PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADOLESCENT AGGRESSION: EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN FAMILY ATTENTION AND BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT
Bullying remains a recurring issue in school settings and may be influenced by the quality of parental attention. This study aimed to (1) describe parental attention among seventh-grade students, (2) describe students' bullying behavior, and (3) examine the relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping. A quantitative correlational design was employed. The population and sample comprised 52 seventh-grade students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using self-report questionnaires measuring parental attention (36 items) and bullying behavior (35 items). Descriptive statistics (percentages) and Pearson product–moment correlation were used for data analysis. Findings indicated that parental attention was predominantly high (100%), while bullying behavior was generally low (65% low; 31% very low; 4% moderate). Correlation analysis revealed a significant negative association between parental attention and bullying behavior ($r = -0.307$, $p = 0.027$), indicating that higher parental attention was linked to lower bullying tendencies, although the magnitude of the relationship was small. The study concludes that parental attention functions as a protective factor against bullying among students in this context. Practically, the findings support strengthening parent–school collaboration, including parenting guidance, routine supervision, and school-based reporting and counseling mechanisms to prevent bullying. Future research should use larger and more diverse samples, apply longitudinal approaches, and examine potential mediators (e.g., peer norms, school climate, and family communication patterns).

Keywords: Adolescents; Bullying; Middle school; Parental attention; Pearson correlation.

INTRODUCTION

Bullying in schools has developed from a "routine disciplinary issue" into a global educational, developmental, and public-health concern because it threatens students' safety, well-being, and learning continuity. International evidence consistently indicates that bullying remains common across regions, with a substantial proportion of adolescents reporting peer victimization within relatively short reporting windows. For example, a UNESCO synthesis of large-scale international surveys has reported that roughly one in three students experienced bullying within the last month in available datasets, underscoring that bullying is not a marginal phenomenon but a structural challenge for schooling systems. Conceptually, bullying is generally distinguished from single episodes of conflict by its intention to harm, repetition, and power imbalance, which can be expressed through physical strength, social status, group dominance, or psychological leverage (Olweus, 1993; Volk et al., 2014). Bullying can manifest in multiple forms—physical, verbal, and relational/social exclusion—each with distinct mechanisms and consequences (Smith et al., 2004; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). Contemporary research also recognizes that cyberbullying may co-occur with traditional bullying, and prevalence estimates vary substantially depending on measurement features and definitional thresholds (Modecki et al., 2014). The urgency of bullying research is intensified by evidence linking bullying involvement (as a perpetrator, victim, or bully-victim) to multi-domain harms. Victimization is associated with internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety and depression), stress-related symptoms, and impaired psychosocial functioning (Arseneault, 2010). Longitudinal findings also suggest that bullying involvement can predict later mental health difficulties into adulthood, even after accounting for pre-existing vulnerabilities and contextual adversities (Copeland et al., 2013). These outcomes carry educational implications: bullied students often display weaker engagement, increased absenteeism, and compromised academic trajectories, while classrooms characterized by aggression and intimidation may undermine collective learning climates (Juvonen & Graham, 2014; Wang et al., 2014).

In the past decade, much research has focused on bullying as an ecological phenomenon shaped by interlocking systems: individual traits (e.g., emotion regulation), peer processes (e.g., group norms), school climate (e.g., supervision and fairness), and family functioning (e.g., parenting and monitoring) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2010; Cook et al., 2010). This shift matters because it reframes bullying prevention from "student-level correction" to multi-layered risk management and relationship-building across home and school contexts. Among these systems, family and parenting are particularly salient in early adolescence, when students expand autonomy, intensify peer dependence, and experience heightened sensitivity to social status and acceptance (Steinberg, 2014). At this stage, parental attention—expressed through warmth, involvement, monitoring, guidance, and responsive communication—can operate as a protective scaffold that shapes children's social-cognitive scripts, conflict management, and moral decision-making (Baumrind, 1991; Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Smetana et al., 2006). In Indonesia, bullying has become increasingly visible in public discourse and educational policy conversations, often in relation to school safety, student mental health, and character education. Many schools report recurring patterns of teasing, name-calling, humiliation, exclusion, and occasional physical intimidation that disrupt classroom order and students' sense of belonging. Practically, these realities push educators and counselors to move beyond reactive discipline toward preventative strategies, parent–school partnerships, and evidence-based guidance services.

Despite extensive literature, several problems remain unresolved in the family–bullying nexus. First, it remains unclear why the magnitude of association between parenting variables and bullying differs markedly across studies. Meta-analytic work indicates that family factors can be significant but often yield small-to-moderate effects, suggesting substantial heterogeneity across contexts, definitions, and measurement approaches (Cook et al., 2010; Lereya et al., 2013). In practice, this means schools may receive mixed messages: some studies imply that strengthening parenting support substantially reduces bullying, while others suggest that peer and school climate dominate. Second, the construct of "parental attention" is often operationalized inconsistently. Some studies treat it as parental warmth and responsiveness, others as behavioral monitoring or supervision, and still others as parental involvement in schooling and daily routines (Stattin & Kerr, 2000; Hoeve et al., 2009). These variations can produce apparent contradictions: for example, high parental control may reduce opportunity for misconduct in some settings but increase adolescent reactance in others, especially when control is perceived as intrusive rather than supportive (Smetana, 2011). As a result, translating "parenting guidance" into concrete school counseling recommendations becomes difficult without context-specific evidence. Third, there is an under-addressed cultural and contextual dimension. Much of the foundational bullying literature is derived from Western or high-income contexts, while school–family interaction patterns, discipline norms, and community structures in many Indonesian settings differ in meaningful ways. This contextual gap is particularly relevant for junior high school students (early adolescence), where developmental changes coincide with new peer hierarchies and potential escalation of relational aggression. A general solution direction, therefore, is to strengthen evidence on the specific parenting dimension most actionable for schools and counselors—namely parental attention as daily involvement, guidance, supervision, and supportive communication—and to test its relationship with bullying behaviors in well-defined local school settings.

The scientific literature offers several strategies to address bullying by leveraging the family system and by aligning school-based programs with parental engagement. (a) Whole-school prevention programs with parent components. Evidence-based anti-bullying programs increasingly emphasize systemic change: clear norms, consistent adult responses, student skill-building, and parent–school collaboration. The KiVa anti-bullying program, for instance, has demonstrated effectiveness in large-scale evaluations, indicating that structured curricula and norm-focused interventions can reduce bullying and victimization. Although KiVa is school-centered, its logic is consistent with the broader evidence that bullying is sustained by social reinforcement, and that adult coordination—including parents—can weaken the peer "reward structure" that maintains bullying (Salmivalli, 2010; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). (b) Parenting practices as risk reduction mechanisms. Meta-analytic findings indicate that negative parenting behaviors (e.g., harshness, rejection, inconsistent discipline) increase risk of victimization and bully-victim status, while supportive involvement, communication, and supervision can be protective (Lereya et al., 2013). These mechanisms are theoretically coherent: supportive parenting helps adolescents develop emotion regulation and prosocial

problem solving, while effective monitoring reduces exposure to high-risk peer situations and signals clear behavioral expectations (Dishion & McMahon, 1998; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). (c) Addressing overlap between offline and online aggression. Because bullying forms frequently co-occur, prevention increasingly targets "poly-aggression" and relational processes rather than single modalities. A meta-analysis comparing cyber and traditional bullying suggests cyberbullying is generally less prevalent but strongly correlated with traditional bullying, implying that family guidance on digital behavior is most effective when embedded in broader parenting practices (Modecki et al., 2014). Collectively, these approaches suggest that strengthening parental attention—conceptualized as warmth, involvement, guidance, motivation, and supervision—should be considered a plausible and practically relevant pathway for bullying prevention, especially when integrated with school counseling services and consistent school norms.

A more focused review indicates both convergence and limitations in prior studies: Predictors and correlates are well mapped, but effects vary. Meta-analytic evidence identifies multiple predictors of bullying and victimization spanning individual, peer, school, and family domains (Cook et al., 2010). However, heterogeneity remains substantial, often due to differences in age group, bullying definition, informant source (self vs. teacher vs. peer nominations), and cultural context. Parenting matters, but "which element" matters most is still debated. A meta-analysis specifically on parenting behavior and bully/victim outcomes concludes that negative parenting increases risk while positive parenting shows protective effects, yet the protective magnitudes are often small-to-moderate and vary by role (victim vs. bully-victim) (Lereya et al., 2013). This indicates that parenting is relevant but not deterministic; thus, local operationalization of parenting constructs is crucial. Consequences are robust, strengthening the need for prevention. Reviews and longitudinal studies show links from bullying victimization to mental health problems (Arseneault, 2010) and to psychiatric outcomes in young adulthood (Copeland et al., 2013). These findings raise the stakes for early preventive action, especially in early adolescence. Context-specific evidence in Indonesian junior high settings remains limited. While bullying is recognized as prevalent and harmful globally (UNESCO, 2019), many Indonesian studies are localized, vary in measurement rigor, and often emphasize descriptive prevalence rather than testing specific, actionable family predictors with clear indicators aligned to counseling practice. Moreover, studies that explicitly operationalize parental attention (as distinct from general parenting style) and relate it to different bullying forms (physical, verbal, relational) in a single school context remain comparatively scarce. Research gap. There is a need for focused, context-grounded empirical testing of whether parental attention, conceptualized in actionable dimensions (guidance, advice, motivation/appreciation, meeting needs, and supervision), is significantly associated with bullying behavior among early adolescents in Indonesian junior high school contexts. This gap is both academic (construct clarity and contextual contribution) and practical (school counseling and parent engagement strategies).

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping. The study also aimed to describe the level of parental attention and the level of bullying behavior in the target group. The study contributes novelty in three practical-academic ways: it operationalizes parental attention in concrete, counselor-relevant dimensions (e.g., guidance, advice, motivation/appreciation, fulfillment of needs, and supervision) rather than relying solely on broad parenting-style labels; it provides local empirical evidence from a specific Indonesian junior high context, supporting contextual validity for school counseling and parent–school partnership planning; and it tests a clear directional proposition that is directly translatable into preventive recommendations (i.e., strengthening parental attention as a protective factor). Justification of hypothesis. Based on ecological and social-developmental perspectives (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Espelage & Swearer, 2010) and meta-analytic evidence indicating that supportive parenting behaviors and supervision are protective against bully/victim outcomes (Lereya et al., 2013), the study hypothesized a negative relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior: higher parental attention is expected to be associated with lower bullying behavior. Scope and limitations. This study is delimited to seventh-grade students in one school setting and uses a quantitative correlational design with questionnaire-based measurement and correlation testing. The achieved sample comprises 52 students (total sampling in the study context). Bullying is examined as student-reported behavior and is represented in multiple forms (physical, verbal, relational) as operationalized in the instrument. Because the design is cross-sectional and relies on self-report, causal inference is not claimed; instead, the study aims to provide context-specific

association evidence to inform counseling services, parent guidance programs, and school-based prevention planning. In the reported findings, parental attention was categorized as high and bullying as low, with a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables (r = −0.307; p = 0.027).

METHOD
Research Design and Approach

This study employed a quantitative correlational research design to examine the statistical association between parental attention (X) and students' bullying behavior (Y) among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping. The correlational approach was selected because the primary objective was to determine whether a relationship exists, the direction of the relationship, and the degree of association between the two variables using a correlation coefficient.

Population and Sample / Participants

The target population comprised all Grade VII students at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping included in the study context. The study involved 52 students, and the sampling strategy applied was total sampling, meaning all students in the population frame were included as research participants.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The data used for this study were collected by administering self-report questionnaires (angket/kuesioner) to participating students. The questionnaire method was chosen to efficiently capture students' perceptions and reported experiences related to parental attention and bullying behavior within the school context.

Two Likert-type instruments were used: Parental Attention Scale: 36 items representing 5 indicators (learning guidance, advice, motivation and rewards, fulfillment of needs, and supervision). Bullying Behavior Scale: 35 items representing 3 indicators (physical, verbal, and relational bullying). All items were scored on a 5-point response format. For positively keyed items, scoring ranged from 5 to 1, and for negatively keyed items scoring was reversed (1 to 5).

Table 1. Operationalization of variables and instrument structure

Variable	Role	Indicators (dimensions)	Number of items	Response scale	Scoring rule
Parental Attention	X	Learning guidance; advice; motivation & rewards; fulfillment of needs; supervision	36	5-point Likert	Positive: 5→1; Negative: 1→5
Bullying Behavior	Y	Physical; verbal; relational	35	5-point Likert	Positive: 5→1; Negative: 1→5

Data Analysis Procedures

Prior to hypothesis testing, questionnaire responses were checked and prepared through data verification, coding, and scoring to produce total scores for each variable. Descriptive statistics were then computed using frequency distributions and percentages to describe the level/category of parental attention and bullying behavior. To ensure the appropriateness of parametric correlation analysis, two assumption tests were applied: Normality test using the One-Sample Kolmogorov–Smirnov procedure. The results indicated a significance value of 0.200, exceeding 0.05, suggesting normally distributed residuals. Linearity test to confirm that the relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior is linear; the reported significance value was 0.596 (> 0.05), indicating a linear association.

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product–moment correlation with a significance threshold of α = 0.05, implemented in SPSS version 25. The correlation output indicated r = −0.307 with p = 0.027, implying a statistically significant negative association of low magnitude.

Table 2. Data analysis plan and decision rules

Step	Analysis	Output	Decision rule
1	Data screening and scoring	Clean dataset; total scores	Items scored with reverse coding for negative statements
2	Descriptive statistics	Frequencies, percentages	Used to describe category levels of each variable
3	Normality test (K–S)	Asymp. Sig.	Normal if Sig. > 0.05
4	Linearity test	Sig.	Linear if Sig. > 0.05
5	Pearson correlation	r and p-value	Significant if p < 0.05

Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

Instrument quality assurance was addressed through validity and reliability testing as part of the research procedure. In applied survey studies of this type, validity is typically strengthened by (a) content validation through expert judgment aligned with the defined indicators of each construct, and (b) item-level evaluation to ensure items function consistently with their intended dimensions. Reliability is commonly evaluated using internal consistency (e.g., Cronbach's alpha) to confirm that items within each scale measure a coherent construct.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Empirical context, sample, and analytic prerequisites

This study examined the relationship between parental attention (perhatian orangtua) and students' bullying behavior (perilaku bullying) among junior high school students at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping, motivated by school-based observations and interviews indicating that bullying manifestations occurred in both direct (e.g., hitting) and indirect forms (e.g., mocking appearance, excluding peers), alongside concerns that some parents were busy and less attentive to children's learning and daily supervision. Methodologically, the study used a quantitative correlational design with a population/sample of 52 students and relied on questionnaire data to assess the two variables. The bullying instrument was explicitly described as 35 items with three indicators, with scoring that distinguishes positive and negative statements (5–1 for positive items; 1–5 for negative items). Before hypothesis testing, the study reported two key parametric assumptions: (a) normality of residuals and (b) linearity of the relationship between variables. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov normality test yielded Asymp. Sig. = 0.200, which exceeds 0.05 and supports the assumption of normal residual distribution. The linearity test produced Sig. = 0.596 (> 0.05), supporting the interpretation that the association between parental attention and bullying can be treated as linear. Note on reporting consistency: within the document, the target group is described as "kelas VII" in multiple places yet later a section refers to "kelas VIII." This inconsistency should be corrected in the manuscript because it affects interpretability and replicability.

Descriptive findings: Parental attention

The descriptive distribution shows a high concentration of parental attention scores in the "high" category. As reported in Table 1, 52 of 52 students (100%) were in the "Tinggi" category, with none in "Sangat tinggi," "Cukup tinggi," "Rendah," or "Sangat rendah."

Table 3. Frequency distribution of parental attention (N = 52)

Score range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
152–180	Very high (Sangat tinggi)	0	0%
123–151	High (Tinggi)	52	100%
94–122	Fairly high (Cukup tinggi)	0	0%
65–93	Low (Rendah)	0	0%
36–64	Very low (Sangat rendah)	0	0%
	Total	52	100%

From an analytic standpoint, this distribution implies very limited variance at the total-score level—an important point for interpreting the magnitude of correlations, because restricted variance typically attenuates observable effect sizes (i.e., the correlation can appear smaller than it would be in a more heterogeneous sample). To add nuance, the study also reported an indicator-level recap (Table 6), indicating that parental attention components were mostly in the "high/very high" categories across indicators, with some modest spread. For example, "pemberian bimbingan belajar" split across very high (37%) and high (63%), whereas "memberikan motivasi dan penghargaan" included a small "cukup tinggi" share (6%). This suggests that although the overall category is uniformly "high," some indicator-level variability exists and may carry substantive meaning (e.g., motivation/reward practices may be less uniformly strong than guidance or meeting needs).

Bullying behavior

Bullying scores were concentrated in the low end of the distribution. As shown in Table 2, the largest portion of students fell into "Rendah" (65%) and "Sangat rendah" (31%), with only 4% in "Cukup tinggi," and none in "Tinggi" or "Sangat tinggi."

Table 4. Frequency distribution of bullying behavior (N = 52)

Score range	Category	Frequency	Percentage
147–174	Very high (Sangat tinggi)	0	0%
119–146	High (Tinggi)	0	0%
91–118	Fairly high (Cukup tinggi)	2	4%
63–90	Low (Rendah)	34	65%
35–62	Very low (Sangat rendah)	16	31%
	Total	52	100%

A minor textual issue appears in the narrative sentence that follows the table: the document states "kategori tinggi dengan persentase 65%," but immediately interprets it as "perilaku bullying yang rendah." The table itself is unambiguous: 65% are in the "Rendah" category. This appears to be a wording error that should be edited for internal consistency. Indicator-level recapitulation (Table 6) further suggests that bullying forms are predominantly low across physical, verbal, and relational indicators, but with a small "cukup tinggi" proportion in some domains (e.g., verbal and relational each show 8% "cukup tinggi"). This is consistent with broader bullying research noting that non-physical forms (verbal/relational) can persist at low-to-moderate levels even where overall bullying is generally controlled (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Wang et al., 2009).

Correlation between parental attention and bullying

The main inferential finding is a negative and statistically significant association between parental attention and bullying behavior. The Pearson correlation table reports: $r = -0.307$, Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.027, N = 52. This indicates that higher parental attention is associated with lower bullying behavior, and the probability of observing a correlation of this magnitude (or stronger) under the null hypothesis is below 0.05. The study also explicitly interprets the effect as significant but low/weak ("koefisien korelasi rendah"). From an effect-size perspective, $r^2 \approx 0.094$, meaning parental attention accounts for roughly 9.4% of the variance in bullying scores (in correlational terms, not causal terms). Using Fisher's z transformation for N=52, the approximate 95% CI around r is $[-0.535, -0.037]$, indicating that while the effect is reliably negative, the plausible range includes values from small to moderate magnitude (Cohen, 1988; Funder &

Ozer, 2019). Finally, the recap section reiterates the pattern: parental attention is categorized as high, bullying as low, and the relationship is present but low in strength.

Convergence with international evidence on family factors and bullying

The observed negative association aligns with a substantial international evidence base positioning parenting and family processes as meaningful correlates of bullying involvement. Meta-analytic work has shown that adverse parenting practices (e.g., harshness, low warmth) increase risk for victimization and bully/victim status, while protective features (e.g., supportive involvement, supervision) are associated with lower bullying-related risk (Lereya et al., 2013). Likewise, more recent reviews and meta-analytic syntheses emphasize that modifiable parental factors—monitoring, communication quality, warmth, and consistent discipline—are linked to bullying outcomes across contexts (Grama et al., 2024; Hong et al., 2012; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). From a risk-protection lens, the present study's pattern (high parental attention; low bullying; and a negative correlation) is consistent with the broader view that the family environment shapes adolescents' social behavior through (a) internalization of norms, (b) emotion regulation and empathy development, and (c) opportunity structures for unsupervised peer dynamics (Cook et al., 2010; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). In addition, the study's emphasis on "attention" as encompassing guidance, advice, motivation/reward, meeting needs, and supervision resonates with research distinguishing parental involvement (support, guidance, engagement) and parental monitoring (awareness and regulation of activities). Both dimensions have been repeatedly linked to lower externalizing behavior and reduced aggression risk, which conceptually includes bullying as a form of goal-directed peer aggression (Baldry & Farrington, 2000; Kljakovic & Hunt, 2016).

Partial divergence: unusually "compressed" distributions (ceiling and floor effects)

While the direction of association converges with international literature, the distributional pattern in this dataset is somewhat atypical: Parental attention: 100% "high" (ceiling tendency), Bullying: concentrated in low/very low categories (floor tendency). International prevalence studies and reviews routinely report wider dispersion in both parenting and bullying measures, with meaningful proportions of youth reporting moderate involvement, especially for verbal and relational forms (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Modecki et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2009). The present compression likely reflects (a) a context where bullying is indeed low, (b) measurement and response tendencies (e.g., social desirability), and/or (c) sampling restricted to one school and one cohort. Importantly, restricted variability tends to attenuate correlations: even if parental attention genuinely matters, a sample where nearly everyone reports "high" attention and "low" bullying will typically yield smaller observed r values than a more heterogeneous sample would. This point is consistent with psychometric and methodological discussions in bullying research that highlight measurement, definitional, and reporting heterogeneity as major drivers of variation across studies (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Relation to intervention and school context literature

The finding that bullying is generally low is also compatible with intervention research showing that school-level prevention efforts can reduce bullying, though average effects are often modest and vary with implementation quality (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Gaffney et al., 2021). However, the current study does not provide intervention or school climate measures, so the low bullying level cannot be attributed to any specific program; it only suggests that, within this context, bullying may be relatively contained. Moreover, the contextual description indicates that bullying incidents still occur (e.g., mocking, physical aggression, exclusion). This fits the broader ecological view that bullying is not merely an individual trait but a relationship- and context-dependent behavior involving peers, bystanders, and normative climates (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001).

Patterns, trends, and the hypothesis

The central pattern is coherent: high parental attention coexists with low bullying, and the negative correlation indicates that students who perceive greater parental attention tend to report less bullying behavior. Substantively, this supports the study's working hypothesis (Ha) that parental attention relates to bullying outcomes, with the direction indicating a protective association. In the language of contemporary

bullying theory, parental attention can be interpreted as a family-level protective factor that may reduce bullying through multiple pathways: Norm internalization and moral regulation: engaged parenting tends to strengthen children's commitment to prosocial norms and reduce instrumental aggression (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Hong et al., 2012). Emotion regulation and social competence: supportive parent–child interactions are associated with better emotion regulation, which buffers reactive aggression that can manifest in bullying contexts (Cook et al., 2010). Monitoring and opportunity reduction: supervision reduces unsupervised peer contexts where bullying often occurs, and increases the likelihood of early detection and correction of emerging aggressive behaviors (Lereya et al., 2013). Even with a low correlation, the association is non-trivial in applied educational settings because bullying is a multifactorial behavior. Meta-analyses of bullying predictors consistently show that many single predictors have small-to-moderate effects, yet their practical significance can be substantial when scaled across school populations (Cook et al., 2010; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

Why is the effect "significant but low"?

A statistically significant but low correlation ($r = -0.307$) can plausibly emerge from several complementary explanations—none of which negate the protective role of parenting, but they clarify the limits of what this dataset can show. (a) Restricted range (ceiling/floor effects). With 100% of parental attention in the "high" category and bullying concentrated in low categories, the correlation is likely attenuated by restricted variance. In other words, if most families are "similar" in attention (at least as measured here), the statistical association cannot fully reflect the true underlying relationship. (b) Social desirability and self-report bias. Bullying perpetration is a socially undesirable behavior; self-report measures often underestimate involvement, especially in school settings where students worry about consequences or stigma. This is a well-known challenge in bullying research and is one reason many studies advocate multi-informant approaches (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017). (c) Bullying is strongly shaped by peer and school ecology. Even attentive parents cannot fully control peer norms, bystander reinforcement, and classroom climate. Bullying is a group process in which peers and bystanders often sustain or inhibit aggression (Hawkins et al., 2001; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). Therefore, parental attention may be protective but only one component among many school-ecological determinants. (d) Form-specific dynamics: relational bullying may be less visible to parents. The recapitulation suggests relational bullying includes a small "cukup tinggi" proportion. Relational aggression (exclusion, rumor-spreading) can be subtler and less detectable to adults compared to physical bullying, which can reduce the apparent association with parental monitoring and attention (Wang et al., 2009; Hymel & Swearer, 2015).

Contribution to theory and literature

Despite its modest magnitude, the finding contributes to bullying scholarship in at least three ways. Contextual confirmation in a specific Indonesian school setting. International theories (social-ecological and developmental models) emphasize that bullying is produced by the interplay of family and peer systems (Hong et al., 2012; Espelage & Swearer, 2003). This study provides local empirical support that family-level factors—operationalized as parental attention—retain explanatory value even when overall bullying levels are low. Evidence consistent with cumulative-risk thinking. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that bullying is associated with multiple predictors, each often small-to-moderate (Cook et al., 2010). The present low correlation fits that pattern: parental attention matters, but it likely operates alongside peer norms, self-regulation, school discipline, and bystander dynamics. Indicator-level nuance highlights potentially actionable components. Although the overall parental attention category is uniformly high, the indicator recap shows some variation (e.g., motivation/reward having a small "cukup tinggi" proportion). This suggests that prevention strategies can be more targeted—for instance, strengthening parental practices around consistent reinforcement, recognition, and structured supervision rather than assuming all dimensions of attention are equally strong.

Practical and policy implications for schools, counseling services, and families

Because bullying prevention is most effective when it integrates school and family components (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017), the study's findings support several applied

implications: Strengthen structured parent–school communication. Given that parental attention is linked to lower bullying, schools can formalize communication channels (e.g., periodic parent briefings, short checklists for home supervision, early-warning reporting). This is consistent with ecological approaches advocating alignment across family and school systems (Hong et al., 2012). Integrate Guidance and Counseling (BK) programming with parent components. BK services can run brief parent modules on: recognizing relational bullying, responding non-punitively but firmly, supporting empathy development, and reinforcing prosocial peer leadership. The bystander literature shows that peer dynamics are crucial, and parent engagement can reinforce intervention messaging at home (Hawkins et al., 2001). Focus on relational and verbal bullying as "hidden" risks. Indicator recap suggests that verbal/relational forms may be the domains where moderate risk persists. Policies should explicitly name and address these forms (e.g., rumor-spreading, exclusion) and create clear procedures for reporting and restorative follow-up (Hymel & Swearer, 2015). Maintain school-wide prevention even when bullying is "low." The overall low prevalence can create complacency; however, bullying is episodic and can spike with peer conflicts or cohort changes. Meta-analyses show that anti-bullying programs can reduce perpetration and victimization, but sustained implementation and monitoring are important (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011; Gaffney et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine the level of parental attention, the level of bullying behavior, and the relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior among seventh-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Lubuk Sikaping. The main findings showed that parental attention was in the high category (100%), while students' bullying behavior tended to be low (65% low; 31% very low; 4% moderately high). Pearson correlation analysis confirmed a significant negative relationship between parental attention and bullying behavior ($r = -0.307$; $p = 0.027$) with a low correlation strength, indicating that better parental attention is associated with a lower tendency to engage in bullying. These results strengthen the guidance and counseling and family education literature by supporting parental attention as a protective factor (although with a small effect size) in preventing aggressive behavior in schools, and they provide practical implications for schools to reinforce parent–school counselor collaboration through parenting education, behavioral monitoring, and safe reporting mechanisms. Future research is recommended to expand sample size across multiple schools, employ longitudinal and/or experimental designs, and examine potential mediating/moderating variables such as school climate, peer influence, and family communication patterns.

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