

Self-screening and coping with stress strategies in bullying: Path analysis in junior high schools in Maros Regency, Indonesia

Estrategias de autoevaluación y afrontamiento del estrés en caso de acoso escolar: análisis de rutas en escuelas secundarias de la Regency Maros, Indonesia

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SUMMARY

Introduction: The phenomenon of bullying has long been part of the dynamics of schools both at home and abroad, which causes great loss for victims and perpetrators, such as deviant behavior, psychological disorders, depression, stress, and suicidal thoughts. Appropriate stress-coping strategies are important to be managed and owned by adolescents who are victims of bullying. **Objective:** Aims to self-screen and analyze stress coping strategies in adolescents who are victims of bullying in Maros Regency Junior High School, Indonesia. **Methods:** This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional design. **Results:** The

frequency of bullying was assessed among 450 students who underwent self-screening, resulting in 105 students being categorized as victims of bullying. The types of bullying experienced were physical (15.2 %), verbal (29.5 %), and social (28.6 %). The stress-coping strategies used by students were problem-focused coping (80 %), emotion-focused coping (17.1 %), and a combination of both strategies (2.9 %). There was no direct effect of bullying behavior on coping stress ($p = 0.462$), and resilience was not a mediating variable ($0.728 < 1.96$); however, a significant value ($p = 0.0001$) was found for coping stress. **Conclusions:** Self-screening was carried out to obtain the number of victims and types of bullying that occurred in the school environment, with the use of stress coping strategies dominated by problem-focused coping. Bullying behavior does not affect dealing with stress, and resilience does not mediate between bullying behavior and coping with stress.

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RESUMEN

Antecedentes: *El fenómeno del acoso escolar ha sido durante mucho tiempo parte de la dinámica de las escuelas, tanto en el país como en el extranjero, lo que causa grandes pérdidas para las víctimas y los perpetradores, como comportamientos desviados, trastornos psicológicos, depresión, estrés y pensamientos suicidas. Es importante que los adolescentes que son víctimas de acoso gestionen y asuman estrategias adecuadas de afrontamiento del estrés.* **Objetivos:** *Autoevaluar y analizar las estrategias de afrontamiento del estrés en adolescentes víctimas de acoso escolar en la escuela secundaria Maros Regency, Indonesia.* **Métodos:** *Se realizó una investigación cuantitativa de corte transversal.* **Resultados:** *Se analizó la frecuencia de acoso de 450 estudiantes que realizaron autoevaluación. Se incluyó en la categoría de víctimas de acoso hasta 105 estudiantes, con los tipos de acoso experimentados que fueron físicos (15,2 %), verbales (29,5 %) y sociales (28,6 %). Las estrategias de afrontamiento del estrés utilizadas por los estudiantes fueron el uso del afrontamiento centrado en el problema (80 %), el afrontamiento centrado en la emoción (17,1 %) y ambas estrategias (2,9 %). No hubo efecto directo de la conducta de acoso sobre el estrés de afrontamiento ($p= 0,462$) y la resiliencia no fue una variable mediadora ($0,728 < 1,96$) sino un valor de significación ($p=0,0001$) sobre el estrés de afrontamiento.* **Conclusiones:** *Se realizó una autoevaluación para obtener el número de víctimas y tipos de acoso escolar que ocurrieron en el ámbito escolar, con el uso de estrategias de afrontamiento del estrés dominadas por el afrontamiento centrado en el problema. La conducta de acoso no afecta el manejo del estrés, y la resiliencia no media entre la conducta de acoso y el manejo del estrés.*

Palabras clave: *Bullying, escuela secundaria, autoevaluación, afrontamiento del estrés.*

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents are in the phase of life between childhood and adulthood, from 10 to 19 years. Adolescents experience rapid physical, cognitive, and psychosocial growth. Although it is considered a healthy stage of life, this phase also significantly experiences death, illness, and injury to deviant behavior (1). Problems that usually occur related to behavior are acts of bullying carried out and accepted by adolescents (2).

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Indonesia data reveals that 2 out of 3 girls and boys aged 13-17 have experienced at least one type of violence in their lifetime, 41 % of 15-year-old students have experienced bullying more than a few times a month and 45 % of the 2 777 young people aged 14-24 surveyed through the platform said they have experienced cyberbullying (3).

Based on data from the last five years, the increase in cases is approximately 13.9 % for individuals aged 12 to 17 years. The results of initial data collection conducted at the Regional Technical Implementation Unit for the Protection of Women and Children (*Unit Pelaksana Teknis Daerah Perlindungan Perempuan dan Anak (UPTD PPA)*) of Maros Regency found that there were 54 cases of violence against children in 2023, which were dominated by cases of bullying in the form of physical, psychological, and verbal as many as ± 21 cases. Meanwhile, in 2024, there were 3 cases; 2 cases were reported at the Maros UPTD, and one other case was reported directly by the victim to the South Sulawesi Province UPT PPA. Most victims of bullying are still in school, with elementary, junior high, and high school education (4).

The phenomenon of bullying has long been part of the dynamics of schools, both at home and abroad, causing great losses to victims and perpetrators (5). Oktaviani and Ramadan's (6) study indicates that bullying significantly increases the risk of suicide in adolescents and negatively impacts mental health, especially in adolescent girls. The adverse effects of bullying can also be long-term for adolescents. Adolescents who experience stress because of bullying are at great risk in their daily lives. Therefore, bullying behavior that occurs can be a predictor of increased mental health problems that can be harmful to adolescents.

Nurhidayanti et al. revealed that stress is a state caused by one's dealing with an internal and external condition felt by the individual (7), and Rahayu (8). It is stated that the conscious effort to reduce or eliminate stress in stressful conditions is known as coping with stress. It can involve thoughts, emotions, and actions. Coping with stress is an action that individuals can take to tolerate, manage, minimize, or reduce its effects, utilizing both behavioral and psychological strategies. Social support and resilience are two

factors that can influence an individual's choice of coping strategy. These factors are part of the secondary appraisal, which is the process of evaluating resources to deal with a stressful situation (9).

Currently, bullying behavior is a serious problem among school-age children and adolescents (10). Proper coping strategies are important to be managed and owned by children and adolescents who are victims of bullying. Stress coping strategies owned by children and adolescents are expected to hinder adolescents from avoiding the long-term impact caused by the bullying incidents obtained.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a quantitative, cross-sectional design. The population consisted of 450 students from Maros Regency Junior High School who participated in self-screening using the Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire. The sampling technique was purposive sampling, which refers to the results of self-screening. Self-screening was conducted to meet the study's sample criteria, specifically students with experience of bullying, active students from both schools, and students in grades VII, VIII, and IX. A total of 105 students met the criteria as victims of bullying.

Bullying behavior is the independent variable, resilience is the intervening variable, and coping stress is the dependent variable. Primary data were collected through the distribution of questionnaires, which included information on respondent characteristics (age, gender, class, and birth sequence), experiences of bullying as a victim, resilience, and coping strategies for stress. Secondary data was obtained from relevant agencies and literature from national and international journals.

Data Processing and Analysis. Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 24.0. and for intervening variable tests using Path Analysis with the *Sobel Test*. After the analysis, the distribution

of each free and bound variable was obtained. The value of $p = 0.05$ indicates a statistically significant relationship between the variables, and a Z score greater than 1.96 suggests mediation between them.

Research Ethics Approval. The Health Research Ethics Committee of Hasanuddin University approved this study with a recommendation for ethical approval number 2123/UN4.14.1/TP.01.02/2024.

RESULTS

The results of data analysis in the form of respondent characteristics, self-screening, resilience, and coping stress of adolescent victims of bullying are presented in Figure 1.

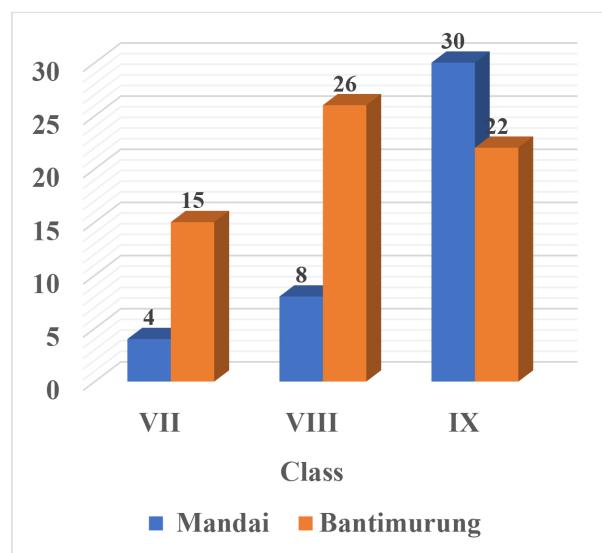


Figure 1. Distribution of Victims of Bullying in Class VII-IX Junior High Schools in Maros Regency ($N = 105$).

Questionnaires and screening instruments were distributed to respondents in grades VII, VIII, and IX who had experienced bullying. After obtaining all the screening results, 105 students were identified as victims of bullying, and these results served as the sample for this study.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Adolescent Victims of Bullying in Maros Regency Junior High School

Variables	n (%)
Age	
12 years	13 (12.4%)
13 years	25 (23.8%)
14 years	49 (46.7%)
15 years	13 (12.4%)
16 years	5 (4.8%)
Total	105 (100%)
Gender	
Male	31 (29.5%)
Female	74 (70.5%)
Total	105 (100%)
Class	
VII	19 (18.1%)
VIII	34 (32.4%)
IX	52 (49.5%)
Total	105 (100%)
Birth Sequence	
Firstborn	35 (33.3%)
Second/Middle Child	35 (33.3%)
Last/Best Child	35 (33.3%)
Total	105 (100%)

Table 1 shows that the age distribution of the respondents is mainly 14 years old, with 49 people (46.7 %), while the older age was 16 years old, with five people (4.8 %). The distribution of gender of adolescent respondents who were victims of bullying was 74 women (70.5 %) and 31 men (29.5 %)—distribution of class groups. The most numerous class is Class IX, with 52 people (59.5 %), and the least is Class VII, with 19 people (18.1 %). Birth order analysis reveals that the distribution of respondents in this study is the same, with 35 people (33 %) in each category.

In Table 2 are shown the categories of treatment received by adolescent victims of bullying in Maros Regency Junior High School, namely the most frequently experienced form of physical bullying is that *I have been pushed for no apparent reason* (Number 15) with a percentage of 15.2 % choosing often. The most reported form of verbal bullying is that *my friends tease me to make me angry* (Number 16) with a percentage of 29.5 % choosing often and the form of social bullying (relational) is that *I have been viewed*

sarcastically by my friends (Number 9) with a percentage of 28.6 % choosing often.

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents' resilience, with the highest level of resilience at the moderate level, represented by 69 people (65.7 %), and the lowest level at three people (2.9 %). The distribution of respondents' coping stress showed that problem-focused coping was the most frequently used, with 84 people (80.0 %), while problem and emotion-focused coping were the least used, with three people (2.9 %) each.

Table 4 shows that the *unstandardized beta* value for bullying behavior was 0.243, which was significant at 0.462, indicating that it indirectly affected coping stress. The value of the unstandardized beta coefficient for resilience is 0.633, and the significance level is 0.0001, indicating that resilience has a significant impact on the ability to cope with stress.

As shown in Figure 2, a test was carried out using the *Sobel Test Online*. The results of the Sobel Test, with a Statistical score of $0.728 < 1.96$ and a P-value of $0.466 > 0.05$, can be interpreted as indicating that the resilience variable is not an intervening or mediating variable between bullying behavior and adolescent coping stress.

DISCUSSION

Bullying was first introduced by Olweus (1994), who defined it as an aggressive act that occurs repeatedly over time, is carried out by an individual or group, and involves an imbalance of power between the victim and the perpetrator. Bullying is a phenomenon that often occurs in the school environment, namely in children and adolescents (11). Of the 105 students who were victims of bullying, 14 years of age dominated as victims. This shows that most victims of bullying are in the early adolescent category. Generally, adolescents at this age experience changes that lead to a decline in maturity in the form of physical, social, emotional, moral, and intellectual behavior by the level of development based on the condition of the individual (12). Women dominate the gender who experience bullying. This study is in line Xaviera and Kristinawati (13) who studied 102 bullying

SELF-SCREENING AND COPING WITH STRESS STRATEGIES IN BULLYING

Table 2. Screening for Types of Bullying Behavior.

Question	Bullying Behavior (Victim)									
	TP		J		KK		S		SS	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
I have been humiliated in public (e.g., in front of other friends)	14	13.3	37	35.2	45	42.9	8	7.6	1	1.0
I was called a nickname that I did not like	13	12.4	25	23.8	47	44.8	20	19.0	0	0.0
I have been gossiped about something badly	20	19.0	21	20.0	34	32.4	29	27.6	1	1.0
I was denied entry into their group	42	40.0	28	26.7	22	21.0	12	11.4	1	1.0
I have been teased (e.g. about my family, my appearance)	25	23.8	24	22.9	39	37.1	16	15.2	1	1.0
I have been hit	38	36.2	32	30.5	28	26.7	7	6.7	0	0.0
I have been forcibly asked for money (extorted)	44	41.9	24	22.9	24	22.9	13	12.4	0	0.0
I have been threatened/forced to do things I don't want to do (e.g., make up homework, forced to give cheats)	47	44.8	26	24.8	25	23.8	6	5.7	1	1.0
I have been looked at sarcastically by my friends	15	14.3	13	12.4	47	44.8	30	28.6	0	0.0
I have been ostracized	37	35.2	25	23.8	34	32.4	9	8.6	0	0.0
I have been commented on about my race (ethnicity)/skin color	39	37.1	31	29.5	27	25.7	7	6.7	1	1.0
I have been yelled at	16	15.2	17	16.2	46	43.8	26	24.8	0	0.0
My friends cheer for me if I answer a teacher's question incorrectly.	31	29.5	37	35.2	27	25.7	9	8.6	1	1.0
I have been silenced (not communicating) with my friends	20	19.0	31	29.5	36	34.3	17	16.2	1	1.0
I have been pushed for no apparent reason	22	21.0	31	29.5	36	34.3	16	15.2	0	0.0
My friends tease me to make me angry	16	15.2	25	23.8	33	31.4	31	29.5	0	0.0
I have been kicked so that I felt pain	53	50.5	27	25.7	21	20.0	4	3.8	0	0.0
I have been bullied via SMS/WA/Facebook or other social media with threats and taunts that made me afraid and embarrassed	71	67.6	19	18.1	12	11.4	3	2.9	0	0.0
I have been asked to treat friends by force	72	68.6	19	18.1	13	12.4	1	1.0	0	0.0
I have been made fun of (e.g., about my physique)	24	22.9	41	39.0	22	21.0	17	16.2	1	0.0
My belongings have been taken and damaged by force	50	47.6	31	29.5	16	15.2	8	7.6	0	0.0
I have been pinched	30	28.6	27	25.7	37	35.2	11	10.5	0	0.0

Note: TP (Never), J (Seldom), KK (Sometimes), S (Often), SS (Very Often)

survivors aged 15-24 years, where 52 % were women and the remaining 48 % were men.

Our data indicate that most respondents are 52 grade IX students, which aligns with Astikasari (14), who demonstrated that there is a positive and significant correlation between the bullying variable and the suicidal ideation variable in grade IX students at SMP Negeri 2

Bawen. Our results show that both the first child, the second child, and the youngest child show a tendency to experience bullying. However, there are differences in how they respond. Exploratory research in Pakistan on birth order and bullying found that single children experienced more bullying behaviors compared to first, middle, and last children (15).

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on the Variables Studied

Variables	n (%)
Resilience	
Low	3 (2.9)
Medium	69 (65.7)
High	33 (31.4)
Total	105 (100)
Coping Stress	
Problem Focused Coping	84 (80.0)
Emotion Focused Coping	18 (17.1)
Problem & Emotion Focused Coping	3 (2.9)
Total	105 (100)

Table 4. Uji T Bullying Behavior, Resilience, and Coping Stress.

Model	Coefficients ^a					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	168.721	9.185			18.369	0.0001
Bullying Behavior	0.243	0.328	0.073		0.739	0.462
a. Dependent Variable: Coping Stress						
Model	Coefficients ^b					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	123.653	14.299			8.647	0.0001
Bullying Behavior	0.145	0.308	0.044		0.472	0.638
Resilience	0.633	0.160	0.364		3.944	0.0001

^aDependent Variable: Coping Stress

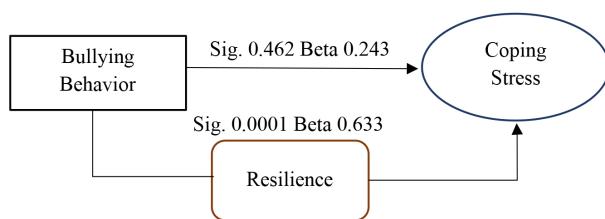


Figure 2. Results of Path Analysis.

If an individual does not have healthy friendships, it can negatively affect the process of self-discovery (16). It is not surprising that bullying occurs a lot at the junior and senior high school levels, where students are in their teens. This data is likely to increase even more if all victims report their experiences of bullying (17). Based on this explanation, researchers screened junior high school students in Maros Regency to identify individuals who were victims of bullying. In this way, it will be possible to obtain accurate data on the prevalence of bullying that occurs in the school environment (18). A total of 105

students were categorized as victims of bullying. Of the 22 question items, the most frequently chosen type of physical bullying behavior among students at Maros Regency Junior High School was physical bullying in the form of being pushed without a clear reason. For most types of verbal bullying, the victim is tempted by his friends to make the victim angry. In social bullying (relational), the victim of bullying gets treatment in the form of being seen cynically by his friends.

Bullying can occur physically, psychologically, verbally, or socially and is often repeated either at school, gathering places, or even through social media. Aminah et al. (19) stated that adolescent girls are often the target of verbal bullying, such as ridicule or sarcasm, due to misunderstandings. In contrast, adolescent boys are more often subjected to physical bullying in the form of punches. Bullying can lead to anxiety, trauma, social isolation, and changes in self-image, as well as trigger a desire to pray or engage in religious activities (20).

According to the theory of Lazarus and Folkman (9), there are two forms of coping: *problem-oriented a problem-fosused coping and emotion-focused coping*. Most of the coping mechanisms employed by respondents fell into the category of problem-focused coping (80 %). Problem-focused coping is a technique for managing stress that focuses on the source of the problem, involving direct confrontation. The most widely used indicators of this approach include seeking social support and confronting the issue. In problem-focused coping, several factors influence individuals to choose these strategies, namely, cognitive ability, previous experience, perception, and adequate support (21). Meanwhile, 17.1 % of the total used emotion-focused coping. Emotion-focused coping is an effort to overcome stress by managing emotional responses to adjust to the impact caused by a stressful situation or condition (22). Influencing factors include emotional regulation, anxiety levels, and emotional support.

Bullying did not have a significant effect on coping with stress. This can happen due to the specific context or situation that occurs. For example, not all bullying has the same impact on adolescents, especially if the bullying is not very

intentional or lasts for a short time. In theory (9), bullying behavior can clearly be considered a *stressor* because it can make adolescents feel threatened, insecure, or depressed. In this case, other factors, such as prior coping skills, social support, or individual traits, may influence resilience more significantly than bullying behavior in determining coping stress. Vrigil and Xaviera (23) established two factors that influence problem-solving strategies: individual factors, such as mental health, personality, skills, and emotional maturity, and environmental factors, including social, cultural, and gender support.

Overall, these results suggest that although bullying can be a stressor for adolescents, its effect on how individuals cope with stress in this model is very limited. However, teenage victims of bullying at Maros Regency Junior High School still have an agency in choosing their coping strategies. In other words, in this study, secondary assessments will further influence how adolescents choose coping, as they will consider whether they have the resources to cope with the stress of bullying.

Resilience does not mediate the relationship between bullying behavior and *coping stress* if it is associated with theory (9). *Coping* is a process that relies heavily on an individual's assessment of the situation they are facing, as well as the strategies they choose to employ in dealing with it. Although resilience helps individuals in recovery and improves their ability to cope with stress, managing stress is more closely related to how individuals approach stress through active or emotional strategies. Therefore, while there is a significant relationship between resilience and *coping stress*, resilience does not act as a direct mediator between bullying and *coping stress*, but rather as an internal factor and quality (secondary judgment) that strengthens the individual's ability to cope with it. Resilience as a determining factor in coping can affect adolescents' ability to manage stress even when they face bullying. Adolescents with a moderately high level of resilience can adapt to challenges and find constructive solutions to overcome stress (9). Additionally, it highlights that coping is influenced not only by internal factors but also by external factors, such as social support, environment, and available resources, that individuals possess.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that the types of bullying experienced by junior high school students, based on the order of the most experienced, are verbal, social, and physical. For the use of stress coping strategies, most victims of bullying use problem-focused coping. The reason bullying behavior has no effect is because several factors include context, individual factors, and environment, but bullying behavior remains a stressor that threatens adolescents. Resilience does not act as a direct mediator between bullying and *coping stress*, but rather as an internal factor and quality (secondary appraisal) that strengthens the individual's ability to cope with the stress of bullying.

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