

# The Driving Forces of Bully in Adolescents: A Systematic Review of Literature in Asian Country

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## Abstract

Bully is the intentional and repeated hostility act via physical, verbal, or cyber in which the victims cannot defend themselves. Hence, these acts of aggression have several of negative impacts towards the victim' life (physically, emotionally and psychologically). The growing of bully incidents especially among adolescents in the school background was increasingly upsetting. More concerns and research were given to aid the victimized population leaving the bullies unattended. Hence, this review focuses on the factors that drive the school student to engage in bully. This systematic review studies the factors lead to bully incidents in selected major Asian countries namely Hong Kong, China, India, Vietnam and Malaysia. Information was extracted from SCOPUS database to find relevant reading materials which includes the inclusions and exclusion criteria in the processes. A total of 10 journals were selected to aid reviewer in analysing data for responding the three main objectives of this paper. The driving forces of bullying such as environmental influences, self-expressive, racial elements, psychological factors were discussed systematically. The statistic and pattern of bullying incidents were also identified from the selected journals. The implications of this review were also being discussed.

## Introduction

Bullying is a common problem but ignored in schools worldwide. However, due highly and serious implications on the adolescents who are being victimized by bullies, it raises some concerns. Initially, school bullying has been widely well researched in the Westerns only for over thirty years (Le et. al, 2017). However, it all changes when Japanese started to conduct

a series of research on bullying in other Asian countries, mostly Chinese societies. Hence, research on bullying in the Asian region booming in the late 1990s (Chui & Chan, 2014).

In general, bully involves a range of either physical or verbal or psychological aggressive actions to initiate harm and distress towards others. Bully can be defined as repeated act of aggression towards a weaker victim (Poon, 2016). It can be direct or physical such as hitting and threatening or it can be indirect such as social exclusion and spreading rumours. Usually, bullying is a negative attitude or incidents because it victimized other people and causes them to feel discomfort (or in some cases illnesses) (Norshidah Mohamad Salleh & Khalim Zainal, 2014). For the purpose of this review, bully is defined as actions done by individuals that have negative impacts towards others physical, emotions or life.

While majority are fond towards traditional bullying, with the rise of internet and technology, cyber-bullying is possibly the new form of social cruelty. It will give the accessors the “green card” to say or do things anonymously. Hence, with this anonymity, adults’ supervisions might be at the minimum. For India, the growth of internet usage is unbelievably high where 35% of the population actively on social media (Sharma, Kishore, Sharma et.al, 2017). This trend will put the adolescents in India on the spot of cyberbullying risk.

In Malaysia, bullying is a common occurrence in school settings and it raises great attention from every level and corner of community. A study among a 13 aged students in a rural area found the frequency of bullying behaviour at 14.4% (Wan Ismail et. al, 2014). A similar study in an urban area among the same age group, reported a prevalence of 21.1%. With the increasing of bully incidents mainly among school youth, Malaysian UNICEF started a campaign to stop this rage by introducing an anti-bullying hotline at 1800-88-4774 and Childline at 15999 where publics can report suspicious or bullying incidents to the responsible parties.

China, Taiwan and Hong Kong have high number of bully incidents. In mainland China, social rejection is the major issues of bullying at school, where in Taiwan itself, 24% to 50% cases were reported commonly associated with physical and verbal bullying (Chui, Choon & Chan, 2014). While Hong Kong documented an increase number of this negative event from 20% to 46% of physical and verbal bullying between the year 2004 to 2008 (Choon, Chan & Wong, 2017).

Similarly, traditional bullying is more common compared to cyberbullying among Vietnamese school students. More than half of the students are believed to be involved in bully, however, many cases possibly remain unreported or dismissed (Le et.al., 2017). Reviewer believed that this is due to lack of researched being conduct.

With the growing of bullying incidents in some of major Asian countries, reviewer decided to explore some of the reasons why the occurrence keeps on increasing. The bullying experiences might be or possibly different in comparison of Western countries and Asian countries. Reviewer believed that this has something to do with the cultural differences. Hence, reviewer decided to do systematic review to identify the driving forces of bully in Asian countries, hoping to come across the cultural indifferences indicators.

### **Objectives**

The objective of the review is to explore the factors behind the occurrence of bullying in Asian countries. The questions below provide some guidelines and ideas about the context of the study.

1. What are the statistics of bullying in Asian countries?

For this purpose of study, statistics incorporated the bullying incidents in social and school settings.

2. What are the driving forces that cause bullying?

The centre was to discuss and explore the cause of bullying in different region of Asian countries on the relevant reading materials.

3. What are the patterns of factors that cause bullying in Asian countries?

The factors that are being mentioned in the most journals shall be concluded as the main causes bullying in Asian countries.

### **Methodology**

The systematic review was first initiated by using the key word “bully”. It followed by the specific processes in order to search and extract the suitable literatures. Hence, justify the main purpose of this review. According to Bolland, Cherry and Dickson (2014), systematic reviews are considered the best way to blend the findings of several studies to provide informative and evidence based answers. The use of objectives helps reviewer to make appropriate selections from the lists.

### **The Search Strategy**

For the purpose of this study, reviewer uses the SCOPUS database as a primary literature search to search for journal articles. Firstly, the searching process was started by key in the keywords which were “bully” and “adolescents”. Secondly, as shown in Table 1 and 2, inclusion and exclusion criteria were also included and justified in order to retrieve appropriate journal articles. Then, the focused was on the publications from the year 2014 until 2018. After that, reviewer selected the main subject areas in the database namely Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and Psychology. This has some relevancy to reviewer’s subjects of interests. Finally, Asian countries were selected to be the potential countries to conduct relevant reviews, namely, Malaysia, China, Hong Kong, India, and Vietnam. Reviewer chose to conduct a study in Asian countries because Asian countries are rich in cultural differences and may somehow affect the bullying behaviours.

Initially, there were 830 relevant journals found using just the key words (bully and adolescents). When the reviewer limits the year from 2013 to 2018, only 441 journals were found and chosen. Then, 308 journals were selected from the subject areas of Art and Humanities, Social Science and Psychology. The search was again limited to a margin of studies from Asian countries only which are India, Malaysia, Hong Kong, China and Vietnam until the numbers of journal decreased to 18 journals. Exclusion of journal was also being conducted by the reviewer in order to exclusively found 10 relevant journals in the end. This exclusion criterion was by the journal sources. Hence, Figure 1 shows the steps in searching processes in SCOPUS database.

All of the 10 journals selected were being carefully studied in order for the reviewer to find the relevant findings as shown in Table 4. The selected journals were also downloaded from the publication servers and saved in form of PDF files. This helps the reviewer to intensively read and understand in pursuing this systematic review.

Table 1  
*The inclusion criteria*

<b>Exclusion Criteria</b>	<b>Particulars</b>		
<b>Journal Source</b>	School of Mental Health	1	} 8
	International Journal of Behavioural Development	1	
	Asian Journal of Psychiatry	1	
	Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research	1	
	SAGE Open Access Journal	2	
	School of Psychology	1	
	Child and Youth Forum	1	

Table 2  
The Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria presented in order	Particulars	Literatures identified	Remaining Literature
<b>Key terms</b>	Bully and Adolescent	830	830
<b>Year</b>	From year 2013 to 2018	441	389
<b>Subject Area</b>	Social Science		
	Art and Humanities	309	80
	Psychology		
<b>Country</b>	India	3	} 18
	Malaysia	1	
	China	9	
	Vietnam	3	
	Hong Kong	2	

Figure 1: Flow chart of systematic review

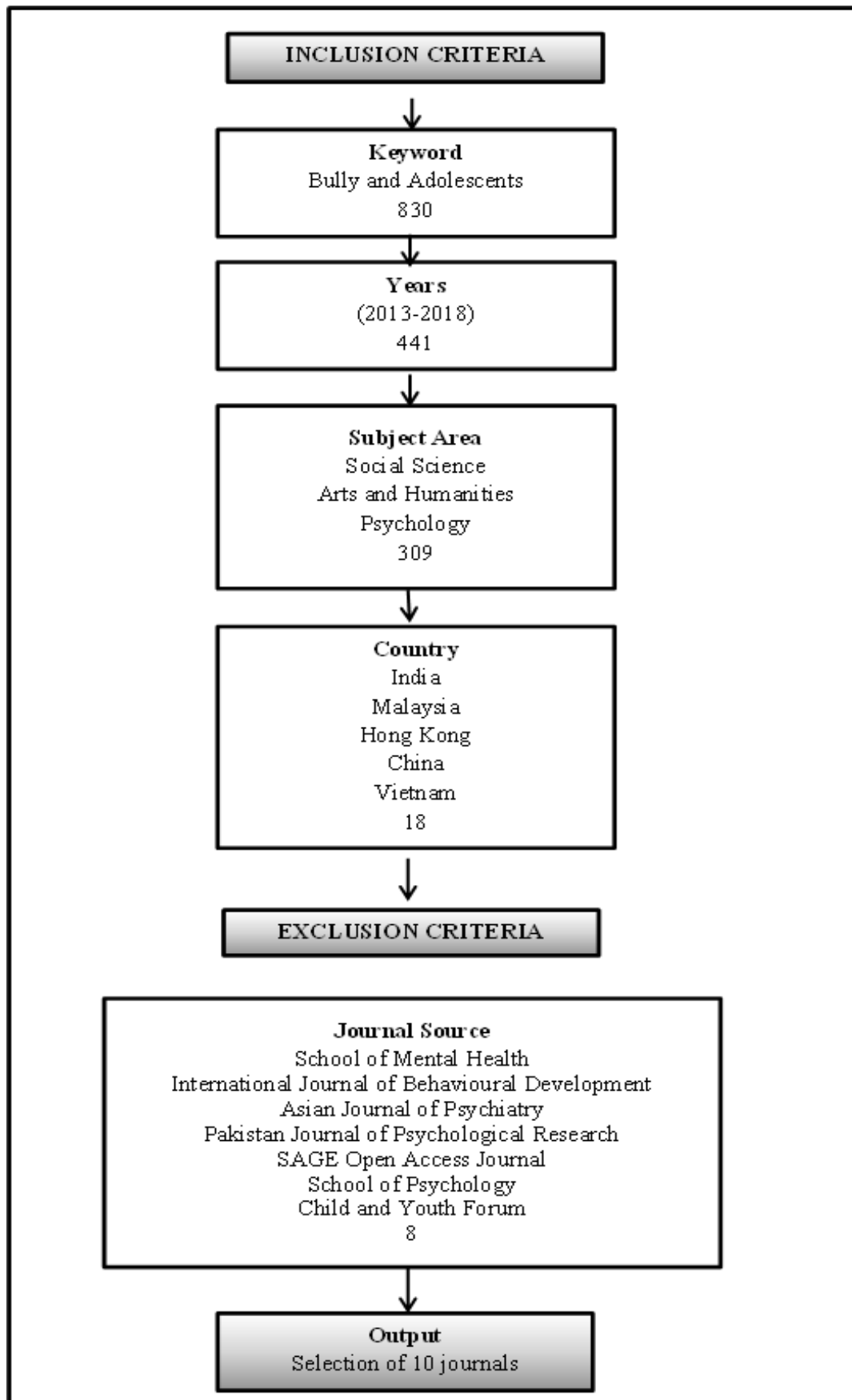


Figure 1: Flow chart of systematic review

### Findings of Literature Review

The summaries of the selected journals are shown in Table 3. The literatures have been reviewed and presented by the name of the authors, publication years, journal titles, country, sample of study and the findings that are relevant to the objective of the paper.

Table 3

#### Summary of Selected Literatures

Author (Year)	Title of Journal	Country	Sample	Relevant Findings
Malik & Mehta (2016)	Bullying Among Adolescents in an Indian School	India	45 participants Female: 20 Male: 25	The study was to understand the potential bully and interventions.
Balakrishnan (2015)	Cyberbullying among young adults in Malaysia: The roles of gender, age and Internet frequency	Malaysia	393 (aged 17-19) participants	Being a victim to cyberbullying triggered the tendency to be a bully.
Sharma et al (2017)	Aggression in Schools: Cyberbullying and gender issues	India	178 participants Female: 57 Male: 121	With an active growth and access of internet usage, Internet bullying is possible for social cruelty.
Le et al (2017)	Temporal patterns and predictors of bullying roles among adolescents in Vietnam: A school-based cohort study	Vietnam	1,424 middle and high school students	The finding indicates that adolescents seek for social control in a new environment
Chan & Wong (2017)	Coping with cyberbullying victimization : An exploratory study of Chinese adolescents in Hong Kong	Kowloon, Hong Kong	423 participants. Female: 183 Male: 249	The study examines the effects of avoidance strategies (denial and distractions) are associated with persistent emotional and behavioural problems
Young et al (2014)	Happy and unhappy adolescent bullies:	China	481 Chinese adolescents	Beneficial end results related to happiness

	Evidence for theoretically meaningful subgroups			and satisfaction promotes repeated bullying behaviours.
<b>Gao &amp; Chan (2015)</b>	Future orientation and school bullying among adolescents in rural China: The mediating role of school bonding	Southwest rural China	677 participants	Environment (such as school) plays an important role in affecting adolescents' bully behaviours.
<b>Lui et al (2016)</b>	Weight status and bullying behaviour among Chinese school aged children	China	10,587 school aged participants Female: 5,527 Male: 5060	Low self-esteem obese adolescents tend to be victimized.
<b>Ismail et al (2014)</b>	Why do young adolescents bully? Experience in Malaysian schools	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	410 of 12-aged adolescents.	The study is to determine sociodemographic and psychological factors associated with bullying behaviour among young adolescents in Malaysia.
<b>Chui &amp; Chan (2014)</b>	Self-control, School Bullying Perpetration and Victimization among Macanese Adolescent	Macau, China	365 male participants	Adolescents learned the negative behaviours from their parents.

Table 3 (continued): Summary of Selected Literatures



## Discussion

### *The Statistic of Bullying in Asian Countries*

Table 4 showed the statically data of bullying in adolescent in Asian countries. This information was tabulated in order to get a better view of the trend.

Number of Literature	Country	Statistical Data
1	India	96% participants in a survey claiming that bullying is a significant concern in educational establishments.
2	Vietnam	School students experienced cyberbully: 81% are the victims 75% are the bullies
3	New Delhi, India	From 178 adolescents at school, 8% are engaged in cyberbullying which resulted a total of 17% of reported victims.
4	Hong Kong	From 432 bully-victims, 65% of them were aggressively being bully while 35% were passively victimized.
5	Hong Kong	Most adolescents projected higher involvement in risky behaviour.
6	China	In mainland China, the occurrence of bullying victimization are ranged from 2% to 66%
7	Malaysia	14.4% of rural area adolescents engage in bullying behaviour 21.1% of urban area adolescents involved in bully.
8	China	20 % of 3,297 Hong Kong secondary school students being victimization for the past 6 months.
9	Vietnam	Rates of bully-victims in Vietnam school was found to range from 24% to 50 % with physical and verbal bullying ranging from 40% to 68 %
10	General Study	15%–30% of students experienced being a victims of bully worldwide

Table 4: Statistical data from selected studies

### **The Driving Forces that Cause Bullying**

The driving forces of bullying for every Asian country vary from one another. The trend and pattern of these negative behaviours depends on the social background. China has the highest number of bullying cases compared to other Asian countries. This might due to the size of populations and the country itself. In the context of Chinese culture, school bullying happened because to protect and maintain the group conformity. According to Chui and Chan (2017), bullying in the school setting is also often seen as a “collective act” in Asian communities, members in the group valued the “interpersonal benefits” to maintain the group’s belief system.

Peer victimization such as social rejection is common and become major bullying issue in Chinese and Hong Kong school. Weight status (obese) in Chinese adolescents is seen as not normal and this tends to give a wild card to bullies to victimize them (Liu, 2016). Similarly in

Hong Kong, adolescents tend to repeat bullying behaviours because of the satisfactions and cheering from peers after victimizing the weak ones (Young et. al, 2014).

On the contrary, Macanese adolescents identified the domestic environment such as parental violence background may affect the bullying behaviours. Study made by Chan & Chui (2013) indicates that these sorts of parents may adopt unhealthy parenting style in raising their children. Hence, may dent the children's psychological functions which increase their tendency to victimize at school. Similarly in rural China, school environment plays important role in affecting adolescents' behaviour. This is in line with the study conducted by Gao and Chan (2015) where school adolescent with low level of positive school bonding will led to negative bullying behaviour.

In difference with Malaysian studies, traditional bullying is quite common, however, cyberbullying also taking place in such numbers. The finding by Salleh and Zainal (2014) suggests that bullying in racially mixed school might potentially include the matters of racial element where most the bullies are keen to defend a friend from humiliations or beaten up by students of different races. High internet usage and time spent, increases the chances to cyberbullying. According to Balakrishnan (2015), there's an observational pattern indicating that victims tend to be bullies due to the experienced of being cyberbullied before. Nevertheless, these bully's behaviours cannot eliminate the possibility of psychological factors. Ismail et. al (2014) suggests that the behaviours tend to associates with ADHD and hyperactive symptoms.

In India, physical bullying is common in the educational settings. However, the growth of internet usage and access made cyberbullying possible. Malik and Mehta (2016) found out that male adolescents expressed anger explicitly compared to the female adolescent. This negative expression led to favourable face to face bullying. On the other hand, female adolescents are highly engaged in cyberbullying due to "less physical expressive" nature (Sharman et.al., 2017).

In Vietnam, traditional bullying is widely known in the school system. However, the cause factors are fluid overtime ranging from individual to family, peers and schools. According to (Le et.al, 2017), one of the main reasons is trying to seek and maintain social control or superiority over their friends in a new and distinct environment (in the case of transition from primary to secondary school). Apart from that, adolescent who witnessed domestic violence at home increased the tendency to develop bullying behaviours at school.

### **The Patterns of Factors that cause Bullying in Asian Countries**

Based on the factors discussed beforehand, it is clear that the pattern or current trend of bullying incidents slightly differs from countries to countries. However, the gist is there. As for China, Vietnam and Hong Kong, the peer victimizations are normal there and the driving forces are due to environments. Meanwhile in Malaysia, the elements of psychological incompetence, trauma, and racial matters seems to endorse the bullying incidents. Although in India, physical bullying is a common issues at school, due to incline of internet access, cyberbullying is often related to self-expressive. However, we could identify that environment affected individuals in driving the bullying behaviours. Hence, we could conclude it can be applied to Asian countries for the purpose of this review.

**Implication**

Counsellors especially the school counsellors are well positioned to address bullying at school by providing suitable intervention strategies and support for students. Nowadays, most of the intervention programs are focusing on the victims especially in the aspect of social support whereas the bullies are commonly punished. However, lacks of interventions are being studied in order to understand the bullies of perspective. Hence, by understanding the bullies and victims, interventions can be tailored specifically to both parties which in the end can reduce a significant number of bully cases. Therefore, the school counsellors need to identify the potential short term and long term ramifications associated with bully before introduced intervention tools.

Taking the “Bullet Proof Your School” strategies as implemented in the United States local high school, the STAC intervention program should give an idea towards school counsellors especially in the Asian Countries. The STAC program basically a collaboration project between counsellors and students to train them as “defenders” to intervene whenever bullying incidents are observed. The STAC stands for Stealing the show, Turning it over, Accompanying others and Coaching sessions (Midgett, 2016). Stealing the show basically turning away peers’ attentions from the targeted victims to other valuable and beneficial matters while Turning it over is to always report the incidents to the responsible adults. Accompanying others is to befriended with social left out victims and lastly coaching sessions focuses on “mellow-confronting” techniques instead of punishing the bullies. In order words, this strategies emphasize in harmonize the school environment in combating the bullying incidents. Reviewers perceive this assertive interventions as suitable for both parties (the bully and victim) and definitely can accommodate the cultural differences aspect. Moreover, this intervention strategy is time and cost effective. After quite of deliberations, reviewer consider this intervention program is seemly appropriate to be applied in the Asian countries’ school setting.

Apart from that, this review cannot be used to generalize the entire community of Asian countries. A comprehensive study which involves urban and rural communities in major parts of Asian countries should be conducted. Future researchers can do some in depth studies in order to gain such validity in reviews for future references.

Last but not least, only few selected journals in one database been reviewed and other Asian countries were not included. A wider search should be conducted in few databases to search for more studies such as economical indifferences and technological aspects in major part of Asian countries. Future reviewers should also extend the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the searching processes. Thus, this will enhance the quality of the reviews.

**Conclusion**

Bully is becoming unsettling problem worldwide especially in the school context. With this review being conducted, we can get a clear picture of the statistics, factors and pattern that drives the school student engaging in bully activities in Asian countries. The statistics shows that every country experiencing an increase of the bully activities among school students where in Vietnam being the highest occurrence (75% engaged in cyberbully and about 68% traditional bullying). The driving factors are different across countries ranging from

inner self to environment. To conclude, the trend for causing the bully activities among school student is leaning towards the factor of environment.

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