

THE EFFECT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE ON CYBER BULLYING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to see use of social media on Cyberbullying behavior among teenagers, and the importance of parental supervision of their children's use of social media, especially in adolescence to behavioral tendencies cyberbullying. This study was aimed at class XII Civil Service students at Al-Azhar Medan's flagship high school who use social media. The number of respondents in this study was 21 people. The measuring instrument used in this study was online questionnaire via Google Forms. The technique used is a data analysis technique using a qualitative descriptive research design, which is considered the most suitable approach to explore the complex phenomenon of cyberbullying on social media and its impact on the social lives of adolescents. Based on the results of the study, 57.1% said that social media has a positive impact on life, but 23.08% have experienced cases of cyberbullying. It can be concluded that while social media use offers many benefits, it also increases the risk of cyberbullying. Synergy between schools, families, and the government is needed to provide digital education to adolescents. Socialization regarding internet ethics, empathy, and respect for privacy should be part of the educational curriculum.

Keywords: *Social Media, Cyberbullying, Teenagers, Parental Supervision*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of teenagers' lives. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp make it easy to communicate, share information, and express oneself. However, these benefits also pose the challenge of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the act of hurting others online, either verbally or nonverbally. This phenomenon is widespread due to the fast, anonymous, and pervasive nature of social media. This study aims to describe the extent to which social media use influences cyberbullying behavior among high school students. Social media is a means of social interaction that uses website-based technology to transform communication into highly accessible and scalable interactive dialogue. It can be used to share, participate in, and create content supported by increasingly sophisticated multimedia technology. Social media allows information to spread easily and quickly, influencing people's perspectives, lifestyles, and culture. Through social media, people are also invited to engage in dialogue, sharpening their reasoning and psychological abilities with the world displayed on screen. However, it cannot be denied that messages broadcast through this electronic media can lead audiences toward both prosocial and antisocial behavior.

Early adolescence is a transitional period from childhood to adolescence. Adolescence is often identified as a time when individuals begin to understand themselves through exploring and assessing their own psychological characteristics in an effort to be accepted within their environment. While some adolescents navigate this transition well, others may experience juvenile delinquency, ranging from minor behaviors to criminal behavior, including cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is a serious and growing psychosocial problem occurring in schools worldwide. Cyberbullying has a significant negative impact on the emotional well-being of children and adolescents, expressed through negative emotions such as stress, sadness, anger, frustration, shame, loneliness, fear, depression, revenge, and suicidal thoughts. Cyberbullying also leads to behavioral problems such as juvenile delinquency, violence, and even poor grades and school functioning, leading to school dropout and social withdrawal. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) in the era of globalization has brought about significant changes in patterns of social

interaction. The presence of digital media and the internet has made communication faster, easier, and without the constraints of space and time. This undoubtedly offers numerous benefits, particularly in education, the economy, and everyday social life. However, behind this convenience, new and complex challenges have emerged, one of which is the phenomenon of cyberbullying. "Cyberbullying is a form of bullying carried out through digital media, characterized by anonymity, wide reach, and rapid dissemination of information (Willard, 2007)." These factors make cyberbullying more difficult to control than conventional forms of bullying. This phenomenon is common among teenagers who actively use social media and digital communication platforms, potentially having serious impacts on their mental health. "Previous research has shown that cyberbullying behavior is influenced by various factors, including the level of aggressiveness of the perpetrator, online norms, and lack of parental supervision (Kowalski & Limber, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2015)." The resulting impacts are significant, including increased anxiety, depression, and social isolation experienced by victims. This situation is certainly a serious concern, because adolescent mental health directly impacts their personal, social, and academic development.

Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive strategy. Several steps can be taken, including improving digital literacy, strengthening anti-cyberbullying policies, and actively involving schools and parents in creating a safer digital environment. These efforts are expected to build collective awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying and encourage a culture of healthy and responsible digital media use. Therefore, developing cyberbullying research is crucial, particularly through a systematic approach that understands the social and psychological dynamics behind this phenomenon. A comprehensive understanding of the causes, impacts, and response strategies is expected to contribute to educational efforts and social policies aimed at creating a safer and more conducive digital environment for adolescents. Technological developments and internet advancements have brought significant changes to human life, particularly in communication and social interaction. Social media, a product of this digital technology, has now become an essential part of everyday life, especially for teenagers. Through social media, teenagers can communicate, seek information, express themselves, and even build a social identity. However, despite its benefits, social media also presents various challenges and risks that cannot be ignored. One of the most common negative phenomena is cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is a form of aggressive behavior perpetrated by individuals or groups through digital media with the intention of harming others. These actions can include teasing, insults, spreading slander, harassment, and even social exclusion online. Unlike traditional bullying, which is limited by time and place, cyberbullying has a broader impact because it can occur at any time, is anonymous, and can spread quickly in digital public spaces. This situation often leaves victims of cyberbullying feeling unsafe, depressed, and even experiencing psychological disorders. One serious impact of cyberbullying is increased anxiety levels in adolescents. Adolescence is a vulnerable developmental period, where individuals are discovering their identity and forming their personalities. Pressure from the social environment, including online interactions, can impact adolescents' psychological well-being. Repeated exposure to cyberbullying can lead to feelings of fear, low self-esteem, anxiety, and even depression. This is a serious issue because mental health is a crucial aspect of healthy adolescent development.

The increasing use of social media by adolescents is directly proportional to the rise in cyberbullying cases. Data shows that adolescents are the largest group of social media users, making them most vulnerable to the various negative impacts that arise. Therefore, it is important to conduct more in-depth studies on the relationship between cyberbullying and anxiety levels in adolescents. Based on these main reasons, the aim of writing this article is to explain how vulnerable teenagers are to facing cyberbullying, whether as a perpetrator or a victim. Besides that, aims to describe how social media influences Cyberbullying behavior among adolescents and the importance of parental supervision of their children, especially during adolescence. The author hopes this article will contribute ideas and broaden readers' understanding of the urgency of introducing social media to adolescents who are vulnerable to cyberbullying, and encourage them to not underestimate this issue. For future researchers, the research results obtained can be used as a reference for carrying out similar research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

"Cyberbullying has emerged as a growing problem with the rapid expansion of technology and the use of social media (Livingstone & Smith, 2014)." Willard (2007) defines cyberbullying as the use of information technology to harm or harass others. Although social media provides opportunities for communication and self-expression, it also facilitates social conflict and deviant behavior. Kowalski and Limber (2013) found that adolescents who spend more than three hours daily on social media are twice as likely to engage in cyberbullying, either as victims or perpetrators. Contributing

factors include low self-control, weak parental supervision, and limited digital literacy. Hinduja and Patchin (2015) further emphasized that the consequences of cyberbullying go beyond psychological distress, negatively impacting academic performance, social adjustment, and even physical health, with victims often experiencing depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. Livingstone and Smith (2014) highlight the dual role of digital media: it can support learning and interaction but also expose adolescents to risks such as online harassment. Therefore, early digital literacy education is crucial for fostering responsible online behavior. Similarly, Setiawan and Fithrah (2018) show that social media communication campaigns can strengthen character and reduce deviant online behavior, findings supported by Rizky and Putri (2023), who emphasize the importance of families and educational institutions in guiding adolescents' digital engagement. Furthermore, Hartono and Fauzi (2019) noted that Generation Z, growing up in the digital era, exhibits distinct patterns of social interaction. While social media significantly contributes to identity formation, it also increases adolescents' vulnerability to online social pressures, including cyberbullying. Overall, the literature shows that cyberbullying is closely related to the intensity of social media use, digital literacy levels, the presence of social control, and adolescent psychosocial development. Addressing this issue requires an integrated approach involving families, schools, and the broader social environment to promote safe and responsible digital practices.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach, employing a literature review and limited observation through a Google Form questionnaire. Data sources were drawn from journals, articles, and questionnaire reports on cyberbullying and social media. The data collection process involved distributing online questionnaires to 10 male and 10 female students in the 12th grade of civil service. Data analysis was conducted descriptively, identifying patterns, themes, and relationships between the variables studied.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design, considered the most suitable approach to explore the complex phenomenon of cyberbullying on social media and its impact on adolescents' social lives. A qualitative approach allows researchers to capture the subjective experiences, perspectives, and meanings that emerge from participants' everyday interactions in digital environments. Rather than focusing on numerical measurements, this design prioritizes contextual understanding, interpretive analysis, and the construction of meaning based on lived experiences.

Participants and Research Setting

The participants of this study consisted of 10 male and 10 female students in the 12th grade of the Unggulan Civil Service program who are active on social media platforms such as Instagram, WhatsApp, TikTok, and YouTube. The participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals who have direct or indirect experience with cyberbullying—either as victims, perpetrators, or observers. The research setting was primarily virtual, as the phenomenon under study takes place online.

Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity of the topic, ethical principles were strictly adhered to. Informed consent was obtained from all participants voluntarily and without coercion. Participant anonymity was maintained through pseudonyms, and sensitive data (such as screenshots) were handled confidentially.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, the survey was filled out by 21 respondents consisting of 14 students from XII UG D and 7 students from XII UG C of Al-Azhar Medan's flagship high school. 57.1% stated that social media has a positive impact on life, but 23.08% have experienced cases of social media abuse. cyberbullying And as many as 38.1% have consciously/unconsciously done this. cyberbullying. Teenagers tend to be unaware of the psychological impact of these actions, whether as victims or perpetrators. Digital literacy education is crucial for fostering responsible behavior in social media use. The most common forms of abuse are negative comments, sharing unauthorized photos, and defamation. Social media, especially Instagram, is one of the fastest-growing forms of new media. Instagram is not only a platform for sharing photos and videos but also offers interactive features like Instagram Stories, live

streaming, direct messaging, and short video uploads. These features encourage users to create, communicate, and express themselves in the digital world.

However, despite these benefits, Instagram is also a vulnerable space for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can occur through negative comments, insults, slander, or the unauthorized dissemination of personal information. It takes various forms, from cyberstalking (repeated harassment via digital messages), insults (defamation), impersonation (identity theft), outing & trickery (revealing personal secrets or using deception), to exclusion (intentionally isolating someone from an online group). "A survey conducted by Ditch the Label (2019) revealed that 69% of respondents admitted to having been involved in or been a victim of cyberbullying on social media." Many teenagers even fear using social media because of the potential risk of such attacks. The impact is limitless on shame; It can also damage self-confidence, cause stress, depression, and even lead to long-term psychological trauma.

Real Case Examples

One of the most discussed cases on Instagram involved a celebrity. An Indonesian teenager was bombarded with negative comments and insults after posting a personal photo that didn't meet netizens' expectations. Her comments section was filled with harsh words, criticism of her physical appearance, and even offensive remarks about her family. Due to this psychological pressure, she decided to deactivate her Instagram account for several months. Another case involved a high school student who was the victim of body shaming on Instagram. Her photo was taken by a classmate without her permission and shared online, accompanied by derogatory comments. As a result, the victim felt low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and her academic performance plummeted due to depression. From these two examples, it's clear that cyberbullying is not a trivial issue but a serious phenomenon that requires attention. Instagram, as a global platform, has provided features like reporting and blocking to address bullying. However, the role of users, families, teachers, and the community remains crucial in providing education, guidance, and moral support to victims.

In conclusion, while Instagram offers a space for creativity and interaction, users should use it wisely. Cyberbullying is a real challenge that must be addressed to ensure that social media remains a safe, healthy, and positive environment for everyone. The rapid development of digital technology has given rise to new media, which differ from traditional media in terms of interactivity, participation, and accessibility. One of the most widely used forms of new media is social media, which allows users to share information quickly and easily. Instagram has become one of the most popular platforms because it offers features such as photo and video sharing, Instagram stories, live streaming, and direct messaging. These features allow users to express themselves and interact with others more freely. Despite its benefits, Instagram is also a platform vulnerable to cyberbullying. Generally, bullying is defined as repeated aggressive behavior intended to harm or undermine another person. In the digital context, bullying has evolved into cyberbullying, which is harassment or abuse carried out through electronic devices such as social media, email, or online messaging.

There are several forms of cyberbullying on Instagram, including:

Cyberstalking → harassment or intimidation through repeated online messages.

Defamation → spreading false or defamatory information to damage someone's reputation.

Identity impersonation → pretending to be someone else with the intent to deceive or harm.

Outing & Trickery → revealing personal information or tricking someone to embarrass them.

Exclusion → intentionally isolating someone from an online group.

A survey conducted by Ditch the Label revealed that 69% of social media users admitted to experiencing or being involved in cyberbullying. On Instagram, this phenomenon often occurs in the comments section, where users may face insults, taunts, or personal attacks. The psychological impact can be serious, especially for teenagers, leading to embarrassment, loss of self-confidence, stress, or even depression. In some cases, victims choose to deactivate their Instagram accounts due to the pressure they face. While Instagram offers features like reporting, blocking, and comment filtering, these measures alone are not enough to address the problem. Digital literacy, family support, and community engagement play a crucial role in preventing and addressing cyberbullying. Therefore, while Instagram remains a powerful tool for communication and self-expression, it is crucial to foster awareness and responsibility among users to ensure that social media remains a safe, positive, and constructive space. The phenomenon of cyberbullying on Instagram illustrates how digital interactions aren't always accompanied by responsible behavior. While Instagram provides features that empower users to express themselves, these same features can be misused to spread hate speech, harassment, or defamatory content. The anonymity and widespread reach of social media often embolden perpetrators to engage in actions they might hesitate to engage in in-person interactions. According to a survey conducted by Ditch the Label, the

fact that 69% of respondents have experienced or participated in cyberbullying indicates that the problem is widespread and systemic. Teenagers, as the largest group of Instagram users, are particularly vulnerable because they are at a developmental stage where identity formation and social acceptance are crucial. Therefore, negative online interactions, such as body shaming, exclusion, or impersonation, can have severe psychological consequences. The real-life cases presented—both involving teenage celebrities and high school students—reflect two important aspects of cyberbullying. First, public figures are often targeted because their visibility exposes them to mass criticism, making them easy targets for online harassment. Second, ordinary users, such as students, can also be victims through peer interactions that escalate into bullying. In both cases, the impact is not only emotional distress but also behavioral changes, including withdrawal from social media and decreased academic performance.

Efforts to combat cyberbullying require a multi-stakeholder approach. Instagram has attempted to mitigate the problem by offering tools like blocking and reporting, but these mechanisms are reactive rather than preventative. Families and schools play a crucial role in educating young people about digital ethics, empathy, and responsible technology use. Furthermore, public awareness campaigns and counseling services are crucial in providing coping mechanisms and recovery support to victims. In short, cyberbullying on Instagram is a serious social problem that goes beyond mere online conflict. It represents a digital extension of traditional bullying, magnified by the speed and scale of social media. Addressing it requires not only technological safeguards but also social, educational, and psychological interventions to ensure that digital platforms remain a safe and constructive environment for all users.

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

While social media use offers many benefits, it also increases the risk of cyberbullying. Synergy between schools, families, and the government is necessary to provide digital education to adolescents. Socialization regarding internet ethics, empathy, and respect for privacy must be part of the educational curriculum. Suggestions for further research include conducting a quantitative survey to statistically measure the relationship between intensity of social media use and cyberbullying incidents.

Conclusion

Social media has a profound and far-reaching impact on shaping cyberbullying behavior among adolescents. The influence of digital interactions goes beyond simple communication, often dictating behavioral patterns, self-expression, and identity formation during adolescence. Cyberbullying is not gender-specific; both boys and girls are at risk of being both perpetrators and victims. The transitional stage of adolescence, characterized by curiosity, emotional sensitivity, and the search for identity, makes young people particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of excessive and unregulated use of social media platforms. The availability of anonymity and the permanence of digital footprints further exacerbate the severity of cyberbullying incidents. "From a systems theory perspective, cyberbullying should not be viewed solely as the responsibility of individual adolescents but rather as a multifaceted problem arising from interactions between individuals, families, peer groups, and broader social structures (Miles & Huberman, 1994)." Lack of family guidance, limited digital literacy, weak self-control, and unhealthy online cultures can amplify the risk of engaging in cyberbullying. Conversely, supportive family communication, a strong social environment, and responsible digital practices act as protective buffers. Therefore, addressing cyberbullying requires a holistic approach, recognizing that adolescents' online behavior is a product of interconnected systems that influence one another.

Suggestion

1. Strengthening the Role of Parents

Parents should not only monitor but also actively engage with their children's online lives by promoting healthy discussions about the benefits and risks of social media. They should act as role models, demonstrating ethical online behavior, while establishing clear but flexible rules that balance freedom and responsibility. Building trust-based communication ensures that teens feel safe when disclosing experiences of harassment or peer pressure.

2. Improving Digital Education and Literacy

Educational institutions should integrate digital citizenship and internet ethics into formal curricula and extracurricular programs. By raising awareness about online privacy, respect, and empathy, schools can help reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying. Collaborative workshops involving students, teachers, and parents can further strengthen

collective awareness and responsibility. Furthermore, partnerships with technology companies can be developed to design safer online environments and promote campaigns that prevent harmful digital practices.

3. Empowering Teens to Build Self-Control

Adolescents should be supported in developing resilience, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. Peer mentoring programs and youth-led initiatives can provide positive spaces for adolescents to discuss challenges and find constructive alternatives to online aggression. Encouraging participation in sports, arts, cultural events, and community service can redirect energy toward personal growth and meaningful offline connections, reducing overreliance on social media platforms that can expose them to greater risks.

4. Strengthening the Role of Society and Government

Communities and government agencies must work together to build a robust prevention and intervention framework. This includes creating accessible reporting channels, offering psychological support services for victims, and enforcing stricter penalties for perpetrators of cyberbullying. National-level campaigns that promote kindness, inclusivity, and empathy in digital interactions are crucial for fostering a safer online ecosystem. Furthermore, policymakers must continually update cybercrime laws to adapt to the evolving nature of online harassment, ensuring that youth are better protected in the digital age.

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