



Why Bystander act or do not act Prosocially in Bullying Situations

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ABSTRACT

Individuals, as bystanders, can reduce bullying by engaging in prosocial behavior toward victims. However, many students either side with the perpetrator or passively observe. This study aims to explore the factors influencing prosocial bystander behavior in bullying situations among students at 'X' Maros Junior High School. Using a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative), the study involved 263 students aged 12–15 years who had witnessed bullying. Instruments used included a prosocial behavior questionnaire, a vignette, and open-ended questions. The findings revealed that most bystanders in Maros Junior High School were actively engaged in all stages of prosocial behavior, including stopping the perpetrator, reporting to a teacher, and offering social support to the victim. The factors influencing prosocial behavior were both personal/psychological and situational. Personal factors included attitudes toward bullying, empathy, emotional involvement, risk perception, religiosity, victim attribution, self-efficacy, and conformity. Situational factors included the relationship with the perpetrator or victim, the presence of other bystanders, and the severity of the bullying. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of promoting empathy and emotional involvement as key factors in encouraging bystanders to act. The presence of peers also plays a critical role in influencing whether bystanders intervene. These findings offer valuable insights for developing strategies to encourage adolescents to intervene and support peers who are victims of bullying. The research contributes to the creation of effective anti-bullying programs by emphasizing the role of both personal and situational factors in shaping prosocial bystander behavior.

Keywords: Prosocial Behavior, Bystander, Bullying.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a deliberate and repeated act directed at individuals perceived as weaker, with the intent to inflict harm, induce fear, and create a sense of terror. This behavior often leads to physical, emotional, and psychological distress for the victims (Olweus, 1993; Conn, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2005). A study by Kustanti (2015) found that 74% of 429 students in Semarang, spanning from elementary to high school, had experienced bullying. Perpetrators' actions included mocking, hitting, threatening, and spreading rumors, commonly observed in classrooms (52.7%), schoolyards (26.7%), and cafeterias (15.3%). The 2022 National

Assessment by Indonesia's Ministry of Education reported that 36% of students were at risk of bullying, 35% faced sexual violence threats, and 27% were vulnerable to physical punishment. The Indonesian Teachers Union Federation (FSGI) noted an increase in bullying cases from 21 in 2022 to 30 in 2023, with 80% of these cases occurring in schools under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology.

At Junior High School X in Maros, a preliminary interview with a guidance counselor revealed ongoing bullying, exemplified by a ninth-grade student who did not report bullying out of fear, only for it to be discovered when his shirt was torn and written on by classmates. Bullying, whether physical, verbal, or relational, can have profound negative effects, leading to anxiety, depression, and even suicidal ideation (Sejiwa, 2008). Nakamoto & Schwartz (2010) found that bullying also adversely impacts academic performance and causes school avoidance. With 70%-80% of students reporting involvement in bullying, either as perpetrators or victims (Pellegrini & Long, 2002), the prevalence of bullying, particularly in junior high school, is alarmingly high.

In such situations, bystanders—those who witness the bullying—play a pivotal role. Empowering bystanders to intervene is an effective anti-bullying strategy (Pepler & Craig, 2014). Research indicates that while 20%-30% of students are directly involved in bullying, 70%-80% are bystanders (Salmivalli et al., 1996). The behaviors of bystanders can significantly influence the course of bullying, with defenders often stopping the bullying and reinforcers escalating it (Salmivalli et al., 1996). This highlights the importance of promoting prosocial behavior among bystanders, particularly in bullying situations.

METHOD

Types of Research

This study uses a qualitative approach to explore the factors influencing the stages of bystander prosocial behavior in bullying situations among middle school students in Maros. A vignette design was employed, providing a stimulus that simulated bullying scenarios to allow participants to imagine themselves as bystanders. The use of vignettes was chosen to enhance participant engagement and ensure consistent exposure to the same situation, while also allowing for individual interpretation and reflection.

Research Variable

The focus of the research and the unit of analysis studied uses a descriptive qualitative approach. To understand how the factors that influence the process of stages of bystander prosocial behavior in *bullying* situations. In this study, the context of bullying refers to a situation where there is a person/ group of people who commit negative actions intentionally and repeatedly against others who seem weaker than the perpetrator.

Prosocial behavior processing at the bystander refers to a series of stages that occur in individuals who witness an emergency/dangerous situation to be able to assist people who are in need. Prosocial stages according to Latane & Darley (1970) are stages of *notice*, *interpretation*, *responsibility*, *know how to*, and *implement*. Each component has two (2) answer options, ranging from 'appropriate' (by checking the statement column) and 'not appropriate' (by not

checking the statement column). The choice of answers checked on each component describes the subject's involvement as the bystander and the process of stages of their prosocial behavior towards bullying situations. For example, respondents who tick statements with content aspects of *interpretation* are classified as involved in the second stage or it can be said that the subject interprets the situation of bullying scenario as a situation where the victim needs help.

Research Subject

Following the research problem, which is to see the factors that affect the process of bystander prosocial behavior in bullying situations in Junior High School students in Maros, then the researcher determines the characteristics of the subject as follows: Being in the early teenage stage, which is 12-15 years. Actively attend school as a junior high school student. I've seen bullying between students. The study was conducted in Maros Regency, South Sulawesi. The selection of a research place, SMP X Maros, is based on cases of bullying that occur in the school environment.

Techniques of Data Collection

The research instrument used in this study is in the form of a measuring tool related to the process of prosocial behavior stages to see an overview of bystander involvement at each prosocial stage in a bullying situation. On the measuring instrument, the subjects were given a sketch (*vignette*) that tells three scenarios or situations of bullying, namely physical, verbal, and relational bullying. *Vignette* is used to see bystander reactions in all three situations. Several open-ended questions are also given to gain insights related to students' perspectives on others involved in bullying, thinking their attitude, empathy, and moral engagement, which influence the process of the subject's prosocial behavior while witnessing *bullying*.

Aitem Indicators and Grids of Prosocial Stage Process Scale

Measuring instruments related to the process of prosocial bystander behavior in bullying situations is a modification of the scale created by Nickerson (2014) in a study entitled *Measurement of The Bystander Intervention Model for Bullying and Sexual Harassment*. The aspects are based on the theory put forward by Latane & Darley (1970). From these aspects obtained indicators about the stages of prosocial behavior and then operationalized into several statements, with the following grid:

Table 1
Item Stage Indicators and Grids of Prosocial Behavior

Component	Examples of Item	Number Item
<i>Notice</i> (Pay attention to the situation)	I am aware of the bullying in the above situation.	1
<i>Interpretation</i> (Interpreting a situation as a situation that needs help)	I think that the victim must have needed help in that situation.	2
<i>Responsibility</i> (Feel responsible for giving help)	I feel a responsibility to stop bullying perpetrators	3

Know-How to Help (Know how to help)	I know what to do to stop the perpetrator to stop his actions against the victim.	4
Implement (Implement prosocial actions)	I did something to stop the bullying above.	5, 6, 7, 8, 9

Validity and Reliability Test

The stages of prosocial behavior are conducted validity tests using calculations of reproducibility coefficients and scalability coefficients through SKALO (Guttman Scale Analysis Program). As a result, it is known that $K_r = 0.913 > 0.9$ and $K_s = 0.825 > 0.6$ so that the entire item is valid and meets the criteria of a good item for use in the study. The reliability of the stage process scale of prosocial bystander behavior is measured using Kuder-Richardson 21 calculations through the Excel 2013 program. The results showed that the value of KR-21 was 0.73. Thus, it is known that the scale is available for use in research.

Data Analysis

The study used data analysis techniques with interactive models from Miles and Huberman. Pawito (Darmalina, 2014) explained that the model consists of three components, namely data reduction, data testing, and withdrawal and conclusion testing.

1. Data Reduction

Data reduction is conducted through several stages, namely editing, grouping, and summarizing data. Then, compile codes and notes on things to find themes, groups, and data patterns. Furthermore, drafting, concepts, and explanations related to themes and patterns, as well as the group concerned (Pawito; in Darmalina, 2014).

2. Data Presentment

In this study, to facilitate in analyzing data, besides presenting in narratively, the presentation of data is also present in the form of images or diagrams that show the relationship between one data with another.

3. Withdrawal and Testing Conclusions

Conclusions in qualitative research are expected to be a new finding that can provide a description or picture of an object that was previously still sketchy so that the object would be clearer after research.

4. Data Validity Techniques

To test the validity of the data, this study uses several techniques as stated by Setyo Hadi (Tamar, et al., 2015), namely as follows:

1. Triangulation: The triangulation technique used in this study is data triangulation, which is to compare data information obtained from participants with the theory of literature.
2. Peer Checking: This technique is conducted by exposing provisional results or final results obtained in the form of analytical discussions with peers.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Qualitative data on this study was obtained through questionnaires with types of open-ended questions and the help of bullying sketches (*vignette*) to find out the reasons behind each bystander's action response in the study of a bullying situation. Based on the acquisition of data, it found some common themes as follows.

Table 2
Reasons That Understify Every Bystander's Actions in Bullying Situations

General Theme	Percentage (%)
Attitudes towards bullying	52,1
Empathy and Emotional Engagement	32,3
Perception of risk gained	23,2
Closeness to the Victim/Perpetrator	17,5
Attribution to victims	16,3
Self-Efficacy	4,2
Orientation of Religiosity	3,4
Severity/Danger	3
Bystander	0,8
Conformity	0,8

1. Attitude

Attitudes towards bullying were found to be one of the reasons that prompted bystanders to take prosocial acts against victims. The study found that 121 (46%) subjects perceived bullying as rude, unkind, inappropriate, and outrageous (A0409 – physical bullying; Subject, B0405 – verbal bullying; C0406 – relational bullying).

Besides having a negative view of the perpetrator's actions, bystanders also expressed a negative attitude regarding the perpetrator of bullying. Some subjects consider bullies to be bad, unkind, and unjustified. A total of 15 (5.7%) subjects expressed negative views of the perpetrator, as in the following statement (A0717 – bullying of physics; A0816 – physical bullying; A1419 – physical bullying). Another student even felt that the perpetrator's actions were motivated by confusion and inadequacy (B1313 – verbal bullying; A1313 – physical bullying; C1313 – relational bullying).

2. Empathy and Emotional Engagement

Kohut (1997) dan Taufik, (2019) defines empathy as the ability to think objectively about the deepest life of another person, or a process by which a person thinks about the condition of

others and as if they were in someone else's position. Based on the information provided by respondents, bullying can elicit mixed emotional reactions to bystanders, and these emotional reactions (such as empathy, fear of becoming victimized). Further, and the excitement of the bystander) seems to affect the process of the prosocial behavior of students as bystanders in bullying situations. Empathy for victims, including concern and bad feelings, was found in some participants in this study. (A1214 – physical bullying; C0906 – relational bullying).

A total of three (3) subjects acted prosocially because they had previously imagined being in the position of the victim of bullying (B0417 – verbal bullying; Subject, A0202 – physical bullying). Four (4) of the 16 participants expressed their feelings when witnessing bullying, ranging from feeling sad, angry, to sympathy for the victim. A total of 40 (15.2%) subjects felt sorry for the victim (C1409 – relational bullying; Subject, B0402 – verbal bullying; B0910 – verbal bullying). A total of 8 (3.04%) subjects felt unable to see the victim get bullying treatment (B0613 – verbal bullying; B0624 – verbal bullying; C0916 – relational bullying; Subject, A0911 – physical bullying; Subject, A1518 – physical bullying; C1218 – relational bullying.) As many as two (2) other respondents were annoyed with the perpetrator, who then encouraged him to assist the victim by trying to stop the perpetrator's actions (A0921 – physical bullying; B0323 – verbal bullying).

These emotions appear to be factors that can influence individuals to behave prosocially, such as comforting, helping, supporting, listening, and protecting the victim. Meanwhile, the fear of being victimized is defined as one of the reasons bystanders so choose not to assist, that is fear of being next targeted by the perpetrator. A total of 12 (4.6%) of subjects expressed their feelings of fear and stated that they were silent about going away when witnessing bullying because they thought that people were others may hit him or bully him. This can be seen in some of the statements below. (B0211 – verbal bullying; A0410 – physical bullying). In addition, the fear of being victimized and audience excitement can also influence bystanders not to assist victims. Audience *excitement* leads to excitement, pleasure, and desire to continue witnessing bullying events, as shown in the following statement (C0921 – relational bullying; B0401 – verbal bullying). A total of five (5) subjects reported feeling distressed or reluctant to see the victim experiencing bullying, which then inhibited them from responding prosocially in bullying situations (B1015 – verbal bullying; C0710 – relational bullying).

3. Perception of the risks obtained

Prosocial behavior towards peers who are victims of bullying is a risky action for students. These actions are risky because often they will be faced with threats or consequences of being the victim of further bullying by the perpetrator. Some of the students in this study are also known to make considerations related to this. A total of 41 (15.6%) students were found to be not assisting victims because they considered the negative consequences they could receive if they helped or tried to stop the perpetrator's actions (A0512 – physical bullying; B0707 – verbal bullying; C0614 – relational bullying).

Another 21 (8%) subjects stated that they did not assist because they did not want to get into trouble involved in the bullying situation (A0326 – physical bullying; B0412 – verbal bullying; C0624 – relational bullying). On the other hand, the study found that in situations perceived as at risk, some bystanders would tend to want to know that they would be socially or physically supported when assisting. Individuals will ensure that when they choose to act prosocial and

attempt to stop bullying, they do not incubate and get negative consequences. Some participants explained that knowing themselves to be supported and protected by teachers is something that encourages and makes them feel more capable in their way to provide help. Some consider that teacher to be their protector, as in the following statement (A1002 – physical bullying). Some other participants believed that the teacher was ready to help him when trying to stop the actions of the perpetrator (A1514 – physical bullying). The two above states explain the belief that the teacher will defend and provide assistance when needed. The support and protection gained from significant others, in this case, teachers can influence respondents in their decision to assist victims.

4. Close Relationship with The Victim or Perpetrator

It is known that peers are often identified as the most likely individuals to provide assistance in bullying situations. The significance of friendship is also evident in influencing individual involvement as a bystander. Closeness to either the victim or the perpetrator has been identified as a key factor affecting bystanders' decisions to act prosocially.

Based on the data collected, approximately 20 students (7.6%) reported that their friendship or close relationship with the victim was a motivating factor in their decision to help. This is reflected in several responses (e.g., A1402 – physical bullying; A0803 – physical bullying). Other students elaborated that their sense of responsibility to protect the victim increased when the victim was a close friend or someone they knew well (e.g., A0609, A0824, A0503, A0622 – all physical bullying cases).

In addition to closeness with the victim, a relationship with the perpetrator also influenced prosocial bystander behavior. A total of 25 students (9.5%) reported that their friendship with the perpetrator made them feel responsible for trying to stop the bullying (e.g., B0609 – verbal bullying; C0514 – relational bullying). A close relationship with the perpetrator may lead bystanders to feel safer and more confident in using communication or assertive strategies to intervene. One student, for instance, expressed the belief that a perpetrator would be more receptive to feedback when it came from a friend, thereby encouraging the student to take prosocial action (B0910 – verbal bullying).

However, the study also found that familiarity with the perpetrator could inhibit prosocial behavior in certain cases. Fifteen students (5.7%) indicated that their closeness with the perpetrator discouraged them from intervening (e.g., B0704, B1005 – verbal bullying; C1008 – relational bullying). This suggests that perceptions of the perpetrator's character—such as being impulsive or normalizing aggressive behavior—may cause bystanders to hesitate out of fear or uncertainty. The perceived risk or consequences of attempting to stop the perpetrator also emerged as a key reason why some bystanders chose not to help and instead allowed the bullying to continue (e.g., B0707 – verbal bullying).

In summary, the perception of friendship or closeness with either the victim or the perpetrator plays a significant role in shaping bystander prosocial behavior. Such relationships can both facilitate and inhibit action, depending on the context and perceived risks involved.

5. Attribution to Victims

Attribution is the process or effort made by someone to understand the causes behind the behavior of others and our behavior (Baron, 2004). According to Weiner (Mashoedi, 2009), a

person will be more motivated to assist if he assumes that the victim's misfortune is something that comes from beyond his control. As in the study, 43 (16.3%) students were found to have chosen to act prosocially due to the assumption that victims of bullying were doing the right thing, innocently, do not cause problems, or accidentally making mistakes. This makes them assume that the victim deserves to be given help (A0313 – physical bullying; B1307 – verbal bullying; C0313 – relational bullying).

Attribution is also known to affect an individual's emotional reaction to the victim, such as causing a sense of empathy or concern that further encourages the individual to behave prosocially. Seven (7) subjects expressed images of their feelings towards the victims he attributed to being innocent (C0402 – relational bullying; A0624 – physical bullying). Meanwhile, a subject gave a different response to a given bullying situation. The response shown is to laugh at the victim, as expressed in the following statement (B0104 – bullying verbal).

The subject above attributes that the bullying event occurred as a result of the victim's actions which he considered 'stingy' for not providing the answer key to the perpetrator. This makes the subject tend to blame the victim (*blame the victim*) and give a response that is to laugh at the victim. From these statements, it seems that attribution to victims can be one of the reasons that influence the prosocial behavior of students as a bystander in the bullying situation. Individuals will be more motivated to assist if they think the bullying is beyond the victim's control.

6. Self-Efficacy

Providing help to difficult peers such as in bullying situations is a form of risky action (Dovidio, et al., 2006). Without a strong belief from the individual regarding his or her ability to successfully stop the bullying, the individual's prosocial behavior can be inhibited. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to successfully carry out certain actions necessary in achieving the desired results (Bandura, 1997). Based on the data, as many as 11 (4.2%) participants reported that one of the reasons that encourage them to do social activities is the belief that they can assist victims (A1214 - physical bullying; B1204 – verbal bullying; C1408 – relational bullying).

7. Religious orientation

Most religious groups advocate peace and friendship and support doctrines that are inadequate in violence. For this reason, individuals with a high religious orientation may tend to internalize religious values or principles that are related to prosocial behavior.

Based on the data obtained, there were 9 (3.4%) subjects who suggested that the bullying they witnessed was something that did not match religious values (A1106 – physical bullying, A0708 – physical bullying; A0508 – physical bullying; A0210 – physical bullying). The statement above is the reason some participants chose to stop the actions of the perpetrator when witnessing *the bullying that* occurred. Although not in a large percentage, religious orientation can be one of the reasons respondents perform prosocial acts as bystanders in bullying situations.

8. Severity

Another factor determining whether the subject would behave prosocially in a bullying situation was the severity perceived by the bystander. As many as 8 (3%) of subjects who assisted the victim reported that the bullying situation he saw had crossed the line and was perceived as major bullying (A0503 – physical bullying; B0605 – verbal bullying; C0605 – relational bullying). The number of bystanders who behaved prosocially in the study was also found to be greater in situations of physical bullying than verbal and relational bullying. In physical bullying there were 176 (66.9%) subjects, in verbal bullying, there were 164 (62.4%) subjects, and in relational bullying, there were 172 (65.4%) subjects who chose to behave prosocially as bystanders.

Bullying events tend to be considered more severe when bullying occurs repeatedly, or when bullying involves serious physical threats. Physical bullying is often described as a high level of violence and therefore more severe than verbal or relational bullying. Physical bullying can also raise awareness that the situation is a serious thing that then makes the bystander angrier or emotionally involved, as well as motivated to try to provide help to the victim (A0921 – physical bullying).

Victim characteristics can also affect bystanders in assessing the severity of bullying situations. When the victim is unable to defend himself at the time of being bullied, then the bystander will perceive that the victim is in an emergency and it is important to be given immediate attention help (B1011 – verbal bullying; A1203 – physical bullying; C0211 – relational bullying). Forms of bullying that are considered more severe or dangerous can also lead bystanders to take action by notifying adults, such as reporting situations to the teacher. This is illustrated in the statements of the following participants (A0201 – physical bullying; A0606 – physical bullying; A0909 - physical bullying).

The number of bystanders asking teachers for help was found to be greater in situations of physical bullying than in other forms of bullying. A total of 26 (9.9%) subjects on physical bullying, 5 (1.9%) subjects on verbal bullying, and 1 (0.4%) subjects on relational bullying reported attempting to stop bullying by reporting or asking the teacher for help. However, perceived bullying has a high severity (*severity*) can also affect bystander behavior to refuse the assist victims. This seems to happen when individuals feel they cannot cope with difficult bullying situations (A0329 – physical bullying).

Besides some subjects who choose to behave prosocially consider bullying situations are still quite mild or not too difficult to deal with (C0319 – relational bullying; C0606 – relational bullying; C0208 – relational bullying). However, in the study, it was also found that bystanders who consider bullying as something that is commonly accepted by victims seem to make individuals perceive the situation such as mild bullying and unnecessary help (A1516 – physical *bullying*). In other words, the subject above states that the bullying received by the victim is a common situation so the assumption arises that such an offender's actions are not dangerous. But in reality, any act of bullying is dangerous and can have a negative impact. Based on information obtained from the subject, there were 20 (7.6%) students who described the effects of bullying as actions that can hurt a person's feelings, victims are sad, can cause trauma, very disturbing, can harm themselves and others (A0602 – physical bullying).

9. Bystander

Bystanders or people who are around the scene have an important role in influencing a person when deciding whether to give help or not when faced with an emergency (Sarwono & Meinarno, 2009). Darley and Latane's (1996) research showed that the more other people present the less likely a person was to give a helping hand, and conversely a person who was present alone was found to be more likely to help in the emergency.

In line with this, the study found that most subjects (68.4%) showed a prosocial response to the victim even though other students had been conditioned to attend victim in any scenario (*vignette*) bullying situation. The condition in both subjects is even a reason that encourages them to give help to victims (A1002 – physical bullying; A0624 – physical bullying).

10. Conformity

The study found two (2) subjects who expressed reluctance to help victims of bullying due to the presence of other students who were not prosocial in the situation (A0323 – physical bullying). From the statement, it appears that the subject above has an intention to assist but is hampered by a situation where other students even support the perpetrator by laughing at the victim. This is also in line with the statements of other subjects who choose a silent response when other bystanders are passive but express their desire to help if other students are actively helping the victim (B0510 - verbal bullying). Thus, in this examination, it is known that conformity to the actions of other students may have influenced the prosocial behavior of students as a bystander in bullying situations.

11. Relevance to Prosocial Stages

The results of the research above are further reviewed into the framework of the Latané and Darley models (1968) related to the process of stages of prosocial bystander behavior. Latané & Darley (1968) suggests that the helpful actions shown by individuals in danger or risk situations are the result of a series of stage processes, namely 1) paying attention to the situation, 2) interpreting the situation as a dangerous situation for the victim, 3) feels responsible for assisting, 4) knows how to help the victim, and 5) implements action in the form of prosocial behavior.

At each of these stages, several factors were found to encourage or inhibit bystander involvement in certain stages that ultimately help determine whether the bystander will behave prosocially or not in a bullying situation. Each of these factors will be further outlined in the section below.

a) Stage 1: Pay attention to the situation

The first stage of engaging in prosocial behavior is to pay attention to the situation. The study used a *vignette* method that directed each bystander to pay attention to every scenario of a given bullying situation so that the entire subject went through the notice stage in this research. For this reason, exploration of factors that affect bystanders in paying attention in this study has not been able to be done. However, based on other studies it was found that factors that can affect

these stages, such as relationships, the distance between the bystander and the situation, as well as the presence of disturbance (such as noise, priority pressure, cognitive load).

1) Priority Pressure

Darley & Batson (1973) conducted an experimental study in which some participants were asked to rush to a place to do an activity. In the middle of the journey, an actor had been placed lying on the road and seemed to need help. The results found that several participants who were in a hurry tended to pay less attention to the situation than participants who did not. The study explained that participants who were in a hurry indicated being too busy thinking about other things so there is a cognitive burden that makes participants as bystanders pay less attention to the situation and in the end does not provide help.

2) Closeness to the perpetrator/victim

Relationships are also explained to affect bystanders in this stage. In an upfront study that *bullying situations* involving strangers tend to be much less likely to be noticed (Patterson, 2016). Conversely, those who have closeness at least with one party, neither perpetrator nor victim, will encourage *bystanders* to pay more attention to the situation. In the context of bullying in schools, further research using both of the variables above can be conducted to further test how much influence both have on the involvement of the student as a bystander at this stage.

a) Stage 2: Interpreting Emergency/Dangerous Situations

After seeing the incident, the bystander must understand that the bullying situation he witnessed is a dangerous situation for the victim so it is necessary to be given help. In this study, it was found that based on all three sketches of bullying situations given to each subject, there were 207 (78.7%) bystanders in physical bullying situations, 196 (74.5%) in verbal bullying situations, and 182 (69.2%) bystanders in relational bullying situations who interpreted the bullying incident as a dangerous situation in which the victim need help. Some of the factors found to affect bystanders in this stage are as follows.

1) Severity/Danger

Although bullying is generally described by students as wrong, the bystander interpretation of the bullying situation it witnessed can also differ depending on the cyclist regarding the severity. The dangers of bullying, which in turn can affect bystander actions whether to behave prosocially or not. Individuals are more likely to provide help when they perceive bullying as a serious situation that needs to stop. Perceptions about the level of danger from bullying are influenced by the frequency or forms of bullying witnessed. Based on the data that has been obtained, bullying that occurs repeatedly can make bystanders take the situation as a serious thing and increase the urgency of giving help against the victim. However, repeated incidents of bullying are also found to make a bystander downplay the urgency by considering bullying as a situation that is not. It is commonly accepted by victims, as in the subject (A1516). This can

then influence the subject not to interpret the bullying incident he or she witnessed as a situation that needs to be given help so that the individual does not act prosocially and just stays silent when watching the incident.

In addition, *bystanders* will tend to assess the severity or danger of bullying by trying to see cues or non-verbal and verbal cues contained in a situation. This form of physical bullying is the most recognizable of situations, often involving physical violence, and victims' reactions are easy to predict whether they need help or not. Thus, this form of physical bullying is easily interpreted by students as a serious and dangerous situation so it needs to be stopped, as in the statement stated by the subject (A0503). In contrast, relational *bullying* occurs indirectly, involves social manipulation, and there are no attacks or physical injuries on the victim, resulting in relational *bullying* in the study. It is also more widely interpreted by bystanders as a less serious or less dangerous situation for the victim.

In this research, victim characteristics are also known to influence bystanders in assessing the severity of bullying, as in the subject (C0211). Victims who are unable to cope or defend themselves from the perpetrator will be able to encourage a bystander interpretation that the victim is in a dangerous situation and needs help.

2) Empathy and Emotional Engagement

Some bystanders in the study reported empathy or emotional reactions that allowed subjects to understand that victims can be frightened or sad when treated bullying. Some subjects even understood that bullying from perpetrators can have a negative impact, both physically and psychologically on victims and other students. This influenced bystanders to be able to interpret that the victim of bullying is in a dangerous situation and needs help. Thus, emotional reactions to bullying such as the expression of anger to the perpetrator, as well as concern and sympathy for the victim are found to be one of the factors that encourage bystanders to engage in this stage and allow bystanders to further assist victims.

Personal experiences of being victims of *bullying* in the past are found to give rise to a sense of bystander empathy when witnessing bullying situations, which in turn makes it easier for them to interpret the situation as a dangerous situation and affects the subject's willingness to assist in *bullying*. Some subjects reported that they had been in a position as victims, so knowing how individuals felt when subjected to bullying treatment and therefore did not want to be bullied, as found in the subject C0801. Experience as a victim in the past is also described as something that increases the readiness of a bystander to behave prosocially because the emotional experience as a victim serves as a source of empathy can increase their awareness of the dangers of *bullying*. Empathy helps bystanders identify themselves with victims and encourages them to interpret bullying that it sees as a serious situation that is necessary to throw.

3) Attitudes towards *bullying*

Most of the bystanders in the study had negative attitudes toward bullying. They reject bullying and report feelings of disapproval and distaste for the actions of the perpetrators they witness. Individuals with this negative attitude tend to understand what bullying means and are aware of the negative impact that can result from the perpetrator's actions. Thus, the existence of

negative attitudes was found to make bystanders more easily identify bullying events that occur and interpret the victim who occurred being in a needs help situation.

a) Stage 3: Feeling Responsible to Help

If an event is known to be an emergency, then the next bystander must take responsibility as a person who needs to assist the victim. Of the three (3) situations, 190 (72.2%) of respondents felt responsible for providing help in situations of physical bullying, 183 (69.6%) felt responsible for providing help in situations of verbal bullying, 173 (65.8%) of respondents felt responsible for assisting in relational bullying. Some of the factors found to affect bystanders in this stage are as follows.

1) Closeness to the perpetrator/victim

Relationships play a role in influencing this stage of the process, where bystanders are found to be more likely to take action in bullying situations if they have a close relationship with both the victim and the perpetrator. The existence of closeness or friendship with the victim makes the bystander feel more of an obligation to provide support and help. Likewise, closeness to the perpetrator, in some bystanders can also encourage them to feel responsible in stopping the bullying of the perpetrator who is a friend, like on the subject (C0514).

2) Severity/danger

Bystanders also reported that their assessment of the severity or danger of bullying was an important factor in their decision to take any action or not. Bystanders who perceive the perpetrator's actions as not serious and do not negatively affect the victim are also likely to decrease perceptions of severity and urgency to take any action when witnessing bullying so that bystanders can become less moral obligation to assist victims.

3) Orientation of Religiosity

Some bystanders in bullying situations report that the reason behind them acting prosocially is due to the understanding that the act of bullying committed by the perpetrator is an act of negatives that are not by religious values so that then encourages the emergence of bystander negative attitudes towards bullying. Besides influencing bystander attitudes, principles or teaching internalized by the subject are also found to influence a bystander to feel responsible in providing help to the victim. In this study, students who have the belief that helping others is an act that has become a religious obligation are found to encourage a sense of responsibility to assist the victim, which can further affect whether the bystander will behave prosocially or not in the process of bullying.

4) Bystander

If an event is known to be an emergency, then the bystander must next take responsibility as the person who needs to assist the victim. When no other bystanders were present, it was clear that the responsibility for assisting was on the only person who witnessed the incident. However, when there is the presence of other bystanders who also have the potential to assist, then the responsibility can be relieved to all bystanders and reduce a sense of personal responsibility for prosocial behavior. In a sketch (*vignette*) of bullying situations given to each subject, the bystander is positioned as the only person who has the potential to help the victim. In this study, it was found to be the reason that prompted some subjects to behave prosocially. The students assume that the victim should be given help because no one else in the situation is bothered to help the victim.

5) Attribution to victims

In this study, it was found that bystanders were more likely to provide help if they believed that the cause of *bullying* was beyond the victim's control. In contrast, some bystanders were found reluctant to assist due to the perception that the victim made a mistake that made him deserve to be bullied (*blame the victim*). Related to this stage, the sense of bystander responsibility can increase when they perceive that the bullying situation occurs beyond the control of the victim, so that then comes the assumption that the victim should be given help because the bullying is an action that should not be accepted by the victim. Conversely, attributing the situation of bullying as a result of the behavior or mistakes of the victims themselves will reduce the sense of responsibility bystanders to provide help because they feel that bullying by the perpetrator is deserved by the victim.

d) Stage 4: Determining the Right Course of Action

After accepting the responsibility to provide help, a bystander must know what to do to help people in need. Among the three bullying situations presented to the subject, it was found that there were 179 (68.1%) respondents who knew how to provide help in physically bullying situations, 185 (70.3%) of respondents know how to provide help in verbal *bullying* situations, and 180 (68.4%) of respondents know how to provide help in relational bullying situations. The factors found to affect bystanders in this stage are as follows.

1) Severity/danger

The different seriousness of each bullying situation witnessed contributes to bystander ways of assisting and implementing prosocial measures. In general, students as bystanders can see diverse strategies when dealing with a bullying situation at school. If a bystander views the bullying he witnessed as a serious situation, then there are more who act in defense of the victim, including telling adults. The possibility of risks obtained when trying to stop the actions of perpetrators was found not to inhibit bystanders in this study to assist. Serious bullying

situations even make some students seek help from adults (teachers) which he considers as one of the useful strategies to stop the bullying, especially in physical bullying situations. Meanwhile, in situations perceived as less serious and not physical bullying, it was found that there were more prosocial actions carried out by the bystander himself, without involving other adults. In verbal bullying situations, more respondents were found to be behaving prosocially by stopping the perpetrator's actions directly. As for relational *bullying*, more bystanders are providing social support for victims. Relational bullying is generally seen by bystanders as a not-so-serious or dangerous situation, so students tend to use their abilities effectively in defending victims and do not involve other adults while in a bullying situation.

e) Stage 5: Implementing Prosocial Action

At this stage, the next bystander must decide to engage in prosocial behavior. Among the three (3) situations, there were 176 (66.9%) respondents in physical bullying situations, 164 (62.4%) respondents in verbal bullying situations, and 172 (65.4%) respondents in relational bullying situations that implements its prosocial actions against the victim. Some of the factors found to affect bystanders in this stage are as follows.

1) Self-Efficacy

About this stage, bystander behavior is also influenced by personal beliefs related to an individual's capacity (*self-efficacy*) to effectively take an action when witnessing bullying. Bystanders not only need to be aware of the right strategies in taking an action, but also believe that they are capable of taking action (Bandura, 1997). In line with this, the study found that self-efficacy factors sufficiently influence bystanders in the stages of implementation of prosocial actions. Although bystanders feel responsible and know how to assist victims, the implementation of prosocial actions can be hampered if the bystander does not believe that the self has the potential to effectively stop the perpetrator's actions or assist victims in a bullying situation.

2) Perception of risk gained

The perception of the risks gained when trying to stop bullying is one of the factors found to inhibit bystanders in implementing prosocial actions in bullying situations. Risks perceived as a threat to bystanders include the risk of becoming the next victim of bullying by the perpetrator, becoming involved, and getting into trouble when interfering in these situations, as well as the risk of worsening friendship with the perpetrator if trying to assist the victim.

3) Emotional Engagement

Although feelings of empathy can encourage students to build an interpretation that victims of bullying need help, the implementation of bystander prosocial actions can be inhibited by fear when witnessing bullying. Bystander fear is a feeling that is expressed repeatedly among the students in this study. These feelings include fear of being attacked, being bullied, or losing social status if they defend the victim. However, when students are strongly influenced by

empathy, bystander fear will further motivate prosocial behavior indirectly such as by knowing the incident and asking the teacher for help, rather than confronting the perpetrator directly. Bystander fear levels were also linked to students' perceptions of how safe and dangerous it would be if they would defend victims. Among the students, physical bullying was considered not only a more serious but also a more dangerous form, which aroused the fear of stronger bystanders. They don't want to engage in bullying because they're afraid of getting hurt or getting into trouble. Besides that, perpetrators who are considered stronger and dangerous in turn can generate bystander fear of the perpetrators and thus reduce the implementation of prosocial behavior, compared to when the situation is considered safe for bystanders.

4) Conformity

The presence of other students who do not assist victims is known to inhibit bystanders from behaving prosocially. This happens because bystanders perform conformity to other students. Some subjects revealed that he felt embarrassed and reluctant to give help because he saw all the other students laugh at the victim in a bullying situation he witnessed. There was also a student who reported that he would provide help only if he saw other students acting prosocially. Although bystanders realize that victims need help, feel responsible for that, and know-how to help victims, the implementation of bystander prosocial behavior can be inhibited when bystanders feel social pressure from peers that make them follow the behavior of other students not to assist victims.

Discussion

In this study, bystander prosocial actions were implemented in a variety of strategies or ways, such as 1) stopping the actions of the perpetrator directly, 2) asking for adult help by reporting bullying incidents to the teacher, and 3) providing social support to the victim by comforting, calming, and/or remaining friends with the victim.

Meanwhile, bystanders who did not behave prosocially in bullying situations were found not to be involved in at least one of a series of stage processes as previously stated. The results of this study show that personal, psychological, and situational factors such as attitudes toward bullying, religious orientation, empathy and emotional engagement, attribution to bullying victims, proximity to victims or perpetrators, as well as the severity of bullying (*severity*) are found to contribute as factors that affect the process of prosocial behavior bystander in a bullying situation.

The first step that must be done to be able to assist is to pay attention to a situation or event first. After noticing the incident, *the* bystander should interpret the situation as an emergency where the victim needs help. The study found several factors that can influence bystander interpretation of bullying situations, such as attitude, empathy, and emotional engagement, as well as the severity or danger or witnessed bullying.

Attitudes toward bullying describe an assessment of an individual's acceptance of bullying behavior (Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004). Individuals with a positive attitude toward bullying see bullying as acceptable, while individuals with a negative attitude toward bullying see it as an unacceptable action. These attitudes can predict bystander helpful actions towards victims, whereas negative attitudes towards bullying can encourage bystanders to interpret bullying as

something that must be stopped, and thus will be more likely to exhibit helpful behavior. This is in line with the research of Nickerson, et al (2014) which found that attitudes towards bullying correlate with bystander involvement in the interpretation stage of the bullying situation.

Salmivalli & Voeten (2004) has found that students with strong negative attitudes toward *bullying* are known to be more likely to engage in helpful behavior toward victims. Meanwhile, students who are perceived by others as perpetrators or siding with perpetrators tend to have a more positive attitude towards *bullying*. Classrooms that display an average positive attitude toward high *bullying* are found more often in bullying (Scholte, et al., 2010). This attitude can be influenced by the behavior of others, when students feel that others have a positive attitude towards bullying, they also report a positive attitude towards bullying (Gini, et al., 2008).

The presence of empathy or the ability of individuals to identify and understand the perspectives of others, as well as experiencing feelings of concern or sympathy for the victim are other factors found to influence bystanders in interpreting bullying situations, which he witnessed. This is in line with the results of other studies that found that standards with high levels of empathy are more likely to interpret bullying as an emergency (Poyhonen, 2010; Nickerson, et al., 2014). In some bystanders in this study, the experience as a victim was found to be the main reason that makes them able to feel the condition of being in the victim's position and know clearly that the victim needs help in a bullying situation. The bystander who has experience as a victim becomes one of a group who is found to have high empathy and the ability to feel distressed that experienced by others (Perren, et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the severity of *bullying* is also known to affect bystander involvement in the interpretation stage. Individuals are more likely to assist when interpreting bullying as a serious situation that needs to stop. In this study, this form of physical *bullying* was more widely presented as a dangerous and serious situation by respondents than other forms of bullying. The physical bullying in the study was also found to receive the most prosocial responses from bystanders. This is consistent with several studies that have found that bystanders tend to be more willing to take any action in more obvious and dangerous emergencies (Bennett & Banyard, 2016).

After the bystander can interpret the bullying he witnessed as a situation that needs to be given help, the next stage that the bystander goes through is to be able to behave prosocially. It is to accept personal responsibility for assisting the victim. Factors found to affect bystanders in this stage include a close relationship with the perpetrator or victim, severity/danger, religiosity orientation, presence of other bystanders, and attribution to victims.

Relationships are one of the main themes in the study, which is known to influence bystander prosocial behavior in bullying situations. Bystanders tend to feel more responsible for providing help and stopping bullying if the victim or perpetrator is a close friend of theirs. Some respondents stated that the existence of such relationships made them feel responsible and had an obligation to assist victims. These findings are consistent with previous research showing that a close relationship between bystanders and victims is known to increase the likelihood of helpful behavior from bystanders (Levine et al., 2002). Experimental research from Bennett & Banyard (2016) also found that bystanders who had close relationships with victims were more likely to have positive perceptions than those who did not have a close relationship with the victim. Bystanders who had close relationships with victims were found to be more likely to see a situation as a problem that then prompted them to give help.

Meanwhile, findings for bystanders who had a relationship with the perpetrator showed more mixed results. In this study, the relationship with the perpetrator is known to allow

bystanders to provide assistance or not provide assistance to victims. Some respondents stated that friendship with the perpetrator made them try to stop the bullying. Closeness to the perpetrator allows the bystander to feel easier, safer, and able to stop bullying. The findings are consistent with the results of research from Bennett & Banyard (2016) which explained that close relationships with perpetrators may increase the likelihood of *bystanders* to provide help because they think the situation is safer to intervene in. Theories about self-categorization may also explain why bystanders are willing to take action not only if the victim is a friend, but also if the perpetrator is a friend. Compared to situations involving strangers, individuals will be more likely to relate and sympathize within groups or people that are members of their group (Levine et al., 2002).

Meanwhile, the existence of a relationship with the perpetrator is also known to make some respondents silent, go away, or not give help to the victim. In a study by Bennett & Banyard (2016), it was found that some of the bystanders who had close relationships with perpetrators showed that they were less likely to see the situation as a problem. Thus, knowing that a perpetrator is a person who has a close approach to him can also reduce a person's awareness that the situation he is witnessing is a problem. In addition, perceptions about the character of the perpetrator that tend to be difficult to stop can also inhibit the prosocial actions of the bystander. Eukaristia (Achroni, 2012) explained that bullies have characteristics that tend to be difficult to see the situation from the point of view of other children, only caring about their desires and pleasures, and do not wanting to care about others feelings. Priyatna (2010) also suggested that bullies tend to view violence as a natural act, so bullying tends to be done repeatedly and constantly. This can make bystanders not behave prosocially and do not want to bear the risks or consequences that may be received if they try to stop the action of the perpetrator.

Attribution to victims was also found to affect bystander involvement in taking personal responsibility for assisting. Individuals are more likely to help someone if they believe that the cause of the problem is out of the control of the victim. For example, bystanders will be more encouraged to assist if the victim is perceived as accidentally making a mistake. Unexplained attribution can affect our emotional reactions to people in need (Taylor, 2012). A person will be more motivated to assist if he assumes that an individual's misfortune is something that comes from out of his control (Mashoedi, 2009). Similarly, the religious orientation of the bystander was found to encourage a sense of personal responsibility to act prosocially and influence bystanders to assist against the victim. Sarwono (1999) suggests that religious values embraced have a contribution as one of the factors that encourage someone to want to help others.

The presence of other bystanders was also found to influence individual behavior as a bystander. If an event is known to be an emergency, then the bystander must take responsibility as the person assisting the victim. When no other bystanders are present, it's clear that the responsibility for assisting is on the only bystander witnessing the incident. However, when there is the presence of others, then the responsibility can be spread to all bystanders. This process is called diffusion of responsibility, whereas the number of potential helpers increases, fewer and fewer individuals feel compelled to be the right person (Darley & Latane, 1968). The diffusion of responsibility has been assumed to be the mechanism underlying the bystander effect at this prosocial stage.

After accepting the responsibility to assist, a bystander must know what to do to provide help to people in need. Although bystanders are motivated to help, a person who witnesses

bullying may not act prosocially if they don't know effective strategies to stop bullying. In this case, bystanders can be more encouraged to provide help if they feel competent or can stop bullying effectively.

The study found a variety of strategies provided by bystanders when witnessing bullying situations. In the event of bullying that is considered serious, bystanders found more involving adults or teachers as one of the ways they do in assisting the victim. Some bystanders report incidents and ask for help from teachers to effectively stop bullying, especially when there is a form of physical bullying. Meanwhile, in situations of verbal and relational bullying, more bystanders are found to rely on themselves in assisting victims, such as by confronting perpetrators directly.

When the bystander has figured out what to do in assisting, the final stage to a prosocial behavior is to implement the action. At this stage, the bystander must decide to engage in prosocial behavior. However, even if a *bystander* has felt responsible and knows what to do to help the victim, the bystander may be hampered in giving help if the bystander feels social pressure from others not to defend the victim (Latané & Nida, 1981). Conformity to peers is one of the factors in this study that was found to inhibit bystanders in implementing prosocial actions against victims.

In this study, some students were known to feel embarrassed and reluctant to provide help in bullying situations when they saw all other students laughing at the victim. Fear of being assessed by other students may occur due to concerns and considerations. For example, the fear of going wrong if you give help, or fear of being judged and being the center of attention by another bystander. When individuals find out that others are paying attention to their behavior, they tend to try to do what others think they expect and make a good impression on them (Baumeister; in Sears, 1994).

Levine and colleagues (2002) also showed that bystander is more influenced by the norms of others who are members of the in-group (i.e., friends) than bystanders who are outside the group (i.e., strangers). If peers show a negative attitude towards bullying, then this increases the possibility of bystanders assisting victims. Conversely, if peers show a positive attitude towards bullying, it can reduce the likelihood of bystanders helping victims (Pozzoli, et al., 2012; Pozzoli & Gini, 2010; Salmivalli, 2010).

This effect is even greater in adolescence when social influence plays a very strong role in motivating adolescent behavior. Hurlock (1999) also explained that peer influence does tend to be greater in adolescence. Conformity that arises in early adolescence is shown in various ways, one of which is by equalizing oneself to peers, such as in terms of behaving. By imitating the group or peers, there is a greater sense of confidence and opportunity to be accepted into the group. Therefore, adolescents tend to avoid rejection from peers by conforming or behaving the same as other peers. In this way, the presence of other students who are passive or side with the perpetrator in bullying situations can serve as a signal of social consequences when providing assistance, which can ultimately prevent bystanders from behaving prosocially even if they feel responsible and know how to help others who need.

One of the other reasons found to affect students' prosocial behavior as a bystander is the presence of self-efficacy or individual belief that he or she can provide help or stop bullying of the perpetrator. The more confident *the* bystander is, the more they will be likely to implement their actions in the form of prosocial behavior. In line with these findings, other studies related to bullying have found that self-efficacy has a positive relationship with the bullying behavior provided by bystanders (Gini, et al., 2008; Barchia & Bussey, 2011; Pöyhönen, et al., 2012).

Previous research has also shown that factors such as self-efficacy, *self-esteem*, attitudes toward bullying, moral values, outcome expectancy, and hostile attribution bias were found to influence action response given by bystanders (Perren & Helfenfinger, 2012).

CONCLUSION

The study found that most bystanders at Maros Junior High School were actively involved in all stages of prosocial behavior, such as stopping the bullying, reporting it to teachers, and offering social support to victims. The factors influencing this behavior were both personal, including empathy, emotional involvement, and self-efficacy, as well as situational, such as the relationship with the perpetrator and the presence of other bystanders. The research underscores the significance of promoting empathy and emotional engagement, while also highlighting the importance of peer presence in encouraging bystanders to intervene. These findings provide valuable insights for developing anti-bullying strategies that take into account both personal and situational factors, contributing to more effective intervention programs.

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