

## **Relationship Between Bully Victimization and Emotional Difficulty in Adolescence: Hope and School Connectedness as Mediator**

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### **Abstract**

It has been known that bullying victimization could lead to emotional difficulties. Current study wished to examine what could be the underlying factors that leads to this relationship and by identify the potential factors, counsellor will be able to have different approach to help victim of bullying. This study focused on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties and mediation effect of hope and school connectedness. There are total of 413 respondent participated in this study. Descriptive analysis was used to determine the demographic data. Pearson correlation shows that all four variables are significantly associated with each other. In the mediation analysis, finding shows that hope has partial mediation effect while school connectedness does not have mediation effect. The results were discussed and implication of study has been included into the study. Finding of current study has contributed to the literature gap and the mediation effect shown by hope will serve as new method to reduce the negative effect of bully.

**Keywords:** Bully Victimization, Emotional Difficulty, Hope, School Connectedness, Adolescence

### **Introduction**

Bullying can be defined as “any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths who are not siblings or current dating partners that involves an observed or perceived power imbalance and is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated” (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014). Bullying is an aggressive behaviour that can cause the victim to feel insecure, uncomfortable and feel being isolated from those around them, if the condition is worsen mental illness can also be developed.

The study of Salleh, Norshidah & Zainal (2014) mentioned that there are direct bully and indirect bully. Direct bully involve behaviour that causes physical injuries such as hitting,

punching and pushing; meanwhile, indirect bullying behaviour involve teasing and insults that can causes negative effects on psychological and emotional. Indirect bullying receive less attention from mass media as compared to direct bullying but indirect bullying has become more serious when multimedia is used as a tool to carry out indirect bully.

In Malaysia, bullying behaviour has been an issue that commonly happened in school. In different states of Malaysia, the statistic on bullying is also relatively high. According to a study, 41.2% of 410 year six students experience bullied at least 3 or more times of in one month. Among 2528 primary school children there are around 85.8% and 85% experience psychological bully and physical bully respectively (Yaakub, Nagappan & Jusoh , 2019).

Bullying behaviours will cause negative outcomes on the victim physically or psychologically. One of the factors that lead to emotional difficulty is bully involvement in school. Midgett, Dumas, & Johnston, 2018 viewed that students who have experienced as victims in bullying, may have emotional difficulty depression and anxiety. This often lead to lower academic result.

This study is very important especially to school counsellors to tackle bullying issue in school through improving students' hope and their connectedness toward school. Furthermore, by understanding the school connectedness and hope in both role of bully, counsellor may be able to design a better therapeutic activity for the victim during counselling session. Other than that, the finding of this study can contribute limited study on bully and emotional difficulties.

What is more, the finding of the study could also contribute to the importance in cultivating hope within the adolescents. The cultivation of hope in adolescents could help in reducing the chances recovering from emotional difficulties. The finding on school connectedness as mediator can let the society to understand the importance of being connected to school, adults in school and peer in school. This helps to have a better understanding on the bullying issue.

### **Problem Statement**

According to a nationwide survey done in year 2018 as reported by The Star, every 8 person out 10 person has become victim of bullying behaviour in their school (Souza, Rajaendram, & Tang, 2018). Another statistic has also shown that 64% of 2000 children that aged below 18 years old has participated or potentially participate in bullying behaviour. Both statistic has shown the grievous of the bullying issues in school. Although many campaigns and programmes have been conducted to increase the awareness on bullying issue, but the effect of the campaign appeared to be insignificant to reduce the occurrence of such issue. According to the news reported in newspaper The Star, victim of the bullying shows lower level of confidence. This align with the finding of the previous study related to bully behaviour and emotional difficulties.

One of the internal factor that will be studied in current study is hope. It was found out that some of the negative effects shown by victim suffered from bullying are loss of confidence, sad, fear and have impaired social relationship. Some of the treatment plan that a counsellor can choose to do are creating trust, improve self-esteem, relax, learn to have a safe and positive friendship. However, there is also a needs to explore new factors that can help to reduce emotional difficulties. Past studies has shown that higher levels of hope can lead to better psychological adjustment when facing an ongoing stressor, such as bullying (Cleveland & Sink, 2018) and hope helps people keep their negative emotions low by planning a better method to adapt painful and stressful situations (Hobbs & Baker, 2012; Cleveland &

Sink, 2018). There is less number of study studies suggested that hope can be a underlying factors that connect both variables.

One of the external factor is school connectedness. A study found out that adolescent who has higher level of school connectedness shows lower levels of depressive symptoms, suicidal ideation and social anxiety; higher levels of self-esteem and more adaptive use of free time (Foster et.al, 2017). School connectedness has been reported to have direct relationship to both bully involvement and emotional difficulties, however the mediating effect of school connectedness to both variables are still remained unknown. This leads to the needs for current study to explore on potential factors that could help to reduce negative effect of bullying.

In order to understand whether hope and school connectedness serve as the mediator, current study has proposed a few research objectives which can lead to the intended study results. Research objective are:

- i. To identify the relationship between victim of bully behaviour and emotional difficulty.
- ii. To identify on the mediator role of hope in the relationship between victim of bully behaviour and emotional difficulty.
- iii. To identify on the mediator role of school connectedness in the relationship between victim of bully behaviour and emotional difficulty.

The research questions are:

- i. Does being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?
- ii. Does hope mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?
- iii. Does school connectedness mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?

## **Literatur Review**

### **Bullying Victimization**

Bullying victimization is defined as the imbalance in power between victim and perpetrator where the victims are repeatedly expose to negative action (Olweus, 1993). Bullying take in many forms. Traditional bully are more towards physical contact where the victim will suffer from pushing or hitting, verbal harassment such as name calling, and spread of rumour. However, as social media been more common among the adolescent, cyberbullying emerged as a new form of bully. News about bullying has been shown in the newspapers over time and society has been constantly taking preventive measure to reduce bullying from happening.

There are several theories that has been trying to explain on bullying victimization. One of the theories is social capital theory. Social capital are commonly referred as gaining benefits from social relationships (Putnam, 2000). Individual tend to form social relationship and gain benefits from their interaction of others. There are two forms of social capital which are bonding social capital and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the interpersonal relationship between individual who are in a homogenous group and share the sense of belonging., whereas bridging social capital refers to the interpersonal relationship with individual that does not belong in a homogenous group to create a wider social network (Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003).

There are a few benefits that one can gain from having social ties. For example, information, influence, social credentials and reinforcement of sense of self-worth. Interpersonal relationship offers information on opportunity available outside of network

circle. Interpersonal relationship also provides influence of power that can serve that protect someone from being bullied. Social credentials gain from interpersonal relationship could help to improve social status of an individual and hence exposed more opportunity to gain social resources from others. Lastly, through interpersonal relationship, one can also gain emotional supports from individual that share similar interest. These benefits suggested by social capitalist can explain why having a group of friend can help to validate someone's self-worth especially in school (Lin, 2001).

Victim of bullying have few friends which make them have low social status (Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011) and hence have minimum social capital. As a result, victim of bullying will have lower chances to have access on information, improve social credential or have the influence on others in school. Limited social capital will then in turn reduce opportunity to being invited for other social gathering. Lacking of social capital in victim of bullying also may prolong the bullying experiences as they cannot get protection and support from their friends, hence making the victim suffer from emotional issue.

### **Emotional Difficulties**

Emotional difficulties is defined as the internalisation of emotional disorder such as anxiety and depression (Midgett et al, 2018), feeling of loneliness, low in self-esteem. Currently there are many theories related to emotions, for example James-Lange theory, Cannon-Bard Theory and Cognitive appraisal theory. Cognitive appraisal theory is a theory that suggested that before experiencing emotion, thinking needs to be occur first.

According to cognitive appraisal theory, depressed youth could be depressed due to experiencing significant deficit in competence and have high level of stress Rudolph, Hammen, & Daley, 2006). There are possibility that depressed youth have negative cognition on appraisal on personal competency and environmental adversity instead of having biasness in evaluation on self and world. There are study that tested on the accuracy of cognitive appraisal theory on depressive symptom. As some suggested that the negative cognitive appraisal is emerge from depressive symptoms (Pomerantz & Rudolph, 2003). Nevertheless, cognitive appraisal does contribute to the formation of depression and could even contribute to the formation emotional difficulties.

### **Hope**

Hope is known as a primarily cognitive-motivation construct that motivates a person to act to achieve perceived goals (Padilla-Walker, Hardy, & Christensen, 2011). In the Snyder's Hope theory, hope was conceptualised with two components which are pathway and agency. Pathway refers to the how an individual can think of different routes to achieve a certain goal. A high hope individual should be about to produce alternative routes compared to low hope individual. Pathway thinking should be continuously refined and precise as an individual moving toward their goals. Agency thinking refers to the motivational component in the hope theory. Agency thinking involve mental energy and when the individual meets a challenge, agency thinking will help the individual to direct their motivation to the best pathway to achieve their goal. For example, individual may use self-talking to keep themselves motivated (Snyder, 2002). Hope could lead to emotional issue as it can be the result where the individual failed to achieve the targeted goal. Causes for emotional disturbance could be due to insufficient agentic and pathway thinking, or being unable to overcome certain challenges.

Hopeful thought should become more refined as the individual mature. Hopeful thought enhances the development of skills such as vocabulary, abstraction skills which were

useful for the individual to achieve goals. Therefore, individual with high hope tend to have a better performance in school compared to the low hope ones as the performance in the school often associate with how well a student can achieve concrete goals by using pathway thought and agency thought (Wehmeyer, Shogren, Little, & Lopez, 2017).

### **School Connectedness**

School connectedness can be defined as a psychological state in which the individual think that they are cared, trusted and respected by adults in school (Whitlock, 2003). Barber and Schluterman (2008) has categorised school connectedness into two types which are quality of performance in a relationship and combination of perceptions of relationship and antecedent behaviours. School connectedness is a component that are more focused on the interaction between individual and school context. Theoretical foundation of school connectedness are focused on attachment, group membership and social capital.

Social capital is commonly referred as gaining benefits from social relationships (Putnam, 2000). Individual tend to form social relationship and gain benefits from their interaction of others. Social relationship in school does not only limited in peer friendship but also student-teacher relationship. Good relationship with adults in school and good peer friendship may contribute more chances for the individual to gain access more social capital (Lin, 2001). A good relationship with adult and peer in school will also help to improve individual's capacity to meet developmental needs and this will in turn improve the individual's connection with the setting (McNeely, Whitlock, & Libbey, 2010).

### **Bully Victimization And Emotional Difficulties**

Topic in relation to bullying victimization and emotional difficulties has been widely investigated by researchers around the world. In order to study on these two variables, literature study has been done on past years' studies. Many studies also highlighted that not all victims of bullying will develop mental health problems (Baker & Bugay, 2011), hence prompting researchers to investigate factors that can remove negative effects of bullying on emotional difficulties. As role of peer, school, and family support has been demonstrated in the previous study (Moran, Chen, & Tryon, 2018). But as the focus of current study are inner resources in individual in reducing effect of bullying in emotional difficulties, little research has explored the role of individual psychological mechanisms in response to bullying involvement (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014).

A study on bullying and mental health and suicidal behaviour by Ford, King, Priest, and Kavanagh (2017) was done in Australia and it was found out that teenagers take on all three different bullying roles shows higher score on anxiety, depressive symptoms. In the same study, it was also found out that victim of bullying also reported to be more likely to have suicidal ideation, more likely to carry out self-harm and suicidal behaviour (Ford, King, Priest and Kavanagh, 2017). In the discussion section, it was mentioned that the finding was consistent with international studies which suggested that both bullies and victim has higher prevalence in poor mental health which includes depression and anxiety (Turner et al, 2014).

In an integrative review study on emotional experience and bullying victimization, depressed was one of the common emotion experienced by victim of bullying and similar finding was found in 10 of the articles reviewed (Hutson, 2017). It was mentioned that word such as sad has been repeated mentioned in the qualitative study by (Kentel & McHugh, 2015). Other than that, other emotional experienced by victims of bullying were low self-esteem, embarrassment and humiliation were more common emotion mentioned in the studies.

However, there are also some emotions that were suggested in fewer studies, such as suicidal ideation, anxiety and feeling lonely. Most of the emotion mentioned in this study were examples of emotional difficulties which is the variable of current studies. According to Hutson (2017), meta-analysis and systematic review on bullying victimization suggested that significant association can be found between bullying victimization with depression, anxiety non-suicidal self-harm and idea. The association between bullying victimization and depression does not only limited to traditional bullying but also cyberbullying (Bottino et al., 2015). As a conclusion on the review done by Hutson (2017), victim of bullying experiences emotion such as sadness, low self-esteem, anger, loneliness, helplessness, fear, suicidal thinking and confusion.

A study by Williams, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Finnegan (2017) that focused on sex differences in bullying victimization and its association with depressive symptoms, suicide ideation, suicide attempts, rates of depressive symptoms are higher for those that suffered from verbal, social bullying, and this finding was true for both sexes. For male, rates of depressive symptoms were higher in physical bullying victimization, whereas for female, cyberbullying has higher rates. From this study, it can be concluded that both sexes suffered from different form of bullying and different rate of depressive symptom were found in different form of bullying for both sexes.

In Korean population a study has been done to study the factors that associate with bullying victimization, bullying victimisation was significantly associated with more depressive symptoms, lower academic achievement (Seo, Jung, Kim & Bahk, 2017). According to the author, factors such as being bullied, trauma could also lead to depression. Emotional dysregulation and low self-esteem following victimization may act as mediators between victimization and psychiatric symptoms. It is also possible for depressed adolescence to have impaired development of social skills and ability to defend which eventually causing them to become easy targets for bullies.

According to a study by Midgett and other in year 2018, emotional difficulties like depression and anxiety are commonly found in victimized children compared to their friends that were not bullied. Many studies were done on this topic because of the negative social and emotional outcome for victim of bullying. According to a systematic review, association between victimization and emotional difficulties was also suggested from a study by Ttofi, Farrington, Losel, and Loeber (2011). Strong link between victimization and emotional difficulties were also suggested in many studies (Jenkins, Demaray, & Tennant, 2017). In this systematic review, it was emphasized that victimized children are more likely being depressed later in life.

In a longitudinal study on relationship between bullying victimization, depressive symptoms, emotional issue, and self-harm ideation by Bryson, Brady Childs and Gryglewicz (2020), girl were more likely to think about self-harm as compared to male, and those who reported to think about self-harm also reported to have higher level of emotional problems. Finding also suggested that emotional problems has mediation effect on the association between bullying victimization and thought of self-harm. The author mentioned that, although emotional problems show mediation effect, however there were other possible risk factors involved in this effect. Finding of the study also correspond to the theoretical assertions where victimization caused negative emotional such as hopelessness, sense of not belongings and low self-esteem.

A study on bullying victimization was done in Lebanon by Malaeb and others (2020), several variable were examined. For example, role of child abuse, internet addiction, social

phobia and depression. Bivariate analysis of this study shows that higher score in victimization significantly associated with social phobia and avoidance, internet addiction and depression. Previous study has suggested that emotional dysregulation response to abuse and impair social interactions results in internalizing problems such as anxiety or depression (Dvir, Ford, Hill, Frazier, 2014). Another study was done in Pakistani on bullying victimization, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Finding of this study suggested that victims reported more emotional difficulties and behavioural difficulties compared to the bullies. It was also mentioned that bully's exhibits externalizing symptoms whereas victim exhibit internalizing symptoms (Gustafsson, Proczkowska-björklund, Gustafsson, 2017; Haltigan, Vaillancourt, 2014; Syed, Hussein, Azam, Khan, 2009).

Local studies have suggested the association of depression and bullying victimization and depression predicts suicidal ideation (Ibrahim et al, 2017). This result was then supported by another study that suggests similar result (Abd Razak, Ahmad, Abd Aziz, Jamaluddin, Sidik, Awaluddin, Ibrahim, Tan & Sooryanarayana, 2019). This study also suggests that there are no significant difference in gender, age group, and urban rural strata. In term of ethnicity, ethnic other than Malay has higher prevalence in having depression. Another study by Tan and companion (2019) suggested that bullying victimization is associated with factors such as physical attack, drug use, loneliness, depression, anxiety, stress and suicide ideation.

Numerous studies have been done on topic related to bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. Previous studies have also examined the effect sex differences, emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, suicide ideation, self-harm and anxiety when investigating this topic. Similar result was found in most of the studies and as a result study on bullying victimization and emotional difficulties has been expanded to different dimensions. Current studies served to expand studies on psychological capital and social capital that may have association with victimization and emotional difficulties.

### **Hope As Mediator**

Hope is a constructs related to psychological capital which involves developing specific strategies and motivation to achieve goals (Snyder, 1995). Many literatures have described hope as a cognitive-motivation construct focused on intention to act to achieve perceived goals, instead of just a belief in ability to act (Padilla-Walker, Hardy, & Christensen, 2011). Similar to a literature that explored hope as a potential mechanism to reduce the negative effects of bullying victimization on emotional difficulties, current study also wanted to explore on the effect of hope in bullying victimization. Snyder et al. (2002) proposed that low levels of hope in students are related to poor psychological adjustment and it was later supported by another study that suggested a more significant result on hope in reducing negative effects on later depression and anxiety (Arnau, Rosen, Finch, Rhudy, & Fornuato, 2007). These findings suggested that lack of confidence in setting goal and level of motivation to achieve a goal can affect depression and/or anxiety symptoms. More literatures support that higher levels of hope can lead to better psychological adjustment when facing an ongoing stressor, such as bullying (Cleveland & Sink, 2018). Study also suggested the relationship between stress and hope. Yarcheski, Mahon, and Yarcheski (2011) found a moderate negative correlation between stress and hope in urban middle school students.

Hope is able to play a role in the recovery process, as hope helps people keep their negative emotions low by planning a better method to adapt painful and stressful situations (Hobbs & Baker, 2012; Cleveland & Sink, 2018). These findings imply that hope could be a potential mechanism for the relation between stressful experiences such as bullying and

emotional difficulties. There is little literature on the mechanisms linking victimization to emotional difficulties (Hamilton et al., 2013), but some studies have provided potential explanations for this process. A study of 144 students suggested that loneliness mediated the association between victimization and depression (Baker & Bugay, 2011). Similar study also found out that emotional dysregulation is able to mediate the correlation between victimization and emotional difficulties over 7 months (McLaughlin, Hatzenbuehler, & Hilt, 2009). These studies add to the understanding of how victimization negatively affects emotional difficulties; however, they are based on a deficit model, not a resources or resilience model that would encompass hope.

Previous studies that suggested similar finding which is left-behind children with bullying victimization are less likely to be compassionate (Jiang et al., 2016), show agency and have effective coping strategies (Lee, Shellman, Osmer, Day, & Dempsey, 2016). In later study, it was also found out that individual who are more compassionate towards self and feel hopeful has been reported showing lesser depressive symptoms (Zhang, Chi, Long, & Ren, 2019) and this coincide with finding of current studies. Individual that are feeling more hopeful are tend to be feeling less depressed (Du, King, & Chu, 2015).

### **School Connectedness As Mediator**

School connectedness refers to student's attachment toward school. Individual with low sense of school connectedness were more likely to be victimized (Glew et al, 2005; Skues, Cunningham, Pokharel, 2012). School connectedness has been viewed as a protective factor for students as it relates to sense of belongingness, social support and relational support received by students. Previous literature has suggested different results on school connectedness. Loukas, Suzuki, and Horton (2006) has suggested that school connectedness has not be able to mediate later emotional problem such as depression, but school connectedness mediate cohesion and satisfaction with classes for secondary school students. Opposite results were suggested from a study by Shochet, Dadds, Ham and Montague (2006). This study has found a strong predictive relationship between weak school connectedness and mental health symptoms for depression, anxiety and general functioning after 1 year. Another study from Loukas and colleagues (2010) suggested that school connectedness reduce likelihood of substance use, suicide risk and aggression (Ahrens et al, 2011). Further study also suggested that school connectedness is associated with lower level of emotional difficulty and lower odd of sexual activity.

Previous studies suggested school connectedness has mediation effect on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties, between bullying victimization and life satisfaction (Liu, Carney, Kim, Hazler, & Guo, 2019). Previous studies also suggested that negative association with depression among bully victim youth (Alejandra Arango, 2018). In the context of bullying, it was found out that both psychological capital and social context has been associated with bullying and ill being outcome (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014). Both social resources and psychological capital was found out to be partially mediate the relationship between bullying with ill-being outcomes, and social support had a stronger mediation effect. In previous studies, school connectedness has been noted as one of the protective factors which could reduce the negative effect of bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012).

In this study, the independent variable's association with dependent variable will be analysed. The association between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties will in the form of positive and negative relationship. Then, the mediating effect of hope and school

connectedness will be analysed. The presence of hope and school connectedness as mediating variable will show a positive result where hope and school connectedness mediate the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties.

### **Methodology**

This research aimed to study the mediation effect of hope and school connectedness on the association of bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. Firstly, research design current study was quantitative research design. Quantitative research was a top-down process which is commonly used to study causal relationship (Leavy, 2017). Next, another research design for current research was correlation research design. Correlation research design was used to determine association between two or more variable in a single population or between two different populations for the same variable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). To conduct statistical analysis of research question, Pearson correlation test,  $r$  was applied. Other than that, second research design used in current study was survey research design. Survey research design aimed to collect response from a group of sample in order to develop a quantitative descriptor of a larger population (Babbie, 1989). According to Keough and Tanabe, (2011), adapting a questionnaire to collect responses from samples through paper and pencil or web based services. In this study, instrument on the variables was given out and survey was done through paper and pencil method and online questionnaire such as Google Form.

The population in this study were secondary school students approximately 170,000 in one area in Kuala Lumpur. According to Kerjcie and Morgan table of sample size, for population approximately 170000, minimum sample size needed were 384. Researcher manage to have 413 participants answered the questionnaire. Current study focused on simple random sampling method and convenience sampling method to select sample that was suitable for current research. Inclusion criteria for sample were determined, for example age from 13 to 18 years old, currently studying in local school or private school. Sample that fulfilled the inclusion criteria were given instrument to do data collection. Simple random sampling method is a form of probability sampling where a sample is picked randomly from a sampling frame (Zikmund, 2002). By using simple random sampling method, five different schools were selected out of 39 schools through random number generator. Then, random number generator was also used when selecting sample to answer instrument for current study.

Four instruments that address four different variables was prepared. Instruments used in current study were University of Illinois Bully Scale, University of Illinois Victimization Scale, Children's Hope Scale, Me and My School (M&MS) Emotional Difficulties subscale and Student - School Connectedness Scale (SCSS) with adolescents.

University of Illinois Victimization Scale is a subscale of the instrument, Illinois Bully Scale that constructed by Espelage and Holt in year 2001. This instrument consists of 5 item likert scale. The scoring of this instrument is by summing up scores for each items under bully factors. The range of score for the bully subscale is 0 to 20. The higher the score for the sum of all items' score, the higher the individual is being victimized by bully behaviour. This scale had an internal consistency of .49 in previous study (Walsters & Espelage, 2017).

Me and My School (M&MS) instrument was used as the tool to measure emotional difficulties (Deighton et al., 2013; Patalay, Deighton, Fonagy, Vostanis, & Wolpert, 2014). This instrument consists of 16 items which 10 items for emotional difficulties subscale and 6 items for behavioural difficulties subscale. The scoring for this instrument was calculated by adding score for each items and higher score indicates that the individual has more emotional

problems. According to Deighton, Fonagy, Vostanis, & Wolpert (2013), scoring of 10 or above indicates that the respondent has problem in emotional difficulties. M&MS has internal consistency reliability from .78 to .84 (Patalay et al., 2014; Patalay, Deighton, Fonagy & Wolpert, 2015). As the internal consistency reliability results are 0.8 in average, therefore it can be concluded that this instrument is highly reliable.

Children's Hope Scale was used to measure the hope in adolescence. This instrument was constructed by Snyder and its team in year 1997. This instrument consists of six items that based on hope theory (Snyder, 2002). This instrument consists of two sub dimensions which are agency and pathway. Agency refers to the children's belief in own ability to maintain their own goals, meanwhile pathway refers to the children's belief in own ability to achieve goals. This instrument consist of 6-point Likert-type scale which range from 1 = none of the time to 6 = all of the time. This instrument was positively correlated with life satisfaction and was negatively correlated with externalizing/internalizing behaviours (Valle, Huebner, & Suldo, 2004). Child Hope Scale has internal consistency reliability of .86 that ranged between .80 to .89 in previous studies (Carney, Kim, Duquette, Guo, & Hazler, 2019).

Student-School Connectedness Scale (SCSS) is an instrument developed by Spanjers (2016) in order to measure an adolescents' connectedness toward adults, peers and school. The final version of this scale consist of 27 items. This scale consists of three factors which are school attitude, communication and acceptance. The reliability analysis has shown that the internal consistency for both young and old students. School attitude shows significant concurrent validity with GPA for middle school group whereas for Communication shows concurrent validity with DIBELS - ORFA for late elementary group. Test-retest correlation was examined for elementary school and it was found out that the correlation was significant for two of the factors which were school attitude and acceptance but not for communication factor.

As for the objective of the study is to study the relationship between two main variables and the mediating effect of a variable toward the relationship of the two main variables, therefore the data analysis that was carried out are Pearson Correlation data analysis and carry out SPSS macro analysis created by Andrew Hayes on the mediation effect. Pearson correlation was used to determine whether there is a relationship between bully involvement and emotional difficulties. Meanwhile, the mediation effect is tested by using hope and school connectedness separately on the relationship between bully involvement and emotional difficulties.

## FINDINGS

## Research Question 1: Does being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?

Table 1

*Correlation Between Four Variables*

		<i>Emotional</i>	<i>Hope</i>	<i>School</i>	<i>Victim</i>
<i>Emotional</i>	Pearson Correlation	-			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
<i>Hope</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.400**	-		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			
<i>School</i>	Pearson Correlation	-.204**	.486**	-	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
<i>Victim</i>	Pearson Correlation	.397**	-.177**	-.153**	-
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002	

Note. \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Pearson's Table 1:

Table 1 shows that correlation between four main variables which are Emotional Difficulties, Hope School Connectedness and Victim of bullying. According to Table 3, Victim of bullying are positively correlated with emotional difficulties ( $r = .397$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In the analysis of correlation between mediators which are hope ( $r = -.177$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and school connectedness ( $r = -.153$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with victim, finding shows both mediators are weakly negative associated with victim. Similar result was shown for the association between hope ( $r = -.400$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and school connectedness ( $r = -.204$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with emotional difficulties. Correlation between victim and emotional difficulties does not reject the proposed hypothesis. This finding suggested that the level of victimization increased, the level of emotional difficulties also increased.

**Research Question 2: Does hope mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?**

Table 2

*Mediation Analysis On Hope*

<i>Variable</i>	<i><math>\beta</math></i>	<i>t</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Victim → Hope	-.57**	-3.65	-.8723	-.2614
Victim → Emotional difficulties (Direct effect)	-.89**	7.84	.6639	1.1081
Hope → Emotional difficulties	-.29**	-7.17	-.3648	-.2079
Victim → Emotional difficulties (Total effect)	1.04**	8.76		
Victim → Hope → Emotional difficulties (indirect effect)	.1623		.0868	.2729

To investigate mediation effect of hope, a parallel mediation analysis was carried out by using PROCESS. In this analysis, emotional difficulties served as dependent variable whereas victim of bullying served as independent variable. According to the finding, victim of bullying is significantly predicting hope ( $\beta = -.57$ ,  $t = -3.65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The value of  $R^2$  in both model shows that victim in bullying explained 3% of the variance in hope. On the other hand, hope ( $\beta = -.29$ ,  $t = -7.17$ ,  $p < .01$ ) predicts significantly emotional difficulties. The value of  $R^2$  in hope and school connectedness explained 2.7% of the variance in hope and school connectedness respectively.

Bootstrapping has been done and 1,000 bootstrap data samples by randomly sampling with replacement from the original data set. To test on the indirect effect of hope, the 95% CI for pathway from victimization to emotional difficulties via hope did not include zero. This finding indicates that this indirect effects were statistically significant. The direct effect of victimization on emotional difficulties was significant, thus this proved hope's partial mediation effect. Findings indicate that victim of bully leads to emotional difficulties directly and indirectly through lowered hope levels. Finding of the result support the proposed hypothesis that there is a mediation effect of hope on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. This finding also suggested that the increase in level of victimization also observed increase in emotional difficulties and decrease in level of hope can be one of explanation such relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties.

**Research Question 3: Does school connectedness mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties?**

Table 3

*Mediation Analysis on School Connectedness*

<i>Variable</i>	<i><math>\beta</math></i>	<i>t</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
Victim → School connectedness	-.67**	-3.15	-1.0858	-.2509
Victim → Emotional difficulties (Direct effect)	-.89**	7.84	.6639	1.1081
School connectedness → Emotional difficulties	-.01	.36	-.0468	.068
Victim → Emotional difficulties (Total effect)	1.04**	8.76		
Victim → School connectedness → Emotional difficulties (indirect effect)	-.0071		-.0502	.0343

According to the finding, victim of bullying is significantly predicting school connectedness ( $\beta = -.67$ ,  $t = -3.15$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The value of  $R^2$  in both model shows that victim in bullying explained 2% of the variance in school connectedness. On the other hand, school connected ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $t = .36$ ,  $p = .72$ ) does not predicts emotional difficulties. The value of  $R^2$  in hope and school connectedness explained 2.7% of the variance in hope and school connectedness respectively.

Bootstrapping has been done and 1,000 bootstrap data samples by randomly sampling with replacement from the original data set. To test on the indirect effect of school connectedness, the 95% CI for pathway from victimization to emotional difficulties via school connectedness included zero. This finding indicates that this indirect effects were not statistically significant. Therefore, school connectedness school connectedness are not a significant mediator. As a result, this finding rejected the proposed hypothesis. Therefore, school connectedness does not shoes mediation effect on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties.

**Discussion**

The main objective of present study is to test the mediation effect of hope and school connectedness on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. Firstly, the finding on current studies rejects first proposed null hypothesis and suggested that there was a significant positive relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. This finding on positive association between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties has also been consistent with previous studies (McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015; Moore et al., 2017; Reijntjes et al., 2010; Ttofi et al., 2011; Wachs, 2012). As victims of bullying suffered from unwanted treatment from others, victims are tending develop emotional difficulties. As suggested in a previous study, Adolescents that were victimized developed more anger, fear and shame over time (Novin, Broekhof, & Rieffe, 2018).

Secondly the finding has suggested the negative relationship between hope and bullying victimization. This finding was consistent with previous studies that suggested similar finding which is left-behind children with bullying victimization are less likely to be compassionate (Jiang et al., 2016), show agency and have effective coping strategies (Lee,

Shellman, Osmer, Day, & Dempsey, 2016). In later study, it was also found out that individual who are more compassionate towards self and feel hopeful has been reported showing lesser depressive symptoms (Zhang, Chi, Long, & Ren, 2019) and this coincide with finding of current studies. Individual that are feeling more hopeful are tend to be feeling less depressed (Du, King, & Chu, 2015).

Thirdly current finding has suggested that hope has a partial mediation effect of on the association between bullying victimisation and emotional difficulties and the total effect become stronger. Existing literature has been suggesting that hope can serve as a way of resilience for individual who experienced trauma (Munoz et al.,2017). Hope is known as a primarily cognitive-motivation construct that motivates a person to act to achieve perceived goals (Padilla-Walker, Hardy, & Christensen, 2011). This definition of hope was able to explain the negative association with both victimization and emotional difficulties. Victim of bullying are more likely to have feeling of despair, angry and anxious as the victim unable to achieve a certain goal which eventually causes motivation lost. Victim of bullying may also feel hopelessness and given up to search for alternatives to cope with the situation faced.

This finding is consistent with previous empirical studies that studies mediating effect of psychological capital (Cassidy et al., 2014). Through application of social and psychological capital framework (Cassidy et al., 2014) in school bullying, mediation effect of hope was solidified as a core factor of psychological capital and school connectedness as a form of social capital. The trend of research on bullying has transitioned from risk factors of victimization (Machado Azeredo, Madalena Rinaldi, Leite de Moraes, Levy, & Rossi Menezes, 2015) toward protective factors of youth adjustment (Zych, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019). Finding of current study and previous studies can be an empirical evidence for applying positive psychology and strengths-based approaches to show that absence of mental issues is different from positive psychological well-being (Thompson et al., 2013). Lastly, as hope shows only partial mediation in the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties in current studies and this suggest the possibility of other psychological capital such as resilience (Cleveland & Sink, 2018) present in this relationship. This suggestion was based on previous studies that focused on hope as part of resilience for adults who had experienced trauma or reported general vulnerabilities (Banks, Singleton, & Kohn-Wood, 2008; Munoz et al., 2017).

In the bivariate analysis on school connectedness, it was found out that victim and school connectedness had a significant negative correlation and similar result was shown between school connectedness and emotional difficulties. However, in the mediation analysis, it was found out that there are no association between school connectedness and emotional difficulties and no indirect effect between school connectedness. This finding suggested that no mediation effect was exhibited by school connectedness on the relationship between bullying victimisation and emotional difficulties. This finding was opposite to the finding suggested by previous studies. Previous studies suggested school connectedness has mediation effect on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties, between bullying victimization and life satisfaction (Liu, Carney, Kim, Hazler, & Guo, 2019). Previous studies also suggested that negative association with depression among bully victim youth (Alejandra Arango, 2018) but similar result was not found in present studies.

In the context of bullying, it was found out that both psychological capital and social context has been associated with bullying and ill being outcome (Cassidy, McLaughlin, & McDowell, 2014). Both social resources and psychological capital was found out to be partially mediate the relationship between bullying with ill-being outcomes, and social support had a

stronger mediation effect. However, social support may not be useful resources in some cases. Victims of bullying unable to receive more social capital such as supportive friends and this lack of social capital has maintained victims in their current role and prevents them from gaining social status. Social capital refers to the resources embedded in social relationships. Furthermore, the domination from bullying perpetrator toward victims also results in intense humiliation and caused negative effects such as anger and depression (Evans & Smokowski, 2015).

In previous studies, school connectedness has been noted as one of the protective factors which could reduce the negative effect of bullying (Hong & Espelage, 2012). However, in present studies psychological capital serves as a greater variable that can help the victims of bullying in facing emotional difficulties. Another possible reason for present studies to have this result was due to the lack of social capital that refrained victim of bullying to seek for help from others especially from the school staffs or peers. As per mentioned previously, victim of bullying in facing domination of perpetrator are not able to receive social support from friends and caused them unable to maintain their social status in turn making them harder to share with others that are less intimate compared to their friends. As a result, the level of school connectedness may not be an effective mediator for victim of bullying.

Finding of current study proposed that hope partially mediate the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties and this finding consistent with the theory proposed in current study which was psychological capital theory. According to psychological capital theory, individual who are happier, more hopeful, efficacious, resilient and optimistic are tend to have more positive mind set even though the individual is in a difficult situation. Samples of current studies show result similar to what was proposed by psychological capital theory. Therefore, individual suffered from bullying but feeling hopeful are less likely to be depressed on their condition.

In conclusion, there are no relationship between being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties which means there is a significant negative relationship between victim of bullying and emotional difficulties. Second null hypothesis, hope will not mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties was rejected as the finding on mediation analysis shown that There is a direct effect between victim of bullying and hope ( $\beta = -.57, t = -3.65, p < .001$ ), hope and emotional difficulties ( $\beta = -.29, t = -7.17, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, as the indirect effect of hope is significant, finding suggested that the mediation effect of hope is partial. Third null hypothesis, school connectedness will not mediate the association of being victim of bully associate with emotional difficulties. This null hypothesis was rejected as the finding on direct effect between school connectedness and emotional difficulties not are significant.

It's obviously understand that bullying behaviours related to the disturbance of victim physically, emotionally or psychologically. These findings are important especially for school counsellors. As bullying issue is common in school nowadays, the school counsellors and teachers may take an initiative to know the students better. The good relationship between counsellors, teachers and students may help student to share the problems which they are facing. With that, counsellors may guide students through improving their hope and their connectedness toward school. Furthermore, by understanding the school connectedness and hope in both role of bully, counsellor may be able to design a better therapeutic activity for the victim during counselling session.

This finding could also may contribute to the importance of cultivating hope within the adolescents. The cultivation of hope in adolescents could help in reducing the chances

recovering from emotional difficulties. The finding on school connectedness as mediator can let the society to understand the importance of being connected to school, adults in school and peer in school. This helps to have a better understanding on the bullying issue.

### Implication

Current study has explored the mediation effect of hope and school connectedness on the relationship between bullying victimization and emotional difficulties. Findings of present study on the mediation effect of hope implies that counsellors should have facilitate students' psychological capital especially victim of bullying. A hope intervention can be applied to cases related to bully and activities such as setting goal and visualization technique (Feldman & Dreher, 2012). Furthermore, hope can be applied to foster individual well-being and reduce negative effect of emotional difficulties. Counsellor can facilitate hope in victims of bully by setting up small personal goal such as develop friendship, improve communication skills.

Other than that, activities such as small-group counselling and classroom guidance can also improve student's capacities for success (Lemberger, Selig, Bowers, & Rogers, 2015), enhancing sense of hope and providing skills and information on how to deal with bully. For example, as students who has involved in bullying has productive social problem solving issue (Carney et al., 2018), and it was found out that to improve students' social problem-solving skills, activity such as small-group or classroom guidance intervention shows effectiveness in this issue (Merrill, Smith, Cumming, & Daunic, 2017). Therefore during small-group intervention or classroom guidance, include concept of hope theory in different scenarios to help students to facilitate social problem-solving skills.

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