

# The Influence of Empathy, School Climate, and Peer Support on Anti-Bullying Behavior among High School Students in Jeneponto Regency

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## Abstract

Bullying is a serious problem in educational settings that negatively affects students' psychological and social well-being. Anti-bullying behavior is influenced by various psychological and social factors, including empathy, school climate, and peer support. This study aimed to analyze the effects of empathy, school climate, and peer support on anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency. This study employed a quantitative approach using multiple linear regression analysis. The sample consisted of 109 students selected through proportionate stratified random sampling. Data were collected using Likert-scale questionnaires and analyzed using SPSS. The results showed that empathy had a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior ( $B = 0.166$ ;  $t = 2.235$ ;  $p = 0.028$ ), school climate also had a positive and significant effect ( $B = 0.206$ ;  $t = 2.349$ ;  $p = 0.021$ ), and peer support had a positive and significant effect and was identified as the most dominant predictor ( $B = 0.641$ ;  $t = 7.571$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). Simultaneously, empathy, school climate, and peer support significantly influenced anti-bullying behavior ( $F = 176.922$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ), with a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of 0.835, indicating that these variables explained 83.5% of the variance in students' anti-bullying behavior. These findings indicate that anti-bullying behavior is influenced by the interaction between individual psychological factors and social environmental factors. This study highlights the importance of strengthening empathy, fostering a positive school climate, and enhancing peer support in promoting anti-bullying behavior among students.

**Keywords:** Anti-Bullying Behavior; Empathy; School Climate; Peer Support; High School Students

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## INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a global phenomenon that poses a serious threat to the protection and well-being of children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) affirms that every child has the right to protection from all forms of physical and psychological violence, exploitation, and inhumane treatment (UNICEF, 2018). This international commitment has been internalized into the Indonesian legal system through Law Number 35 of 2014 on Child Protection, particularly Article 54, which stipulates that students must be protected from all forms of violence within educational settings. This provision indicates that schools, as educational institutions, have a fundamental responsibility to provide a safe and supportive environment for students' development. However, empirical evidence indicates that bullying remains a serious issue within the Indonesian education system.

National data show an alarming prevalence of bullying. The 2021 National Survey on Children and Adolescents' Life Experiences (SNPHAR) reported that 20% of boys and 25.4% of girls aged 13–17 had experienced violence. Furthermore, the 2018 SNPHAR found that one in three adolescents in Indonesia had experienced violence, with peers identified as the primary perpetrators (Prastiwi, 2025). Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Indonesian Teachers Association Federation (FSGI) also indicate a significant increase in bullying cases in schools, rising from 119 cases in 2020 to 1,478 cases in 2023 (Fitriani, 2025). These findings suggest that bullying is a systemic phenomenon and remains a major challenge in the education sector. The impact of bullying extends beyond the victims, affecting students' psychological development, mental health, and academic achievement. The 2018 PISA study found that bullying experiences were associated with lower academic performance, particularly in reading literacy. In addition, bullying has been linked to increased risks of mental health disorders, social isolation, and even suicide (Syah, 2015).

To effectively address bullying, a comprehensive understanding of the psychological and social factors influencing anti-bullying behavior is required. One important factor is empathy, defined as an individual's ability to understand and share the emotional experiences of others (Davis, 1983). Empathy plays a critical role in promoting prosocial behavior and reducing aggressive tendencies. Individuals with higher levels of empathy are more likely to recognize victims' suffering and are more motivated to help and reject bullying behavior (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; van Noorden et al., 2015; Nickerson et al., 2015). In addition to individual factors, environmental factors also play a significant role, particularly school climate. A positive school climate, characterized by healthy interpersonal relationships, a sense of safety, and social support, has been shown to reduce bullying and promote students' prosocial behavior (Sembiring & Tarigan, 2023). Furthermore, peer support is another important factor, as adolescents are strongly influenced by peer groups in shaping their attitudes and social behavior. Positive peer support can serve as a protective factor that promotes anti-bullying behavior and reduces the risk of

involvement in bullying (Wills & Shinar, 2000; Ramadani et al., 2024).

Although numerous studies have examined the relationships between empathy, school climate, peer support, and bullying behavior, most have investigated these variables separately. Research integrating these three variables into a comprehensive model to explain anti-bullying behavior remains limited, particularly within the Indonesian context. Moreover, studies examining anti-bullying behavior in regions with specific social and educational characteristics, such as Jeneponto Regency, are still scarce. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of South Sulawesi Province (2025) indicate that the average years of schooling in Jeneponto Regency is only 7.01 years, one of the lowest in the province (BPS Sulsel, 2025). In addition, several cases of student violence reported in Jeneponto highlight that bullying remains a real concern in the local educational environment. These conditions underscore the importance of research that considers local contextual factors in understanding the determinants of students' anti-bullying behavior.

Based on the above background, this study aims to analyze the effects of empathy, school climate, and peer support on anti-bullying behavior among senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency. This study is expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide an empirical foundation for developing effective bullying prevention interventions, particularly in regions with similar social and educational characteristics to Jeneponto Regency.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Based on the background above, the hypothesis in this study is as follows:

H<sub>1</sub>: Empathy has a significant effect on anti-bullying behavior.

H<sub>2</sub>: School climate has a significant effect on anti-bullying behavior.

H<sub>3</sub>: Peer support has a significant effect on anti-bullying behavior.

H<sub>4</sub>: Empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously have a significant effect on anti-bullying behavior.

## **METHOD**

### **Design**

This study employed a quantitative approach using a causal-comparative (ex-post facto) research design. According to Sugiyono (2021), quantitative research is a method that relies on numerical data or scores that are analyzed using statistical techniques. The quantitative approach was selected because this study aimed to test hypotheses and examine relationships among variables using numerical data analyzed statistically. The ex-post facto design was chosen because the independent variables were not manipulated by the researcher but were observed as they naturally occurred to determine their effects on the dependent variable. Multiple linear regression analysis was used to examine the effects of empathy, school climate, and peer support on anti-bullying behavior, both partially and simultaneously.

### **Participants**

The population of this study consisted of all public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency, totaling 6,989 students based on data from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education Data Portal (Kemendikdasmen, 2025). The sample consisted of 109 students from six public senior high schools in Jeneponto

Regency, namely SMAN 4 Jeneponto, SMAN 5 Jeneponto, SMAN 7 Jeneponto, SMAN 9 Jeneponto, SMAN 12 Jeneponto, and SMAN 14 Jeneponto. The sample was selected using proportionate stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation of each school as a population stratum.

### Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale to measure four research variables: empathy, school climate, peer support, and anti-bullying behavior. The instruments were developed based on relevant theoretical frameworks, including Davis (1983) for empathy ( $X_1$ ), Thapa et al. (2013) or school climate ( $X_2$ ), Cutrona dan Suhr (1992) for peer support ( $X_3$ ), dan Wang et al. (2023) for anti-bullying behavior ( $Y$ ). The questionnaire was distributed online using the Google Forms platform to facilitate efficient data collection and processing and to minimize the risk of data loss. Prior to the main data collection, the instrument was pilot-tested on 30 students to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement items.

### Data Collection

Data were collected through observation, questionnaires, and documentation during the period from October to December 2025. Observation was conducted to obtain preliminary information regarding the school environment and students' social interactions. The questionnaire served as the primary data collection instrument, using a five-point Likert scale to measure empathy, school climate, peer support, and anti-bullying behavior. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents in classrooms using Google Forms based on the predetermined sample. In addition, documentation was used as supporting data to ensure the validity and completeness of the data collection process.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analysis procedures included:

#### Research Instrument Testing

##### Validity Test

The validity test was conducted to ensure that the research instrument accurately measured the intended variables. An instrument was considered valid if the significance value was less than 0.05 or if the calculated correlation coefficient ( $r$ -count) was greater than the  $r$ -table value, indicating that each item adequately represented the research variables (Ghozali, 2018). The results of the validity test for the research instruments are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Validity Test Results

Instrument Item	r count				r table	Description
	Empathy ( $X_1$ )	School Climate ( $X_2$ )	Peer Support ( $X_3$ )	Anti-Bullying Behavior ( $Y$ )		
1	0,483	0,490	0,740	0,616	0,186	Valid
2	0,556	0,636	0,686	0,629	0,186	Valid
3	0,591	0,619	0,718	0,664	0,186	Valid
4	0,644	0,512	0,698	0,716	0,186	Valid
5	0,567	0,685	0,654	0,678	0,186	Valid

6	0,539	0,643	0,535	0,584	0,186	Valid
7	0,677	0,466	0,696	0,712	0,186	Valid
8	0,638	0,655	0,727	0,597	0,186	Valid
9	0,442	0,688	0,648	0,700	0,186	Valid
10	0,658	0,698	0,648	0,615	0,186	Valid
11	0,507	0,605	0,673	0,642	0,186	Valid
12	0,642	0,581	0,659	0,681	0,186	Valid
13	0,735	0,475	0,671	0,660	0,186	Valid
14	0,660	0,688	0,584	0,683	0,186	Valid
15	0,606	0,760	0,628	0,706	0,186	Valid
16	0,592	0,637	0,764	0,704	0,186	Valid
17	0,490	0,706	0,672	0,664	0,186	Valid
18	0,453	0,600	0,717	0,687	0,186	Valid
19	0,566	0,667	0,690	0,659	0,186	Valid
20	0,652	0,555	0,778	0,783	0,186	Valid
21		0,737		0,687	0,186	Valid
22		0,742		0,646	0,186	Valid

Based on Table 1, all instrument items have r-count values greater than the r-table value (0.186). Although there are variations in the correlation strength among items, all r-count values exceed the minimum validity threshold. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items across the research variables are valid and appropriate for use as research instruments.

#### Reliability Test

The reliability test was conducted to assess the consistency and stability of the research instrument in producing reliable data (Ghozali, 2018). Reliability was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha with the assistance of SPSS software. An instrument was considered reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value was greater than 0.60, and unreliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value was less than 0.60. The results of the reliability test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Criteria	Decription
Empathy (X <sub>1</sub> )	0,896	> 0,6	Reliable
School Climate (X <sub>2</sub> )	0,927	> 0,6	Reliable
Peer Support (X <sub>3</sub> )	0,938	> 0,6	Reliable
Anti-Bullying Behavior (Y)	0,940	> 0,6	Reliable

Based on Table 2, all variables have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.60, namely empathy (0.896), school climate (0.927), peer support (0.938), and anti-bullying behavior (0.940). These results indicate that all research instruments are reliable and suitable for use in this study.

#### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

escriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the research data, including the minimum value, maximum value, mean, and standard deviation of the variables of empathy, school climate, peer support, and anti-bullying behavior. The mean value indicates the general tendency of each variable, while the standard deviation reflects the variability or dispersion of the respondents' data.

## **Classical Assumption Tests**

### **Normality Test**

The normality test was performed using the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to determine whether the residual data was normally distributed. Data were declared normally distributed if the significance value (Asymp. Sig.) was  $> 0.05$ , and abnormal if it was  $< 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2018).

### **Multicollinearity Test**

The multicollinearity test is used to determine the correlation between independent variables in a regression model. This test is performed by examining the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values. The model is declared free of multicollinearity if the Tolerance value is  $> 0.10$  and the VIF is  $< 10$  (Ghozali, 2018).

### **Heteroscedasticity Test**

The heteroscedasticity test aims to determine the presence of inequality in residual variances in a regression model. This test is performed using the Glejser test by regressing the absolute value of the residuals against the independent variables. The model is declared free of heteroscedasticity if the significance value of each variable is  $> 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2018).

## **Multiple Linear Regression Analysis**

Multiple linear regression analysis is used to determine the direction and magnitude of the influence of independent variables on dependent variables, as well as to predict changes in dependent variables based on the independent variables. The influence of variables is assessed by the regression coefficient (B), t-value, and significance. An independent variable is considered significant if the significance value is  $< 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2018).

## **Hypothesis Test**

### **t-test**

The t-test was used to examine the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable. An independent variable was considered to have a significant effect if the value of t count  $>$  t table and the significance value was  $< 0.05$ . Conversely, if the significance value was  $> 0.05$ , the independent variable was considered not to have a significant effect on the dependent variable (Ghozali, 2018).

### **F-test**

The F-test was used to examine the simultaneous effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable and to evaluate the overall significance of the regression model. The regression model was considered significant if the value of F count  $>$  F table and the significance value was  $< 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2018).

### **Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )**

The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to measure the ability of the independent variables to explain the variation in the dependent variable. The value of  $R^2$  ranges from 0 to 1, where a higher  $R^2$  value indicates a greater ability of the independent variables to explain the variation in the dependent variable in the regression model (Ghozali, 2018).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Characteristics

Table 3. Respondents' School of Origin

		School of Origin	
		Frequency (Number of Respondents)	Percentage (%)
Valid	SMAN 4 Jeneponto	22	20,2
	SMAN 5 Jeneponto	29	26,6
	SMAN 7 Jeneponto	19	17,4
	SMAN 9 Jeneponto	18	16,5
	SMAN 12 Jeneponto	7	6,4
	SMAN 14 Jeneponto	14	12,8
Total		109	100

Based on Table 3, the majority of respondents were from SMAN 5 Jeneponto (26.6%), followed by SMAN 4 Jeneponto (20.2%), SMAN 7 Jeneponto (17.4%), SMAN 9 Jeneponto (16.5%), SMAN 14 Jeneponto (12.8%), and SMAN 12 Jeneponto (6.4%). This distribution indicates that the sample proportionally represents all participating schools, providing a representative overview of public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency.

Table 4. Respondents' Gender

		Gender	
		Frequency (Number of Respondents)	Percentage (%)
Valid	Male	38	34,9
	Female	71	65,1
	Total	109	100

Based on Table 4, of the 109 respondents, the majority were female, accounting for 71 students (65.1%), while male respondents totaled 38 students (34.9%). This indicates that female respondents dominated the sample; however, both gender groups were adequately represented, ensuring a representative description of the study population.

### Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Table 5. Results of Descriptive Statistical Analysis

	Descriptive Statistics				
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Empathy	109	56.00	100.00	76.0642	12.10469
School Climate	109	62.00	110.00	82.3578	14.75198
Peer Support	109	56.00	100.00	74.6606	14.18477
Anti-Bullying Behavior	109	62.00	110.00	82.4312	14.64036
Valid N (listwise)	109				

Based on Table 5, the results of the descriptive statistical analysis show that the empathy variable has a mean score of 76.06 (SD = 12.10), school climate has a mean of 82.36 (SD = 14.75), peer support has a mean of 74.66 (SD = 14.18), and anti-bullying behavior has a mean of 82.43 (SD = 14.64). These mean values indicate that students' empathy, school climate, peer support, and anti-bullying behavior are generally at a good level. The moderate standard deviation values

indicate a reasonable variation in the data, suggesting that all variables are suitable for further hypothesis testing.

### Classical Assumption Tests

Table 6. Results of the Normality Test

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test			
		Unstandardized Residual	
N		109	
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	0.000000	
	Std. Deviation	5.94974128	
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.077	
	Positive	0.053	
	Negative	-0.077	
Test Statistic		0.077	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) <sup>c</sup>		0.128	
Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed) <sup>d</sup>	Sig.	0.111	
	99% Confidence Interval	Lower Bound	0.103
		Upper Bound	0.119

a. Test distribution is Normal.  
 b. Calculated from data.  
 c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.  
 d. Lilliefors' method based on 10000 Monte Carlo samples with starting seed 2000000.

Based on Table 6, the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.128, which is greater than 0.05. This indicates that the residual data are normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption is satisfied, and the data are appropriate for further statistical analysis.

Table 7. Results of the Multicollinearity Test

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		
Model	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
1 (Constant)		
Empathy	0.419	2.386
School Climate	0.202	4.952
Peer Support	0.234	4.273

a. Dependent Variable: Anti-Bullying Behavior

Based on Table 7, the empathy variable has a Tolerance value of 0.419 and a VIF value of 2.386. The school climate variable has a Tolerance value of 0.202 and a VIF value of 4.952, while peer support has a Tolerance value of 0.234 and a VIF value of 4.273. All independent variables have Tolerance values greater than 0.10 and VIF values less than 10. These results indicate that there is no multicollinearity among the independent variables in the regression model.

Table 8. Results of the Heteroscedasticity Test

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>		
Model	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	0.894	0.373
Empathy	0.565	0.573
School Climate	0.078	0.938
Peer Support	-0.023	0.981

a. Dependent Variable: ABS\_RES

Based on Table 8, the significance values for empathy (0.573), school climate (0.938), and peer support (0.981) are all greater than 0.05. This indicates that there is no significant effect of the independent variables on the absolute residual values. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model does not exhibit heteroscedasticity, and the assumption of homoscedasticity is satisfied.

### Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Table 9. Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	5.052	3.772		1.339	0.183
	Empathy	0.166	0.074	0.137	2.235	0.028
	School Climate	0.206	0.088	0.207	2.349	0.021
	Peer Support	0.641	0.085	0.621	7.571	<0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Anti-Bullying Behavior

Based on Table 9, the multiple linear regression equation is as follows:

$$Y = a + b_1 x_1 + b_2 x_2 + b_3 x_3 + e$$

$$Y = 5,052 + 0,166X_1 + 0,206X_2 + 0,641X_3 + e$$

The regression equation can be interpreted as follows: (a) The constant value of 5.052 indicates the baseline level of anti-bullying behavior when empathy, school climate, and peer support are assumed to be zero. (b) The empathy variable has a regression coefficient of 0.166 ( $p = 0.028$ ), indicating a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior. (c) The school climate variable has a regression coefficient of 0.206 ( $p = 0.021$ ), also indicating a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior. (d) The peer support variable has a regression coefficient of 0.641 ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating a positive and significant effect and representing the most dominant predictor of anti-bullying behavior.

Therefore, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis indicate that empathy, school climate, and peer support have positive and significant effects on students' anti-bullying behavior.

### Hypothesis Testing

Table 10. Results of the t-test

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	5.052	3.772		1.339	0.183
	Empathy	0.166	0.074	0.137	2.235	0.028
	School Climate	0.206	0.088	0.207	2.349	0.021
	Peer Support	0.641	0.085	0.621	7.571	<0.001

a. Dependent Variable: Anti-Bullying Behavior

Based on Table 10, the partial effects of each independent variable on anti-bullying behavior are as follows: (1) Effect of Empathy on Anti-Bullying Behavior ( $H_1$ ). Empathy has a t-value of 2.235, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.983 ( $t > t$  table), and a significance value of 0.028 ( $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that empathy has a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior; (2) Effect of School Climate on Anti-Bullying Behavior ( $H_2$ ). School climate has a t-value of 2.349, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.983, and a significance value of 0.021 ( $< 0.05$ ). This indicates that school climate has a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior; (3) Effect of Peer Support on Anti-Bullying Behavior ( $H_3$ ). Peer support has a t-value of 7.571, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.983, and a significance value of  $< 0.001$ . This indicates that peer support has a positive and significant effect and is the most dominant variable influencing anti-bullying behavior.

Overall, empathy, school climate, and peer support have positive and significant effects on anti-bullying behavior. Therefore, all research hypotheses ( $H_1$ ,  $H_2$ , and  $H_3$ ) are accepted.

Table 11. Results of the F-test

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	19325.596	3	6441.865	176.922	<.001 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	3823.138	105	36.411		
	Total	23148.734	108			

a. Dependent Variable: Anti-Bullying Behavior  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Support, Empathy, School Climate

Based on Table 11, the results of the F test, it can be seen that the influence of the variables empathy, school climate, and peer support on anti-bullying behavior simultaneously is as follows.

#### **The Influence of Empathy, School Climate, and Peer Support on Anti-Bullying Behavior ( $H_4$ )**

The variables of empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously have a calculated F value of 176.922, which means it is greater than the F table value of 2.69 ( $176.922 > 2.69$ ), and has a significance value of  $< 0.001$  which is smaller than 0.05. Thus, it can be concluded that empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior. This shows that the higher the student's empathy, the more positive the school climate, and the stronger the peer support, the higher the anti-bullying behavior shown by the student.

Based on the results of the F test, it can be concluded that the calculated F value is greater than the F table and the significance value is less than 0.05, so  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_a$  is accepted. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously have a significant effect on anti-bullying behavior can be accepted. This indicates that the three independent variables together have a significant contribution in explaining variations in anti-bullying behavior of public high school students in Jeneponto Regency.

Table 12. Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

Model Summary <sup>b</sup>						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	
1	.914 <sup>a</sup>	0.835	0.830	6.03414	1.946	
a. Predictors: (Constant), Peer Support, Empathy, School Climate						
b. Dependent Variable: Anti-Bullying Behavior						

Based on Table 12, the coefficient of determination (R Square) is 0.835, indicating that empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously explain 83.5% of the variance in students' anti-bullying behavior. The remaining 16.5% is influenced by other factors not included in the research model. This result indicates that the regression model has a very strong explanatory power in predicting anti-bullying behavior among students.

### Effect of Empathy on Anti-Bullying Behavior

The results of this study indicate that empathy has a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency. This is demonstrated by a regression coefficient of 0.166 with a significance level of 0.028 ( $p < 0.05$ ), indicating that empathy is a significant predictor of anti-bullying behavior. This finding confirms that empathy is an important internal psychological factor that encourages students to engage in prosocial behaviors, such as defending victims, providing emotional support, and rejecting bullying behavior. Therefore, higher levels of empathy are associated with a greater tendency for students to demonstrate anti-bullying behavior.

Theoretically, this finding is consistent with the multidimensional concept of empathy proposed by Davis (1983), which includes cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component enables individuals to understand the victim's perspective rationally, while the affective component allows individuals to emotionally relate to the victim's condition. Both components contribute to the development of moral responses and prosocial motivation. Hoffman (2000) also emphasized that empathy is a fundamental basis of moral development that stimulates altruistic motivation to help individuals who are suffering. In the context of bullying, empathy enables students to understand the negative impact of bullying on victims, thereby encouraging them to support victims and oppose bullying behavior.

The findings of this study are also consistent with previous empirical research. Wang and Ma (2026) found that empathy significantly predicts defending behavior among adolescents. Zych et al. (2019) reported that empathy is negatively associated with bullying behavior and positively associated with prosocial behavior. In addition, Deng et al. (2021) found that empathy plays an important role in increasing defending behavior among students. More recent studies by Hikmat et al. (2024), Sobol et al. (2025), and Levantini et al. (2024) also confirmed that empathy is a strong predictor of prosocial behavior and victim-defending behavior in adolescent social interactions.

In the context of this study, students with higher levels of empathy tend to demonstrate greater social and moral sensitivity, enabling them to better understand the suffering of bullying victims and engage in supportive behaviors. Conversely, students with lower empathy tend to be less responsive to victims' conditions and are more likely to become passive bystanders. These findings highlight that empathy is

an important psychological factor contributing to the development of anti-bullying behavior among students.

### **Effect of School Climate on Anti-Bullying Behavior**

The results of this study indicate that school climate has a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency. The significance value of the school climate variable was 0.021 ( $< 0.05$ ), and the t-value was 2.349, which was greater than the critical t-value of 1.983. These results indicate that a more positive school climate is associated with a higher tendency for students to demonstrate anti-bullying behavior, such as defending victims, rejecting bullying behavior, and promoting supportive social interactions within the school environment.

Conceptually, school climate refers to the quality of school life that reflects norms, values, interpersonal relationships, and organizational practices that influence students' social and emotional experiences (Thapa et al., 2013). A positive school climate is characterized by a sense of safety, harmonious relationships between students and teachers, and adequate social support. From the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979), the school is part of the microsystem that directly influences individual behavioral development. Therefore, the quality of the school climate plays an important role in shaping students' social behavior, including anti-bullying behavior.

These findings reinforce the view that a positive school climate functions as a protective factor against bullying and promotes prosocial behavior. A safe and supportive school environment allows students to develop trust, empathy, and social responsibility. Conversely, an unfavorable school climate may weaken positive social norms and reduce students' willingness to engage in anti-bullying behavior.

These findings are consistent with Wang & Degol (2016), who reported that a positive school climate is associated with reduced bullying behavior and increased prosocial behavior among students. Similarly, Aldridge et al. (2018) found that positive perceptions of school climate are linked to lower levels of bullying and higher student engagement in constructive social behavior. Thornberg et al. (2017) also demonstrated that students in supportive and fair school environments are more likely to engage in defending behavior toward bullying victims. Comparable findings were reported by Gage et al. (2014), who concluded that a positive school climate serves as a protective factor against bullying behavior.

From the perspective of Hirschi's social bonding theory (2017), individuals' attachment to their social environment influences their adherence to social norms. When students feel accepted and supported within the school environment, they are more likely to internalize positive social values, including rejecting bullying and demonstrating anti-bullying behavior. This finding is further supported by Wang et al. (2013) who found that a positive school climate significantly enhances prosocial behavior and reduces aggressive behavior among students. Additionally, Hanitis et al., (2015) reported that positive perceptions of school climate are directly associated with increased defending behavior and decreased bullying involvement.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that students who perceive their school climate positively are more likely to demonstrate constructive social behaviors, including defending victims and rejecting bullying. This highlights that the school environment functions not only as an academic setting but also as a social context

that shapes students' behavior and social development. Thus, school climate represents an important contextual factor in promoting anti-bullying behavior among students.

### **Effect of Peer Support on Anti-Bullying Behavior**

The results of this study indicate that peer support has a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency, with a significance value of  $< 0.001$  ( $< 0.05$ ) and a t-value of 7.571, which is greater than the critical t-value of 1.983. Furthermore, peer support had a regression coefficient of 0.641 and a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.621, representing the highest value compared to empathy and school climate. These results indicate that higher levels of peer support are associated with a greater likelihood of students engaging in anti-bullying behavior, such as defending victims, providing emotional support, and rejecting bullying behavior.

The dominant influence of peer support highlights the critical role of social factors in shaping student behavior, particularly during adolescence. Theoretically, this finding aligns with adolescent social development theory, which emphasizes that peers serve as primary socialization agents influencing individuals' attitudes and behaviors (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). During adolescence, individuals tend to internalize the norms and values of their peer groups. Therefore, positive peer support can strengthen social norms that discourage bullying and promote prosocial behavior.

These findings are also supported by social support theory (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Cutrona & Suhr, 1992), which states that social support functions as a protective factor that enhances psychological well-being and individuals' confidence in facing social pressures. Peer support provides emotional security and increases students' self-confidence, enabling them to defend bullying victims more effectively. Conversely, a lack of peer support may result in students becoming passive bystanders in bullying situations.

In addition, these findings are consistent with Bandura's social learning theory (1997), which posits that behavior is learned through social interaction and observation. In school contexts, students tend to imitate the norms and behaviors of their peer groups. When peer group norms promote prosocial behavior, students are more likely to engage in anti-bullying behavior. Conversely, permissive peer norms toward bullying may increase students' risk of involvement in such behavior.

Empirically, these findings are consistent with previous studies. Lambe et al. (2019) found that peer support is one of the strongest predictors of defending behavior in bullying situations. Studies by Nihayati et al. (2025), Julfiati & Nugroho. (2025), and Yusraa et al. (2025) also reported a strong relationship between peer support and anti-bullying behavior. Furthermore, Pozzoli & Gini (2010) and Jungert et al. (2016) found that peer support significantly increases students' likelihood of defending bullying victims. Gini et al. (2020) also demonstrated that peer group norms play a crucial role in shaping students' behavior in bullying situations.

In the context of this study, students who receive strong peer support tend to demonstrate higher levels of moral courage and prosocial motivation. Such support not only provides emotional strength but also reinforces social norms that encourage students to reject bullying and defend victims. These findings highlight that peer support is a crucial social factor in promoting anti-bullying behavior among students.

### **Effect of Empathy, School Climate, and Peer Support on Anti-Bullying Behavior**

The results of the simultaneous test indicate that empathy, school climate, and peer support collectively have a positive and significant effect on anti-bullying behavior. The significance value obtained was  $< 0.001$ , which is lower than 0.05, and the F-value was 176.922, which is greater than the critical F-value of 2.69. In addition, the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was 0.835, indicating that empathy, school climate, and peer support simultaneously explain 83.5% of the variance in students' anti-bullying behavior. These findings demonstrate that empathy, school climate, and peer support collectively make a very strong contribution to shaping anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school students in Jeneponto Regency.

These findings indicate that anti-bullying behavior is the result of an interaction between personal and social environmental factors that complement each other. From the perspective of educational psychology, prosocial behavior develops optimally when there is alignment between individuals' psychological capacities and the social support provided by their environment (Wentzel, 2014). This means that empathy, as an internal psychological factor, is more effective in promoting anti-bullying behavior when supported by a positive school climate and strong peer support.

The findings also demonstrate a complementary effect among variables, where the simultaneous contribution of the three variables provides greater predictive power than the individual effects of each variable. This finding is consistent with Lembeck et al. (2016) who reported that anti-bullying behavior is influenced by a combination of individual and contextual factors. The interaction among these factors produces a stronger effect than any single factor alone.

Furthermore, these findings can be explained through the perspective of social adaptation theory, which suggests that individual behavior develops through adaptation to social norms and environmental conditions (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When the school environment supports prosocial behavior, students are more likely to internalize positive values and demonstrate anti-bullying behavior. These findings are also consistent with Cross et al. (2015), who found that individual, relational, and environmental factors simultaneously play important roles in shaping students' behavior related to bullying.

The high coefficient of determination in this study indicates that the research model has very strong predictive power. This suggests that anti-bullying behavior results from the integrated interaction between empathy as an internal psychological factor, school climate as a contextual factor, and peer support as a social factor. Therefore, these three variables represent key determinants in shaping students' anti-bullying behavior.

Overall, the findings confirm that anti-bullying behavior is influenced not only by individual factors but also by the quality of the social environment. These results reinforce the understanding that students' social behavior is shaped by the complex interaction between psychological and social environmental factors within the educational context.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that empathy, school climate, and peer support have positive and significant effects on anti-bullying behavior among public senior high school

students in Jeneponto Regency, both partially and simultaneously. Empathy functions as an internal psychological factor that encourages students to understand and respond to victims' suffering in a prosocial manner. School climate serves as a contextual factor that shapes social norms, a sense of safety, and the quality of social interactions that support anti-bullying behavior. Meanwhile, peer support is the most dominant factor influencing anti-bullying behavior, as peer groups play a critical role during adolescence in shaping students' attitudes, norms, and social behavior. Collectively, these three variables demonstrate a very strong contribution to explaining anti-bullying behavior, indicating that such behavior is the result of the interaction between personal and social environmental factors. Based on these findings, it is recommended that bullying prevention efforts in schools adopt a comprehensive approach by integrating empathy development, creating a safe and supportive school climate, and strengthening peer social support. Schools may implement character education programs, social-emotional learning, and collaborative student activities to promote prosocial behavior. Furthermore, future research is recommended to examine additional factors that may influence anti-bullying behavior, such as family influence, school policies, and other psychological factors, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of bullying prevention in educational settings.

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