

# Bibliometric Analysis: Research on Bullying and Relational Bullying

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**Abstract.** Bullying cases in the last few decades are global issues that have not been resolved. Research on bullying still needs to be done to find novelty. This article used bibliometric analyses to analyze specific psychology and social science bullying research and find out the factors and forms of relational bullying based on online data on web science. The method focused on the Scopus database and was analyzed through scoping reviews and bibliometric analysis with several publications per year for the last ten years (2013–2022). Relational bullying used NVivo 12 Plus qualitative data analysis software (QDSA) with several publications from 2015–2022. The findings showed that bullying publications continue to increase yearly from 2016 to 2022 and are still a global issue. The United States and the United Kingdom are the top two countries that contribute the most publications. VOSviewer bibliometric analysis found eight clusters due to network visualization, overlay, and density of related themes, and a research gap, interest in relational bullying for future research. The originality of this research lies in relational bullying and its supporting factors.

## 1 Introduction

Bullying in several countries currently shows an alarming condition where one in five children engages in it (1,2). Some European countries make bullying incidents one of the indicators of school performance. Experts believe that schools that allow bullying will cause mental health problems in both perpetrators and victims in the future, such as anxiety, depression, addictive substance use [3,4], child delinquency, and aggressive behavior [5]. Bullying behavior becomes a public health problem affecting mental and psychosocial health. Bullying is an act of physical and relational aggression in which a person negatively influences not only the victim and perpetrator but also others around him, such as teachers, parents, peers, and others [6]. Bullying is a social problem worldwide [7, 8] including in Indonesia. (9) stated that Indonesia is included in the emergency category of bullying, and almost every school engages in verbal and mental or psychological bullying.

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According to the National Centre for Educational Statistics [2016], a significant proportion of students, specifically 20.8%, reported bullying. The meta-analysis study showed that the prevalence of bullying behavior in Europe was 70.4%, and in the United States and the UK was 11.1%. The remaining 18.5% occurred in other countries [Australia and Canada] (10). Meanwhile, the prevalence of bullying behavior in Indonesia reached 40% [10], which occupies the highest number in ASEAN [11]. According to the International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW), most Indonesian children, or 84%, encounter violence within the school setting. The presented data reveals a disconcerting figure, given that educational institutions are intended to serve as hubs for knowledge acquisition. Consequently, this situation poses a significant detriment to the realm of education.

According to a study by [12], the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported 161 instances in education in 2018. Of these cases, 36 (22.4%) involved child victims of violence and bullying, while 41 (25.5%) were children acting as perpetrators. According to [13], the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) for education reported that bullying continue to be the prevailing transgression against children's rights within the education system in early 2019. Bullying cases in the school environment continue to be an annual problem that endangers the safety of children in education. Bullying is a serious issue that affects all parties and is not only a problem for the victims.

Further research and development are required to reduce bullying issues at the school level, which is still quite prevalent among perpetrators and victims, and identify effective solutions. Therefore, this study aims to analyze bullying to obtain novelty from issues that have not been or have been rarely studied before as a strategy to analyze any potential factors that influence bullying behavior and to look for research themes of bullying behavior that have been rarely studied. This study seeks to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of bullying research that has been published in the Scopus database in recent decades.

## **2 Literature Review**

An imbalance of power, the intention to harm, the threat of other aggressive behaviors, and terror characterize bullying. Bullying is not based on anger but on the desire to insult and demean others [14]. [15] defined bullying as repeated oppression, both physically and mentally, by individuals or groups that have higher power against individuals or groups that have lower power. Bullying is a recurring pattern of aggressive conduct directed towards one or more individuals, rendering the target unable to evade, halt, or shield themselves from the impact of such behavior [16]. [17] divided bullying into two: social and relational bullying, which is indicated by specific behaviors to injure or cause harm to targets related to their peers. The other form is indirect bullying, which occurs without the victim knowing by spreading gossip about the victim [17]. The typology of aggression and bullying, according to [16], explains the traditional type of bullying that usually appears

### **1.1. Types of Bullying**

#### **1.1.1. Physical bullying**

Physical bullying includes the behavior of hitting, kicking, punching, taking, or damaging items owned by the victim, as well as locking the victim indoors. Another behavior included in physical bullying is extortion, which is the threat of violence to the

victim so that the victim gives money or something. The threat comes with intimidating gestures and body language. When disapproval becomes a dispute that develops into a fight, this does not become bullying due to the lack of helplessness intention of the victim and the absence of differences in power levels.

### *1.1.2. Verbal bullying*

The most prevalent form of bullying is verbal bullying, which frequently occurs in public and with little effort on the perpetrator's part. Verbal forms of bullying include seductive, mocking, threatening, calling with injurious calls, insulting, and calling with hurtful words with themes of sexual orientation, ethnic group, culture, or learning difficulties.

### *1.1.3. Social exclusion*

Social exclusion is the treatment of systematically removing someone from their social group or being intimidated from their group directly by removing the victim or indirectly by influencing other group members to ostracize the victim.

### *1.1.4. Indirect bullying*

Indirect bullying includes spreading bad news and inviting others not to play with someone [the victim]. Another form of indirect bullying is to lie, spread false rumors about him, or send certain notes to keep others from liking him.

## **1.2. Factors that Influence Bullying**

There are three major types of bullying [16], namely:

### *1.2.1. Personnel factor*

Bullying is associated with a callous emotional trait, psychopathic tendencies, flaunting masculine traits, delinquency, an anti-social personality, and being prone to pressure, anxiety, and depression. Although several studies found that bullies have a higher level of social intelligence and social status, the researchers also distinguished bullies into two groups: bullies who are separate from the social world and those who are integrated with the social world around them [18].

### *1.2.2. Family factors*

Bullying is associated with various family characteristics, such as family members involved in gangs, unfavorable family environments, parental conflicts, domestic violence, inadequate parental communication, insufficient emotional support from parents, authoritarian parenting styles, inappropriate disciplinary practices, and parental abuse [18].

### *1.2.3. Interpersonal factors*

Relationships in peer groups are hierarchical; such interaction is characterized by exchanges designed to obtain and maintain status. Adolescents argue that when an individual's position rises, another individual experiences a decrease in position, so to maintain his position, the individual or group can give rise to aggressive behavior. Groups of friends between adolescents generate pressure to adjust to being the same as other

students and gain and maintain a position in the social hierarchy. Adolescents spend much time engaging in social interactions with peers within educational institutions, residential areas, communities, and online platforms. Notably, instances of bullying predominantly manifest within the framework of these interpersonal relationships. Forming friendships with aggressive individuals increases bullying issues [18].

### **3 Method**

The study employed a three-step approach to align with the research objectives, which involved doing a scoping review using the methodology proposed by [19]. A scoping review is a research methodology that aims to comprehensively summarise and address a substantial study area, encompassing a wide range of studies, publications, methodologies, hypotheses, and existing evidence [20]. In a more critical vein, a scoping review can identify areas of study that require attention while maintaining the integrity of research robustness and comprehensive quality assessment. During this phase, the research questions are formulated, data sources and software mapping tools are chosen, search algorithms are proposed, and data is acquired from databases [19,20].

In addition, in the second stage, the researchers conducted a bibliometric analysis of the data from the review. The efficiency of previous research can be assessed using a literature review and meta-research when the number of publications and related citations is minimal. Due to social media platforms, academics can study alternative metrics, or altmetrics, for a complete picture of the effects of research beyond the usual size, such as articles, citations, and more, because it is relatively easy to use a quantitative approach to evaluate many publications, as in the case of this research carried out in examining published articles. Bibliometrics encompass a range of methodologies used to evaluate the scholarly impact of research publications, with the ability to be applied across several levels of analysis, ranging from individual authors, thematic areas, and journals to broader scales such as fields of study, nations, and global mapping. Using bibliometric science mapping tools, one can analyze the levels of various research subjects, publications, and citations at the level of authors, journals, institutions, and countries related to each other and show the findings visually [21].

Furthermore, in the third stage, the data was processed using qualitative data software analysis (QDSA), NVivo 12 Plus, and VOSViewer, which helps analyze tools that can read the text and content of qualitative data [22], aiming to support the results of previously conducted analyses using VOSViewer bibliometric analysis.

### **4 Research Strategy**

The authors entered the title "bullying" in the [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com) database by limiting the time of 2013–2022 publications, specifically in psychology and social sciences, using English by filtering relevant keywords, including 1780 articles. Next, the authors extracted the co-authorship and co-occurrence to search for bibliographies and data folders in the Scopus database in Ris and CSV Excel and filtered items related to themes relevant to the research to obtain the results of network visualization, overlays, and density to find future research gaps and factors that can be analyzed with predetermined themes [21].

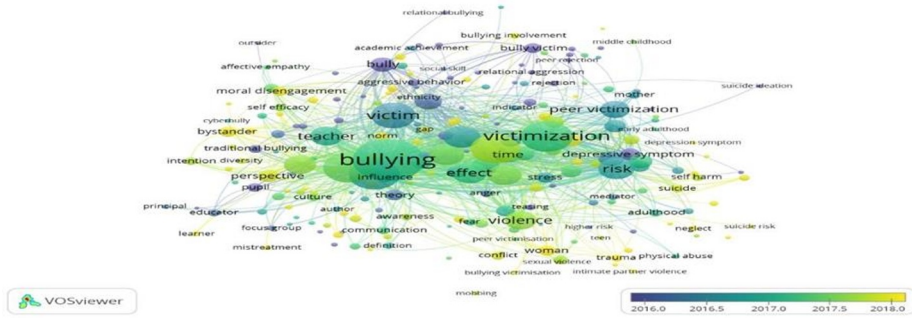
After getting interesting novelty results from previous studies, the authors conducted a database search on [www.scopus.com](http://www.scopus.com) using the keyword "bullying AND" relational. With a time between 2015 and 2022, the keyword "articles and subjects of the psychology area" made it easier to classify based on the needs of the study. The authors obtained 236 Scopus database articles. Next, look for secondary data on the official website: <https://bankdata.kpai.go.id/KPAI>. Data processing was facilitated through NVivo 12 Plus



anxiety, stress, drug use, suicide attempts, experiences of victimization, victimization of violence, women, men, young adults, mobbing, suicide, risk factors, and effects. Cluster 2 includes awareness, bullying, hallmarks, bullying prevention, communication, control groups, complexity, culture, differences, educators, effectiveness, exclusions, experimental groups, focus groups, homophobia bullying, implementation, influence, knowledge, learners, meaning, negative impacts, peer abuse, personality, prejudice, pressure, elementary school, pupils, school violence, society, student, teacher, university, school, student, welfare, violent behavior, school bullying, school safety, school context, school environment, principal.

Cluster 3 includes acceptance, adolescence, aggression, aggressive behavior, aggressor, anti-social behavior, behavioral problems, bullying experiences, early adolescence, early childhood, primary school, emotional regulation, gaps, indicators, internalization problems, middle childhood, mother, norms, peer acceptance, peer group, peer rejection, peer relations, peer reports, peer victims, school bullying victims, self-reports, similarities, social relationships, social skills, social status, teacher reports, young adolescents, suicidal ideation. Cluster 4 includes adolescents, affective empathy, anger, bullying situations, observers, social media, cyber aggression, cyber victims, delinquency, early adolescence, emotions, empathy, fear, intention, motivation, negative emotions, offenders, outsiders, participant roles, peer aggression, perspective, positive relationships, assuming, grief, high school, students, self-efficacy, self-report size, social exclusion, traditional bullying, victimization, moral release, cyber victimization, cyberbullying. Cluster 5 includes perpetrator, victim, bullying behavior, intimidation involvement, behavioral problems, emotional problems, ethnicity, functioning, further research, impulsivity, negative effects, problems, peers, relational bullying, social context, social defeat, and social interaction. Cluster 6 includes academic achievement, bullying behavior, bullying dimensions, bullying factors, low self-esteem, high school, high school students, relationships, self-esteem, sensations, social support, structural equations, ridicule, and weight. Cluster 7 includes victims of bullying, conflict, cyber victimization, future research, loneliness, parents, peer victimization, and victimization. Cluster 8 includes determinant.

Extensive research has been conducted on bullying, particularly in Western nations. Over the course of several decades, numerous studies have been conducted examining various aspects related to bullying. These studies have explored variables contributing to bullying, the consequences and risk factors associated with victimization, the behaviors exhibited by offenders, the effects on victims and teachers, and the influence of ethnicity or culture. Additionally, research has also investigated aggressive behavior and other related elements. According to [23], bullying can be characterized as a series of hostile behaviors perpetrated regularly by an individual or a collective entity, stemming from an inherent power disparity among the participants engaged in the act. Based on VOSviewer analysis, bullying research has been developed in Western countries such as America, England, the Netherlands, Australia, Spain, Canada, and several other Asian countries. Further studies are needed, for example, studies in Asian countries, to see space for future research.



**Fig. 2.** Bullying Overlay Visualization

The results of the development of bullying research in the West can be seen in the many publications of these developments. Figure 2 shows that the bullying topic published in several studies is based on research development. There are several themes for future research, such as relational bullying, the negative impact of physical bullying (suicide), the influence of outsiders, the experience of bullying in childhood, the influence of the principal's policies, research on bullying in childhood, and mobbing behavior, which still has room for further research.

Relational bullying is a threatening attitude, spreading negative issues so that peers' rejection of socializing occurs by ignoring or ostracizing [24,25]. The authors' interest is in relational bullying, as this behavior is often taken less seriously than other forms of bullying, as supported by studies in the West that identify relational bullying as the mildest and least serious form of bullying [26–29]. Bullying behavior will continue if relational bullying is considered normal in a school setting. Educators or teachers feel a lack of empathy for victims of relational bullying [26,29]. Undefined behavior can sometimes be the root of an ongoing problem and will not be resolved.



**Fig. 3.** Bullying Density Visualization

Figure 3 depicts a concise visualization that encapsulates the primary areas of research that have garnered significant attention in recent decades. The findings indicate that prevalent topics in bullying research in Western countries revolve around themes such as bullying itself, individuals who experience bullying, the consequences and adverse variables associated with victimization, and the relationship between bullying and acts of violence. Other related themes, such as culture, ethnicity, self-efficacy, empathy, social status, relational bullying, relational aggression, mobbing behavior, outsider bullying, and bullying victims, are still low in the publication.

## 1.4. Discussion

Bullying exists in the education system worldwide and always increases every year. Bullying is a serious form of school violence in several countries, including Indonesia. One of the main problems in modern society is aggressive behavior among adolescents. Aggressive behavior can take many forms, including aggression towards humans and other living beings [30]. After several published cases of juvenile suicide linked to victimization and bullying, national attention has been directed to deep public health issues resulting from bullying behavior [31]. According to Wang et al. [2014], bullying is a pattern of recurrent aggressive behaviors perpetrated by an individual or a collective entity, stemming from an inherent power disparity between the parties engaged in the act. [32] divide bullying into four categories: physical, verbal, relational, and cyberbullying. Furthermore, [16] explained the traditional forms of aggression and bullying typologies: psychological, verbal, social exclusion, and indirect bullying.

According to a longitudinal study by [3], bullying has enduring consequences on various aspects of individuals' lives, including their physical health, emotional well-being [34], mental health, and other social indicators. Relational bullying is characterized by deliberate actions aimed at causing harm to individuals through the strategic manipulation of peer relationships and undermining their acceptance within social groups [33]. Furthermore, [34] and [25] explained that relational bullying is a threatening attitude, spreading negative issues so that there is peer rejection in socializing by ignoring or ostracizing. Relational bullying has an ambiguous meaning with indirect social aggression comprehensively [34]. Relational bullying includes direct and indirect behavior [35].

Relational bullying is commonly perceived as being comparatively less severe and less detrimental, necessitating a reduced level of intervention compared to alternative manifestations of bullying. Several studies have been conducted in the United States [26,36] focusing on the topic. Similarly, research has been conducted in Australia [27] and the United States [29,37], shedding light on the subject matter. Relational bullying frequently manifests covertly, evading detection, prolonging the victimization, and exacerbating the distress experienced by the target [38]. However, bullying behavior will continue if relational bullying is considered normal in a school setting, as supported by [39,40] mentioning that students believe their teachers do not care much about relational bullying and believe victims will not report those behaviors, which can further perpetuate other bullying behaviors and their implications on adolescent health and well-being.

According to previous research by [41,42], relational bullying exhibits a greater detrimental effect than other types of bullying. In a study conducted in Australia, about 10,000 teenagers were examined to investigate the effects of social exclusion on their psychological well-being. The findings revealed that individuals who encountered social exclusion reported higher levels of psychological distress and lower emotional well-being or happiness [45] when compared to those who suffered physical and verbal bullying [38]. According to a study conducted in the United States, victims of relational bullying were found to be significant indicators of somatic symptoms [43] and subsequent physical health issues in later stages of life [43] compared to other forms of bullying. In addition, Thomas et al. proposed that disseminating rumors has a more pronounced impact on females' psychological distress than males [38]. Baier et al. indicated that there exist gender disparities in the manifestation of psychological symptoms. Specifically, their findings implied that females prefer to exhibit symptoms associated with internalization, while boys are more prone to displaying symptoms related to externalization [44]. Crick and Grotpeter claim that conventional beliefs around relational bullying mostly pertain to manifestations

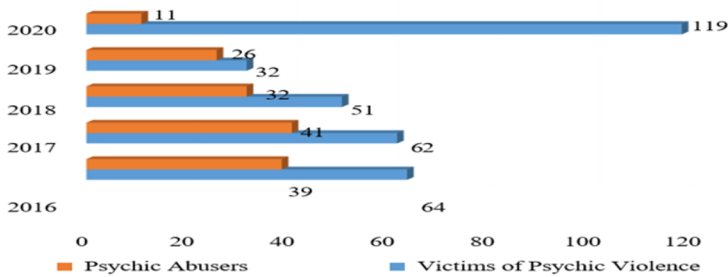


of bullying behavior among females [33]. Adolescents or individuals in an educational setting may not consistently acknowledge relational bullying and hesitate to disclose such incidents to adults with greater maturity. This intervention investigates the underlying causes and mechanisms of relational bullying in teenagers, enhancing our comprehension of the intricate dynamics involved in bullying behaviors [45]. In contemporary times, bullying has extended to online platforms, challenging adolescents who cannot disengage from their digital engagements [46]. The significance of educators in cultivating a favorable school atmosphere to mitigate instances of bullying holds consequences for developing and implementing school-based initiatives aimed at preventing and addressing bullying behavior [47].

#### 1.4.1. Relational Bullying research trends

##### 1.4.1.1. Relational Bullying Violence on the Psychic

The document data was viewed based on the year with the number of victims and perpetrators of psychic violence in the last five years, from 2016 to 2020. The amount of secondary data obtained from the KPAI data bank has been processed by researchers based on classification, resulting in 328 victims with several cases of psychic violence and 149 cases of psychic abusers.



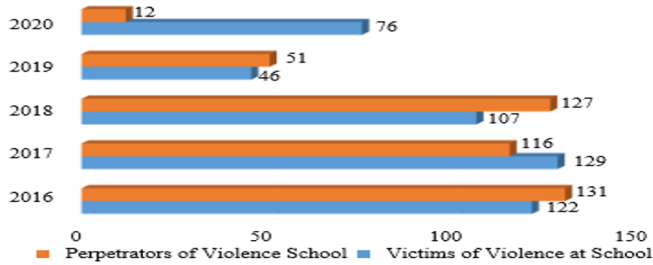
**Fig. 4.** Children Facing the Law

Source: Indonesian Child Protection Commission (*KPAI Data Bank*)

Figure 4 explains that the number of victims of psychic violence in 2016 was 64; in 2017, there were 62; in 2018, there were 51; in 2019, there were 32; and in 2020, there were 119 victims of relational bullying. As for the number of perpetrators of psychic violence in 2016, there were 39 perpetrators of psychic violence. In 2017, there were 41 perpetrators of psychic violence; in 2018, the number of perpetrators was 32. In 2019, there were 26, and in 2020, there were 11 perpetrators of psychic violence.

#### 1.4.2. Relational bullying and violence in schools

The document data was viewed based on the year with the number of victims and perpetrators of violence in schools in the last five years, from 2016 to 2020. The number of secondary data obtained from the KPAI data bank that has been processed by researchers based on classification shows 480 total victims of violence in schools, and the number of abusers is 437.

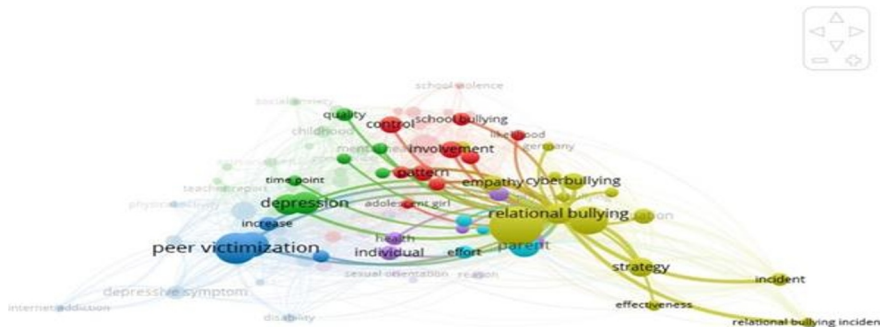
**Fig. 5.** Education

Source: Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI Data Bank)

Figure 5 explains that the number of victims of school violence in 2016 was 122; in 2017, there were 129 victims in schools; in 2018, there were 107. In 2019, there were 46; in 2020, there were 76 school victims. The two perpetrators of violence to victims in 2016 were 131. The number of perpetrators of violence in schools in 2017 was 116, 107 in 2018, 51 in 2019, and 12 perpetrators of violence in schools in 2020.

#### 1.4.3. Network Visualisation of Relational Bullying Factor Themes

This section delineates the central areas of interconnected research themes, examining impact analysis and factors associated with relational bullying across various countries. The analysis is based on a comprehensive dataset comprising 236 articles from the Scopus database. The search used "bullying" and "relational" within the specified timeframe of 2016 to 2020. The present paper employs VOSviewer software for data analysis, which facilitates data visualization by identifying co-citation clusters and co-occurrence networks.

**Fig. 6.** Visualization of Relational Bullying Networks

Source: Processed by Researchers Using VOSviewer

Picture 6 illustrates that the factors and impacts of relational bullying have been seen with the visualization of VOSviewer software, meaning that the factors and impacts of the occurrence of victims and the presence of perpetrators in relational bullying are influenced by factors such as school bullying, relational bullying experiences, cyberbullying, parenting, empathy and anti-social attitudes and personalities, teachers, school climate, and others.



writing the title, relational bullying in adolescents was most often discussed in the writing of previous studies. The impact of weakening actions involves ostracizing, gossiping, inviting others to mock one of their friends, looking cynical, degrading self-esteem, and making unpleasant body gestures. According to Fathoni and Setiawati, relational bullying is classified as follows [49].



**Fig. 9.** Classifications of relational bullying

**Source:** Processed by the Author

Relational forms of bullying exist for both perpetrators and victims. Furthermore, the psychological impact on victims of relational bullying is that the perpetrator is anxious, hurt, disappointed, and stressed, and victims of stress, mental disorders, pain, and sadness. Bullying is caused by several factors, such as peer association, internal and personal factors of the perpetrator, having been a victim, grudging with the victim, being a quiet child, wanting pleasure, seeking attention, and seeking recognition in his environment. Relational bullying involves gossiping, ostracism, seniority, gangs, and ridiculing. Bullying is carried out physically by gripping, hitting, fighting, and attacking [50,51]. Knowledge of relational bullying is expected to be important in preventing this issue.

## 6 Conclusion

The data analysis showed the classification of relational bullying based on the victim and the perpetrator's presence. The findings showed that bullying is caused by several factors: internal and personal factors of the perpetrator or victim, bullying experiences, desire for revenge, external factors, teacher peers, family, and social media. Relational forms of bullying include ostracizing, gossiping, inviting others to mock one of their friends, looking cynical, demeaning self-esteem, and making unpleasant body gestures. The psychological impact on the victim includes cognitive, psychological, and social factors (the perpetrator is anxious, hurt, disappointed, and stressed; the victim is stressed, mentally disturbed, sick, and sad).

Based on a literature review and analysis, adolescent bullying behavior in Indonesia has an impact due to the victim's lack of attention and self-development, which makes the victim commit unexpected actions such as despair, unconfident, being absent from school, depression, and suicide attempts. Therefore, action is needed from schools, academics, and government agencies who must take part in new policy innovations and empirical research that is relevant to be able to minimize bullying behavior that almost occurs in every school. This study still has limited data sources and limited researchers to see a comparison of smart analysis development using the Web of Science. The authors hope this study will further conduct an explicit empirical test of the conceptual framework of the impact and factors of relational bullying in Indonesia with Web of Science data. Then, the results of empirical research can be used as evaluation materials for schools and governments to make early interventions and anti-bullying policies in each school.

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