

# Bullying in Adolescents

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## Bullying in Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a transitional period of development between childhood and adulthood, which involves changes in self entering adulthood. Which is marked by major changes in physical, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects. Many adolescences experienced psychological problems, such as anxieties, social challenges, negative views of the self, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, depression, suicide ideation, suicide attempt, and others. Various psychological problems can occur due to various factors, from internal and external or environmental factors. One of the external factors that often occurs during adolescence is bullying. Bullying is systematic abuse of power as a deliberate detrimental act and repeatedly. The aim of this study is to find a picture of bullying experienced by adolescents in one of the state high schools in the South Tangerang area. The study was conducted by distributing a questionnaire and interviews with high school students. Questionnaires were given to adolescents aged 13-19 years (N = 178). The results showed that 102 participants (57%) had experienced bully, 52 participants (51%) of whom were female. There were 38 participants (21%) have experienced cyberbully, 122 participants (69%) have experienced verbal bully, and 74 participants (42%) have experienced physical bully. Interviews were conducted on 3 students who have been bullied. Interviews showed that those bullying victims obtained a negative impact. Some negative impacts are difficulties in socializing, feeling useless, lack of confidence, academic decline, and others. However, some participants chose to oppose, ignored, change for the better, find more friends so they don't experience bully again, and still be able to focus, know their goals and steps needed. The results of this study are preliminary studies that are useful for the development of psychological science in the future.

**Keywords:** adolescents, bullying

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a period of searching for identity, adolescents search for who they are, what their uniqueness is, what their life goals are, where they are in the community, and find their ideal position. During the process, teens often experiment with various roles and personalities [1]. Not infrequently young people want to look stronger and dominant in their environment so that they can be respected and feared by those around them, and often happens in the school environment. Some teenager gathers and forms a group, presenting themselves as dominant and strong compared to other students. To show their strengths, often in various forms of aggressive actions taken to weaker students, both physically and verbally, spread rumors about other students who have been targeted, or through cyberspace. The actions taken by these young people are called bullying. Lamb, Pepler, and Craig [2] describe bullying as the use of force and aggression to cause distress or control others. In their research, Wolke, and Lereya [3] describe bullying as the efforts to build social networks or hierarchies, bullies will try to exert their power on all children. Those who have emotional reactions (e.g. crying, running away, upset) and no or few who defend

them are targets of repeated bullying. Bullies may make others join (e.g. laughing, teasing, hitting, spreading rumors) as a spectator or even as a follower.

The results of a study conducted by the Pew Research Center [4] to 920 American teenagers aged 13 to 17 years, showed 7 out of 10 adolescents saw that anxiety and depression were the main problems and significant problems in their current age group. In the next sequence are bullying, drugs, and alcohol consumption. Furthermore, compared to getting good grades, about half of them said they felt a lot of pressure to look good (29%) and to adjust socially (28%). Bullying is a case that often occurs throughout the world. There are many cases of bullying that occur and not all cases come to the surface. The World Health Organization [5] explained that one of three children reported being bullied in their lives, and 10-14% experienced chronic bullying that lasted more than 6 months. In Indonesia, the case of bullying has been in the spotlight for a long time. Quoted from idntimes.com [6], the chairperson of the Commission for The Protection of Children Indonesia (KPAI) Susanto explained that based on the data obtained, there were recorded 37 cases of violations, most of which were dominated by bullying and

physical violence. There 12 children were victims of psychological violence and bullying, 4 cases of children who were bullies against teachers. In 2019 there have been many cases of bullying in the spotlight in Indonesia.

Swearer and Hymel [7] explain that various acts of bullying by more dominant students can give negative impacts on weaker students who become victims. This is also supported by several other research shows that bullying gives negative impacts on its victims [7,8,9,10,11,12]. Negative events in life can cause and maintain anxiety disorders, anxious individuals will see the world as a threatening place, and interpret events as worries and fears [7]. Based on various phenomena obtained about bullying, the researcher wanted to find out more about how the picture of bullying experienced by adolescents in one of the state high schools in the South Tangerang area. The results of this study are preliminary studies that are useful for the further development of psychological science.

### **1.1. Related Work**

According to the aim of this study, we discussed two topics those related to adolescent and bullying.

#### **1.1.1. Adolescents**

Santrock [1] explains that no child enters adolescence in the form of an empty list, which only has a genetic code that will determine a variety of thoughts, feelings, and behavior. However, the combination of heredity, childhood experience, and adolescent experience, determines the range of adolescent development. Santrock [1] explains adolescence as a transitional period of development between childhood and adulthood, which involves changes in self entering adulthood. Biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes experienced by adolescents, can range from the development of the sexual function, abstract thought processes to autonomy. Piaget's Theory [1] states that individuals actively build an understanding of the world and through four stages of cognitive development. Two processes – organization and adaptation – underlie the individual's cognitive construction about the world. To make the world make sense, the individual tries to organize his experiences. Each stage contains a different way of thinking. According to Piaget, it is the way to understand the world differently that makes a stage higher than the other stages. According to Piaget, children's cognition at one stage is qualitatively different compared to other stages.

Psychosocial development in adolescents, according to Erikson [1] the fifth stage namely identity versus identity confusion, takes place during adolescence. At this time, teenagers must decide who they are, what their uniqueness is, and what their life goals are. They are faced with various roles, ranging from the role of work to the role in romantic relationships. In the process of exploring and searching for their identity, they often experiment with various roles and

personalities. At one time they might be argumentative, while at other times they might be cooperative. They may dress neatly one day and unconventional another day. This personality experiment is a deliberate attempt by teenagers to find their place in the world. When adolescents slowly begin to realize that they will soon be responsible for themselves and their lives, they begin to look for the life they want to live [1]. These young people who succeed in overcoming and accepting roles that conflict with each other are identified with a new identity, refreshing and acceptable appreciation of themselves. Teenagers who fail to overcome the identity crisis will suffer from identity confusion. They can withdraw, isolate themselves from friends and family, or immerse themselves in the world of others and lose their own identity in the crowd [1]. According to the aim of this study, we discussed two topics those related to adolescent and bullying.

#### **1.1.2 Bullying**

Bullying is a systematic abuse of power and is defined as aggressive behavior or deliberate harassment by peers that is repeatedly carried out and involves an imbalance of power, both actual and perceived, between the victim and the bullies. Children who are victims of bullying are consistently found to have a higher risk for common somatic problems such as colds or psychosomatic problems such as headaches, stomachaches, or sleep problems, and are more likely to smoke [3]. Lamb, Pepler, and Craig [2] describe bullying as the use of force and aggression to cause distress or control others. Bullying is a form of harassment that can occur in various forms at various ages. Bullying can occur in the family, at work, or in other environments and at any age.

Lamb, Pepler, and Craig [2] explain there are two key elements to understand bullying. First, bullying is a form of aggressive behavior that is forced from positions of power: Children who bully have more power than children they targeted, and this power is often invisible to adults. Children's strength can come from physical gains (such as size and strength) or social excellence (such as higher social status in peers or strength in numbers). Recent research by Van Cleave and Davis [13] show that children with special health care needs are more likely to be victims, while those who have chronic behavioral, emotional, or developmental problems are more likely to be involved in the bullying of others. Lamb, Pepler, and Craig [2] explain that the second element is that bullying is repeated from time to time, and with each incident recurring, the dynamics of power become consolidated. Although the formal definition includes repetition, children believe that a single occurrence of the use of power and aggression can be identified as bullying.

Bullying can be broadly categorized in the form of direct and indirect aggression. Direct bullying is a blatant expression of power and can include physical aggression (e.g. hitting, kicking) and verbal aggression (e.g. insult, racial or sexual harassment, threats). Indirect bullying (or relational aggression) is a veiled manipulation of social

relations to hurt (e.g. gossiping, spreading rumors) or to exclude individuals who are victims [2]. Pörhölä, Almonkari, and Kunttu [14] explained that victims of bullying are different from those who have no experience, victims have characteristics of anxiety and a higher level of social anxiety.

## 1.2. Our Contribution

This research method was conducted by giving questionnaires to random teenagers in one school in the South Tangerang area. Participants are students in grades 10 to 12 high school, ages 13-19 years, and not limited to gender or socioeconomic status. The distribution of the questionnaire aimed to find out the description of bullying experienced by students at SMAN A, South Tangerang. The questionnaire contained several questions about the form of bullying that had been experienced by the students. After completing the questionnaire, the next step was interviewing three participants. Interviews were conducted to find out more about the impact of bullying on the daily lives of the participants.

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## 1.3. Paper Structure

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 1 introduces the preliminaries used in this paper, which include theories and previous research about adolescent and bullying. Section 2 presents the result of this study. Finally, section 3 concludes the paper.

## 2. RESULT

The study was conducted by distributing questionnaires and interviews with several victims of bullying. Questionnaires were given to adolescent victims of bullying, aged 13-19 years, students in grades 10 to 12. Researchers gave questionnaires to teenagers in one of the South Tangerang state high schools to 178 students, namely 71 students (40%) grade X, 37 students (21%) grade XI, and 70 students (39%) grade XII. The results of research conducted on 10 to 20 September 2019, showed that various types of bullying often occur namely physically, verbally, and also through cyber. The results showed that 102 students (57%) had experienced bullying, 52 students (51%) of whom were women. There are 38 students (21%) who have experienced bullying through cyber, 122 students (69%) have experienced verbal bullying, and 74 students (42%) have experienced physical bullying. The researcher then interviewed three students who had experienced bullying for further study.

One of the students interviewed was B. B had been bullying since 3rd grade in junior high school until now, namely class X. B had experienced physical bullying (i.e. beating, kicking, pushing and throwing things), verbally (i.e. insulted, cursed, humiliated, humiliated, humiliated

and given an inappropriate name), and through cyber (ignored and insulted) (personal communication, September 19th, 2019). Based on the results of observations made while in class, B is a person who does not talk much and does not interact much with other people compared to his classmates. The other students interviewed were AS who experienced bullying during the 8th grade of junior high school. AS has experienced physical bullying (i.e. beating, kicking, pushing, throwing things) and verbally (i.e. being insulted, humiliated, humiliated, invoked inappropriate words, threatened and his secret was spread). As a result of the bullying, AS wanted to transfer from the school. AS tells about the bullying he experienced to his family, AS father helped him solve the problem by talking to the teacher at his school. The bullies were eventually expelled from school and AS did not move schools (personal communication, September 17th, 2019). The researcher interviewed F, one of the other victims of bullying that had been bullied since junior high school until now. F has experienced verbally bullying (i.e. humiliated, cursed, shouted, called with inappropriate words, threatened, intimidated, isolated from friendship, and spread false rumors), and through cyberspace (through social media, that is, insulted, spoken with inappropriate words, spread rumors). F does not have a supportive environment from family and friends (personal communication, September 21st, 2019).

Based on the results of interviews conducted on B, AS and F there is a similarity that bullying has a negative impact on them. Negative impacts of bullying that are continuously experienced, making B feel insecure about himself, not confident to talk with others, preferring to avoid, more often to play online than playing with his peers directly. Whereas with the AS, the result of bullying experienced is want to get out of school because they cannot stand the treatment of their friends. Until now the AS still has fears of bullying, becomes difficult to start interactions with new people, and prefers silence, unless someone else starts first (personal communication, September 17th, 2019). Likewise, F feeling everyone thinks he is negative or annoys others, always feels people around him talking negatively about him and thinks that he is the cause why everyone does not like him. F has difficulty being friends, feels no one wants to be friends with him, does not want to socialize, and prefers social avoidance for fear of being judged negatively. Besides, F becomes bulimic, and the ongoing bullying makes F diagnosed with depression by a psychologist during junior high school (personal communication, September 21st, 2019). Based on the interview results it was found that some of the negative impacts of bullying are anxiety, withdrawal, lack of confidence, difficulty in socializing, social avoidance, social isolation, bad perceptions of self, and others.

B explained that he was still able to concentrate well when studying, trying to have better self-confidence even though he still experienced bullying. Some of the things that B did was to have the courage to be the group leader and to make presentations. Besides that, B has a high motivation to continue school because he has hopes and goals to make his parents happy (personal communication, September



19th, 2019). In the case of AS, even though AS has experienced bullying, it is still able to have good concentration and high motivation when studying. Besides, AS also has a dream of becoming a successful pilot or entrepreneur. AS feels that his family is in the middle to lower economic status, this is one of the reasons AS has a high motivation to study hard so that he can have a good job and become a successful person to help the family economy (personal communication, September 17th, 2019).

In the other case of F, he has difficulty concentrating while studying and difficult taking a verbal test in front of others. F does not have hopes and goals for his future, F only follows his parents' hopes and goals to be a doctor, which is not his desire. F said that he was only doing his duty as a child that is studying. F explained that he often had difficulty managing his emotions, especially negative emotions such as sadness or crying, he often cried without cause or when he was alone (personal communication, September 21st, 2019). B and AS who have experienced bullying and have a negative impact, still know their hopes, goals, ideals, they are still able to concentrate and able to organize themselves to achieve the ideals he wants. In contrast to F, who also gets a negative impact from bullying, feels he has no hope, motivation, and goals in his life, he only does what his parents want. F also has difficulty regulating his feelings and often experiences anxiety.

Despite experiencing negative psychological impacts, B and AS still can concentrate in school, have hopes and goals for their future. B and AS have good relations with their families, inter-family support each other (personal communication, September 17th and 19th 2019). In contrast to F, he has no motivation and hopes. F cannot communicate well with his family and even tends not to be able to give an opinion or express his thoughts. F is not close to his family and tends to avoid more, F's parents are strict and require F to follow the rules (personal communication, September 21st, 2019). Based on the results of the questionnaire and interview, it was found that bullying had a negative impact on the victim. Besides, the surrounding environment especially families, that provide support can play a role in the impact of bullying experienced by victims.

### 3. CONCLUSION

<sup>12</sup> Based on the results of research on bullying from 178 students, there were 102 students (57%) had experienced bullying and 52 students (51%) of whom were women. There are 38 students (21%) who have experienced bullying through cyber, 122 students (69%) have experienced verbal bullying, and 74 students (42%) have experienced physical bullying. Based on the results of interviews on three bullying victims, bullying has a negative impact on them. Some of the negative impacts of bullying are anxiety, withdrawal, lack of confidence, difficulty in socializing, social avoidance, social isolation, bad perceptions of self, and others. The result also showed that the family also plays

a role in the impact of bullying. Victims who get family support still can concentrate in school, have hopes and goals for their future, and vice versa.

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