

The Relationship between Body Image and Bullying Behavior among Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur

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Abstract

Introduction: Bullying is a psychosocial problem widely experienced by adolescents and has a serious impact on mental health and social development. One of the associated factors is body image. **Objective:** This study aimed to determine the relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur in 2025. **Method:** This study used a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. The population consisted of 291 eleventh-grade students, with 168 respondents determined using the Slovin formula. The research instruments were body image and bullying questionnaires. Data were analyzed using the Chi-Square test at a significance level of 0.05. **Result and Discussion:** Ninety-four respondents (56.0%) had a positive body image and 74 respondents (44.0%) had a negative body image. Seventy-nine respondents (47.0%) experienced bullying and 89 respondents (53.0%) did not. The Chi-Square test showed a significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior ($p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$). **Conclusions:** There is a significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents. The more positive an adolescent's body image, the lower their tendency to be involved in bullying.

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Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental period marked by the transition from childhood to adulthood, occurring approximately between the ages of 13 and 21 years. During this stage, individuals experience substantial physical, emotional, and social changes while searching for identity and striving for independence from parental dependency, a period often described as “storm and stress” (Sulhan, 2024); (Al Atsari & Ichsan, 2025); (Batubara, Patriawati, & Sisthaningrum, 2025)

Within this dynamic developmental phase, adolescents become a vulnerable group for various psychosocial problems, one of which is bullying behavior (Kurniawati & Lestari, 2021); (Raudhati & Hilwa, 2023); (Septiani, 2024). The Indonesian Commission for Child Protection (KPAI, 2023) reported that most bullying victims are aged 6 to 18 years, with the highest incidence occurring among adolescents aged 16 to 19 years, indicating that bullying remains a serious and unresolved problem among Indonesian adolescents. Being a victim of bullying has serious consequences for adolescent development. Victims often experience difficulty forming friendships, tend to isolate themselves, develop a negative body image, and feel afraid to attend school (Rabbani & Prima, 2026); (Rachmawati, 2024); (Nurhayati, 2025). Further consequences may include depression, which in some cases can lead to suicidal behavior (Bachri, Putri, Sari, & Ningsih, 2021)

Several factors are associated with becoming a victim of bullying in relation to body image disturbance, including the social environment, such as peer association and media pressure. Previous studies indicate that body image disturbance can increase the risk of a person becoming a bullying victim, with a significant impact on adolescents' mental health and well-being (Lestari, Hutahaeen, & Fahrudin, 2023). Body image disturbance is frequently associated with negative outcomes for adolescents' psychological well-being, and its prevalence has been reported to increase over recent years, particularly among female adolescents (Indarto et al., 2026).

This relationship can be further explained through at least three interrelated theoretical pathways. First, negative body image is closely linked to diminished self-esteem, both in terms of global self-worth and appearance-specific self-esteem; using a person-oriented approach, recent research found that adolescents classified in a self-derogation self-esteem profile were at greater risk of involvement in bullying and victimization than those with a consistently high self-esteem profile, indicating that low self-esteem functions as a genuine vulnerability factor rather than merely a consequence of being bullied. Second, dissatisfaction with one's body often heightens self-consciousness in social situations, which may develop into social anxiety; longitudinal evidence confirms that socially anxious adolescents who tend to appear more withdrawn, hesitant, and less able to assert themselves are at significantly greater risk of peer victimization over time. Third, from a social-dominance and evolutionary perspective, bullying is fundamentally rooted in a power imbalance, in which aggressors tend to select targets perceived as less likely or able to retaliate, since doing so lowers the social risk of the aggression adolescents who display visible signs of insecurity or discomfort about their bodies may therefore inadvertently signal vulnerability, making them more readily identifiable as targets. Taken together, reduced self-esteem, heightened social anxiety, and perceived vulnerability provide a stronger theoretical foundation for understanding negative body image not merely as a consequence of bullying, but also as a contributing risk factor for becoming a victim (Cahyati, 2025); (Arsi, Ridfah, & Pratiwi, 2025).

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In Cianjur Regency, the local Child Protection Agency recorded 62 cases of violence against children throughout 2023, several of which involved bullying incidents in schools. A preliminary observation conducted by the researchers on five students at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur revealed that students who felt dissatisfied with their body image tended to exhibit bullying behavior toward peers, both verbally and non-verbally. Despite the accumulating evidence linking body image and bullying, empirical data specific to the school setting in Cianjur remain limited. These findings reinforce the urgency of examining the relationship between body image and bullying behavior, considering its significant impact on adolescents' psychological condition and mental health, particularly within the school environment. This study therefore aimed to determine the relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur in 2025.

Method

This study employed a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach, in which data on the independent and dependent variables were collected at a single point in time. The population consisted of 291 eleventh-grade students at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur, Karangtengah Subdistrict, Cianjur Regency. The minimum sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a significance level of 0.05, yielding a sample of 168 respondents who were proportionally distributed across seven majors. The inclusion criteria were eleventh-grade students aged 15-18 years, in possession of a device to complete the questionnaire online, and willing to participate as respondents. The exclusion criteria were students absent during data collection and those who completed the questionnaire incompletely or inconsistently.

Data were collected using a structured, self-administered online questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, consisting of two instruments. The body image questionnaire was adapted from a body-image evaluation framework and previously validated with nine items, comprising four favorable and five unfavorable statements, and demonstrated a Cronbach's α of 0.605. The bullying questionnaire was adapted from the Child Adolescent Bullying Scale (CABS), consisting of 19 unfavorable items covering verbal, physical, and cyberbullying dimensions, with a Cronbach's α of 0.886 (Agustin, Rohmah, & Anggraini, 2024). Both instruments had previously demonstrated adequate item validity (r -value > 0.363 for all items) and were therefore used without repeated validity and reliability testing. Data collection was conducted after obtaining institutional and school permission. Respondents who agreed to participate signed an informed-consent form before completing the questionnaire, which required approximately 20 minutes. Univariate analysis was used to describe the frequency distribution of each variable, while bivariate analysis using the Chi-Square test ($\alpha = 0.05$) was applied to examine the relationship between body image and bullying behavior. The study was conducted at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur in 2025.

Result and Discussion

1. Result

This study, titled "The Relationship between Body Image and Bullying Behavior among Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur," involved 168 respondents. Data were collected and processed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS, with the results presented below.

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Univariate Analysis

Table 1

Frequency Distribution of Body Image among Eleventh-Grade Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur

Body Image	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Negative	74	44.0
Positive	94	56.0
Total	168	100.0

Table 1 shows that 74 respondents (44.0%) had a negative body image, while 94 respondents (56.0%) had a positive body image, out of a total of 168 respondents.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of Bullying Behavior among Eleventh-Grade Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur

Bullying	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
No	89	53.0
Yes	79	47.0
Total	168	100.0

Table 2 shows that of the 168 respondents, 79 (47.0%) experienced bullying and 89 (53.0%) did not, indicating that although the majority of respondents were not exposed to bullying, a substantial proportion, nearly half, still experienced it.

Bivariate Analysis

The relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur was analyzed using the Chi-Square test. The results showed a p-value of 0.000, which is smaller than the significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$). This indicates that there is a statistically significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur. Because the p-value was smaller than α , the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) was accepted, confirming a significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior in this population.

2. Discussion

Body Image among Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur

The results showed that of the 168 respondents, 94 (56%) had a positive body image and 74 (44%) had a negative body image. This indicates that most respondents held a favorable perception of their own bodies, although nearly half of the respondents still reported a negative body image. Adolescents with a negative body image tend to be more susceptible to psychological problems such as low self-esteem and social anxiety. This negative perception is often shaped by sociocultural factors, particularly unrealistic beauty standards portrayed through social media, which reduce self-acceptance and increase the likelihood of adolescents becoming either victims or perpetrators of bullying.

These findings are consistent with a study by Agustin, Rohman and Anggraeni (2024), which found that adolescents with a negative body image were more likely to be

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involved in bullying behavior, using an instrument based on the body image framework of Cash (2012) and demonstrating a significant relationship between body image and bullying experience in physical, verbal, and cyber forms. Garcia and Martinez (2022) similarly reported that adolescents with a positive body image show better social adaptation, whereas those with a negative body image tend to withdraw, experience declining self-esteem, and become more vulnerable to aggressive behavior from their social environment. The researchers assume that body image plays an important role in adolescents' psychosocial condition. A negative body image not only affects psychological aspects such as low self-esteem and anxiety, but also increases the risk of adolescents' involvement in bullying behavior, whether as a victim or as a perpetrator.

Bullying Behavior among Adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur

The results showed that of the 168 respondents, 79 (47%) experienced bullying and 89 (53%) did not. This proportion indicates that nearly half of the adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur still experience bullying, with verbal bullying reported as more dominant than physical bullying. This finding is consistent with the study by Agustin, Rohman and Anggraeni (2024), which showed that adolescents with weaker psychological conditions or a negative body image were more vulnerable to being involved in bullying, either as victims or perpetrators, and that body perception was significantly associated with the experience of physical, verbal, and cyberbullying. Besides internal factors such as low self-control and lack of empathy, external factors also play a substantial role; peer influence and social media use frequently trigger bullying behavior, indicating that bullying among adolescents is not solely an individual matter but is also shaped by the social and cultural dynamics of their environment.

The researchers assume that the persistently high prevalence of bullying among adolescents indicates that this phenomenon remains a serious problem requiring special attention. Bullying, particularly in its verbal form, not only affects the victim's mental health but may also disrupt social development and academic achievement, underscoring the need for active involvement from schools, families, and the wider social environment in prevention efforts.

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The Chi-Square test showed a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur. This suggests that the more positive an adolescent's body image, the lower their tendency to be involved in bullying, whether as a victim or perpetrator; conversely, adolescents with a negative body image are more vulnerable to experiencing or perpetrating bullying. This finding is consistent with the study by Agustin, Rohman and Anggraeni (2024), which found a negative relationship between body image and bullying behavior among adolescents, and with Libing et al (2021), who showed that adolescent victims of bullying tend to have a negative body image. From a theoretical perspective, this finding supports the view that individual body perception is strongly influenced by sociocultural factors, including peer commentary; adolescents with a negative body image are more likely to become targets of bullying, whereas those with a positive body image are better able to resist social pressure and maintain their mental health.

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It is important to note that body image is not a unidimensional construct, and the global positive–negative classification used in this study may obscure differences among its underlying sub-dimensions. Multidimensional model, body image can be broken down into components such as appearance evaluation (satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one's overall physical appearance), appearance orientation (the degree of importance and cognitive-behavioral investment an individual places on their appearance), and body areas satisfaction (satisfaction with specific body parts, such as the face, weight, or muscle tone), and these sub-dimensions may relate differently to bullying involvement. Appearance evaluation appears to show the most consistent association with peer victimization: lower appearance evaluation scores are linked to higher levels of cyber victimization, and this dimension has also been found to moderate how strongly victimization relates to disordered-eating symptoms.

A related dimension, satisfaction with specific body areas, similarly functions as a protective factor against cyberbullying involvement, although this protective effect is more pronounced among adolescents already positioned as victims or bully-victims, suggesting its influence may matter more once a bullying dynamic is already underway rather than as an initial trigger. Appearance orientation, by contrast, reflects the importance an adolescent places on appearance rather than satisfaction with it, and its relationship with bullying is theoretically more ambiguous: a high investment in appearance could act as a protective factor by motivating conformity to peer appearance norms, or as a risk factor by heightening sensitivity to appearance-related remarks from peers. This particular sub-dimension remains comparatively under-examined in the bullying literature and represents a promising direction for future research. Because the present study relied on a global body image score, it cannot determine which of these specific sub-dimensions most strongly drives the relationship with bullying observed here; future studies at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur and similar settings would therefore benefit from measuring appearance evaluation, appearance orientation, and body areas satisfaction separately in order to clarify which aspect of body image most strongly predicts involvement in bullying, whether as victim or perpetrator

Study Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, it focused on body image as the sole independent variable without controlling for other variables that may also influence bullying behavior. Second, the researchers faced time constraints, as data collection had to be adjusted to the academic schedule of SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur.

Nursing Implications

Based on these findings, several nursing implications can be drawn. As health promoters, nurses can promote a positive body image among adolescents through school-based health education programs focusing on self-acceptance, self-confidence, and the negative impact of bullying. As educators, nurses can provide health education to students, teachers, and parents regarding the importance of a positive body image, bullying prevention strategies, and coping strategies for social pressure both at school and on social media. As advocates, nurses can collaborate with schools and parents to develop bullying-prevention policies and ensure a safe school environment that supports adolescents' mental health. As collaborators and program managers, nurses can work with school counselors, psychologists, and other stakeholders to design and manage bullying-

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prevention programs, such as peer support groups, peer counseling, and anti-bullying campaigns. Finally, as researchers, nurses can further investigate effective interventions to improve positive body image, reduce bullying rates, and explore other factors associated with adolescent mental health.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study on the relationship between body image and bullying behavior among 168 adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur, it can be concluded that 74 respondents (44.0%) had a negative body image while 94 respondents (56.0%) had a positive body image, indicating that the majority of adolescents at SMK Bunga Persada Cianjur held a positive body image. In terms of bullying behavior, 79 respondents (47.0%) experienced bullying while 89 respondents (53.0%) did not, showing that nearly half of the adolescents were still involved in bullying, either as victims or perpetrators. The Chi-Square test result ($p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$) confirmed a significant relationship between body image and bullying behavior: the more negative an adolescent's body image, the higher the tendency toward bullying involvement, and conversely, the more positive the body image, the lower the tendency toward such involvement.

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