

Research Article

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being Among Adolescent Victims of Bullying in Junior High School

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Abstract: *Bullying* is an intentional aggressive action or behavior, carried out by a group of people repeatedly and from time to time against a victim who cannot defend himself easily or as an abuse of power or strength. *Bullying* is also a serious problem among teenagers that has a direct impact on the psychological condition of the victim, especially on aspects of self-esteem and psychological well-being. This study aims to analyze the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescent victims of *bullying* in junior high schools. This type of research uses a *non-experimental design* with a *cross-sectional approach* that is included in the type of *descriptive correlational research* with 63 research subjects. Simple sampling in the study used a *purposive sampling method* calculated by the Slovin formula and produced 54 samples. The instruments used were the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (RSES) to measure self-esteem and the *Psychological Well-Being Scale for Children* (PWB-C) to measure psychological well-being. Data were analyzed using the Spearman Rank test, the results of the study showed a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) and $r = 0.550$, which means there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescent victims of *bullying*. The higher the adolescent's self-esteem, the better their level of psychological well-being.

Keywords: *bullying*; self-esteem; psychological well-being; adolescents; Junior high school.

1. BACKGROUND

Bullying is a social phenomenon that is increasingly prevalent in various contexts of modern life, particularly in educational settings. This phenomenon is frequently found in schools in Indonesia and is a serious issue with a broad impact on students' psychological development. *Bullying* can be defined as aggressive acts carried out intentionally, repeatedly, and over a period of time against a weaker individual or group, leaving them unable to defend themselves or fight back on equal terms (Rompas & Sitompul, 2020).

A World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) report indicates that approximately 25–50% of children and adolescents aged 2–17 worldwide experience *bullying* each year. In developing countries, the prevalence of *bullying* is reported to reach 42% among boys and 37% among girls. This data confirms that *bullying* is a serious global public health problem. According to UNICEF (2020), more than 170,000 adolescents aged 13–24 in various countries experience violence or intimidation in school environments, making schools no longer a safe place for students. In Indonesia alone, more than two-fifths (41%) of 15-year-old adolescents admitted to having been victims of *bullying*, both physical and psychological, with a frequency of repeated every month (Ambarwati & Mariyati, 2025).

Bullying takes various forms, including physical, verbal, relational, and *cyberbullying*. *Physical forms* such as *hitting, kicking, or damaging the victim's belongings* are the easiest to identify. *Verbal bullying* is more common, such as teasing, insults, and slander, while relational *bullying* usually takes the form of social exclusion that is difficult for teachers to detect. *Cyberbullying* is carried out using digital technology, for example, spreading slander or insults through social media (Fariz et al., 2023). A factor that causes victims of *bullying* is someone having low self-esteem. Someone who experiences a decrease in self-esteem due to being bullied,

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then the lower the self-esteem, the more at risk of being *bullied*. Bullying victims *who* initially have low self-esteem will experience a more severe decrease in self-esteem (Tri et al., 2023).

Self-esteem is a person's perception of themselves, indicating how much they value and accept their existence. Low self-esteem can lead someone to seek recognition or control in a distorted way. Therefore, there is a negative relationship between self-esteem and *bullying behavior*. The higher a person's self-esteem, the lower their tendency to *bully*, and conversely, the lower a person's self-esteem, the more likely they are to *bully*. (Fauzan Ashariyanto and Endang Sri Indrawati, 2023). Low self-esteem also has a profound impact on victims of *bullying*, which can damage their self-confidence. The experience of being the target of *bullying* may make them feel inferior, worthless, or even guilty about what happened, even though they were not the source of the *bullying behavior*. In various aspects of life, this can lead to social isolation, difficulty in building healthy relationships with peers, and self-confidence issues (Nuryuliza et al., 2024).

Furthermore, *bullying* has a significant impact on students' psychological well-being at various levels. A student may experience mental health problems if they are frequently the victim of intimidation, threats, or other demeaning behavior. The harm caused by *bullying* is often more than just a momentary negative event, and can impact students' psychological well-being in the long term (Nuryuliza et al., 2024). Psychological well-being is a concept of well-being that encompasses a combination of positive feelings and the ability to function effectively. This does not mean that a person feels good or always experiences positive emotions, but that they are able to manage themselves when experiencing excessive or persistent negative emotions that impact them (Zakiyah & Khusumadewi, 2024).

The impact of *bullying* on students' psychological well-being is a complex issue that requires special attention from all parties involved. By understanding these impacts, it is hoped that we can create a more welcoming learning environment and support students' psychological growth. To support student mental health and prevent harassment in schools, these additional research objectives are needed (Dahlia et al., 2025).

Based on a survey conducted by researchers, namely, conducted through interviews with eighth grade students and guidance counseling teachers, also known as BK teachers, showed that BK teachers had handled *bullying behavior problems* against their students. In schools, *bullying* usually occurs verbally, such as calling their parents by name, teasing, and mocking, but physical *bullying* also occurs, such as male students fighting each other because of mocking their parents' names. The results of interviews by 3 eighth grade junior high school students, 2 students said they had experienced *bullying* in verbal form, namely by being mocked by their parents' names and cursing and 1 student said they experienced verbal *bullying* by physically insulting and *cyberbullying*, namely by spreading gossip or slander online using social media whatsapp. Some even gave up and intended to change schools, but BK teachers and parents motivated and supported them not to change schools. Thus, students who had been bullied were enthusiastic about learning again and did not care about friends who had bullied them. Researchers are interested in conducting a study called "The Relationship between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being in Adolescent Victims of *Bullying* in Junior High School" because of the high number of *bullying incidents* among adolescents, especially junior high school students, and the major impact it has on the self-esteem and psychological well-being of victims.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

Bullying

Bullying is a deliberate and repeated aggressive behavior by an individual or group with greater power against a weaker individual with the aim of physically or psychologically harming the victim (Safaat, 2023). According to Coloroso in (Fariz et al., 2023), *bullying* can be divided into four types, namely:

bullying (hitting, kicking, damaging the victim's belongings),

bullying (taunting, insults, derogatory nicknames),

bullying (social exclusion, ostracism, or spreading gossip)

Cyberbullying (intimidation via social media or digital technology).

Bullying in schools has serious consequences, including emotional disturbances such as fear, anxiety, and helplessness; psychological impacts such as stress, depression, and adjustment disorders; and academic impacts such as decreased concentration and

academic achievement (Astivationita, 2024) . This condition can significantly hinder adolescents' psychosocial development and mental health.

Pride

Self-esteem is an individual's assessment of themselves, the extent to which a person values and accepts their existence (Baitina, 2022) . According to Coopersmith (in Tri Anugrah Eni et al., 2023) , self-esteem reflects an evaluation expressed through self-acceptance or rejection, and indicates confidence in one's abilities, significance, and self-worth.

Aspects of self-esteem include four main dimensions (Baitina, 2022) :

Power (strength)

The ability to regulate behavior and gain recognition,

Significance

Feeling appreciated and cared for by others,

Virtue (goodness)

Adherence to social values and norms,

Competence (ability)

The drive to achieve and complete tasks.

Self-esteem is influenced by several factors, such as gender, family support, social environment, and peer influence (Sahira et al., 2024) . Individuals with low self-esteem tend to feel worthless, are easily stressed, and have difficulty building social relationships, while individuals with high self-esteem have good self-confidence, self-control, and optimism (Widianti et al., 2021) .

Psychological well-being

Psychological well-being is a condition in which an individual is able to function optimally emotionally, socially, and mentally and feels satisfied with their life (Juwita & Kustanti, 2020) . Based on Ryff's theory, psychological well-being has six main aspects (Zakiyah & Khusumadewi, 2024) :

Self-acceptance (self-acceptance)

Accepting your own strengths and weaknesses,

Positive relations with others (positive relationships)

The ability to build warm and empathetic relationships,

Autonomy

Ability to act according to personal principles,

Environmental mastery

Ability to adapt to the social environment,

Purpose in life

Have a clear direction and meaning in life

Personal growth (self-development)

the ability to develop and actualize one's potential.

Victims of *bullying* often experience psychological well-being disorders such as stress, anxiety, and depression. They feel a loss of meaning and motivation in life, and have difficulty establishing healthy social relationships (Nuryuliza et al., 2024) .

Teenager

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, marked by rapid physical, psychological, social, and emotional changes. This phase generally occurs between the ages of 12 and 21, during which individuals begin to form their own identities and attempt to adapt to increasingly complex social demands.

Adolescent development:

Intellectual Development of Early and Middle Adolescents

Intellectual ability refers to thinking or intelligence that demonstrates the ability to connect thought processes. Therefore, it can be said that knowledge is a skill in various scientific activities, all of which are interrelated and important to individual behavior.

Emotional Development of Early and Middle Adolescents

Emotional changes in adolescence are caused by environmental changes related to bodily changes, which are a direct result of physical and hormonal changes. Hormonal changes lead to gender changes and the emergence of new desires and emotions.

Social Development of Early and Middle Adolescents

One of the most difficult aspects of growing up is fitting in. Teenagers must adjust to heterosexuality in new relationships and to adults outside the home and school environment.

Moral Development of Early and Middle Adolescents

Morality is the control and management of actions and behavior in accordance with life's values, social norms, and the principles that govern life. Adolescent moral development begins with feelings of guilt and the search for a sense of security.

According to (Karlina, 2020) there are several changes that occur during adolescence, which have the following characteristics:

- 1) Emotional Enhancement
- 2) Rapid Physical Changes
- 3) Changes in Money Matter to Himself and His Relationships with Others.
- 4) Change in Value

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This research is a quantitative research with using a *non-experimental design* with a *cross-sectional approach* that is included in the type of *descriptive correlational research* with 63 research subjects. Simple sampling in the study used a *purposive sampling method* calculated by the Slovin formula and produced 54 samples. The instruments used were the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (RSES) to measure self-esteem and the *Psychological Well-Being Scale for Children* (PWB-C) to measure psychological well-being. The data were analyzed using the Spearman Rank test, the results of the study showed a $p\text{-value} = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) and $r = 0.550$, which means there is a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescent victims of *bullying*. The higher the adolescent's self-esteem, the better the level of psychological well-being.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1.
Distribution Frequency Characteristics Respondents (n=54).

Respondent Identity	f	%
Gender		
Woman	35	64.8
Man	19	35.2
Age		
13 years old	28	51.9
14 years	26	48.1

Based on table 1 above, it is known that for the number of respondents of 54 respondents, there are 35 respondents (64.8%) who are female and 19 respondents (35.2%) who are male, and for the total number of respondents here there are 54 respondents (100.0%). While the identity of respondents based on age above is known that respondents aged 13 years are 28 respondents (51.9%), respondents aged 14 years are 26 respondents (48.1%), and for the total number of respondents here there are 54 respondents (100.0%).

Table 2. Distribution Frequency Respondents Based on Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being.
(n=54)

Pride	F	%
Low	18	33.3
Currently	33	61.1
Tall	3	5.6
Psychological Well-being		
Low	2	3.7
Currently	33	61.1
Tall	19	35.2

Based on table 2 above, it is known that the results of the frequency distribution of self-esteem, respondents who have low self-esteem are 18 respondents (33.3%) and for respondents who have moderate self-esteem are 33 respondents (61.1%), and respondents who have high self-esteem are 3 respondents (5.6%) total respondents are

54 respondents (100.0%). And for the frequency distribution of psychological well-being, respondents who have low psychological well-being are 2 respondents (3.7%) and for respondents who have moderate psychological well-being are 33 respondents (61.1%) and for respondents who have high psychological well-being are 19 respondents (35.2%), total respondents are 54 respondents (100.0%).

Table 3.

Connection The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being in Adolescent Victims of *Bullying*.
(n=54)

Price Self	Psychological Well-being						<i>P value</i>	R
	Low		Currently		Tall			
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)		
Low	2	3.7%	14	25.9%	2	3.7%	0,000	0.550
Currently	0	0%	18	33.3%	15	27.8%		
Tall	0	0%	1	1.9%	2	3.7%		
Total	2	3.7%	33	61.1%	19	35.2%		

Table 3 shows that respondents with low self-esteem had low psychological well-being as many as 2 respondents (3.7%), medium as many as 14 respondents (25.9%), high as many as 2 respondents (3.7%). Respondents with medium self-esteem had low psychological well-being as many as 0 respondents (0%), medium as many as 18 respondents (33.3%), and high as many as 15 respondents (27.8%). Respondents with high self-esteem had low psychological well-being as many as 0% (0%), medium as many as 1 respondent (1.9%) and high as many as 2 respondents (3.7%). Overall, the majority of respondents had a medium level of psychological well-being as many as 33 respondents (61.1%), and high as many as 19 respondents (35.2%) and low as many as 2 respondents (3.7%).

Study This done analysis *Rank Spearman* to determine the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being. Statistical test results *Rank Spearman* obtained p value = 0,000 (p value ≤ 0.05) Which means H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected, which means there is a relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescents who are victims of *bullying* in junior high school . Obtained mark ($r = 0.550$) show that strength of relationship between self-esteem with psychological well-being is moderate And test results *Rank Spearman* show mark positive Which It means the higher the self-esteem, the the more the psychological well-being of adolescent victims of *bullying* is also high , So the relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being is very strong, making it a one-way relationship.

Discussion

Self-Esteem in Teenagers Who Are Victims of Bullying

In the victims of *bullying* who experienced low self-esteem, there were 18 respondents (33.3%), and for respondents who had moderate self-esteem, there were 33 respondents (61.1%), and respondents who had high self-esteem were 3 respondents (5.6%). Someone who is a victim of *bullying* usually has a quiet nature, has difficulty getting along with friends around him and has difficulty adapting (Chaidar & Latifah, 2024) . So they will feel dissatisfied with themselves, both in appearance, academics or their own performance results, not only that, they also often compare themselves with others so they feel inferior because of their friends' physical appearance, academics and their friends' performance (Hasana, 2024) .

Bullying will have a bad impact on the victim , even the effects of *bullying behavior* will leave a mark until the child is an adult. The negative impacts that can occur in children who are victims of *bullying* include anxiety, feeling lonely, low self-esteem, and depression, psychosomatic symptoms, social withdrawal, complaints about physical health, leaving home, alcohol and drug use, suicide, and decreased academic performance so that the victim experiences low self-esteem (Andriati Reny H, 2020) . This finding is in line with

Umara's research (2024) , which states that victims of *bullying* are vulnerable to experiencing decreased self-esteem due to repeated social and psychological pressures.

Self-esteem in adolescents is a crucial psychological aspect that influences how individuals evaluate themselves, including their competence, significance, and ability to adapt to social environments (Baitina, 2022) . Low self-esteem can make adolescents feel worthless, vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and even difficulty building healthy social relationships (Fauzan Ashariyanto and Endang Sri Indrawati, 2023) .

On the other hand, people who have high self-esteem feel satisfied with themselves, are able to solve problems in the learning process as other people can, so they consider themselves valuable and useful for themselves and others and they feel they fully accept their condition as it is (Ambarwati & Mariyati, 2025) .

Psychological Well-being in Adolescent Victims of Bullying

Based on the results of the study, it shows that the psychological well-being of adolescent victims of *bullying* at SMP Negeri 22 Semarang City was 54 respondents. Respondents with low psychological well-being were 2 respondents (3.7%), respondents with moderate psychological well-being were 33 respondents (61.1%), and respondents with high psychological well-being were 19 respondents (35.2%). *Bullying* has an impact on the psychology of victims, often manifested in the form of constant emotional stress, deep anxiety, and feelings of isolation. Victims often experience sleep disorders, decreased self-confidence, and difficulty in building healthy social relationships. Feelings of fear and insecurity arising from bullying *can* damage self-confidence and disrupt the teaching and learning process in the school environment (Nuryuliza et al., 2024) .

The psychological well-being of *bullying victims* is often underestimated by some. However, it can affect the victims' psychological and physical well-being. The psychological well-being of *bullying victims* will also change as a result of *the bullying* they experience, which can have both negative and positive impacts on the victims. The concept of psychological well-being is a concept of a good life, which consists of a combination of good feelings and the ability to function effectively throughout one's life. Psychological well-being does not mean an individual feels good or constantly experiences positive emotions, but rather the ability to overcome negative emotions. Psychological well-being means being able to control oneself when experiencing excessive or persistent negative emotions that affect one's ability to function in daily life (Zakiyah & Khusumadewi, 2024) .

In fact, according to Dahlia et al., (2025), as many as 71.43% of adolescent victims of *bullying* reported quite serious psychological disorders. Thus, although the majority of respondents in this study were in the moderate and high categories, there is a significant risk that their psychological well-being could decline if *bullying* continues without intervention. Social support factors from family, peers, and the school environment play an important role in maintaining the psychological well-being of *bullying victims* . Without this support, victims have the potential to experience social isolation, low self-confidence, and feelings of helplessness (Wahani et al., 2022) .

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Psychological Well-Being in Adolescent Victims of Bullying

Based on the results of statistical test research using Spearman rank test calculations, the results obtained (p value = 0.000) where $0.000 < 0.05$ means H_0 is rejected and H_a is accepted, which means there is a relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in *bullying victims* at SMP Negeri 22 Semarang City. And the value of the relationship closeness ($\rho = 0.550$) for the results of the closeness value shows that the closeness value is moderate, and for the direction of the relationship shows that the direction of the correlation relationship is positive, meaning that the higher the adolescent's self-esteem, the higher the psychological well-being they have .

Bullying victims have relatively high levels of anxiety and depression, as well as low self-esteem. This is all a result of previous *bullying incidents* , which cause persistent stress and anxiety (Zakiyah & Khusumadewi, 2024) . This impacts include decreased psychological well-being, which ultimately leads to physical health problems, depression, and anxiety. Victims of *bullying* will experience things like loneliness, isolation, low self-esteem, poor self-image, poor academic performance, a limited sense of belonging, insecurity at school, a tendency to belittle others, fear, and even suicidal thoughts (Prastiti & Anshori, 2023) .

This research aligns with the research of Nurul Hasana and Sawi Sujarwo (2024), which showed consistent results, with an r value of 0.996 and p value of 0.000, indicating a very strong relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in junior high school students in East Jakarta. This study confirms that adolescents with positive self-perceptions have better abilities in managing emotions and building healthy social interactions.

bullying behavior continues, the impacts experienced by victims of *bullying* include various disorders, including low psychological well-being, where victims of *bullying* feel depressed, uncomfortable, afraid, depressed, have low self-esteem, and feel worthless. They then withdraw from their friends, become withdrawn, have difficulty sleeping well, and become drug users. Meanwhile, in the long term, with lifelong effects on victims, victims of *bullying* can suffer from emotional and behavioral disorders such as low self-esteem, inability to socialize, depression, and even suicide (Wibowo et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the results of research conducted on 54 respondents in junior high schools, a p -value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) and a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.550$ were obtained, indicating a significant positive relationship between self-esteem and psychological well-being in adolescent victims of *bullying*. This means that the higher the level of self-esteem possessed by adolescents, the better their level of psychological well-being. Researchers suggest that schools and guidance counselors provide psychological assistance and self-esteem improvement programs for victims of *bullying*, supported by the active role of parents in creating a supportive environment, so that adolescents can build self-confidence and better psychological well-being.

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