The Role of Self Control as a Moderator Variable on the Effect of *Schadenfreude* on *Bullying* Behavior in Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to ascertain whether self-control is a moderator of the influence of schadenfreude on bullying behavior. Quantitative research methodology was used in this study. Students in junior high schools from all over Surabaya became the study population. Purposive sampling was used for sampling. The number of samples obtained was 366 students. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire. The analysis technique used is the classic assumption test and path analysis. The results showed that self-control is able to mediate the effect of schandenfreud on bullying behavior, self-control with bullying behavior has a significant relationship, schandenfreud with bullying behavior has a significant relationship, and schandenfreud with self-control has a significant relationship. This study can enrich existing educational psychology theories regarding the influence of *schadenfreude* on the tendency of *bullying* behavior, and explain how self-control becomes a moderating variable in the influence of schadenfreude on *bullying* behavior.

Keywords: Self Control, Schadenfreude, and Bullying Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is increasingly becoming a problem especially among adolescents. Adolescence is a critical period in a person's psychological, emotional and social development (Permata and Nasution, 2022). Adolescents are at a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, where they face various challenges in building self-identity, relationships with peers, and adjustment to social norms. Adolescents are in a stage of psychosocial development that emphasizes the importance of searching for self-identity through social interaction (Aulia et al., 2022). In this process, bullying behavior often emerges as a form of response to peer group pressure or the need to gain social dominance.

Adolescents are still unable to understand the adverse effects of bullying behavior, which can adversely affect the mental and psychological health of victims (Wardani, Sugara, and Rahimsyah, 2023).(Wardani et al. 2023) Bullying can occur in any environment, including family, school and society. Bullying nowadays often occurs in the school

environment, even though schools are supposed to be a place of learning for children (Kurniawati & Rustam, 2024).

Bullying in schools occurs in many parts of Indonesia, and junior high school students are the target of the majority of bullying incidents (Noviandari, Padillah, and Rhomadoni, 2022).(Noviandari et al. 2022) This seems to be the case as junior high school students enter a developmental phase where they seek organizations that align with their interests and discover their identity. Bullying can have both psychological and physical effects on the victim (Tri Bagas Romadhoni et al., 2023). It includes teasing, taunting, insulting, threatening, intimidating, sexually abusing, sexually assaulting, isolating, avoiding, damaging the victim's property or objects, threatening, and hitting the victim with the intent to harm or mentally suppress them.

In terms of the proportion of students who have been bullied, Indonesia ranks fifth out of 78 countries, according to data from the *Organization for Economic Co- operation and Development* (OECD) (Afif Syaiful Mahmudin, 2021). East Java province recorded 55 cases of bullying, sexual harassment, and assault involving women and children, according to the Integrated Service Center for Women and Children Empowerment (Rahmadhony, 2020).

Based on the results of observations conducted for two weeks in one junior high school in an urban area, there were strong indications of bullying practices in various forms, including verbal, physical, and social. Observations were conducted in strategic areas such as classrooms, canteens, and school grounds during break times and after class hours. One of the main findings was the presence of unhealthy interactions among students, such as teasing, derogatory name calling, and physical intimidation. Some students were seen not participating in group activities because they felt uncomfortable with the treatment of their peers.

The results of in-depth interviews with guidance and counseling (BK) teachers revealed that bullying behavior often occurs due to a lack of supervision outside the classroom and low student awareness of the negative impact of these actions. The counseling teacher explained that in the last three months, there have been more than five official reports of bullying involving students in grades VII and VIII. The most commonly reported form of bullying is verbal, such as taunts related to physical condition or family background.

Schadenfreude is one of the elements that contribute to *bullying* behavior (Widyastika and Anisah, 2023). Schadenfreude is an expression of human feelings that feel happy when others experience injustice or misfortune (Indrianto and Rahmatulloh, 2024). In addition, laughing at people who are experiencing difficulties is also considered bullying behavior (Wardani et al., 2023). Schadenfreude is the pleasure of passively viewing another person's misfortune (Widayati and Farida, 2022).

Schadenfreude is the pleasure of seeing other people's misery, because it is a pleasure obtained by passively seeing other people's suffering, not by actively creating it (Kusmantoro & Rahayuningsih, 2023). Based on the results of Kusmantoro & Rahayuningsih's research, most of the bullying perpetrators were seen to show

schadenfreude and dark triad personality traits, namely psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and narcissism. Schadenfreude perpetrators do not realize the impact of their words or actions on others because they see bullying as a communication tool that enhances rather than inhibits conversation (Widyastika and Anisah, 2023).

People will not feel envious of the success of others until they are able to recognize the truth of their own situation. One of the components of self-control is the ability to accept the truth (Perianto, 2021). Therefore, indirectly, the higher one's self-control, the more they will love themselves and avoid schadenfreude. Individuals with high self-control are able to regulate and suppress their emotions, interpret the emotions of others, and connect with their environment effectively. Thus, one can manage their violent behavior if they have strong self-control (Noviandari et al., 2022).

According to Widayati & Farida's research, one form of schadenfreude that manifests as violent behavior such as bullying has a stronger correlation with the suffering caused by the perpetrator of schadenfreude (Widayati and Farida, 2022). Only 21.53% (22 instances) of the 102 cases were caused by an unwanted or unintentional tragedy directly created by the perpetrator of schadenfreude, whereas 78.43% (80 cases) were caused by triggered pain. The correlation between bullying behavior tendency and schadenfreude variables suggests that schadenfreude plays a role in the tendency to bully. It is expected that self-control will act as a moderator between bullying behavior tendency and schadenfreude.

According to the direct correlation test findings, self-control and schadenfreude are negatively correlated (Ro'uf and Nurwardana, 2023). This can be seen as a negative relationship where schadenfreude scores increase with lower levels of self-control and vice versa. According to research by Akollo, bullying behavior and self-control had a relationship of 0.720 (p<0.01). There is a high relationship, as indicated by the correlation coefficient value of 0.720. This indicates that bullying behavior tends to be lower when self-control is higher and higher when self-control is weaker (Akollo, 2022). Using a value of β = 0.372 and p < 0.05, Bari's study showed that schadenfreude and cyberbullying activity had a positive and significant relationship (Bari, 2022). From this finding that there is a positive correlation between the two variables. This implies that cyberbullying behavior increases along with schadenfreude. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to show how self-control serves as a mediator between students' tendency to bully and schadenfreude.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research methodology. Surabaya City junior high school pupils made up the study's population. Purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique, was used for the sampling. Sample selection is done by selecting individuals or groups that meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This process begins with determining the criteria, namely junior high school students aged 12-15 years, involved in bullying behavior as perpetrators, victims, or observers, and attending schools in institutions that have reports on bullying cases. The sample obtained was 366 students. A scale was utilized to gather the data, validity and reliability tests were

performed on the measuring device, and the classical assumption test, path analysis, and Sobel test were employed as analytical methods.

The classic assumption test consists of 2 tests, namely normality test and multicollinearity test. In this study, the test of normality used is the *Kolmogov Smirnov Test*. *The Kolmogov-Smirnov* method works by comparing the cumulative frequency of the empirical distribution (observation). This normality test calculation uses the SPSS application. Multicollinearity test is a technique used to ascertain whether the dependent and independent variables follow a linear relationship or not significantly. The researcher will calculate the linearity test using the SPSS application.

Path analysis is used to analyze the direct and indirect effects between schadenfreude as the independent variable on bullying behavior as the dependent variable through self-control as a moderating variable. The steps in analyzing are as follows(Putri and Puspitasari 2022) (Putri and Puspitasari, 2022):

a. First, design a model based on concepts and theories
b. Second, it checks the assumptions underlying the path analysis.
c. Third, parameter estimation or path coefficient calculation.
d. Fourth, check the validity of the model.

   Whether an analysis result is valid depends on whether or not the underlying assumptions are met. It has already been mentioned that it is assumed that all assumptions are met.

e. Fifth, interpret the results of the analysis.

   First, interpret the coefficient of total determination and significant cross-effects. Second, calculating the total effect of each variable that has a causal influence on the endogenous variable.

In order to perform the Sobel test, one must determine how strongly the independent variable (X) influences the dependent variable (Y) indirectly through the mediating variable (M). To compute the indirect effect of X to Y through M, multiply the path X → Y (a) by the path Y → M (b), or ab. Accordingly, the coefficient ab = (c-c^1), where c is the influence of X on Y in the absence of regulating M and c^1 is the coefficient of the effect of X on Y following the control of M. Use the formula below to determine the t value of the coefficient ab in order to assess the importance of the indirect impact:

$$t = \frac{ab}{Sab}$$

The presence of a mediating impact can be inferred if the tcount value is higher than the ttable value after being compared to the ttable. The p-value and alpha (0.05) are compared under the following circumstances to determine whether to test the hypothesis:

a. The mediating variable has a genuine mediating influence on the independent and dependent variables if the p-value is less than alpha (0.05), thus Ha is accepted and H_0 is rejected.
b. The mediating variable does not actually mediate the relationship between the independent and dependent variables if the p-value is greater than alpha (0.05), hence accepting H_0 and rejecting Ha.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION
RESEARCH RESULT
Normality Test Results

The normalcy test in this study was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov technique in SPSS software. The normality test results show a p value of 0.124, above the commonly accepted significance level of 0.05. Thus, it may be inferred from the results of the normality test that the data under analysis is regularly distributed. In the context of statistics, normal distribution is one of the basic assumptions that must be met in order to use parametric analysis methods, such as the t-test, regression analysis, and ANOVA.

Multicollinearity Test Results

To conduct the multicollinearity test in this study, SPSS software was used to check the *Variance Inflation Factor* (VIF) and *Tolerance* values. According to the criteria used to identify multicollinearity, multicollinearity does not occur if the VIF is less than 10 and the tolerance value is more than 0.1.

Based on the results of the multicollinearity test conducted, no multicollinearity was found among the independent variables in this study. This is indicated by the Tolerance value which is above 0.1, which is 0.997 and the VIF value which is below 10, namely 1.003 for all independent variables.

Tabel 1. Path Analysis Results

			Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p
Z	→	Y	0.375	0.120	3.129	0.002
X	→	Y	0.739	0.076	9.751	< .001
X	→	Z	0.072	0.033	2.186	0.029

The interpretation of the path analysis results is as follows:
a. Correlation between Schadenfreude and Self-Control

The results of the analysis show a direct relationship between Schandenfreud and Self Control, obtained a value of z = 2.186 with a significance of p = 0.029 (p < 0.05). This shows that Schandenfreud and Self Control have a significant relationship.

b. Correlation between *schadenfreude* and *bullying* behavior

The results of the analysis show a direct relationship between Schandenfreud and Bullying, obtained a value of z = 9.751 with a significance of p = 0.001 (p < 0.05). This shows that Schandenfreud and Bullying have a significant relationship.

c. Correlation between self-control and *bullying* behavior

The results of the analysis show a direct relationship between Self Control and Bullying, obtained a value of z = 3.129 with a significance of p = 0.002 (p < 0.05). This shows that Self Control and Bullying have a significant relationship.

Sobel Test Results

The following are the statistical test results of the sobel test:

Table 2. Sobel Test Results or Mediation Tests

					Estimate	Std. Error	z-value	p
X	→	Z	→	Y	0.027	0.015	1.792	0.073

With a significant level of p = 0.073 (p>0.05), the mediator analysis's findings indicated that the variable that schandenfreud and bullying behavior through self-control acquired a value of z = 1.792. This suggests that the self-control variable can act as a mediator between bullying behavior and schandenfreud.

DISCUSSION

The results of the mediator analysis show that the self-control variable acts as a mediator in the relationship between schadenfreude and bullying behavior. From this analysis, a value of z = 1.792 was obtained with a significance level of p = 0.073 (p> 0.05). These results indicate that self-control is able to be a link that explains the influence between schadenfreude and bullying behavior, although this influence is not statistically significant.

The z value of 1.792 with a significance level of p = 0.073 indicates that self-control has the potential to be a mediator, but does not meet the traditional significance limit (p < 0.05). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), If taking into consideration the mediator (self-control) results in a weaker or inconsequential association between the independent variable (schadenfreude) and the dependent variable (bullying), then the mediator is deemed important. In this case, the results show that self-control affects the relationship, although the effect is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant.

This research supports the view that self-control plays an important role in individual behavior, especially in the context of negative behaviors such as bullying. As revealed by Tageny, et al that self-control is an individual's ability to regulate emotions, thoughts, and actions to conform to social and moral norms (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). In this situation, persons with limited self-control are more prone to participate in bullying conduct as they are less able to resist urges caused by negative emotions, especially schadenfreude.

Schadenfreude or pleasure derived from the suffering of others is often the motivator behind aggressive behavior, including bullying. According to Smith, schadenfreude arises when a person feels superior to others (Smith, 1996). In this context, individuals who experience schadenfreude may be driven to bullying as a way to reinforce their feelings of superiority.

However, the presence of self-control can moderate these urges. Research suggests that self-control serves as a psychological resource that enables individuals to inhibit impulsive drives (Baumeister, Vohs, & Tice, 2007). In this study, the results of the analysis indicated that self-control was able to mediate the relationship between schadenfreude and bullying, although the effect was not statistically significant. This could be due to several factors, including limited sample size or variability in the measurement of self-control.

In self-regulation theory, self-control is seen as a mechanism that helps individuals to direct their behavior in accordance with long-term goals and social values (Ro'uf and Nurwardana, 2023). In the context of this study, self-control allows individuals to manage schadenfreude urges that can lead to bullying behavior. In other words, individuals with high self-control tend to be better able to resist the urge to commit actions that harm others.

This study is also in line with the ego-depletion model proposed by which states that self-control is a limited resource (Franken et al., 2015). When this resource is depleted, individuals become more vulnerable to impulsive behaviors, including bullying. In this case, schadenfreude may increase emotional distress that depletes self-control, thus increasing the likelihood of bullying behavior.

This study is in line with my previous findings which reveal that self-control is one of the key factors in reducing aggressive behavior (Nebioglu et al., 2012). Other studies also support that good self-control can help individuals manage negative urges, including the urge to bully (Akollo, 2022). In other words, although schadenfreude drives bullying behavior, the presence of high self-control can weaken the relationship, so that individuals are better able to refrain from harmful behavior.

Several studies in the last five years support these findings. For example, another study found that schadenfreude contributes significantly to aggressive behavior, especially in situations where individuals feel there is a power imbalance (Wulandari and Susilarini, 2023). On the other hand, research by others shows that high self-control can reduce the intensity of bullying behavior, even in situations that trigger negative emotions (Rahmadhony, 2020).

Another study highlighted the importance of interventions that focus on improving self-control as a strategy to reduce bullying behavior in schools (Kusmantoro & Rahayuningsih, 2023). In their study, a self-control training program was shown to be effective in lowering bullying rates, especially in students who had previously scored high in schadenfreude. In addition, other studies emphasize the importance of understanding the psychological factors underlying bullying behavior to design more effective intervention programs (Erina, Aulia, and Ipah, 2023).

CONCLUSION

From the findings of data analysis and discussion that has been given, numerous conclusions can be taken from the results of mediator analysis revealing the variable schandenfreud and bullying behavior through self-control, achieved a value of z = 1.792 with a significance of p = 0.073 (p> 0.05). This might be understood as the self-control variable is able to regulate the influence of schandenfreud on bullying behavior. Self-control and bullying are directly related, according to the analysis's findings, which yielded a value of z = 3.129 and a significant level of p = 0.002 (p < 0.05). This demonstrates the strong correlation between bullying behavior and self-control. The analysis results show a direct relationship between Schandenfreud and Bullying Behavior, obtained a z value = 9.751 with a significance of p = 0.001 (p < 0.05). This shows that schandenfreud and bullying behavior

have a significant relationship. The analysis results show a direct relationship between schandenfreud and self-control, obtained a z value = 2.186 with a significance of p = 0.029 (p < 0.05). This shows that schandenfreud and self-control have a significant relationship.

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