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Aggressive Behavior Towards Bullying In Early Adolescence

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Abstract

Introduction: Aggressive behavior was a destructive action that arose due to a lack of self-control. Aggressive behavior resulted in negative interactions with peers, which had the potential to trigger bullying. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between aggressive behavior and bullying in early adolescents.

Methods: This type of research was quantitative with a correlational design using a cross-sectional approach. The population consisted of 163 students, with a sample of 115 selected using the simple random sampling method. The research instruments used were questionnaires on aggressive behavior and bullying behavior. Data analysis in this study used the Spearman rank test.

Results: The results of the study showed that 52.2% of aggressive behavior was at a moderate level, and 40.9% of bullying was also at a moderate level. The results of the Spearman rank test showed a p-value of 0.000 (≤ 0.05) and a correlation coefficient of 0.822, which indicated a very strong relationship between aggressive behavior and bullying.

Conclusions: Adolescents who exhibited aggressive behavior at moderate levels had the potential to engage in bullying behavior in certain situations. Adolescents needed to be trained to recognize and manage emotions through education, counseling, and psychosocial support provided by schools via bullying prevention programs. Parents needed to monitor adolescent behavior and become role models by implementing parenting strategies that supported open communication, enabling adolescents to prevent the emergence of negative behaviors.

Keywords: aggressive behavior; bullying; adolescence

Introduction

Adolescence was a period in a person's life cycle that was mostly spent in school. At that time, some adolescents often showed negative behavior, one of which was aggressive behavior. Aggressive behavior was destructive behavior that caused a significant burden on individuals, families, and society. Aggressive behavior occurred due to disturbances in brain structure and function (Aroviyani & Niman, 2021). This posed a very frightening threat if it was not immediately addressed with appropriate solutions. This aggressive behavior arose due to a lack

of self-control, which resulted in a person's inability to respect and empathize with others and themselves (Cuyunda et al., 2020).

In Indonesia, in 2021, the number of aggressive cases increased by 12.9%, while from 2022 to 2023 an increase of 14 percent was recorded (Maharani et al., 2023). East Java itself showed that the percentage of the adolescent population reached 16.19% of the total population of 6,133,053 people. In 2020, there were 90 cases of abuse involving teenagers in East Java. The number of cases increased from the previous year, which recorded 142 cases in 2021, 194 cases in 2022, and 285 cases in 2023 (Tirto.id, 2024). According to data compiled by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), bullying cases remained a threat to children in the school environment. From this data, it was known that there were 226 cases of bullying in 2022. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) also released data showing that bullying cases in Jember Regency reached around 87.6%, with more male victims than female victims (Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI), 2020).

This aggressive behavior, if not handled appropriately, had the potential to lead to violent behaviors such as harming oneself, others, and the environment (Siauta et al., 2020). These impacts affected both perpetrators and victims, but the most significant effects were felt by the victims. Children who engaged in aggressive behavior were more likely to become juvenile delinquents, commit acts of violence, and engage in criminal activities (Armitage, 2021). Aggressive behavior that occurred during adolescence could cause problems in establishing interpersonal relationships with others and could lead adolescents into conflict with the law (Yuhbaba et al., 2023).

Aggressive behavior in adolescents, if not identified early and not given appropriate intervention, could result in the emergence of mental disorders. Some aggressive behaviors included the belief that they were always right, the desire to have power in various situations, the urge to possess everything, the tendency to annoy others, making threats with words and actions, showing open hostility, being aggressive and destructive, being stubborn, having a tendency to seek revenge, and frequently showing sadistic anger. Aggressive behavior in adolescents was influenced by several factors, namely: biological factors (such as genes, brain systems, and blood chemistry), and environmental factors (such as poverty, anonymity, anger, peer group influence, and inappropriate disciplinary practices (Putri, 2019). Such aggressive behavior resulted in less positive interactions with peers and could also trigger bullying (Ashidiq, 2019).

Bullying was a form of aggressive behavior that targeted an individual repeatedly and continuously, resulting in both physical injury and psychological harm to the victim (Adnan & Wirastania, 2020). In the school environment, bullying frequently manifested through direct physical contact, including acts such as hitting, pushing, biting, grabbing, kicking, locking someone in a room, pinching, scratching, extortion, and damaging personal belongings (Andriati & Sukmawati, 2020). This phenomenon remained a persistent concern among adolescents and was closely associated with elevated levels of aggressive behavior. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between aggressive behavior and bullying among early adolescents, with the intent to strengthen the evidence base for preventive interventions. By identifying the strength and nature of this relationship, the findings were expected to contribute to the development of targeted programs that reduce bullying by addressing its behavioral antecedents.

Methods

This study was categorized as quantitative research using a cross-sectional approach. The population involved in the study consisted of 162 adolescent students enrolled in junior high schools in the Jember area. The sample comprised 115 respondents, determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 0.05. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling. The inclusion criteria encompassed students in grades VII, VIII, and IX aged 13–16 years, while the exclusion criteria included students who were ill, those experiencing mental health issues, and students who were not present at school during the data collection period.

The instruments utilized in this study were questionnaires measuring aggressive behavior and bullying. The aggressive behavior questionnaire was adapted from previous research that had been tested for validity and reliability, yielding an r -table value of 0.3390 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.856. The questionnaire included items on four parameters: physical aggression (9 items), verbal aggression (5 items), aggressive anger (7 items), and hatred (8 items). The bullying behavior questionnaire demonstrated an r -table validity value of 0.3610 and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.806. The bullying questionnaire measured three parameters: verbal bullying (8 items), physical bullying (7 items), and relational bullying (8 items) (Pujiastuti, 2018). This study received ethical approval from the Health Research Ethics Commission of the University of dr. Soebandi, with approval number: 222/KEPK/UDS/III/2024.

The data analysis employed in this research consisted of univariate and bivariate analyses. Univariate analysis included variables such as age, gender, aggressive behavior, and bullying. Bivariate analysis examined the relationship between aggressive behavior and

bullying using the Spearman Rank correlation test, with statistical significance set at a p-value of < 0.05 . Data processing and analysis were conducted using SPSS version 26.

Results

Table 1 presented the results of the study, including the characteristics of respondents, levels of aggressive and bullying behavior, as well as the relationship between the two variables.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents, Aggressive and Bullying Behavior

Characteristics of Respondents	Number (n)	(%)
Age		
13-14 years old	58	50.4
15-16 years old	57	49.6
Total	115	100
Gender		
Man	59	51.3
Woman	56	48.7
Total	115	100
Aggressive Behavior		
Low	20	17.4
Middle	60	52.2
High	35	30.4
Total	115	100
Bullying Behavior		
Low	38	33.0
Middle	47	40.9
High	30	26.1
Total	115	100

The data in Table 1 showed that the distribution of respondents by age indicated that more than half of the adolescents (50.4%) were between 13 and 14 years old, with the majority being male (51.3%).

Table 2. The Relationship Between Aggressive Behavior and Bullying in Adolescents in Junior High School

Aggressive Behavior	Acts of Bullying							
	Low		Middle		High		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Low	19	16.5	1	0.9	0	0.0	20	17.4
Middle	18	15.7	42	36.5	0	0.0	60	52.2
High	1	0.9	4	3.5	30	26.1	35	30.4
	38	33.0	47	40.9	30	26.1	115	100.0
Spearman's rho	Sig. (2-tailed) = .000							
Symtric Measures	Contingency Coefficient = .822							

Based on Table 2, the significance value (2-tailed) was 0.000, which was less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship between aggressive behavior and bullying in early adolescence. The correlation coefficient of 0.822 indicated a very strong level of association between the variables of aggressive behavior and bullying.

Discussion

The results presented in Table 1 showed that more than half of the early adolescents who exhibited aggressive behavior fell into the moderate category. This indicated that aggressive behavior in this group tended to cause moderate levels of discomfort, emotional tension, and physical harm. These behaviors included an inability to control oneself, such as fighting, hitting, attacking others, being uncooperative, lying, being dishonest, speaking rudely, jealousy, quarrelsomeness, irresponsibility, and disruptive conduct (Nara et al., 2018). Aggressive behavior was more commonly observed during adolescence due to heightened emotional sensitivity and irritability. When experiencing tension, adolescents tended to react emotionally, although the situation often deescalated once their emotions subsided (Saputra et al., 2023).

Multiple factors were found to contribute to aggressive behavior among adolescents. One prominent factor was peer group influence, which could reduce individual moral control. Direct provocation within peer groups often served as a significant trigger for aggressive acts (Isnaeni, 2021). Aggressive behavior in school environments was also associated with peer conflict, lack of teacher supervision, and inconsistent school discipline. In some cases, adolescents were driven by peer pressure to act aggressively to gain acceptance or status. Furthermore, adolescents with psychological conditions such as anxiety, depression, or behavioral disorders were more likely to display aggression as a coping mechanism. A lack of education regarding empathy and social skills also contributed to the emergence of aggressive behavior, as these adolescents may have been unaware of the consequences of their actions on others (Suib & Safitri, 2022).

Researchers argue that aggressive behavior in the school environment can occur due to conflicts between students, lack of supervision from teachers, and student irregularity. Peer pressure can also influence teens to act aggressively in order to gain recognition or status in their social group. Adolescents who experience psychological problems such as anxiety disorders, depression, or behavioral disorders are more prone to exhibiting aggressive behavior as a way to cope with their negative feelings. In addition, adolescents who lack education about

empathy and social skills may be more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior because they do not fully understand or care about the impact of their actions on others.

The findings also showed that bullying behavior among adolescents was predominantly in the moderate category. Forms of bullying observed included physical aggression (e.g., hitting, kicking, locking others in a toilet), verbal abuse (e.g., mocking, name-calling, gossiping), and social exclusion (e.g., humiliating peers or exploiting others' weaknesses to gain power). Bullying was understood as an intentional, repeated aggressive act that aimed to harm others either physically or emotionally. It often involved a power imbalance, as seen in cases where senior students bullied juniors to assert dominance (Suib & Safitri, 2022).

Bullying is a form of juvenile delinquency that frequently emerges during early adolescence (12–14 years old), when egocentrism and impulsive behavior are prominent. Adolescents in this stage often overestimate their abilities, minimize problems, and underestimate others, leading to arrogance and reckless actions (Saputra et al., 2023). Bullying behavior occurred in various forms, namely: physical, verbal and social and had significant negative effects on victims, including anxiety, fear, reduced academic focus, and school avoidance. Long-term bullying could damage self-esteem, increase social isolation, and lead to emotional withdrawal, depression, or insecurity (Helmi et al., 2023).

The researchers concluded that bullying was a harmful behavior with serious consequences for victims. The school environment played a key role in shaping bullying tendencies. Adolescents raised in aggressive or violent surroundings were more likely to engage in bullying. Peer pressure was another contributing factor, as adolescents often sought social acceptance or status through bullying. Additionally, individuals with emotional or psychological difficulties such as low self-esteem or anxiety, were more likely to become either perpetrators or victims of bullying.

The Relationship of Aggressive Behavior Against Bullying in Adolescents

The study supported previous findings suggesting that adolescents with higher levels of aggressiveness were more likely to engage in bullying, particularly if they were familiar with or close to other bullies (Andriati & Sukmawati, 2020). Aggressive behavior was identified as a core element of bullying. Whether physical or verbal, it functioned as a means of demonstrating power and dominance. Therefore, aggression served as a mechanism to achieve the goals of bullying.

Adolescents who received supportive and respectful treatment from peers and the school environment were more likely to develop positive personality traits. In contrast, negative

experiences such as bullying, were likely to hinder healthy personality development and increase the risk of psychological disorders, including further aggressive behavior (Silaban, 2023). In some cases, victims of bullying developed aggressive behaviors as a defense mechanism, ultimately becoming perpetrators themselves. This contributed to a cyclical pattern of violence. Bullying was often used by adolescents to express anger, frustration, or a desire for control. For some, it became a strategy for gaining social status or power within their peer group.

To address this issue, the researchers recommended training for teachers and school staff to recognize early signs of aggression and bullying. Additionally, involving parents in intervention programs would be essential in helping them understand how to identify and respond to these behaviors appropriately.

Conclusion

The results of the study showed that early adolescents exhibited moderate levels of aggressive behavior and bullying. A very strong correlation was found between aggressive behavior and bullying among early adolescents. Future research could explore additional variables that may influence these behaviors. Schools were encouraged to enhance education on aggression and bullying by implementing classroom-based counseling and involving parents in intervention efforts.

Author Contributions

The first author were responsible in conducted the research and study administration. The second author were responsible on the designed research method and data analysis. The third and fourth author were responsible in the final content and wrote the final manuscript.

Acknowledgment

Thank you to the all authors for approved the final content of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The author declare no conflict of interest on this study.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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