

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN BULLYING BEHAVIOR AND THE RISK OF POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER AMONG ADOLESCENTS AT MTS AHMAD YANI JABUNG

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Bullying is a traumatic experience that can result in various developmental problems in adolescents, particularly those related to mental health. Some individuals may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of experiencing traumatic life events.

Objectives: This study aims to investigate the impact of bullying on PTSD among adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Methods: This research method is correlational with a quantitative approach using a cross-sectional approach. The sample in this study was 97 students, using a proportionate stratified random sampling technique with predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. The bullying behavior, as the independent variable, was measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire developed by Chrysanthou and Chrysolavantis (2018). The dependent variable, risk of PTSD, was assessed using the PTSD Reaction Index questionnaire. The Spearman rank correlation test was used for data analysis.

Results: The correlation coefficient value ($r = 0.309$) and the p -value ($p = 0.002$, where $p < 0.05$) indicated a significant correlation between bullying behavior and the likelihood of PTSD among adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung. Furthermore, bullying behavior was found to be positively and significantly correlated with the risk of PTSD in adolescents.

Conclusions: Since the majority of respondents were at risk of developing PTSD and nearly half of all respondents had experienced moderate levels of bullying, it can be concluded that bullying behavior is associated with the risk of PTSD among adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung.

Introduction

Bullying is a form of power abuse in which an individual perceived as weak becomes the target of ongoing violence (Nadhira & Rofiah, 2023). There are three categories of bullying behavior: relational bullying, verbal bullying, and physical bullying. Physical bullying includes direct aggressive acts such as pushing, hitting, and spitting. Name-calling, mocking, and spreading rumors are forms of violence categorized as verbal bullying. Meanwhile, intimidation in correlations manifests as marginalization, neglect, and exclusion. Children's mental health may be disrupted by bullying, which can lead to symptoms such as stress, anxiety, and fear (Feilasifa & Sutoyo, 2022).

In Southeast and South Asia, including Bhutan, Indonesia, the Maldives, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and India, WHO research revealed that bullying victims are typically between the ages of 13 and 17 (Sukmawati et al., 2021). Meanwhile, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) as of February 13, 2023, reported an increase in bullying cases, with 1,138 cases of physical and psychological violence related to bullying. The incidence of bullying in East Java Province has continued to rise, with 2,473 cases



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reported in the educational sector and on social media platforms (Hikmah Diajeng E.F. et al., 2021).

Experiencing bullying can be a form of psychological trauma that may lead to symptoms of PTSD in some individuals. Mental illness that develops as a reaction to potentially fatal traumatic events is known as post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD (Rusyda et al., 2021). According to data from the Indonesian National Mental Health Survey, approximately 2.45 million adolescents in Indonesia suffer from mental health disorders, and PTSD affects 0.5% of all adolescents, or an estimated 12,250 individuals (Sari et al., 2023).

If not properly treated, PTSD symptoms can lead to depression and suicidal behavior in victims. The symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) include flashbacks, trauma-related nightmares, intense fear, and avoidance of situations that remind individuals of the traumatic event. A person may be at risk of developing PTSD due to factors such as experiencing dangerous or traumatic events, sustaining injuries, witnessing others being injured or killed, childhood trauma, bullying, feelings of fear or helplessness, and receiving little or no social support after the frightening event (Rusyda et al., 2021).

Bullying can have significant psychological impacts, including social isolation, low self-esteem, anxiety, insomnia, depression, and an increased likelihood of developing post-traumatic stress disorder. Individuals suffering from PTSD may avoid situations that trigger traumatic memories, experience severe anxiety, have recurring nightmares about the traumatic event, and suffer from flashbacks. Students with PTSD also struggle with the consequences of bullying on their school attendance, social skills, and academic performance.

This study is expected to encourage schools, parents, and adolescents to take action against bullying within their communities.

Methods

This research uses a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional research design. The research was conducted in April 2024 at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung (Madrasah Tsanawiyah Ahmad Jabung; English: SMP Islam Ahmad Yani), located at Jl. Raya 145 Sukolilo, Kenongo, Jabung District, Malang Regency, East Java Province, which is the main reference location. The school has a total of 921 students. After determining the population consisting of 128 students from Grades VI and VII, aged between 12 and 15 years, the researcher used the Slovin formula to determine the number of samples until the results were 97 students as the research sample. The researcher used a proportionate random sampling technique with the characteristics of inclusion of grade VII and VIII students of MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung, the characteristics of exclusion of uncooperative students or students who were absent from the research. Data were collected by distributing surveys to students at school, and the reliability of the results depended entirely on the honesty of the participants. Preliminary validation and reliability testing were conducted on the questionnaire, which was used as the research instrument. The validity test revealed that several items were invalid; however, the researchers addressed these issues, and the reliability test yielded a value of $0.910 > 0.361$, indicating that Cronbach's alpha exceeded the R table value, and thus the instrument was considered reliable. To determine the correlation between the two variables, the data were analyzed using the Spearman rank correlation test.

Results

Table 1 Characteristics of Respondents Based on Age Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
13	36	37.1%



14	61	62.9%
Total	97	100%

According to Table 1, 61 out of the total respondents were 14 years old.

Table 2 Characteristics of Respondents Based on Gender Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	38	39.2%
Female	59	60.8%
Total	97	100%

Table 2 shows that there were 59 female respondents, making them the majority in this study.

Table 3 Characteristics of Bullying Behavior Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Bullying Behavior	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Low	34	35.1%
Moderate	48	49.5%
High	15	15.5%
Total	97	100%

According to Table 3, nearly half of the respondents who experienced bullying behavior were classified in the moderate category. Specifically, 48 respondents, or 49.5%, fell into this category.

Table 4 Frequency Distribution of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Risk Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

PTSD Risk	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not at Risk	23	23,7%
At Risk	74	76,3%
Total	97	100%

Table 4 shows that up to 76.3% of the sample were potentially at risk of experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Table 5 Cross Tabulation of the Correlation Between Bullying Behavior and the Risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Bullying Behavior	Not at Risk of PTSD		At Risk of PTSD		Total	
	F	%	f	%	F	%
Low	2	8.1	32	25.9	34	100
Moderate	15	11.4	33	36.6	48	100
High	6	3.6	9	11.4	15	100
Total	23	23.0	74	74.0	97	100

Based on the results presented in Table 5, which shows the cross tabulation, it was found that nearly half of the 48 respondents who had experienced moderate bullying behavior were

classified as at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder, with a total of 33 respondents in this category. Meanwhile, 15 respondents in the same category were classified as not at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder among adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung.

Table 6 Analysis of the Correlation Between Variables

Correlation Between Variables	<i>P</i>	<i>R</i>
Bullying Behavior and the Risk of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder	0,002	0,309

Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung were found to have a higher risk of developing PTSD according to the results of this study. This finding was supported by a P value of less than 0.05, specifically 0.002.

Discussion

Identifying Bullying Behavior Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

The results of the study showed that 48 respondents (49.5% of the total) experienced moderate bullying, indicating that nearly half of the respondents had been subjected to a significant level of bullying. These findings reinforce previous research, which showed that 64.1% of students, or 41 individuals, were categorized as victims of moderate bullying (Feilasifa & Sutoyo, 2022). A person who becomes the target of threats, insults, or harassment continuously for nine to sixteen consecutive days can be considered to have experienced moderate bullying. A school climate that strongly supports religious values also has an impact on the presence of low-level bullying victims. Lecturers and school staff contributed to addressing students' problems. School support in properly handling student issues after receiving complaints, along with students' strong religious education, may contribute to the occurrence of moderate bullying, according to researchers based on interviews with school authorities. At the same time, the number of students being bullied may increase if the adults responsible for the school turn a blind eye to the issue or dismiss it as harmless joking.

Both external and internal factors play a role in the development of bullying experiences. Gender is an important internal factor, with females being the most frequently bullied demographic group. Out of the total participants, 59 (or 60.8%) were female. Theoretically, females are generally considered to be physically weaker, more instinct-driven, and more likely to submit to bullying compared to males. This perspective is supported by previous research involving 92 participants, the majority of whom were female (58.8%) (Sulistiowati et al., 2022). The authors of that study claimed that gender is one of the components that may affect bullying, with females being more likely to become targets than males due to their less aggressive nature. When facing difficulties, females tend to withdraw from strong positions and are more susceptible to anxiety and fear.

Age is the second factor that affects bullying. According to this study, the majority of bullying victims were early adolescents, particularly those aged between 12 and 15 years. The early signs of bullying behavior among adolescents are clearly observed at this age. This finding is consistent with previous research involving 30 participants, of whom 16 (or 53% of the total) were between the ages of 12 and 15. Individuals aged between 12 and 16 are considered more vulnerable to bullying. Bullying is only one of the many challenges faced by adolescents during the transitional period from childhood to adulthood, including puberty and identity exploration (Santrock, 2011). Adolescents are highly vulnerable to bullying because of the developmental challenges they face. Since adolescents are very receptive to social cues, the researchers



suggested that age may contribute to bullying behavior. Adolescents often experience difficulties adjusting to their environment due to a lack of ability to regulate their behavior and emotions.

Identifying the Risk of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

Based on the findings of this study, a large number of respondents (up to seventy-four) were identified as potentially suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. A total of 74 participants were surveyed in this study, and 56 of them (75.7%) were classified as at risk of PTSD, consistent with previous research by (Rina et al., 2021). The severity of the psychological impact caused by traumatic events determines the level of post-traumatic stress disorder experienced by the victims. Previous studies have shown that approximately 25% of bullying victims exhibited symptoms indicative of PTSD. The findings of this study are in line with those of Johnson et al., who previously reported that students were significantly more likely to experience PTSD after being subjected to bullying (Nadhira & Rofiah, 2023). According to researchers, traumatic experiences (including but not limited to accidents, war, sexual abuse, violence, and natural disasters) can lead to mental illness known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Individuals suffering from PTSD should not delay seeking treatment to prevent complications in the future.

The study found that females represented a significant portion of the respondents, accounting for 45.0% of those identified as being at risk of post-traumatic stress disorder. Based on the gender breakdown of 102 respondents, females made up 58.8% of the total, which reinforces the findings of this study. Bipolar disorder is also more commonly observed in females than in males (Nuzulia, 2024). This difference is attributed to variations in coping mechanisms. When experiencing stress, females tend to cry and talk to loved ones as a means of seeking comfort. Furthermore, compared to males, females are more likely to experience depression.

Since females typically experience emotions more sensitively than males, the researchers concluded that females are more prone to post-traumatic stress disorder. One factor that burdens women is their tendency to overanalyze situations when stressed, which can lead to anxiety and increased psychological pressure.

The second significant finding was that 23 participants (or 23.7% of the total) were at risk of developing post-traumatic stress disorder during early adolescence, specifically between the ages of 12 and 15. According to a previous study conducted in Missouri by McCutcheon et al. (2010), 38% of PTSD cases in women occurred before the age of 12, 39% during adolescence, and 23% after the age of 18. The findings of this study are consistent with that research. Among the women who participated in the study, one-third reported having experienced physical abuse or neglect during childhood (Imanina & Surjaningrum, 2022). However, the results of this study contradict previous research, which found no correlation between age and the severity of PTSD (Juliana1 & AP, 2023). That earlier study did not show any significant correlation between age and stressful events, with statistical analysis yielding a p-value of 0.913, which is greater than 0.05 (Juliana1 & AP, 2023). Researchers emphasized that adolescents are not immune to the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. Those who have previously experienced traumatic events are more vulnerable to similar events in the future.

Analyzing the Correlation Between Bullying Behavior and the Risk of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Among Adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung

According to this study, adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung were at a higher risk of developing PTSD if they had been bullied. This was indicated by a P value of 0.002, or $P < 0.05$. These results are consistent with previous research that found a strong correlation between bullying and PTSD (Tini et al., 2021). This correlation exists because the mental well-being of



individuals who are bullied is significantly affected. Since bullying has a negative impact on the emotional and psychological health of adolescents, the government, parents, and educators must work together to support bullying victims.

According to Ashofa (2019), victims of bullying may experience traumatic events. Traumatic stress disorder is the medical term for this condition (Ashofa, 2019). Symptoms of PTSD include anxiety, autonomic lability, emotional vulnerability, and flashbacks of distressing experiences. These symptoms occur when an individual experiences stress that exceeds their physical or emotional capacity to cope. This study found that although many respondents had been victims of bullying, none of them were diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Among the many possible contributing factors to PTSD, bullying is recognized as one of them.

On the other hand, PTSD does not necessarily occur in every victim of bullying. This is consistent with previous studies that showed the majority of victims in the high-intensity bullying category did not develop PTSD and were able to overcome the experience (Fitria & Dwi, 2023). Victims may occasionally experience flashbacks and negative emotions, but these episodes are infrequent and do not interfere with their ability to carry out daily activities, especially if the victims are courageous enough to report the incident to their parents or school and receive supportive feedback. However, for those who are unable to talk about their experiences, the trauma may develop into a mental illness that disrupts their daily lives.

The findings of this study also indicated that some adolescents were at risk of developing PTSD even though they had experienced only minor instances of bullying. Bullying is merely one of many potential triggers for PTSD. Previous research has shown that any traumatic event, whether brief or prolonged, can pose a threat to an individual's mental health. This risk may increase if the individual has experienced additional traumatic events, such as childhood abuse, which can have lasting effects into later stages of life (Fadillah et al., 2022).

As a form of violence stemming from peer pressure, bullying often involves issues of status or power. Psychological impacts of bullying include depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, low self-esteem, and impaired social functioning. Meanwhile, symptoms of PTSD include reliving the trauma through flashbacks or nightmares, severe anxiety, and avoidance of anything that triggers painful memories.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed the following: (1) nearly half of the participants, or 48 out of 79, had experienced moderate bullying behavior; (2) the majority of participants, or 74 out of 79, were at risk of developing post traumatic stress disorder; and (3) among adolescents at MTs Ahmad Yani Jabung, there was a weak correlation between bullying behavior and the risk of post traumatic stress disorder, as indicated by a significance value of 0.002, which is less than 0.05.

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan Ngudia Husada Madura, with ethical clearance number 2063/KEPK/STIKES-NHM/EC/IV/2024.

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