



## The Relationship Between Self-Control and Bullying Behavior Among Eighth-Grade Students

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year. This study employed a quantitative descriptive research method with a correlational design. The population consisted of 164 students, while the sample comprised 42 students (25% of the population), selected using a simple random sampling technique. Data were analyzed using the Product Moment correlation test with the assistance of SPSS Statistics version 26 for Windows. The results showed a significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year, with a weak level of relationship and a positive direction.*

**Keywords:** *Self-Control; Bullying Behavior; Students; Correlational Study; Junior High School*

**Abstrak:** *Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hubungan antara kontrol diri dengan perilaku bullying pada siswa kelas VIII UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang Tahun Pelajaran 2025/2026. Jenis penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional. Populasi dalam penelitian ini berjumlah 164 siswa dan sampelnya berjumlah 42 siswa (25% dari populasi) dengan teknik pengambilan sampel yang digunakan ialah simple random sampling. Teknik analisis data dalam penelitian ini menggunakan uji korelasi Product Moment dengan bantuan program SPSS statistics versi 26 for windows. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan dengan tingkat hubungan yang lemah dan arah hubungan yang positif antara kontrol diri dengan perilaku bullying pada siswa kelas VIII UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang Tahun Pelajaran 2025/2026.*

**Kata kunci:** *Kontrol Diri; Perilaku Bullying; Siswa; Penelitian Korelasional; Sekolah Menengah Pertama*

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## Introduction

Schools, as formal educational institutions, play a strategic role in shaping students' character, personality, and social development. At this level, students are in the early stages of adolescence, which are characterized by emotional instability and a strong need for acceptance and recognition from peer groups.

During this phase, social interactions among students often lead to conflicts. One form of negative behavior that may emerge in the school environment is bullying. Coloroso (as cited in Sapitri, 2020) stated that bullying is an act of humiliation carried out consciously and intentionally by an individual child or a group of children with the purpose of causing harm, such as intimidating others through threats of aggression and creating terror.

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicate that cases of bullying in schools have continued to increase each year. According to KPAI data, there were 573 cases throughout 2024. More recent data from 2025 also indicate that junior high school students are among the groups vulnerable to bullying, with victims accounting for approximately 25% of the total cases at the educational level. The forms of bullying identified include verbal, physical, and relational violence, which are often triggered by seniority, a lack of empathy, and peer-group environments. These data provide an overview of bullying cases occurring nationally across various regions of Indonesia.

Bullying is not merely an ordinary conflict, but rather an aggressive act carried out intentionally and repeatedly by an individual or group against a person perceived to be weaker (Soedjatmiko et al., 2013). Coloroso (as cited in Sapitri, 2020) stated that there are several forms of bullying, namely verbal bullying, physical bullying, emotional bullying, and electronic bullying (cyberbullying). These various forms of bullying can occur both within and outside the school environment and have the potential to cause various problems for victims.

Furthermore, Zakiyah et al. (2017) stated that bullying can cause various impacts, both physically and psychologically. Physical impacts include bodily injuries and psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches and abdominal pain. Psychological impacts include emotional disturbances, such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances (insomnia), and the emergence of suicidal ideation.

Bullying behavior is influenced by various factors. Yusuf (2014) explained that several factors influence bullying behavior, including a disharmonious family environment, negative

influences from peer groups, and low levels of self-control in individuals.

Ronen (as cited in Miskanik, 2022) stated that self-control is an individual's ability to regulate their behavior, including controlling desires, delaying gratification, regulating emotions, following rules, and initiating or stopping specific behaviors. In other words, self-control is related to an individual's ability to regulate their actions so that they produce positive effects or consequences. Low levels of self-control may trigger negative behaviors, including bullying.

Several previous studies have demonstrated a relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among students. Noviadari et al. (2022) found a significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior. Similarly, Salmi et al. (2018) demonstrated a significant relationship between self-control and students' bullying behavior. The same finding was reported by Afdal (2018), who revealed that there was a significant relationship between self-control and students' bullying behavior.

A preliminary study conducted by the researcher through observation in October 2025 in Grade VIII at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang found that several students frequently engaged in physical bullying, such as kicking, slapping, choking, scratching, spitting on, and damaging or destroying other students' belongings. In addition, verbal bullying was also observed, including insults, slander, hurtful criticism, and humiliation. Meanwhile, based on interviews with the school guidance and counseling teacher, several students were found to frequently engage in relational bullying toward students who were physically weaker, such as through sarcastic remarks, threatening looks, and mocking. Furthermore, several students engaged in electronic bullying or cyberbullying through mobile phones with the intention of terrorizing victims through written messages, animations, images, or video recordings.

Based on the foregoing discussion, the research problem is formulated as follows: Is there a relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year? Based on the research problem formulated above, the purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year.

## Method

### Research Design and Setting

This study employed a quantitative descriptive approach with a correlational design. The study aimed to determine the relationship between

self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang during the 2025/2026 academic year. The study was conducted at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang for approximately six months, from January to June 2026.

### Participants, Sample, or Data Sources

The study population consisted of all eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang, totaling 164 students. The sample consisted of 42 students, representing 25% of the population. The participants were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

### Instruments and Measures

Data were collected using two closed-ended questionnaires with a five-point Likert scale: strongly appropriate, appropriate, less appropriate, inappropriate, and strongly inappropriate. The self-control instrument was developed by Rianghepat (2022) based on the aspects of cognitive control, behavioral control, and decision control. The bullying behavior instrument was adapted from Nanga (2024) based on verbal, physical, relational, and electronic forms of bullying. The bullying behavior instrument consisted of 50 items and had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.845, indicating good reliability.

### Procedure and Research Ethics

Data were collected by administering the questionnaires to the students selected as research participants. The participants were informed about the purpose of the data collection and were asked to complete the questionnaires according to their actual conditions. The confidentiality of participants' identities and data was maintained throughout the research process.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics version 26 for Windows. The analysis began with a normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test and a linearity test. Since the data were normally distributed and met the linearity assumption, the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's Product Moment correlation to determine the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior.

## Results and Discussion

### Results

To test the hypothesis and statistically determine the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year, the researcher conducted data analysis using SPSS version 26 for Windows. The data were analyzed using the Product Moment

Correlation Test (Pearson Correlation) to determine the correlation, direction, and strength of the relationship between the independent variable (self-control) and the dependent variable (bullying behavior). The results of the Product Moment correlation test are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Product Moment Correlation Test of Self-Control and Bullying Behavior Variables

| Correlations                                                |                     |              |                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------|-------------------|
|                                                             |                     | Self-Control | Bullying Behavior |
| Self-Control                                                | Pearson Correlation | 1            | .346*             |
|                                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     |              | 0.025             |
|                                                             | N                   | 42           | 42                |
| Bullying Behavior                                           | Pearson Correlation | .346*        | 1                 |
|                                                             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.025        |                   |
|                                                             | N                   | 42           | 42                |
| *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). |                     |              |                   |

Based on the table above, the results of the Product Moment correlation test showed that the Sig. (2-tailed) value between the self-control and bullying behavior variables was 0.025. This value was lower than the significance level of 0.05 ( $0.025 < 0.05$ ). Therefore, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students.

Based on the results of the Product Moment correlation test, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was 0.346. This value falls within the interval of 0.20–0.399, indicating that the strength of the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior was categorized as weak.

Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ), which stated that there was no significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior, was rejected, while the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ), which stated that there was a significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior, was accepted.

### Discussion

Based on the results of the Product Moment correlation analysis, the Pearson Correlation coefficient was 0.346, with a significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.025. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05 ( $0.025 < 0.05$ ), the results indicate a significant relationship between self-control and

bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year. The correlation coefficient of 0.346 falls within the interval of 0.20–0.399, indicating that the strength of the relationship between the two variables was categorized as weak. Furthermore, the positive correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior was in the same direction. Thus, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted and the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected.

The findings of this study differ from those reported by Annisa (2022), who found a significant negative relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among high school students. The study reported a correlation coefficient of  $r = -0.288$  with  $p = 0.000$ , indicating that higher levels of self-control were associated with lower levels of bullying behavior. This difference may be related to variations in participant characteristics, school environment, social context, and research instruments. In contrast, the present study found a significant positive but weak relationship between self-control and bullying behavior, suggesting that the relationship between these variables may vary across different research contexts.

The findings of this study indicate that bullying behavior is influenced not only by the ability to regulate oneself but also by how students utilize this ability when interacting with others. Students who are able to control their emotions may choose to carry out bullying behavior in a more deliberate manner than students who act impulsively. Therefore, high self-control does not necessarily function as a protective factor against bullying behavior when it is not accompanied by moral development, empathy, and concern for peers.

This finding differs from the results reported by Noviandari et al. (2022) and Salmi et al. (2018), who found that higher self-control was associated with lower levels of bullying behavior. This difference may have been influenced by variations in respondent characteristics, school environmental conditions, school culture, research instruments, and data analysis techniques. Therefore, the direction of the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior may vary across research settings.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang is not influenced solely by self-control but also by various other factors that were not examined in this study. Therefore, efforts to prevent bullying should not focus solely on improving students' self-control but should also involve strengthening character education, fostering empathy, developing moral awareness, increasing

supervision by teachers and parents, and creating a safe and bullying-free school climate.

This explanation is also consistent with the self-control theory proposed by Gottfredson & Hirschi (1990), which states that individuals with high self-control are capable of regulating impulsive desires and considering the consequences of their actions. However, this capacity is morally neutral in terms of its direction; it can be used to refrain from violating social norms, but it can also be consciously utilized to carry out harmful actions against others in a more deliberate and covert manner when accompanied by moral disengagement. The concept of moral disengagement has also been shown to play a significant role in promoting bullying and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents, as reported in several recent studies.

According to Averil (1973), self-control refers to an individual's ability to regulate behavior, control cognitive processes, and make rational decisions. In the context of eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang, this rational aspect of self-control may potentially be used to consider the advantages and disadvantages of certain actions. Thus, students who perceive intimidation as beneficial to their social position may use their emotional composure to engage in such behavior without being easily detected.

Therefore, the findings of this study demonstrate that the relationship between self-control and bullying behavior is not necessarily uniform across different school contexts. In some populations, low self-control may be associated with impulsive bullying, whereas in other populations, including potentially the eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang, higher self-control may be associated with more deliberate and relational forms of bullying. Consequently, bullying behavior cannot be understood solely through the lens of self-control but should also be considered in relation to other factors, such as parenting styles, peer influence, school climate, social media use, and students' personality characteristics. Bullying prevention efforts at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang should therefore not focus exclusively on strengthening self-control but should also incorporate the development of empathy and moral awareness, as self-control without strong moral guidance may potentially be directed toward actions that harm others.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the data analysis, it can be concluded that there was a significant relationship, with a weak level of association, between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year. This finding was statistically supported by a significance

value (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.025, which was lower than 0.05 ( $0.025 < 0.05$ ), indicating that the relationship between the two variables was statistically significant. Furthermore, the Pearson Correlation (Product Moment) coefficient was 0.346, which falls within the interval of 0.20–0.399 and, based on Sugiyono's (2019) interpretation guidelines, indicates a weak relationship. The positive correlation coefficient indicates that the relationship between the two variables was in the same direction. Thus, the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) was rejected and the alternative hypothesis ( $H_a$ ) was accepted, indicating that there was a significant relationship between self-control and bullying behavior among eighth-grade students at UPTD SMP Negeri 16 Kupang in the 2025/2026 academic year.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### Author Contributions (Optional)

The author was responsible for conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft, writing—review and editing, and supervision of the research and manuscript preparation.

### Generative AI Disclosure

The authors used generative AI-assisted tools in the preparation of this manuscript for language translation and language editing. The authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and final content of the article.

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