An examination of student bullying tendencies in West Sumatera Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine bullying tendencies among students in Indonesia. A sample of 689 male and female students was selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through the Bullying Behavior Tendency Scale (BBTS), which consisted of 45 Likert scale questions. Descriptive analysis was conducted to analyze the data. The results showed that the bullying tendencies were in a low category. However, it was discovered that 32.08%, 4.06%, and 0.87% of students fell into the categories of moderate, high, and very high tendencies, respectively. Additionally, it was observed that there are significant differences in bullying behavior between male and female students. These results provide a basis for understanding the role of school counseling services in reducing prevalent bullying behavior, which can lead to trauma. Therefore, it is essential to implement preventive programs to address the tendencies of students engaging in such behavior at school.

Keywords: bullying tendencies, student, counseling intervention

INTRODUCTION

The tendency to engage in bullying is one of the problems that occur in students. This act is defined as the abuse of power or dominance by a person or group (Vaillancourt, 2021). It can occur in various environments, including the home, school, and community. Bullying has been in the spotlight in recent years (Chen et al., 2023; Han, 2019; Koyanagi, 2019; Rambaran et al., 2020). Bullying is detrimental to both the perpetrator and the victim (Wachs, 2019). Furthermore, bullying involves the intentional harm of others through verbal, physical, or psychological means, which leave the victim feeling oppressed (Birks, 2018; Longobardi, 2018; Pontes, 2018). Bullying often occurs in the school environment, despite being a place for students to understand life and manage their negative behavior. Studies conducted in various countries have shown that bullying is prevalent among adolescents (Hong et al., 2017; Li, 2020; Luca, 2019; Midgett, 2019; Östberg, 2018; van der Ploeg, 2020; Walls, 2019; Wang, 2019), and this issue is not limited to Indonesia.

Bullying can have negative impacts on these victims, hindering their ability to achieve developmental tasks, causing withdrawal from social environments, increasing sensitivity to people's reactions and comments, and leading to excessive internal thoughts and fear (Lee, 2018; Salmon, 2018; H Sampasa-Kanyinga, 2018). The fear of negative attention and social isolation can lead to withdrawal from social interactions (Allen, 2018). Bullying is a significant problem that needs attention as it can have negative consequences for many students, such as social isolation (Hong et al., 2017; London & Ingram, 2018; Matuschka et al., 2022) not having close

friends, can even result in deep trauma (Johnson, 2019; Lu et al., 2020; Matuschka et al., 2022; Mayo et al., 2019). In more severe cases, victims of this act may feel pressured, traumatized, and helpless to the point of contemplating suicide (Johnson, 2019; Quintana-Orts et al., 2019; Serafini et al., 2021). This highlights the loss of human values in adolescents. Some specific forms of aggressive behavior display the characteristic of intending to harm another person repeatedly over time and involve a power difference between the victim and the perpetrator (Aldridge, 2018; Charalampous, 2018; Hinduja, 2019).

Students who experience bullying are those who are vulnerable in bullying situations, while perpetrators of bullying refer to parties who play a dominant and assertive role in bullying incidents. However, some bullies also coexist with victims (so-called bully-victims), suggested by previous research to be considered separately because of their uniqueness. Previous research has shown that all bullies, victims, and victims of bullies can lead to severe violence and even long-term health consequences (Chen et al., 2023). In addition, victims of bullying are generally highly rejected by their peers and have more problems externalizing and internalizing. Therefore, given its detrimental consequences, bullying has important social and health relevance.

Students who experience bullying may exhibit adverse psychological conditions such as sadness, low self-confidence, difficulty interacting with people, and feeling of isolation, which can impede overall personal development. According to data from Plan International and the International Center for Research on Women (2015), 84% of children experience violence at school. This is supported by interventionist studies, which stated that about 10-60% of students in Indonesia are reported to experience bullying on a weekly basis. The rate of bullying has been increasing over the years, as evidenced by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia--KPAI) recording 119 cases in 2020. This marks a significant rise from previous years, which had ranged from 30-60 cases per year. The victims experienced various forms of bullying such as physical, verbal, and relational bullying. In particular, the three forms of bullying mainly involve the following behaviors. Physical bullying includes physical violence, kicking, beating, forcing, or threatening other people to do something, and damage or destroy other people's property on purpose. Verbal bullying includes linguistic violence, name-calling or insulting (Xiong et al., 2020). Relational bullying includes spreading rumors, slandering, and excluding others (Cho, 2018; Dovchin, 2020; Joukov & Caspar, 2021). Students who reported being bullied by any kind of bullying behavior were recognized as victims, and those who responded to bullying others with any behavior were identified as bullies.

The impact of bullying behavior is so fatal, and it is necessary to understand the underlying causes in order to prevent its occurrence. The current systematic review suggests that the tendency towards bullying is related to the child's psychological condition. Bullies were found not only to be physically stronger than their victims (representing a power imbalance) but also to adapt better within groups (e.g., being more popular). Although researchers have discussed group processes in explaining bullying, the emphasis has been on specific bullies and specific victims. Therefore, early intervention is crucial in addressing the needs of both victims and those who exhibit the behavior. The behavior can have both direct and indirect negative effects on child development, including a detrimental impact on the home environment. It is essential to detect and deal with this behavior as early as possible to mitigate its negative consequences on the child's psychological development. This should be done by considering internal and external factors such as individual characteristics, past experiences, and current parental appreciation. However, there is a lack of studies that focus on examining the overall tendencies of students to engage in bullying behavior. The purpose of this study was to examine students' tendencies to bully in order to provide early prevention for individuals who exhibit this behavior against their peersdisabilities.

METHOD

The method used in this study was a survey with a cross-sectional design. Demographic questions were formulated to elicit information about the participants' age, gender, and race/ethnicity. Furthermore, participants were recruited from schools in the city of Padang. All data were collected after obtaining ethical approval from the Educational Research Ethics

Committee of Universitas Negeri Padang. This survey was conducted electronically through the use of Google Forms. After reading the instructions and filling out the consent form, adolescents were able to complete the questionnaire in about 10 minutes. A total of 689 male and female students were selected through simple random sampling. There were higher numbers of female students who completed the survey, with 473 and 216 male and female submissions, respectively. In terms of race/ethnicity, the sample consisted of Batak (n=14), Javanese (n=39), Minang (n=578), Nias (n=9), and unknown (n=49).

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire given to students across Indonesia using Google Forms. The Bullying Behavior Tendency Scale (BBTS) with 45 question items using a Likert scale, was adapted from a theory that focuses on bullying behavior tendencies (Beane, 2008) and employed in this study. Descriptive analysis was applied to the data, consisting of 15, 16, and 14 items of physical, verbal, and social/relational bullying, respectively. The instrument's validity was evaluated through Rasch analysis, and the results showed that it is valid and reliable (person reliability is 0.88, and item reliability is 1.00) (Sumintono & Widhiarso, 2015).

After providing informed consent, students were given instructions and asked to complete the questionnaire within 10 minutes. Data collection was conducted after obtaining ethical approval from the Educational Research Ethics Committee of Universitas Negeri Padang. Data analysis was performed using the JASP application for statistical processing.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
Finding

The tendency of bullying behavior among Indonesian students, as identified by the BBTS across various domains, is presented in Table 1.

Table 2. Description of the behavior trends according to bullying behavior using sub-variables (N=689)

No	Aspect	Ideal	Max	Min	Mean	SD	Category (%)				
							Very High	High	Medium	Low	Very Low
1	Physical	75	75	15	25.26	9.08	0.72	3.70	32.07	63.42	0
2	Verbal	80	80	16	28.08	10.29	0.87	4.20	39.9	55.00	0
3	Social and relational	70	70	14	24.40	9.27	1.16	4.35	39.1	55.29	0
	Total	225	225	45	77.74	27.68	0.87	4.06	32.08	62.26	0

Table 1 shows that the most prevalent form of bullying falls within the low category (L) with a maximum and minimum overall score of 225 and 45, respectively. The average score is 77.74, with a standard deviation of 27.68. This result was obtained from the analysis of each aspect, indicating a tendency for low-category bullying behavior.

In the physical aspect, the average score is 25.26, with 63.42% falling in the low category (L). Despite this, 32.07% are in the medium category (M), 3.7% in the high category, and 0.72% in the very high category. This suggests that physical bullying still exists, despite the prevalence of low-category behavior.

Regarding the verbal aspect, the average score is 28.08, with 55% falling in the low category (L). There is still a 39.9% tendency in the medium category (M), 4.20% in the high category, and 0.87% in the very high category (VH). This highlights that verbal bullying remains prevalent, despite current educational efforts to promote good manners and respectful communication. The results show that receiving more praise is associated with a lower likelihood of all forms of victimization and acts of intimidation. Previous study has found that a lower likelihood of bullying engagement also results in a lower likelihood of both being a bully and a victim (Sampasa-Kanyinga et al., 2020).

The analysis of social and relational aspects of bullying showed an average of 24.40, with 55.29% falling in the low category. However, 32.08% of students exhibit tendencies to this

behavior in the medium category (M), 4.35% in the high category, and 1.16% in the very high category. This indicates that actions such as spreading malicious rumors, causing hostility, excluding others from social groups, humiliating and threatening friends in public, and ridiculing others still occur, which potentially harm and manipulate relationships. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach involving various parties to promote positive self-understanding and the implementation of learning activities that can effectively impact student behavior in educational settings.

Bullying behavior in the physical aspect can involve threatening and intimidating gestures, as well as actions such as pressing, slapping, elbowing, shouldering (slamming), beating, choking, punching, kicking, biting, scratching, and spitting on victims (Acosta, 2019; Espelage, 2018; Koyanagi, 2019; Östberg, 2018; Ryzin, 2019; Yun, 2018). Preventive efforts are necessary to address this behavior by instilling in children that such violent behavior will not be tolerated. Perpetrators of physical bullying often engage in destructive actions, even attacking the victim. This type of behavior is detrimental to the positive development of students and the implementation of school activities.

Studies have shown that a combination of physical activity, adequate sleep, and limited screen time can decrease the likelihood of depression and anxiety in students (Li, 2020) as well ss promote positive peer relationships, social support, and integration into school groups, thereby protecting them from bullying (Chen et al., 2023). Furthermore, engaging in self-regulation activities such as physical activity, getting enough sleep, and limiting screen time can also contribute to students' executive functioning (e.g., self-regulation, decision-making) and social connectedness, making them less likely to become bullies.

Verbal bullying involves using words, statements, and insulting names or calls to demean the victim. It includes actions such as making fun of someone, using derogatory names, and saying hurtful things (Rambaran et al., 2020). Although verbal bullying may not be as overt as physical bullying, it has received significant research attention in recent years as it is recognized as a trigger for physical bullying. However, verbal bullying has received less attention because it is often seen as less harmful, sometimes considered a normative behavior.

Despite its less pronounced nature compared to physical bullying, verbal bullying has been the subject of extensive study (Muluk et al., 2021). Furthermore, verbal bullying is often overlooked as less harmful or as normative behavior. It has been found to be more strongly associated with emotional distress than physical bullying (Chen et al., 2023) and can also predict future behavioral problems and mental health issues Thus, gaining a better understanding of the three types of bullying is crucial in developing more targeted prevention programs. Students who have a tendency for verbal bullying need to understand the importance of displaying respectful attitudes at school, speaking politely, being gentle, and keeping words to respect one another.

This process of bullying behavior also involves peer influence, where bullies influence their friends. Adolescents who exhibit bullying tendencies may form friendships with other bullies, reinforcing each other's bullying behavior through positive feedback, both verbally and non-verbally (e.g., smiling or laughing). While this may be socially beneficial for the individuals involved, it can be very distressing psychological impact on the victims. Therefore, a more comprehensive understanding of the three types of bullying is necessary to develop effective prevention programs.

Table 2. Description of gender data based in the bullying begavior group description

	Group	N	Mean	SD	SE
Total	Male	216	86.204	32.369	2.202
	Female	473	73.888	24.332	1.119

Table 2 shows that the statistical group in this study consisted of 216 males and 473 females. The Independent Sample T-Test table indicates that the bullying behavior of males is higher (M=86.20) compared to females (M=73.88). The verbal aspect of bullying behavior can take various forms. Direct verbal intimidation, which is executed in person, shares similarities

with more direct forms of cyberbullying, such as sending insulting text messages or making prank calls. On the other hand, indirect bullying is more like bullying that occurs through social media platforms (Johansson & Englund, 2021).

Table 3. Presents interpretations of independent sample t-tests to determine the significance of differences

	t	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference
Total	5.533	687	<.001	12.316	2.226

Note. Student's t-test.
[a] Levene's test is significant (p<.05), suggesting a violation of the equal variance assumption

		W	p
Total	Male	0,613194	<.001
	Female	0,588194	<.001

Note. Significant results suggest a deviation from normality.

According to Table 3, the significance level of Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is 0.01, which is less than 0.05, indicating that the variance of the data between men and women is homogeneous. In addition, a 2-way independent sample test (t-trailed) showed a significance value of 0.001, which is less than 0.05, showing a difference in point scores. This suggests that there is a significant difference between the tendency of bullying behavior exhibited by men and women. The act can manifest in various forms, including physical, verbal, social, and relational aspects.

Table 4. Analysis of Pearson's correlations

Variable		Physical	Verbal	Social and relational	Total
1. Physical	n	—	689		
	Pearson's r	—	0.901		
	p-value	—	<.001		
2. Verbal	n	689	—		
	Pearson's r	0.901	—		
	p-value	<.001	—		
3. Social and Relational	n	689	689	—	
	Pearson's r	0.890	0.908	—	
	p-value	<.001	<.001	—	
4. Total	n	689	689	689	—
	Pearson's r	0.961	0.972	0.965	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001	—

Pearson correlation is a statistical measure used to determine the strength and direction of a linear relationship between two variables. Variables are said to be correlated when a change in one variable has an influence on the other, either in the same direction or in the opposite direction. An increase or decrease in the physical variable will be followed by an increase or decrease in its verbal counterpart as well as a decrease in the social and relational aspects, as shown in Table 4. The measurement results indicated that physical bullying behavior correlated with verbal bullying behavior at a significance level of (r=0.901), physical bullying behavior correlated with social and relational bullying behavior at a significance level of (r=0.890), and verbal bullying behavior correlated with social and relational bullying behavior at a significance level of (r=-0.908).

High levels of bullying behavior in the physical aspect of the victim could also lead to an increase in verbal bullying initiated by the perpetrator. This is also associated with social and relational problems in the lives of many children. Victims often experience rejection, weak social

support, and social isolation, which negatively impact academic performance and increase levels of anxiety and depression (Östberg, 2018; Wang, 2019). Furthermore, adolescents who have experienced bullying may lack support from peers, and even friends may participate in the harassment of victims. The negative consequences of bullies have been well documented, ranging from poor academic functioning in schools to more serious offenses later in life (Baier, 2019; Chang, 2019; Evans, 2019; Koyanagi, 2019; Rambaran et al., 2020).

Previous research has suggested that engaging in regular physical activity and getting adequate sleep duration can reduce bullying involvement among students (Chen et al., 2023; Esposito, 2019; Jenkins, 2019; Plexousakis, 2019; Rambaran et al., 2020). Moving forward, research should focus on collective behaviors rather than individual movement behaviors to develop targeted anti-bullying interventions. The findings of this study emphasize that bullying can lead to severe and long-term health consequences. Therefore, adopting a healthy lifestyle is one of several ways to reduce the level of victimization.

Various activities can be implemented to address the problem of student bullying behavior in schools (Fandrem & Støen, 2021; Fischer et al., 2021; Kollerová et al., 2021; Wachs, 2019). However, these activities have not adequately addressed the cognitive aspects of students, resulting in only temporary behavior changes. The increase in bullying behavior among students is influenced by the process of imitating the actions of others, which is strongly influenced by cognitive factors. For this reason, the counseling process should focus on positive cognitive aspects rather than highlighting negative cognitive aspects. Changes in behavior and emotion occur through changes in cognition (Romanowska & Dobroczyński, 2020), and intervensions should involve cognitive processes to bring about behavior change.

The cognitive-behavioral approach is effective as a mode of intervention based on clinical practice experience (Palmer, 2022). Albert Ellis observed that clients make progress when their cognitive process changes. The cognitive-behavior theory is built on assumptions, techniques and general research strategies that emphasize the importance of cognitive aspects for behavior change. The term cognitive-behavioral reflects the importance of both cognitive and behavioral approaches to understanding and helping individuals.

To address these issues, creative and innovative counseling services based on cognitive-behavioral approaches are proposed (Sung et al., 2020) such as the Creative and Innovative Counseling Based on Cognitive Behavior (KREIN-MKP-- *Konseling Kreatif dan Inovatif Berbasis Kognitif Perilaku*) (Karneli et al., 2019; Karneli, Neviyarni, et al., 2020; Karneli, Syukur, et al., 2020). The term KREIN-MKP in this study was adapted from Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) developed by Meichenbaum & Cameron (1974). Experts who are members of the National Association of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapists (NACBT) define Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) as a counseling approach that emphasizes the important role of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Matson & Ollendick (1988) define KREIN-MKP as an approach in counseling that applies a number of procedures specifically by using cognition as a central element. The focus of this counseling is perception, belief and thoughts. Counseling with a cognitive approach focuses on thoughts, assumptions and beliefs. The cognitive approach facilitates individual learning to recognize and correct mistakes. Cognitive counseling is not only related to positive thinking processes but also related to calm and critical thinking processes. On the other hand, the behavioral approach helps build relationships between problem situations and the habit of reacting to problems. Individuals learn to change their thoughts and calm their minds as well as their bodies so they feel better, think more clearly and make better decisions.

CONCLUSION

This research provides a detailed examination of students' tendencies to engage in bullying behavior. It has been revealed that there are still students who exhibit such tendencies, highlighting the need for precautions to establish a comprehensive and inclusice learning environment. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of early detection of bullying tendencies to provide targeted interventions. To adress this issue, the research proposes a solution through creative, innovative services involving cognitive modification, specifically through

Cognitive Behavior-Based Creative and Innovative Counseling (KREIN-MKP--*Konseling Kreatif Dan Inovatif Berbasis Kognitif Perilaku*). It is important to note that the results of this study are limited by the small sample size. Therefore, further research using a larger sample and different methods is suggested to understand and overcome the problem of bullying in students.

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