

**Original Research**

## **Adolescent Verbal Violent Behavior and Emotional Intelligence: A Cross-Sectional Study**

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**ABSTRACT**

In today's world, verbal violence is a prevalent issue, especially among adolescents. Typically, the perpetrators are the victims' peers, and this can have detrimental effects on the victims, including a decrease in emotional intelligence. The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between peer verbal violence and emotional intelligence in adolescents. The study utilized a cross-sectional design and involved 120 teenage boarding school students, with a sample of 92 active adolescent students selected through simple random sampling. The research instruments included a bullying questionnaire (consisting of 12 questions) adapted from Tower and an emotional intelligence self-assessment tool (comprising 20 questions) adapted from Sterret. Data analysis was conducted using the Spearman Rank Test, which revealed a significant relationship ( $\rho$  value of 0.000) between peer verbal violence and emotional intelligence in adolescents. The study highlighted the adverse effects of peer verbal violent behaviour, such as hindering self-development, reducing empathy, and causing anxiety and shame, as well as potentially triggering similar violent behaviour by the perpetrator. As a result, it emphasizes the need for schools to take collaborative action to minimize violent verbal behaviour.

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## Introduction

Verbal violent behaviour is one of the sources that can cause stress in adolescents. This behaviour is currently a form of psychological violence that is carried out by intimidating through speech such as insulting, defaming, speaking harshly, mocking, excluding, demeaning, humiliating, cursing, yelling, threatening, blaming, and swearing at the victims, especially adolescents (Isnawati & Yunita, 2022). Verbal violent behaviour is not only violence spoken through words but also includes increased tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language. Peers at school mainly carry out verbally violent behaviour, so these actions often cause fear to their victims (Teicher *et al.*, 2010; Thomason, 2018).

Rates of violent behaviour among adolescents in some countries vary widely. In Mexico, bullying among adolescents reached 44%. Meanwhile, Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous country, shows that 46.8 million (18%) of the population is aged 10-19 years. The prevalence of violent behaviour in 2017 was 78.7%, consisting of physical violence at 43.1%, verbal violence at 12.2% and sexual violence at 4.5%. In addition, adolescents who received one type of violent behaviour were 14.3%, and adolescents who experienced two forms of violence were 7.4%. Meanwhile, adolescents who received all three types of violence amounted to 1.4% (Syukriani *et al.*, 2022).

However, the prevalence rate of violent behaviour that occurred in the East Java Region reached 1,234 victims in 2021. Most victims experienced violent behaviour in several forms: physical violence, as many as 268 people; psychological violence, as many as 366 people; and sexual violence, 595 people (Widiani, 2023). Meanwhile, in Probolinggo City, there were 38 reported cases of violent behaviour in 2020. The victims received treatment in the form of physical violence for as many as 11 people, psychological violence for as many as 17 people, sexual violence for as many as 8 people, and 2 people were exiled (Dinas Sosial, Pemberdayaan Perempuan dan Perlindungan Anak Kota Probolinggo, 2021).

Based on the results of a preliminary study conducted at the Hafshawaty Zainul Hasan Islamic Boarding School on December

15, 2022, show that 8 out of 10 students have experienced verbal violent behaviour from their peers both at the boarding school and at school. Most of them have received harsh words from their peers, getting ridicule, threats, degrading and cursing. The incident made them embarrassed, and they preferred to avoid and stay away from the perpetrator in an effort to protect themselves from verbal violence. This condition makes victims experience limitations and reluctance in developing their potential and limiting interactions with other friends, such as reluctance to participate in extracurricular activities, experiencing a decrease in academic interest, being indifferent, not caring about the presence of others, and being passive.

Perpetrators of verbal violent behaviour generally intimidate to show their power over their victims (Naveed *et al.*, 2020). However, without realizing it, it turns out that verbal violent behaviour carried out by peers can affect growth and development, especially in the cognitive, psychological and social aspects of its victims. Someone who experiences verbal violent behaviour, especially during adolescence, continuously and for a long duration of time can affect mental health status (Allen & Anderson, 2017).

This situation is mainly because the victim has been traumatized for a long time, resulting in a worsening of the psychological condition in adolescents as a result of the ill-treatment they have experienced. Such a situation requires victims to manage their emotional intelligence to minimize adverse effects. Emotional intelligence is defined as an emotional state characterized by a sense of optimism, realism, and flexibility so that individuals can solve all the problems they experience, control stress and control existing situations (Mendez *et al.*, 2019). Emotional intelligence is also defined as an individual's ability to be able to recognize, control and distinguish the emotions and feelings of himself and others. Emotional intelligence is an indicator that can be used to assess an individual's ability to manage thought processes and behaviour (Sfetcu, 2020).

Individuals with adequate emotional intelligence can recognize the emotions they feel to regulate emotions, maintain emotions,

express problems experienced, control themselves, have a sense of empathy, and maintain social skills. However, it is different with victims of bullying. The victims of bullying (on average), in certain conditions there, are victims who are unable to control their emotional state, so when victims get bullied, they tend to carry out verbally violent behaviour similar to the perpetrator as a form of resistance and protection against themselves. The forms of behaviour carried out, such as the emergence of high anger, tend to trigger aggressive actions as well. However, some victims tend to be passive and accept all bad treatment from peers, making victims experience anxiety, despair, resignation and even depression (Mambra & Kotian, 2022). Thus, based on the above explanation, this study aims to analyze the relationship between peer verbal violence behaviour and adolescent emotional intelligence.

### Method

This research used a cross-sectional study research design. The population research respondents were all 120 teenage students of Hafshawaty Zainul Hasan Islamic Boarding School who were victims of bullying. This research was conducted from June to July 2023. The inclusion criteria for research respondents are active adolescent students who are high school students, adolescent students who live in the dormitory of the Hafshawaty Zainul Hasan Islamic Boarding School, and adolescent students who have been victims of verbal violent behaviour. The exclusion criteria for research respondents are adolescent students who leave, move, and leave high school education and adolescent students who live outside the boarding school dormitory. The sample of research respondents was 92 active adolescent students who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The research sampling technique used was purposive sampling.

The data collection process carried out in this research uses an instrument in the form of a bullying questionnaire consisting of 12 question items. In the questionnaire there are favorable questions with answer choices never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always (5) while unfavorable questions with ratings never (5), seldom (4), sometimes (3),

often (2), always (1) (Tower, 2005). This questionnaire was used to assess the verbal violence behaviour experienced by the victims. In addition, this research also used an emotional intelligence self-assessment tool questionnaire consisting of 20 question items. The questionnaire has questions in favourable form with answer options never (1), rarely (2), sometimes (3), often (4), always (5), while unfavourable questions with ratings never (5), seldom (4), sometimes (3), often (2), always (1) (Sterrett, 2000). This questionnaire was used to assess the victim's emotional intelligence. The questionnaire used in this study had been tested for validity with a  $\rho$  value  $\geq 0.05$  and a reliability test result of 0.916, so the questionnaire is considered valid and reliable.

Before the data collection process, the researcher explained the study's purpose and objectives to all research respondents. Then, the researcher gave informed consent to the guardian or parent of the research respondent. This was done because most research respondents were under 18 years old. After the researcher gets informed consent from the guardian or parent of the respondent, the researcher gives the informed consent to the research respondents. The researcher gave a verbal violence behaviour questionnaire and an emotional intelligence questionnaire to all respondents. After that, the researcher collected the completed questionnaires. Researchers assessed the questionnaires that had been filled in by categorizing them into three levels, which were low, medium and high for the peer verbal violence behaviour variable.

Meanwhile, the emotional intelligence variable assessment category is also divided into three criteria: poor, fair, and good. Data analysis was performed using the Spearman rank test. Researchers submitted ethical clearance at the Ethics Commission of STIKes Hafshawaty Pesantren Zainul Hasan and were declared ethically sound with the number KEPK/158/STIKes-HPZH/VI/2023.

### Results and Discussion

The results of the research that has been carried out show data such as:

**Table 1. Distribution of Respondent's Characteristics (n=92)**

Category	n	%
<b>Sex</b>		
Girl	92	100
<b>Respondent Age</b>		
Early adolescent (12-15 years)	0	0
Middle adolescent (15 - 18 years)	84	91
Late adolescent (18-21 years)	8	9
<b>Father's Job</b>		
Unemployed	8	9
Labourer	18	20
Civil Servant	16	17
Private Worker	21	23
Self-employed	29	31
<b>Mother's Job</b>		
Housewife	48	52
Labourer	18	20
Civil Servant	3	3
Private Worker	12	13
Self-employed	11	12
<b>Father's Education</b>		
No School	22	24
Elementary School	12	13
Junior High School	8	9
Senior High School	46	50
University	4	4
<b>Mother's Education</b>		
No School	17	18
Elementary	19	21
Junior High School	15	16
Senior High School	36	39
University	5	6
<b>Parent's Income</b>		
< 500.000	19	21
500.000-1000.000	17	18
1000.000-1.500.000	30	33
> 1.500.000	26	28

Based on the above data, it was found that all research respondents were female as many as 92 (100%). The majority of respondents were middle adolescents aged 15-18 years, as many as 84 people (91%); the majority of fathers' jobs were self-employed, as many as 29 people (31%), while mothers' jobs were housewives as many as 48 people

(52%). Most of the fathers' education had high school education as many as 46 people (50%), most of the mothers' education had a high school level education as many as 36 people (39%), and most of the parents' income was 1,000,000-1,500,000 as many as 30 people (33%).

**Table 2. Peers Verbal Violence Behavior**

Peers Verbal Violence Behavior	n	(%)
Low	20	22
Medium	26	28
High	46	50
Total	92	100

Based on the data above, it was found that most of the research respondents experienced peer verbal violence behaviour in the high

category, as many as 46 people (50%), 26 people (28%) medium, and 20 people (22%) low.

**Table 3. Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents**

Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents	n	(%)
Good	22	24
Fair	32	35
Poor	38	41
Total	92	100

Based on the data above, most of the research respondents experienced emotional intelligence in the poor category, with 38

people (41%) being poor, 32 people (35%) being fair, and 22 people (24%) being good.

**Table 4. Relationship Between Peer Verbal Violence Behavior and Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents**

Peer verbal violent behaviour	Emotional Intelligence in Adolescents						$\rho$ value
	Good		Fair		Poor		
	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	(n)	(%)	
Low	18	20	2	2	0	0	0.000
Medium	3	3	23	25	0	0	
High	1	1	7	8	38	41	
Total	22	24	32	35	38	41	

Based on the above table, it is found that most of the research respondents received verbal violent behaviour from their peers, causing the value of emotional intelligence to decrease in as many as 38 people (41%). These results indicate that the higher verbal violence behaviour experienced by victims leads to a decrease in emotional intelligence. In addition, according to the table above, it is also found that there is a significant relationship between peer verbal violence behaviour and emotional intelligence in adolescents, indicated by an  $\rho$  value of 0.000.

Peer verbal violence behaviour can be defined as an act of violence committed by peers consciously and intentionally through negative words so that it can hurt the feelings of others. Verbal violence behaviour is often carried out by calling the victim by a nasty name, insulting and mocking the victim's physical condition, swearing at the victim such as swearing, insinuating, making fun of the victim with harsh words, shouting at the victim in a disrespectful and high tone of voice and demeaning the victim (Abdullaevna, 2023).

Peers of the same age often perpetrate verbal violent behaviour. Perpetrators hang

out with peers who have aggressive personalities and intimidate others. As a result, they are influenced to do the same to their victims. Perpetrators commit violent behaviour against their peers as a form of attracting attention and maintaining their social power status (Su, 2018).

Perpetrators in groups generally carry out this verbal violence behaviour as a form of power over their peers. The perpetrator commits acts of verbal violence aimed at a group of individuals who are primarily weak, passive, and have no social power, so this situation makes the victim unable to fight and defend himself and accept all the bad treatment he experiences. As a result, the victim feels embarrassed in front of their peers (Thakur & Grewal, 2021).

Based on the results of the study, it was found that most of the research respondents experienced verbal peer violence behaviour, as many as 46 people (50%). The forms of verbal abuse are carried out on victims, such as spreading false rumours to others, talking about the victim on purpose, humiliating the victim in public, and calling the victim's name by calling the parent's name using a loud, rude, and vocal voice.

Of course, verbal peer violent behaviour experienced by victims is influenced by several factors that become potential targets for verbal violent behaviour, such as physical conditions, economic, and parental education factors. Based on the study, results show that most of the victims' fathers had a high school education, as many as 46 people (50%), and most of the mothers had a high school education, as many as 36 people (39%). Meanwhile, the income of the victims' parents mainly was 1,000,000-1,500,000 for as many as 30 people (33%), so this factor is often the target of verbal violent behaviour by the perpetrator.

As a result, 30 (41%) victims who received this treatment experienced a lack of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is experienced by respondents, such as feeling angry, irritated, embarrassed, inferior, not confident, and helpless to defend themselves when others participate in humiliating them in public. This situation caused the victim to do self-isolation and accept all the bad treatment of the perpetrator reluctantly. The impact is that victims feel afraid to tell their problems to parents and schools because they get threatened by the perpetrators, so the victims decide to suppress and hide their problems.

A similar situation was also experienced in the boarding school environment. The forms of verbal violence behaviour carried out in boarding schools include swearing with harsh words, hitting, kicking and calling the victim's name using the parents' name. In general, perpetrators who carry out acts of intimidation against victims, on average, have a taller and larger body posture than their victims. Verbal violent behaviour can occur due to several factors, such as the background of students from various regions, which causes differences in character. In addition, other factors, including seniority, can also trigger verbal violent behaviour. All forms of verbal violent behaviour carried out directly or indirectly can undoubtedly harm the growth of the victims, primarily psychological, one of which can reduce emotional intelligence (Barus *et al.*, 2023).

Emotional intelligence is an essential indicator in regulating one's emotional state. Emotional intelligence is an individual's ability

to realize their own and others' feelings, provide mutual motivation, empathy, and compassion, and express happiness and sadness (Rueda *et al.*, 2022). In addition, emotional intelligence is defined as an individual's ability to express emotions by regulating and controlling emotions and thinking calmly. When people have emotional intelligence, they can control every problem they face to regulate their mood and keep themselves from experiencing pressure. Thus, it can maintain the ability to think and empathize. In addition, individuals with high emotional intelligence tend to have the ability to manage emotions to control and deal with all existing problems and pressures adaptively and assertively (Mendez *et al.*, 2019).

This exposure is to the research results that the higher the violent behaviour experienced by individuals from peers, it can reduce emotional intelligence. As described by Koller and Darida (2020), individuals who experience violent behaviour from peers continuously are vulnerable to causing changes in emotional intelligence. Victims of violent behaviour tend to feel sad, disappointed, and hopeless because they cannot defend themselves, so they accept all the treatment carried out by the bully.

If this situation continues, it can have long-term effects, such as an impact on academic performance at school. Victims of verbal violent behaviour are prone to difficulty concentrating while in class and loss of focus during the learning process. This situation can occur because victims feel threatened and overly cautious when they are at school for fear of getting repeated acts of intimidation so that they cannot capture all learning information adequately (MacCann *et al.*, 2019).

As a result, the victim is reluctant to come to school because she or he tends to avoid and refuse to interact with her or his peers. If this situation is left unchecked, it can affect the victim's academic performance at school and hinder the development of positive skills and potential that the victim has (Lopez *et al.*, 2018).

However, some victims do not experience negative impacts from the verbal violent behaviour they receive. This is because victims get support from their surrounding

environment, such as from family and peers. The existence of this support turns out to be able to shape the victim's character more positively and be able to carry out the emotional defence. Therefore, the degree of psychological impact experienced by victims of peer verbal violent behaviour can have both positive and negative effects, all depending on the respective personal resources they have (Leon Del Barco *et al.*, 2020).

In addition, support from parents is needed to overcome peer verbal violent behaviour. Parents are the first means of education for children. Parents have a primary role in educating, nurturing, teaching, training, directing, and guiding their children. Furthermore, parents also have a role as motivators, so they give advice to their children with love so that children feel that their presence is meaningful. Of course, parents' success in carrying out all these roles is greatly influenced by parental education. The higher the education of parents, the more parents understand and easily seek information about verbal violent behaviour so that they can monitor and become more sensitive to any changes in the behaviour of their children who are victims of verbal violent behaviour (Doss & Crawford, 2023).

Thus, in accordance with the description above, if verbal violent behaviour is carried out continuously and takes place over a long period of time, the emotional defence ability can also weaken, which can have a negative effect on its victims, one of which can reduce the victim's emotional intelligence. In this case, an immediate effort is needed to overcome the incidence of verbal violent behaviour, one of which is through collaborative action with schools so that victims can get protection from intimidation efforts.

### Conclusion

It concludes that verbal violent behaviour has a significant relationship with the victim's emotional intelligence. The more often the victim gets verbally violent behaviour, the lower the emotional intelligence. Thus, it is expected that the results of this study can be a source of reference, especially in providing interventions to minimize long-term adverse

effects through mentoring activities for victims of verbal violent behaviour and involving the participation of parents. This is because parents are the closest parties who understand more about their children's conditions. Thus, it is expected that mentoring activities for parents can be a means to reduce the incidence of verbal violent behaviour.

### Limitations of the study

The limitation of this study is that it only focuses on victims of peer verbal violence behaviour as respondents.

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### Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest in this study.

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