Bullying Behavior in Early Childhood: Study at Early Childhood Education Institution in East Jakarta in Indonesia

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Abstract

This qualitative research is aimed to find a picture of bullying behavior of students aged 4-6 years old at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. Data collection technique was carried out through questionnaires given to the teachers at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia to assess the bullying behavior of 165 students at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. The result of this research confirmed that the majority of 65 % students did not show bullying behavior, but there were still a small proportion of 35 % still doing bullying in various forms. There is no correlation between bullying behavior with gender, but there is still a relationship that boys are more likely to physically bullying. The age aspect of the child also has a significant correlation with bullying behavior that 6 years old students exhibit bullying behavior more often.

Keywords: bullying behavior, early childhood, gender, age

1. Introduction

Students’ bullying as a social problem spreading in schools needs comprehensive solutions. The systemic nature of this epidemic affects not only students experiencing bullying but also students carrying out bullying to others and witnessing bullying (Ford et al., 2017; Mofe & Editor, 2012). Students can take different roles in ongoing bullying actions and have overlapping effects on psychological functions of participating children. Students can also experience physical injuries due to bullying behavior. Bullying is considered a public health threat affecting individuals both mentally and physically (Blake, Banks, Patience, & Lund, 2015).

Children aged 3 years can participate in bullying. Bullying often happens in early childhood environments such as day care centers, play groups, and in kindergartens (Saracho, 2017). Some behaviors involving children excluded from their playgroups, given nicknames such as ‘children without a father’, being pinched daily, being stabbed with a pencil, and being hit with something done repeatedly can be classified as bullying (Arseneault et al., 2006).

The impact of bullying behavior in childhood is closely related to anti-social behavior in the future after children growing up (Milsom & Gallo, 2015). Bullying behavior can have a negative impact on mental health, psychosocial, physiological, and behavioral changes from bullying victims (Cook, Williams, Guerra, Kim, & Sadek, 2010; Olweus, 2013; Olweus, Limber, & Breivik, 2019; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011). These impacts not only affect children lives at this time but also after children growing to understand (Milsom & Gallo, 2015). Several models of bullying prevention are offered (Olweus, D., 1994; Saracho, 2017). These models often include one or combination of several program elements such as making
changes to school rules and behavior management process, integrating all schools, prevention programs, supervising students, requesting collaboration between different professionals and between school staff (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014).

Children experiencing bullying suffer from low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and self-destructive thoughts (Rigby & Slee, 1991). Bullying perpetrators are at risk of increasing their anti-social and criminal behavior or continuing to be a bullying person as an adult. Young children being aggressive victims of bullying appear to be socially rejected (Sourander et al., 2009). Children aged 5-7 years old having been victims of bullies tend to experience adjustment errors during their early school years (Arseneault et al., 2006; Repo, 2015). Children may be able to protect themselves if they know the meaning of bullying.

Bullying is a problem often occurring in young children (Alsaker & Nägele, 2008; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Monks et al., 2009). It is important to identify the symptoms of early bullying to stop its development (Repo, 2015). Personal and interpersonal characteristics of preschool children encouraging problems with bullying and victims can be reduced by the components of prevention and intervention programs being appropriate for young children (Vlachou, Botsoglou, & Andreou, 2013). Social context or school environment influences the level of bullying and peer victimization and the intervention effectiveness. Several effective programs are found to prevent peer bullying and victimization in schools (Bradshaw & Johnson, 2011).

2. Method

This qualitative research was conducted at an early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. The purpose of the study was to find a picture of bullying behavior of students aged 4 – 6 years at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. Aspects observed included sex, child ages, and the form of bullying the children did. Data collection technique was carried out through questionnaires given to the teachers at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia to assess the bullying behavior of their students. Assessment was conducted for 165 students at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. The questionnaires consisted of two main parts. The first part collected basic information from each participating student including gender and age. In the second part, the teacher responded to 10 statements reflecting student bullying behavior using a 5-point Likert scale score 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree.

The sex of the students observed was quite balanced with 88 male students or 53 % of respondents and 77 female students or 47 % of total students observed. The observed age range of students is 4-6 years old with the highest number of students, namely 79 students of 5 years old or 48 % of total students followed by 47 students of 6 years old or 28 % of total students, and 39 students of 4 years old students or 24 % of total students (seen in Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Demographic Profile</th>
<th>Frequency (N=165)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>53 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>47 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data was collected through questionnaires to be filled out by the teachers based on their observations of student bullying behavior in their class. Interview was also done to find out the teacher opinions about student bullying behavior at early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia. Teacher representatives are also asked to fill out an assessment sheet on student bullying behavior.

3. Results and Discussion

The results of this study related to the types of bullying done by students are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Indicators of student bullying behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Percentages (%)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Seldom</td>
<td>Often</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children pinching and hitting others more than once</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children pushing and punching others more than once</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children hiding or remove toys of others</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children damaging toys of others</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children spitting on friend more than once</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children talking in threatening tones to friends</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ages
4 years old                                39  24 %
5 years old                                 79  48 %
6 years old                                 47  28 %
No Response                                  0  0 %

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In Table 2, it can be seen that most of students or 85% of the students have never spat while 12% of students sometimes perform these actions. There are the fewest of students or 45% of students have never pushed and punched friends while 35% of students occasionally take these actions. It can be seen that on the average children never hide or remove toys of others at school, damage toys of others, spit on friend more than once, speak harsh language or make racist words, and exclude friend in class intentionally and more than once although there is small portion of students who often do the bullying behavior. Besides the highest average of students pushed and punched others more than once while playing. It should be noted that there are 4% of the total students who are often seen pinching and hitting friends more than once, 3% of the total students who are seen pushing and punching friends more than once. In addition to this, 1% of the students who speak in a threatening tone to friends, 1% of the students who taunts and teases when talking to friends, and 1% of the students who commit acts making others crying in class. Data related to gender relationship with bullying behavior can be seen in Table 3.

### Table 3. Gender relationship with bullying behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>The average of responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 3, it can be seen that male students tend to do bullying. The overall mean score indicates that male students sometimes bullying with an average answer of 1.74 from maximum score 5 compared to female students who are only 1.23. The male students more often used physically in bullying. It can be seen from the highest scores of students pinching
and hitting others more than once as well as pushing and punching others more than once. Whereas female students have the highest score of students look scoffing and teasing when talking to friends. In Table 4, it can be indicated that there is no association between bullying behavior with student gender. In Table 5, it can be pointed out the relationship of age with bullying behavior.

Table 4. Correlation between bullying behavior and gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVG Gender</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.427**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Table 5. Age relationship with bullying behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ages</th>
<th>Average of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 years old</td>
<td>1.54 1.46 1.31 1.36 1.13 1.36 1.41 1.26 1.41 1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>1.77 1.82 1.51 1.48 1.23 1.56 1.65 1.51 1.58 1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years old</td>
<td>1.85 2.00 1.49 1.32 1.13 1.77 1.94 1.70 1.83 1.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 indicates that bullying behavior increases with the student ages, except for students hide or remove toys, damage toys, and spits on others more than once. Students aged 6 years have an average total of 1.63 indicating that they sometimes bullying compared to student aged 4 years where the average score is still 1.32 or never do bullying. Table 6 shows about correlation between bullying behavior and student ages. In Table 6, it is indicated that there is a significantly positive association between bullying behavior and ages of 0.193.

Table 6. Correlation between bullying behavior and age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVG Ages</th>
<th>AVG</th>
<th>Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Correlation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.193*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig. (2-tailed)</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Based on the result of this study, it appears that the majority of students never and sometimes do bullying behavior to others more than once. In addition to this, more male students do bullying than female students as well as the student age has a correlation with bullying behavior specifically for 6 years old students appear to be bullying more often than other ages. This study shows that male students tend to do bullying more often than women. Although there is a tendency for male students to do more bullying in physical form but girls also do bullying in other forms. These findings is similar to the study done by Anagnostopoulos et al. (2009) stating that 80% of the school violence is based on gender. Further research conducted by Seals and Young (2003) presented that percentage of gender-based bullying is higher than other forms such as ethnic and age-based bullying. The boys are more prone to bullying and victims of bullying, especially in physical expression. The girls are more likely to be involved in indirect bullying situations, such as teasing or gossiping about peers (Carbone-Lopez, Esbensen, & Brick, 2010). Other research conducted by Tanrikulu (2018) to early childhood teachers showed that most teachers agreed that the children who did preschool bullying were boys. Boys tend to have behavioral problems, show leadership skills, and are good at expressing feelings. The study done by Kaltiala-Heino and Fröjd (2011) found that physical bullying is the most common among boys and verbal social bullying is the most common among girls. According to Cuadrado-Gordillo (2012) boys tend to interpret various forms of bullying as a mechanism of interaction between peers. Boys manifest themselves through physical attacks and insults (Silva, Pereira, Mendonça, Nunes, & de Oliveira, 2013). However, Pearson Correlation doesn’t show a significant relationship between sex with bullying behavior. This is due to the nature of the social life experienced by families and the freedom to enroll in mixed schools and communities. The results of this study are consistent with much of the literature investigating the importance of differences between male and female in bullying behavior, most of which show a lack of statistically significant differences (Baldry & Farrington, 2000). Other studies have shown that there are no statistically significant differences between men and women on the total scale of bullying (Badarna, 2016).

Gender is one of the fundamental variables in understanding the phenomenon of bullying. The concept of gender seeks to distinguish between the social and historical constructs of men and women on the one hand and sex on the other hand, as well as explain the power relations between men and women and how they relate in society. Gender is closely related to understanding socially determined roles (Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012).

The result of this study also showed that 6 years old students tend to do bullying more often than 4 and 5 years olds. In line with the findings stating that the intensity of bullying can vary according to the student ages, but it reaches its peak in adolescence (Lafontana & Cillessen, 2010). The probability of bullying practice increases until age 14 years old and the possibility of aggression decreases thereafter (Álvarez-García, García, & Núñez, 2015). In addition to this, the study conducted by Jansen et al. (2012) showed that one third of children aged 5-6 years old were involved in bullying and 17% of them were only bullies, 13% were bullied victims, and 4% were only victims. Prevalence rates and predictors of bullying can vary as a function of age (Swearer et al., 2015). Certain individual or contextual factors can predict involvement to a greater or lesser degree during childhood or adolescence, providing age specific direction in bullying (Saracho, 2017).

Involvement in bullying situations with gender and age considerations enables the formation of conceptions in intervention practices in schools with a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral focus. Bullying is a growing phenomenon deserving great attention from researchers, teachers, education councils, education and health professionals and families.
Prevention and intervention programs reducing bullying need to be used with children as early as possible. Children aged 5-7 years having been victims of bullying tend to be adjusted in the early years of school (Arseneault et al., 2006; Kirves & Sajaniemi, 2012). Therefore, no matter how small the bullying behavior occurring early must be minimized so that it doesn’t develop widely. Children bullying need to get attention early so that it can prevent future problems when the child is growing up.

4. Conclusion

The majority of students at an early childhood education institution in East Jakarta in the Province of Jakarta in Indonesia never and sometimes do bullying behavior to others more than once. In addition to this, more male students do bullying than female students as well as the student age has a correlation with bullying behavior specifically for 6 years old students appear to be bullying more often than other ages. This study shows that male students tend to do bullying more often than women. Although there is a tendency for male students to do more bullying in physical form but girls also do bullying in other forms.

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