

Factors Related to Bullying among Adolescents in Aceh, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To identify the relationship between gender, parental education, and income with bullying behavior among high school students in Aceh, Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY: This was a cross-sectional study, and the participants were comprised of 110 students from two high schools in Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Indonesia, who were selected using a purposive sampling method. Furthermore, data were collected using a self-report questionnaire for demographic characteristics and a bullying behavior questionnaire comprising 16 Likert Scale items. The data obtained in this study were analyzed using the Chi-Square test.

RESULTS: The prevalence of bullying was significantly higher among adolescents of low education ($C^2 = 21,823$; $p < 0,001$) and low-income parents ($C^2 = 9,617$; $p < 0,002$). However, the prevalence of behavior was not significantly different between male and female adolescents.

CONCLUSION: Adolescents of low education and low-income parents showed a higher incident rate of bullying compared to others with high education and high-income parents. Therefore, healthcare providers, specifically community and family health nurses, were advised to pay more attention to these individuals to develop effective prevention programs.

KEYWORDS: bullying, adolescents, factors, gender, education, income

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is an aggressive or threatening behavior within a group of people with unequal numbers or strengths. Furthermore, it extends beyond friendly joking¹ and includes actions, such as insults and ostracization, mainly targeting those with less power². Several studies have reported the prevalence of this behavior in various countries worldwide, specifically among adolescents^{3,4}.

According to previous reports, adolescents aged cover 10-19 years constitute a vulnerable group susceptible to bullying due to the various changes occurring during this transition period. Furthermore, recognizing this behavior is vital for healthcare providers, particularly family and community health nurses, to implement effective prevention programs⁵.

Previous studies have reported a wide-ranging prevalence of bullying, spanning from 5-70% across various countries. In Indonesia, the International Center for Research on Females (ICRW) discovered that 84% of students were victims of this behavior at school, surpassing rates in other Asian regions⁶. A previous study in Aceh showed that 46.9% of Junior High School students in Banda Aceh reported being victims by their peers at least 2-3 times a month⁷.

The high prevalence of bullying incidents contributes to the occurrence of various health problems, particularly affecting adolescents^{8,1}. These problems

affect mental health, psychosocial well-being, physiology, and behavior⁴. Furthermore, bullying has been reported to induce traumatic stress among victims, causing sleep disorders and affecting physical and mental well-being⁹. This behavior also causes the emergence of self-righteous attitudes leading up to suicide^{10,11}, intensifying mental problems for victims¹²⁻¹⁴.

In line with these studies, the repercussions of bullying extend beyond the victims to the perpetrators¹⁵. The bully, wielding more power, habitually feels stronger and more dominant, shaping their personality. Long-term engagement in bullying can have detrimental effects on the perpetrator, including feelings of guilt. A previous study showed that bullies are often at risk of internalization problems, such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation¹⁶.

Preventing adolescent bullying requires a comprehensive method, considering all contributing factors. This behavior is a severe problem affecting both the victim and the perpetrator, thereby necessitating a clear identification of all related factors to develop an effective prevention program¹⁷. Previous studies have examined several associated factors, including personality, self-esteem¹⁸, self-efficacy, and emotional management^{8,19}. Social skills have also been identified as a significant contributor, where adolescents with a high level often have friendship relationships with reduced vulnerability to the condition. Meanwhile, individuals with low social skills often face more problems in the social and academic domains²⁰.

Another essential factor is family, which serves as a protective space for all members and plays a vital role in shaping the characteristics of children, including

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bullying tendencies. In addition, parents, as key figures, are also expected to provide a sense of security, calmness, and tranquility within the family environment. Components, such as perceived parental support and a general understanding of security at home, are vital components in shaping the behavior of family members.

Previous studies have identified two significant factors influencing a family's ability to shape the characteristics of children and prevent bullying behavior, namely socioeconomic and educational background. A recent report stated that economic status contributed to the occurrence of behavior among adolescents, suggesting the need to focus on children from families with a low socioeconomic background²¹. Furthermore, evidence also supports the role of parental education, showing a higher likelihood of bullying among children of low-educated parents^{21,22}.

A hostile family environment has been reported to be associated with a higher risk of being a victim at school. Positive family interactions can prevent adolescents from bullying at school, both as victims and perpetrators. Furthermore, a previous study showed that adolescents with good relationships with their parents were less likely to become victims or perpetrators. The moral values instilled by families in children are closely related to the possibility of this habit, specifically among females. Parenting style also has a significant influence, where children who receive rejection from their fathers and mothers tend to be victims²³. Communication dynamics within the family have also been linked to the prevalence of this behavior due to emotional problems caused by communication difficulty²⁴.

At present, there are limited studies on bullying, which focus on parental education level and income, specifically among adolescents in Indonesia. Based on the results, previous studies on this subject were mainly conducted in Western countries with different characteristics from Eastern countries, such as Indonesia. This current study was conducted at two Senior High Schools in Aceh, Indonesia, a remote area with difficulty gaining health information. The results will help healthcare providers develop an effective bullying prevention program, specifically family and community nurses.

METHODOLOGY

Study Design

This was a cross-sectional study which aimed to identify factors related to bullying behavior among adolescents, including gender, parental education, and parental income.

Population and Sample

The sample population comprised all students in two senior high schools in Aceh Besar, Aceh Province, Indonesia. Furthermore, 110 participants were selected using purposive sampling to obtain

homogeneous samples. The inclusion criteria consisted of respondents who had both parents (mother and father), lived with parents, had no communication disorders and could speak Indonesian fluently. The schools used were selected due to their location in remote village areas where most people in these places had low income and education levels. The data obtained in August 2023 showed that several students dropped out without specific reason.

Instrument

The data collection tool in this study was a self-report questionnaire consisting of respondent characteristics and bullying behavior data. Furthermore, the characteristic data included gender, grade, parent education, and parent income. Bullying behavior was identified using a previous questionnaire, which was developed specifically for studying the attitude among Indonesian adolescents with a reliability value of 0.784¹⁸. The instrument consisted of 16 Likert Scale items with five options: always, often, sometimes, rarely, and never. High and low scores reflected high and low bullying behavior, respectively.

Data Analysis

Data analysis used descriptive statistics, including frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Subsequently, the Chi-Square test was used to determine the correlation between the independent and dependent variables.

Ethical Statement

This study was approved by the Faculty of Nursing Ethics Committee, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia, with reference no. 113001200623.

RESULTS

Characteristics of Respondent

The characteristics of respondents in this study included gender, grade, parents' education, and parents' income, as shown in **Table I**.

Table I: Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristics	f	%
GENDER		
Female	59	53,6
Male	51	46,4
GRADE		
10 th	50	45,5
11 th	60	54,5
PARENT' EDUCATION		
High (Bachelor Degree)	3	2,7
Moderate (Senior High School)	61	55,5
Low (Elementary/junior high school)	46	41,8
PARENT'S INCOME		
High	48	43,6
Low	62	56,3

Bullying related Factors

Three independent variables were analyzed using the Pearson Correlation, including gender, parents, and income. This current study showed that the prevalence of bullying was significantly higher among adolescents with low-educated parents compared to others ($C^2 = 21,823$; $p < 0,001$). A significantly higher prevalence was also observed among participants with low-income parents than others with high income ($C^2 = 9,617$; $p < 0,002$). However, the analysis showed that the frequency of bullying was not significantly different between male and female adolescents, as shown in **Table II**.

Table II: Comparison of Bullying among variables

Variables	Bullying				Total	C ²	p
	High		low				
	f	%	f	%			
GENDER							
Male	27	45,8	32	54,2	59	0,313	0,576
Female	27	52,9	24	47,1	51		
Total					110		
PARENT'S EDUCATION							
High	0	0	3	100	3	21,823	0,001
Moderate	20	32,78	41	67,2	61		
Low	36	78,3	10	21,7	46		
Total					110		
PARENT'S INCOME							
High	15	31,4	33	68,6	48	9,617	0,002
Low	39	62,9	23	37,1	62		
Total					110		

DISCUSSION

This current study showed that the prevalence of bullying was not significantly different between male and female adolescents, showing the presence of equal risk levels. Furthermore, gender was the difference between males and females, which could be seen from values and behavior in social construction. Several studies have shown that gender norms influence a person's behavior, perception of themselves and others, and mode of interaction. These variables could manifest in gender-based roles, representing behavioral norms applied to males and females. This role tended to influence individual actions, experiences, and expectations in everyday life and provide meaning in the family, workforce, or education system²⁵.

Although there were differences in the roles of males and females in society, this current study showed that gender was not correlated to bullying; this was due to the presence of various types of bullying, including physical and psychological. Several studies showed that the physical and psychological types were more dominant among males and females, respectively. Acts of insulting and mocking carried out by female adolescents were classified as psychological bullying behavior. These results were inconsistent with a

previous study, where gender had a significant association with behavior²⁶.

In this study, the prevalence of bullying was significantly higher among adolescents with low-education parents compared to others with high education ($C^2 = 21,823$; $p < 0,001$). This result showed the importance of parental education as a significant factor influencing the ability to teach children about bullying prevention; this was because highly educated individuals often searched for sufficient information compared to others who were less educated. These results were supported by previous studies, where parental education influenced the behavior of children²².

According to previous studies, formal education also contributed to parents' self-efficacy and self-confidence in performing their roles within the family, including shaping the characteristics of children. This variable was essential in parenting various behavioral disorders among adolescents, including bullying. This role was a considerable challenge, placing the need to acquire more knowledge and information. Parents must have a comprehensive understanding of the concept of character, including the virtues to be instilled in their children and the various factors shaping the behavior of children. Furthermore, it was essential for them to be acquainted with the correct methodologies for fostering children's character, thereby fortifying adolescents against succumbing to undesirable behavior, such as bullying.

Parental education levels had been reported to reflect intellectual resources, specific and general knowledge, values and norms, problem-solving skills, and literacy, which correlated with the children-raising behavior of parents. This behavior was known to affect the development of children's coping strategies and social skills. A previous study showed that children of less educated individuals often had more screen time, causing exposure to violent programs on television, which could stimulate peer aggression and bullying behavior²¹.

The study analysis showed that the prevalence of bullying was also significantly higher in adolescents of low-income parents compared to others with high income ($C^2 = 9,617$; $p < 0,002$). Based on this result, parental income was a significant contributor to the incidents of bullying among adolescents due to the role of financial and instrumental support; this was because parents who had an adequate income could meet the needs of their children, both physically and psychologically, leading to proper growth and development and vice versa. This current study was in line with previous studies showing that a family's economic status could influence the behavior of children²². Another study stated that people's income had an impact on their health, including life expectancy, crime rates, and violence, showing the potential detrimental effect of poverty on individual health²⁷.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study showed that adolescents of low-education and low-income parents showed a higher prevalence of bullying compared to others. Furthermore, healthcare providers, specifically community and family health nurses focusing on bullying prevention programs, were advised to pay more attention to these individuals; this was expected to help in reducing the number of bullying among adolescents.

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AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION

Fithria F: Initiated the research and drafted the manuscript.

Jannah SR: Conducted the research and contributed in revising the manuscript.

Aiyub A: Supervised the research process and also participated in revising the manuscript.

All authors reviewed and approved the manuscript.

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