REVIEW

A Scoping Review of Assertiveness Therapy for Reducing Bullying Behavior and Its Impacts Among Adolescents

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Abstract: Bullying is a global problem in adolescents which has increased every year. One of the factors in the occurrence of bullying is the ability of interpersonal skills. This ability can build good relationships with assertive between adolescents and can prevent bullying. The purpose of this study is to describe assertiveness therapy for reducing bullying behavior and its impacts among adolescents. The method used in this study is scoping review. The search strategy used is PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews through three databases namely PubMed, CINAHL, and Scopus. The authors used inclusion criteria and exclusion criteria in the selection of articles. The major keywords used in the article search were bullying, assertiveness therapy, and adolescents. Data analysis used descriptive qualitative. The results showed that there were 10 articles that discussed assertive therapy. All articles show that assertiveness therapy can reduce bullying behavior and its impact significantly, such as reducing the impact of anxiety and increasing self-esteem. Assertiveness therapy methods carried out in the form of education, games, and role play. Education is carried out online and offline. Educational media is provided directly and through media such as educational videos which can be accessed at any time. Gender and cultural approaches are important aspects in the implementation of assertive therapy. Assertive therapy can improve interpersonal skills, social skills, empathy and assertiveness so that it can reduce bullying behavior and its impacts in adolescents. Then, this data becomes the basis for nurses to carry out assertive therapy as an effort to prevent and reduce bullying behavior in adolescents.

Keywords: adolescents, assertiveness, bullying, impacts

Introduction

Bullying is a phenomenon that occurs in many adolescents. Bullying is an act of using power to harm a person or group of people verbally, physically, or psychologically so that the victim feels depressed, traumatized, and helpless.[1] Bullying is also defined as an act of intentional aggressive behavior carried out by a person or group of people repeatedly and from time to time against a victim who cannot defend himself easily.[2] Bullying carried out repeatedly by stronger children against weaker children with the aim of hurting both physically and emotionally.[3]

Bullying can take many forms. Forms of bullying include physical, verbal, psychological, social, and cyberbullying.[4] Physical bullying involves aggressive acts of physical violence, such as punches, kicks, or direct abuse.[5] Meanwhile, verbal bullying includes the use of verbal abuse, taunts, and threats that can undermine the victim's self-esteem.[6] Psychological bullying occurs when someone deliberately demeans or isolates an individual emotionally, for example by persistent insults or threats.[7] Social bullying involves trying to exclude an individual from their social group, creating a sense of isolation, or spreading negative gossip.[8] Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs through digital media, such as text messages, social media, or email.[3] Based on previous research in developing countries, there are several

forms of bullying in the context of social media, namely social intimidation, psychological intimidation, and invasion of privacy.[9]

A survey from UNICEF in 2016 showed that as many as 41 to 50% of adolescents in Indonesia aged 13 to 15 years had experienced acts of social and verbal bullying.[10] Previous survey results also show that bullying behavior in schools has increased every year. Data on cases of violence in Indonesia against children in 2015 amounted to 3820 cases.[11] Meanwhile, cases of child violations in the education sector reached 478 cases. Data also shows that children who are perpetrators of bullying increased drastically to 39% in 2015.[12] The research results show that the United States has the highest prevalence of bullying with 71%, followed by India with 60%, Korea 40%, the Netherlands 33%, Mexico 17–39%, Taiwan 11%, and Brazil 8.5%.[13]

Bullying can cause negative impacts in the form of physical and psychological problems. The psychological impact experienced by the victim is psychologically, especially on the low self-esteem of the victim. The results of previous research show that bullying causes stress, depression, and a decrease in academic grades in victims.[14] In addition, other studies also show that victims experience a decrease in self-confidence so they do not want to go to school.[15,16] This causes academic problems in victims of bullying. Physical bullying also causes physical damage to the victim. Previous research indicated that the victim suffered cuts and bruises as a result of being beaten by students at school.[17] Other studies have also shown that students bleed as a result of being pinched hard by other students.[18,19]

The results of the research show that the perpetrators of bullying are related to negative characteristics or aspects of themselves, including the presence of anxiety, depression, tend to have an antisocial personality, and also have a high risk of dropping out of school, and in adulthood the perpetrators of bullying have more problems with their work[20] and also find it difficult to maintain a long-term romantic relationship with their partner. Perpetrators of bullying are not only related to psychological distress, but are also related to psychological well-being as a positive affect within the individual. This is in accordance with research results which state that perpetrators of bullying feel less happy than other students who are not involved in bullying.[21]

Efforts to prevent and overcome bullying require intervention on the part of the perpetrator first, this is because perpetrators of bullying tend to involve more than one person in carrying out bullying actions, thus causing bullying cases to continue to increase because more and more individuals are becoming perpetrators.[22] Bullying needs special attention from all levels of society, this is because most bullying acts occur in the school environment and can have an impact on the mental health of students at school.[23] Assertive techniques are techniques in behavioral counseling that focus on cases that experience difficulties in expressing feelings that are not appropriate.[24] Assertive techniques intimidate the bully because they realize the power the victim has. Apart from that, assertive behavior among witnesses to bullying, who are also called bystanders, has an influence in preventing bullying. An assertive attitude by bystanders makes the perpetrators feel that there is resistance from the environment and an assertive attitude can make the victim feel safe.[25]

Assertive therapy is a psychotherapeutic approach that aims to teach individuals how to communicate their needs, wants, opinions, and feelings clearly and assertively without violating the rights of others.[26] It involves learning communication skills that enable one to set healthy boundaries, respect oneself, and overcome self-confidence or social anxiety.[27] Adolescents who have received assertive therapy tend to have higher levels of self-confidence and the ability to cope with social pressure.[24] Previous research shows that individuals with assertive skills can defend themselves assertively yet in a respectful manner, thereby reducing the risk of being repeatedly victimized by bullying.[28] In addition, with assertive skills adolescents can also learn to identify bullying behavior. This is in line with previous research which shows that there is a decrease in the incidence of bullying after being given assertive therapy to adolescents.[29] Assertive therapy is important for adolescents. Adolescents often experience significant emotional turmoil and psychological changes during this period, which can impact how they interact with the world around them.[26] Psychological and social changes that adolescents experience, such as the search for identity and peer group influence, can influence the dynamics of interactions between adolescents, sometimes pushing them to exhibit aggressive or derogatory behavior in search of validation or social status within their group.[30] This causes adolescents to be vulnerable to becoming subjects of bullying problems. Assertive therapy can help adolescents involved in bullying problems to discover self-identity, increase social interactions, and develop healthy communication skills, requiring a targeted approach to self-development. This ability can reduce bullying behavior in adolescents and reduce various problems that arise as a result of bullying.[31]