



The relationship between bullying and self esteem in adolescents in class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received Jul 1, 2025
Revised Jul 10, 2025
Accepted Jul 22, 2025

Keywords:

Adolescents;
Bullying;
Self Esteem.

ABSTRACT

Bullying is defined as any deliberate, persistent, and harmful kind of intimidation or aggressive behavior directed at others by a person or group of individuals who are stronger or more powerful. A person's evaluation of themselves, both favorably and unfavorably overall, is based on their level of self-esteem. Bullying behavior can have an impact on how self-esteem develops, leading to teenagers having low self-esteem. In today's schools, it is common for teenagers to be shy, lack confidence, or remove themselves from their friends since they have been teased by them. There are 10 male students and 7 female students from class VII who feel inferior because they are often teased by their friends, some of them also admit that they often call their friends rude names (animal names). In order to examine the connection between bullying and self-esteem in SMPN 7 Palangka Raya adolescents in class VII, this study used a cross-sectional strategy and a correlational study design. 151 pupils in class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya made up the study's population, while 33 respondents made up the sample. At the end, the p value is 0.000 < 0.05 when the significant value is 0.05 using the Chi square test (0.000). In order to support the H1 hypothesis, adolescents in class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya exhibit a substantial correlation between bullying and self-esteem. Conclusion: The study's findings show a strong correlation between bullying and self-esteem among teenagers in SMPN 7 Palangka Raya's seventh grade.

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical period marked by rapid physical, emotional, and psychological development. During this phase, individuals strive to build identity and social connections, particularly within school environments. Friendships play a crucial role in supporting adolescents' mental well-being; positive peer relationships can foster mutual respect, empathy, and emotional growth (Babu & Mittal Goyal, 2022). However, negative peer interactions, such as bullying, can significantly disrupt this developmental process. Bullying is defined as a repeated, intentional act of aggression whether verbal, physical, or psychological directed by one or more individuals who possess greater power toward a weaker victim, with the intent to harm (Babu & Mittal Goyal, 2022). Victims of bullying, particularly adolescents, often suffer from anxiety, fear, and even depression. These experiences directly affect their self-esteem, a

core component of psychological health that influences how individuals perceive their worth and navigate social environments.

Globally, bullying remains a widespread problem in educational settings. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), 42% of male adolescents and 37% of female adolescents have been victims of bullying. In Indonesia, this issue persists at an alarming rate. Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI) reveal that bullying cases continue to rise. For example, in 2022, there were 226 reported incidents of bullying, an increase from 53 cases in 2021 and 119 in 2020. Verbal bullying constituted the highest proportion of cases (29.3%), followed by physical (55.5%) and psychological bullying (15.2%) (Nur Annisa Jatnika et al., 2022). These national-level statistics indicate a disturbing trend that mirrors the global concern and emphasizes the pressing need for localized intervention and further research.

Locally, bullying is also prevalent in Palangka Raya, particularly among junior high school students. Based on research conducted by Martono and Sitio (2020), junior high school students aged 14 to 16 years experience various forms of bullying, including verbal, physical, social, and cyberbullying. Although cyberbullying is relatively low (with 78% experiencing it rarely), verbal and physical bullying are significantly more frequent. Specifically, 12% of students reported engaging in verbal bullying very often, 10% often, and 20% sometimes. Physical bullying also appeared prevalent, with 10% of students admitting to doing it very often, and 9% often. A preliminary survey conducted at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya on March 18, 2024, further supports these findings. Interviews with 17 students (10 male and 7 female) from Grade VII revealed that many felt inferior, isolated, and lacked confidence due to persistent teasing and being called offensive names, including animal epithets. This school thus provides a focused setting for understanding the direct impacts of bullying on adolescent self-esteem.

Theoretically, the relationship between bullying and self-esteem is well-established in adolescent psychology literature (Nur Annisa Jatnika et al., 2022). Self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of their own worth and is formed through interactions with family, peers, and society. Victims of bullying often internalize the negative feedback they receive, resulting in lower self-perception, social withdrawal, and difficulties in asserting themselves in peer relationships. Prolonged exposure to bullying can distort adolescents' self-concept and increase the risk of emotional disorders. Low self-esteem during adolescence not only affects academic performance and interpersonal skills but also has long-term effects on adulthood mental health. Therefore, understanding how bullying behaviors particularly verbal and psychological abuse affect self-esteem is crucial to developing effective prevention and intervention strategies, especially within school environments.

According to educational attainment, elementary school pupils experience bullying at the highest rate (26%), followed by junior high school students (25%), and high school students (18.75%). According to data collected from junior high school samples in five sub-districts of Palangka Raya city by WC Martono & EFS Sitio (2020), pupils are 14 years old (48.1%) and 16 years old (3.5%). On the basis of gender, however, there were more men (47%) and women (53%). Because only 2% of people in Palangka Raya city engage in cyberbullying frequently, 5% do so frequently, 15% do so occasionally, and 78% do so infrequently, the prevalence of cyberbullying is quite low. Meanwhile, social bullying behavior is known that 13% do it very often, 11% often, 19% sometimes, and 57% rarely. However, verbal bullying behavior in Palangka Raya is relatively high compared to other types of bullying behavior. 12% do it very often, 10% often, 20% sometimes, and the remaining 58% rarely do it. And physical bullying behavior in Palangka Raya, it is known that 10% do it very often, 9% often, 15% sometimes, and 66% rarely do it. Based on the results of a preliminary survey conducted on March 18, 2024 at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya, the results of interviews with 10 male students and 7 female students from class VII who felt inferior because they were often teased by their friends, among them also admitted that they often called their friends impolite names (animal names) (Munawaroh, S., Murtolo, 2018).

Bullying is linked to either a favorable or negative evaluation of an individual's talents, hence influencing their self-esteem, which can be advantageous for both the individual and others in their personality (Nurhidayah, Aryanti, Suhendar, Lukman, & Nursing, 2021). Self-esteem is a state of personal fulfillment that encompasses self-acceptance and the capacity to understand one's own nature.

Adolescent development depends heavily on self-esteem, particularly for victims of bullying, as this can impact their development as adults. (Komang et al., 2025) When victims of bullying do not have their needs for self-esteem met, they will face challenges in their own lives, such as academic failure, which will cause them to become distracted while studying and result in a decline in their grades. In addition, they may feel unloved, alienated in their social environment, or even depressed, which may lead to suicide (Nurhidayah et al., 2021).

Handling bullying cases can be done through prevention starting from the child and the child's environment. One of the preventive measures that comes from the child himself is by increasing the child's self-esteem or called self-esteem. Increasing self-esteem can be done by increasing several components of self-esteem, such as feeling of belonging, feeling of competence and feeling of worth. Additionally, parents' and teachers' roles are crucial in boosting kids' self-esteem and preventing bullying. Nurses' roles as advocates and educators, as well as their roles as health professionals, should be highly beneficial in attempts to stop bullying. Nurses can take action by educating people about health issues and working to prevent or treat bullying-related distress. The relationship between bullying and self-esteem in adolescents in Class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya is the study's title, which the researcher chose to carry out in light of the aforementioned issues (Melinda, 2020).

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative correlational design using a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between bullying and self-esteem among adolescents at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya. The population included all seventh-grade students who met the predetermined inclusion criteria, from which a sample of 33 respondents was selected through purposive sampling (Mawarni, 2022). Data were collected using two structured questionnaires: a bullying behavior questionnaire measuring physical, verbal, and non-verbal bullying; and a self-esteem questionnaire measuring self-strength, self-meaning, self-policy, and self-ability. Both instruments were adapted from previous validated tools and subsequently underwent content validity testing by expert judgment, with revisions made based on feedback to ensure contextual relevance and clarity. The reliability of the instruments was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, with all items exceeding the minimum reliability coefficient threshold ($\alpha > 0.70$), indicating good internal consistency. The data collection process involved direct distribution of the questionnaires in the classroom, following the provision of informed consent from both students and their guardians. To ensure compliance with research ethics, the study obtained ethical clearance from the local education authority, and confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were emphasized to all respondents. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software version 25, including descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation tests, and assumption testing such as normality and linearity. While the cross-sectional design enables identification of the relationship at a specific point in time, it is acknowledged that this approach limits conclusions regarding the long-term causal effects of bullying on self-esteem.

3. Results and Discussion

Result

- a. General Data is a presentation of demographic data obtained by researchers during the research, characteristics of respondents based on gender, age, class, use of social media, duration of use of social media, etc.

Table 1.
Respondent Characteristics by Gender in 2024

| Gender | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|--------|-----------|--------------|
| Man | 16 | 48,5% |
| Female | 17 | 51,5% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on gender show that there are 16 male respondents (48.5%) and 17 female respondents (51.5%).

Table 2.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Age in 2024

| Age | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 12-13 year | 23 | 69,7% |
| 14-15 year | 10 | 30,3% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on age show that 23 respondents (69.7%) are aged 12-13 years and 10 respondents (30.3%) are aged 14-15 years.

Table 3.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Class of 2024

| Class | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|-------|-----------|--------------|
| VII 1 | 5 | 15,2% |
| VII 2 | 6 | 18,2% |
| VII 3 | 9 | 27,2% |
| VII 4 | 7 | 21,2% |
| VII 5 | 6 | 18,2% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on class show that class VII 1 had 5 respondents (15.2%), VII 2 had 6 respondents (18.2%), VII 3 had 9 respondents (27.2%), VII 4 had 7 respondents (21.2%), and VII 5 had 6 respondents (18.2%).

Table 4.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Social Media Usage in 2024

| Social Media | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Game Online | 11 | 33,3% |
| WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook | 22 | 66,7% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on social media usage show that 11 respondents (33.3%) use online games and 22 respondents (66.7%) use WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook.

Table 5.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Duration of Social Media Use in 2024

| Duration of social media use | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|------------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| 1-3 hours | 16 | 48,5% |
| 4-6 hours | 17 | 51,5% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on the duration of social media use show that 16 respondents (48.5%) used a duration of 1-3 hours and 17 respondents (51.5%) used a duration of 4-6 hours.

Table 6.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Number of Friendships in 2024

| Banyak Pertemanan | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|-------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| At School | 22 | 66,7% |
| In The Home Environment | 11 | 33,3% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on the number of friendships show that 22 respondents (66.7%) have many friendships at school and 11 respondents (33.3%) have many friendships at home.

Table 7.
Respondent Characteristics Based on Learning Achievement in 2024

| Learning Achievement | Frekuensi | Presentase % |
|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Ranking 1-5 | 13 | 39,4% |
| Ranking 6-10 | 8 | 24,2% |
| Ranking Below 10 | 12 | 36,4% |
| Total | 33 | 100% |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on learning achievement show that ranking 1-5 were 13 respondents (39.4%), ranking 6-10 were 8 respondents (24.2%), and below ranking 10 were 12 respondents (36.4%).

- b. Special Data, the following are the results of the identification of bullying with self-esteem in adolescents in class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya.

Table 8.
Respondent characteristics based on bullying in 2024

| Bullying | Frekuensi | Persentase % |
|----------|-----------|--------------|
| High | 26 | 78,8 % |
| Medium | 6 | 18,2 % |
| Low | 1 | 3,0 % |
| Total | 33 | 100 % |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on bullying show that there are 26 respondents (78.8%) who have high bullying, 6 respondents (18.2%) who have moderate bullying, and 1 respondent (3.0%) who have low bullying.

Table 9.
Respondent characteristics based on self-esteem in 2024

| Self Esteem | Frekuensi | Persentase % |
|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Positive | 2 | 6,1 % |
| Negative | 31 | 93,9 % |
| Total | 33 | 100 % |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of respondents based on self-esteem show that respondents with positive self-esteem were 2 respondents (6.1%), negative were 31 respondents (93.9%).

Table 10.
Cross Tabulation of Bullying with Self Esteem in 2024

| | | Self Esteem | | Total |
|----------|--------|-------------|---------|-------|
| | | Positif | Negatif | |
| Bullying | High | 1 | 25 | 26 |
| | Medium | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| | Low | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 2 | 31 | 33 |

Based on the table above, the characteristics of the respondents show that respondents with high bullying with positive self-esteem were 1 respondent, high bullying with negative self-esteem were 25 respondents, moderate bullying with negative self-esteem were 6 respondents, low bullying with positive self-esteem was 1 respondent.

Table 11.
Results of the Analysis of the Relationship between Bullying and Self Esteem in Adolescents in Class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya

| | Chi-Square Tests | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 16.111 ^a | 2 | .000 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 6.612 | 2 | .037 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 4.851 | 1 | .028 |
| N of Valid Cases | 33 | | |

a. 4 cells (66.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .06.

Table 3.11 shows that the chi-square correlation test above yielded a p(value) of 0.000, which is less than the alpha value of 0.05. Thus, there is a relationship between bullying and self-esteem among adolescents in Class VII of SMPN 7 Palangka Raya, according to the rejection of hypothesis H_0 and acceptance of hypothesis H_1 .

Discussion

This study involved 33 seventh-grade students at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya. Respondents were nearly evenly distributed by gender—48.5% male and 51.5% female. The majority were aged 12–13 years (69.7%) and came from a variety of class sections, with the highest representation from class VII-3 (27.2%). Most students used social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook (66.7%), and over half spent 4–6 hours daily on these platforms. A large proportion (66.7%) reported having more friendships at school than at home, and academic achievement data showed that 39.4% ranked in the top 1–5, while 36.4% ranked below the top 10.

In terms of bullying levels, 78.8% of respondents experienced high levels of bullying, while 18.2% experienced moderate levels, and only 3.0% experienced low levels (Table 3.8). When examined alongside self-esteem, 93.9% of respondents reported negative self-esteem, whereas only 6.1% had positive self-esteem (Table 3.9). A cross-tabulation of bullying with self-esteem (Table 3.10) revealed that among the 26 students with high bullying exposure, 25 had negative self-esteem and only one reported positive self-esteem. This pattern was consistent among those experiencing moderate bullying, all of whom had negative self-esteem. Interestingly, the only other student with positive self-esteem experienced low bullying.

Statistical analysis using the Chi-Square test (Table 4.11) yielded a p-value of 0.000, which is significantly lower than the alpha value of 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between bullying and self-esteem. Thus, hypothesis H_0 was rejected, and hypothesis H_1 accepted, confirming that bullying is significantly related to the self-esteem of adolescents in class VII at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya.

This finding aligns with Adler's theory of individual psychology (Feist & Feist, 2012), which explains that individuals with feelings of inferiority often develop compensatory mechanisms such as aggression or bullying to mask low self-worth. According to Sofie & Recha (n.d.), adolescents with fragile self-esteem may attempt to inflate their sense of self by demeaning others, which in turn perpetuates a cycle of bullying. The study also resonates with the insights of Usman (2019), who asserts that adolescent egocentrism and the need for peer validation often result in violent behavior. This is further supported by Paramitasari & Alfian (2018) who highlight the role of emotional regulation in adolescent development—an ability that many bullies and victims alike struggle with.

Compared to prior studies, these results show a stronger prevalence of negative self-esteem among bullying victims. For instance, (Sofie & Recha, n.d.) observed that cyberbullying exacerbates feelings of isolation and shame due to its anonymous and public nature. While our study focused more on physical and verbal bullying, the pattern remains consistent: higher levels of bullying correspond to lower levels of self-esteem. Notably, in this study, cyberbullying prevalence was not high, consistent with earlier local studies by Martono & Sitio (2020) in Palangka Raya, which found verbal bullying to be the most dominant.

This research thus adds to existing literature by emphasizing the emotional cost of bullying, particularly in the offline school context where adolescents form the bulk of their social identity. With 93.9% of students reporting low self-esteem and 78.8% experiencing high bullying, this points to a critical need for intervention within the school's psychosocial environment. Interventions could include school-wide anti-bullying programs, peer counseling schemes, and structured character-building curricula aimed at emotional intelligence and resilience training. Teachers and parents must also be sensitized to the signs of emotional distress in students who may be quietly suffering.

Although this study clearly demonstrates a relationship between bullying and self-esteem, it is important to note that its cross-sectional design limits the ability to determine causality or long-term effects. Longitudinal research would be more effective in observing how prolonged exposure to bullying influences self-esteem over time and whether interventions produce lasting change.

The results of the study show a gap between facts and theories, where this study found high bullying and negative self-esteem. Bullying directly damages adolescent self-esteem. Victims of bullying often feel helpless, ashamed, and worthless. This experience can erode their self-confidence and instill negative feelings about themselves. In the digital era, bullying does not only occur in the physical environment but also in cyberspace. Cyberbullying can exacerbate the negative impact on self-esteem because attacks can be carried out anonymously and can reach a wider audience. This can make victims feel isolated and embarrassed in front of many people. (Musakif, 2024) A strong correlation exists between aggressive conduct (bullying) and self-esteem, with better self-esteem corresponding to lower bullying victims and lower self-esteem corresponding to more bullying victims. This demonstrates the connection between bullying and teenage self-esteem, which is impacted by a number of factors, including unpleasant emotional experiences. Bullying frequently results in negative emotional experiences including shame, fear, and poor self-esteem. Teenagers who keep having these experiences may develop a poor self-perception, which might harm their self-esteem. The study's findings suggest a connection between bullying and adolescents' self-esteem in SMPN 7 Palangka Raya's class VII.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the study involving 33 respondents, it was found that 26 respondents (78.8%) exhibited high bullying characteristics, 6 respondents (18.2%) were in the medium category, and 1 respondent (3.0%) fell into the low category. Contributing factors to bullying behavior included the use of social media and the school friendship environment, with 22 respondents (68.7%) identifying social media use and 22 respondents (66.7%) identifying peer relationships as influential. In terms of self-esteem, only 2 respondents (6.1%) had high self-esteem, while the majority, 31 respondents (93.9%), had low self-esteem. The chi-square test showed a p-value of 0.000, which is smaller than the alpha value of 0.05, indicating a significant relationship between bullying and self-esteem among seventh-grade adolescents at SMPN 7 Palangka Raya. This supports the research hypothesis (H1) and rejects the null hypothesis (H0), confirming that lower self-esteem is associated with higher incidences of bullying. These findings underscore the importance of targeted bullying prevention efforts through programs aimed at improving adolescent self-esteem. However, this study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single school, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Future research should include a broader population and explore additional psychological and environmental factors. Addressing bullying through educational policy and school-based interventions that foster healthy self-esteem could provide a meaningful strategy to reduce bullying behavior among adolescents.

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