



# **Bullying in the School Environment: A Thematic Analysis of Causes, Consequences, and Prevention Efforts**

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**Abstract:** The goal of this thesis is to increase awareness and give victims a better understanding of the causes of bullying and coping mechanisms by analysing the causes, effects, and efficacy of current anti-bullying interventions at Cendekia Harapan School in Jimbaran, Bali. To strengthen anti-bullying initiatives, it also assesses current solutions and makes culturally appropriate suggestions. Students completed open-ended surveys as part of a qualitative research design to learn more about their individual experiences, opinions, and the success of ongoing programs. To find patterns in bullying behaviours and their impacts, thematic analysis was used. The results showed that bullying is frequently caused by insecurity, a desire for power, and a need to fit in. Bullying victims often experience emotional distress, mental health conditions like anxiety and depression, and academic decline. According to the study, bullying can be influenced by the school environment. While students believe that current initiatives are effective, they also recommend additional interventions like workshops that foster empathy and greater parental involvement. These findings provide useful recommendations for improving school-based anti-bullying initiatives and corroborate theories put forth by Olweus and Adler.

**Keywords:** Analysis; Bullying; Environment; School; Social

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Bullying is a pervasive issue in schools worldwide, affecting students across diverse backgrounds and settings, including here in Jimbaran, Bali. Many students face bullying in different forms, such as physical aggression, verbal insults, and cyberbullying. These experiences can lead to several symptoms for victims, including anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem, and social withdrawal (Olweus, 1993). The problem extends beyond individual suffering; bullying disrupts the learning environment, strains social relationships, and has lasting effects on both victims and perpetrators (Smith & Sharp, 1994).

Understanding the root causes of bullying is crucial to addressing this issue effectively. Researchers suggest that bullying often stems from an abuse of power, with bullies seeking control to boost their self-worth or assert dominance (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). Some may engage in bullying behaviours as a response to unresolved personal trauma or mental health struggles. These individuals may attempt to cope with their challenges by asserting control over others, possibly as a means of compensating for feelings of inadequacy or insecurity (Rigby, 2003).

Various thinkers and researchers have contributed to the study of bullying prevention. For example, Alfred Adler, a prominent psychologist known for his work on social interest, emphasised the importance of empathy and community feeling in reducing aggressive

behaviours. According to Adler, creating environments where children feel valued and connected to others can reduce tendencies toward bullying (Adler, 1927). In many schools, interventions based on Adler's ideas involve empathy-building activities and cooperative learning environments to promote positive social interactions. Studies show that such interventions can reduce bullying incidents, fostering more inclusive school cultures (Olweus, 1993).

However, while these strategies can have positive outcomes, they also face limitations. One notable weakness is that these solutions often require extensive resources, including time, trained facilitators, and sustained commitment from the entire school community. Furthermore, some programs may not address the specific mental health needs of bullies, which can limit their effectiveness in cases where deeper psychological support is needed (Ttofi & Farrington, 2011).

The objective of this thesis is to raise awareness about bullying among students in Jimbaran, Bali, by examining its causes, consequences, and current intervention methods. My goal is to provide victims with a deeper understanding of why bullying occurs and empower them with knowledge and strategies to address it. Additionally, I aim to evaluate existing solutions and propose actionable recommendations that can be adapted to the specific cultural context of our school community in Jimbaran. This study will enhance awareness of bullying among students in Jimbaran, Bali, by providing insights into its causes, consequences, and intervention strategies. By evaluating existing solutions and proposing culturally relevant recommendations, this research aims to empower victims and support the development of more effective anti-bullying measures within the school community.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Children's engagement in bullying behaviour is often influenced by underlying trauma or mental health issues. Some children react to adverse experiences by adopting aggressive tendencies, particularly if they come from environments where negative behaviours are normalised or where they experience low self-esteem. Alfred Adler, a pioneering psychologist, argued that social belonging and self-worth are crucial in shaping a child's behaviour. His theory of individual psychology posits that children who feel valued and connected to others develop healthier relationships and are less likely to engage in bullying. He believed that fostering a supportive and encouraging environment could mitigate future mental health issues by reducing feelings of isolation and inferiority (Adler University, n.d.).

Adler's theories were deeply shaped by his personal experiences. Growing up in Austria during a period of social and economic upheaval, he became acutely aware of the role of social structures in shaping human behaviour (Watts, 1998). His early medical career exposed him to individuals with various physical differences, leading him to formulate the concept of "compensation," where individuals develop strengths to counterbalance perceived weaknesses. This idea later evolved into his concept of the "inferiority complex," which suggests that feelings of inadequacy can drive individuals to act in ways that either foster growth or reinforce negative behaviour patterns (Britannica, 2024). His time as a military doctor in World War I, where he encountered numerous cases of trauma, further influenced his belief in the importance of early intervention in children's psychological development (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). He established child guidance clinics in Austria to promote social interest—his belief that individuals are healthier when they feel connected and engaged with their community (Britannica, 2024). This principle remains highly relevant in modern educational and counselling settings that prioritise inclusivity and social support.

Despite Adler's significant contributions, his theories have faced criticism. One major challenge is the lack of empirical evidence to support some of his concepts, such as the inferiority complex. Critics argue that feelings of inferiority and compensatory behaviours are difficult to measure scientifically, making it challenging to validate his theories through rigorous research (Watts & Shulman, 2003). Additionally, some scholars believe Adler's emphasis on individual experiences overlooks broader sociocultural factors, such as economic disparities, family dynamics, and systemic inequalities. These elements play crucial roles in shaping behaviour and coping mechanisms. For example, while Adler's framework suggests that self-worth and social connection are key in addressing bullying, some researchers argue that bullying is also driven by power imbalances and social hierarchies, which are not sufficiently addressed in Adlerian theory (Qu & Luke, 2022).

Another criticism is the applicability of Adler's theories across different cultural contexts. His ideas were primarily developed within a Western framework that values individual success and self-determination. However, in collectivist cultures, where social harmony and group identity are prioritised, Adler's focus on individual psychology may not be as relevant (Hofstede, 1984). In these cultures, bullying may stem more from community-enforced hierarchies than from personal inferiority complexes. Additionally, Adler's approach may not be as effective for individuals with severe mental health conditions, such as clinical depression or anxiety, where professional intervention and treatments beyond social connection are necessary (Corey, 2016).

Over time, Adler's theories have evolved and influenced various disciplines, including education, counselling, and social work. His emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging has informed anti-bullying programs in schools, which aim to create supportive social environments that reduce feelings of isolation and promote positive peer relationships (Carlson et al., 2006). Modern psychologists and educators continue to draw from Adler's principles to develop strategies that address self-esteem issues, encourage social cooperation, and prevent bullying. Despite its limitations, Adler's work remains foundational in understanding the psychological and social dynamics of bullying, offering valuable insights into how individuals can be supported in ways that foster resilience and positive behavioural change.

Alfred Adler's theory of individual psychology provides a foundational framework for understanding bullying behaviour, which is central to answering the research question in my thesis: "What are the causes, consequences, and intervention strategies for bullying among students in Jimbaran, Bali?" Adler's concept of the inferiority complex suggests that children who experience low self-esteem or social disconnection may engage in bullying as a compensatory mechanism to regain a sense of power or control. This aligns with my research findings, which indicate that bullying often arises from personal insecurities and adverse childhood experiences. His emphasis on social belonging and self-worth also supports my analysis of how school environments influence bullying dynamics. By integrating Adler's perspective, my thesis explores how fostering a supportive school climate can mitigate bullying by addressing the root causes of aggression—such as feelings of inadequacy and social exclusion.

Additionally, Adler's belief that early intervention can prevent long-term psychological harm is reflected in my evaluation of existing anti-bullying strategies. His approach underscores the importance of community-based solutions, such as peer support programs, mentorship initiatives, and school-wide inclusivity policies, which align with my recommendations for culturally relevant intervention methods in Jimbaran. Furthermore, while my research acknowledges criticisms of Adler's theory—such as its limited empirical validation and Western-centric approach—it adapts his principles to fit the local cultural context. For example, in Bali, where collectivist values are strong, interventions that emphasize group harmony, community involvement, and traditional conflict resolution practices may be more effective than those solely focused on individual self-improvement.

Thus, Adler's theory helps shape my thesis by providing psychological insights into the motivations behind bullying, guiding my evaluation of intervention strategies, and reinforcing

the argument that building a strong sense of social belonging within schools can reduce bullying incidents and support victims effectively.

### **3. METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research design to explore the experiences and perspectives of students regarding bullying in schools. By using open-ended surveys, the research seeks to uncover the underlying causes of bullying, its impact on victims, and the effectiveness of current intervention strategies within the school environment in Jimbaran, Bali.

Participants in this study will include students from grades 7–12 at Cendekia Harapan School who have had direct or indirect experiences with bullying. Additionally, school counsellors and teachers who have observed or managed bullying cases will be included to gain a broader view of the school environment and current intervention practices.

A survey will be distributed to a larger group of students. This survey will include open-ended questions to capture broader perspectives on bullying. The survey will be administered electronically by using Google Forms to maintain anonymity and encourage honest responses. Students will be informed that their answers will be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

Data collected from both surveys will be analysed using thematic analysis, a method well-suited for identifying patterns and themes within qualitative data. This analysis will follow six steps: familiarisation with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing a final report. This approach allows for both expected themes, such as the causes of bullying, and unexpected themes, such as cultural factors or specific school dynamics, to emerge from the data.

### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section presents the findings of the study, which investigates the experiences and perspectives of students, teachers, and school counsellors regarding bullying in schools. The primary aim is to identify the underlying causes of bullying, its impact on victims, and the effectiveness of current intervention strategies within the school environment in Jimbaran, Bali.

#### **Result**

A few students had some ideas on why students bully others, relating to insecurities, mental health, feeling superior, experience, and trying to raise their self-esteem. A student has mentioned, 'I think feeling isolated or needing to fit in is one of the reasons bullying exists. This might be because they have been mistreated recently and decided to copy that behaviour

for themselves.’ as their opinion to the question ‘In your opinion, how does feeling isolated or needing to fit in relate to bullying behaviour?’.

They mainly shared the idea of copying others' behaviours to fit in. When ‘What role do you think the desire for power or control plays in why some students bully others?’, they shared the ideas of insecurity. One of the answers was, ‘Power and control make bullies bully in the first place. Their reasons include power and control, which they have in their own hands. With that, we can never really stop them from doing it in the first place, since we couldn’t predict if they were going to use that power to bully others and not to use it for a much nicer act.’ Students mainly said how bullying can affect the victim in ways such as doing worse in school, feeling sad or having mental health problems, and feeling more reserved.

Every respondent has shared the idea of the school environment becoming unsafe for people if bullying becomes more common. This was one of the responses. ‘It makes the school an unsafe learning environment, and students that get bullied might get uncomfortable with their surroundings. School is supposed to be a safe place for everyone to learn; if only one student starts bullying others, it might make young students follow the bad example, which will start a lot of problems. The students that get bullied will eventually want to move schools or even do homeschooling because of how toxic the environment will be.’ Respondents believed that the main effects of bullying on mental health were low self-esteem, anxiety, PTSD, trauma, and depression.

The school has conducted rules, seminars, workshops, and lectures as a way to prevent or stop bullying. Most respondents say that the school's efforts in stopping or preventing bullying are effective, as it's seen that bullying doesn't happen around the school. Efforts that could be improved in response to bullying would be educating students, informing parents of both the ‘bully’ and ‘victim’, if seen, for any bullying cases, and reminding the parents and students and parents about the laws in Indonesia on bullying. Students have suggested that the school should do a workshop that explains the perspective of those who get bullied so that the bullies understand, and also a program where students can get to know each other better and be good friends with each other by playing games, joining competitions, and discussing with each other.

It's seen that most students have come up with ideas that are similar to Olweus’s theory, including Adler's. For example, respondents have said that the effects of bullying can be mental health issues like anxiety, depression, or PTSD, and respondents have also said that putting children in programs with other children helps build friendships and get to know other people more.

## **Discussion**

The study, which collected opinions from a wide range of participants, found that bullying stems from several causes, such as past experiences, insecurities, mental health issues, the need to feel better, and attempts to increase one's self-esteem. According to some students, bullying behaviours are exacerbated by feelings of loneliness or the need to fit in, as people may act aggressively in an attempt to gain control or approval. One student explained how bullying behaviour is frequently modelled rather than naturally developed, highlighting how personal abuse may result in learnt aggression. Students acknowledged that control and dominance frequently fuel bullying behaviours, indicating that power dynamics also played a significant role in the responses. According to one respondent, bullies benefit from power structures in school environments, which makes intervention challenging since power itself serves as a kind of reinforcement for aggressive behaviour. Students went on to say that bullying has a serious negative impact on its victims, resulting in emotional distress, academic difficulties, and mental health issues like depression, PTSD, and anxiety.

One of the respondents' main concerns was the larger school environment. Many emphasised that if bullying becomes widespread, the school environment could become dangerous, impacting not only the victims but all of the students. Students pointed out that ongoing bullying exposure can cause unease, which may force some victims to switch schools or turn to homeschooling. This is consistent with Adler's theory of inferiority complex, which holds that people who feel like they don't belong may become aggressive in an attempt to regain control. The results also align with Olweus's theory of bullying, which contends that power disparities and social hierarchies encourage bullying in educational environments.

The efficacy of intervention techniques, such as school regulations, workshops, seminars, and counselling services, is still up for discussion. The majority of respondents agreed that these tactics have effectively decreased instances of bullying that are visible, but some felt that more needs to be done. To help bullies gain empathy and awareness, some students suggested more comprehensive educational programs that explain the victim's point of view. Others emphasised how crucial it is to create stronger social ties through school-sponsored contests, conversations, and engaging activities that support inclusivity. To handle bullying cases more successfully, students frequently suggested parental involvement and called for improved communication between parents and schools. These suggestions support Adler's focus on social belonging and suggest that fostering a welcoming and inclusive school climate could be a more long-term strategy for lowering bullying.

This study supports earlier research that found bullying to be a psychological and social phenomenon impacted by personal insecurities and external power dynamics. According to studies like Carlson et al. (2006), bullying victims frequently experience social and academic difficulties, which is consistent with this study. In a similar vein, Smith et al. (2002) discovered that bullying hurts victims' mental health, resulting in problems like social disengagement and depression. Olweus (1993) also emphasised the long-term consequences, such as relationship problems and anxiety.

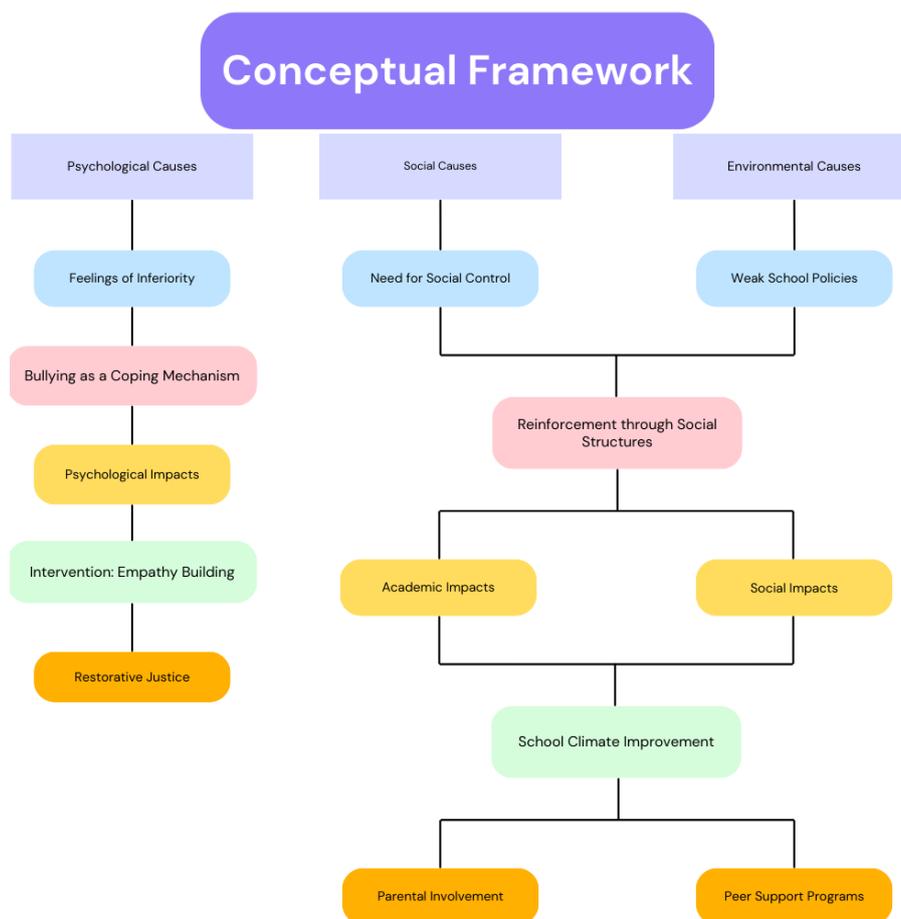
However, this study highlights the potential of empathy-building and community engagement, whereas previous research concentrated on punitive measures. For instance, Juvonen et al. (2017) discovered that encouraging inclusivity in schools can reduce bullying incidents, and Ttofi and Farrington (2011) demonstrated that empathy-based programs can reduce bullying behaviour. These results imply that alternative strategies, such as social bonding and awareness campaigns, can be just as successful as conventional disciplinary measures.

However, other research offers different viewpoints. Peer group dynamics may limit the effectiveness of empathy programs, according to Veenstra et al. (2005), but Bradshaw et al. (2013) discovered that, in some situations, punitive measures are still necessary to address severe bullying. Building empathy should be a component of larger systemic changes in the school to address the underlying causes of bullying, according to Rigby (2002).

A critical assessment of the theories covered in this study reveals both their advantages and disadvantages. Although Adler's framework offers a solid basis for comprehending how bullying behaviours are motivated by feelings of inferiority, it falls short in taking into consideration more extensive societal factors like socioeconomic status and cultural expectations. In a similar vein, Olweus's focus on power relations explains why bullying is reinforced in school systems, but his intervention techniques mostly involve punishment rather than proactive community development. By supporting a more integrated approach that incorporates elements of both theories and modern social-emotional learning methodologies, this study adds to the conversation.

Although the results offer insightful information, several limitations should be noted. The study's generalisability was limited because it was only carried out in one Jimbaran school. Furthermore, the majority of the data were self-reported, which raises the risk of response bias. The absence of quantitative data further limits the ability to measure the exact prevalence of bullying cases. By carrying out extensive studies across several schools and using statistical analysis to support the results, future research could fill in these gaps.

In conclusion, this study's findings support the necessity of all-encompassing, multifaceted anti-bullying tactics. Peer mentorship programs should be strengthened, empathy-based workshops should be expanded, and parental involvement in bullying prevention initiatives should be increased in schools. By creating a more welcoming and encouraging school climate, these strategies can eventually lower bullying rates and improve student relationships. Additional studies examining the long-term effects of such initiatives may shed more light on the best ways to address bullying in schools on both an individual and systemic level.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework

According to the conceptual framework, bullying in schools results from a confluence of environmental, social, and psychological elements. Psychologically, Adler's Inferiority Complex Theory suggests that low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity, and inferiority are frequently the driving forces behind bullying. Some students use bullying as a socially motivated tactic to establish dominance or win acceptance from their peers because they feel a need for control and power. In the context of schools, a lack of intervention and lax policies can let bullying continue unchecked. Together, these elements fuel bullying behaviours, which are then strengthened by school social structures, where students may resort to violent acts to

blend in or uphold their perceived status. Bullying's effects include social isolation for victims, academic difficulties (like poorer performance and disengagement), and psychological distress (like anxiety, PTSD, and depression). Intervention strategies should concentrate on developing empathy, enhancing the school environment, enlisting the help of parents, and putting restorative justice principles into practice to address bullying effectively. To foster a more upbeat and encouraging learning environment, schools should incorporate inclusive peer support programs and community-building exercises rather than depending only on punitive measures. According to this framework, combating bullying necessitates a systemic strategy that integrates institutional, social, and psychological changes to produce long-lasting effects.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study looked at the causes, consequences, and methods of intervention related to bullying in Jimbaran, Bali, schools. The results show that a variety of factors, such as social hierarchies, mental health issues, personal insecurities, and the need to establish control or dominance, contribute to bullying. Bullying victims frequently suffer from severe mental health conditions like anxiety, PTSD, and depression, as well as a drop in their academic performance and emotional distress. Bullying can either be prevented or made worse by the school environment, and if it is allowed to continue, it can lead to a hostile and unsafe learning environment.

According to the study, more all-encompassing tactics are still required even though schools employ a variety of anti-bullying initiatives, including policies, workshops, counselling services, and parental involvement. Current interventions could be improved by educational initiatives that emphasise developing empathy and cultivating healthy peer relationships. The results support the theories of Adler and Olweus, highlighting the significance of tackling bullying by fostering inclusive, encouraging environments where students feel appreciated and included in addition to using discipline.

The necessity to broaden Adler's theory by adding a more thorough comprehension of outside factors influencing bullying behaviour is a crucial lesson to be learnt from this study. Although Adler's focus on social belonging and individual inferiority is pertinent, this study contends that a contemporary adaptation should also take systemic and environmental elements like family dynamics, school culture, and societal expectations into account. To develop more successful anti-bullying tactics that take into account both the psychology of the individual and the broader social context, future research should examine how these wider influences interact with Adlerian principles.

This study does have certain limitations, though. The study's generalisability to other educational settings was limited because it was only carried out in one school. Furthermore, the lack of quantitative measures limits accurate statistical analysis, and self-reported data may introduce biases. Future studies should investigate the long-term effects of anti-bullying interventions, involve mixed-method approaches, and broaden their scope to include more schools.

This study's conclusion emphasises that bullying is a complicated problem that calls for a multifaceted strategy. In order to promote social inclusion, empathy, and student engagement, schools must implement comprehensive strategies that go beyond punitive measures. To establish a more caring and secure learning environment, future projects should incorporate student-led projects, parental participation, and structured social-emotional learning programs. Educational institutions can endeavour to drastically reduce bullying and its detrimental long-term effects on students by fostering a culture of mutual respect and continuously improving intervention techniques.

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