

The Role of Empathy in Bullying Behavior Among Middle School Students: A Quantitative Correlational Study

Nur Azizah¹, Elisabeth Christiana¹ , Denok Setiawati¹ , Bakhrudin All Habsy¹ ,
Patricia Pinheiro² 

¹Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia

²University of Maia, Portugal

Article Information:

Received: February 7, 2026

Revised: May 21, 2026

Accepted: June 29, 2026

Keywords:

Bullying,
Empathy,
Correlational

Corresponding Author:

Nur Azizah, Universitas Negeri
Surabaya, Indonesia
nur.23002@mhs.unesa.ac.id



This is an open access article under
the CC BY-SA license.

Abstract

School education plays a vital role in enhancing human quality of life. However, schools also face significant issues, such as bullying. Bullying can be defined as the use of power to hurt an individual or group verbally, physically, or psychologically, leaving the victim feeling distressed, traumatized, and powerless. One contributing factor to bullying behavior among students is a lack of empathy toward their peers. Empathy is the ability to sense another person's emotional state, feel sympathy, attempt to solve problems, and see situations from others' perspectives. Students who engage in bullying often exhibit low levels of empathy. This study aims to examine the relationship between the level of empathy and bullying behavior in junior high school using a descriptive quantitative method. Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's Rank Correlation. The results indicate that empathy significantly influences bullying behavior, with a p-value of $0.000 < 0.05$ and a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.464$. This finding suggests that higher levels of empathy among students are associated with lower incidences of bullying behavior. Empathy serves as a fundamental and essential basis for building relationships, connections, and positive social interactions. Relationships grounded in high empathy tend to be healthier. By fostering high empathy in students, bullying behavior can be prevented through the cultivation of empathetic attitudes in individuals.

© 2026 by the Author(s).

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a vital role in enhancing human quality of life. Schools serve as primary institutions for acquiring education, where teachers are responsible for shaping individuals of quality. Education constitutes a fundamental aspect of human development, involving multiple stakeholders including families, communities, and the government in guiding learners to prepare them for future challenges. However, this process is often hindered by various issues, one of which is bullying. Bullying is a persistent problem that has attracted significant attention from academics and educators (Valencia, 2025).

Therefore, bullying can also interfere with learning activities teaching in class and creating an unsafe school environment. Therefore, efforts to prevent and handle bullying are very important to create a healthy and conducive learning environment. Research by Paramita et al. (2024) has also shown that bullying has become an international issue, including in five Asian

How to Cite this Article:

Azizah, N., Christian, E., Setiawati, D., Habsy, B. A., & Pinheiro, P. (2026). The Role of Empathy in Bullying Behavior Among Middle School Students: A Quantitative Correlational Study. *Al-Ihath: Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam*, 6(2), 169-184. <https://doi.org/10.53915/jbki.v6i2.132>

Publisher: Study Program of Islamic Guidance and Counseling | Faculty of Da'wah | Institut Attanwir Bojonegoro, Indonesia

countries: Vietnam (79%), Cambodia (73%), Nepal (79%), Pakistan (43%), and Indonesia (84%).

Bullying is defined as the use of power to inflict harm upon an individual or group, verbally, physically, or psychologically, resulting in distress, trauma, and helplessness in the victim. It can further be described as intentional and repeated aggressive behavior directed at the same person, where power and strength are used to injure someone perceived as unfavorable. Perpetrators often derive emotional satisfaction from committing such acts, whether physical or verbal.

Bullying can be defined as an act of intimidation in the form of violence or coercion by a stronger party against a weaker party (Coloroso, 2014). Furthermore, bullying can also be defined as an act of violence by an individual against another individual or group of people who cannot defend themselves physically and can weaken someone psychologically (Setiawati et al., 2020). This is in accordance with what was conveyed by Munawaroh (2022) namely that bullying is an action that causes other people to be disturbed and suffer losses. This finding is also consistent with the view that bullying is a deliberate and repeated act intended to harm others. Bullying involves conscious behaviors that inflict physical or psychological harm on an individual or a group perceived as weaker (Dianes, 2019).

Therefore, bullying can be done by anyone, from a person or a group. This is in line with what was conveyed by Putri (2022) who called bullying an act of intimidation carried out by a stronger party. Bullying can occur in various forms ranging from teasing, spreading rumors, inciting, isolating, intimidating, threatening, oppressing, or physically attacking (Dianes, 2019). Bullying is a negative behavior that can have an impact on all parties, both the perpetrator and the victim. For bullies, having a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem gives them a strong personality with a lack of empathy and causes them to lose control because they have a desire to control everything in order to feel powerful. Meanwhile, for victims, bullying can affect concentration to focus, affect self-confidence and avoidance because the victim is always afraid and worried until the victim experiences depression and feels unable to help himself. Then for those watching, bullying can be considered socially acceptable behavior. Those who watch may also join the perpetrators because they are afraid that they will become the next target of bullying and some others just sit without doing anything, they just watch what is being done.

However, acts of bullying have the most negative impact on victims of bullying. Victims will experience psychological disorders such as persistent feelings of guilt, shame, and feelings of failure because they are unable to face the bullying they have been subjected to. Then the victim will feel isolated from the environment, have difficulty concentrating on work or school so that the victim will refuse to go and prefer to close themselves off (Dianes, 2019). Bullying victims also tend to carry the trauma caused by bullying into adulthood (Sukmawati et al., 2021). Bullying is categorized into five types Haru (2023): Verbal Bullying, Physical Bullying, Social Bullying, Cyber Bullying, and Sexual Bullying. Verbal bullying is the easiest type of bullying to carry out and can be carried out in front of adults and peers without being detected and tends to be ignored because it is only considered stupid and unsympathetic dialogue between peers. Verbal bullying is the most common and easiest form of bullying and can be used by both girls and boys. Verbal bullying can take the form of insults, slander, cruel criticism, insults and sexual harassment.

Physical bullying is a type of bullying that is easiest to recognize than other bullying. Types

of physical bullying can include hitting, kicking, scratching students who are being bullied into painful positions, as well as damaging and destroying the clothes and belongings of students who are being bullied. Social bullying is the most difficult bullying to detect. Relational bullying is the act of regularly weakening the victim's self-esteem through neglect, exclusion or avoidance. This bullying takes the form of aggressive looks, sighs, mocking laughter, and rude body language (Coloroso, 2014). Cyber Bullying is the newest form of bullying because it was created along with the development of technology, the internet and social media. In essence, the victim continues to receive negative messages from the bully. This takes the form of sending hurtful messages or using pictures, leaving cruel messages, calling continuously without stopping but not saying anything, creating websites that are embarrassing for the victim, avoiding or avoiding the victim from chat rooms and so on (Dianes, 2019).

This behavior in schools can be attributed to several factors, including insufficient supervision and ethical guidance from teachers, economic disparities, and rigid disciplinary approaches. Bullies often come from troubled families, parents who often punish their children excessively, or stressful home situations (Bete, 2023). Children will learn bullying behavior when observing conflicts that occur with their parents and then imitate it to their friends. Schools who often ignore the existence of bullying can result in children who are bullies receiving reinforcement for their behavior for bullying other children. Putri stated that the factors that cause bullying behavior at school include: lack of supervision and ethical guidance from teachers and school officials; there is a large gap between rich and poor students; disciplinary patterns that are too rigid or too weak, inadequate guidance and inconsistent rules result in older children carrying out bullying behavior and not having a sense of empathy for their fellow students.

Meanwhile Lusiana & Arifin (2022) explains that the occurrence of bullying behavior in schools is caused by personality factors, interpersonal communication between children and their parents, the role of peer groups and the school climate. Then according to SEJIWA there are several things that make students become perpetrators of bullying, including: they have been victims of bullying; want to show one's existence; want to be recognized; the influence of negative TV broadcasts; seniority; cover up one's shortcomings; seeking attention; want to be famous; and join in. Some children bully in an attempt to prove that they can belong to a certain group, even though they themselves feel uncomfortable with the behavior. One of the social environmental factors that causes bullying is poverty. Those who live in poverty will do anything to meet their living needs, so it is not surprising that bullying often occurs among students in the school environment. Television and print media form patterns of bullying behavior in terms of the broadcasts they display. A survey conducted by Kompas showed that 56.9% of children imitated the scenes of the films they watched, generally they imitated the movements (64%) and the words (43%) (Dianes, 2019).

Rizka (2024) explains that bullying is a complicated act. Children are not born to be bullies. Bullying is also not taught directly to children. Therefore, there are influencing factors, namely: Individual factor; there are two groups of individuals who are directly involved in bullying incidents, namely perpetrators and victims. These two groups are the main factors that influence bullying behavior. Family factor; family background also plays an important role in shaping bullying behavior. Parents who often quarrel or fight tend to form children who are at risk of becoming more aggressive. The use of violence and excessive actions in an effort to discipline children by parents, caregivers and teachers indirectly encourages bullying behavior among children. Children who receive less love, imperfect education and a lack of

positive reinforcement have the potential to become perpetrators of bullying.

Friends factor; peers play an equally important role in the development and strengthening of bullying, anti-social attitudes and abnormal behavior among children. School factor; the school environment, practices and policies influence student activities, behavior and interactions at school. Feeling safe and valued is the basis for high academic achievement at school. If this is not fulfilled, then students may act to control their environment by carrying out anti-social behavior such as bullying other people. Media factor; violent actions and behavior that are often broadcast on television and electronic media will influence the violent behavior of children and teenagers (Yusuf et.al., 2012).

From the several factors that cause bullying to occur above and also the impact of bullying behavior, it is necessary to handle it quickly and appropriately by guidance and counseling teachers at school. This aims to ensure that bullying behavior does not become more widespread among students and that the perpetrators of bullying will later reach the awareness that the behavior carried out towards their friends is wrong behavior. In schools, guidance and counseling teachers are obliged to correct the behavior of their students from various negative behaviors that are carried out. One of the negative behaviors carried out by students is bullying behavior towards their peers. The impact of bullying behavior, from the perspective of the perpetrator, can lead to excessive emotions, ostracization from peers, intimidation, and even criminal acts (Sukmawati et al., 2021).

Equivalent to the opinion Hartini et al. (2025) that the negative impact of students who do not have empathy and behave in a bullying manner can be detrimental to themselves and can damage the learning environment which should be conducive to student development. Furthermore, other impacts of bullying include individuals having minimal empathy for their surroundings, being easily offended, habitually using foul language, and negatively impacting social interactions, especially with peers (Christiana, 2024). In line with Rachma's opinion that bullies often lack empathetic ability. Similarly, Arofa, Hudaniah, and Zulfiana argue that lower levels of empathy in an individual correlate with higher bullying tendencies. It is not only his empathy that is problematic, but his behavior will also become abnormal behavior. Not only that, bullying behavior will form hyperactive and pro-social behavior which is interrelated with the behavior of the perpetrator of bullying towards the surrounding environment (Lusiana & Arifin, 2022).

Empathy plays a crucial role in reducing bullying behavior; the higher the empathetic capacity, the lower the individual's engagement in bullying (Leleang et al., 2021). Empathy, meanwhile, is the ability to perceive another person's emotional state, feel sympathy, attempt to resolve problems, and adopt others' perspectives. It comprises two components: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component involves the capacity to view, imagine, and contemplate a situation from another's point of view. The affective component is characterized by shared emotions related to another's emotional experience. Not only that, empathy can also be interpreted as a person's ability to place themselves in the situation faced by other people (Putra et al., 2024). Meanwhile Narmurodova (2021) defines empathy as a feeling of compassion or understanding that enables someone to interpret or justify the actions and feelings of others.

Therefore, schools must take proactive measures to prevent and reduce bullying, such as providing guidance, advice, and mentoring to students. Implementing appropriate sanctions can create opportunities for students to engage in positive behavior. Fostering empathy is

essential to cultivate students' awareness that bullying is wrongful conduct. The choice of empathy as a correlation in this study is due to the relationship between empathy possessed by students and their behavior.

This is in line with research Soejanto (2016) which reveals that empathy has a very close correlation with pro-social behavior. Where students can share feelings with others in happy and sad situations, willingness to provide assistance to others both materially and morally and willingness to cooperate with other individuals to achieve goals. In addition, the study Durrotul et al. (2021) confirms that empathy has a strong relationship with bullying with mediation by moral detachment from observers. That empathy helps someone in being pro-social (Durrotul et al., 2021). This research focuses on junior high school students because during this phase, children enter early adolescence, a critical transitional phase marked by dramatic biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. During this period, adolescents experience a significant increase in peer relationships and begin to test the boundaries of social norms in search of identity. Other research also shows that bullying behavior peaks in early adolescence, namely 12-15 years of age, then tends to decline with age (Confer et al., 2024). Specifically, age can also have a positive influence on bullying behavior, where middle school adolescents are more involved in bullying behavior.

However, the vulnerability of junior high school students lies in the duality of risk, namely they are at the peak of bullying behavior simultaneously with the world of digital interactions with minimal supervision, making them vulnerable to cyberbullying. Therefore, conducting research on junior high school students can enable understanding their interactions in the development of immature empathy and complex social dynamics in both the real and virtual worlds. The novelty of this study compared to previous research Leleang et al. (2021) is that it focused on high school students with relatively mature cognitive and emotional developmental characteristics. This study, however, focuses on junior high school students with less stable socio-emotional developmental characteristics. Based on this background, the researcher has decided to conduct a study entitled "The Role of Empathy in Bullying Behavior Among Middle School Students: A Quantitative Correlational Study."

METHODS

Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to examine the relationship between the variables through systematic statistical analysis. The quantitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to collect numerical data, identify patterns, and provide objective interpretations based on empirical evidence. The participants consisted of 7th- and 8th-grade junior high school students who met the predetermined inclusion criteria. Data collection was carried out over a one-month period using a self-report questionnaire administered through Google Forms. To ensure the accuracy and completeness of the responses, the researcher directly supervised the questionnaire completion process, monitored participants during data entry, and provided clarification whenever necessary. This procedure was intended to minimize missing data, reduce response bias, and improve the overall reliability of the collected data.

Strategies to Minimize Response Bias

Several procedural steps were implemented to minimize social desirability bias and encourage

honest responses, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, provided standardized classroom instructions, and emphasized that there were no right or wrong answers. Participants were encouraged to respond truthfully based on their actual experiences, feelings, and behaviors. This approach was intended to create a comfortable environment and improve the authenticity of the collected data. In addition, the questionnaire included both favourable and unfavourable items to reduce acquiescence bias and enhance response validity. At the beginning of the Google Form, participants completed a self-declaration confirming that their responses accurately reflected their actual conditions and feelings. They were also assured that all responses would remain anonymous, be used solely for research purposes, and have no impact on their academic evaluation. These procedures were implemented to enhance participants' confidence, promote honest self-disclosure, and strengthen the reliability and validity of the data collected throughout the study (Kosgolla et al., 2023).

Population and Sampling

The total population of the junior high school consisted of 288 students. Of these, 207 male and female students from the 7th and 8th grades voluntarily participated by completing an online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms. This study employed a quota sampling technique to ensure adequate representation of participants from each targeted grade level. The research instrument was a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. It consisted of both favourable and unfavourable items to minimize response bias and improve response accuracy. Favourable items represented positive statements related to the measured construct, whereas unfavourable items were negatively worded and required reverse scoring during data analysis. Each statement was rated according to the participants' level of agreement, allowing the researcher to quantify attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors for subsequent statistical analysis (Leleang et al., 2021). This study utilized two scales: the Empathy Scale and the Bullying Scale.

Empathy Scale

The Empathy Scale was adapted from Davis's Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1980). The empathy scale used in this study was independently translated and culturally adapted by the researcher to ensure that the items were linguistically appropriate and easily understood by the participants. The instrument consists of 28 items based on Davis's four dimensions of empathy: Perspective Taking (PT), Fantasy (FS), Empathic Concern (EC), and Personal Distress (PD), which collectively assess the cognitive and affective aspects of empathy. The instrument's internal consistency was evaluated using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0 for Windows, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.885. This result indicates good reliability, demonstrating that the scale is appropriate for measuring students' empathy and suitable for subsequent statistical analyses.

Bullying Scale

The Bullying Scale was adopted from the instrument used by (Dianes, 2019). The bullying behavior scale used in this study was adapted from an instrument developed by a student at Padang State University in her 2019 undergraduate thesis. The scale consists of 28 items representing four dimensions of bullying behavior: Verbal Bullying, Physical Bullying, Relational Bullying, and Cyberbullying. Participants responded to each statement using a Likert-type scale to indicate the extent to which the statements reflected their behaviors. To assess the internal consistency of the instrument, a reliability analysis was conducted using

IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0 for Windows. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.908, indicating excellent internal consistency. This result demonstrates that the bullying scale is highly reliable and appropriate for measuring students' bullying behavior in the present study.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method used to examine the relationship between empathy and bullying among junior high school students was Spearman's Rank Correlation ([Sugiyono, 2014](#)). Data analysis was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25.0 for Windows. Prior to hypothesis testing, the collected data were prepared and examined to ensure their suitability for statistical analysis. Spearman's Rank Correlation analysis was then employed to examine the relationship between the two research variables and to test the proposed hypothesis regarding the existence of a significant correlation. This non-parametric statistical technique was selected because it is appropriate for analyzing ordinal data and variables that do not necessarily meet the assumptions of normality. The correlation coefficient obtained from the analysis was used to determine both the direction and the strength of the relationship between empathy and bullying behavior among the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The subjects of this study consisted of 207 male and female students in grades 7 and 8. The percentage of male respondents was 57.98% (n = 120 students), while the percentage of female respondents was 42.02% (n = 87 students). The choice of gender differences was made because field findings indicate that boys are more likely to engage in physical bullying, while girls are more likely to engage in relational bullying. This aligns with research that found boys are more frequently involved in bullying than girls.

These findings emphasize the need for gender-based bullying prevention interventions. To descriptively assess the achievement and determine the benchmarks for categorizing low and high scores on the empathy and bullying scales, interval calculation was required. According to Agus Irianto in ([Siregar, 2020](#)), categorization requires a data range or interval. This data range or interval can be obtained using the following formula:

$$i = \frac{DT-DR}{K}$$

Where:

i = Interval

DT = Highest Data Score

DR = Lowest Data Score

K = Number of Assessment Categories

In this study, the instrument consisted of 28 items per scale. Consequently, the lowest possible total score was 28, and the highest possible total score was 112. Based on these ideal scores for the variables, the calculation is as follows:

$$i = \frac{112-28}{4} = 21$$

Based on the calculated interval (i), the research category criteria can be established as shown in the following table:

Tabel 1. Data Interval Bullying

Interval	Category
28 – 48	Low
49 – 69	Moderate
70 – 91	Medium
92 – 112	High

The results from the empathy scale in this study are as follows:

Tabel 2. Scale of Empathy

Interval	Percentage	Category
70 – 91	84, 55 %	Medium
92 – 112	15, 45 %	High



Figure 1. Emphaty Scale

Based on the questionnaire responses collected from all participants, the distribution of students' empathy levels is presented in the data above. The findings indicate that the majority of students demonstrated a moderate level of empathy, accounting for 84.55% of the sample (n = 175). Meanwhile, 15.45% of the participants (n = 32) were categorized as having a high level of empathy. No respondents were classified as having a low level of empathy. These results suggest that most junior high school students possess a moderate capacity to understand and respond to the emotions and perspectives of others, while a smaller proportion exhibit a higher level of empathetic ability. Overall, the findings indicate that the participants generally have an adequate level of empathy, which may support positive social interactions and contribute to reducing the likelihood of bullying behavior among peers.

Tabel 3. Categorization of Bullying

Interval	Percentage	Category
28 – 48	43, 96 %	Low
49 – 69	24, 15 %	Moderate
70 – 91	26, 57 %	Medium
92 – 112	5, 31 %	High

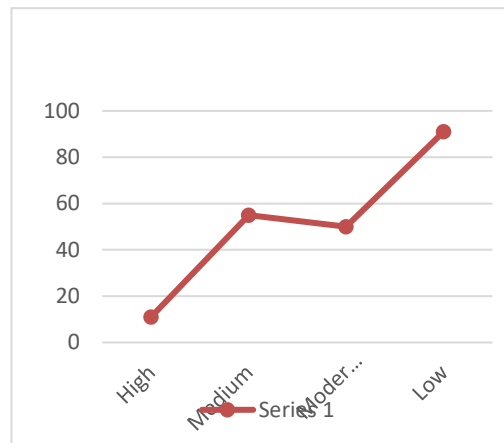


Figure 2. Categorization Bullying

The results of the bullying questionnaire, as presented in the table above, illustrate the distribution of students' bullying behavior across four categories. The findings show that 43.96% of the respondents ($n = 91$ students) were classified in the low bullying category, indicating that bullying behavior was relatively infrequent among this group. Meanwhile, 24.15% ($n = 50$ students) fell into the moderate category, 26.57% ($n = 55$ students) were categorized in the medium category, and only 5.31% ($n = 11$ students) were classified in the high bullying category. Overall, these results suggest that the majority of students exhibited low to moderate levels of bullying behavior, although a small proportion of participants still demonstrated a relatively high tendency to engage in bullying.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using Spearman's Rank Correlation. This non-parametric statistical technique was selected because it is appropriate for analyzing ordinal data and does not require the assumption of normal data distribution. Furthermore, according to Sugiyono, Spearman's Rank Correlation is used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables while testing the significance of an associative hypothesis. In the present study, this correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between students' empathy and bullying behavior, as well as to determine whether empathy has a significant influence on the tendency to engage in bullying. The resulting correlation coefficient was used to indicate both the magnitude and direction of the relationship between the two research variables (Nelvidawati et al., 2023).

The hypotheses for this study were as follows:

Ha: There is a relationship between empathy and bullying.

H0: There is no relationship between empathy and bullying.

The decision criteria for Spearman's Rank Correlation test were:

If the significance value is < 0.05 , a correlation exists.

If the significance value is > 0.05 , no correlation exists.

The analysis was performed using SPSS 25.0 for Windows. The correlation test results are presented in the table below:

Tabel 4. Correlation

			Emphaty	Bullying
Spearman's rho	Emphaty	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.464**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	207	207
	Bullying	Correlation Coefficient	-.464**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	207	207

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation test results in the table above show an overall correlation coefficient significance value of 0.000. According to the decision criteria ($0.000 < 0.05$), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant correlation between empathy and bullying behavior among students.

In addition to the significance value, the strength of the relationship between the two variables was assessed using Sugiyono's interpretation guidelines (Pratama et al., 2017) as follows:

Tabel 5. Correlation Coefficient Guidliness

<i>ρ positif</i>	<i>ρ negatif</i>	Category
$0,9 \leq \rho < 1$	$-0,9 \leq \rho < 1$	Very Strong
$0,7 \leq \rho < 0,9$	$-0,7 \leq \rho < 0,9$	Strong
$0,5 \leq \rho < 0,7$	$-0,5 \leq \rho < 0,7$	Moderate
$0,3 \leq \rho < 0,5$	$-0,3 \leq \rho < 0,5$	Weak
$0 \leq \rho < 0,3$	$-0 \leq \rho < 0,3$	Very Weak

The correlation coefficient in this study is -0.464, which, according to the guidelines, indicates a moderate or fairly strong inverse relationship. The negative value signifies that higher levels of empathy are associated with lower levels of bullying behavior. Conversely, lower levels of empathy are associated with higher levels of bullying behavior among students.

Discussion

The distribution of questionnaire responses among all participants revealed that 84.55% of the students were categorized as having a moderate level of empathy, while the remaining 15.45% were classified as having a high level of empathy. No participants were categorized as having a low level of empathy. These findings indicate that the majority of junior high school students possess a moderate capacity for empathy, suggesting that they are generally able to understand and respond to the emotions and perspectives of others, although there is still room for further development. Empathetic behavior can be observed through various cognitive and affective processes, including an individual's ability to recognize others' feelings, understand different perspectives, and respond appropriately during social interactions. These capacities play an important role in fostering positive interpersonal relationships and promoting prosocial behavior among adolescents.

Therefore, empathy serves as a fundamental and primary basis for building relationships and interactions. Research Navabinijed (2025) Previous research also suggests that empathy, as a

form of interpersonal sensitivity and social connectedness, plays an important role in influencing an individual's socio-emotional condition. Empathy enables individuals to recognize, understand, and appropriately respond to the emotions and experiences of others, thereby fostering positive interpersonal relationships and reducing the likelihood of harmful social behaviors. When relationships and social interactions are initiated and maintained with empathy, they are more likely to develop into healthy, respectful, and supportive connections characterized by mutual understanding and compassion. Such interactions contribute to a positive social environment and promote emotional well-being among individuals. This finding is consistent with the results of the present study and aligns with the research conducted by Leleang et al., (2021), which similarly reported that empathy serves as a protective factor in promoting positive social relationships and reducing aggressive or bullying behavior which states that empathy significantly influences bullying behavior among school peers.

Conversely, the questionnaire administered to 7th- and 8th-grade students produced a different frequency distribution for bullying behavior. The findings showed that 43.96% of the respondents were categorized as having a low level of bullying behavior, 24.15% fell into the moderate category, 26.57% were classified in the medium category, and only 5.31% were categorized as having a high level of bullying behavior. Overall, these results indicate that the prevalence of bullying among the participants generally falls within the low to medium range, although a small proportion of students still demonstrate relatively high levels of bullying behavior. Among the four dimensions measured by the bullying scale, cyberbullying obtained the highest percentage (50.5%), followed by physical bullying (30.5%) and relational bullying (10.3%). These findings suggest that bullying conducted through digital platforms has become the most dominant form of bullying among the participants, highlighting the increasing influence of online communication and social media on adolescents' social interactions.

Cyberbullying emerged as the most dominant form of bullying among junior high school students, indicating that young adolescents are digital natives whose daily social interactions are increasingly integrated with cyberspace and digital communication platforms. The high prevalence of cyberbullying may be influenced by several factors, including limited digital literacy, inadequate self-control, and the ease of accessing online communication. Although many students are familiar with using digital technologies and social media, their digital literacy is often confined to technical skills rather than a comprehensive understanding of digital ethics, responsible online behavior, and internet safety. As a result, some adolescents may engage in inappropriate online interactions without fully recognizing the emotional and psychological consequences of their actions for others. Research Ulum (2025) also emphasized that individual factors such as impulsivity and low self-control, as well as intensive social media use without adequate digital literacy, are the main contributors to cyberbullying behavior. Another contributing factor to cyberbullying is the gap in parental supervision.

In this case, the digital environment is a private space that is difficult for schools to monitor, so parental supervision at home becomes the main line of defense. However, the study Madururas (2024) The findings revealed that parental supervision and social media literacy simultaneously have a significant effect on students' cyberbullying behavior, although their effective contribution is relatively small. This suggests that while both factors play an important role in reducing the likelihood of cyberbullying, they account for only a limited proportion of the variance in students' behavior. Therefore, cyberbullying is likely influenced

by a broader range of factors, including individual characteristics, peer relationships, family environment, school climate, and patterns of technology use. In addition, adolescents' emotional regulation, empathy, and self-control may also contribute to their online behavior. These findings indicate that preventing cyberbullying requires a comprehensive approach involving not only parental monitoring and digital literacy but also support from schools, families, and the wider social environment. Strengthening collaboration among these stakeholders is expected to create a safer digital environment and reduce the incidence of cyberbullying among students.

Besides that, schools frequently provide education and awareness programs about bullying, emphasizing that students should not engage in behaviors that harm or intimidate peers who are perceived as weaker or have less power. Bullying often occurs when supervision and monitoring within the school environment are insufficient, allowing aggressive behaviors to go unnoticed. Nevertheless, forms of bullying such as physical, verbal, and relational bullying are generally more visible to teachers and school staff, making it possible for schools to identify incidents and implement continuous preventive and intervention programs. In contrast, cyberbullying presents a distinct challenge because it occurs through digital platforms and social media, often outside school hours and beyond direct supervision, making it more difficult for educators to detect, monitor, and prevent effectively (Jia, 2018).

In today's digital era, social media has become an integral part of daily life for people of all ages, particularly adolescents, who use various online platforms for communication, social interaction, entertainment, and information sharing. While these platforms offer many educational and social benefits, they also create opportunities for individuals to intimidate, harass, or harm others through cyberbullying. Unlike traditional forms of bullying, cyberbullying often occurs outside school premises and within private digital spaces, making it difficult for schools to monitor and intervene directly. The results of this study indicate that cyberbullying emerged as the highest among the measured dimensions of bullying behavior, suggesting that online aggression has become a particularly prominent issue among students. This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Anastasia and Nur, which similarly reported that cyberbullying has become one of the most prevalent forms of bullying among adolescents in the digital age Fazry et al. (2021) which reports that social media has a strong influence on cyberbullying behavior, accounting for 24% in their study. UNESCO also noted that in 2019 at least 10% of students in the 8-10 year age range experienced cyberbullying and this increased to 20% in the 12-14 year age range (Sulejmani et al., 2024).

Possessing a high level of empathy toward others can help prevent bullying behavior. This aligns with Davis's definition (Leleang et al., 2021). This finding is consistent with previous research, which describes empathy as an individual's capacity to understand, appreciate, and share the emotions, thoughts, and perspectives of others. Empathy enables individuals to become more sensitive to the experiences and feelings of those around them, thereby promoting mutual understanding and positive interpersonal interactions. Other studies have also suggested that empathy plays a crucial role in fostering healthy social relationships, regulating emotional dynamics during both face-to-face and digital interactions, and strengthening individuals' internal motivation to refrain from behaviors that may harm others verbally, emotionally, or psychologically, including within online environments (Solang, 2025). Apart from that, in the study Dewi (2023), Future studies are recommended to provide empathy training interventions for junior high school students to examine their effectiveness in reducing bullying behavior and promoting positive interpersonal relationships among adolescents.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion presented above, it can be concluded that empathy has a significant influence on bullying behavior among students. The findings indicate that higher levels of empathy are associated with lower tendencies to engage in bullying, suggesting that empathy serves as an important protective factor in adolescents' social interactions. Empathy provides a foundation for positive interpersonal relationships by enabling individuals to understand, appreciate, and respond appropriately to the emotions and perspectives of others. As a result, students with higher empathy are more likely to demonstrate respect, compassion, and prosocial behavior while avoiding actions that may harm their peers. Conversely, lower levels of empathy may increase the likelihood of aggressive or bullying behavior. Therefore, fostering empathy should be considered an essential component of bullying prevention. Schools, teachers, counselors, and parents should work collaboratively to strengthen students' empathetic awareness through character education, social-emotional learning, and guidance and counseling programs, thereby creating a safer and more supportive school environment.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to express his deepest gratitude to the supervisor who has guided the writing of this journal. His deepest gratitude to the principal for allowing him to collect research data and his deepest gratitude to the students for their willingness to fill out the questionnaire as a measuring tool for data collection.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

NA was responsible for the research conceptualization, methodological design, implementation of field data collection, statistical data analysis, and preparation of the initial draft of the manuscript. EC, DS, and BAH acted as supervisors in refining the research design and conducted critical reviews and substantial revisions to the manuscript to enhance its intellectual quality. PP is responsible for conducting the substantive review of the article.

COMPETING OF INTEREST

The author declares that there are no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest related to this research. This research was conducted independently, free from any personal, commercial, or affiliative influence or interest that could influence the results or interpretation of the research. NA acted as the corresponding author for the entire editorial process. The author is responsible for communicating with the journal editor, managing revisions, and conveying publication-related information to all authors.

ORCID

Elisabeth Christiana  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3504-3927>
Denok Setiawati  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8632-4633>
Bakhrudin All Habsy  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-5389-7036>
Patricia Pinheiro  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1713-1053>

REFERENCES

Arif Firmansyah, F. A. (2022). Hubungan Antara Empati dengan Perilaku Bullying di SMA

- Pondok Modern Selamat Kendal. *Jurnal Psimawa*, 5(2), 75–78. <https://doi.org/10.36761/jp.v5i2.2111>
- Bete, M. N., & Arifin. (2023). Peran guru dalam mengatasi bullying di SMA Negeri Sasitamean Kecamatan Sasitamean Kabupaten Malaka. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan (JIP)*, 8(1), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.59098/jipend.v8i1.926>
- Christiana, E. (2024). *Identifikasi Kecenderungan Perilaku Perundungan di Kalangan Siswa Sekolah Menengah Atas*. 62(0754).
- Coloroso, B. (2014). *The Bully, The Bullied and the Bystander*. Harper Collins.
- Confer, J. A., Schleihau, H., & Engelmann, J. M. (2024). *Children and adults' intuitions of what people can believe*. 447–461. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13988>
- Davis, M. H. (1980). *A multidimensional approach to individual differences in empathy*.
- Dewi, P. F. S. (2023). PELATIHAN EMPATI UNTUK MENURUNKAN PERILAKU BULLYING. *Jurnal Intervensi Psikologi*, 15, 51–62.
- Dianes, M., & Alizamar. (2019). *The tendency of bullying behavior in SMP N 12 Padang and implications for guidance and counseling services*. *Jurnal Neo Konseling*, 1(4). <https://doi.org/10.24036/00168kons2019>
- Durrotul, Y., Nashori, H. F., & Rachmy, R. (2021). *The effect of empathy to bystander's role towards bullying at school through moral disengagement as a mediator*. 1(1), 16–23.
- Fazry, L., & Apsari, N. C. (2021). Pengaruh Media Sosial Terhadap Perilaku Cyberbullying Di Kalangan Remaja. *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat (JPPM)*, 2(2), 272. <https://doi.org/10.24198/jppm.v2i2.34679>
- Hartini, S., Marlina, L., & Oktarini, M. (2025). The Phenomenon of Bullying in School Environments : Strategies and Challenges. *International Journal of Education*, 4(1), 52–65.
- Haru, E. (2023). Perilaku Bullying Di Kalangan Pelajar. *Jurnal Alternatif Wacana Ilmiah Interkultural*, 11(2), 59–71. <https://doi.org/10.60130/ja.v11i2.111>
- Jia, Y., Konold, T. R., Cornell, D., & Huang, F. (2018). The impact of validity screening on associations between self-reports of bullying victimization and student outcomes. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 78(1), 80–102. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013164416671767>
- Kosgolla, J. V., Smith, D. C., Begum, S., & Reinhart, C. A. (2023). Assessing the self-reported honesty threshold in adolescent epidemiological research: comparing supervised machine learning and inferential statistical techniques. *Kosgolla et Al. BMC Medicl Research Methodology*, 1–9.
- Leleang, A. I. T., Dewi, E. M. P., & Hamid, A. N. (2021). The correlation between empathy and bullying behavior in senior high school students in Makassar city. *Pinisi: Journal of Art, Humanity & Social Studies*, 1(6), 112–120.
- Lusiana, S. N. E. L., & Siful Arifin. (2022). Dampak Bullying Terhadap Kepribadian Dan Pendidikan Seorang Anak. *Kariman: Jurnal Pendidikan Keislaman*, 10(2), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.52185/kariman.v10i2.252>
- Maduraras, D. (2024). *Peran Pengawasan Orangtua, Literasi Media Sosial dan Pengungkapan Diri Daring Terhadap Perilaku Perundungan Siber pada Remaja*. Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta.
- Narmurodova, G. I. (2021). *Empathy as an expression of emotions and mood in English lingvoculture*. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Culture*, 7(6), 506–510. <https://doi.org/10.21744/ijllc.v7n6.1977>
- Navabinejad, S. (2025). *The influence of agreeableness on perceived social support: The mediating role of empathy*. *Journal of Personality and Psychosomatic Research*, 3(3), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.jprr.3.3.1>
- Nelvidawati, N., & Kasman, M. (2023). Penggunaan Korelasi Spearman Untuk Menguji

- Hubungan Suhu Dan Besarnya Curah Hujan Bulanan di Kota Padang. *Jurnal Daur Lingkungan*, 6(1), 34. <https://doi.org/10.33087/daurling.v6i1.181>
- Paramita, S., & Palipung, R. Y. (2024). The Impact of Bullying on Adolescent : A Systematic Review. *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management*, 12(12), 2092–2100. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijstrm/v12i12.sh01>
- Pratama, H. A., S Zenju, N., & Purnamasari, I. (2017). Pengaruh Kinerja Pegawai Terhadap Penyelenggaraan Diklat Di Pusat Pelatihan Manajemen Dan Kepemimpinan Pertanian (Ppmkp) Ciawi Bogor. *Jurnal Governansi*, 2(1), 23–34. <https://doi.org/10.30997/jgs.v2i1.203>
- Putra, R. P., & Fathiyah, K. N. (2024). Adolescent Empathy Concerning Parenting Style and Peer Social Support Based on Gender Differences 1. *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology*, 5(1), 43–64.
- Putri, E. D. (2022). Kasus Bullying di Lingkungan Sekolah : Dampak Serta Penanganannya. *Keguruan: Jurnal Penelitian, Pemikiran Dan Pengabdian*, 10, 24–30.
- Putri, R. K. (2018). Meningkatkan self-acceptance (penerimaan diri) dengan konseling realita berbasis budaya Jawa. *Prosiding SNBK (Seminar Nasional Bimbingan Dan Konseling)* 2, 2(1), 118–128. <http://prosiding.unipma.ac.id/index.php/SNBK/article/view/480>
- Rachman, N. A., Harum, A., & Akademik, P. (n.d.). *Penerapan Konseling Realita dengan Prosedur WDEP untuk Mengurangi Perilaku Prokrastinasi Akademik Siswa SMP Muhammadiyah 12 Makassar*. 3, 1–7.
- Rasdiany, A. N., & Karneli, Y. (2021). Konseling Individual Menggunakan Teknik WDEP untuk Meningkatkan Keterampilan Belajar Siswa. *Jurnal Aplikasi IPTEK Indonesia*, 5(1), 36–43. <https://doi.org/10.24036/4.15437>
- Riska Maelani, Ratna Purwanti, D. P. R. (2022). Peran Guru dalam Penanaman Karakter Fairness pada Siswa Sekolah Dasar. *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 07, 207–215.
- Rizka Febrianti, Yogi Damai Syaputra, T. W. O. (2024). Dinamika Bullying di Sekolah: Faktor dan Dampak. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Counseling*, 8(1), 9–24. <https://doi.org/10.30653/001.202481.336>
- Robert Maribe Branch. (2009). *Instructional Design: The ADDIE Approach*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-0-387-09506-6>
- Sasmita, H., & Karneli, Y. (2020). *Layanan bimbingan konseling sebagai upaya pembentukan kemandirian siswa*. 1(2), 37–47.
- Setiawati, D., Shiddiq, M., & Fathoni, A. (2020). *Relational Bullying in Religious School at the Senior High School Level*. 491(Ijcah), 170–173.
- Siregar, S. H. (2020). Efektivitas Teknik Homerome Dalam Layanan Bimbingan Kelompok Untuk Meningkatkan Interaksi Sosial Siswa Di Smp It Al-Ikhsan Boarding School Kecamatan Siak Hulu. *Skripsi*. http://repository.uin-suska.ac.id/28205/2/SKRIPSI_SITI_HABSYAH_SIREGAR.pdf
- Soejanto, L. T. (2016). Tingkat Empati Mahasiswa Program Studi Bimbingan dan Konseling Universitas Kanjuruhan Malang. *Jurnal Konseling Dan Pendidikan*, 3(2), 49–57.
- Solang, D. J. (2025). The Role of Empathy in Social Intelligence to Reduce Cyberbullying Among Adolescents. *International Journal of Science and Society*, 7(2), 612–625.
- Sudijono, A. (2008). *Pengantar Statistik Pendidikan* (1st ed.). Raja Grafindo.
- Sugiyono. (2009). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Alfabeta.
- Sukmawati, I., Fenyara, A. H., Fadhillah, A. F., & Herbawani, C. K. (2021). Dampak Bullying Pada Anak Dan Remaja Terhadap Kesehatan Mental. *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Kesehatan Masyarakat 2021*, 2(1), 126–144.
- Sulejmani, H., & Ziberi, F. (2024). Bullying in Schools: Patterns , Reactions , and Intervention Strategies among Adolescents. *International Journal of Research an Innovation in Science*, VIII(2454), 1863–1873. <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS>

- Tika evi. (2020). Manfaat Bimbingan dan Konseling Bagi Siswa. *PENDIDIKAN Dan KONSELING*, 2, 2–5.
- Yusra, Z., Zulkarnain, R., & Sofino, S. (2021). Pengelolaan Lkp Pada Masa Pendmik Covid-19. *Journal Of Lifelong Learning*, 4(1), 15–22. <https://doi.org/10.33369/joll.4.1.15-22>
- Ulum, I. F. (2025). *Perilaku cyberbullying sebagai masalah sosial remaja di era digital : analisis kajian literatur tentang perilaku , pengaruh lingkungan dan implikasinya bagi kesehatan mental . 3*, 1263–1269.
- Valencia, M. (2025). The Lingering Impact Of Words: Verbal Bullyinng, Emotion Regulation, ang Forgiveness Among High. *International Journal of Application on Social Science and Humanities*, 3(3), 135–142.
- Yusuf, H., & Fahrudin, A. (2012). Perilaku Bullying: Asesmen Multidimensi dan Intervensi Sosial. *Jurnal Psikologi Undip*, 11 No. 2, 1–10.