

Bullies thrive when supervision fails

SCHOOLS are meant to be places where student learning happens, but some have become environments where bullying festers.

This occurs because bullying tends to flourish in contexts where supervision is weak, disciplinary systems are inconsistent, and institutional cultures tolerate humiliation, according to Universiti Putra Malaysia Faculty of Educational Studies academic Prof Dr Roziah Mohd Rasdi.

“So, in environments where students perceive that teachers or administrators are unwilling or unable to intervene effectively, aggressive behaviour becomes embedded in the informal social order,” she said.

She added that this is why many contemporary anti-bullying frameworks, including the Anti-Bullying Act 2026, place significant responsibility on institutions, such as establishing reporting channels and prevention committees.

“It requires moving beyond the assumption that bullying is simply the result of individual aggression or bad behaviour,” she said.

Citing contemporary research, Prof Roziah noted

that bullying is a multi-faceted phenomenon, shaped by the interactions of individual traits, peer dynamics, family environment, institutional cultures, and broader societal influences.

Institutional environments, particularly schools, can contribute to bullying dynamics, she stressed.

At the individual level, she said it is often associated with certain psychological or developmental factors.

“Some children or adolescents engage in bullying as a way to assert dominance, gain social status or compensate for personal insecurities.

“The second major cause lies in peer-group dynamics and social hierarchies, where bullying frequently occurs within group settings, and status, popularity or social belonging are contested,” she said.

She also noted that children who experience aggression or neglect at home may exhibit similar behaviours at school as a means to resolve conflict.

“Some studies show that exposure to harsh parenting, domestic conflicts or inconsistent discipline can influence how children interact with others,” she added.