

## CYBERBULLYING AMONG TEENAGERS: ITS IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

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**Abstract:** This research aims to explore the impact of cyberbullying on the social relationships and mental health of adolescents. This researcher uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This research involves teenagers aged 13-18 who have been victims of cyberbullying. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The research results show that cyberbullying is experienced in various forms, such as insults, threats, and the spread of false information, which significantly impact the mental health of the victims, including anxiety, depression, and social isolation. Additionally, victims tend to withdraw from social relationships due to a loss of trust in their peers. This research emphasizes the importance of digital education, psychological support, collaboration between parents and schools, and the strengthening of protection policies to prevent and address cases of cyberbullying.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying, Adolescents, Mental Health

### Introduction

One of the technological devices that is often used is a smartphone, because its use is very easy, simple, and easy to carry anywhere. The use of smartphones is not only among adults but also has reached children and teenagers. Unsupervised use of smartphones will have negative impacts, one of which is bullying (Nasution & Sitepu, 2018). Smartphones are very vulnerable to bullying cases, especially among teenagers who have attracted the attention of educators, researchers, and communities in various countries. Research on bullying among teenagers began in the 1970s in Western countries, but now the problem is considered a global issue that occurs in various parts of the world (Unicef, 2019). In the last 2 decades, experts and researchers have begun to focus on the latest form of bullying among teenagers, namely cyberbullying. The increasing use of information technology and modern communication devices among children is thought to create new vulnerabilities that can cause children to be involved in cyberbullying either as perpetrators or victims (Fanti et al., 2008).

Sourander's research (Sourander et al., 2010) on 2215 adolescents aged 13-16 years in Finland showed that victims of cyberbullying are more prone to emotional disorders and friendship disorders as well as psychosomatic problems such as headaches, recurring stomachaches, or sleep disorders compared to non-victims. (Barlett & Coyne, 2014) explained that victims of cyberbullying also tend to have suicidal tendencies.

Beran and Li (Beran & Qing, 2005) found that children who were bullied online and in person at school faced various difficulties in the learning process, such as getting low grades, experiencing impaired concentration, and being absent from school. Katzer's research (Katzer et al., 2009) also showed that cyberbullying causes victims to often be absent from school, skip school, and view school as an unsafe place. Experts believe that the disruption to the victim's academic achievement is considered to be caused by impaired concentration in learning and high levels of frustration experienced by victims of cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Bullying and cyberbullying are closely related to mental health issues. Where mental health is a condition where a person does not experience feelings of guilt towards themselves, has a realistic assessment of themselves and can accept their shortcomings or weaknesses, has the ability to face problems in their life, has social life satisfaction, and has happiness in their life. (Jamilah et al., 2019). Cyberbullying is an incident where a child or teenager is teased, insulted, intimidated, or even embarrassed by other children or teenagers through the internet, digital technology, or mobile phones. Cyberbullying is considered valid if the perpetrator and victim are under 18 years of age and are not legally considered adults. If one of the parties involved (or both) is over 18 years of age, then the case that occurs will be categorized as cybercrime or cyberstalking (often also called cyber harassment).

The forms and methods of cyberbullying are very diverse. It can be in the form of threatening messages via e-mail, uploading photos that embarrass the victim, creating websites to spread slander and mock the victim, and accessing other people's social networking accounts to threaten the victim and create problems. The perpetrators' motivations are also diverse. Some do it because they are angry and want revenge, are frustrated, want to seek attention, and some even make it just entertainment to fill their free time. Not infrequently, their motivation is sometimes just to joke around. Prolonged cyberbullying can kill a child's self-confidence, make the child depressed and worried, and always make them feel guilty or fail because they are unable to overcome the disturbances that befall them, and there are even victims of cyberbullying who think about ending their lives because they cannot stand being disturbed. Victims of cyberbullying will experience stress that can trigger them to do problematic actions such as cheating, playing truant, running away from home, and even drinking alcohol or using drugs. (Katzer et al., 2009). Nowadays, mental health is a very popular topic among teenagers. Many teenagers are currently vulnerable to mental health problems. Adolescent mental health affected by social media is a topic that has been widely debated in recent years (Fitriah et al., 2023). The use of social media is considered risky for adolescent psychosocial deviations, such as self-esteem, ideal body image, and adolescent identity. In addition, social media is also related to issues regarding cyberbullying, easy access to pornography, and sexting behavior or exchanging sexual messages (Fitriah et al., 2023).

Mental health problems are also related to aggression. Aggression is one way of responding to frustration experienced by adolescents (Nasution, M., & Sitepu, J. M., 2018). Aggressive behavior does not appear by itself but is caused by something behind it. For example, parenting patterns. Parenting patterns are closely related to the behavior displayed by children. The surrounding environment and peers. Parents who may be busy working and pay less attention to their children may make children feel neglected. (Nasution, M., & Sitepu, J. M., 2018). Likewise, the wrong friends and a bad environment have the potential to cause children to experience these problems.

## Literature Review

### 1. Cyberbullying

#### a. Definition of Cyberbullying

Patchin and Hinduja (2015) stated that cyberbullying is intentional and repeated treatment that occurs through electronic text media or the internet. According to Willard (2005), cyberbullying is a cruel act that is intentionally directed at others by sending or distributing dangerous things or materials that can be seen as a form of social aggression in the use of the internet or other digital technology. Kowalski et al. (2014) also added an explanation of cyberbullying that the electronic context in question is such as email, blogs, instant messages, and text messages. Aimed at someone who cannot easily defend themselves.

The explanation according to Dewi (Dewi et al., 2020) has similarities with the above that cyberbullying is a misuse of technology carried out by someone by sending messages or uploading pictures and videos to someone with the aim that the person can be embarrassed, tortured, made fun of, or threatened. Not only that, Rastati (2016) added that spreading rumors about someone, stalking them, or threatening them through various electronic media can be classified as cyberbullying. Basically, cyberbullying can be said to be more understandable than bullying in the real world because the bullying received is not only in cyberspace but also in the real world.

### **b. Aspects of Cyberbullying**

Patchin and Hinduja (Henson, 2014) have several aspects regarding cyberbullying, namely:

- 1) Repetition. Repetition is the most important thing in the element of intimidation. Repetition is also something that is easily recognized and often done in cyberspace so that victims feel disturbed.
- 2) Intention. Defined in intimidation as an act carried out intentionally that can cause harm to someone
- 3) Harm. Harm in this concept of intimidation is defined as something dangerous that can cause victims to be injured in certain ways that are dangerous, such as physical, social, psychological, behavioral, or emotional.
- 4) Imbalance of Power. The perpetrator of the intimidation has power over the victim.

### **c. Factors that influence Cyberbullying**

There are five factors of cyberbullying (Kowalski, 2008), namely:

- 1) Traditional bullying. Bullying incidents that occur in the real world have a big influence on someone having a tendency to bully in cyberspace.
- 2) Personality characteristics. Someone whose personality tends to have high aggression, lacks empathy, cannot control themselves, and even gets angry easily.
- 3) Perception of the victim. The reason for bullying is because of the nature or characteristics of the victim that invite bullying, for example, being weak, whiny, and so on.
- 4) Strain. Strain is a condition of psychological tension caused by negative relationships with other people that produce negative effects (especially anger and frustration) that lead to delinquency.
- 5) The role of parental interaction. The role of parents in supervising children's activities in interacting on the internet is a factor that has quite an influence on children's tendency to be involved in cyberbullying. Parents who are not involved in their children's online activities make children more vulnerable to being involved in cyberbullying.

## **2. Adolescent**

### **a. Definition of Adolescent**

According to Sarwono 2020 (Sari, 2022), adolescence is a development in humans that has three aspects, namely biological, psychological, and socio-economic, which has an age limit of 10-20 years. Adolescents are individuals who develop when they begin to show secondary sexual signs until they reach sexual maturity, individuals who experience psychological development from childhood to adulthood, and individuals who experience a transition from full socio-economic dependence on circumstances so that they will be more independent.

Piaget (Hurlock 1980) said that psychologically, adolescence is an age at which individuals become integrated into adult society, an age at which children do not feel that they are below the level of older people but feel the same, or at least on par.

### **b. Adolescent Development Tasks**

Adolescent development tasks are focused on efforts to improve childish attitudes and behaviors and strive to achieve the ability to behave in an adult manner. The developmental tasks of adolescents (Hurlock, 1995) are:

- 1) Being able to accept their physical condition.
- 2) Able to accept and understand adult sex roles.
- 3) Able to build good relationships with members of different sex groups.
- 4) Achieve emotional independence.
- 5) Achieve economic independence.
- 6) Develop intellectual concepts and skills that are essential to playing a role as a member of society.
- 7) Understand and internalize the values of adults and parents.

## **3. Mental Health**

### **a. Definition of Mental Health**

Health in general can be understood as complete well-being (a perfect state) both physically, mentally, and socially, not only free from disease or weakness (Dewi, 2012). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in Dewi (2012), mental health is a condition of well-being that is realized by individuals, in which there are abilities to manage normal life stress, to work productively and produce, and to participate in their community.

According to Pieper and Uden in Alifiya (2016), mental health is a condition where a person does not experience feelings of guilt towards himself, has a realistic estimate of himself, can accept his shortcomings or weaknesses, has the ability to face problems in his life, has satisfaction in his social life, and has happiness in his life.

### **b. Factors Affecting Mental Health**

According to Anwarsyah (Anwarsyah & Gazi, 2017), the factors that affect mental health are broadly two, namely internal and external factors. These internal factors include personality, physical condition, development and maturity, psychological condition, religiosity, attitude towards life problems, meaningfulness of life, and balance in thinking. External factors include social, economic, political, customary, and environmental conditions, and so on (Faturokhmah, 2019). Mental health is greatly influenced by these factors, because substantively these factors play a significant role in creating mental health. Internal factors include biological and psychological factors, while external factors include socio-cultural factors. Internal factors are one of the factors that influence mental health, especially biological factors.

## **Method**

This researcher uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This study involved adolescents aged 13-18 years who had been victims of cyberbullying. Respondents were selected based on checklist data regarding indicators of cyberbullying victims. Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation.

## Result and Discussion

Cyberbullying among adolescents is a relatively new issue that is currently viewed as a global issue. This problem can occur in any country regardless of the level of socio-economic development of a region. Cyberbullying has a negative impact on the psychosocial conditions and academic achievements of victims. Based on the results of observations and interviews that have been conducted, there are several things that have an impact on mental health caused by cyberbullying among adolescents, including insults, threats, and the spread of false information. This has an impact on the mental health of victims, such as anxiety, depression, and social isolation. In addition, victims tend to withdraw from social relationships due to loss of trust in peers.

In line with the results of the study above, Fitriah (2023) stated that social media addiction can cause a number of negative impacts on mental health. Such as making you feel insecure, increasing the risk of depression and anxiety, and becoming selfish. In addition to having a strong effect on the behavior of its users, social media can also cause mental health problems. Among them are anxiety disorders and depression, which can disrupt the mental health of their users.

Teenagers who experience cyberbullying experience fear of making friends, anxiety about future friendships, and shame, and tend to withdraw from friendships, and some of them even feel that they no longer trust friendships. Therefore, based on the results of this study, it is important to emphasize digital education, psychological support, collaboration between parents and schools, and strengthening protection policies to prevent and handle cyberbullying cases. Parents must have more control over their children in using social media so that cyberbullying cases do not occur in children. Schools must also be able to provide education about the impact of cyberbullying on a person's mental health.

Researchers show that cyberbullying has a negative impact on the victim's affective condition, such as depression (Didden et al., 2009), weakened self-esteem (Didden et al., 2009), emotional stress, anger, and sadness (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

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