

LEGAL AWARENESS AND STUDENT BULLYING BEHAVIOR IN THE DIGITAL AGE

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Abstrak. Bullying among students has become an increasingly complex educational problem in the digital age, as aggressive behavior is no longer limited to direct physical or verbal interaction but also occurs through online platforms. This study aims to examine the influence of legal awareness and the social/digital environment on students' bullying behavior. A quantitative approach with a survey design was employed. The participants consisted of 30 senior high school and vocational high school students in Pamulang District, selected through random sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire measuring three variables: legal awareness, social/digital environment, and bullying behavior. The data were analyzed using validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests, and multiple linear regression with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics. The findings reveal that legal awareness has a significant effect on students' bullying behavior, with a regression coefficient of 0.754 and a significance value of 0.000. In contrast, the social/digital environment does not have a significant partial effect, with a significance value of 0.434. Simultaneously, legal awareness and the social/digital environment significantly influence bullying behavior, as indicated by an F-value of 613.115 and a significance value of 0.000. The coefficient of determination shows an R Square value of 0.978, meaning that 97.8% of the variance in bullying behavior can be explained by the two independent variables. These findings imply that strengthening students' legal awareness through civic education, legal literacy, digital ethics, and character education is essential for preventing bullying in schools. The study contributes to the development of school-based anti-bullying strategies by emphasizing the internalization of legal values, social responsibility, and ethical digital citizenship among students.

Kata Kunci: legal awareness; bullying behavior; civic education; digital environment; legal literacy; cyberbullying prevention;

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Bullying among students has become a persistent educational, social, and legal problem in contemporary schooling systems. In the digital age, bullying is no longer limited to direct physical or verbal aggression in school environments but has expanded into cyberbullying through social media, instant messaging platforms, online communities, and other digital communication spaces. This transformation has made bullying more complex because harmful actions can occur beyond school hours, spread rapidly, involve anonymous perpetrators, and leave long-lasting digital traces. UNESCO emphasizes that school violence and bullying, including cyberbullying, are serious threats to students' right to education, mental health, safety, and well-being [1]. Recent studies also confirm that cyberbullying is associated with psychological distress, academic disruption, anxiety, depression, and reduced school engagement among adolescents [2], [3].

In educational settings, bullying behavior is influenced by multiple factors, including peer interaction, school climate, family background, social environment, digital exposure, moral reasoning, and students' internal regulation. Studies on bullying prevention increasingly highlight the need for educational interventions that do not merely punish students but also strengthen values, empathy, self-control, social responsibility, and awareness of the

consequences of harmful behavior [4], [5]. From the perspective of citizenship education, bullying prevention is closely related to the formation of responsible citizens who understand rights, obligations, legal norms, human dignity, and ethical participation in social life [6]. Therefore, legal awareness is not only a juridical concept but also an educational construct that can shape students' attitudes and conduct in both offline and online interactions.

Legal awareness refers to students' understanding, acceptance, and internalization of legal norms as a basis for responsible behavior. In school contexts, legal awareness includes knowledge of school rules, awareness of the legal and ethical consequences of violence, respect for others' rights, and willingness to obey norms voluntarily. Civic education has a strategic function in developing such awareness because it integrates civic knowledge, civic skills, civic disposition, and character values. Prior research has shown that civic education learning can significantly contribute to students' legal awareness and obedience to rules in school environments [7]. Similarly, studies on character education indicate that the educational environment has a crucial role in shaping students' moral conduct and social responsibility [8], [9].

Problem of the Study

Although many schools have implemented anti-bullying policies, counseling programs, disciplinary procedures, and character education initiatives, bullying remains a recurring problem among students. One major issue is that prevention efforts often focus more on external control, such as school regulations, teacher supervision, sanctions, or digital monitoring, while students' internal legal awareness receives insufficient empirical attention. As a result, students may know that bullying is prohibited but may not fully internalize why such behavior violates legal, moral, and civic principles. This gap between knowledge and behavior indicates that bullying prevention requires deeper attention to students' internal awareness, not merely external compliance.

Another problem concerns the increasing influence of digital environments on student interaction. Digital platforms provide students with wider spaces for communication, but they also create opportunities for verbal aggression, social exclusion, humiliation, and harassment. Research on online disinhibition shows that digital interaction may reduce empathy and self-control, thereby increasing the likelihood of cyberbullying behavior [10]. However, the presence of a risky digital environment does not automatically make students engage in bullying. Students with strong legal awareness, moral control, and civic responsibility may be better able to regulate their behavior even when exposed to negative peer or digital influences. Therefore, it is important to examine whether legal awareness has a stronger role than social and digital environmental factors in influencing bullying behavior.

The problem addressed in this study is the limited empirical explanation of how legal awareness contributes to student bullying behavior in the digital age. Previous studies have discussed bullying, cyberbullying, school climate, and character education separately, but fewer studies have quantitatively examined legal awareness as a dominant internal factor in relation to bullying behavior. This issue is particularly relevant for civic education because legal awareness is part of the broader mission of education to develop law-abiding, ethical, democratic, and socially responsible citizens.

Research's State of the Art

Recent research on bullying and cyberbullying has developed in several major directions. First, studies have examined the prevalence, forms, and psychological consequences of bullying among adolescents. Cyberbullying has been found to affect students' emotional well-being, academic performance, and mental health [2], [3]. Second, systematic reviews have explored educational interventions for reducing traditional bullying and cyberbullying, showing that school-based and classroom-based programs can contribute to prevention, although their effectiveness depends on design, implementation quality, teacher capacity, student participation, and contextual factors [4], [5]. Third, research has increasingly focused on digital risk factors, including online disinhibition, moral disengagement, low self-control, anonymity, and social media exposure [10], [11].

In parallel, studies in civic education and character education have emphasized the role of schools in shaping students' values, attitudes, and social behavior. Civic education is considered a strategic subject for strengthening students' moral reasoning, democratic values, tolerance, responsibility, and legal awareness [6], [7]. Suchyadi and Suryani argue that the educational environment strongly influences character education implementation, indicating

that schools must create supportive environments for value internalization [9]. In another study, Suchyadi, Indriyani, and Destiana highlight the importance of educational supervision and administrative support in improving the quality of educational processes [12]. These studies suggest that bullying prevention should not be separated from broader educational management, school culture, civic learning, and character-building processes.

The state of the art also shows a growing concern with integrated approaches to bullying prevention. Contemporary research no longer views bullying merely as individual misconduct but as a complex phenomenon shaped by psychological, social, institutional, legal, and digital dimensions. Studies on Pancasila and citizenship education show that character values can be integrated into classroom learning through reflective, communicative, and participatory approaches [13]. Meanwhile, research on school climate and bullying prevention indicates that safe, inclusive, and participatory school environments can reduce aggressive behavior and strengthen positive peer relationships [14]. However, the specific contribution of legal awareness as an internal civic variable remains underexplored, especially in relation to students' bullying behavior in digital contexts.

Gap Study and Objective

Based on the literature, there are at least three research gaps. First, many studies have focused on bullying prevention from psychological, environmental, or technological perspectives, while legal awareness as a civic and internal regulatory factor has not been sufficiently examined. Second, previous studies have often treated school environment and digital environment as major predictors of bullying, but fewer studies have compared these external factors with students' internal legal awareness. Third, limited empirical research has positioned bullying prevention within the framework of civic education, legal awareness, and digital citizenship, particularly in the context of secondary school students.

To address these gaps, this study aims to analyze the influence of legal awareness on students' bullying behavior in the digital age. It also seeks to examine the role of the social and digital environment in shaping bullying behavior and to test the simultaneous influence of legal awareness and environmental factors. The novelty of this study lies in its positioning of legal awareness as a key internal factor in bullying prevention, while still considering the relevance of social and digital environments. The study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of civic education, legal education, and character education, and practically to the formulation of school-based bullying prevention strategies that emphasize legal understanding, ethical behavior, digital responsibility, and civic values.

II. METHOD

Type and Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach with a survey design. The quantitative approach was selected because the study aimed to measure the relationship and influence among clearly defined variables through numerical data and statistical testing. A survey design was considered appropriate because it enables researchers to collect standardized responses from participants regarding legal awareness, social/digital environment, and bullying behavior. In this study, legal awareness was positioned as the first independent variable, the social/digital environment as the second independent variable, and bullying behavior as the dependent variable. This design allowed the researcher to test both partial and simultaneous effects among variables. The use of a quantitative survey design is consistent with educational research procedures that emphasize objectivity, measurement, hypothesis testing, and the general interpretation of patterns found in empirical data [16].

B. Data and Data Sources

The data used in this study were primary data obtained directly from student respondents through a structured questionnaire. The population of the study consisted of senior high school and vocational high school students in Pamulang District. The sample involved 30 students selected through a random sampling technique to provide each member of the population with an equal opportunity to participate in the study. The respondents were considered relevant because high school students are active participants in both school-based social interaction and

digital communication spaces, making them a suitable group for examining bullying behavior in the digital age. The main data sources were students' responses to statements measuring three research variables: legal awareness, social/digital environment, and bullying behavior.

Data Collection Technique

Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire arranged on a Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral tendencies related to the research variables. The legal awareness variable included indicators related to students' understanding of rules, awareness of legal consequences, respect for others' rights, and willingness to obey school and social norms. The social/digital environment variable included indicators related to peer interaction, school climate, digital communication patterns, and exposure to online behavior. The bullying behavior variable included indicators related to verbal, social, psychological, physical, and digital forms of bullying. Before the main analysis was conducted, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure that each item was suitable for measuring the intended construct. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, with a value above 0.70 considered acceptable for social science research [17].

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression with the assistance of IBM SPSS Statistics. The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to identify the general distribution of respondents' answers for each variable. Second, instrument testing was conducted through validity and reliability tests to ensure the quality of the questionnaire. Third, classical assumption tests were performed, including normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests, to ensure that the regression model met the requirements for further statistical analysis. Fourth, multiple linear regression was used to examine the partial effect of legal awareness and the social/digital environment on bullying behavior. The t-test was used to determine the partial significance of each independent variable, while the F-test was used to examine the simultaneous influence of both independent variables on bullying behavior. The coefficient of determination was also used to identify the proportion of variance in bullying behavior explained by legal awareness and the social/digital environment. This analytical procedure was intended to provide an empirical basis for determining whether legal awareness functions as a dominant internal factor in reducing bullying behavior among students in the digital age.

III. RESULTS

The results of this study indicate that the research instrument met the statistical requirements for further analysis. The reliability test showed that all variables had Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.70, indicating that the questionnaire items were internally consistent and reliable. The legal awareness variable obtained a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.822, the social/digital environment variable obtained 0.763, and the bullying behavior variable obtained 0.742. These findings show that all research variables were measured using reliable instruments and were therefore appropriate for regression analysis.

Table 1. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Category
Legal Awareness	0.822	Reliable
Social/Digital Environment	0.763	Reliable
Bullying Behavior	0.742	Reliable

The classical assumption tests also showed that the regression model fulfilled the required assumptions. The normality test produced an Asymp. Sig. value of 0.200, which is higher than 0.05, indicating that the residual data

were normally distributed. The multicollinearity test showed that both independent variables had tolerance values of 0.979 and VIF values of 1.021. These results indicate that there was no multicollinearity between legal awareness and the social/digital environment. Furthermore, the heteroscedasticity test showed significance values of 0.485 for legal awareness and 0.204 for the social/digital environment, both of which are higher than 0.05. Thus, the regression model was free from heteroscedasticity problems.

Table 2. Classical Assumption Test Results

Test	Indicator	Result	Interpretation
Normality	Asymp. Sig.	0.200	Normal
Multicollinearity: Legal Awareness	VIF	1.021	No multicollinearity
Multicollinearity: Social/Digital Environment	VIF	1.021	No multicollinearity
Heteroscedasticity: Legal Awareness	Sig.	0.485	No heteroscedasticity
Heteroscedasticity: Social/Digital Environment	Sig.	0.204	No heteroscedasticity

The multiple linear regression analysis showed that legal awareness had a significant effect on students' bullying behavior. The regression coefficient for legal awareness was 0.754, with a beta value of 0.992, a t-value of 34.757, and a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, legal awareness was statistically proven to have a significant effect on bullying behavior. In contrast, the social/digital environment variable had a regression coefficient of 0.021, a beta value of 0.023, a t-value of 0.794, and a significance value of 0.434. Since this value was higher than 0.05, the social/digital environment did not have a significant partial effect on bullying behavior.

Table 3. Multiple Linear Regression Results

Variable	B	Beta	t	Sig.	Interpretation
Constant	0.503	—	0.332	0.742	—
Legal Awareness	0.754	0.992	34.757	0.000	Significant
Social/Digital Environment	0.021	0.023	0.794	0.434	Not significant

The simultaneous test showed that legal awareness and the social/digital environment jointly had a significant effect on bullying behavior. The F-value was 613.115 with a significance value of 0.000, indicating that the regression model was statistically significant. In addition, the coefficient of determination showed an R Square value of 0.978, meaning that 97.8% of the variation in bullying behavior could be explained by legal awareness and the social/digital environment, while the remaining 2.2% was influenced by other variables outside the model.

Table 4. Simultaneous Test and Coefficient of Determination

Test	Value	Sig.	Interpretation
F-test	613.115	0.000	Significant
R	0.989	—	Very strong relationship
R Square	0.978	—	97.8% explained variance
Adjusted R Square	0.977	—	Very high model fit

Overall, the results show that legal awareness is the dominant variable influencing students' bullying behavior. Although the social/digital environment is conceptually relevant in the digital age, its partial statistical effect was

not significant in this study. This finding suggests that internal normative awareness may be more decisive than external environmental exposure in shaping students' tendency to avoid bullying behavior.

Discussions

The findings demonstrate that legal awareness plays a central role in controlling students' bullying behavior. This result supports the argument that bullying prevention cannot rely only on disciplinary action, school supervision, or digital monitoring. Students need to understand the legal, moral, and civic consequences of bullying so that they are able to regulate their own behavior. A recent study on students' legal awareness of bullying prohibition found that students' legal knowledge and legal understanding do not automatically guarantee positive legal attitudes and behavior, indicating the importance of internalizing legal values rather than merely delivering legal information [18]. Therefore, the significant effect of legal awareness in this study confirms that legal consciousness should be treated as a key preventive factor in anti-bullying education.

The result also strengthens the relevance of legal counseling and legal education in schools. Rahmad, Setiyawan, and Dewi found that legal counseling improved students' understanding of bullying from a legal perspective and increased awareness of the importance of respecting individual rights and creating a safe school environment [19]. This is consistent with the present finding that students with stronger legal awareness tend to show lower tendencies toward bullying behavior. In this regard, civic education can function as a strategic pedagogical space for developing legal literacy, respect for human rights, responsibility, empathy, and rule-obedient behavior.

However, the insignificant partial effect of the social/digital environment requires careful interpretation. The finding does not mean that the social and digital environment is irrelevant. Rather, it suggests that environmental influence may not directly determine bullying behavior when students possess strong internal control, legal awareness, and moral responsibility. Previous research on cyberbullying prevention in the Society 5.0 era emphasizes that the rapid development of technology has created new risks of digital aggression, but prevention should combine legal regulation, technological prevention, and educational strategies [20]. Thus, environmental and technological factors remain important, but their effect may be mediated or moderated by students' internal values and self-regulation.

The present results also differ from studies that place school climate as a significant predictor of cyberbullying behavior. Maftuh et al. found that school climate influenced cyberbullying behavior among high school students and that psychological capital mediated this relationship [21]. The difference may be caused by sample characteristics, variable measurement, school context, or the relatively small sample size in the present study. Nevertheless, both studies point to the same broader conclusion: bullying prevention must integrate internal and external approaches. Strengthening legal awareness should be accompanied by a safe school climate, ethical digital culture, teacher supervision, and peer-based prevention.

From a citizenship education perspective, these findings affirm that bullying prevention is closely related to the formation of responsible citizens. Citizenship education based on Pancasila values has been reported to help address bullying cases by strengthening students' moral awareness, tolerance, social responsibility, and respect for others [22]. Similarly, civic education teachers have a strategic role in building legal awareness and legal compliance through socialization, mentoring, supervision, exemplary conduct, motivation, habituation, and stakeholder collaboration [23]. Therefore, schools should not treat bullying merely as a behavioral violation but as a civic, ethical, and legal problem that requires systematic educational intervention.

Novelty and contribution

The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on legal awareness as a dominant internal factor influencing students' bullying behavior in the digital age. While many previous studies have focused on school climate, peer interaction, psychological distress, digital risk, and cyberbullying exposure, this study positions legal awareness as a central variable in explaining bullying behavior. This perspective is important because bullying is not only a psychological or social problem but also a violation of legal norms, human rights, school rules, and civic ethics.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of civic education, legal education, and character education by showing that legal awareness can function as an internal mechanism for preventing bullying. Practically, this study contributes to school-based anti-bullying policy by providing empirical evidence that strengthening students' legal awareness may be more effective than relying solely on environmental control. The findings also contribute to the discourse of digital citizenship by showing that students need legal and ethical awareness to participate responsibly in digital spaces.

Limitation and future study

Future research should involve a larger and more diverse sample to increase the generalizability of the findings. Since this study involved 30 respondents, future studies may use broader samples across different school levels, regions, and educational backgrounds. Further research should also examine additional variables such as empathy, self-control, moral disengagement, peer pressure, family support, school culture, teacher supervision, and digital literacy.

Future studies may also apply mixed-methods designs to obtain deeper explanations of how students understand legal norms and how such understanding influences their behavior in real-life and digital interactions. Qualitative interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations could enrich the statistical findings. In addition, future research may test mediation or moderation models to examine whether legal awareness mediates the relationship between school climate and bullying behavior, or whether digital literacy moderates the influence of online interaction on cyberbullying. Such studies would provide a more comprehensive model of bullying prevention in the digital age..

Implication and suggestions

The results imply that schools should integrate legal awareness education into anti-bullying programs, civic education learning, student counseling, and digital literacy activities. Legal awareness should not be taught only as abstract knowledge of rules but should be internalized through contextual learning, case-based discussion, role-play, reflection, peer mentoring, and school campaigns. Students need to understand that bullying can have psychological, social, academic, and legal consequences for both victims and perpetrators.

Teachers, especially civic education teachers, should be actively involved in designing preventive programs that connect legal norms with students' daily experiences. Schools are also encouraged to develop collaborative programs involving parents, counselors, school leaders, legal practitioners, and community stakeholders. In the digital context, schools should strengthen digital ethics, responsible online behavior, and cyberbullying prevention by combining education, supervision, and restorative approaches. Rather than focusing only on punishment, anti-bullying strategies should promote legal consciousness, empathy, accountability, and civic responsibility.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that legal awareness is a dominant internal factor influencing students' bullying behavior in the digital age. The findings indicate that students who possess stronger understanding, acceptance, and internalization of legal norms tend to demonstrate better behavioral control and lower tendencies toward bullying. Although the social and digital environment remains conceptually relevant in shaping student interaction, its partial effect was not statistically significant in this study, suggesting that external environmental exposure does not automatically determine bullying behavior when students have strong legal and civic awareness. Simultaneously, legal awareness and the social/digital environment provide a strong explanatory contribution to bullying behavior, confirming that bullying prevention should be addressed through an integrated educational strategy. Therefore, schools need to strengthen civic education, legal literacy, digital ethics, and character-building programs as preventive efforts to create a safe, responsible, and bullying-free learning environment. Future educational policies should not focus only on disciplinary control but also on the internalization of legal values, empathy, social responsibility, and ethical digital citizenship among students.

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