

## ***Bullying in Educational Settings: A Literature Review of Factors Contributing to Bullying Behavior***

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### **ABSTRACT**

Bullying has become a critical issue, particularly in educational settings. Cases of bullying occur not only at a single educational level but across elementary, middle, and high schools. The number of bullying cases continues to increase each year. It is important to examine the factors contributing to bullying behavior as a basis for bullying prevention efforts in schools. This article reviews 15 studies on factors contributing to bullying behavior. The method used was a literature review, which involved analyzing 15 research articles according to predetermined criteria. Based on the analysis of these studies, five factors contributing to bullying behavior were identified: individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors, and digital media. These findings confirm that the factors leading a person to engage in bullying do not exist in isolation but are interconnected with other factors. Collaboration among the entire school community and parents is essential for bullying prevention efforts in schools.

### **Informasi Artikel**

#### **Keywords:**

*Bullying;  
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### **ABSTRAK**

Fenomena bullying menjadi permasalahan yang krusial terutama di lingkungan pendidikan. Kasus ini terjadi tidak hanya di satu jenjang, tetapi di SD, SMP, SMA. Setiap tahunnya kasus bullying selalu meningkat. Pentingnya kajian mengenai faktor-faktor penyebab bullying sebagai dasar upaya pencegahan yang dilakukan di lingkungan sekolah. Artikel ini mengkaji 15 penelitian mengenai faktor-faktor penyebab bullying. Metode yang digunakan ialah literature review, yaitu dengan menganalisis 15 artikel penelitian sesuai dengan kriteria yang telah ditetapkan. Berdasarkan hasil analisis dari berbagai penelitian, dihasilkan bahwa terdapat 5 faktor penyebab terjadinya bullying. Faktor tersebut ialah diri individu, keluarga, teman sebaya, lingkungan sosial, dan media digital. Hasil temuan tersebut menegaskan bahwa faktor seseorang melakukan bullying tidak berdiri sendiri, melainkan terdapat keterikatan dengan faktor-faktor yang lain. Perlunya kolaborasi antara seluruh warga sekolah dan orang tua dalam upaya pencegahan bullying di sekolah.

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## 1. Introduction

Educational settings should serve not only as spaces for developing students' academic and nonacademic potential and character but also as comfortable and safe spaces for students. However, deviant behavior persists in educational settings. One such *problem* is bullying. In simple terms, bullying is aggressive *behavior* intended to cause emotional or physical harm. Such actions are deliberate, repeated, and may be carried out individually or in groups. Bullying harms an individual's *mental* and physical well-being and occurs repeatedly, whether on a small or large scale [1]. Furthermore, *bullying* involves the abuse of power to oppress individuals perceived as weak [2].

Bullying in educational settings may take the form of physical, verbal, relational, or *cyberbullying*. *Perpetrators* of bullying may derive pleasure from bullying others and may not take responsibility for their actions. In addition to creating a less comfortable and safe school environment, bullying *has* serious consequences for victims of bullying, including reduced self-confidence, lower academic achievement, and mental health problems such as fear, anxiety, and depression [3]. According to Visty (2021) and Harmiasih (2023), perpetrators of bullying may experience regret and guilt, be avoided by their peers, be expelled from school, and experience mental health problems such as emotional instability.

*Bullying* has become an issue of concern in every country, particularly in Indonesia. The government and all members of society need to respond to the *widespread* occurrence of bullying cases. Data released by Pusiknas (2025) indicated that 25% of victims of bullying were at the middle *school* level and that the number of victims of bullying increased annually, from 10.617 in 2023 to 12.216 in 2024 and 14.512 in 2025. The majority of these victims were female. Furthermore, data from KPAI and JPPI revealed that there were 285 cases of *bullying* in 2023 and 573 in 2024. These data indicate that bullying cases have *increased* sharply each year. This issue has become a major concern, particularly within the educational sector.

A considerable body of research has examined the factors that influence individuals to engage in *bullying*. According to Haslan (2022), factors contributing to bullying *behavior* may stem from individual factors, family factors, peer factors, and parents who pay insufficient attention to their children's play environment. Furthermore, the school environment is the factor with the greatest *influence* on the occurrence of bullying. Other factors identified by Ririn (2024) include being a new student at school and differences in cultural, religious, socioeconomic, skin color, hair color, and intellectual backgrounds. According to Noya (2024), family factors, peer factors, the school environment, and social media *may* influence the emergence of bullying. The complexity of the explanations above indicates that bullying cannot be understood from a single perspective alone but must be understood through the integration of existing findings. Based on these views, a literature review is needed to integrate

research findings on factors contributing to *bullying* behavior in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding.

Understanding the factors contributing to an individual's *engagement* in bullying is important because it provides a basis for appropriate prevention efforts. In response to the *increasing* number of bullying cases in educational settings, a literature review of the factors *contributing* to the emergence of bullying is needed. Understanding the factors that *influence* individuals to engage in bullying makes it possible to tailor appropriate prevention *efforts* to minimize bullying behavior. Such prevention efforts may also reduce the negative impacts of *bullying* behavior.

This article does not examine a single study but synthesizes findings from a range of relevant studies. Based on an initial review, similar existing literature reviews generally continue to describe factors contributing to bullying in a *descriptive* narrative manner without explicit cross-study synthesis procedures (e.g., frequency tabulation, category coding, or a consistent conceptual framework). Consequently, relationships among factors tend to be presented as general conclusions without a clear analytical basis; this is the methodological *gap* on which this review focuses. In addition, there is a definitional gap, as *previous* reviews have not consistently differentiated or integrated definitions of conventional bullying and *cyberbullying* within the same *synthesis* framework, as well as a contextual gap, given that *most* studies of factors contributing to bullying in *Indonesia* remain fragmented into single case studies at individual schools or within specific regions. Few have integrated findings across educational levels (elementary school, middle school, high school, and university students) and across both national (Indonesia) and international (China) contexts, as this review does.

The *novelty* of this review lies in the explicit use of Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecological conceptual framework to organize factors from the initial stage of the review, accompanied by an analytical synthesis procedure based on identifying patterns of co-occurrence among *factor* categories across 15 primary studies involving participants ranging from elementary school students to university students and covering national (Indonesia) and international (China) contexts. Thus, the findings of this review are expected to provide an account of the factors contributing to bullying behavior that is not only descriptive but also has a stronger conceptual and analytical foundation, thereby contributing to the efforts of educators, Guidance and Counseling teachers, and researchers to *develop* bullying prevention efforts.

The complexity of the explanations above *indicates* that bullying cannot be understood from a single perspective but must be understood through an integrated consideration of existing findings. Based on these views, a literature review is needed to integrate research findings on factors contributing to bullying behavior to obtain a *comprehensive* understanding. To systematically organize these diverse factors, this review uses

Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecological theory (ecological systems theory/social-ecological model) as a *conceptual framework for categorizing factors*, with individual factors placed at the ontogenic/individual level, family factors and peer factors at the microsystem level, and social environmental factors and digital media at the mesosystem through macrosystem levels. The *use of this framework* from the initial stage of the review is intended to ensure that the synthesis of factors contributing to bullying in the results and discussion sections has a consistent conceptual foundation rather than merely constituting a list of isolated factors.

## 2. Methods

This article uses a literature review *method involving* the review, synthesis, and examination of various research findings relevant to the selected topic. A literature review aims to identify, evaluate, and interpret research findings relevant to the topic [4]. A literature review is a continuous analytical process for answering questions about a topic and providing a critical review. To ensure that the design of this review can be replicated, the procedures undertaken are described operationally below, including search keywords, search *strings*, year range, *inclusion/exclusion* criteria, and selection procedures [5].

Keywords and *search* strings. The search was conducted using the keyword combination "*bullying*" AND "contributing factor" AND "education/school," as well as the equivalent English terms "*bullying*" AND "risk factors" AND "school"/"adolescent." These keyword combinations were constructed using Boolean operators (AND/OR) to broaden or narrow the search results according to the needs of the topic.

Database sources. Searches were conducted in three databases, *namely Google Scholar*, ScienceDirect, and Garuda, to capture both national and international literature.

Publication period. The search was limited to articles published between 2021 and 2026 to obtain relatively recent data and findings relevant to the contemporary context of *bullying*.

Inclusion criteria. The selected articles or journals met predetermined criteria adapted from the selection framework of Lubis (2022), namely: 1) nationally or internationally indexed articles or journals; 2) indexed in Sinta; 3) available in *full text*; 4) explicitly addressing factors contributing to *bullying behavior* or *cyberbullying*; and 5) primary research articles (not undergraduate theses, master's theses, *dissertations*, or opinion/review articles without empirical data).

Exclusion criteria. Articles were excluded from the review if they: 1) did not directly address a contributing factor but discussed only the effects or management of *bullying*; 2) were not accessible in *full text*; or 3) were duplicates from other databases.

Basis for study selection. Study selection in this review was based on the relevance of the topic to the inclusion criteria above

rather than on a formal methodological quality *appraisal, such as* study design, sample size, or instrument type. This constitutes one limitation of the review, which is explained further below; therefore, interpretation of the findings should consider variations in quality among the synthesized primary studies.

Selection procedure. The selection process involved the following stages: 1) an initial search using the *keywords* and strings above across the three databases, which yielded a number of candidate articles; 2) screening of titles and abstracts to confirm topic relevance; 3) application of the inclusion and exclusion criteria to the *full-text* articles; and 4) final verification of content relevance to the topic of *factors* contributing to bullying behavior. This process resulted in 15 articles that met all the above criteria and were published between 2021 and 2026.

The 15 selected articles underwent content analysis *through manual coding of* factor categories. Statements in each study referring to factors contributing to bullying behavior were identified and *then* grouped into factor categories that recurred across studies (individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors, and digital media). Given variations in the definitions of bullying and cyberbullying across the *primary* studies, this review *treated* cyberbullying as a form of bullying occurring in the digital domain; thus, its contributing factors were synthesized within the same categorical framework, with contextual notes (online/offline) added in Table 1. A *formal study* quality appraisal was not conducted in this review. The procedures included: 1) thoroughly reading the retrieved articles or journals; 2) analyzing and coding the factors contributing to bullying behavior in each study; 3) grouping findings according to the identified factor categories; and 4) synthesizing the research findings to obtain an *overview* of the factors contributing to bullying behavior most frequently reported in educational settings.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Results

Articles and journals were collected in accordance with the previously established criteria, as described in the Methods section. A total of 15 articles relevant to factors contributing to bullying behavior and published between 2021 and 2026 were identified. The methods used in the reviewed studies varied and included qualitative approaches (interviews, observations, and case studies) and quantitative approaches (surveys using instruments/scales). Participants in the reviewed studies included elementary school, middle school, high school, and university students. The 15 studies were analyzed by coding *factor* categories, as described in the Methods section, through the identification of statements concerning contributing factors in each study and their subsequent grouping into recurrent factor categories. Definitions of *bullying* and *cyberbullying* in the

primary studies were treated within the same framework, with cyberbullying considered a *form of* bullying in the digital domain. A formal *appraisal of study* quality was not conducted in this literature review; therefore, variations in methodological quality across studies represent a limitation that readers should consider when evaluating the strength of the synthesized evidence. Analysis of the 15 studies yielded five categories of

factors contributing to *bullying* behavior: individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors, and digital media. A structured summary of each study, including its design/method, participants, identified factors, and study limitations, is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Findings of the Literature Review

| No. | Study Title                                                                                                                    | Author, Year                                                                       | Design/Method and Data Source                                                                                                                                                                                  | Participants                                                            | Identified Contributing Factors (Synthesis Categories)                                                                                                                       | Study Limitations                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1   | Prevention of bullying <i>behavior</i> among elementary school-aged children through parental involvement.                     | Abdullah, G., & Ilham, A. (2023) [6]                                               | Qualitative; data were collected through outreach and educational activities for parents or guardians (rather than formal, structured interviews) at SDN 1 Paguyaman.                                          | Parents or guardians of students at SDN 1 Paguyaman                     | Internal (individual factors) and external factors (family, school, community, and peers) → Individual Factors, Family Factors, Peer Factors, Social Environmental Factors.  | The data were based on parents' or guardians' perceptions rather than direct observations of student behavior and were therefore susceptible to parental perception bias. |
| 2   | Case Study of Bullying in Schools: Factors Influencing Student Behavior as Triggers of Bullying and Their Impact on Victims.   | Rahmatillah, W., Isnata, R., Jayatri, T., Wulandari, S., & Sitawani, A. (2024) [7] | Qualitative (case study); interviews with teachers and GT's classmates (GT was the perpetrator of bullying), observations of the classroom and school environment, and a review of CT incident report records. | Teachers, students (classmates), and 1 perpetrator of bullying (GT)     | Individual characteristics, family roles, and social dynamics → Individual Factors, Family Factors, Peer Factors/Social Environmental Factors.                               | Single-case study (1 perpetrator of bullying); the findings cannot be broadly generalized.                                                                                |
| 3   | Analysis of Factors Contributing to Bullying Behavior Among Female Students at MTs Darul Ihsan.                                | Syarif, M. M., Bahri, S., & Khairiah, K. (2022) [8]                                | Qualitative; observations and interviews with female students and Guidance and Counseling teachers at MTs Darul Ihsan.                                                                                         | Female students and Guidance and Counseling teachers at MTs Darul Ihsan | Peers, family relationships, and social media → Peer Factors, Family Factors, Digital Media.                                                                                 | The focus was limited to female students and therefore did not describe patterns among male students.                                                                     |
| 4   | Factors Contributing to Cyberbullying Behavior Among Students.                                                                 | Insani, B., & Yaksa, R. A. (2022) [9]                                              | Quantitative; questionnaires were administered to students at SMPN 5 Kota Jambi.                                                                                                                               | Students at SMPN 5 Kota Jambi                                           | Envy, lack of achievement, joking around, and anonymously embarrassing peers → individual factors (emotional/motivational dimensions in the context of cyberbullying).       | The specific type of instrument and its psychometric properties were not reported in detail in the source article.                                                        |
| 5   | Factors Associated With Bullying Among Students at SMPN 54 Merangin.                                                           | Ardianto, O. (2025) [10]                                                           | Quantitative; instruments were administered to students at SMPN 54 Merangin.                                                                                                                                   | Students at SMPN 54 Merangin                                            | Poor family relationships, negative peer influence, the surrounding environment, and mass media → family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors, digital media. | The instrument and sample size were not described in detail; generalizability was limited to one school.                                                                  |
| 6   | Analysis of Factors Influencing Cyberbullying Behavior in Relation to Social Media Use Among Adolescents at SMA 6 Lhokseumawe. | Budi, S. (2023) [11]                                                               | Quantitative; instruments/scales were administered to students at SMAN 6 Lhokseumawe to measure the relationship between self-esteem and social media use and cyberbullying.                                   | Students at Public High School 6 Lhokseumawe                            | Self-esteem and social media use → individual factors (indicators of self-control/self-confidence), digital media.                                                           | The study was correlational (cross-sectional) and could not explain the direction of causality between self-esteem and cyberbullying.                                     |
| 7   | Analysis of External Factors Influencing                                                                                       | Dhema, M. C., Doni, Y.                                                             | Qualitative: observations and interviews with the principal, Guidance and                                                                                                                                      | Principal, Guidance and Counseling                                      | Family, peers, environment, mass media → family factors, peer factors, social                                                                                                | The study focused only on external factors and did not                                                                                                                    |

|    |                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | Bullying (A Case Study of Grade 11 Students at Public High School 4 Kupang).                                                                            | D., & Lio, S. (2026) [12]                                                             | Counseling teachers, homeroom teachers, and students (victims/perpetrators) at Public High School 4 Kupang.                                                         | teachers, homeroom teachers, students                                          | <i>environmental factors, digital media.</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | explore individual factors in depth.                                                                                                                                    |
| 8  | Teachers' Efforts to Minimize Bullying Behavior at Public High School 1 Bima City.                                                                      | Fajriani, A. N., Mustari, M., Hadi, M. S., & Haslan, M. M. (2025) [13]                | Qualitative: observations and interviews with Guidance and Counseling teachers, civics teachers, religion teachers, and students at Public High School 1 Bima City. | Guidance and Counseling teachers, civics teachers, religion teachers, students | Disharmonious family conditions, lack of attention, exposure to violent media content, and peer influence → <i>family factors, digital media, peer factors.</i>                                                                                                     | The study focused on teachers' perspectives; thus, the perspectives of students who perpetrate or experience bullying were insufficiently explored.                     |
| 9  | A criminological review of contributing factors and impacts of verbal and physical bullying cases at Public High School 1, Lareh Sago Halaban District. | Halim, M., & Yustrisia, L. (2026) [14]                                                | Mixed methods: interviews, observations, and administration of scales to students at Public High School 1, Lareh Sago Halaban District.                             | Students at Public High School 1, Lareh Sago Halaban District                  | Lack of parental supervision, peer factors, social environmental factors, weak social control, and inadequate school supervision → <i>family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors.</i>                                                               | The criminological approach placed greater emphasis on legal aspects and impacts, limiting elaboration of mechanisms involving individual factors.                      |
| 10 | <i>Associated factors and patterns of school bullying among school-aged adolescents in China: A latent class analysis.</i>                              | Liu, F., Yang, Y., Lin, P., Xiao, Y., Sun, Y., Fei, G., ... & Zhang, X. (2024) [15]   | Quantitative: a survey of middle school and high school students in Yixing, Jiangsu Province, using latent class analysis.                                          | Middle school and high school students in Yixing, China                        | Individual factors, peer factors, family factors, school factors, and social media use → <i>individual factors, peer factors, family factors, social environmental factors, digital media.</i>                                                                      | China's cultural context and educational system differ from those of Indonesia; therefore, cross-contextual generalization requires caution.                            |
| 11 | <i>Prevalence and associated factors of school bullying among Chinese college students in Changsha, China.</i>                                          | Yu, Q., Wu, S., Twayigira, M., Luo, X., Gao, X., Shen, Y., ... & Shen, Y. (2022) [16] | Quantitative: instrument administration to 8.098 college students in Hunan Province, China.                                                                         | 8.098 college students in Hunan, China                                         | Gender, poor family relationships, mental health problems, risky behaviors, poor peer relationships, and low satisfaction with the campus environment → <i>individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors.</i>                      | The sample was limited to college students, representing a context different from that of elementary school, middle school, and high school students in other studies.  |
| 12 | <i>Ecological factors and adolescent involvement in bullying: A systematic literature review.</i>                                                       | Farrell, A. H., Lewis, K., Eriksson, M. J., & Vaillancourt, T. (2026) [17]            | <i>Systematic</i> literature review: analysis of 72 articles using an ecological factors framework.                                                                 | Adolescents (aggregated across 72 studies)                                     | Ecological systems; individual factors, family factors, peer factors, school factors, and social environmental factors → <i>individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social environmental factors (encompassing all ecological levels simultaneously).</i> | As a <i>secondary</i> literature review, it has a high level of generalizability; however, the contextual details of each original study are explored less extensively. |
| 13 | <i>Middle school students' perceptions of peer bullying: A qualitative study.</i>                                                                       | Çelik, E. Ü., Uyaroğlu, A. K., & Tosun, A. S. (2026) [18]                             | Qualitative: interviews with middle school students.                                                                                                                | Middle school students                                                         | Desire to demonstrate power, differences in individual characteristics, peer influence, lack of empathy and awareness, and insufficient adult supervision → <i>Individual Factors, Peer Factors, Social Environmental Factors.</i>                                  | The data reflect students' subjective perceptions and were not triangulated with direct observations or teacher reports.                                                |
| 14 | <i>A correlational meta-analysis of inhibiting and promotive factors of racial/ethnic</i>                                                               | Yang, C., Lim, J. H., & Rho, E. (2025) [19]                                           | Correlational meta-analysis: review of 17 studies.                                                                                                                  | Adolescents (aggregated across 17 studies in the context of                    | Individual, family, peer, and school factors → <i>Individual Factors, Family Factors, Peer Factors, Social Environmental Factors.</i>                                                                                                                               | Its specific focus on racial/ethnic bullying means that it is not fully                                                                                                 |

|    | bullying among youth.                                                                                   |                                                              |                                                                                   | racial/ethnic bullying)                         |                                                                                                                                                                                           | representative of bullying in general.                                                                          |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15 | <i>Prevalence and associated factors of school bullying among adolescents in Inner Mongolia, China.</i> | Zhang, X., Liu, L., Zhou, Z., Qi, M., & Chen, L. (2024) [20] | Quantitative: survey of 2.891 secondary school students in Inner Mongolia, China. | 2.891 secondary school students, Inner Mongolia | Gender, age/school level, less harmonious family relationships, poor peer relationships, deviant behavior, and mental health problems → Individual Factors, Family Factors, Peer Factors. | The specific ethnic and geographic context of Inner Mongolia limits generalizability to the Indonesian context. |

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 Individual Factors

Individual personality characteristics may influence whether a person perpetrates bullying. This view is consistent with analyses from various studies indicating that individual factors are among the factors contributing to bullying behavior [21]. Mental health problems, jealousy, lack of achievement, acting on a whim, poor communication skills, emotional problems, deliberately humiliating peers without being detected, and lack of empathy are factors that may lead a person to perpetrate bullying. Findings regarding acting on a whim and jealousy in cyberbullying behavior were obtained through closed-ended questionnaires administered to students, whereas findings from another study were obtained using a scale that measured the relationship between self-esteem and social media use and the tendency toward cyberbullying behavior. The inclusion of these instrument types is intended to ensure that interpretations of the synthesized factors are not speculative but are grounded in clear data sources [9].

It should also be emphasized that the term "self-esteem" in the findings is an indicator included within the Individual Factors category, consistent with the indicator of limited self-control discussed in other studies in this review. Thus, the term "self-esteem" and indicators related to self-confidence/self-control in this section are used consistently as part of the Individual Factors category rather than as a separate category distinct from the Individual Factors discussed previously.

Mental health problems, jealousy, low achievement, impulsivity, poor communication skills, emotional problems, deliberately humiliating peers without being detected, and a lack of empathy are factors that may lead an individual to perpetrate bullying. Low self-esteem, limited self-control, moral disengagement, behavioral problems, and prejudice against a group or ethnicity may also contribute to bullying perpetration.

In addition, gender, age, differences in school level, and a desire for power may contribute. Individuals who are aggressive and easily angered may tend to perpetrate bullying when circumstances do not meet their expectations. According to Andriyani (2024), perpetrators of bullying engage in bullying because they feel that they possess substantial power and can therefore freely do anything to weaker individuals. They act

without guilt and do not consider the consequences that victims may experience.

3.2.2 Family Factors

Family factors significantly influence individuals' attitudes and behavior because families play an important role in character development through communication, discipline, support, and supervision. Therefore, individuals may imitate deviant behavior if it is present within the family. Parents who provide insufficient attention and discipline may lead individuals to feel free to engage in deviant behavior. Less harmonious family relationships and low parental support may influence children to become perpetrators of bullying or victims of bullying.

As indicated by the analysis of various studies, family factors may contribute to bullying among individuals. These factors include adverse family conditions, insufficient parental attention and affection toward children, inadequate parental supervision and intervention, and parental contributions to bullying behavior. According to Setiawan (2024), authoritarian and aggressive parenting styles may serve as models for children. Thus, when family conditions are positive, attentive, and supportive, children will develop into individuals who do not engage in bullying.

3.2.3 Peer Factors

Peer factors play an important role in bullying because they may exert a negative influence by viewing bullying as normal or merely a joke rather than as a serious matter [22]. This view is consistent with the analysis of various studies, which indicates that peer factors are among the causes of bullying. These factors include peer influence that encourages individuals to intimidate others, poor peer relationships, friends or groups that exert negative influences, the desire to be accepted by peers, peer pressure, and a lack of efforts to foster mutual respect for differences among peers.

Peer factors have a substantial influence because individuals spend most of their time interacting with peers, both at school and in their home environments. Therefore, when peer influence is positive, bullying cases are less frequent [23].

3.2.4 Social Environmental Factors

Bullying cases often occur in the school environment. Furthermore, schools do not disregard submitted reports, but the sanctions imposed are ineffective. This situation prevents

perpetrators of bullying from learning to value and respect their peers [24]. The analysis of various studies indicates that social environmental factors are among the causes of bullying. One social environmental factor is poverty. Individuals experiencing poverty may take any action to meet their basic needs, such as extorting money at school. Negative behavior demonstrated by school authorities may also contribute to the development of bullying cases when they fail to provide safety for school members.

In addition, weak teacher supervision and a lack of firmness in enforcing school rules may result in poorly functioning bullying response mechanisms. When sanctions are not firmly enforced and education regarding the dangers of bullying is inadequate, such cases may recur. According to Ere (2024), behavior is a form of an individual's reaction to their environment. Therefore, if an environment inhabited by individuals encourages bullying, freedom to act, and a lack of norms, bullying may become increasingly prevalent.

### 3.2.5 Digital Media Factors

The phenomenon of globalization may contribute to a decline in students' ethical standards because it provides content that is not always appropriate for display. This may influence students' character [25]. This view is consistent with the analysis of various studies, which indicates that digital media factors are among the causes of bullying. Such factors include inappropriate comments on photographs and other content by perpetrators of bullying, as well as imitation of aggressive behavior portrayed in various media, such as television dramas, films, online games, and even news about physical violence, which children with unstable personalities may readily absorb and wish to imitate.

Students may not yet understand ethical boundaries for interacting on social media, moral responsibility when expressing opinions, or the implications of sharing content. This indicates the importance of education to increase awareness and empathy and promote the wise use of social media [26].

### 3.2.6 Synthesis of Research Findings

The factors contributing to bullying described above do not operate independently but are interconnected. This conclusion regarding the relationships among factors was derived through a *thematic synthesis* of the 15 reviewed studies by identifying the *co-occurrence* of factor categories within the same studies. Based on a tabulation of occurrence frequencies, 12 of the 15 reviewed studies (80%) identified more than one factor category simultaneously (e.g., family factors together with peer factors), providing an empirical basis for the claim that these factors are interconnected rather than merely supporting a narrative conclusion.

Poor family relationships, including parenting patterns and a lack of attention and affection, may expose adolescents to negative peer influences because parents provide insufficient support. This pattern of association is consistent with findings at the microsystem-mesosystem level, for example, studies that explicitly link less harmonious family conditions to peer

influences that encourage bullying behavior [13], as well as studies linking inadequate parental supervision to weak social control in the school environment. To gain acceptance and greater recognition, individuals may join groups perceived as engaging in bullying *because* they feel more accepted and receive appreciation or support [14]. An unsafe school environment, inadequate supervision, inappropriate sanctions, and insufficiently strict rules may allow bullying behavior to become *widespread*. This pattern was identified at the exosystem *level* (the school as an institution), which interacts with the microsystem level (family and peers), as found in studies that systematically analyzed factors across multiple ecological levels simultaneously [17].

Thus, bullying *is not* the result of a single factor but rather of complex interactions among family factors, peer factors, the school environment, digital media, and individual factors. This claim is supported analytically by patterns of *co-occurrence* among factor categories, as described above, rather than solely by descriptive narratives. The findings of this research synthesis reinforce Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, as stated in the Introduction, which emphasizes that individual behavior is influenced by interactions among multiple surrounding systems, from the family as a *microsystem* to media and the social environment as *macrosystems*. These findings are also consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, whereby aggressive behavior may develop through observation *and* modeling of behaviors encountered in the environment and media.

In addition to the 15 primary studies that formed the main basis of the synthesis, this literature review also cited several supporting articles and journals [21], [27], [28] that were not included among the 15 main articles but were selected on the basis of their conceptual and theoretical relevance to the topic to strengthen or provide additional context for the findings from the 15 main studies. These supporting studies complemented the explanation of the mechanisms underlying the patterns identified in the 15 main studies but were not used as a basis for *calculating* factor frequencies or co-occurrences in the synthesis process described above. Most of the studies reviewed did not explicitly conduct cross-study synthesis and therefore contained only explanations of research findings supplemented by the views presented in supporting journals or articles. This condition *constitutes* one of the research gaps that this literature review seeks to address (*see the* explanation of novelty and the research gap in the following section).

## 4. Conclusion

Based on this literature review of 15 articles or journals and supported by additional information, the findings indicate that bullying behavior is influenced by various internal and external factors. The factors contributing to bullying behavior *include* individual factors, family factors, peer factors, social

environmental factors, and digital media. These five factors are interconnected and do not operate independently. Peer factors are dominant because individuals spend most of their time with friends. Identifying the factors contributing to bullying behavior represents an effort to prevent bullying cases in educational settings.

Accordingly, bullying behavior is a multifactorial phenomenon. Bullying prevention efforts should not focus solely on perpetrators of bullying but should also involve families, peers, schools, and the social environment. Approaches to addressing bullying and collective commitments to creating safe and supportive environments are needed to prevent, reduce, and respond to bullying behavior in educational settings.

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