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The Relationship between Bullying Types and Social Supports in South Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study employed a quantitative research method with 545 samples selected among senior high school students. Bullying occurs in many forms in South Sulawesi schools. Verbal bullying has been identified to be the most dominant bullying type. Social supports could minimize the effects and prevalence of bullying in school. The research also found that bullying type is significantly correlated with the existence of social supports in school. Therefore, social support is crucial for students.

Keywords: Bullying; Verbal Bullying; Social Support; Indonesia

Introduction

Bullying is a worldwide problem that has deleterious effects on students in general schools, and students have the right to study in safe schools that are conducive to learning. For the past three decades, bullying in school has gained increasing attention in the United State due to the media focus on bullying as the a cause of crime (Dake et al., 2004). Additionally, bullying has become a major concern of learners, parents, educators, and researchers, with bullying galvanizing a significant amount of research in the past fifteen years (Craig, Henderson & Murphy, 2000).

There have been few studies on bullying in Indonesia, especially in the South Sulawesi province. Therefore, this article identifies a need for research on the bullying behaviours of the students in South Sulawesi and the social supports that create safe schools that are conducive to learning.

A recent survey in Yogyakarta by Hinitz, Shore and Kumara (2010) revealed that the types of bullying behaviours found among students include verbal aggressions, such as teasing (88.62%) and insulting (34.92%); physical bullying, such as hitting (73.17 %), biting (19.51%), and kicking (63.41 %); and other psychologically bullying behaviour, such as

excluding friends from groups (64.23%) and forbidding friends from sitting near their friends (60.16%).

This negative phenomenon should be treated proactively to prevent it from growing and becoming more dangerous. From this point of view, researchers formulated the objectives of research to investigate the types of bullying that exist in South Sulawesi, Indonesia and to determine the relationship between bullying and social support. This research is crucial to anticipating the bullying that might recur in schools.

Bullying Definition

Over the past four decades, most of the findings about bullying came from the work of Olweus (1978). In terms of the prevalence of bullying, Olweus (1999) carried out a survey of Norwegian students in 1987. In this research, it was found that nine percent of 140,000 total students were bullied and that seven percent of the students bullied their friends. In addition to the work by Olweus, researchers identified the existence of bullying in countries such as in the USA, Australia, Finland, Japan, South Korea, and Malaysia. The results, however, varied among those countries.

Although a general consensus on the definition of bullying has not yet been reached by psychological and educational experts (Elinoff, Chafoleas & Sassu, 2004; Espelage & Swearer, 2003), most researchers have agreed with Olweus' definition of bullying, which is repetition of a harmful act towards another involving an imbalance of power (Garrity, Jens, Porter & Stoker, 2002). This definition of bullying became the starting point for worldwide research on school bullying (Pateraki & Houndoumadi, 2001; Stevens, De Bourdeaudhuij & Van Oost, 2000), which exposed bullying as a grave educational problem in many countries that can harm schools and students.

Physical bullying can be categorized as hitting, kicking, beating and other types of physical assault. This type of bullying can be fatal to students. Berger (2007) described a tragic bullying case in Chicago where a boy committed suicide after another student spilled chocolate milk on his sweatshirt. Additionally, research conducted by Coloroso (2003) found that the most detectable type of bullying is physical bullying.

Verbal bullying, which is categorized as direct bullying, such as showing low respect to someone or calling a victim names, has been found to occur more often on school playgrounds than physical bullying; however, it is difficult to verify the existence of such bullying (Elizabeth Jean Zacher, 2009). Additionally, a study showed that verbal bullying was reported twice as often as physical bullying (Berger, 2007). Lee (2004). Coloroso (2003) examined the issue from a slightly different angle by investigating the bullying types from the gender perspective. Verbal bullying is one of the most commonly used forms of bullying, constituting approximately seventy percent of the bullying among males and females and having an immediate effect. Meanwhile, verbal bullying is a powerful and may diminish the spirit of the victims (Coloroso, 2003). Despite the variations among the types of bullying, most researchers agree that bullying has the following five characteristics: (1) the bully means to instil fear in the victim, (2) the aggression occurs repeatedly towards the victim, (3) bullying occurs in social groups, (4) the bully is socially or financially stronger than the victim (5) the bullying victim does not inflame the bullying using verbal or physical bullying (Greene, 2000; Bonds & Stoker, 2000).

Social Support

Demaray and Malecki (2003) posited that social support is a helping behaviour that contributes to protecting people, both physically and mentally aiding those who suffer from mental illness. For the past two decades, social support has been measured in various ways. Researchers who have identified social support (Demaray & Malecki, 2002; Wenz-Gross & Siperstein, 1998) have largely viewed social support as a massive construct without identifying its specific forms.

Obviously, social support is crucial both in maintaining an optimal life and reducing the likelihood of negative effects when someone experiences stress. Cobb (1976) asserted the positive influence of social support in a typical picture of social support, such as the feelings of belonging, being appreciated, and being valued/esteemed in different interactions and environments. Social support is also sometimes categorized as a “buffer”, with the social support as a source or asset that is accessed to help someone cope with stress (Vedder, Boekaerts & Seegers, 2005; Cohen & Wills, 1985).

Several studies examined the relations among perceived social support, sociometric status and academic success. Szabo (1994) found a relationship between interpersonal relationships and social support, whereas other researchers (Cutrano et al., 1994) emphasized student academic achievement and perceived social support from family. In a similar vein, (Lubber et al., 2006) found that approval by friends can support academic success. Austin and Drapper (1984) discovered that students who have greater-than-average academic success are perceived to be more sympathetic and well regarded than those who do poorly. Thus, researchers, particularly in the areas of psychology, education and health, generally concluded that social support is beneficial to people.

Understanding the prevalence of bullying and social support is key in addressing the bullying process in school. Studies have made a variety of findings about intervention programmes in different places, with different samples and using different interventions. A study conducted in Australian and Japanese schools by Murray and Slee (2006) put forward the view that increasing the social network support in school will increase social learning and reduce stress. Additionally, social support reflects a healthier lifestyle (Hanna, 2001).

Bullying and Social Support

The relationship between social support and students' behavioural and school adjustment has been significantly studied regarding levels of stress. Similarly, Dubow and Tisak (1989) found that a positive perception of social support and problem-solving skills affect the connection between students' stress level and school achievement and conduct. According to research, social support providers among peers, teachers, and parents help decrease the negative effects related to bullying (Rothon et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2009; Yeung & Leadbeater, 2010).

Several studies have conceptualized bullying within the ecological framework (Espelage & Swearer, 2004), and social support is one of the most important related factors influencing outcomes and is well documented (Natvig, Albrektsen, & Qvarnstrom, 2001; Beran & Tutty, 2002; Furlong et al., 1995). Additionally, the levels of social support vary

based on the individual's role in the bullying relationship (victim, bully, bully/victim, bystander). Now, social support is identified as bridging the relationship between bullying behaviour and adjustment outcomes (Davidson & Demaray, 2007). However, findings from this research are tentative and require further empirical study and overarching explanation.

In some respects, Furlong et al. (1995) were the first to identify the perception and role of social support. They carried out a study of students in grades 5-12 in California. This research assessed 6,819 students using a series of questions regarding bullying prevalence to investigate social support from teachers. The study showed that bullying victims received less support from teachers and peers.

Consistent with Rigby (2000) and Beran and Tutty (2002), empirical studies of the social support for perpetrators have been conducted. The results of these studies were similar to those involving bullying victims. Perpetrators of bullying also received less social support than non-perpetrators (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Demaray & Malecki, 2003b; Duncan, 2004; Malecki & Demaray, 2006). For example, Malecki and Demaray (2003) ascertained that a lack of support from teachers, parents, and classmates is predictive of bringing a weapon to school among adolescents. Additionally, those students who received less social support from teachers, classmates, and others in school had the potential to become bullies (Malecki & Demaray, 2003b).

Previous research has found that bullying victims experience less support from classmates, close friends and schools (Olweus, 1993; Schreck et al., 2003; Rigby, 2000). Meanwhile, bullying behaviours are linked to a lack of parental support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003b) and school support, excluding classmate support (Bosworth et al., 1999). Research has shown that victims consider social support from other sources to be important and that students who most need social support might not receive that support (Demaray & Malecki, 2003a). These obvious findings in the research have revealed the importance of classmate social support in students' outcomes (Demaray & Malecki, 2003b; Kashani et al., 1994).

Research Method

The study employed a quantitative research method. The respondents were senior high school students in the South Sulawesi province, Indonesia. The researcher applied stratified random sampling to select 545 students from a population of 4,773 students in six regencies in South Sulawesi. The sample from each grade was selected to make the number of sampling representative of that grade.

Questionnaires were distributed to identify and assess the prevalence of bullying. The analysis of the findings used SPSS to determine the mean score and the most dominant bullying type that occurs in South Sulawesi. Additionally, the relationship between bullying and social support was analysed using the Pearson correlation.

This study investigated the most dominant bullying type that occurs in school and sought to determine the significant relationship between bullying type and social support. Therefore, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What is the most dominant bullying type in South Sulawesi schools?
2. What is the relationship between bullying types and social support in South Sulawesi schools?

Findings and Discussion

Twenty-eight questions addressed the bullying types. Each question was answered using a scale ranging from 1-5 to indicate the frequency of each behaviour. The results of the statistical analysis reveal verbal bullying to be the most dominant type of bullying. Table 1 compares the four types of bullying, namely physical, verbal, social and cyber.

Table 1 Mean Scores of Four Types of Bullying

No.	Bullying Type	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Physical	22.1	7.84
2	Verbal	28.1	2.86
3	Social	26.6	7.63
4	Cyber	12.4	4.46

Verbal, physical, social and cyber bullying are experienced by students in the South Sulawesi province. Verbal bullying was found to occur most frequently (28.1), followed by social bullying (26.6), physical bullying at 22.1), and cyber bullying (12.4), as the least common bullying type in South Sulawesi schools.

From some points of view, previous literature supports several of the findings of this analysis. A survey by Harrys and Petrie (2002) also found that verbal bullying is more common than physical bullying. They further found that approximately 45 % to 50 % of students stated that they had been teased and called names in school. Other studies have found youth and children to experience more verbal bullying than other types (Oliver, Young & Lasalle, 1994; Boulton, Trueman, & Flemington, 2002)). Recent research by Rose et al. (2010) found that verbal bullying seemed to increase significantly among the other bullying types in school, such as name calling, teasing and mimicking. Likewise, in their survey of the national prevalence of bullying forms in schools. Wang, Lannotti and Nansel (2009) found that verbal bullying is the main form of bullying faced by students. Another study showed that verbal bullying occurs twice as often as physical bullying (Berger, 2007). A similar finding noted that students practiced many types of bullying in school (Felix & McMahon, 2006). The current research, however, finds that verbal bullying is the most form of bullying in schools in the South Sulawesi province.

A survey of the types and effects of bullying conducted in several primary schools in the Pangkep regency found that more than sixty percent of the victims were bullied verbally and the rest were bullied physically and socially in school (Halim, 2003). The survey further revealed that verbal bullying is most likely to occur on the school playing field and

in the lunch room. That investigation of bullying has commonalities with the current research in terms of the existence of bullying types, such as verbal, physical, social and cyber bullying. However, that study investigated bullying more deeply and made claims about where in school the bullying normally occurs.

In contrast, Rigby (2000) acknowledged that social bullying is the most common type of bullying reported by students. Some examples of social bullying are ignoring a classmate who wants to join a group that is working together or moving away when the victim approaches. The current study found that social bullying is the second most frequent type of bullying in schools. "Students did not let you work in the group" and "students refused to talk to you on purpose" are identified as two examples that are more dominant than others. Furthermore, Rigby (2000) stated that social bullying is also considered more common than cyber bullying among high school students (Lewis, 2011). One hundred six students took part in the study, and the results indicate that 70 % of the students were bullied socially and that 29 % of the student were cyber-bullied. Research by Lewis (2011) was consistent with the current findings that social bullying is more common than cyber bullying. Overall, based on the bullying statistics (2012), it is concluded that verbal bullying is the most common bullying form in the world with more than 75 % of students having been bullied verbally. Additionally, the findings reveal that bullying significantly correlates with social support sources in school.

Table 2 Relationship between bullying type and social support

		Social Support
Bullying Type	Spearman Correlation	.400**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	545

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01

Based on the findings in table 2 above, the relationship between bullying type and social support is identified as 0.400. Thus, the relationship between bullying type and social support is moderate. Additionally, the probability value 0.000 is smaller than alpha 0.05. Therefore, the hypothesis states that there is a significant relationship between the types of bullying and social support.

The findings of the current study support the previous claim in the literature review that bullying types and social support are ecologically inseparable (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Hanis (2000) conducted a similar study on bullying types in private schools in South Sulawesi and their relationship with social support providers in the school with a sample consisting of 350 students at private senior high schools. The researcher found that the levels of social support in school and families are significantly correlated with physical and verbal bullying. Thus, many studies have revealed that the types of bullying in school and social support are mutually correlated. The increase in bullying types in school can be said

to be due to less social support; conversely, the more positive social support is present, the fewer bullying incidents occur.

Similarly, Rigby and Johnson (2006) examined social support providers regarding bullying. A study with approximately 200 middle and elementary school students in Australia found that female elementary school students are more supportive than male elementary school students. Overall, both middle and elementary school students stated that support is more often offered in response to verbal bullying than in response to physical bullying. A survey by Amir (2001) on verbal bullying and physical bullying in several single-sex schools in South Sulawesi also reported that physical bullying is leading to an increase in adult supervision in the school, in this case teachers and school staff. Verbal and social bullying are also related to how teachers control students' behaviour in school. Another study conducted by Maghfirah and Rachmawaty (2003) concluded that teachers' support in school is positively related to and reduces the number of cases of bullying by twenty percent.

The current research clearly supports some previous findings and indicates the positive influence of social support sources on outcomes for students who experience bullying. For example, depression and delinquency have been connected with social support (Licitra Klekler & Wass, 1993), whereas stress and depression have been linked to parent and classmate support (Malecky & Demaray, 2002). Additionally, a study by Bahar (2010) with a sample size of 274 found that lower academic achievement is considerably influenced by the availability of social support from family, whereas friend support does not significantly influence students' academic status. Another study by Fibriana (2009) found that students' academic achievement influences lecturers and advisors to help their students finish their studies on time.

Conclusion

Although all of the bullying types generally occur in the South Sulawesi schools, verbal bullying occurs the most frequently. Many studies establish that bullying has deleterious effects for students, and it is expected that all of the stakeholders will take part in addressing this issue by identifying the existence of bullying in South Sulawesi.

Verbal bullying occurs most frequently among students in senior high school in South Sulawesi. Bullying is also found to be moderately correlated with social support. Additionally, the role of adults in school is particularly important when students are involved in bullying. Teachers are expected to lead the way in reducing the prevalence and effects of bullying in school.

Social support may reduce bullying. In contrast, a lack of social support in school could increase the prevalence of bullying. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers be fully responsible for every student's problems in school due to teachers' important role in eradicating bullying and its effects on students. Social support sources in schools, such as teachers, headmasters and school staff, should pay more attention to students to create safe schools that are conducive to learning.

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