

# Special law needed to end bullying: UiTM

KUALA LUMPUR: Bullying has become an increasingly serious issue with a significant rise in reported cases, but is legislation the solution?

This problem has raised concern in society with 4,994

cases reported since October 2023, a significant increase compared to 3,887 cases in 2022 and 326 cases in 2021 as revealed by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Despite various efforts taken by the MOE, including launching the Guidelines for the Management of Bullying and Sexual Harassment, the problem persists.

The recent one was of a male student repeatedly hitting his friend's face using a



helmet in Segambut Dalam as shown in a video that went viral on social media.

Based on the increasingly alarming situation, experts believe it is time for a specific law to be introduced to tackle the problem.

This is considering that the guidelines do not provide punishment to curb the wrongdoing of bullying and thus do not create fear among bullies, said a senior lecturer at the Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Mimi Sintia Mohd Bajury (pic).

"In Malaysia, there is no specific law dealing with bullying cases. The existing law is only a 'piecemeal', a bit of here and there under the Minor Offences Act. It is time we have a special act to deal with bullying," she said on Bernama TV Malaysia Petang Ini programme.

She said it is important to have a law because bullying affects the victims not only physically, but also emotionally resulting in them suffering severe stress, depression, lack of self-confidence and most worryingly, becoming suicidal.

Mimi Sintia said there are various reasons why people bully, among others, they have been victims of bullying and do not regard the act as an offence.

"They think it (bullying) is a small matter because they have been bullied before and do it to others because they want to feel superior," she added.

She said bullying normally happens at a young age because, at that age, a person is easily influenced by peers, especially when in a group that also includes bullies.

An associate researcher at the Institute of Social Science Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Dr Mohamad Naquiuddin Dahamat Azam expressed the need for a special law on bullying to be formulated so that appropriate punishment can be imposed on the bully whether the offence is physical or verbal.

He said the fine of not more than RM100 for those convicted of verbal bullying provided under the Minor Offences Act 1955 is not commensurate with the sufferings of the victims. Malaysia should emulate countries such as the United States and the Philippines are ahead in dealing with the problem of misconduct with the enforcement of the bullying act.

"The provision in the existing laws on bullying is more focused on imposing severe punishment for offences that involve physical injury and punishment for verbal bullying is considered light," he said. - Sun