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Family's support for adolescent victims of bullying[☆]

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Abstract
Objective: Victims of adolescent bullying commonly experienced anxiety, low self-esteem, declining academic performance, and depression. Family support is very important in overcoming these impacts of bullying. The study aimed to get an overview of the family experience of providing support for victims of adolescent bullying.
Method: The research design was qualitative with descriptive phenomenology approach involving eight participants. Data were analyzed using Colaizzi method.
Results: The results of the study found five themes; sadness and anger as an early response to bullying, providing advice and motivation is a form of family support for victims of bullying, family support strategies as an effort to speed up the recovery process of bullying victims, relationship with others is the source of support to help to overcome the impact of bullying, psychological resilience as a result of family support on victims of bullying.
Conclusions: Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the importance of mental health nurses to play a role as an educator of the family, so that the family can optimize their support for the bullied adolescent.
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Introduction

Adolescence is defined as a transition phase between childhood and adulthood stage of development. WHO sets 10–20 years as the age range of adolescent.[1] The psychosocial development task an individual has to overcome in this phase is the formation of self-identity, during this time the adolescents will experience a crisis. Successful completion of developmental tasks will increase his confidence and be able to realize his identity. If there is a failure of developmental tasks in adolescence will confuse identity and great influence on the next period such as mental health problems in adulthood.[2]

Relationships with others of their age are important for the development of adolescents, however not every adolescent interact in a good friendship environment, some of them are in an environment that does not promote a

conducive situation, of other things, the bullying among adolescent peers. According to[3] bullying is a serious social problem that occurs in many schools in many different countries.

The bullying case in Indonesia ranks first for public complaints. In 2011 to August 2014 there were 369 complaints related to bullying. The amount is approximately 25% of the total 1480 cases of complains in education.[4] Research conducted by[5] in three big cities namely Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Jakarta reported verbal, psychological, and physical bullying behavior occurred in 67.9% of high school students both men and women and 66.1% of junior high school students. SEJIWA also reported that 10–60% of students in Indonesia at the very least once a week experienced mockery or scorn.

In general, verbal bullying felt more painful than physical bullying although, unlike the latter, it does not cause any injury to the body. Verbal bullying leaves scars on the victim's feelings. Impacts of bullying on children and adolescents can become the catalyst of various psychosocial problems, behavioral disorders, emotional disturbances, and difficulty in relationships with peers. According to Gibb, Horwood and Ferguson, 2011 in[6] victims of bullying will experience more severe effects such as experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression, stress, despair, low self-esteem, declining academic performance, tend to hurt themselves or even commit suicide.

Mental health problems as a result of bullying behavior have become a very worri some phenomenon today. That to handle it requires cooperation from various parties such as schools, families, and communities. Families have an important influence on the success of school-based anti-bullying programs. Parental involvement, school meeting, and training were significantly correlated with decreased bullying behaviors both as perpetrators and victim of bullying in schools.[7]

Research by[8] explains that social support provided by the family is an important resource for protecting children and adolescents from the adverse effects of stress caused by bullying behavior. According to[9] if the victims have parents that support them, they can avoid being depressed. The identification of family support can help to handle bullying comprehensively. This study aims to obtain an overview of the family experience in providing support to the victims of adolescent bullying.

Method

This study used a qualitative research method with descriptive phenomenology approach. Participants in this study were selected by using purposive sampling. Creswell explains purposive sampling is a deliberate technique of selecting information-rich individuals to understand central phenomena.[10] Participant data obtained from counseling teachers. Selection of participants based on criteria formulated based on the objectives of the study. Criteria for the adolescents are: adolescents aged 15–18 years, victims of verbal bullying which recorded on school counseling report. Participant criteria for the family are: parents who own children aged 15–18 years who are victims of verbal bullying, parents who live together with adolescents who

are victims of verbal bullying, parents members who are able to communicate well in Indonesian, parent are representative of either father or mother who had the most influence in providing support to the victim of adolescent bullying.

Data collection was conducted at the participant's house. After the collection process is completed, the interview result is converted into transcript form and proceed with data analysis. The report is generated from early January to mid-June 2017. The analytical method used Colaizzi's approach.[11] Participants in this study were parents of verbal bullying victims. The ethical considerations of the research include aspects of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, anonymity, and justice.[12]

Researchers give participants the freedom to decide on their own whether or not they are willing to participate in the study with no coercion. This study has brought positive impacts on participants, either directly or indirectly. The researcher did not include the name of the participant, instead only provided P1 code for participants 1, P2 for participant 2 and so on. The principle of secrecy is fulfilled by storing the research data in a safe place that can only be accessed by researchers with a special password which only known to researchers. The principle of justice means that all participants receive equal treatment and rights from participating in research.[13]

Results

Participants in this study are 8 persons. The youngest is 38 years old and the oldest 56 years old. Dominant level of education is high school. Marital status consists of 2 widows and 6 married. The length of the period in which their adolescent children have become victims of bullying ranging from 4 months to 2 years. The form of bullying experienced by the adolescent is verbal bullying with 5 teenagers experiencing mockery such as crippled, idiot, stupid, weakling, monkey. 3 participants were called with an unpleasant nickname; the mole, the sissy, and the fatty.

Themes that resulted in the study are:

(1) Sadness and anger as an early response to bullying. This theme is derived from two categories: feelings of sadness and anger. Some of the participant quotes that represent this theme include:

''*There was a time when he doesn't want to go to school, he also wrote in a book, saying things like'I want to kill myself...'At night, I cried, oh good Lord...*'' (P1)

''*.....Well, to be honest, on my way from my house, I was filled with anger, I questioned how come they can be so cruel, you don't know not how much struggle my son had....*'' (P5)

(2) Providing advice and motivation is a form of family support for victims of bullying. The first category is to provide advice. Participants advised to ignore the mockery from peers as seen in the following the statement of the participant:

''*Here's what I say to my child: just let them call you whatever they wanted, what's important is you went there not to be teased, you want to learn.....*'' (P6)

''*.....I am someone working with people out there, I told him just to fight them, there's nothing to fear....*'' (P3)

The second category is giving motivation, almost every participant provide motivational support to the victims as they expressed through the following statements:

''Yeah, so now I only sparked his motivation, yes, even you get bullied in the school, don't ever pull back word, that's what I said, Ma'am....'' (P1)

''....listen, you definitely can do this, you are strong, just take every word they say as constructive criticism to make you become a better person...'' (P8)

(3) Family support strategies as an effort to speed up the recovery process of bullying victims. The first sub-theme is to provide spiritual support which consists of 2 categories namely spiritual endeavors and enhance own peace of mind. The first category is spiritual endeavors which done through praying as expressed by the following participants:

''Well, every time he wants to go to the school.. Ee I always remind him to pray for his safety, prayers for safe travel, while me, I go with bismillahi tawakaltu Alallohu, just like that...'' (P4)

''Perhaps, prayers. O Lord, I pray before you every day, that's it. For things he's going to bring with him, say, his drinking bottle, I pray on it, O Lord, give him strength....'' (P8)

In addition to praying, the participants also perform other spiritual endeavors such as zikr, salat, ruqyah in order to accelerate the recovery process of bullying victims as revealed by the following participants:

''Yes, we had him underwent ruqyah...'' (P3)

''In the midnight, we chant istighfar, dzikir...'' (P3)

''The most important thing is to salat, Insha Allah...'' (P4)

The second category is to enhance own peace of mind which done by submitting oneself to God, be patient, and be thankful to God, as revealed by the following participants:

''Don't hold resentment toward men, just ask The One Above All, that's what I told hm, I submit myself and all my problem to Him...'' (P7)

''I would not want to be angry whatever insults me or myself receive. Insha Allah, up until now I can still be patient...'' (P8)

''I am grateful, Alhamdulillah, that's it. I'd rather insulted by a human than by God...'' (P6)

The second sub-theme is to provide financial support and facilities. Following statements describe participants' efforts in providing financial and facilities support:

''... I'm willing to buy him this and that so that he wants to go to school. It's better than having him dropped out of school...'' (P2)

''I asked him, what do you want? Motorbike? Just go and use it to go to school. What's important, you can have your confidence....'' (P3)

''For facilities, I often prioritized him. His brothers even get envious of him sometimes...'' (P6)

(4) Relationship with others is the source of support to help to overcome the impact of bullying. This theme formed out of 3 categories: support from main family, support from the whole family, and support from outsiders. Some statements of the participants that represent this theme including:

''..... I tried to dig the details, we talked heart to heart, right? This is what I told him: Now, just take Dad

as your friend, okay? Since he feels like he doesn't have any friends....'' (P3)

''Grandma said, you can do it, don't lose against mere human, both you and they eat rice after all (proverb for standing on the same level)....'' (P8)

''... I require help from some experts to restore him, his mentality so that he's just like what he used to be, that's what I wanted, I want to discuss this with psychiatric'' (P1)

''Given direction by some paranormal...'' (P3)

''The support from his teachers may also affect him...'' (P8)

''His friend around here is just W, I always ask for help from W, W please cheer F up, encourage him to go to school, and so W tried to spoke with him...'' (P2)

(5) Psychological resilience as a result of family support on victims of bullying. This theme is composed of two categories: more resilient and positive behavioral changes, as revealed by participants as follows:

''When he was bullied for the first time, he only eats so much, now no matter how he gets bullied, he'd eat as nothing happens, it's no longer affects him, he already has strong willpower...'' (P3)

''See, F? Alhamdulillah, you won! He said you no longer pulled back... Finally, well, F build up his will to go to school again, he wants to be diligent again'' (P2)

Discussion

Theme 1: sadness and anger as an early response to bullying

Sadness and anger are the family reaction when they found out that their child is a victim of bullying. Anger is the feeling of annoyance that arises in response to anxiety that is perceived as a threat.[14] Anger begins with a stressor that either comes from internal or external factors. Internal stressors such as illness, resentment, and irritability while external stressors can originate from bullying, scolding, insulting, loss of precious objects, disasters, and so on.

Anger is part of everyday life that every individual must face. Response to anger can be expressed in three manners: expressing it verbally, suppressing it, and challenge it.[15] In this study, the angry response experienced by the family was expressed by four participants on the grounds of irritation, an annoyance to the bullies in the school who had teased their children with heart breaking words. Jacobsen and Bauman[16] explained that psychologically, the victims might face difficulty in adjusting to social situations and are experiencing anxiety. Often, this can lead to isolation, depression which impacting their school performance, skipping school, and suicidal thoughts. The impact of the desire to perform suicide is expressed by one of the participants. This makes the participant really sad and really concerned about the condition of his child and also gets annoyed toward the bullies.

Theme 2: providing advice and motivation is a form of family support for victims of bullying

The main source of coping that are used by families in responding to bullying events is by providing support to the

victims of bullying. The results discovered that all participants provided support to the victims by giving advice, suggestions, and motivations. The participants explained that bullying experienced by the victim had an impact on their motivation to go to the school that some victims said they wanted to go to another school or even showing their desire to quit school.

The prominent element in improving one's motivation and ultimately changing the behavior is the individual's readiness to change. Behavioral changes occur gradually over time.[17] From the results of the study, the participants describe that restoring confidence and encouragement must be done continuously and in any given situation.

Theme 3: family support strategies as an effort to speed up the recovery process of bullying victims

Participants do spiritual endeavors through worships activities and enhance one's peace of mind by submitting oneself to God, consider having children who become victims of bullying as God's trial, family patience, and be grateful for the condition of their children. A person's spirituality or belief will influence their coping in responding to problems. Spiritual beliefs proved to be useful as the source of hope and maintaining coping efforts against unexpected situations.[14]

A person's spirituality is closely related to how they determine the decisions they took in solving problems. This is in line with the opinion of[18] which explains that families who can perform their role well are capable of solving problems that arise in the family. This can be done by utilizing good communication among family members and using a spiritual foundation to achieve it.

Theme 4: relationship with others is the source of support to help to overcome the impact of bullying

Participants in their effort to provide support to victims obtained help from other main family members, big family, and other external parties. Parents, especially fathers, mothers, and siblings are the main family who becomes the source of support. Ref. 2 explains the close relationship between adolescents and parents is important in adolescence phase as the relationship will become an example that will be brought from time to time and will influence the formation of a new relationship in the future.

According to Craig et al. in[19] parents have an important role in helping their children to understand what they should do should they face bullying. Ref. 9 explains victims of bullying can avoid depression if they have parents who support them.

Theme 5: psychological resilience as a result of family support on victims of bullying

Resilient adolescents have strong self-control, possess a sense of responsibility adjusted to their age, and practices self-discipline. In facing stressors, they show the capacity to recover quickly from temporary disappointment and try to cope with stress rather than avoiding problems.

Certain protective factors lead some children to be more resilient than others.[17] From results, participants explained that after being supported by the family and other external parties, the children show some change in their activities as they become more excited both at home and at school.

Conclusions

This study resulted in five themes on family support for victims of adolescent bullying. The themes are: Sadness and anger as an initial response to bullying, providing advice and motivation is a form of family support to victims of bullying, family support strategies as an effort to speed up the recovery process of bullying victims, relationship with others is the source of support to help to overcome the impact of bullying, psychological resilience as a result of family support on victims of bullying.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends the importance of mental health nurses to play a role as an educator of the family, so that the family can optimize their support for the bullied adolescent.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Acknowledgements

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