

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND BULLYING BEHAVIOR AMONG FIFTH-GRADE STUDENTS OF SDN 1 GEGESIK KULON

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behavior among fifth-grade students of SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon. This research used a quantitative approach with a correlational method. The sample consisted of 30 students selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using normality, linearity, and Pearson Product Moment correlation tests with SPSS. The results showed a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and bullying behavior. This indicates that students with higher emotional intelligence tend to exhibit lower bullying behavior. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted.

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying remains a prominent issue at the primary education level in Indonesia. Various findings indicate that aggressive actions in the school environment frequently emerge in the form of bullying, such as disrespect and ostracization, leading to cases like the Molotov cocktail explosion at SMAN 72 Jakarta Utara as an attempt to demonstrate superiority. Such behavior creates an uncomfortable learning atmosphere and disrupts the psychological condition of children during their character-formation phase (Agustine, 2025). This phenomenon is reinforced by the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report, revealing that approximately 41 percent of

students in Indonesia have experienced bullying at school. This high percentage indicates that bullying cannot be viewed solely as a disciplinary issue but is closely related to students' inability to manage emotions and understand others' feelings (Thoif et al., 2025).

At the primary school level, particularly in the fifth grade, students are in a phase of rapid social development where peer interaction plays a crucial role in self-identity formation. However, children face limitations in controlling emotional impulses, understanding acceptable behavioral boundaries, and positioning themselves appropriately within social environments. These obstacles often trigger conflicts that can escalate into bullying behavior, with research indicating that the fifth-grade classroom is the most frequent location for such incidents (Rahmawati et al., 2022). Emotional instability in primary school-aged children occurs because their ability to recognize and regulate feelings is still developing. Anger, envy, disappointment, or the desire for power can emerge without adequate control and be expressed through actions that harm peers, highlighting the importance of early emotional education (Sihombing et al., 2024).

The concept of emotional intelligence serves as a primary foundation for understanding how children manage feelings in social interactions. Emotional intelligence involves the ability to recognize one's own emotions, understand others' emotions, control feelings, foster empathy, and build healthy social relationships; children with good emotional intelligence tend to consider the impact of their actions before acting (Goleman, 2018; Chintya & Sit, 2024). Conversely, low emotional intelligence makes children more vulnerable to exhibiting aggressive behavior. Difficulties in understanding others' perspectives often cause children to misinterpret situations and respond inappropriately, including through acts of bullying (Anggraini & Wahdan Najib Habiby, 2024). Bullying itself constitutes intentional, repeated aggression where a perpetrator abuses a power imbalance—whether physical, social, or psychological—to harm a weaker target (Kajian et al., 2024). A specific manifestation, verbal bullying, encompasses aggression delivered through words to degrade, intimidate, or emotionally harm the victim, such as swearing, insulting, name-calling, and public shaming (Pradana, 2024).

This phenomenon is also identified locally at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon. Based on initial observations and teacher reports, forms of bullying such as mockery of physical conditions, degrading nicknames, physical pushing, and ostracization were found, affirming the existence of problematic social dynamics that demand intensive coaching (Alhidaya & Yasmin, 2025). Bullying severely impacts students by lowering self-confidence, weakening motivation, and disrupting emotional well-being, potentially leading to long-term social anxiety and depression (Faozi et al., 2024). Prior studies confirm this correlation, finding that students with low emotional intelligence more frequently exhibit bullying behaviors (Saputra & Khotimah, 2024), and that a lack of empathy and weak emotional regulation are the primary factors triggering aggressive acts in primary school students (Asrie Refi Salshabila et al., 2025). Given that every school possesses unique social characteristics, and considering the absence of specific prior research at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon, this study is necessary to scientifically map the relationship between these two variables and assist the school in formulating prevention strategies.

METHOD

This research utilized a quantitative approach with a correlational method to analyze the relationship between emotional intelligence as the independent variable and verbal bullying behavior as the dependent variable. The study was conducted in February 2026 at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon, located in Cirebon Regency, West Java, specifically targeting students in classes V A and V B.

The population in this study consisted of 66 fifth-grade students, comprising 33 students from class V A and 33 students from class V B. From this population, a sample of 30 students was selected. The sampling technique

employed was purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling method that determines the sample based on specific considerations or criteria desired by the researcher in accordance with the research objectives.

Data collection was carried out utilizing observation and questionnaires. Observation was conducted to directly observe verbal bullying behaviors, such as mockery or insults, in the classroom or during breaks without intervention to obtain natural and objective data. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale to measure both emotional intelligence and verbal bullying, consisting of positive and negative statements with five response alternatives ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree". Prior to implementation, the instrument underwent validity testing using the Pearson Product Moment correlation and reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha.

Data processing was performed using SPSS version 22. The data analysis techniques commenced with prerequisite tests, specifically the Shapiro-Wilk test to determine data normality, and a linearity test to ascertain the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Following the prerequisite tests, hypothesis testing was executed utilizing the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to determine the significance and the degree of correlation strength between emotional intelligence and verbal bullying behavior.

Table 1. Instrument Blueprint

Variable	Indicator	Item Numbers	Total
Emotional Intelligence (X)	Self-awareness	1, 2, 3, 4	4
Self-regulation	5, 6, 7, 8	4	
Self-motivation	9, 10, 11, 12	4	
Understanding others' feelings (Empathy)	13, 14, 15, 16	4	
Social skills or relationship building	17, 18, 19, 20	4	
Verbal Bullying Behavior (Y)	Swearing	1, 2, 3, 4	4
Insulting	5, 6, 7, 8	4	
Name-calling	9, 10, 11, 12	4	
Public shaming	13, 14	2	
Spreading gossip	15, 16	2	
Slandering	17, 18, 19, 20	4	
TOTAL			40

Results and Discussion

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Results

Validity and Reliability Tests The instrument testing phase evaluated the validity of 20 items measuring the Emotional Intelligence variable and 20 items measuring the Verbal Bullying variable. The assessment utilized the Pearson Product Moment correlation by comparing the calculated r-value (r_{hitung}) against the r-table (r_{tabel}) value of 0.361, established for a sample size of 30 respondents. All 40 items across both variables produced calculated r-values exceeding the r-table threshold, rendering them valid for data collection. A subsequent reliability test employing Cronbach's Alpha confirmed that the measurement instruments for both variables possessed high consistency.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Description
Emotional Intelligence (X)	.905	Reliable
Verbal Bullying Behavior (Y)	.952	Reliable

Descriptive Analysis Descriptive statistical analysis categorized the level of each variable among the 30 respondents by evaluating the total and mean scores. The Emotional Intelligence variable registered a total score range of 70 to 95, with mean values spanning from 3.50 to 4.75, positioning it within the "High" category. The Verbal Bullying variable recorded a total score range of 42 to 78, with mean values ranging from 2.10 to 3.90, placing it in the "Low to Medium" category.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis Assessment

No	Variable	N	Total Score	Mean	Category
1	Emotional Intelligence (X)	30	70-95	3.50-4.75	High
2	Verbal Bullying Behavior (Y)	30	42-78	2.10-3.90	Low-Medium

Prerequisite Tests: Normality and Linearity The Shapiro-Wilk test was executed to determine data normality. The analysis yielded a significance value of 0.366 for Emotional Intelligence and 0.754 for Verbal Bullying Behavior. Both significance values exceeded the 0.05 threshold, confirming a normal data distribution. The subsequent linearity test recorded a Deviation from Linearity significance value of 0.732. This value is greater than 0.05, establishing a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

Hypothesis Testing The hypothesis was tested using the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis to determine the association strength between the two variables.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Emotional Intelligence (X) to Verbal Bullying (Y)	-.998	.000	30

The analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of -0.998, placing the relationship strictly within the very strong category. The significance value was 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. This result dictates the rejection of the null hypothesis (\$H_0\$) and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (\$H_1\$), proving a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and verbal bullying behavior.

Discussion

Emotional Intelligence among Fifth-Grade Students The emotional intelligence levels among fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon vary, reflecting individual differences in personal emotional capacity. Students possessing high emotional intelligence consistently avoid engaging in verbal bullying acts against their peers. Conversely, students with lower emotional intelligence exhibit a pronounced tendency to commit verbal bullying. A significant distinction exists among students regarding emotional control; those with high intelligence generally record minimal bullying tendencies, whereas those with diminished emotional capacities record high instances of such aggressive behavior (Fatin et al., 2025).

Verbal Bullying Behavior among Fifth-Grade Students Verbal bullying levels within the observed classes are categorized overall as moderate. The variation in bullying occurrences is directly tied to the students' varying levels of emotional intelligence. Individuals endowed with high emotional intelligence exercise effective self-control and endurance when confronting unpleasant circumstances, mobilizing their internal strength to prevent the manifestation of verbal bullying. Characteristics inherent to bullying perpetrators often include dominating the social hierarchy of the school, congregating in specific areas, and holding a popular status among peers (Andriyani et al., 2024). These traits allow perpetrators with physical or mental advantages to effortlessly target weaker victims. The moderate aggregate level of verbal bullying at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon signals an overarching tendency toward high emotional intelligence among the student body.

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence and Verbal Bullying Behavior The product-moment correlation findings explicitly demonstrate a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and verbal bullying behavior. A deficit in emotional intelligence corresponds precisely with an elevation in verbal bullying actions. Conversely, heightened emotional intelligence correlates directly with diminished bullying behaviors. Prior research supports this dynamic, revealing a similarly significant negative relationship with a correlation coefficient of -0.462 (Education, 2021). Elevated emotional intelligence in students continuously results in lower rates of verbal bullying actions (Malida et al., 2021).

Verbal bullying maintains an intrinsic connection with emotional intelligence. Children equipped with sound emotional intelligence actively circumvent verbal bullying, whereas individuals occupying the roles of both perpetrator and victim typically display poor emotional intelligence (Kota et al., 2024). A deficit in emotional awareness serves as a primary catalyst for engaging in verbal bullying, a behavior that inflicts psychological trauma on victims and frequently incites them to replicate the bullying behavior cyclically (Aprilia et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence provides the necessary capacity to recognize, feel, and effectively apply emotional sensitivity. A high degree of this intelligence is imperative for individuals to recognize their own and others' emotions, generate self-motivation, regulate emotional responses meticulously, and establish effective communication channels (Muhsinah, 2023).

CONCLUSION

The level of emotional intelligence among fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon falls into varying categories, ranging from low to high. The analysis results indicate the presence of students with high emotional intelligence, achieving an average score of 4.25, alongside students with low emotional intelligence, averaging a score of 2.25. This variation highlights the differences in students' abilities to recognize, manage, and control their own emotions, as well as to understand the emotions of others. Concurrently, the level of verbal bullying behavior among these students also exhibits variation. There are students demonstrating a high level of verbal bullying behavior with an average score of 3.75, and those with a low level averaging 2.53. This disparity indicates that verbal bullying behavior remains present among a portion of the students at varying intensities.

There is a significant negative relationship between emotional intelligence and verbal bullying behavior among the fifth-grade students at SDN 1 Gegesik Kulon. The Pearson Product Moment correlation test resulted in a correlation coefficient value of $r = -0.998$ with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, leading to the acceptance of the research hypothesis and the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0). These results indicate that higher emotional intelligence possessed by students corresponds to a lower incidence of verbal bullying behavior committed. Conversely, lower emotional intelligence in students equates to a higher tendency to engage in verbal bullying behavior. The relationship between these two variables is classified within the very strong category.

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