

The Relationship Between Catcalling and Self-Esteem Among Female Students

Siti Aprilia*, Marni, Puput Mulyono

Bachelor of Nursing Program, Faculty of Health Sciences, Duta Bangsa University Surakarta, Indonesia

Email: semprilips2@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Catcalling is a form of verbal sexual harassment frequently experienced by adolescent girls and may negatively affect their psychological well-being, particularly self-esteem. Low self-esteem may interfere with adolescents' psychosocial development, making it important to examine the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem. **Objective:** To determine the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap. **Methods:** This study employed a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach. A total of 41 female students were selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using the Street Harassment Scale (SHS) to measure catcalling experiences and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to assess self-esteem. Data were analyzed using the Chi-Square test. **Results:** Most respondents experienced low-level catcalling (30 students; 73.2%), while 11 students (26.8%) experienced high-level catcalling. A total of 22 students (53.7%) had low self-esteem, whereas 19 students (46.3%) had high self-esteem. The Chi-Square test revealed a significant relationship between catcalling and self-esteem ($\chi^2 = 12.983$; $p = 0.000$). Female students who experienced higher levels of catcalling tended to have lower self-esteem. **Conclusion:** There is a significant relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap.

Keywords: adolescents; catcalling; female students; self-esteem.

This is an Open Access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>) which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are properly cited

INTRODUCTION

Catcalling is a form of verbal sexual harassment that frequently occurs in public spaces and is predominantly experienced by women (1). This behavior includes whistling, sexual comments, unsolicited remarks, or sexually suggestive verbal expressions directed at individuals without their consent (2). Catcalling is often normalized due to patriarchal cultural values that position men as dominant while perceiving women as subordinate, making them more vulnerable to such behavior (3). Although it does not involve physical contact, catcalling is still considered a form of verbal sexual harassment (4). It is also recognized as a form of gender-based harassment that may cause various psychological consequences, particularly among adolescent girls who are undergoing significant physical, emotional, and social development (5). These psychological impacts demonstrate that catcalling should not be regarded as a trivial issue. In response to this problem, several countries, including France and the United States, have implemented regulations to strengthen the protection of women against sexual harassment in public spaces, including catcalling, in order to ensure women's safety and comfort in public environments (6).

Adolescence is a critical period for identity formation (7). During this stage, adolescents tend to be more sensitive to social evaluation, making negative social experiences more likely to influence how they perceive themselves (8). Adolescence is also characterized by substantial physical, psychological, and social changes (9). These developmental changes may affect adolescents' self-evaluation, increasing their vulnerability to low self-esteem. In contrast, young adults generally possess greater self-understanding and self-acceptance, resulting in a more stable self-concept (10). One of the psychological consequences associated with catcalling is decreased self-esteem (11). Self-esteem refers to an individual's evaluation of their own worth and value, which plays an essential role in developing self-confidence, maintaining mental health, and facilitating positive social interactions (12). The ability to appreciate and accept oneself is fundamental to healthy personal development and overall well-being (13). High self-esteem serves as a protective factor against various psychological problems, whereas low self-esteem is associated with an increased risk of anxiety, depression, and difficulties in social adjustment (14).

Several previous studies have reported the psychological effects of catcalling. (15) found that catcalling was associated with mental health and self-confidence among female university students. (16) reported that bullying and catcalling frequently occur in educational settings and negatively affect students' psychological well-being. (17) identified a significant relationship between catcalling and anxiety levels among female senior high school students. However, (18) found no significant association between catcalling and self-esteem among female university students. These inconsistent findings indicate that the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem requires further investigation. Although numerous studies have examined the psychological consequences of catcalling, research specifically investigating the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among early adolescent girls, particularly junior high school students, remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on female university students or senior high school students, despite early adolescence being a developmental stage characterized by heightened vulnerability to psychological distress. This vulnerability is closely related to identity formation, emotional development, and increased sensitivity to social evaluation during adolescence (Maharani 2024). Therefore, this study aims to analyze the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative correlational design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female

students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap. Data collection was conducted in May 2026. The study population consisted of 58 female students from grades VII, VIII, and IX. The sample size was calculated using Slovin's formula with a 10% margin of error. An additional 10% was added to account for potential dropouts, resulting in a final sample of 41 respondents. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The catcalling variable was measured using the Street Harassment Scale (SHS), adapted from (18). The instrument consists of 17 items. Self-esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), adapted from (8), which consists of 10 items. The SHS demonstrated excellent reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.924, while the RSES showed a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92, indicating very good internal consistency.

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Univariate analysis was performed to describe the respondents' characteristics and the distribution of each study variable. Bivariate analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the two variables (20). The Chi-square test was used to determine the association between catcalling and self-esteem.

Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection. All respondents voluntarily participated in the study after providing informed consent, and the confidentiality of participants' identities was maintained throughout the research process.

Research Stages Flowchart:

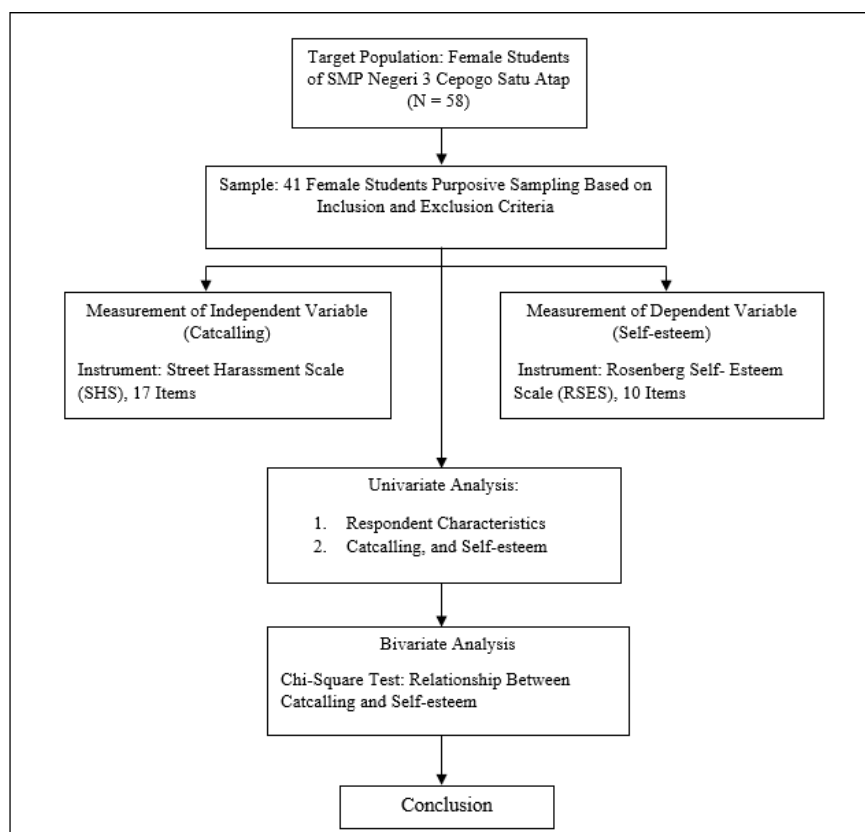


Figure 1. Research Stages Flowchart

RESULTS

The distribution of respondents' characteristics is presented to provide an overview of the general characteristics of the study participants and is shown below:

Table 1. Respondents' Characteristics

Characteristics	n	%
Age (Years)		
13	19	46,3
14	6	14,6
15	8	19,5
16	8	19,5
Total	41	100
Grade		
VII	14	34,1
VIII	11	26,8
IX	16	39,0
Total	41	100
Sex		
Female	41	100
Total	41	100

Source: SPSS output

The frequency distribution of the catcalling and self-esteem variables among the respondents is presented in the following table:

Table 2. Distribution of the Study Variables

Variabels	n	%
Catcalling		
Low	30	73.2
High	11	26.8
Total	41	100
Self-Esteem		
Low	22	53,7
High	19	46,3
Total	41	100

Source: SPSS output

Bivariate Analysis of the Relationship Between Catcalling and Self-Esteem Among Female Students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap:

Table 3. Relationship Between Catcalling and Self-Esteem Among Female Students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap

Catcalling	Self-Esteem				Total	
	Low		High			
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Low	11	26,8	19	46,3	30	73,1
High	11	26,8	0	0,0	11	26,9
Total	22	53,6	19	46,3	41	100

Chi-Square test = 12,983 p = 0,000

Source: SPSS output

DISCUSSION

A total of 41 female students participated in this study. As shown in Table 4.1, of the 41 respondents, the majority were 13 years old ($n = 19$, 46.3%), followed by 15-year-old and 16-year-old students, with 8 respondents (19.5%) each, while 6 respondents (14.6%) were 14 years old. Based on grade level, most respondents were in Grade IX ($n = 16$, 39.0%), followed by Grade VII ($n = 14$, 34.1%) and Grade VIII ($n = 11$, 26.8%). The age range of 13–16 years falls within early adolescence, a developmental stage characterized by rapid physical, emotional, and social changes, making adolescents more sensitive to evaluations from their social environment (21). All respondents were female (100%), in accordance with the predetermined inclusion criteria.

As presented in Table 4.2, the majority of female students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap experienced low levels of catcalling, accounting for 30 respondents (73.2%), whereas 11 respondents (26.8%) experienced high levels of catcalling. These findings indicate that most respondents experienced relatively low levels of catcalling. Although the frequency of catcalling was relatively low, such experiences may still cause feelings of discomfort, fear, and reduced perceived safety in public spaces (22). Nevertheless, a proportion of respondents experienced high levels of catcalling, indicating that this form of harassment continues to occur within their social environment.

Regarding self-esteem, the majority of respondents had low self-esteem ($n = 22$, 53.7%), while 19 respondents (46.3%) had high self-esteem. These findings suggest that more than half of the respondents tended to have a less positive evaluation of themselves. Low self-esteem has been associated with an increased risk of psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, and difficulties in social adjustment among adolescents (23). Meanwhile, nearly half of the respondents demonstrated high self-esteem, indicating a more positive self-evaluation and greater self-confidence.

The Chi-square test revealed a significant relationship between catcalling and self-esteem ($\chi^2 = 12.983$, $p < 0.001$). All respondents who experienced high levels of catcalling had low self-esteem, whereas most respondents who experienced low levels of catcalling had high self-esteem. These findings suggest that the higher the level of catcalling experienced, the greater the likelihood of having low self-esteem. This result indicates that verbal sexual harassment may influence how adolescents perceive and value themselves. Repeated experiences of verbal sexual harassment may lead to self-objectification, reduced psychological well-being, and

negative self-evaluation (24). The findings of this study are consistent with those reported by (25), who found that catcalling was significantly associated with self-esteem among adolescent girls. Repeated exposure to sexually suggestive comments, whistles, or verbal remarks may evoke feelings of shame, fear, insecurity, and humiliation, thereby negatively affecting individuals' perceptions of themselves. These findings are also supported by (15), who reported that catcalling was associated with poorer mental health and lower self-confidence among female university students.

In contrast, (18) found no significant relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female university students. This discrepancy may be explained by differences in participant characteristics. Junior high school students are in early adolescence, a developmental stage during which self-concept is still being formed and emotional maturity has not yet been fully achieved. Consequently, they are more vulnerable to the psychological consequences of negative experiences. This vulnerability is closely related to the ongoing development of emotion regulation and identity formation during early adolescence (26).

On the other hand, more than half of the respondents had low self-esteem despite the majority experiencing low levels of catcalling. This finding suggests that self-esteem is influenced by multiple factors, including family support, peer relationships, the school environment, personality traits, and life experiences. Previous studies have shown that family support, positive peer relationships, a supportive school climate, and self-acceptance are important factors contributing to the development of adolescents' self-esteem (27). Nevertheless, the results of this study indicate that catcalling remains significantly associated with lower self-esteem among female students.

From a nursing perspective, these findings highlight the important role of schools and community nurses in providing education about verbal sexual harassment, raising adolescents' awareness of the psychological consequences of catcalling and the importance of self-respect, and developing mental health promotion programs aimed at enhancing adolescents' self-esteem.

CONCLUSION

This study found a significant relationship between catcalling and self-esteem among female students at SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap. Female students who experienced higher levels of catcalling were more likely to have lower self-esteem than those who experienced lower levels of catcalling. These findings suggest that catcalling, as a form of verbal sexual harassment, may negatively affect adolescents' self-perception and self-esteem. This study has several limitations, including the use of a cross-sectional design, the inclusion of respondents from only one school, and the use of self-report questionnaires, which may have introduced response bias. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve a larger sample size, include participants from broader geographical areas, and employ longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological impact of catcalling on adolescents.

Acknowledgments: The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Universitas Duta Bangsa Surakarta, the Principal, teachers, and female students of SMP Negeri 3 Cepogo Satu Atap for their permission, cooperation, and participation throughout this study. The author also extends appreciation to everyone who provided support and contributed to the successful completion of this research.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest related to the conduct or publication of this study.

REFERENCES

1. Vita Febriyanti, Mirna Nur Alia Abdullah, Muhammad Retsa Rizaldi Mujayapura. Analisis Dampak Cat Calling Terhadap Perempuan Di Ruang Publik: Perspektif Psikologis Dan Sosial. SABANA: Jurnal Sosiologi, Antropologi, dan Budaya Nusantara. 2025;4(2):251–61. doi:10.55123/sabana.v4i2.5190
2. Dinda AY, Supriyono, Nugraha DM. The Impact and Legal Role of the Catcalling Phenomenon in Indonesia. *Dinamika Sosial Budaya*. 2021;23(2):324–32.
3. Clifford H, Salmon J, Zidan A, Pattimura HU. Catcalling Sebagai Bentuk Kekerasan Seksual Non Fisik. Vol. 2. 2022;2(44):44–56.
4. Contreras-Merino AM, Farhane-Medina NZ, Castillo-Mayén R. Unmasking Street Harassment in Spain: Prevalence, Psychological Impact, and the Role of Sexism in Women’s Experiences. *Sex Roles*. 2024;90(9):1136–53. doi:10.1007/s11199-024-01500-2
5. Kadek N, Shreepadma A, Putu N, Angelina R. Catcalling dan Humor Seksis sebagai Bentuk Kekerasan Simbolik Pada Perempuan di Ruang Publik. Vol. 3. 2026;3(1):216–30.
6. Candra ningtyas A putri. D. Pemaknaan Catcalling : Wujud Kekerasan Simbolik dalam Habitasi di Sekolah Menengah Atas “ X ” Kabupaten Malang. Vol. 9. 2025;9(2):2–5.
7. Suryana E. Perkembangan Remaja Awal, Menengah Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Pendidikan. Vol. 8. 2022;8(3).
8. Tohir, Syamsuri, Mutaqin. Analisis Self-Esteem Matematis Siswa SMP. *Jurnal Inovasi Dan Riset Pendidikan Matematika*. 2022;3(2):158–71.
9. Izzani TA, Octaria S, Studi P, Konseling B, Tarbiyah F, Ilmu D. Perkembangan Masa Remaja. Vol. 3. 2024;3(2):259–73.
10. Prawiro R, Panjaitran R, Susanti Y, Wardani I. Hubungan Karakteristik Penggunaan Media Sosial Dan Harga Diri Pada Pemuda 15-24 Tahun. 2024;1–24.
11. Rohbani M, Syah P, Damayantie A, Sosiologi J, Lampung U, Korban S. (Studi Pada Perempuan di Ruang Publik Kota Bandar Lampung) Dari bukti yang telah diuraikan pada gambar 1 bahwa jumlah kasus kekerasan terhadap Perempuan di Indonesia selama 7 tahun terakhir ini mengalami peningkatan setiap tahun , kecuali satu penurunan. Vol. 4. 2025;4(1):71–86.
12. Rohisfi E. Self-Esteem (Harga Diri) Dalam Perspektif Budaya Minangkabau. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tematik*. 2022;3(1):34–40.
13. Sholichah IF, Amelasasih P, Hasanah M. Kualitas Persahabatan dan Harga Diri Mahasiswa Muslim. Vol. 13. 2022;13(2):164–70.
14. Sari R, Akerpia RK. Harga Diri dan Self-Injury: Sebuah Studi pada Individu dengan Riwayat Adverse Childhood Experiences. *Journal Psikologi*. 2025;3:1–10. doi:https://doi.org/10.47134/pjp.v3i1.5118

15. Rahma IM, Fayyaza S, Ingtyas FT, Ginting L. Catcalling dan Kesehatan Mental Berhubungan dengan Kepercayaan Diri Mahasiswi. *Wiraraja Medika: Jurnal Kesehatan*. 2025;15(1):43–9. doi:10.24929/fik.v15i1.3887
16. Rika Aulia Maharani Srg, Raisya Rhadella Br Ginting, Nurhayati. Bullying dan Catcalling di Kalangan Pelajar: Tantangan Kekerasan Sosial Dalam Dunia Pendidikan. *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (JURDIKBUD)*. 2025;5(2):181–95. doi:10.55606/jurdikbud.v5i2.6086
17. Tumembouw CA, Onsu RR, Marentek EA. Pengaruh Komunikasi Verbal Catcalling Terhadap Tingkat Kecemasan Perempuan Di Medan Denai. Vol. 5. 2023;5:1–7.
18. Surya Ningtyas DY, Ervina I, Istiqomah. Pengaruh Catcalling terhadap Self Esteem pada Mahasiswi. *Jurnal Psikologi*. 2023;1(3):10. doi:10.47134/pjp.v1i3.2007
19. Maharani A, Info A. Bimbingan dalam Menangani Perubahan Emosional selama Masa Pubertas. Vol. 2. 2024;2(2):60–5.
20. Norfai. Analisis Data Penelitian. Fahmi N, editor. Jawa Timur: CV. Penerbit Qiara Media; 2022.
21. Azmi DN, Mahardika IK, Mutmainah N, Lestari P. Pengertian Perkembangan dan Pertumbuhan Anak Usia SMP Ditinjau dari Pemahamannya Terhadap Pembelajaran IPA. Vol. 7. 2023;7:27171–6.
22. Dwi S, Putri K, Handoyo P, Ridwan A. Pengalaman Pelecehan Seksual Catcalling Di Kenjeran Surabaya. Vol. 15. 2025;15(2):55–62.
23. Putri TH, Tafwidhah Y, Fujiana F, Maharani D, Miptazaka DP. Cegah Depresi Remaja Melalui Edukasi Dalam Meningkatkan Pengetahuan Harga Diri. *jurnal kreativitas pengabdian kepada masyarakat*. 2023. doi:https://doi.org/10.33024/jkpm.v6i11.12329
24. Pahlevi Z salsabilla putri, Laksmiwati H, Satiningsih. Penerimaan Diri Perempuan Penyintas Pelecehan Seksual yang Disebabkan oleh Bentuk Tubuh Self-Acceptance of Woman Who are Survivors of Sexual Harassment due to Their Body Shape. *jurnal psikologi*. 2024;11(01):574–86.
25. Nasucha M, Azizah WN, Alifia AN, Studi P, Fakultas K, Kesehatan I, et al. Hubungan Verbal Sexual Harassment (Catcalling). Vol. 2. 2025;2(2):2819–27.
26. Qulubina S, Rahmasari D. Studi Kualitatif Resiliensi Pada Perempuan Dewasa Awal Dengan Riwayat Self-harm Qualitative Study of Resilience in Early Adult Women With A History of Abstrak. Vol. 13. 2026;13(01):219–36.
27. Havsari S, Elmanora, Hmiyati. Peran Dukungan Orangtua Dalam Meningkatkan Self-Esteem siswa Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan Dalam Belajar. *jurnal pendidikan teknik dan vokasional*. 2024;7:108–16. doi:http://doi.org/10.21009/JPTV.7.2.108

