

Navigating peer bullying: parents' and students' communication patterns, behavioral responses, and coping strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how bullying experiences influence adolescents' coping strategies, with a particular focus on parent-student communication as a predictor of coping outcomes. Using a mixed-methods approach in Indonesia, data were collected from 78 secondary school students through surveys measuring bullying exposure, communication patterns, and coping strategies, complemented by in-depth interviews with four parent-student pairs. Quantitative analysis using descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients showed that higher levels of bullying were significantly associated with poorer communication with parents and reduced use of problem-focused coping strategies, while bullying was positively correlated with emotion-focused and maladaptive coping. Qualitative findings supported these results and revealed four key themes: experiences of bullying, communication patterns, emotional responses, and coping mechanisms. Parental involvement, particularly in providing emotional support and engaging in joint problem-solving, emerged as a critical protective factor. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating the central role of parent-student communication in shaping adolescents' coping responses to bullying. Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening family communication through targeted interventions may reduce adolescents' reliance on maladaptive coping strategies and promote more effective, problem-focused approaches to managing bullying experiences.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Peer bullying remains a widespread and persistent issue affecting students worldwide [1]. It is commonly defined as repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm or distress others and may take physical, verbal, relational (social), or cyber forms [2]. Due to its high prevalence, bullying poses serious risks to students' mental health, emotional development, and overall well-being, making it a critical concern within educational and psychological research.

Despite the implementation of numerous anti-bullying programs and increased public awareness, many adolescents continue to experience bullying in their daily lives. The psychological and social consequences of bullying are often profound and long-lasting, with victims reporting heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem that may persist into adulthood [3]. In addition, bullying has been

shown to negatively affect academic performance and peer relationships, thereby reinforcing cycles of victimization, social withdrawal, and emotional distress [4]. These enduring impacts highlight the urgent need to identify protective factors that can support adolescents in managing bullying more effectively.

While prior research has extensively examined the psychological outcomes of bullying and various coping styles, fewer studies have focused on the interpersonal and familial factors that shape how adolescents respond to peer victimization. In particular, the role of parent-adolescent communication remains underexplored. Although some studies acknowledge parental influence, limited attention has been given to how the quality of communication directly moderates adolescents' coping responses to bullying. This gap is especially evident within the Indonesian context, where strong family ties, respect for parental authority, and collectivist cultural norms may uniquely shape communication dynamics and adolescents' help-seeking behaviors.

Parents play a pivotal role in how adolescents perceive, interpret, and respond to bullying experiences [5]. The quality of parent-adolescent communication has been shown to significantly influence adolescents' coping strategies and behavioral outcomes. Open, empathetic, and supportive communication can provide adolescents with emotional reassurance, validation, and practical guidance, whereas poor or strained communication may intensify feelings of isolation and helplessness, discouraging help-seeking and adaptive coping responses.

Family communication involves more than routine interaction; it requires active listening, empathy, and the creation of a safe, non-judgmental space in which sensitive issues such as bullying can be discussed. Empirical evidence consistently indicates that adolescents who experience open and trusting communication with their parents are more likely to disclose bullying incidents and seek emotional or instrumental support [6], [7]. In contrast, limited or ineffective communication may increase adolescents' reliance on maladaptive coping strategies, thereby exacerbating psychological distress.

Students' behavioral responses to bullying vary depending on individual characteristics, the nature of the bullying experienced, and the availability of social and familial support [8]. Coping strategies, defined as the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals use to manage stress and emotional distress, are commonly categorized as problem-focused, emotion-focused, or maladaptive strategies [9]. Existing evidence suggests that supportive parental communication is associated with greater use of adaptive coping strategies, whereas weak or inconsistent communication is linked to less effective coping and poorer psychological outcomes [10]. Taken together, these considerations underscore the need for a clearer understanding of how parent-adolescent communication influences adolescents' coping responses to bullying. Addressing this gap, the present study examines the relationship between parental communication patterns and adolescents' coping responses to peer bullying in Indonesia.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Communication between parents and students

Effective communication between parents and students is a critical factor in managing and mitigating the effects of peer bullying [11]. This communication involves the exchange of information and the quality and nature of interactions that shape how students perceive and handle bullying situations. The nature of communication between parents and students encompasses several dimensions, including openness, frequency, and emotional tone. Open communication refers to the extent to which students feel comfortable discussing their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with their parents [12]. When parents create an environment where students feel safe to share, it can lead to more effective problem-solving and emotional support. Students who perceive their parents as open and approachable are more likely to disclose experiences of bullying and seek help. This disclosure allows parents to provide timely advice, emotional support, and intervention if necessary. Furthermore, open communication fosters trust and strengthens the parent-adolescent relationship, making it easier for students to discuss complex topics and seek guidance on coping strategies. When parents practice active listening, they demonstrate empathy and understanding, which can validate the adolescent's experiences and emotions. Empathetic responses help students feel supported and understood, essential for their emotional well-being and can enhance their ability to cope with bullying.

Parental guidance shapes students' responses to bullying [13]. Through communication, parents can provide practical advice on handling bullying situations, encourage positive behaviors, and model effective coping strategies. For example, parents can help students develop assertiveness skills, practice conflict resolution, and understand their rights in bullying situations. This guidance can empower students to address bullying proactively and reduce its impact. The reactions and responses of parents to bullying incidents can also influence the adolescent's perception and handling of the situation. Supportive and calm reactions can reassure students and encourage them to seek help. Conversely, reactions characterized by anger or panic may increase the adolescent's stress and inhibit open communication. How parents manage their emotions and

responses during discussions about bullying can significantly affect the effectiveness of the communication process.

Family dynamics and communication styles vary widely and can impact how bullying is discussed and addressed [14]. Families with a history of open dialogue and supportive interactions are more likely to address bullying issues effectively. In contrast, families with rigid or dysfunctional communication patterns may struggle to provide support. Understanding the specific dynamics within a family can help identify areas for improvement and strategies to enhance communication. Educational interventions to improve parent-adolescent communication about bullying can be beneficial [15]. Workshops, counseling, and training programs can provide parents with tools and techniques for effective communication, active listening, and empathetic responses. Additionally, school-based programs that involve parents in anti-bullying initiatives can strengthen the support network for students and foster a collaborative approach to addressing bullying.

2.2. Coping strategies

Coping strategies refer to the cognitive and behavioral efforts individuals employ to manage stress and emotional distress arising from challenging experiences such as peer bullying. These strategies play a crucial role in determining how adolescents adjust psychologically to bullying victimization. Prior research has consistently demonstrated that bullying is strongly associated with psychosocial maladjustment, including both internalizing problems (e.g., anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal) and externalizing problems (e.g., aggression, defiance, and rule-breaking behaviors). Adolescents who experience persistent bullying are therefore at heightened risk of adverse emotional and behavioral outcomes, particularly when effective coping mechanisms are lacking.

Coping strategies adopted by bullied adolescents generally fall into adaptive and maladaptive categories. Adaptive coping strategies, such as problem-focused coping and seeking social support, enable adolescents to address stressors directly and regulate emotional responses more effectively. In contrast, maladaptive coping strategies, including avoidance, denial, and emotional suppression, are often associated with increased emotional distress and behavioral difficulties. Empirical studies have shown that adolescents who predominantly rely on avoidant or maladaptive coping patterns tend to exhibit higher levels of psychosocial maladjustment, whereas those who engage in active and constructive coping demonstrate better psychological adjustment and social functioning [16].

Importantly, the effectiveness of coping strategies does not operate in isolation but is shaped by contextual and environmental factors. Zhang *et al.* [16] emphasized that the relationship between coping strategies and psychological outcomes is moderated by supportive contextual management, such as effective classroom discipline. In structured and supportive environments, adaptive coping strategies are more effective in reducing internalizing and externalizing problems, while the negative effects of maladaptive coping are attenuated. Conversely, in less supportive contexts, even adaptive coping strategies may be insufficient to buffer the adverse psychological impact of bullying. These findings highlight the necessity of examining contextual moderators when assessing adolescents' coping responses to bullying.

Beyond the school context, family-related factors particularly parental coping strategies and parent-adolescent communication have emerged as critical influences on adolescents' coping processes. Choi [17], through a longitudinal investigation, demonstrated that parental coping strategies function both as predictors and outcomes of bullying experiences, revealing a reciprocal relationship between child victimization, parent-child communication, and parental coping responses. Effective and open communication between parents and adolescents was found to facilitate supportive parental coping strategies, which in turn reduced adolescents' emotional and behavioral problems. In contrast, maladaptive parental coping and poor communication were associated with prolonged victimization and increased psychosocial difficulties. These findings underscore the importance of conceptualizing coping with bullying as a family-level process rather than solely an individual endeavor.

In addition to familial influences, the broader educational environment plays a vital role in shaping students' coping responses and psychological adjustment. School-based prevention and intervention strategies, such as fostering a positive school climate, implementing clear anti-bullying policies, and promoting collaboration among teachers, parents, and students, have been shown to reduce bullying incidents and mitigate their psychological consequences [18]. Schools that provide emotionally safe and supportive environments encourage students to seek help and adopt more adaptive coping strategies, thereby reducing the likelihood of long-term psychosocial maladjustment.

Taken together, the existing literature indicates that adolescents' coping with bullying is influenced by a complex interplay of individual coping strategies, family communication processes, and school-level support systems. While prior studies have examined these factors independently, fewer studies have integrated parent-adolescent communication within the broader coping framework. Building on this gap, the present study extends existing research by examining how parent-adolescent communication shapes adolescents' coping strategies and psychological outcomes in the context of peer bullying.

3. METHOD

This study adopted a mixed-methods design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the research problem. The research was conducted in July 2024 at SMK Ibnu Taimiyah (Ibn Taimiyah Vocational School), Pekanbaru City. The quantitative phase involved 78 student respondents, while the qualitative phase included in-depth interviews with four participants, two students and their respective parents.

3.1. Quantitative phase

The questionnaire included items measuring four forms of peer bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. The Parent-Adolescent Communication Scale (PACS) was employed to assess the quality of communication between parents and students [19], [20]. To evaluate students' coping responses to bullying, the Coping Strategies Inventory (CSI) was utilized [21]. This inventory classifies coping strategies into three categories: problem-focused, emotion-focused, and maladaptive coping.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the prevalence and types of bullying, communication patterns, and coping strategies among participants [22], [23]. In addition, Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships between communication quality, experiences of bullying, and the coping strategies adopted by students [9], [24].

3.2. Qualitative phase

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted with both students and their parents [25]. The interview protocol was guided by four key indicators: i) experiences with bullying, ii) parent-adolescent communication patterns, iii) emotional responses, and iv) coping mechanisms. Participants selected for the interviews met the following criteria: the adolescent must have experienced peer bullying, whether physical, verbal, social, cyberbullying, or a combination thereof, within the past two years; and the accompanying parent must be the adolescent's primary caregiver. Both students and parents were required to demonstrate a willingness to discuss sensitive topics related to bullying, communication, behavioral responses, and coping strategies.

Each interview session lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes per participant. The qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed thematically, involving systematic coding to identify recurring themes and patterns related to the core constructs of communication, emotional response, and coping. The research procedure was illustrated through a customized diagram adapted to the study's design and objectives shown in Figure 1.

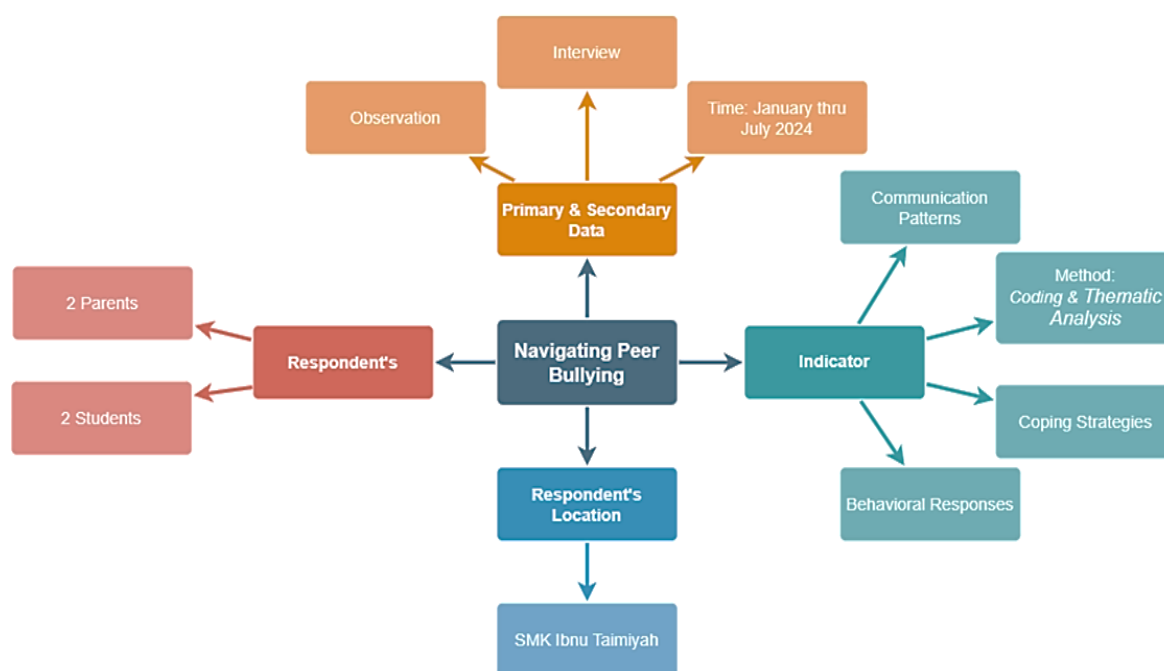


Figure 1. Research procedure

3.3. Coding

The data sourced from informants (study participants) consisted of two students (S and C) and two parents (M and R). The data were analyzed according to the concept of thematic analysis.

3.4. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis in this study followed a structured sequence of steps to ensure a rigorous and meaningful interpretation of the qualitative interview data. The process comprised the following phases:

- Familiarization: this initial step involved the researcher immersing themselves in the interview data to develop a deep understanding of the content. By repeatedly reading and reviewing the transcripts, the researcher became more familiar with the key issues and narratives relevant to the study.
- Coding: in this stage, the data were systematically coded to identify significant features related to bullying experiences, communication patterns, emotional responses, and coping strategies. Coding served as a fundamental process in thematic analysis, enabling the transformation of raw data into organized units of meaning.
- Theme development, refinement, and naming: this phase encompassed the third, fourth, and fifth steps of the thematic analysis process. Initially generated themes were reviewed and refined to ensure alignment with the research focus. Irrelevant or overlapping themes were revised or removed. Each theme was then clearly defined and named to reflect its content and relevance to the research questions.
- Writing and Interpretation: in the final stage, the researcher compiled and synthesized the analyzed data into a coherent narrative. This involved developing, organizing, editing, and positioning the themes to accurately address the core research questions. The writing process was iterative and analytical, ensuring that each theme meaningfully contributed to the study's findings.

An overview of the thematic analysis process is illustrated in Figure 2.

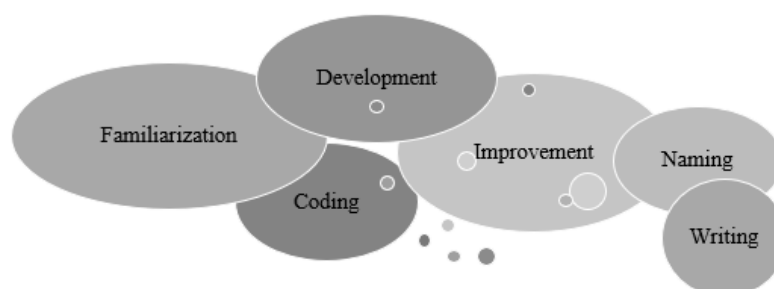


Figure 2. Thematic analysis process

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the frequency and types of bullying shown in Table 1, communication patterns are shown in Table 2, and coping strategies are shown in Table 3. The summary tables present the means, standard deviations, and percentages for each variable.

Table 1. Frequency and types of bullying

Type of bullying	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	% Reporting any bullying
Physical bullying	2.45	1.12	55%
Verbal bullying	3.30	1.08	72%
Social bullying	2.80	1.17	65%
Cyberbullying	2.20	1.05	54%
Rumors	2.90	1.20	67%
Property damage	1.90	0.98	41%

Table 2. Parent-adolescent communication patterns

Communication aspect	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	% Agree/strongly agree
Open communication	3.77	0.85	71%
Frequency of communication	3.50	0.90	65%
Communication about difficult topics	3.30	0.95	62%
Satisfaction with communication	3.86	0.80	72%

Table 2. Coping strategies

Coping strategy	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)	% Often/always used
Problem-focused coping	3.60	0.90	67%
Emotion-focused coping	3.50	0.95	63%
Maladaptive coping	2.10	1.00	38%
Adaptive coping	3.86	0.88	76%

The results indicate that verbal bullying is the most prevalent form experienced by students, reported by 72% of respondents ($M=3.30$, $SD=1.08$). This is followed by rumor-spreading (67%, $M=2.90$, $SD=1.20$) and social bullying (65%, $M=2.80$, $SD=1.17$), suggesting that indirect or relational forms of aggression are widespread among adolescents.

Physical bullying (55%, $M=2.42$, $SD=1.12$) and cyberbullying (54%, $M=2.20$, $SD=1.05$) were also reported but occurred less frequently. Meanwhile, property damage was identified as the least common type of bullying, experienced by 41% of students ($M=1.90$, $SD=0.98$), though it still affects a significant portion of the population.

These findings underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions that address various forms of bullying, particularly verbal, social, and rumor-based aggression, which appear to be the most pervasive. Understanding these patterns can inform the development of more effective prevention strategies by educators, parents, and mental health professionals. Additionally, such insights can support the design of communication-based interventions and coping support systems that reduce the psychological impact of bullying and promote healthier emotional regulation among students [26].

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the majority of students reported positive communication experiences with their parents. In particular, 71% of respondents ($M=3.77$, $SD=0.85$) agreed or strongly agreed that they experience open communication, while 72% ($M=3.86$, $SD=0.80$) expressed overall satisfaction with parent-child communication. These findings suggest that most adolescents perceive their interactions with parents positively—an important foundation for providing effective emotional and behavioral support in managing peer bullying.

However, some areas of communication could be strengthened. For instance, while 65% of respondents ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.90$) reported frequent communication, this percentage indicates that consistency in communication could be improved. Furthermore, 62% of students ($M=3.30$, $SD=0.95$) indicated that they are able to engage in discussions about complex or sensitive topics, such as bullying. Although encouraging, this aspect remains an area in which families may benefit from additional support and guidance.

These findings highlight the importance of enhancing specific dimensions of parent-adolescent communication. While most students feel generally supported, improving communication frequency and depth, particularly regarding sensitive or emotionally charged topics—could further strengthen adolescents' ability to cope with peer victimization. Prior studies [27], [28] have similarly noted the critical role of effective family communication in fostering resilience among adolescents facing bullying. Thus, targeted intervention programs aimed at building communication skills within families may contribute to more adaptive coping responses and improved student well-being [29].

Table 3 shows that the results indicate that students predominantly use adaptive coping strategies 76% ($M=3.86$, $SD=0.88$) this shows a strong inclination towards employing effective and healthy coping mechanisms to manage the challenges associated with bullying, with problem-focused 67% ($M=3.60$, $SD=0.90$) this reflects an active engagement in trying to resolve the issues causing distress and emotion-focused coping 63% ($M=3.50$, $SD=0.95$) many adolescents find it essential to manage their emotional reactions to bullying, though it is slightly less prevalent than problem-focused coping. A proactive and constructive response to bullying, the lower prevalence of maladaptive coping 38% ($M=2.10$, $SD=1.00$) they are less commonly relied upon than adaptive methods. The high percentage of students using adaptive coping strategies reflects a positive coping pattern, likely contributing to better resilience and overall well-being. However, the presence of maladaptive coping strategies in a significant portion of the sample suggests room for improvement in helping students develop more effective coping mechanisms and reduce reliance on less effective strategies [17]. Interventions that focus on enhancing adaptive coping skills and supporting emotional regulation could further improve how students manage the challenges of peer bullying [10], [30].

4.2. Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among key variables in the study. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was employed to assess the linear associations between bullying experiences, parent-adolescent communication patterns, and students' coping strategies. Table 4 presents the correlation matrix, with r values ranging from -1 to +1, where positive values indicate direct relationships and negative values indicate inverse relationships.

The correlation analysis revealed several significant relationships among bullying frequency, parent-adolescent communication, and coping strategies. Bullying frequency was found to be negatively correlated with open communication ($r=-0.45$) and problem-focused coping ($r=-0.40$), indicating that students who experience higher levels of bullying are less likely to report open communication with their parents and are less inclined to use constructive, problem-solving strategies. Conversely, bullying frequency showed a positive correlation with both emotion-focused coping ($r=0.30$) and maladaptive coping ($r=0.50$). This suggests that as bullying increases, adolescents are more likely to rely on emotional self-regulation and, more concerning, on less effective or harmful coping behaviors.

Open communication with parents demonstrated a strong positive correlation with problem-focused coping ($r=0.55$) and a moderate correlation with emotion-focused coping ($r=0.35$), suggesting that students who engage in open communication with their parents are more likely to adopt adaptive coping strategies. In contrast, open communication was negatively correlated with bullying frequency ($r=-0.45$) and maladaptive coping ($r=-0.30$), further underscoring its protective role.

In addition, emotion-focused coping was positively associated with both problem-focused coping ($r=0.40$) and maladaptive coping ($r=0.20$). While this indicates that adolescents who use emotion-focused strategies may also engage in problem-solving, the weaker correlation with maladaptive coping suggests occasional reliance on less effective strategies, possibly when emotional regulation is insufficient. Notably, a negative correlation was found between problem-focused coping and maladaptive coping ($r=-0.35$), implying that students who actively work to resolve problems are less likely to adopt harmful coping mechanisms.

These findings highlight the crucial role of positive parent-adolescent communication in fostering adaptive coping and mitigating the negative psychological effects of bullying. Strengthening communication within families may therefore serve as a key intervention point to reduce the use of maladaptive strategies and support students' emotional well-being.

Table 3. Correlation matrix

Variables	Bullying frequency	Open communication	Emotion-focused coping	Problem-focused coping	Maladaptive coping
Bullying frequency	1	-0.45**	0.30**	-0.40**	0.50**
Open communication	-0.45**	1	0.35**	0.55**	-0.30**
Emotion-focused coping	0.30**	0.35**	1	0.40**	0.20**
Problem-focused coping	-0.40**	0.55**	0.40**	1	-0.35**
Maladaptive coping	0.50**	-0.30**	0.20**	-0.35**	1

Note: ** indicates significance at the 0.01 level ($p<0.01$).

4.2.1. Experiences with bullying

The findings demonstrate the profound emotional and behavioral impact that bullying has on adolescents. Whether physical, verbal, social, or cyberbullying, these experiences are closely associated with feelings of fear, anxiety, and social isolation. For many students, physical bullying instilled a persistent sense of vulnerability, transforming the school environment into one perceived as hostile and unsafe. Similarly, verbal and social bullying often led to withdrawal, low self-esteem, and a pervasive feeling of being trapped within a negative social context.

Despite these challenges, the presence of supportive peers and parents, along with the use of active coping strategies, appeared to enhance students' resilience in managing the emotional toll of bullying. The narratives indicate that when adolescents feel emotionally supported and are encouraged to engage in open communication, they are more likely to respond to bullying in constructive ways.

Furthermore, students expressed confidence in problem-solving when classroom discussions validated their perspectives and used their experiences as part of a collaborative learning process. The iterative nature of problem exploration where all ideas were welcomed and the most accurate conclusions confirmed by the teacher or facilitator during final sessions, appeared to empower students and reinforce their critical thinking.

These qualitative insights are supported by interview data, particularly the experiences of Student S and Student C, who highlighted the emotional weight of bullying and the critical role of family support, peer connection, and educator facilitation in shaping their coping responses. The thematic findings illustrate that bullying is not only an interpersonal issue but also a deeply emotional experience, where the quality of external support significantly influences students' ability to cope.

- Students: *"I was always afraid, especially in the hallways leading to the toilets where no one could see what they were doing to me. They would push me or trip me."* [S]
"It was not just what they said to my face. They spread lies about me to everyone, and soon, I did not have any friends left. I felt like no one liked me." [C]
- Parents: *"I knew something was wrong, but he would not discuss it. He kept saying everything was fine when it was not."* [M]
"My daughter used to be so outgoing, but she started staying in her room more. She did not want to discuss what was happening, but I knew something was wrong." [R]

The interview narratives provide valuable insight into the complex dynamics of peer bullying, as experienced by both students and their parents. Students frequently described feelings of emotional distress, fear, and social vulnerability, while parents expressed concern, frustration, and uncertainty about how best to support their children. A recurring theme across the interviews was the crucial role of communication in shaping how families responded to bullying incidents. Families that maintained open and supportive lines of communication were generally more effective in helping adolescents process their experiences and seek appropriate support [30]. In contrast, families where communication was limited or strained often faced greater challenges, including misunderstandings, emotional withdrawal, or a fear of exacerbating the problem by intervening [31], [32]. These findings underscore the importance of fostering constructive parent-adolescent communication, not only as a buffer against the emotional impact of bullying but also as a mechanism for promoting healthier coping responses and access to support.

4.2.2. Communication patterns

Many students emphasized the critical role of open communication with their parents in navigating the challenges of bullying. This form of communication allowed students to express their emotions, share their experiences, and receive emotional reassurance, which often helped alleviate the psychological stress associated with peer victimization. One student shared that regular, supportive conversations helped build a sense of trust and emotional security, enabling them to confide in their parents during difficult times. Such narratives reflect how consistent and positive interactions between parents and adolescents can strengthen the student's ability to cope with bullying.

From the parents' perspective, there was a shared recognition of the need to maintain open lines of communication, especially on sensitive or complex issues like bullying. Many parents expressed a strong commitment to creating a safe, non-judgmental space where their children felt comfortable discussing their thoughts and emotions even when the topics were difficult or emotionally charged. By proactively initiating conversations and showing genuine interest in their children's daily lives, these parents sought to cultivate an environment in which communication flowed freely and mutual trust was reinforced.

These findings further underscore the protective role of healthy parent-adolescent communication in mitigating the emotional effects of bullying and supporting the development of resilient coping behaviors.

- Students: *"I always talk to my mom about what is going on. She listens and does not judge me, which helps me feel like I am not alone."* [S]
"My dad always asks me about my day, and I know I can tell him if something wrong happens at school. We have a good relationship, so I feel comfortable opening up to him." [C]
- Parents: *"I always ask how my son's day was and try to listen without interrupting or jumping to conclusions. I want him to know I am here for him."* [M]
"I try to ask about her friends, what is happening at school, and how she feels. I want to ensure she knows she can come to me if something is wrong." [R]

The interview narratives reveal the complexities and nuances of communication patterns between parents and adolescents within the context of bullying. While many parents expressed a strong desire to maintain an open and supportive dialogue, students often highlighted the emotional difficulty of navigating these conversations particularly when there was a fear of being misunderstood or judged.

The effectiveness of communication frequently depended on the parents' capacity to listen empathetically, without immediate judgment or attempts to impose solutions. Adolescents valued emotional validation and the opportunity to express their feelings, rather than being met with hasty advice or corrective responses [33]. When communication was perceived as one-sided or dismissive, it often led to emotional disengagement, with both students and parents reporting frustration and disconnection.

These findings underscore the importance of empathetic, non-judgmental communication approaches that prioritize emotional support and mutual understanding. Without such sensitivity, communication can

become strained or break down entirely, limiting the effectiveness of parental support and increasing students' emotional vulnerability to the effects of bullying [17], [31].

4.2.3. Emotional responses

Many students reported experiencing intense feelings of anger and frustration as a direct result of being bullied. These emotions were often amplified by a pervasive sense of powerlessness, which made it difficult for students to regulate their emotional responses both during and after the incidents. For many, the anger was not solely directed at the perpetrators, but also at the perceived absence of justice or meaningful resolution following the bullying episodes. This lack of closure contributed to prolonged emotional distress, causing the psychological impact to extend well beyond the immediate events.

These findings highlight the emotional complexity of students' responses to bullying and suggest that unresolved anger, particularly when tied to a perceived failure of intervention—can hinder recovery and escalate emotional strain.

- Students: *"When it happens, I get so mad. I want to yell at them or do something, but I feel stuck, which makes me even more frustrated."* [S]
"I keep thinking about it all the time. It makes me so angry that they get away with it, and I cannot do anything to stop it." [C]
- Parents: *"I kept thinking, 'What if I had talked to him more, would this have happened?' I felt like I had failed as a parent."* [M]
"I wanted to confront the kids who were bullying my daughter. It made me so angry to think that someone was hurting her, and I felt powerless to stop it." [R]

The interview narratives reveal a range of emotional responses from both students and parents about bullying. Students often experience a mix of anger, sadness, fear, and frustration, with many struggling to manage these intense emotions. Meanwhile, parents shared their children's emotional burden, feeling empathy, anger, and fear. Both students and parents faced emotional challenges in dealing with the immediate effects of bullying and coping with the potential long-term impacts [34]. This emotional landscape underscores the complexity of navigating bullying and the need for adequate support systems for both adolescents and their families [17].

4.2.4. Coping mechanisms

The interview narratives revealed a wide range of emotional responses from both students and parents in relation to bullying. Students frequently reported experiencing a mix of anger, sadness, fear, and frustration, with many struggling to manage these intense emotions in the face of persistent victimization. Simultaneously, parents expressed a deep sense of empathy, often mirroring their children's emotional distress through their own feelings of helplessness, anger, and anxiety.

Both groups highlighted the emotional toll of navigating the immediate consequences of bullying as well as the long-term psychological implications. These shared emotional experiences reflect the interconnected nature of adolescent well-being and parental involvement, where the distress of one often reverberates through the other [33], [34].

This emotional landscape underscores the complexity of managing bullying within the family context and highlights the urgent need for comprehensive support systems that address the emotional needs of both adolescents and their caregivers [17]. Providing families with appropriate tools, resources, and professional guidance is essential for fostering resilience and emotional recovery.

- Students: *"I try to focus on avoiding them, like taking different routes to class or sitting with other people I feel safe around."* [S]
"Sometimes I go to the teacher and tell them what is happening. They always help solve it, but at least I am trying to do something about it." [C]
- Parents: *"We have discussed different strategies with our child, like how to respond to the bullies and when to ask for help. It is important to have a plan."* [M]
"When my child comes home upset, I just listen. I try not to jump in with solutions immediately because sometimes they need to be heard." [R]

In summary, both students and parents reported utilizing a variety of coping strategies in response to bullying experiences. Students commonly adopted problem-focused approaches, such as seeking help from teachers or attempting to address the situation directly, as well as drawing on emotional support from peers. However, some students also described using avoidance or emotional suppression, which, in certain cases, contributed to sustained psychological distress and limited emotional resolution.

Parents, on the other hand, engaged in a combination of proactive interventions including communicating with school personnel, addressing the issue with other parents, and providing consistent emotional reassurance to their children. Some also turned to professional support, such as school counsellors or mental health services, to enhance their capacity to respond effectively to their child's needs [17].

While both groups demonstrated a shared commitment to mitigating the emotional and social effects of bullying, the efficacy of these coping strategies varied significantly. Factors such as individual emotional resilience, parent-child relationship quality, and access to institutional or professional support played a crucial role in shaping outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

This study underscores the critical role of open, supportive parent-adolescent communication in shaping adolescents' emotional and behavioral responses to peer bullying. Findings demonstrate that families providing non-judgmental dialogue and guidance can promote healthier coping strategies, particularly problem-focused approaches, while reducing reliance on maladaptive coping. The results highlight the importance of equipping both parents and adolescents with practical tools to navigate bullying, including fostering emotional resilience and effective behavioral responses. In practice, interventions such as parent training modules, peer-support groups, and integration with school counseling services could enhance these protective effects. Looking forward, future research should examine the longitudinal effects of communication quality on coping trajectories, providing insight into how parent-adolescent interactions influence long-term emotional well-being and resilience. Evaluating the impact of family-centered intervention programs would further inform the design of culturally sensitive, school- and community-based support systems. Such efforts are essential for sustaining positive family dynamics and improving adolescent outcomes in the face of bullying.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This journal uses the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) to recognize individual author contributions, reduce authorship disputes, and facilitate collaboration.

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C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft

E : Writing - Review & **E**editing

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declared no conflict of interest related to the conduct, authorship, and publication of this study.

INFORMED CONSENT

The authors have full documentation and disseminated informed consent prior to the participation of some personnel in the study. Moreover, the researchers observed utmost confidentiality to the data used in this study.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The completed manuscript was submitted to the Universiti Teknologi MARA for ethics review. After the review, necessary revisions and suggestions were considered in the manuscript for its betterment. This manuscript complied with all the ethical compliance as stated in the suggestions and recommendations. The researchers firmly observed the following: there is no name of the examinee was declared and mentioned, the name of the understudied university was not disclosed, and proper citations and referencing were used in compliance with the promotion of national and international standards of copyright laws. Finally, the researchers declared no conflict of interest in conducting this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The original contributions presented in this study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

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