019–2024 document how arts education and SEL mutually reinforce one another, with visual arts experiences functioning as high-leverage contexts for practicing social awareness and prosocial communication.

In the specific context of anti-bullying, recent syntheses and field studies underline that creative, student-voice interventions help learners grasp the emotional impact of bullying while mobilizing bystander empathy and norms change. Scoping and narrative reviews from 2023–2025, along with school-based studies, indicate that art-anchored activities (exhibits, co-created artifacts, design projects) make the social consequences of bullying visually and emotionally legible, thereby strengthening identification with victims and motivating supportive action. Your collaborative paintings on verbal and non-verbal bullying mirror this pattern by rendering the felt pressures of exclusion and harassment in ways that peers can recognize and discuss.

Analytically, treating the students' canvases as visual texts through Roland Barthes' semiotics is well supported by contemporary applications of semiotic and arts-based research: denotative elements (line, color, plane, shape) and connotative ensembles (warm–cool palettes, broken forms, clustered vs. isolated figures) operate as non-verbal sign systems that carry emotional and social meanings about bullying. Recent arts and health/education studies echo that viewing and creating art can activate empathic interpretation and social reflection among audiences, reinforcing the value of public display as a school-wide communication strategy. In this sense, your collaborative works function not only as expressive products but as semiotic campaigns that circulate anti-bullying meanings across the school community

### **Non-Verbal Bullying Painting**

This painting raises the theme of social criticism of the culture of victim blaming and sexual bullying. Visually, this work is very expressive and strong in terms of artistic elements.

In terms of the elements of fine art, lines are used thickly and firmly as elements of fine art, especially in the form of hands creeping towards the woman's body. This line shows visual intimidation and psychological pressure. Bold colors, such as red, dark green, and brown, are used to create a more depressed and traumatic atmosphere. The field consists of square panels arranged in such a way that they form one body and a complete message. This painting focuses on the main figure because the space is flat and does not create the illusion of depth. The shape of the woman's body is depicted with rough proportions, but enough to convey an expression of fear and discomfort.

In terms of the principles of fine art, visual unity consists of the alignment of color, theme, and shape. This applies even when the work is created collaboratively. Although not symmetrical, the balance remains stable: the hands, writing, and body are evenly distributed so that they appear balanced in the visual distribution. The repetition of the shape of the hands and text shows rhythm, which creates a visual flow towards the center of the image. The main focus of this work is the female figure in the center surrounded by many hands, indicating the center of pressure and attention. Overall, this painting builds a tense and reflective atmosphere, inviting the viewer to reflect on the unfair treatment of the victim, while also voicing social protest through visual language.

### **Verbal Bullying Painting**

This painting depicts the theme of verbal abuse against children and a sincere plea for affection. This painting is emotionally touching and communicative, with a simpler yet meaningful visual style.

In terms of the elements of fine art, lines are used firmly to describe the character of the child and the direction of the fingers pointing in the elements of fine art. These lines indicate real mental stress. Bright colors such as pink, blue, and orange are usually used, but using them actually creates irony because it contradicts the sad message conveyed. The field consists of twelve square panels that come together, which form a picture and story in one unit. In addition, the space is flat, with the main figure sitting down in the middle. The child figure is depicted in a cute and simple way so that it is easily recognized by everyone, making it a common symbol of victims of verbal bullying.

In terms of the principles of fine art, this painting is very strong in building bonds from the perspective of the principles of fine art. The main message; children need affection rather than abuse; supported by all elements, namely writing, color, expression, and direction of the hands. Through the main figure in the middle and the pressure from the left and right sides, symmetrical balance is clearly visible. The rhythmic emotional pressure is created by the finger movements and the repeated negative words. The child figure sitting in the middle, with red on his face and the large text, "Love Me," is very eye-catching. Overall, the painting successfully conveys a strong emotional message through simple yet touching visuals. This work is effective in making students aware of the dangers of verbal abuse and the importance of creating an environment full of empathy and care.

## **Response and Impact on Students**

After the joint painting was carried out, the students' responses showed very positive results, both in terms of cognitive, emotional and social aspects. Brief reflections and interview meetings conducted by researchers and moderators have shown that most students have opened up new insights about various forms of harassment, physical, verbal and social harassment, and are often considered trivial. Students argue that they know the psychological effects caused by victims of bullying. They also learn to recognize their role in creating a safer environment, and understand that the occurrence of silence and harassment is the same as part of the problem itself.

Emotionally, this activity also builds intimacy among students. The process of assembling, discussing, and concluding the task strengthens relationships between classmates. Many students said they saw another side of their friends who rarely interacted with them. This more open interaction creates a more integrated and supported social climate in the classroom. Regarding trust, students feel the courage to express their views, even when they experience forms of harassment in the school environment. Some students showed strong feelings because they knew they were not alone and now they knew they received support from friends and teachers to combat this unhealthy behavior.

Overall, this activity not only produced a powerful visual work, but also had a profound psychosocial impact on students. The anti-bullying campaign by Media Seni has proven to be an effective and thoughtful approach in character design and strengthening a positive school culture. The results of the joint mural show that art not only functions as a medium of visual representation in the anti-bullying campaign, but also plays an important role as an instrument of social-emotional education. Through direct participation in the creative process, students are invited to express their messages and emotionally experience the values they draw. This activity shows that the process of creating students encourages them to collaborate and learn to interact, negotiate, and listen to the perspectives of friends. This situation creates a genuine learning space where understanding the problem of bullying is not only considered cognitively, but also experienced emotionally through teamwork and personal reflection. This collaborative process shows that art can bridge personal experiences with collective experiences and not only better understand the concept of harassment, but also become more mindful of their social responsibility when creating a safe environment.

This is in line with Elliot Eisner's (2002) view. It emphasizes that art has the potential for change in education. According to Eisner, meaningfully designed art experiences can

change the way individuals view the world and themselves. In the context of this activity, students do not just draw, they interpret social reality, develop sensitivity, and form empathetic attitudes through symbols, colors, and visual narratives. Furthermore, this collaborative art approach also supports the theory of humanistic education which places human values such as empathy, tolerance, and solidarity as the foundation of learning. The process of working together allows for the emergence of value-based learning practices that are difficult to achieve in a one-way instructional approach.

Interestingly, these results also strengthen the findings of previous studies which highlight that participation in art activities can increase self-awareness, social skills, and emotional regulation in adolescents. In this activity, there is also a dynamic of small conflicts that must be resolved together, which indirectly trains students to manage emotions and solve problems constructively; two important aspects of social-emotional competence. Therefore, this Painting activity proves that collaboration is not only a means to send a message, but also a holistic learning medium that includes cognitive, emotional and social disciplines. The integration of art into character education and this social campaign is an effective strategy and has a long-term impact in creating a healthier and more empathetic school culture.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion of the two collaborative paintings, it can be concluded that art elements such as lines, planes, space, color, and shapes have been used effectively to enhance the social message conveyed. Various strong emotional nuances, such as fear, pressure, and a request for empathy, are produced from two-dimensional space, bold lines, collaborative planes, and contrasting color choices. By using simple figurative language, the works clarify the visual narrative about the conditions of victims of bullying and verbal violence, which are often invisible to those around them.

Both paintings have the ability to produce works that are not only aesthetic but also communicative and reflective by applying the principles of fine art such as unity, balance, rhythm, and center of attention. The unity of theme and form strengthens the collective meaning, the balance of composition provides visual stability, and rhythm creates a flow that guides the audience's emotions. Thus, these two paintings show that art can function as a powerful educational tool to raise students' awareness of the dangers of bullying and foster a sense of empathy, the courage to voice their opinions, and a culture of mutual respect in schools.

The main advantage of this study lies in its demonstration of how collaborative art activities can combine aesthetic value with socio-educational impact, making it a relevant method for character education and anti-bullying campaigns. However, the limitation of this research is that it focuses only on two artworks within a specific school context, which may not fully represent the diversity of student perspectives across different educational settings.

For further research development, similar studies could be expanded to involve a larger and more diverse group of participants across various school levels and cultural contexts. In addition, future investigations could integrate mixed methods (combining visual analysis with psychological or behavioral assessments) to measure the impact of collaborative painting on students' empathy levels, communication skills, and anti-bullying attitudes over time. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the long-term educational and social benefits of art-based interventions.

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