

Family Functioning as a Predictor for Internalizing Problems on Adolescents who Experienced Bullying

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the family functioning as a predictor for internalizing problems on adolescents who experience bullying. In addition, this study aims to see the dimensions of family functioning that contribute to internalizing problem. The internalizing problem was measured using Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and family functioning were measured using Family Assessment Device (FAD). Respondents were also asked to fill bullying questionnaire as a screening of bullying victims. Data were obtained from 201 respondents from Junior High School (SMP) and senior high school (SMA) in Jakarta. The age of respondents ranged between 12-17 years ($M = 14.3$). Through linear regression statistical techniques, the results showed that family functioning in general contributes to the decrease of internalizing problems in adolescents who experienced bullying ($p < 0.01$), with the value of R^2 was 12,1 % and the value of β was -0,211. In addition, it showed that among all the dimensions of family functioning, affective responsiveness was a significant predictor to decrease internalizing problems ($p < 0.05$). Based on these results it can be concluded that the family functioning is a significant predictor to decrease internalizing problems in adolescents who experience bullying.

Keywords: family functioning; internalizing problem; bullying; adolescent

1. Introduction

Violation of children's rights is often heard today. The right of the child is an important thing to be given special attention because it is difficult for the child to ask for their own rights (Jones, 2009). Indonesia already has a law that specifically regulates child protection namely Act No. 35, 2014. Based on the act, child is a person under the age of 18 years old. One of the rights that children have is the right to be free from violence in schools, as mentioned in article 54 of Act No. 35 of 2014 on Child Protection. However, the current conditions are still far away from what is contained in the Act because children still experience violence at school, or more known as

The results of a study conducted by The National Development Consortium of Character Schools in 2014 mentioned almost every school in Indonesia has bullying cases, although only verbal and psychological or mental bullying (republika.co.id, 2014). In addition, study conducted by Plan International and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) released in early

March 2015 shows an astonishing fact of child abuse at school. There are 84% of adolescents aged 12-17 in Indonesia who experienced bullying at school (liputan6.com, 2015). This phenomenon is a saddening fact and shows that adolescents in Indonesia are still vulnerable to be bullied. This fact is in line with the statement delivered by Ghoul et al. (2013) that bullying is increasing in early adolescence which is a time when teenagers spend most of their time with peers.

Bullying is a series of aggressive behavior that deliberately harms and cause feelings of discomfort in others (Olweus, 2013). According to Papalia and Maltorell (2015), bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional or relational. In 2016, there was a video on social media showing students throwing cigarette ash on a student's head, while another student beside him washed down with water and being asked to suck cigarette and wearing a bra outside the uniform (tempo.co, 2016). This is only a handful of many cases captured by the media. There are still many cases of bullying that occur but not known, especially if bullying occurs in a verbal form.

At the beginning of 2014, a bullying case found to occur in a high school child in West Sumatra. The teenagers were getting verbal bullying since his peers insult about his physical appearance repeatedly. In addition, they often talk about him behind his back. Thus, he felt uncomfortable in school and begun to hate himself. He feels as bad, worthless, losing confidence and regret the life he lived. Based on the teen's statement, he does not fight or convey to what happened to him because he was afraid if he resisted, his friends would increasingly dislike him. This situation is usually difficult for teenagers because in the adolescence period, peers have higher values for adolescents, and their acceptance becomes an important thing (Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan, 2005).

That case shows that bullying has a significant negative impact on the victim. Previous research found that victims of bullying have a tendency of low self-esteem, loneliness, isolation, disruption of concentration, fear to go to school and absenteeism in elementary and middle school (Kaltiala-Heino, R. et al., 2000). Dake, Price, and Telljohan (2003) also mentioned that victims of bullying are four times more likely to be depressed than those who do not experience bullying. This shows that bullying is a source of stress for victims who experience it and trigger the emergence of these effects.

Based on the impact it is seen that the victim of bullying tends to direct the negative emotions that are felt within him. The act of directing negative emotions into the self, including anxiety, fear, depression, and self-induced anger are referred to internalizing problems (Papalia & Martorell, 2015). Many studies show that children and teenagers who are witnesses and victims of bullying have a high risk of the internalizing problem (Sheidow et al., 2013). According to Kaltiala-Heino et al. (2000), victims of violence are associated with a less developed psychosocial domain and equal to the emergence of internalizing problems such as depression and anxiety. The characteristics of individuals who usually become victims of bullying cause the occurrence of internalizing problems in adolescents who experience bullying.

Some studies suggest that individuals who are bullied are characterized as an introvert, passive, submissive, have low self-esteem, loners, tend to blame themselves for difficulties faced, sensitive, quiet and careful (Kaltiala-Heino et al. 2000). Based on these characteristics, it the victims of bullying are quite reserved, including when faced with difficulties. This factor may lead to the occurrence of internalizing problems in adolescents who experience bullying. Victims of bullying tend to

address the problems they face into themselves and do not present them out either by telling or resisting.

In addition, based on the notion of bullying, teenagers who experience bullying usually have a weaker power than people who do violence to them, this makes them difficult to resist and tell their experience of bullying. Also, Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2005) explain some reasons the victim did not tell others about the bullying he received. If told, they were afraid of being hurt again, that they would be more excluded, Otherwise, if they did not tell the perpetrators, they will start to like them. The other reason is they did not want to worry their parents. Therefore, they keep their bullying problems alone.

Everyone has different levels of vulnerability to events that they experienced, including how individuals perceive their negative emotions (Steinberg, 1999). The environment also plays a role in the tendency of individual responses to these emotions. From a contextual perspective, individual development can be understood through its social context (Papalia & Martorell, 2015). So, that when understanding the individual, the social context around him also needs to be understood.

Bronfenbrenner develops bioecological theory, which divides the influence of the environment into five levels: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Papalia & Martorell, 2015). The environment closest to the individual is called the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner defined microsystems are patterns of activity, social roles, and interpersonal relationships experienced by individuals in direct face-to-face settings. Usually, there are sustainable physical, social, and symbolic features, or are also interpreted as complex interactions with the immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2007). Microsystems include family environment, school, and peers.

Based on that statement, one of the environments closest to the individual is the family. The family holds many important roles against the individual in it, including the child. If it is associated with the Indonesian context as a collectivist country, individuals in Indonesia cannot be separated from the various social systems in it. This is relevant with the statement of Larson and Wilson (in Papalia and Martorell, 2015) that the tasks of adolescent development in Indonesia, Bangladesh, Morocco, and Argentina cannot be separated from the family context. Schools and peers are also the nearest environment for adolescents (Bronfenbrenner, 2007)., When both environments do not provide a sense of security to teenagers who experience

bullying, it is hoped that the family as the nearby environment can be a supporting system for adolescents. However, sometimes not all families can provide it, so the impact of bullying on the child become stronger.

Many components in the family predict the emergence of depression and anxiety in adolescents, including parental psychopathology, poor family functioning, and interaction between parent and child (Schleider & Weisz, 2016). Boyes et al. (2014) mentioned that aspects of family functioning such as family relationships, cohesion, beliefs and structures directly related to the emotional health of adolescents. The development of adolescents cannot be fully understood if we do not see the context of the family functioning (Francisco, 2016). Therefore, this research will focus on the family functioning.

Family functioning is a condition where all family members can communicate with each other, doing the job together, and help each other, and affects the physical and emotional health of a family member (Epstein et al., 2009). Epstein, Baldwin, and Bishop (1983) said family functioning could be seen based on the perception of each family member. McMaster Model of Family Functioning describes the structural and organizational characteristics of the family, as well as the patterns of relationships between family members who distinguished between healthy and unhealthy family (Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop, 1983). Family functioning based on McMaster's theory has several dimensions: problem-solving, communication, role, affective responsiveness, affective involvement, and behavioral control (Epstein, Baldwin & Bishop, 1983). These dimensions are inseparable and interrelated in shaping the family functioning.

According to Black and Pedro-Carrol (in Boyes et al., 2014), conflicts or arguments that occur between parents contribute to the internalizing problems experienced by children. The low level of unity in the family such as the level of emotional closeness, dependency, support, and communication are significantly associated with internalizing symptoms in adolescents (Boyes et al., 2014). In addition, research conducted by Galambos, Barker, and Almeida (2003) showed that low control of behavior in the family increases the internalizing problem in adolescents. Based on this matter is seen that family functioning has influenced the tendency of adolescent to have the internalizing problem.

Research about bullying has been quite often done in Indonesia. There have been numerous research about bullying in Indonesia, but there has not been discovered studies that link between family

functioning and internalizing problems. Therefore, the current research is interested to see the effect of family functioning to the internalizing problem on adolescents who experience bullying and to find out the dimension of family functioning that plays a role in reducing the tendency of internalizing problem in bullying victim. The hypothesis that will be tested in this research is: 1. Family functioning can predict internalizing problem in adolescents who experienced bullying, and there is a dimension of family functioning that can decrease internalizing problem in adolescents who experienced bullying.

Sample. Respondents are 201 respondents, aged 12-17 years old. Respondents are students from several secondary schools in Jakarta who experienced bullying and live with their family. A total of 35.3% of participants are men, and 56.7% are women.

Research Design. This was a non-experimental study using quantitative method. The procedure used in this research was correlational study with data retrieval from questionnaire.

Instrument and Measurement. In this research, we used 3 questionnaires, which are:

- a. Family Assessment Device (FAD), consists of 49 items to measure all dimensions of family functioning. All of items have good reliability coefficient to measure each of dimensions. The value of coefficient reliability for problem-solving dimension is 0.706, communication dimension is 0.544, role functioning dimension is 0.630, affective response dimension is 0.707, affective involvement dimension is 0.684, behavior control dimension is 0.696, and general functioning is 0.830.
- b. Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ), consists of 9 items to measure internalizing problem with coefficient reliability is 0,664.
- c. Bullying questionnaire as a screening for bullying experience, consist of 18 items. The coefficient of reliability is 0,91

Procedure. In the beginning, we tested the readability, validity, and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on this process, all questionnaires have good psychometric component.

After that, the data collection process started. The study was conducted in several junior and senior high schools in Jakarta, conducted in the classroom with the permission of the school for 30-40 minutes. In the beginning, the researcher explained about the instruction for each questionnaire. After the respondents finished filling out the questionnaires,

the researchers gave rewards in the form of snacks and bookmarks.

Then, the researcher inputs the data and do statistical analysis. The analysis used in this study includes descriptive statistics, simple regression, and multiple regression. Descriptive statistics view the general descriptions of research respondents and overview of research variables. Regression techniques test the research hypothesis. The researcher collected 302 respondents, but after screening, the respondents with bullying questionnaire only 201 respondents that can be categorized as bullying victim.

2. Results

The data is analyzes using simple regression and multiple regression by SPSS. These are the result of data analysis:

Table 1.
The effect of general family functioning to internalizing problem

Dimension of Family Functioning	β	R square	F	Sig
General Functioning	-,211	,121	27,478	,000

Based on the table, family functioning in general significantly predicts internalizing problem on adolescents who experience bullying ($p < 0.01$). This means that the increase in family functioning decreases the value of internalizing problem. Based on the value of R^2 , it can be concluded that family functioning can predict 12.1% of internalizing problem. Based on the value of β , it can be concluded that every increase of general functioning value of 1 point will decrease the value of internalizing problem by -, 211.

Table 2.
The effect of each dimension of family functioning to internalizing problem

Dimensions of Family Functioning	β	t	Sig.
Problem solving	-,067	-,532	,595
Communication	-,035	-,230	,818
Roles	,145	1,029	,305
Affective Responsiveness	-,227	-2,356	,019
Affective Involvement	-,102	-1,178	,240
Behaviour Control	-,111	-1,446	,150

$R^2 = .122$ (N = 201, $p < 0,05$)

Based on the table, there are dimensions of family functioning which is a significant predictor of internalizing problem in adolescents who experience bullying. The dimension is affective responsiveness that has significant negative value to internalizing problem ($p < 0,05$). In conclusion, affective responsiveness is the most influential dimension to decrease internalizing problem on bullying victim. Based on the β value of affective responsiveness (β : -,227), it can be interpreted that any increase in affective responsiveness value of 1 point, internalizing problem will decrease by -, 227.

3. Discussion & Conclusion

Discussion. Based on the results, family functioning is a significant predictor of internalizing problem. Based on the regression analysis, the family functioning, in general, can decrease the tendency of internalizing problem in teenagers who experience bullying. These results show that family is an important factor to decrease the chance of teenagers with bullying having an internalizing problem. This is in accordance with Steinberg (1999) that one of the factors that affect the internalizing problem is the existence of social support.

Family is one of the social support held by teenagers. When the family works well, it can help adolescents deal with stress, anxiety, or depression experienced. In the case of bullying, the victimized teenager does not get this social support from her friends. Therefore the role of the family becomes very important to be able to embrace teenagers and provide that support. This is also in line with Sheidow et al. (2013) which mentions family functioning mediates the relationship between stress and daily stress with internalizing problems, weak parenting patterns, weak family structure. Weak emotional cohesiveness will activate teenage depression and anxiety which is under heavy pressure and often in his daily life. Emotional chaos can only be formed if the family members respond to each other in the right way by giving the right feeling response both in quality and quantity.

Based on the value of R^2 it can be concluded that family functioning can predict 12.1% internalizing problem. This means there are still 87.9% variants of internalizing problems that are influenced by other factors. If associated with Steinberg's (1999) theory, then the possibility of factors such as the number of stressors, other social support, and effective coping strategies also contribute to internalizing the problem. So, it is necessary to do further research to be able to know the other factor that contributes to

internalizing problem of adolescents who experience bullying.

In addition, based on regression analysis conducted to all dimensions in family functionality, it is found that affective response is the most influential dimension to reduce internalizing problem in adolescents who experience bullying. Adolescents who experience bullying do not get the appropriate affective responses from peers, that often their feelings are ignored and overlooked, especially by friends who bully them. Following what Miller et al. (2000) describe, families need to provide appropriate affective responses both qualitatively and quantitatively. The affective response provided by the family will allow adolescents to express their feelings in the family and get appropriate responses from the family.

Boyes et al. (2014) explained that the low level of unity in the family such as the level of emotional closeness, dependency, support, and communication are significantly associated with internalizing symptoms in adolescents. Emotional closeness here can be linked to affective responses in family functioning. Families can maintain emotional closeness among the members by increasing the response to feelings that arise from family members.

Affective responsiveness is expected not only to be given when family members come up with certain emotions, but it is hoped that members of the family can also show affective responsiveness if any of the members have a problem. Particularly in the context of bullying, according to Sullivan, Cleary, and Sullivan (2005), one of the reasons children do not tell is that they are afraid to worry parents. Families expected to understand the emotions shown by the child, so they can detect when problems occur. Based on these findings, it is important for families to provide such affective responses, especially when there are family members who experience bullying.

Based on the research results, Indonesian teenagers are still often exposed to bullying, so it is necessary to take preventive measures to prevent and reduce the occurrence of bullying. There is a need for preventive and curative interventions that are carried out by the family to avoid children having internalizing problems. Based on results, family should provide appropriate affective responses to children to help them cope with their bullying problems.

In addition, e some suggestions for future research that. It would be better if the data are collected in a

more diverse school regarding school type, accreditation, and school location, so that the population could be more representative. In addition, future research can assess another factor that can contribute to the internalizing problem on bullying victim, such as other support systems, coping strategy, etc. It would be better if we can differentiate the effect of family functioning to internalizing problem based on type of bullying or look the different effect between victim only and bully-victim.

Conclusion. Based on the results we can conclude that the hypothesis is accepted; family functioning can predict internalizing problem on adolescents who experience bullying, and affective responsiveness as a dimension of family functioning can decrease internalizing problem on bullying victims.

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