

FRUSTRATION IN MOBILE LEGENDS AND VERBAL AGGRESSION AMONG SMAN 12 STUDENTS

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the relationship between frustration experienced while playing Mobile Legends online games and verbal aggression among students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. This study employs a quantitative correlational approach, with the population consisting of 10th-grade students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin, and a sample size of 90 participants. The sample was selected from students who met the criteria of playing the online game Mobile Legends. Data collection was conducted using a Likert scale for the variables of frustration, discomfort, and verbal aggression. Data analysis in this study used Pearson product-moment correlation analysis. The results showed a significant relationship between frustration and verbal aggression, with a correlation coefficient of $r_{hitung} = 0.377$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000$. This indicates that an increase in frustration is associated with an increase in verbal aggression among students, and the null hypothesis (H_0) is accepted in this study. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of the study by considering other variables that may influence verbal aggression.

Keywords: Frustration, Verbal aggression, Mobile legends, Students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi hubungan antara frustrasi yang dialami saat bermain game online Mobile legends dengan agresi verbal pada peserta didik di SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional dengan penentuan populasi adalah peserta didik SMAN 12 Banjarmasin kelas X dan sampel sebanyak 90 orang. Sampel diambil dari peserta didik yang memenuhi kriteria yaitu peserta didik yang bermain game online Mobile legends. Pengumpulan data dilakukan dengan menggunakan skala Likert pada variabel ketidaknyamanan frustrasi dan variabel agresi verbal. Analisis data pada penelitian ini menggunakan analisis korelasi Pearson Product Moment. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat hubungan signifikan antara frustrasi dan agresi verbal, dengan koefisien korelasi sebesar $r_{hitung} = 0,377$ dan nilai signifikansi $p = 0,000$. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa peningkatan frustrasi berhubungan dengan peningkatan agresi verbal di kalangan peserta didik dan H_0 diterima dalam penelitian ini. peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas cakupan penelitian dengan mempertimbangkan variabel-variabel lain yang mungkin mempengaruhi agresi verbal.

Kata kunci: Frustrasi, Agresi verbal, Mobile legends, Peserta Didik

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology and communication in today's globalized era provides opportunities for children to learn about positive character traits through technological media. Especially since children tend to have a high intensity of online gaming, which causes them to pay less attention to their surroundings because they are too engrossed in their games. When they are too involved in the gaming world, they may be reluctant to be distracted by things around them. In fact, aggressive behavior in the gaming world can carry over into real life, such as imitating the behavior seen and heard in the game (Farhan dkk., 2019). Playing online games is one of the most popular forms of entertainment in the internet era. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (Inews, 2020), as reported by *inews.id*, playing online games became one of the most popular forms of entertainment among the public in 2020, with a percentage of 16.5%. Data from the Newzoo Global Games Market Report (2020) also shows that global revenue from mobile games increased by 13% in 2020, and it is estimated that the number of online gamers will exceed 3 billion by 2023.

Online gaming has become an increasingly popular part of lifestyle. The growth in the number of online gamers is supported by the rapid development of the internet, with approximately 63 million internet users in Indonesia alone. However, there are negative impacts arising from online gaming, namely the emergence of aggressive behavior among players. This behavior can include the use of profanity, throwing or smashing gaming devices, and even physical violence toward other players nearby (Wang dkk., 2021). In 2016, game developer Moonton launched its latest game, known as Mobile Legends 5v5, which is now called Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang. Since then, the game has experienced a significant increase in popularity, especially in 2016, when it went viral and gained many MOBA fans from various backgrounds, particularly in Indonesia. According to a digital survey by Telkomsel, *tSurvey.id* (Hart dkk., 2020), Mobile Legends: Bang-Bang is the most popular mobile game in Indonesia. The majority, or 67%, of respondents play this game. Mobile Legends is also recognized as one of the best MOBA games for the Android platform to date.

The online game Mobile Legends is currently a phenomenon among the public, especially among students. Many of them claim to play Mobile Legends as a way to unwind. However, the effects of frequent Mobile Legends gameplay cannot be ignored, as some students have begun to develop dependencies. This addiction can affect their behavior, such as a loss of social awareness toward their surroundings. Many students become indifferent to social issues occurring around them. This becomes evident when social issues arise that require attention. The negative effects of this game can also influence the identity formation process of students, making them more likely to adopt individualistic behavior (Narullita dkk., 2022). In Mobile Legends, there are several game modes, including Brawl, AI Mode, Custom, Classic, and Ranked. The Ranked Mode in Mobile Legends is a mode where players can compete seriously to improve their ranking in the game's ranking system. In this mode, players are matched with other players of similar skill levels for fairer matches. Each player has a rank, such as Warrior, Elite, Master, Grandmaster, Epic, Legend, and Mythic, which reflects their skill level in the game. The

primary goal of Ranked Mode is to climb to a higher rank by winning matches and earning ranking points. Ranked Mode is often considered a more serious way to play Mobile Legends because there is pressure to perform well and collaborate with the team to achieve victory. Of course, the pressure and burden of playing increase. Players often feel stressed and pressured in Ranked Mode. The pressure to perform well and achieve victory can lead to high levels of stress. Additionally, there is a risk that players who cannot control their emotions may vent their frustration by using harsh words or engaging in other negative behaviors.

According to Buchanan & Lovullo, (2001) Frustration is an important aspect of human emotional dynamics that can have a significant impact on verbal behavior. When someone feels disappointed or frustrated, their natural reaction may include verbal attacks that are insulting, mocking, or even argumentative. This happens because frustration often triggers strong emotions, such as anger or dissatisfaction, which are then expressed through aggressive communication. For example, when someone faces a situation that does not meet their expectations in a game or in everyday life, they may feel compelled to blame others and respond with inappropriate words. This aggressive verbal behavior can be a way for individuals to release tension and vent their frustration. However, when this behavior is uncontrolled, it can lead to conflict and harm in social relationships. Especially in an educational context, frustration that is not handled properly can lead to violent behavior, where students may feel that the only way to express their disappointment is through various forms of verbal attacks (Tierney dkk., 2021).

The tendency of students to commit violence due to frustration is categorized as high, which also indicates that, in general, students do not yet have the ability to control their emotions. The higher the level of frustration felt by students, the higher their tendency to commit violent behavior because their ability to control their emotions is still low (Garcia dkk., 2021). Most frustrated Mobile Legends players end up becoming toxic. They use the in-game communication features to express their frustration and vent their anger. Sometimes, this is not only directed at enemies but also at teammates. In fact, it is not uncommon for players to use harsh, inappropriate, sarcastic, or even hateful language. In such situations, frustration can trigger toxic behavior. Unresolved frustration can lead to unhealthy responses, such as using harsh words, sarcasm, or hate speech. As a result, the gaming atmosphere becomes more toxic, which ultimately increases frustration levels and makes the game less enjoyable for everyone involved (Fitria dkk., 2024).

In the phenomenon of toxicity in the online game Mobile Legends, students stated that students who actively play Mobile Legends often experience toxicity in the form of arguments within their team or with opponents. Even though they did not make any mistakes, they often received harsh words or toxic behavior from fellow players. This experience made some students or players afraid to continue playing the game. Furthermore, this situation can be categorized as cyberbullying, where inappropriate words such as insults toward parents, ethnicity, or race are used. This leads to feelings of frustration from unfair and harmful conflicts in an environment that should be enjoyable. Students hope to enjoy a challenging and enjoyable game, but instead encounter unpleasant and disruptive verbal attacks. This frustration not only causes discomfort but

also disrupts the concentration and focus of students in the game (Gameil & Al-Abdullatif, 2023).

Currently, Mobile Legends is also very popular among students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. Students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin who initially planned to relax by playing online games such as Mobile Legends have instead experienced increased pressure and a decline in mood. Although initially intended as a form of entertainment, in the process they may experience frustration due to difficulties in achieving the game's objectives, such as winning, or feeling burdened by their team's performance. This can lead to more negative mood changes than before, making the gaming experience unpleasant. Some of them then express their frustration through verbal aggression, such as using harsh language or uttering hurtful words when interacting with teammates or opponents. This situation attracted the attention of researchers to study students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. Many reports indicated that students who played Mobile Legends online games during free periods or breaks experienced frustration, which often led to verbal aggression when interacting with others, either when they were spoken to or when they were heard talking to their friends while playing the game. The researchers aim to identify the relationship between frustration and verbal aggression among students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin who play the online game Mobile Legends, with the goal of drawing conclusions that can provide insights to students, guidance counselors, school principals, and parents based on the findings of the study.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to determine the relationship between frustration in playing the online game Mobile Legends and verbal aggression among students. A quantitative correlational approach was chosen because it is suitable for measuring the strength and direction of the relationship between the two variables under study, namely frustration and verbal aggression (Mustafa dkk., 2022). The population in this study was all tenth-grade students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. This population was determined based on the assumption that students at this level are adolescents who are actively using digital media and participating in online games. From this population, a sample of 90 students was selected purposively. The criteria for sample selection were students who actively played the online game *Mobile Legends*, so that the data obtained truly represented the frustration and verbal aggression behaviors directly related to playing the game.

The data collection technique in this study used a closed questionnaire with a Likert scale as the main instrument. There were two scales used, namely a frustration scale designed to measure the level of emotional discomfort experienced by students while playing Mobile Legends, and a verbal aggression scale that measured the intensity of negative verbal behavior that emerged as a response to frustration. The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment correlation statistical analysis. This analysis aimed to determine whether there was a significant relationship between the level of frustration in playing Mobile Legends and verbal aggression

behavior. The results of this analysis provide an empirical description of the psychological dynamics that occur in students in the context of playing online games.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the relationship between frustration in playing Mobile Legends online games and verbal aggression among students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. Based on the results of data analysis, a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.377$ was obtained. This value indicates a positive relationship with a low level of strength between frustration and verbal aggression. This positive correlation shows that the higher the level of frustration experienced by students while playing online games, the higher their tendency to exhibit verbal aggression. This finding is reinforced by a significance value of $p = 0.000$, which is much smaller than the significance level used in this study, which is $\alpha = 0.05$. This means that the relationship between frustration and verbal aggression is statistically significant, which means that the hypothesis in this study can be accepted. Thus, it can be concluded that frustration while playing Mobile Legends contributes to the emergence of verbal aggressive behavior in students who were respondents in this study.

Theoretically, these results align with the frustration-aggression theory proposed by (Breuer & Elson, 2017), which states that the presence of frustration will result in certain forms of aggression, including verbal aggression. In the context of playing online games, frustration can arise when players experience repeated failures, lose the game, or feel unable to achieve their desired goals in the game. These conditions can give rise to feelings of anger, disappointment, and frustration, which are ultimately manifested in the form of aggressive verbal behavior, such as shouting, cursing, or insulting other players. Additionally, this finding is supported by the theory presented (Kruglanski dkk., 2023), which explains that aggression can be triggered by negative experiences encountered by individuals. Frustration is one form of negative experience arising from obstacles in achieving goals. When goals are not achieved, such as winning in a game, uncomfortable feelings emerge, which can then develop into aggression as a form of venting.

It is important to note that verbal aggression is one form of aggressive behavior expressed through words, either directly or indirectly. In the online gaming world, verbal aggression can manifest in the form of chat messages containing harsh words, insults, or sarcasm directed at opponents or teammates. This can worsen the gaming atmosphere and create an unhealthy digital environment, especially for teenagers who are still in the emotional and social development stage. Furthermore, the results of this study are also in line with the findings of Hasrita, (2022), who found a significant relationship between frustration tendencies and aggression tendencies among students at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University. In her study, the higher the level of frustration, the higher the tendency toward aggression, including verbal aggression. This indicates that the pattern of the relationship between frustration and aggression consistently occurs across various age groups, both adolescents and young adults.

The context of playing online games such as Mobile Legends is increasingly relevant to the phenomenon of digitalization in the lives of teenagers today. Most high school

students have made games one of their forms of entertainment, but at the same time, games also have the potential to be a source of frustration, especially if not handled wisely. Challenges in playing, losing, or differences in ability between players can trigger negative emotions that are not always easily controlled. In this context, it is important for schools and parents to monitor students' gaming time and the emotional impact it has. Character education and digital literacy must be strengthened to help students manage their emotions effectively when facing challenging situations in the virtual world. On the other hand, school counselors can provide individual or group counseling services for students showing aggressive tendencies, especially those related to digital interactions.

These findings have practical implications that the use of online games needs to be accompanied by strengthening emotional management skills in adolescents. Emotional management training programs, relaxation techniques, or even education related to digital communication ethics can be implemented in schools to prevent an increase in verbal aggression among students. Early intervention in signs of excessive frustration can also prevent the emergence of aggressive behavior that is harmful to oneself and others. Furthermore, this study also indicates that prolonged frustration in gaming activities can have a negative impact on students' psychosocial development. If left unaddressed, this can reduce the quality of social relationships, create isolation, and even decrease academic achievement due to disrupted focus and motivation. Therefore, it is important to monitor and provide regular guidance to students who are active in online gaming.

In terms of methodology, the results of this study were obtained through a quantitative approach with correlational analysis using the Pearson Product Moment formula. The respondents consisted of 90 students from SMAN 12 Banjarmasin who were selected based on the criteria of being active *Mobile Legends* players. The instrument used was a Likert scale that measured two main variables, namely frustration in playing and verbal aggression. The validity and reliability of the instruments were tested beforehand, ensuring that the data obtained are representative and accurate. During the analysis process, statistical assumptions such as normality and linearity were also tested, ensuring that the correlation results obtained have a strong statistical foundation. The positive and significant correlation findings not only indicate a relationship between variables but also suggest that intervention or prevention targeting one variable (e.g., frustration) can influence the tendency for another variable (verbal aggression) to emerge.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to examine the relationship between the level of frustration experienced by students while playing the online game *Mobile Legends* and their tendency to display verbal aggression. The results of the study indicate that there is a significant positive relationship between the two variables, with a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.377$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000$. This value indicates that there is a statistically significant linear relationship between frustration and verbal aggression, although the strength of the relationship is relatively weak. Psychologically, these findings support the hypothesis that the higher the level of frustration felt by students while playing online games, the greater their tendency to express aggression

verbally. These findings are highly relevant in the context of today's digital lifestyle, where gaming is not only a form of entertainment but also a competitive arena filled with emotional pressure.

The relationship between frustration and verbal aggression in this study can be explained through the classical frustration-aggression theory, which was first introduced by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears in 1939, and later updated by contemporary researchers such as (Breuer & Elson, 2017). This theory assumes that frustration, which arises as a result of failure to achieve expected goals, will lead to a tendency to act aggressively. In this case, verbal aggression is one form of aggressive expression caused by emotional pressure, such as disappointment, anger, or dissatisfaction. In the context of playing *Mobile Legends*, frustration can arise from various sources, such as consecutive losses, team errors, unfairness in the matchmaking system, or the inability of players to achieve personal goals such as ranking up or winning matches. These conditions are forms of obstacles that trigger feelings of frustration. When individuals are unable to manage this frustration adaptively, the tendency to express anger through words increases. Behaviors such as sarcasm, swearing, mocking, or belittling other players often become outlets for frustration that is not channeled in a healthy manner.

These findings are also in line with the cognitive-emotional theory proposed by Adhiyaman dkk., (2007), which emphasizes the importance of the appraisal or cognitive assessment process in responding to an event. When gamers assess a game situation as a threat to their self-esteem, competence, or personal goals, negative emotions such as frustration, anger, or irritation will arise. If emotional regulation is ineffective, verbal aggression can become the easiest and quickest form of response. In many cases, especially among adolescents who are still in the emotional development stage, the ability to assess and regulate emotions is not yet fully mature. This reinforces the likelihood that frustration arising during gaming will be expressed in the form of aggressive behavior, including verbally. Verbal aggression in this context can emerge through various mediums, such as in-game chat features, voice communication, or even outside the game via social media.

Meanwhile, the general aggression model (GAM) developed by Anderson & Bushman, (2002) also provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of the relationship between frustration and verbal aggression. This theory states that aggression is the result of an interaction between personal factors (such as impulsive traits or low frustration tolerance) and situational factors (such as provocation in games). Within the GAM framework, frustration is viewed as a situational input that triggers internal processes (cognition, emotion, and arousal) which ultimately influence aggressive behavior. This study shows that students who experience frustration while playing games are more likely to experience an increase in the intensity of negative emotions. These negative emotions then influence how they behave, especially in challenging or competitive situations such as in the game *Mobile Legends*. Verbal aggression then becomes a form of expression used to relieve emotional pressure.

In addition to general psychological theories, these findings can also be linked to Bandura's social-cognitive theory, particularly in the aspects of observational learning and self-regulation (McLeod, 2025). In the world of online gaming, players not only play but also often mimic the communication styles and behaviors of other players, including aggressive behavior. When a player sees a teammate or idol streamer cursing or mocking others when feeling frustrated, they tend to view such behavior as an acceptable response, or even as a norm within the gaming community. This indicates that verbal aggressive behavior can also be reinforced through social modeling mechanisms. Empirically, the results of this study are also consistent with the findings of Hasrita, (2022), who stated that frustration has a positive correlation with aggressive behavior tendencies, including verbal aggression. This study reinforces the current findings by showing that the pattern of the relationship between frustration and aggression is not limited to one age group or background, but can also be found among college students as representatives of young adults. This indicates that the effect of frustration on aggression is cross-age and cross-contextual.

In practice, the results of this study indicate the urgency of paying attention to the psychosocial conditions of adolescents in their interactions with digital media, particularly online games. Although games have positive potential, such as improving cognitive abilities, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, when not accompanied by adequate supervision and management, games can also become a source of emotional stress that leads to negative behavior. The impact of verbal aggression caused by frustration not only harms other players socially and emotionally but also creates a toxic and unproductive gaming environment for adolescents' mental development. In the long term, unaddressed patterns of verbal aggression may escalate into more serious forms of aggression, both physical and social.

Therefore, the results of this study emphasize the importance of digital literacy and character education oriented towards emotional management and healthy communication in the digital space. Schools have a strategic role to educate students about the ethics of interacting in games, the importance of sportsmanship, and ways to cope with frustration in adaptive ways. Coaching programs that involve psychological and pedagogical approaches can strengthen students' emotional resilience to pressure in the digital world. In addition, school counselors can also take an active role in monitoring students who show aggressive tendencies, both directly in the school environment and through their online behavior. Stress management skills training, relaxation techniques, and group counseling can be effective interventions to reduce the level of aggression caused by frustration.

From a methodological perspective, this study has met statistical analysis standards by testing assumptions such as normality and linearity before conducting Pearson correlation tests. The sample size of 90 students who are active players of *Mobile Legends* provides a fairly representative picture of the population of high school students who enjoy playing online games. The use of a Likert scale instrument, which has been validated and reliability-tested, ensures that the data obtained is reliable and accurate. However, the relationship between frustration and verbal aggression found is still at a low correlation

level. This indicates that while there is a significant relationship, other factors also influence the emergence of verbal aggression in students, such as personality factors, family environment, academic pressure, and other social factors. Therefore, further research could explore mediating or moderating variables that influence this relationship.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the discussion and data analysis, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between frustration in playing the online game *Mobile Legends* and verbal aggression in students at SMAN 12 Banjarmasin. The correlation coefficient obtained was $r = 0.377$, indicating a low positive correlation between the two variables. This means that the higher the level of frustration experienced by students while playing the game, the greater their tendency to exhibit verbal aggressive behavior. This positive relationship is reinforced by the significance value of $p = 0.000$, which is smaller than the significance level set in the study, namely $\alpha = 0.05$. These results indicate that the relationship found is statistically significant, so that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) in this study is accepted. Thus, it can be confirmed that frustration that arises during online gaming contributes to an increase in verbal aggression among students. This conclusion is in line with the frustration-aggression theory, which states that frustration arising from obstacles in achieving goals will increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior, including verbal aggression. In the context of online games such as *Mobile Legends*, failure to achieve victory or difficulties in teamwork can trigger negative emotions that are then expressed through harsh words, cursing, or insults to other players. Therefore, it is important for educational environments and families to pay attention to students' emotional factors while playing games, as well as provide education on emotion management and communication ethics in digital spaces. Early intervention is also necessary to prevent the long-term effects of aggressive behavior triggered by frustration.

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