



ANALYSIS OF DETERMINANTS OF BULLYING TENDENCIES AMONG URBAN AND RURAL ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

Bullying is a serious issue that threatens adolescent mental health and shows a high prevalence in Indonesia. This behavior is influenced by various internal and external factors, yet few studies have comprehensively compared bullying tendencies between adolescents in urban and rural settings. Objective: This study aims to analyze the main determinants influencing bullying tendencies among adolescents aged 12–15 years and to examine interregional differences. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design was used. A total of 167 students were selected through cluster random sampling from SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh and MTsN 6 Montasik. Data were analyzed using logistic regression and multinomial logistic regression tests. The results showed that parenting style, gender, and self-esteem were significantly associated with bullying tendencies. Authoritarian parenting showed the highest influence (Odds Ratio [OR] = 13.78; $p = 0.001$), followed by permissive parenting (OR = 6.15; $p = 0.043$), and self-esteem (OR = 8.81; $p = 0.001$). Gender also contributed, with males having a higher tendency to engage in bullying than females (OR = 2.54; $p = 0.085$). In contrast, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nutritional status (BMI), social skills and popularity, and academic achievement showed no statistically significant associations. The study also found that students in MTsN 6 Montasik (rural area) had higher bullying behavior (25.61%) compared to those in SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh (urban area) at 12.94%. These findings affirm the importance of appropriate parenting, healthy self-esteem, and sensitivity to gender differences as key elements in bullying prevention efforts.

Keywords: adolescents; bullying; gender; parenting style; regional difference; self-esteem

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a form of psychological and physical violence that occurs repeatedly and has negative impacts on adolescents' mental and social development. In Indonesia, bullying has become a serious public health issue. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2018 reported that 41.1% of Indonesian students experienced bullying, a figure significantly higher than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average of 22.7% (Syahzidah & Savira, 2024). Furthermore, data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) recorded over 2,400 cases of bullying between 2011 and 2019, highlighting the urgency of this issue for the younger generation's well-being (Wahani, Isroini, & Setyawan, 2022).

Adolescents aged 12–15 are in a critical developmental phase, characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes. Immature emotional regulation and strong environmental influences make them vulnerable to social pressures, including becoming perpetrators or targets of bullying (Agisyaputri, Nadhirah, & Saripah, 2023; Mustari, Sari, & Yarni, 2024). Parenting styles, as a primary system of interaction within the family, play a significant role in shaping adolescents' aggressive behaviors. Authoritarian parenting, which is rigid, or permissive parenting, which is overly lenient, have both been associated with increased risk of involvement in bullying (Syukri, 2020; Taib, Ummah, & Bun, 2020).

In addition to parenting style, self-esteem is also a critical determinant in the development of adolescent behavior. Individuals with low self-esteem tend to be more vulnerable as victims, whereas those with narcissistic high self-esteem are more likely to engage in bullying (Ahmed, Metwaly, Elbeh, Galal, & Shaaban, 2022; Cuesta et al., 2021). Other contributing factors reported in the literature include gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nutritional status, social skills, and academic achievement. However, few studies have comprehensively examined how these factors interact within different social environments, particularly in urban versus rural settings.

This gap is important to address, as social and cultural characteristics between urban and rural adolescents may influence their exposure to bullying and their behavioral responses. Adolescents in urban areas may experience greater academic and social pressure, while those in rural areas may be influenced by stricter social norms or a lack of parental supervision (Malecki, Demaray, Smith, & Emmons, 2020; Syukri, 2020). This study aims to analyze the key determinants of bullying tendencies among adolescents aged 12–15 in both urban and rural settings, and to compare the influence of those factors based on residential location. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of contextual and evidence-based interventions for bullying prevention among Indonesian youth.

METHOD

This research employed a quantitative study with a cross-sectional design conducted in January 2025. The sample consisted of 167 students aged 12–15 years, selected using cluster random sampling from two schools: SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh representing an urban area, and MTsN 6 Montasik, Aceh Besar representing a rural area. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire that had been tested for validity and reliability, covering eight independent variables: parenting style, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nutritional status (based on BMI), self-esteem, social skills and popularity, and academic achievement. The dependent variable was bullying tendency, classified into two categories: high and low. Data analysis was carried out in stages, beginning with univariate analysis to describe the frequency distribution of each variable. Bivariate analysis was then conducted using simple logistic regression to examine the relationship between each independent variable and bullying tendency. Variables with a $p\text{-value} \leq 0.25$ were included in a multivariate analysis using multinomial logistic regression to identify the most influential determinants. All analyses were performed using Stata software with a significance level set at $p < 0.05$.

RESULT

This study involved 167 respondents, comprising 85 students from SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh (urban area) and 82 students from MTsN 6 Montasik, Aceh Besar (rural area). Most of the respondents were aged between 14 and 15 years, with a fairly balanced gender distribution: 71 male students (42.5%) and 96 female students (57.5%). Based on univariate analysis, the majority of respondents were categorized as having low bullying tendencies, accounting for 135 students (80.84%), while 32 students (19.16%) showed high bullying tendencies. When analyzed by school, students from SMP Negeri 1 Banda Aceh predominantly demonstrated low bullying tendencies (87.06%), while the proportion was slightly lower at MTsN 6 Montasik (74.39%). This indicates a higher proportion of students with high bullying tendencies in the rural school compared to the urban school.

Bivariate analysis using logistic regression revealed that three variables were significantly associated with bullying tendencies: parenting style, gender, and self-esteem. Students with authoritarian parenting were 13.78 times more likely to exhibit high bullying behavior ($p = 0.001$), and those with permissive parenting had a 6.15 times greater risk ($p = 0.043$), compared to those with democratic parenting. Male students were also more likely to engage in bullying compared to female students, with an odds ratio of 2.54 ($p = 0.085$). Interestingly,

students with high self-esteem were found to be 8.81 times more likely to exhibit bullying behavior than those with low self-esteem ($p = 0.001$). On the other hand, variables such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nutritional status, social skills and popularity, and academic achievement were not statistically associated with bullying tendencies. Multivariate analysis using multinomial logistic regression confirmed that authoritarian parenting and high self-esteem were the two most influential factors affecting bullying tendencies. Gender also remained a relevant variable, although its p -value was above the threshold of 0.05.

Table 1.

Multivariate analysis			
Variable	Category	OR	p-value
Authoritarian Parenting	vs Democratic	13.78	0.001
Permissive Parenting	vs Democratic	6.15	0.043
High Self-Esteem	vs Low	8.81	0.001
Gender (Male)	vs Female	2.54	0.085

These findings indicate that family characteristics, particularly parenting style, and psychological factors such as self-esteem play a crucial role in shaping bullying tendencies among adolescents. Gender also contributes to this tendency, with male adolescents more likely to engage in bullying behavior than their female counterparts.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study revealed that adolescent bullying tendencies are significantly influenced by parenting style, self-esteem, and gender. These findings support the theory that bullying behavior is the result of a complex interaction between psychological factors, family environment, and individual characteristics. First, authoritarian parenting emerged as the strongest determinant of bullying tendencies. Students raised in authoritarian environments were found to be nearly 14 times more likely to exhibit high bullying behavior compared to those raised with a democratic parenting style. Authoritarian parenting is characterized by strict control, harsh punishment, and a lack of open communication, which may lead adolescents to channel their frustration and emotional stress through aggressive behavior. This finding is in line with studies by Syukri (2020) and Putri (2017), who noted that children subjected to authoritarian parenting often experience psychological tension and difficulty expressing emotions in a healthy manner, thereby increasing the likelihood of bullying behavior. Similarly, permissive parenting, though generally perceived as more lenient, was also associated with bullying behavior due to the absence of consistent boundaries and discipline from parents.

Second, high self-esteem was surprisingly associated with a higher likelihood of bullying behavior. This supports the theory of threatened egotism proposed by Baumeister, Smart, and Boden (1996), which explains that individuals with high but fragile self-esteem tend to react more strongly to social threats and are thus more likely to engage in aggression to defend their self-image. Among adolescents, narcissistic high self-esteem can manifest as bullying behavior intended to assert dominance and control within peer groups. This phenomenon is also supported by the findings of Bushman and Baumeister (1998), who observed that adolescents with high self-esteem often feel superior and highly sensitive to rejection, which may trigger aggressive responses.

Third, gender was also found to influence bullying tendencies, with male students exhibiting a higher probability of engaging in bullying compared to female students. This finding is consistent with previous studies showing that males are more likely to be involved in physical and direct forms of bullying, while females are more inclined to engage in relational bullying such as social exclusion or gossip. Finiswati and Matulesy (2018) explained that these differences in aggressive behavior between boys and girls are shaped by social and cultural factors that influence gender expectations from an early age.

Conversely, variables such as ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nutritional status, social skills and popularity, and academic achievement were not significantly associated with bullying tendencies. This suggests that psychosocial factors and family dynamics have a greater influence on bullying behavior than demographic or academic characteristics. Nevertheless, these variables remain important for future research, particularly through broader studies or qualitative approaches.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the importance of strengthening family parenting practices and fostering healthy self-esteem as key strategies for bullying prevention. School-based interventions involving teachers, counselors, and parental training in democratic parenting may serve as effective starting points for creating a supportive social environment that promotes positive adolescent development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that bullying tendencies among adolescents aged 12–15 years are significantly influenced by parenting style, self-esteem, and gender. Authoritarian and permissive parenting styles were found to increase the risk of involvement in bullying behavior, whereas the democratic parenting style served a protective role. Unstable high self-esteem also emerged as a risk factor, highlighting the importance of developing healthy and realistic self-esteem in adolescents. Male students were more likely to engage in bullying compared to female students. These findings underscore the need for interventions that focus on both family and school environments, particularly in promoting healthy parenting practices and fostering positive self-awareness among adolescents. Bullying prevention efforts should involve cross-sector collaboration, including teachers, parents, and school health professionals, to create a safe and supportive social environment conducive to optimal adolescent development.

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