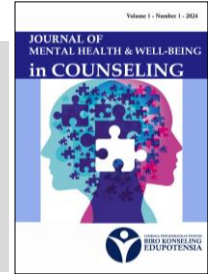


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The Relationship Between Psychological Well-Being and Bullying Among Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Psychological well-being is one of the essential indicators in adolescent mental development, which determines their ability to function adaptively within social environments, particularly at school. This study aims to analyze the description of psychological well-being and the correlation between psychological well-being and bullying among junior high school students who are victims of bullying. This research employed a quantitative approach with a descriptive correlational design, involving 209 students of SMPN 6 Tasikmalaya selected using purposive sampling. The instruments used included the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument (APRI) to measure bullying and the Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents (BSPWB-A) to measure psychological well-being. The findings indicated that among 71 students identified as bullying victims, the majority fell into the moderate category of psychological well-being (69.0%), followed by 21.1% in the low category and 9.9% in the high category. Correlation analysis revealed a negative relationship between psychological well-being and bullying, meaning that the higher the students' psychological well-being, the lower the level of bullying experienced. The dimension of positive relation with others demonstrated the strongest negative correlation, whereas autonomy was the lowest-scoring dimension among bullying victims. These findings emphasize the importance of emotional support-based interventions and school counseling services to strengthen students' psychological well-being, thus minimizing the impact of bullying.



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Introduction

Adolescence is an important and complex developmental stage, characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. At this stage, individuals begin to form their self-identity, learn to understand social roles, and strive to gain acceptance from their surrounding environment. Healthy social relationships become a crucial aspect of adolescent development. Support from family, peers, and teachers helps adolescents feel valued, accepted, and heard. Positive relationships also encourage adolescents to express themselves openly without fear of receiving negative judgments from others. Such social support and recognition strengthen self-confidence and play an important role in promoting adolescents' psychological well-being (Hasanuddin & Khairuddin, 2021). However, not all social relationships within adolescents' environments take place positively. In the context of education, the phenomenon of bullying emerges as a form of negative social interaction. Bullying is defined as aggressive behavior carried out repeatedly with the intention to harm others, whether physically, verbally, or socially (Parada, 2000). Rigby (2003) emphasized that bullying not only causes physical harm but also triggers deep emotional suffering such as fear, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Forms of bullying

may include teasing, insults, social exclusion, rumor spreading, and physical violence occurring in school settings.

Bullying has become a serious social issue among students. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA, 2020) reported 11,278 cases of bullying in schools. Globally, UNESCO (2020) recorded approximately 246 million children and adolescents worldwide experiencing violence or bullying in educational environments. These figures indicate that bullying is a widespread phenomenon that negatively affects students' psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is an essential aspect of adolescent development. According to Ryff (1989), psychological well-being is an optimal condition that reflects an individual's ability to function positively in life. Ryff (2013) proposed six major dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. Sugara et al. (2025) explained that individuals with high psychological well-being tend to hold a positive view of themselves, are able to regulate emotions, and maintain healthy social relationships. Conversely, low psychological well-being may hinder personal development and reduce emotional resilience. Adolescents with low psychological well-being often experience decreased self-esteem, depression, and difficulty adapting to social environments. Meanwhile, adolescents with good psychological well-being exhibit creativity, resilience, and the ability to manage stress positively (Morrish et al., 2018). The quality of adolescent development also significantly affects their psychological well-being in adulthood (Sugara et al., 2020).

In the context of bullying victims, reduced psychological well-being is often manifested through feelings of worthlessness, withdrawal from social interactions, and a loss of motivation to develop. Victims tend to experience disruptions in several dimensions of psychological well-being, especially in self-acceptance and positive relations with others (Nuryuliza et al., 2024). Therefore, understanding the psychological well-being of bullying victims is essential to determine the extent to which adolescents are able to maintain positive aspects of themselves despite social pressure (Maylinda et al., 2024). It is important to recognize that bullying is not merely negative behavior among students, but a complex social problem that can disrupt adolescents' psychological, emotional, and social development. Bullying victims often experience emotional distress, such as anxiety, helplessness, and loss of self-confidence, which gradually lower their psychological well-being (Sigurdson et al., 2015). This phenomenon highlights the urgent need for strong attention from schools because the impact of bullying is not only felt by individual victims but also influences the overall school social climate (Nuryuliza et al., 2024).

Preventive and intervention efforts can be implemented through guidance and counseling services. According to Kanti et al. (2024), the role of school counselors becomes highly important in helping students understand the psychological impact of bullying, manage negative emotions, and build self-confidence and positive social relationships. Guidance services may be conducted through classical guidance, individual counseling, or group counseling that focuses on strengthening self-acceptance, adaptability, and the development of empathy among students. Through these activities, students are expected to gain new awareness about the importance of building a safe, respectful, and violence-free school environment both physically and psychologically. Thus, this study aims to provide an overview of the psychological well-being of bullying victims at a public junior high school in Tasikmalaya City. The findings of this study are expected to serve as a foundation for developing more effective guidance and counseling services to address the psychological impact of bullying and support the creation of a healthy, supportive learning environment that prioritizes the psychological well-being of all students.

Method

Participants

This study employed a quantitative method with a descriptive design and involved a total of 209 students. From this population, 71 students were selected as participants using purposive sampling, namely a sampling technique based on predetermined criteria (Rubison, 2024). The inclusion criteria consisted of students aged 13–15 years, students identified as victims of bullying, and students with low psychological well-being. This technique was chosen to obtain a general description of psychological well-being among students who are victims of bullying.

Measure

Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument

The Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument (APRI) was developed by Roberto H. Parada in 2000 to measure adolescents' involvement in bullying behaviors, whether as perpetrators or victims. The instrument consists of 36 items divided into 6 subscales, each of which measures the roles of perpetrator and victim across three forms of bullying: physical, verbal, and social (relational). The instrument has been adapted by Wardani et al. (2023), showing acceptable internal consistency for both the perpetrator and victim subscales (alpha

coefficient perpetrator = .93, victim = .94). The total 36 items are divided into two parts; however, only one part was used in this study Part B, which contains 18 items that measure bullying from the victim perspective. The APRI uses a Likert scale with six response categories: 1 = never, 2 = occasionally, 3 = once or twice a month, 4 = once a week, 5 = several times a week, and 6 = every day.

Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents (BSPWB-A)

The Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents (BSPWB-A) was developed by Viejo et al. (2018) based on the theoretical framework of Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale (RPWB) developed by Carol D. Ryff in 1989. The scale is specifically designed to measure psychological well-being in adolescents using a eudaimonic approach, which emphasizes that well-being is not merely about happiness but also involves self-development, positive relationships, and a meaningful life. BSPWB-A consists of 20 items measuring four dimensions of psychological well-being: self-acceptance, positive interpersonal relationships, autonomy, and personal growth. The instrument was adapted into Indonesian by Sunardy et al. (2023) through a double-translation procedure (forward and back-translation) by professional translators, followed by expert review and readability testing to ensure that each item can be easily understood by adolescents. Based on validity testing using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the four-factor structure of the Indonesian version of BSPWB-A was confirmed, and reliability testing showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.87, which is categorized as high. The scale uses a six-point Likert response format (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree), making it appropriate for assessing the psychological well-being of adolescents in Indonesia.

Procedure

The study began with coordination with the school to determine the schedule and classes for implementation. After obtaining permission, the researcher provided an explanation to students regarding the objectives and procedures of the study and requested their participation consent. Students were then administered two instruments: the victim section of the Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument and the Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents (BSPWB-A). The questionnaires were completed in the computer laboratory with supervision to ensure that instructions were understood without influencing the students' responses. Once the questionnaires were completed, the researcher checked the completeness of the data and processed them to describe the level of psychological well-being and the relationship between psychological well-being and bullying among students.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was carried out through three main procedures. First, descriptive statistics were used to identify general trends and score distribution characteristics of the Psychological Well-Being and Bullying variables. Descriptive statistics were presented to illustrate the overall score profiles and the category levels of Psychological Well-Being (low, medium, high) and bullying (low, medium, high), providing an initial understanding of students' psychological well-being conditions and bullying experiences. Second, the relationship between Total Psychological Well-Being and Total Bullying was analyzed using Pearson correlation to evaluate the strength and direction of associations between the two main variables. This analysis allowed the researcher to determine whether increases or decreases in psychological well-being were associated with changes in the level of bullying experienced by students, as well as the degree to which the relationship reflected adaptive or maladaptive patterns in adolescent development. Third, further correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between each dimension of Psychological Well-Being (Self-Acceptance, Positive Relation with Others, Autonomy, and Personal Growth) and the three forms of bullying (physical, verbal, and social). This analysis aimed to obtain a deeper understanding of the relational patterns between the two constructs, including identification of the Psychological Well-Being dimensions that showed the strongest and weakest associations with each form of bullying. Through this analytical approach, the study was able to capture relevant psychological dynamics in the bullying experiences of students within school environments.

Results

Based on the demographic data presented in Table 1, the table illustrates the characteristics of the students who participated in this study. In terms of gender category, the number of female participants was slightly higher than male participants, with 108 female students (51.67%) and 101 male students (48.33%). Based on age category, the age distribution ranged from 13 to 15 years old. The largest group consisted of 14-year-old students, totaling 109 students (52.15%). The next highest proportion was 13-year-old students with 92 participants (44.02%), while the smallest percentage was 15-year-old students, with only 8 participants (3.83%). Overall, these data indicate that the majority of participants were in the early to middle stages of adolescence, which is generally considered a critical phase in the development of self-identity and social relationships. Viewed from the category of bullying identification, most students reported not experiencing bullying (138 students, 66.03%),

while 71 students (33.97%) stated that they had experienced bullying. These findings show that although the majority of students did not experience bullying, there remains a considerable group who were victims and require further psychological attention.

Table 1. Demographic Data of Students

Demographic Data	N	Percentase
Gender		
Male	101	48.33
Female	108	51.67
Age		
13	92	44.02
14	109	52.15
15	8	3.83
Identification		
Experienced Bullying	71	33.97
Did Not Experience Bullying	138	66.03

Based on the general description of psychological well-being among bullying victims, the findings indicate a diverse distribution of psychological well-being levels among participants. Of the total 71 adolescent victims of bullying, most 49 adolescents (69.0%) fell into the moderate category. This finding suggests that the majority of bullying victims possess a sufficiently good level of psychological well-being to function adaptively in daily life, although they still have the potential to experience psychological vulnerability when facing greater emotional or social pressure. Furthermore, 15 adolescents (21.1%) were categorized as low, indicating that some participants experienced obstacles in achieving a healthy psychological state. Adolescents in this category are at risk of exhibiting decreased self-esteem, emotional difficulties, and limitations in forming positive interpersonal relationships due to bullying. This condition suggests the need for psychological support and further interventions to improve their psychological well-being. Meanwhile, 7 adolescents (9.9%) were categorized as high, indicating that a small proportion of bullying victims were still able to maintain adequate psychological well-being. Adolescents in this category tend to have more effective coping strategies, good emotional regulation, and a positive mindset toward themselves and their social environment despite experiencing bullying.

When viewed by dimension, the highest mean score was found in personal growth ($M = 22.30$; $SD = 3.27$), indicating that many adolescents still perceive progressive self-development and increasing personal potential. The dimension of self-acceptance also showed a relatively strong score ($M = 21.44$; $SD = 4.15$), suggesting that some adolescents are still able to accept themselves despite their experiences of being bullied. In the dimension of positive relation with others ($M = 18.14$; $SD = 3.92$), well-being was at a moderate level, reflecting that bullying may have affected the quality of interpersonal relationships. Meanwhile, the lowest score was found in the autonomy dimension ($M = 13.63$; $SD = 3.87$), indicating that bullying victims tend to show lower levels of psychological independence, including difficulties in making decisions or acting freely without social pressure.

Overall, these findings show that although most bullying victims fall within the moderate level of psychological well-being, special attention is required for those in the low category. This is important to ensure that psychological support and counseling interventions are delivered to enhance the well-being of bullying victims. Details of the psychological well-being distribution are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Overview of Psychological Well-Being Among Bullying Victims

Range	Category	f	%
87-104	High	7	9.9
70-86	Medium	49	69.0
51-69	Low	15	21.1
Total		71	100.0
Dimensions		M	SD
Self-acceptance		21.44	4.15
Positive relation with others		18.14	3.92
Autonomy		13.63	3.87
Personal Growth		22.30	3.27

Correlation analysis showed that Psychological Well-Being was negatively correlated with all forms of bullying among students. Overall, Psychological Well-Being displayed a negative correlation with bullying levels, indicating that the higher the psychological well-being, the lower the bullying experienced, although the correlation strength was weak. When analyzed by dimensions of Psychological Well-Being, the negative correlation pattern remained consistent across all forms of bullying. In the Self-Acceptance dimension, the negative correlation suggests that students with better self-acceptance tend to report lower levels of bullying. Low appreciation of self and negative self-evaluation may increase vulnerability to becoming bullying victims (Zakiyah & Khusumadewi, 2024). The dimension positive relation with others demonstrated the strongest negative correlation with bullying overall, indicating that positive interpersonal qualities such as trust, empathy, and social support play an important role in reducing bullying risk (Wardani et al., 2023). Students with good social connectedness are more protected from verbal aggression, physical aggression, and social exclusion (Prabowo, 2016). The autonomy dimension also showed a negative correlation, meaning that students who remain firm in their stance and are not easily influenced by social pressure tend to experience lower bullying. Although the correlation is weak, this finding suggests that students who lack emotional and social independence are at greater risk of becoming bullying targets. Additionally, the personal growth dimension also presented a negative correlation with bullying, indicating that students with strong self-development orientation, learning motivation, and the ability to view experiences positively are better able to adapt socially and are less likely to become objects of aggressive behavior (Sugara et al., 2025). Overall, despite the weak correlation strength, the consistent negative pattern shows that Psychological Well-Being has a substantial relationship with students' vulnerability to bullying. The better the adolescents' psychological well-being, whether through self-acceptance, social relationships, autonomy, or personal growth, the lower the likelihood of experiencing bullying. These findings reinforce the importance of strengthening psychological well-being in school environments as a preventive strategy against bullying. A detailed distribution of the correlation between Psychological Well-Being and bullying is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation Between Psychological Well-Being and Bullying Among Adolescents

Scale	Psychological Well-Being	Self-Acceptance	Positive Relation with Others	Autonomy	Personal Growth
Total Bullying	-0.271	-0.030	-0.385	-0.251	-0.016
Physical Bullying	-0.115	0.034	-0.245	-0.111	0.012
Verbal Bullying	-0.232	-0.021	-0.363	-0.205	0.028
Social Bullying	-0.327	-0.044	-0.404	-0.316	-0.063

Discussions

This study aimed to describe the level of psychological well-being among adolescents who are victims of bullying. The findings revealed that most students fell into the moderate category of psychological well-being, while others were categorized as low and high. This variation indicates that the impact of bullying is not uniform for every individual, but rather depends on factors such as the intensity of bullying, emotional regulation capacity, and the level of environmental support received. Consistent with previous research, bullying can trigger fear, anxiety, and decreased sense of safety, thereby disrupting adolescents' emotional development and social relationships (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Within the Psychological Well-Being framework, such pressure has the potential to reduce key aspects such as self-acceptance and positive relations with others (Ryff, 1995). Students

categorized in the moderate range demonstrated the ability to manage emotions, build social relationships, and maintain a generally positive self-view. Meanwhile, students in the high category displayed strong self-acceptance and personal growth, whereas students in the low category continued to struggle with emotional regulation and self-confidence. This condition aligns with the concept of Psychological Well-Being, which emphasizes that well-being is not the absence of stress, but the ability to find meaning in life, build healthy relationships, and develop one's potential amidst social challenges (Ryff, 2013). The findings also suggest that a portion of students maintain relatively good psychological well-being, reflecting their ability to bounce back and adapt after experiencing pressure a condition closely related to emotional regulation development and support from peers or teachers (Maylinda et al., 2024).

The variation in scores across dimensions demonstrates that psychological well-being does not develop uniformly. The dimensions of personal growth and self-acceptance were relatively high, indicating that some adolescents are able to interpret negative experiences as part of their developmental process. This finding is in line with the Psychological Well-Being concept, which highlights the importance of internal psychological functioning such as autonomy, self-acceptance, and personal potential (Ryff, 2013). Similarly, Purwaningsih et al. (2025) stated that strengthening internal factors can improve psychological well-being, and Sugara et al. (2025) found that emotional regulation skills significantly contribute to improving adolescents' psychological well-being. Conversely, the dimensions of autonomy and positive relations with others showed lower scores, suggesting that bullying strongly affects adolescents' ability to make independent decisions and form secure interpersonal relationships (Xaviera & Kristinawati, 2024). This finding is reinforced by research showing that social support plays an important role in maintaining emotional stability and social relationships among adolescents (Hasanuddin & Khairuddin, 2021). Support from peers, teachers, and family helps students feel accepted and valued, thereby strengthening aspects of self-acceptance and positive relations (Soputan & Mulawarman, 2021). In addition, Wardani et al. (2023) found that bullying behavior in students was generally categorized as low, enabling some students to demonstrate good psychological adaptation even within environments that pose social pressure.

Social support becomes one of the most significant protective factors for bullying victims. A supportive social environment helps reduce emotional distress caused by bullying and strengthens aspects of positive relations and environmental mastery (Hasanuddin & Khairuddin, 2021). Furthermore, gender differences appear to influence psychological reactions, with male students generally showing higher independence and environmental mastery, while female students tend to be more vulnerable to emotional pressure (Amalia, 2023). This pattern is consistent with findings that adolescent girls are more sensitive to social stressors and show lower well-being in certain dimensions (Nuryuliza et al., 2024). The analysis of the relationship between bullying and psychological well-being showed a consistent negative relationship. The higher the level of bullying experienced, the lower the psychological well-being of students. Bullying experiences disrupt emotional regulation, reduce self-esteem, and weaken adaptive capacity in social situations (Morrish et al., 2018). Such effects are evident across several dimensions of Psychological Well-Being, including self-acceptance, interpersonal relationships, autonomy, and personal growth (Ryff, 1995). This pattern is further supported by Momose and Ishida (2024), who found that bullying has long-term psychological consequences extending into adulthood.

Nonetheless, this study provides an optimistic perspective because a considerable number of students maintained moderate to high psychological well-being. This condition shows that the impact of bullying can be minimized when individuals receive strong social support and employ effective coping strategies (Azpiazu et al., 2024). In other words, psychological well-being is not solely influenced by bullying experiences but also by the individual's ability to interpret and cope with them (Xaviera & Kristinawati, 2024). Internal factors such as personality, confidence, and coping strategies play an important role (Compas et al., 2017), while external factors such as parental and teacher support serve as psychological protectors (Amalia, 2023). Thus, the psychological well-being of bullying victims emerges as a result of the interaction between the individual's psychological capacity and the quality of environmental support (Ryff, 2013). The present study reinforces the importance of providing psychological support to improve student well-being. Counseling services can help students manage emotions, regulate thoughts, and deal with social pressure through adaptive coping strategies (Kanti et al., 2023).

Implications

The findings of this study carry important implications for the field of guidance and counseling, particularly in the development of services focused on improving the psychological well-being of adolescents who are victims of bullying. The fact that most students fall into the moderate category of psychological well-being shows that they still possess adaptive capacity; however, they remain vulnerable if not provided with interventions that reinforce self-acceptance, positive interpersonal relationships, and autonomy the dimensions identified as most influential in the context of bullying. This condition highlights the need for counseling strategies specifically designed to enhance Psychological Well-Being, especially for students who demonstrate low scores in several dimensions. From a practical standpoint, the results underline the importance of equipping

school counselors and mental health practitioners with the competencies required to apply interventions that help increase psychological well-being (Sugara et al., 2025). In terms of intervention, hypnosis becomes a relevant approach to supporting bullying victims in improving psychological well-being. Hypnosis enables individuals to enter a deep relaxation state, making it easier to access and modify negative emotional imprints stored in the subconscious mind (Elkins, 2016). Through directed therapeutic suggestions, counselors can reinforce more adaptive thought patterns, enhance self-control, and reduce emotional distress caused by bullying experiences. In addition, self-hypnosis techniques may serve as a supplementary strategy for students to manage stress, calm their thoughts, and build a more positive self-perception independently (Sugara, 2023). Thus, hypnosis-based interventions have the potential to strengthen aspects of psychological well-being that are impaired by bullying.

Conclusions

This study provides empirical insights into the psychological well-being of junior high school students who are victims of bullying. The findings show that most bullying victims fall into the moderate category of psychological well-being, indicating that they are still able to function adaptively but remain vulnerable to emotional and social pressures. Some students fell into the low category and were at risk of experiencing decreased self-esteem, emotional regulation difficulties, and challenges in developing interpersonal relationships. Correlation analysis also confirmed that the higher the level of bullying experienced by students, the lower their psychological well-being, with the dimension of positive relation with others being the most strongly affected. These findings highlight the urgency of providing psychological support and counseling-based interventions to help bullying victims strengthen self-acceptance and the quality of interpersonal relationships. Overall, this study emphasizes that the psychological well-being of bullying victims is not evenly distributed across dimensions and requires targeted psychological support so that students can face developmental challenges in a healthier and more resilient manner. In addition, this study opens opportunities for future research on protective factors and effective intervention approaches to improve the psychological well-being of bullying victims in school settings.

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