

Original Research

The Relationship Between Peer Conformity and Bullying Behavior Among Students in A Public Senior High School in Jakarta

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Bullying
Peer conformity
Student
Behavior

ABSTRACT

In Indonesia, approximately 25% of reported violence cases are related to the education sector, with 1,480 documented incidents of bullying in schools. Bullying behavior among adolescents may be influenced by peer conformity, in which individuals seek social acceptance by adapting to group norms and expectations. This study aimed to examine the relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among students. An analytical correlational design with a cross-sectional approach was employed, involving 139 respondents. Data was collected using two questionnaires: the Peer Conformity Questionnaire and the Bullying Behavior Questionnaire. The results indicated a significant association between peer conformity and bullying behavior ($\chi^2 = 29.165$, $p = 0.023$). Based on these findings, it is recommended that teachers implement weekly student briefings, conduct monthly behavioral evaluations, provide positive reinforcement for students who demonstrate awareness and prevention of bullying, and apply disciplinary warnings for those involved in bullying. Moreover, anti-bullying education should be strengthened, and participation in extracurricular activities focused on bullying prevention should be encouraged, particularly for Grade X students.

Received 20 November 2024;

Received in revised form 21 July 2025;

Accepted 29 October 2025

<https://doi.org/10.19166/nc.v13i2.9041>

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a negative behavior carried out repeatedly by an individual or group through the misuse of power imbalance to harm the victim, both physically and psychologically (Andriani et al., 2011). According to the Semai Jiwa Amini Foundation, one of the reasons perpetrators engage in bullying is low self-confidence,

which they compensate for by exerting dominance over others. By bullying, perpetrators experience a sense of power and social superiority among peers. As a result, bullies are often perceived as “strong” and “powerful,” while victims are labeled as “weak” and “inferior” (Nirmalasari, 2020).

The phenomenon of bullying among adolescents is increasingly

visible and frequently reported in print and electronic media (Andriani et al., 2021). In the United States, data from 2009 showed bullying prevalence of 20.8% physical, 53.6% verbal, 51.4% social, and 13.6% electronic bullying (Liu & Graves, 2011). According to research by the Semai Jiwa Amini Foundation related to bullying violence in three major cities in Indonesia, namely Yogyakarta, Surabaya, and Jakarta, it was found that cases of violence at the high school (SMA) and junior high school (SMP) levels were 67.9% and 66.1%, respectively. Peer violence was reported by 41.2% of junior high school students and 43.7% of high school students, with psychological rejection being the most common form, followed by verbal (sarcasm) and physical aggression (hitting). In terms of self-reported violence, 77.5% of students in Yogyakarta, 59.8% in Surabaya, and 61.1% in Jakarta acknowledged experiencing or witnessing violence (Nirmalasari, 2020).

Other national data also confirm that violence against children remains a serious concern in Indonesia. A national survey by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) reported a prevalence rate of 3.02%, meaning that for every 10,000 Indonesian children, 302 have experienced violence (Kurniasari et al., 2017). The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) has similarly documented high rates of violence, particularly within educational settings (KPAI, 2014).

Peer conformity, defined as a change in behavior or beliefs to align with group norms due to social pressure, is one contributing factor to bullying. Adolescents may engage in bullying to gain acceptance and recognition within their peer group (Ningrum et al., 2019). A study by Febriyani and Indrawati (2016) found a significant positive correlation between peer conformity and bullying behavior: the higher the peer conformity, the higher the likelihood of bullying, and vice versa.

An initial survey conducted in 2016 revealed an example of bullying at a senior high school in Jakarta, in which six female students in Grade XII bullied a Grade X student during an evening school event. The victim was forced to bow and was verbally abused using harsh language. This incident illustrates the role of peer group dynamics in reinforcing bullying behavior. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among students at X Public Senior High School in Jakarta, with the goal of providing evidence-based recommendations for prevention efforts and promoting a safer, more supportive school environment.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional approach. The study population consisted of all active Grade X students at a public senior high school, totaling 212 students. A sample of 139 students was selected based on inclusion criteria, which required participants to be enrolled as Grade X students, present

during data collection, and willing to participate as respondents.

Peer conformity was measured using the Peer Conformity Questionnaire developed by (Dewi, 2015) which consists of 24 items covering three domains: cohesion (items 1–9), agreement (items 10–17), and obedience (items 18–22). The instrument contains both positive (favourable) and negative (unfavourable) statements, rated on a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree (SA) scored 4 for positive statements and 1 for negative statements, agree (A) scored 3 for positive statements and 2 for negative statements, disagree (D) scored 2 for positive statements and 3 for negative statements, and strongly disagree (SD) scored 1 for positive statements and 4 for negative statements. The interpretation of scores was categorized as very high (>67.95), high ($67.95–62.65$), moderate ($62.65–57.35$), low ($57.35–52.05$), and very low (≤ 52.05).

Bullying behavior was measured using the Bullying Behavior Questionnaire developed by (Dewi, 2015) which consists of 34 items categorized into physical bullying (items 1–7), verbal bullying (items 8–27), and psychological bullying (items 28–34). The questionnaire used the same four-point Likert scale and scoring format as the peer conformity instrument. The interpretation of bullying behavior scores was classified as very high (≥ 83.55), high ($83.55–71.85$), moderate ($71.85–60.15$), low ($60.15–48.45$), and very low (≤ 48.45). The peer conformity scale demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.909$), and the bullying behavior scale demonstrated excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.935$) (Dewi, 2015).

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. This study obtained ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Immanuel Bandung College of Health Sciences (No. 038/KEPK/STIKI/V/2022).

RESULT

Characteristics Respondents

Table 1 presents the demographic distribution of respondents based on gender and age. The majority of participants were male, totaling 119 individuals (85.6%), while female respondents numbered 20 individuals (14.4%). In terms of age, most students (113 respondents; 81.3%) were in the early adolescent stage (12–16 years), whereas 26 respondents (18.7%) were in the late adolescent stage (17–25 years). These findings indicate that the sample was predominantly male and within the early teenage age range.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=139)

Characteristics Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	119	85,6
Female	20	14,4
Age		
12-16 Years	113	81,3
17-25 Years	26	18,7

Peer Conformity

As shown in Table 2, the majority of respondents exhibited a very high level of peer conformity (43.9%), followed by those in the high category (24.5%). A smaller proportion demonstrated a moderate level (19.4%), while only a few respondents fell into the low (6.5%) or very low (5.8%) categories. These results suggest that most students tend to strongly conform to peer influence.

Table 2. Levels of Peer Conformity Among Respondents (n=139)

No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Very High	61	43,9
2.	High	34	24,5
3.	Moderen	27	19,4
4.	Low	9	6,5
5.	Very Low	8	5,8
Total		139	100

Bullying Behavior

Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of bullying behavior among the 139 respondents. The largest proportion of students (36.7%) demonstrated very high levels of bullying behavior, followed by 29.5% in the high category. Approximately 20.1% of respondents reported moderate levels, while only 10.1% and 3.6% exhibited low and very low levels of bullying behavior, respectively. This indicates that bullying behavior was generally high among the students assessed.

Table 3. Levels of Bullying Behavior Among Respondents (n=139)

No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Very High	51	36,7
2.	High	41	29,5
3.	Moderate	28	20,1
4.	Low	14	10,1
5.	Very Low	5	3,6
Total		139	100

The Relationship between Peer Conformity and Bullying Behavior of Students at Public Senior High School

The results of the chi-square test (Table 4) show a statistically significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior, with $X^2 = 29.165$, $p = 0.023 < 0.05$. These findings indicate that the level of peer conformity is significantly associated with bullying behavior among students at the public senior high school. Therefore, the research hypothesis (H1) is accepted, while the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected.

Table 4. Relationship peer conformity with bullying behavior (n=139)

	Bullying Behavior	
	X ²	P-Value
Peer Conformity	29,165	0,023

DISCUSSION

Peer conformity

Peer conformity refers to an individual's tendency to adjust thoughts, attitudes, or behaviors to align with group expectations, particularly during adolescence when the need for social acceptance is heightened (Rahmi & Nurmina, 2019). Previous studies have mentioned that peer conformity can be influenced by several factors, including the desire to be liked, fear of being bullied, the desire to feel correct, and cognitive consequences. The desire to be liked is considered a key factor because, fundamentally, most individuals appreciate compliments and positive recognition, which can make them more likely to adapt to group expectations. Fear of rejection is also shaped by the need to be accepted by peers, while the desire to feel correct and the influence of cognitive consequences further reinforce the tendency toward peer conformity (Zakiyah et al., 2017).

Several studies support the role of peer conformity in shaping adolescent behavior. Febriyani and Indrawati (2016) reported that 63% of Grade XI students at a public high school demonstrated high levels of conformity, which was associated with increased bullying behavior. Similarly, a study by Yulia & Prima reported that peer conformity among early adolescents in Padang City was mostly in the moderate category, with 31 out of 80 participants (38.75%) showing this level. Pratiwi and Karneli (2020) confirmed that peer conformity is a significant predictor of bullying behavior and may negatively affect peer group dynamics.

There are three types of conformity, with two commonly observed in individuals: compliance and acceptance. Compliance occurs when individuals conform due to a desire to gain rewards or avoid punishment, and this behavior persists only as long as the rewards

are received or the punishment is avoided. In contrast, acceptance is a form of conformity rooted in personal beliefs, where individuals adopt behaviors in line with social norms because they genuinely agree with them (Rahmi & Nurmina, 2019). Similarly, a study by Adiputra (2018) confirmed that peer groups significantly influence students' self-esteem. Thus, higher levels of peer conformity tend to emerge when adolescents strongly desire approval, fear exclusion, or believe conformity is the "correct" choice. When these factors are weaker, conformity decreases.

Bullying Behavior

Bullying is defined as intentional and repeated behavior aimed at harming others, carried out by an individual or group that perceives itself as more powerful than the victim (Dewi, 2015). In this study, it was found that most engaged in bullying at a moderate intensity, with a total of 51 respondents (36.7%). According to the Amini Inner Soul Seedling Foundation (Zakiyah et al., 2017), Bullying manifests in three forms: (1) Physical bullying, such as hitting, pushing, and kicking; (2) Verbal bullying, such as using rude language, ridicule, and laughter; and (3) Psychological bullying, such as ostracizing, sneering, and terrorizing.

The causes of bullying can be grouped into five factors: family, school, peer group, social environment, and mass media (television and print). The peer group factor is often a driving force behind bullying behavior, as students and adolescents may feel pressured to bully in order to be accepted by their group (Dewi, 2015; Zakiyah et al., 2017). Research by Fitriani and Septiyanah (2020) found that most respondents had a high level of peer conformity, with 41 students (68.3%), followed by 19 students (31.7%) in the moderate category, and no students in the low category. This indicates that the dominant level of bullying behavior among respondents was in the high category (68.3%). Similarly, Sulfemi and Yasita (2020) also found that students at SMA Taruna Andhiga Bogor were more likely to engage in bullying.

In contrast, a previous study by Husna et al. (2021) showed that bullying behavior among Grade VIII students at SMP Negeri 13 Banjarmasin was mostly in the low category (58 students or 50.4%), followed by the moderate category (56 students or 48.7%), and only one student (9%) in the high category. Furthermore, Pratiwi & Karneli (2020) found that most students who experienced bullying fell into the high category (40%), followed by the moderate category (37.8%), and the low category (13.4%). Only 4.4% of students were in the very low category, and another 4.4% in the very high category. Overall, the average level of bullying behavior was in the high category. Based on this discussion, bullying behavior often arises from the need to be accepted by peers. The higher the desire for acceptance, the greater the risk of engaging in bullying behavior, while lower levels of this desire may reduce the likelihood of bullying.

The Relationship Between Peer Conformity and Bullying Behavior

The results of this study support previous findings showing a significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior. Pratiwi and Karneli (2020) demonstrated that peer conformity significantly contributes to bullying among students, while Husna et al. (2021) found a similar pattern among junior high school students in Banjarmasin. Mustika Cahyani and Partini Msi (2019) reported a positive association, indicating that higher conformity is linked to higher bullying involvement. This means that the higher the level of peer conformity, the higher the occurrence of bullying behavior, and conversely, the lower the level of peer conformity, the lower the occurrence of bullying behavior.

In addition, family and environmental influences may reinforce this pattern. Children who are exposed to aggressive behavior at home may normalize violence and replicate it within peer groups (Novrian, 2017). Novan Ardy (2018) further emphasized that adolescents with strong conformity tendencies are more likely to imitate group behavior, including bullying. Supporting this, Widyorini and Rahayu (2021) found a significant linear relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior among adolescents. Similarly, Sari and Budiman (2021) reported a moderate, positive, and significant relationship, indicating that higher peer influence is associated with higher bullying behavior, and lower peer influence corresponds to lower bullying behavior.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that 61 respondents demonstrated a high level of peer conformity, while 51 respondents showed a high level of bullying behavior, and there is a significant relationship between peer conformity and bullying behavior. It is expected that teachers conduct weekly briefings during joint ceremonies and evaluate student behavior monthly by giving rewards to students who show good understanding of bullying prevention and issuing warnings to those who engage in bullying. In addition, education about bullying should be strengthened, and all Grade X students should be required to participate in available anti-bullying extracurricular programs.

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