

The Relationship Between Peer Conformity and Bullying Behavior in the Work Area of Soropia Community Health Center

Wa Ode Nova Noviyanti^{1*}, Cece Indriani², Nazaruddin Nazaruddin³, Nurdin Nurdin⁴

¹Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Mandala Waluya, Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia

²Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Mandala Waluya, Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia

³Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Mandala Waluya, Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia

⁴Faculty of Health Sciences, Universitas Mandala Waluya, Sulawesi Tenggara, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: E-mail: waodenova.rachman@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: Bullying is a deliberate activity aimed at hurting and intimidating through unequal power dynamics, with the potential to cause trauma and instil fear. This phenomenon occurs in various contexts, such as schools, workplaces, or online, and encompasses physical, verbal, social, and psychological violence. Its impacts are highly detrimental, including psychological trauma, decreased academic performance, depression, anxiety, and even suicide risk for victims, as well as potential future behavioural problems for perpetrators. Environments that tolerate bullying can create unhealthy and fear-filled atmospheres. This study aims to examine the relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center.

Methods: This research used a quantitative study design with a cross-sectional approach. The study population consisted of 52 respondents, with a sample of 46 respondents selected using consecutive sampling techniques. The instrument utilized was a questionnaire.

Results: The Fisher Exact Test showed a significant relationship, with a ϕ value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and X^2 calculated = $40.310 > X^2$ table = 3.841 . Therefore, H_0 was rejected, and H_a was accepted, indicating a positive relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center.

Conclusion: Relevant stakeholders are encouraged to collaborate, including individuals, families, educational institutions, and the broader community, in efforts to prevent and address bullying, thereby creating a safe and supportive environment for all. The findings of this study are expected to provide useful information for adolescents to avoid bullying behavior and maintain harmony.

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) states that adolescence is a period of growth and human development occurring after childhood and before adulthood, ranging from ages 10 to 19. Changes in individuals during this period are influenced not solely by age but also by experiences and environmental factors. Adolescents often experience unstable emotions and seek recognition from others to adapt to new environments and their accompanying dynamics. This makes adolescence a critical phase for psychosocial development and social interactions, which play significant roles, including self-identity formation, peer influence, emotional instability, conflict management difficulties, and the influence of family environment. Adolescents' ability to adjust is greatly influenced by their new surroundings (1-9).

Bullying among adolescents has been on the rise. According to WHO, adolescent bullying rates in Japan reach 72.5%, while in the United States, it is 71.2%. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in 2019 that 40% of children experience bullying at school, 32% reported physical violence, and 72% of children and adolescents have witnessed violence against other children. Governments worldwide have committed to reducing all forms of violence against children (10). In Indonesia, the incidence of bullying increased by 70% between 2013 and 2019. It is estimated that over 70% of adolescents in Indonesia and abroad experience bullying. Indonesia has significant issues with aggressive behavior, such as school bullying, with an incidence rate of 84% (2, 11).

The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) compiled data from Republika, which recorded 226 cases of bullying in 2022, 53 cases in 2021, and 119 cases in 2020. More recent data from January to August 2023 indicates 30 bullying cases in schools, with 50% occurring in junior high schools, 30% in elementary schools, and 13.5% in vocational high schools. Most cases in junior high schools involved peer-on-peer bullying or were perpetrated by educators. Over a nine-year period, KPAI recorded 41 perpetrators of bullying, representing 25.5% of total cases between 2011 and 2019. During this period, 37,381 child violence reports were filed, with 2,473 specifics to bullying in educational settings or on social media. Reports of harassment in schools and social media continue to rise (4, 12).

Bullying is a form of aggressive behavior intentionally aimed at causing harm or instilling fear. It often involves repeated actions toward a peer, resulting in victims experiencing physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Bullying typically occurs in social environments, such as schools, neighbourhoods, and public spaces (13). It can manifest physically (e.g., slapping, hitting, extorting, or throwing objects) or verbally (e.g., name-calling, mocking, isolating, or shaming). One common form of bullying involves seniority, where senior students intimidate their juniors, either physically or non-physically (6, 7, 14).

In Kendari City, Southeast Sulawesi, the Women's Empowerment and Child Protection Agency (DP3A) reported 25 cases of child violence in 2021. By July 2023, this number had increased to 35. In 2022, 31 cases involved children, and 6 cases involved women subjected to violence against children (Rachman et al., 2023). Evidence of bullying behaviour was also gathered from interviews conducted by researchers with Guidance and Counselling (BK) teachers in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center on June 12, 2024. These interviews revealed incidents of students bullying peers by calling them unpleasant names, physically assaulting weaker students, and inciting others to ostracize certain individuals. Student interviews conducted on the same day indicated that bullying often occurred during recess or outside teaching hours. The bullying behaviours included mocking, name-calling, pushing, kicking, and excluding someone from a group.

The impacts of bullying were evident. According to information provided by BK teachers, one parent reported that their child refused to attend school after being ridiculed by classmates. Another student dropped out after experiencing physical violence from peers, while some felt isolated in class. Student misconduct and aggressive behaviour have become alarming issues, both within and outside school environments. Many believe perpetrators of bullying are often children who lack attention, struggle academically, or require psychological assistance and counselling. Regardless of the causes, these incidents reflect the broader issue of juvenile delinquency (15, 16).

METHOD

The type of research used in this study is quantitative and observational analytic research aimed at determining the relationship between conformity and bullying behavior among students in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center using a cross-sectional approach. The study was conducted in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center from May to June 2024 with a sample size of 46 participants.

RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents by Gender and Age in the Working Area of Soropia Community Health Center

	Characteristics	n	%
Gender	Man	23	50
	Women	23	50
Age	13	25	54,3

	14	17	37,0
	15	4	8,7
Total		46	100

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 2. Distribution of Respondents Based on Bullying Behavior in the Soropia Health Center Work Area

No.	Bullying behavior	n	%
1.	High	36	78,3
2.	Low	10	21,7
Total		46	100

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 3. Distribution of Respondents Based on Peer Conformity in the Soropia Health Center Work Area

No.	Peer Conformity	n	%
1.	Good	10	21,7
2.	Less	36	78,3
Total		46	100

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 4. Distribution of Respondents Based on Peer Conformity with Bullying Behavior in the Soropia Health Center Work Area

Peer Conformity	Bullying Behavior						Statistical Analysis
	Low		Tall		Total		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Good	10	100	0	0	10	100	X^2 count: 40,310 X^2 table: 3,841 p value: 0,000 $\phi = 0,707$
Less	0	0	36	100	36	100	
Total	10	21,7	36	78,3	46	100	

Source: Primary Data, 2024

Table 4 shows that out of 46 respondents, 10 respondents with good peer conformity exhibited low bullying behavior. Meanwhile, among the 36 respondents with poor peer conformity, all 36 students (100%) displayed high bullying behavior. This indicates that students with poor peer conformity are more likely to exhibit high bullying behavior. The statistical test results showed a value of X^2 calculated = 40.310 > X^2 table = 3.841. This indicates that H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted, meaning there is a significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research results analysed using SPSS, it was found that some cells had expected frequencies less than 5, rendering the chi-square test invalid. Therefore, the Fisher Exact Test was used. The results of this test showed a significant relationship between peer conformity levels and bullying behavior among adolescents. The study found that adolescents with high levels of peer conformity tend to exhibit low bullying behavior, while those with low levels of peer conformity are more likely to exhibit high bullying behavior.

The data analysis using the Fisher Exact Test yielded a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$, leading to the rejection of H_0 and acceptance of H_a . Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior at SMPN 10 Kendari. Based on the respondent distribution, the researcher assumes that adolescents aged 13-15 are undergoing a stage of stable identity development, where they are trying to understand who they are in relation to others and society as a whole. Adolescents in this stage are typically in the conventional moral stage, where they tend to follow existing social rules and norms. However, their moral immaturity may make them less sensitive to the emotional and psychological impacts of bullying, as they might not fully comprehend the consequences of their actions.

The researcher also assumes that peer conformity plays a key role in influencing bullying behavior among adolescents. This assumption is based on the understanding that adolescents tend to seek social validation and recognition from their peers. When adolescents feel they conform to social norms, they may be more susceptible to bullying behavior as a way of asserting dominance or seeking social identity. Therefore, peer conformity levels can serve as a strong indicator for predicting the level of bullying behavior among adolescents. Based on peer conformity levels and bullying behavior, the researcher conducted statistical analysis to test the hypothesis that adolescents with high levels of peer conformity tend to have low bullying behavior, while those with low or poor peer conformity levels tend to have high bullying behavior.

Myers (2012) states that group size is a factor influencing individual conformity, as larger group sizes exert greater influence on individuals. Normative influence forms the basis for adapting to the desires or expectations of others to gain acceptance. This influence drives individuals to comply with the normative standards within a group. Informational influence, on the other hand, refers to an individual's adjustment or desire to align their thinking with the group due to the perceived superiority of group opinions or assumptions. Individuals often perceive group information as richer than their own and, as a result, conform to align their views with group suggestions (18, 27).

Santrock (20) also stated that the emergence of group behavioral standards related to prevailing norms and information obtained from the group becomes a standard for individuals to behave within the group. Individuals feel a certain demand within the group when they become aware of the information and/or norms originating from it. These demands create either imaginary or real pressure for the individual. It is described as imaginary because the group's pressure often comes from the interpretation of unwritten rules prevailing in the group (20, 22).

The findings of this study are supported by previous research conducted by Nabila Fiiryal Shafira, Ratna Widiastuti, and Moch. Johan Pratama in 2020, which aimed to examine the relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among students of SMA Negeri 8 Lampung. This research adopted a quantitative approach, with a sample of 86 students selected through purposive sampling. Data collection utilized peer conformity and bullying scales. The results indicated that the level of conformity significantly influences daily bullying behavior (18).

This proves that conformity is one of the factors influencing students' bullying behavior. Bullying behavior is closely related to conformity, as individuals often change their values and norms, and even their behavior patterns, due to interaction and influence from others. Such changes may occur unconsciously or intentionally. Conformity arises when individuals mimic the attitudes or behaviors of others due to perceived real or imagined pressure. The pressure to conform to peers becomes especially strong during adolescence (21, 29, 10).

Adolescents often engage in behaviors influenced by negative conformity, such as using inappropriate language, stealing, vandalism, and mocking parents and teachers. Due to peer conformity, adolescents tend to spend more time outside the home with their peers, whose influence grows significantly. It is therefore unsurprising that peers influence adolescent behaviors and attitudes more than family does (18, 25, 3).

This study is also supported by research conducted by Maulidiah Rahmi and Nurmina (Universitas Negeri Padang) on "The Relationship Between Peer Conformity and Bullying Behavior Among Students at SMPN 2 Kota Solok." The study used a correlational quantitative design with a sample of 61 students selected through purposive sampling. Data analysis was conducted using the product moment statistical method. The results showed a significant positive relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among students at SMPN 2 Kota Solok, with a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.293 and a p -value of 0.022 ($p < 0.05$). This means that the higher the peer conformity among students, the higher the bullying behavior, and conversely, the lower the peer conformity, the lower the bullying behavior (20, 26).

Additionally, research by Lailatus Sholihah in 2023 supports this study. It aimed to determine whether there is a relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among students of SMN 2 Puri Mojokerto. The respondents were from grades VII and VIII, with a total sample of 158 students using a saturated sampling technique. The study used a quantitative method, and the results showed that peer conformity and bullying behavior among students were in the low category. Lower peer conformity was associated with lower bullying behavior, enabling students to control their behavior toward their peers better, thus reducing bullying in schools (24).

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study is that there is a significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior in the working area of the Soropia Community Health Center, with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$. Thus, H_0 is rejected, and H_a is accepted. This finding demonstrates that peer conformity is one of the factors influencing students' bullying behavior in schools.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Authors explicitly outline and describe their individual contributions to the research and the development of the manuscript. This statement is intended to provide transparency and clarity regarding each author's role in the project. It helps readers and reviewers understand the specific contributions of each author to the research process

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Confirms that the authors have declared any potential conflicts that could influence the impartiality of the research. The authors explicitly state that they have no financial or personal relationships with entities that might unduly affect their objectivity. This declaration ensures the integrity of the study by transparently addressing any possible influences on the research outcomes, contributing to the credibility and trustworthiness of the article.

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