

The Role of the School Climate to Moderate an Agreeableness Personality Trait on Bullies

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Nowadays, a number of programs have been implemented to anticipate bullying. However, they are not effective yet to prevent bullying from happening despite the fact that bullying has negatively impacted on things that may not be underestimated, either short-term ones (being afraid to go to school, feeling insecurity, feeling isolated) or long-term ones (affecting the formation of a negative self-concept, depression, emotional problems and a desire to commit a suicide). This study was aimed at examining a model in which the impact of an agreeableness personality trait on bullying is moderated by the school climate. The samples of this study were 723 Senior High School students from five administrative municipalities in Jakarta Capital Special Region, Indonesia. Moreover, the author employed a purposive sampling technique. NEO PI-R, School climate scale, and My life at school check served as the measuring instruments. This study found out that an agreeableness personality trait moderated by the school climate negatively impacted more on the bullies than the direct impact of an agreeableness straight to the bullies. Therefore, the author drew a conclusion that the relations between an agreeableness personality trait and bullying could be enriched theoretically, and could be optimised by including a school climate as the mediator.

Key words: *Agreeableness Personality Trait, School Climate, Bullying.*

Introduction

In general, the public's growing awareness and, specifically, the educators' awareness of the importance of building students' healthy mentality have made any forms of aggressive behaviours in schools receive a lot of attention. Nowadays, bullying is handled seriously. In several schools, those who are found out to let bullying take place either during the new students' orientation period or during daily learning and teaching activities, where there are interactions among the students, must get ready to face a firm sanction from the pertinent

Education Office. It takes various forms from giving a reprimand to the teachers, students or Principals to a heavy sanction such as getting transferred or even a termination of employment.

Different from other kinds of aggressive behaviours, bullying has its own characteristics. In bullying, there is an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim (Paramo, 2012). Moreover, bullying is systematically perpetrated and takes place repeatedly (Rigby, 2012). A study conducted by Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber (2011) revealed that bullying could negatively impact on a student's self-esteem, increase social isolation, generate reclusive behaviour and make a teenager vulnerable to depression and feelings of insecurity. In more extreme cases, bullying may result in a teenager's making a foolhardy act or even may result in killing or his or her committing a suicide. Meanwhile, from the bully's side, he or she could grow up into an individual who had a difficulty to cooperate, tended to be manipulative when nurturing any relations to other people, was stubborn and had a dominating attitude. If not seriously handled, he or she would possibly commit a crime in the future when he or she became an adult. Those behavioural characteristics above referred to certain personality profiles that constitute one's traits (Feist, J; Feist, 2009).

Personality psychologists notice that personality traits are affected by one's basic temperament. Allport (in Feist & Feist, 2009) names that basic component a trait. A trait is a coherent, core part of a personality. A trait is one's potential to respond aimed at consistent parts of behaviours. The trait concept of the big-five personality is an approach relatively often employed in studies on human personality (McCrae, & Costa, 2003). One of the personality traits highlighted by many researchers due to its significant impact on various human behaviours is an agreeableness trait. An agreeableness trait shows friendly, gentle, trustful to others, tolerant, and kind-hearted traits. In regard to bullying, a person with an agreeableness trait is highly likely to be able to avoid bullying.

The author expects that this presentation on this agreeableness trait may represent specific factors of a bully's personality trait. However, since a trait itself is a global construct, the employment of a moderator variable will provide stronger information to explain the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying. School climate was selected to explain the roles of an agreeableness trait in social interactions since it was a social structure representing a complex pattern among interpersonal experience, the impact of environment and the impact of culture (Smith, 2016). Bullying at school could not be separated from the school context, as well as the cultures and the habits taking place there. For the past years, several scientists have deemed the school climate to be a factor in determining the appearance of bullying (Ryan, 2009; Douglass, 2009). Those studies recommend that a main step to overcome bullying at school is conducting a school climate improvement program. That program will include policies to overcome bullying by way of fostering the teachers' and the students' awareness

of bullying, increasing responsibilities for factors resulting in bullying, and supporting the development of pro-social behaviours (Rahmawati, 2016). To teenage students, peer relations based on mutual respect, mutual appreciation, the enforcement of the principles of cooperation and a willingness to help one another will be important aspects of handling the bullying cases. Teachers' caring and respect are also required in order that students will receive an emotional support to display their positive manners and to enforce them to condition their behaviours of mutual appreciation when they nurture any relations to other people. Moreover, enforcing school rules and regulations and social norms that have been approved upon to be behavioural signs at school should be formulated into a school's goals and norms that everybody complies with (Rahmawati, 2018).

Based on the elaboration above, this study tried to explore an agreeableness trait factor moderated by a school climate. The hypotheses that were developed were as follows:

H1: An agreeableness trait negatively impacted on bullying

H2: A school climate moderated the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying

Senior high school students in Jakarta Capital Special Region were selected as the population in this study, taking into consideration that Indonesian teenagers especially those still in Senior High Schools tended to follow lifestyles, customs and manners shown by Senior High School students from Indonesia's big cities. Since they lived in the capital of Indonesia, Senior High School students in Jakarta Capital Special Region were deemed to be a barometer of Senior High School Students from all over Indonesia, so their daily behaviours served as a role model to other students. This study examined an agreeableness trait on bullying moderated by a school climate. The study's model was described in the framework below:

The personality trait was represented by an agreeableness trait; the school climate was observed from the school's goals and norms dimension, the teachers' caring and respect, and the peer relations; while the bullying at school was observed from the bullies' side.

Research Methods

This study employed a quantitative method examining the hypotheses to observe the relations among the variables. Measurements of the study's variables were based on an ex post facto condition namely measuring the subjects' psychological aspects at a certain time, so it could be classified as an explanatory study (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2013).

The population of this study was Senior High School Students living in the Jakarta Capital Special Region. Due to its broad population, we took samples using a purposive random

sampling technique (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005). One sub-district of each municipality in the Jakarta Capital Special Region – South Jakarta, East Jakarta, West Jakarta, North Jakarta and Central Jakarta, was randomly selected. Afterwards, one Senior High School in that sub-district was selected. There were 723 Senior High School students who participated with the distribution as follows:

Table 1: Data of the study's participants

No	Municipality	Sub-district	School's Name*	Participants	
				f	%
1	North Jakarta	Kelapa Gading	SMAN A	131	18
2	Ist Jakarta	Tambora	SMAN B	164	23
3	Central Jakarta	Sawah Besar	SMAN C	68	9
4	East Jakarta	Pasar Rebo	SMAN D	196	27
5	South Jakarta	Cilandak	SMAN E	164	23
	Total number			723	100

**The schools' names were disguised*

After securing permits from the pertinent Education Offices and principals, the author collected the data for approximately 1 month. The students made as the respondents were the eleventh graders since we took into consideration that they knew their schoolmates better than did the tenth graders. The primary data collected in this study consisted of the respondents' ages, sexes, and their school origins. Meanwhile, a NEO PI-R questionnaire from McCrae & Costa (2003) was employed to explore the agreeableness trait. Facets in the agreeableness trait included trustful, cooperative, soft-hearted, courteous, forgiving and tolerant. A "My life at school checklist" questionnaire was employed to explore the bullying comprised of statement of items measuring physical, nonphysical, and relational kinds of bullying, while a school climate scale measuring instrument was used to explore the school climate on the school's goals and norms, the teachers' caring and respect and the peer relations dimensions.

The author translated the measuring instrument into Indonesian language and conducted face validity and content validity examination processes. After finishing the validity examination processes, the author went on to conducting a reliability test on statements that had already been valid. The author conducted the test using an alpha cronbach internal consistency processed with a version-20 SPSS program and achieved the value of alpha-cronbach amounting to $\alpha=0.759$ for the agreeableness trait. Those figures showed that the personality trait scale had a level of reliability deemed to be in a good category (Urbina, 2004). A sample statement for the agreeableness personality trait was: "I am trying not to hurt other people".

The measuring instrument was designed with ordinal scales and the answer choices varied from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

The mediator variable in this study was a school climate. This school climate measuring instrument was developed from the School Social Competence Development scale (Orpinas & Raczynski, 2016). The author conducted an analysis theory and generated a School Clime Scale measuring instrument synthesis consisting of three dimensions, each of which contained 10 statement items: (a) the teachers' caring and respect; (b) the school's goals and norms; and (c) the peer relations. This School Clime Scales consisted of six Likert-type scales, namely "strongly disagree – disagree – neither agree nor disagree - agree – strongly agree". A sample statement for the teachers' caring and respect dimension was: "*The teachers in this school appreciate their students' achievement*"; a sample statement for the school's goals and norms was: "*The rules and regulations in this school make the students safe*"; moreover, a sample statement for the peer relations dimension was: "*The students in this school ignore one another*". The bullying measuring instrument in this study was focused on the bullies using the bullying scale adapted from *My life at school checklist* (Arora, 1994). This measuring instrument had widely been employed in measuring bullying at school. Like the stages in the previous measuring instrument test, the validity and reliability test processes of this measuring instrument went through similar stages. The reliability test through an internal consistency discovered the alpha-cronbach value amounting to $\alpha=0.861$. This meant that the result of the reliability test of this bullying measuring instrument fell into a good category (Kaplan & Saccuzzo, 2004). A sample statement of *My life at school checklist* for the physical bullying dimension was: "For the past 6 months, I have rudely pushed a friend"; a sample statement for the non-physical bullying dimension was: "I make fun of a friend"; meanwhile, a sample statement for the relational bullying dimension was: "For the past 6 months, I have also been hostile to another student being gossiped about by his or her friends". The answer alternatives in this measuring instrument used ordinal scales, and they varied from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Value

No	Variable	Cronbrach Alpha Value	Minimum Cronbrach Alpha
1.	Agreeableness Trait	0.759	0.700
2.	School Climate	0.908	0.700
3.	Bullying	0.861	0.700

Source: Data processed by researcher

Results and Discussion

The participants in this study were 723 Senior High School students from five municipalities in the Jakarta Capital Special Region. Based on the distribution of the agreeable trait, the school climate and the bullies' scales, the figure below showed the data on this study's variables:

We classified each of the study's variables into three categories, namely low (the scores ranged from 1.00 to 2.66), medium (the scores ranged from 2.67 to 4.33), and high (the scores ranged from 4.34 to 6.00). Based on that classification, in Figure 1, we could observe the distribution of each of the study's variable scores based on those categories. For the agreeableness trait variables, the respondents generally were in the medium category ($n = 521$ or 72%), followed by the high category ($n = 176$ or 24%), and followed by the low category ($n = 26$ or 4%). Meanwhile for the school climate variable, most of the students were in the high category ($n = 544$ or 75%), followed by the medium category ($n = 177$ or 24%), and very few in the low category ($n = 2$ or 0.2%). For the last variable, the bully variable, most of the students were in the low category ($n = 568$ or 79%), followed by the medium category ($n = 149$ or 21%) and only six students (0.1%) in the high category.

Afterwards, we moved on to conducting the next test, hypothesis test 1, employing a simple regression technique to observe the impact of the agreeableness trait variable on the bullies. The table below showed the results.

Table 4: Results of Simple Regression Analysis

Coefficients ^a						
Model	B	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
			Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	44.321	2.606		16.997	.000
	Agreeableness (x1)	-.419	.055	-.271	- 7.567	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Bully

The constant value amounting to 44.321 indicated that if the agreeableness trait variable was deemed to be constant or fixed, the average bullying amounted to 44.321 points. The regression coefficient X1 amounting to -0.419 showed that if the agreeableness trait increased by 1000 points, the bullying would decrease by 413 points. Based on Table 4, the value of X1 was -7.567 with the 0.000 significance value, much below 0.05. It meant that hypothesis 1 stating that an agreeableness trait impacted on bullying was accepted.

The following were the test results of the proposed hypothesis 2 stating that the school climate moderated the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying. The calculation results of the interaction test are as follows:

Table 5: Results of Regression Analysis

		Coefficients ^a				
		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	26.122	.477		54.792	.000
	Agreeableness (x1)	-.570	.010	-.369	-57.951	.000
	Interaction (x1*x2)	-.022	.001	.952	149.512	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Bully

The constant value amounting to 26.122 meant that every time the agreeable trait variable and the interaction variable were deemed to be constant or fixed, the average bullying amounted to 26.122 points. The regression coefficient X1 amounting to -0.570 showed that every time the agreeableness trait increased by 1000 points and the interaction variable levelled up, the bullying would decrease by 570 points. The coefficient X1*X2 amounting to -0.022 showed that every time the interaction variable increased by 1000 points, and the agreeableness trait levelled up, the bullying would decrease by 22 points. Based on Table 5, we could know that the significance value of the interaction variable amounted to 0.000, much below 0.05. It meant that hypothesis 2 stating that a school climate moderated the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying was accepted.

A partial determination coefficient was employed to know how the impact of each independent variable contributed to the dependent variable that could be known from its partial correlation in Table 6. Based on the SPSS calculation results in Table 6, we could know the value of coefficient correlation (r) of each independent variable. Moreover, we could know the impact of each independent variable, the agreeableness trait and the school climate using the $r^2 \times 100\%$ formula. Based on the partial correlation analysis results, we obtained an agreeable trait correlation coefficient amounting to -0.907, so the contribution of the agreeableness trait to the bullying amounted to $(-0.907)^2 \times 100\% = 82\%$. Based on the partial correlation analysis results, we obtained the interaction variable correlation coefficient amounting to 0.760, so the contribution of the impact of the interaction variation amounted to $(0.984)^2 \times 100\% = 97\%$.

Table 6: Results of the Partial Determination Coefficient Analysis

Coefficients ^a				
Model		Correlations		
		Zero-order	Partial	Part
1	Agreeableness (x1)	-.271	-.907	-.367
	Interaction (x1*x2)	.914	.984	.947

a. Dependent Variable: Bullies

Source: Data processed by researcher

Basically, the determination coefficient (adjusted R²) measured how far the model was capable of measuring the variations in the dependent variable. Table 6 showed that the value of adjusted R² was 0.971. It meant that 97.1% of the bullying variations could be explained by the two independent variables namely the agreeableness trait and the school climate moderation. Meanwhile, the remaining 2.9% was due to other causes outside of the model.

Table 7: Simultaneous Determination Coefficient

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.985 ^a	.971	.971	1.553

a. Predictors: (Constant), Interaction, Agreeableness

b. Dependent Variable: Bullies

Table 7 showed that the value of *adjusted* R² was 0.971. It meant that 97.1% of the bullying variations could be explained by the two independent variables namely the agreeableness trait and the school climate moderation. Meanwhile, the remaining 2.9% was due to other causes outside of the model.

In this study, we found out that the agreeable trait negatively and significantly impacted on the bullying. It meant that when the agreeableness trait was high, the bullying would be low; on the other hand, when the agreeableness trait was low, the bullying would be high. This study's findings were in accordance with that of Matthiesen & Einarsen (2007) stating that a low agreeableness trait would make a person tend to be a bully. In his study, Fitrianto (2009) also found out that the higher the agreeable trait score was, the lower the bullying score would be. A person dominated by an agreeable trait would be polite, friendly, helpful, sympathetic, always maintain harmony and be able to cooperate. With those personality traits, we could understand that the student tended not to be a bully. This is in line with Matthiesen & Einarsen (2007), and Fitrianto (2009), Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias (2018) who also stated that a bully's outstanding trait was his or her lack of empathy to other

people. A student with a low agreeableness trait was described as a not-so-friendly person who was not really able to cooperate and was not so sensitive to reading other people's emotions.

The descriptive analysis results on the participants in this study, the Senior High School students in Jakarta Capital Special Region, showed that most of the Senior High School Students in Jakarta Capital Special Region who were the participants in this study possessed a medium agreeable trait (72% of the students). Moreover, 24% of the students possessed a high agreeableness trait, and only 4% of the students possessed a low agreeable trait. It meant that, in general, Senior High School students in the Jakarta Capital Special Region were friendly, loved to cooperate, were polite and maintained the harmony between them and other people. Those personality traits prevent the students from bullying their peers. From the point of view of developmental psychology, the students in this period fell into the middle adolescence category (Santrock, 2011) marked with the growing capability of understanding their emotions. They started to be sensitive to other people's points of views and started to develop their ability to overcome negative emotions that they felt. A study conducted by McCrae & Costa (2003) showed that in the adolescence period, a person started to develop his or her skills to trust other people, his or her ability to cooperate and his or her willingness to help (Santrock, 2018). In terms of an agreeable trait, in the mid adolescence period, this trait had already been developed, yet it was not dominant yet. The agreeableness trait would become firmly developed when a teenager was in their late adolescence period. Most of the students in this study (72%) possessed a medium agreeable trait. It meant that although the students' ability to cooperate to nurture harmonious cooperation with other people was already seen, it was still being developed to achieve a mature stage.

The school climate in this study was a moderation variable strengthening the agreeableness trait on the students and minimising the bullying opportunity. A school climate is a social perception towards the school environment on dimensions as follows: firstly, a school climate is a contextual factor affecting the learning and teaching process and the students' development at school; secondly, a school climate is relatively stable from time to time; thirdly, a school climate can be felt meaningful for many of its citizens involved in it (Perlus, Brooks-Russell, Wang, & Iannotti, 2014). A school climate is the school's "heart" and "soul", which makes the teachers or the students feel something towards their school, such as delighted or the other way around (Ryan, 2009). A school that has a positive climate will invite the teachers and the students to feel comfortable when they are there and will encourage them to make their best efforts (Rahmawati, 2016). The students will be motivated to show their academic achievement; on the other hand, they will not be interested in showing their aggressiveness.

There are three main components in a school climate (Summers, 2008) related to the bullying prevention namely: (a) the teachers' caring and respect, (b) the school's goals and norms, and (c) the peer relations. A healthy school climate will become a preventive step in preventing any bullying. In a good school climate, every school's citizen has his or her own sense of responsibility and an emotional tie which makes the guiding rules and regulations consistently enforced, so all of the school's citizens will feel happy. The teachers' caring and respect component strengthens the students to develop their agreeableness trait since the teachers showed their attentions to the students' character development of supporting and cooperating with one another. The teachers usually give the students an assignment such as students' group work, counselling the students to care for their friends' difficulties or the teachers' encouraging the students to be actively involved in intra-school students' organisation's activities or any other students' activities as a form of cooperation among their peers. Meanwhile, for the school's goals and norms component, strictly enforced school's goals and norms will encourage the students to obey them. The school's goals and norms in the students' education are to encourage the students to make an outstanding achievement and optimise their competencies, by continuing to promote cooperation and good characters. By enforcing these rules and regulations, the students' agreeableness trait will obtain a positive development channel since they encourage the students to care for other people more. Moreover, for the peer relations component, the students are guided to help and appreciate their peers and to positively behave. With that guidance, we expect that the relations among the students will warmly be developed, far from destructive competitions. In the end, they will be able to develop the students' agreeableness trait.

That a school climate played a crucial role in moderating the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying was observed on how the school climate supported the development of a student's agreeableness trait, so it prevented him or her from bullying his or her peer. Theoretically, we could prove that the school climate played a crucial role in moderating the independent variable (an agreeableness trait) toward the dependent variable (bullying). This study's findings were in accordance with that of the study conducted by Perlus et al. (2014) stating the a school climate could moderate bullying toward the student's achievement. The stronger the school climate that the student perceived, the more possible he or she would avoid bullying, and the more possible he or she made a good academic achievement.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on this study, we could draw a conclusion that an agreeableness trait impacted on bullying. An agreeableness trait would negatively and significantly impact on bullying. The higher the agreeableness trait, the lower the bullying taking place against Senior High School students in Jakarta Capital Special Region. We found out that a school climate moderated the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying of Senior High School students



in the Jakarta Capital Special Region. The school climate optimised the impact of an agreeableness trait on bullying. It meant that the higher the student perceived the school climate, the stronger the impact of an agreeableness trait moved toward the negative direction, which meant it would reduce the level of a student's bullying.

In regard to this study's implications, we suggest that the school needs to think about methods that can develop its students' agreeableness trait since the students are in their middle adolescence period, where it is still possible for them to strengthen some certain positive traits. We can help them develop their agreeableness trait by giving the broadest space to them to take part in any collaborative activities with their peers either academic activities or non-academic activities such as extracurricular, intra-school students' organization's or other students' activities. If provided with appropriate channels, the students will be motivated to develop their ability to cooperate with one another, to tolerate their differences, to nurture empathy in their friendship and to overcome their weaknesses. These positive traits will help the students appreciate other people, and in the end they will make the students avoid bullying their peers.

Moreover, we should make our best efforts to empower this crucial role of a school climate that will strengthen the development of an agreeable trait. For the teachers' caring and respect aspect for instance, a school should give training to its teachers to develop their ability to nurture their warm relations to their students. Therefore, a two-way communication can be created, and it will enable the students to feel comfortable both in doing their academic duties and in nurturing their relations to other people. For the school's goals and norms component, a school may periodically monitor how far the discipline enforcement at school has been conducted, so the regulations and norms that have been approved, such as the obligation to respect other people, can be enforced at the school premises, especially that of relations among the students. Finally, for the peer relations component, the school should have a formal organisational channel and information that enable the students to be actively involved in activities with their peers. With this optimum involvement, not only do the students learn how to be academically outstanding with all the competencies that they have, but they also learn to skilfully collaborate and synergise with one another in order to achieve their common goals.

Moreover, to those researchers interested in examining personality traits, school climate, and bullying, we recommend that they take into consideration other dependent variables also impacting on bullying such as parenting styles, media development affecting cyber bullying, and the development of a student's positive characteristics such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-regulation that will minimise a student's involvement in the bullying. Besides, we can also extend the objects of this study to Elementary School and Junior High School students since bullying practices are also perpetrated by younger students. We



should take into consideration examining the study's variables to the samples found in other big cities in Indonesia and/or smaller towns and villages to observe the bullying escalation in the society.



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