

Analysing the Impact of Cyberbullying Language on The Psychology of Indonesian Citizens

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Abstract

This study sets out to analyse the impact of cyberbullying language on the psychology of Indonesian citizens. Cyberbullying through digital media is an alarming phenomenon, especially for netizens who are vulnerable to online interactions. This research employs a qualitative approach, using a case study of Indonesian netizens. Data collection was conducted through social media content analysis. The results obtained demonstrated that cyberbullying language exerts a detrimental effect on the mental health and psychological well-being of citizens, as evidenced by an increase in anxiety and depression levels, as well as a decrease in self-confidence. This study emphasises the necessity for digital literacy education and psychological support for netizens in order to combat the challenges posed by cyberbullying in the digital era.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Psychology, Indonesian Netizens

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of information and communication technology has led to the emergence of a global issue: cyberbullying. This term refers to behaviour carried out through digital media by individuals or groups who repeatedly convey aggressive messages intended to harm others (Cretu & Morandau, 2022). The impact of cyberbullying on the mental health of individuals, especially among the younger generation who actively use the internet and social media, is significant.

A substantial proportion of the Indonesian youth population is susceptible to cyberbullying, as evidenced by research conducted by Adiyanti, M.G., et al. (2019). Their study revealed that high-quality friendships are associated with increased peace and empathy, while lower-quality friendships are linked to decreased empathy and an increased propensity for cyberbullying.

A notable group susceptible to the repercussions of cyberbullying are netizens active on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook. The cultural diversity among these netizens frequently renders them vulnerable to cyberbullying, a phenomenon that can be attributed to disparities in perspectives, cultural backgrounds, and even physical appearances.

In light of Indonesia's rich cultural heritage and distinctive traditions, it is observed that members of the internet community frequently raise contentious local issues, including social, political and environmental concerns. Consequently, they are subjected to pervasive online harassment from individuals or groups who hold divergent views. The psychological ramifications of cyberbullying for

Indonesian citizens can encompass stress, anxiety, depression and protracted trauma. The language used in such cases can include hate speech, insults, threats, or the dissemination of false information intended to humiliate or hurt the victim. In the context of Indonesian citizens, the language of cyberbullying often contains elements of racial or ethnic discrimination, which can worsen the psychological impact on victims. Research on cyberbullying has been conducted in many countries. However, research that specifically examines the impact of cyberbullying language on the psychology of netizens is still very limited. This study is therefore expected to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the Indonesian context.

2. Literature Review

Development of Cyberbullying

A plethora of studies have demonstrated an association between cyberbullying and a range of mental health problems in adolescents, including depression, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal behaviour, and somatic symptoms (Nixon C., 2014). It is imperative to recognise that cyberbullying is a crime and a problem that necessitates special attention to be resolved in a sustainable manner (Chan, J. 2024). As asserted by Huang L., et.al., (2023), the absence of intervention to address cyberbullying can lead to the escalation of more severe problems.

The Role of Social Media

Social media has become a prevalent platform for cyberbullying perpetrated by individuals of all ages and genders (Barragan N., et.al., 2024). Research indicates that young people older than 18 years old utilise social media for self-gratification (Abu Bakar, H.H., 2015). Social media sites such as Facebook Professional facilitate connections between users and enable the dissemination of information. However, these platforms can also be exploited to disseminate rumours, disseminate hurtful comments, and distribute embarrassing photos or videos. The pervasiveness and difficulty of eradicating cyberbullying on social media underscores its significant threat.

Impact of Cyberbullying

The impact of cyberbullying on the lives of its victims can be detrimental, with studies indicating its potential to induce stress (Fang, X., et.al., 2023). Research in the United Kingdom has highlighted the prevalence of cyberbullying aimed at creating embarrassment among peers (Hawkins, C., 2023). Similarly, studies in Turkey have noted the impact of cyberbullying on emotional disturbance and difficulty regulating emotions (Gül, H., et.al., 2019). The consequences of cyberbullying can be significant, with victims often experiencing a range of emotional and physical health problems. These problems can include difficulties in concentrating at school and social isolation, and in extreme cases, can lead to hostility (Fang, X., et.al., 2023).

How to Solve Cyberbullying Problems

It is imperative to regard cyberbullying with the utmost seriousness, and those who have been subjected to such behaviour are advised to inform their parents, teachers or counsellors, who can offer psychological guidance (Chen L, et.al., 2023; Cortés-Pascual, A., et.al., 2019). In order to prevent cyberbullying, it is essential to educate young people, schoolchildren and university students on the subject of online safety and to encourage them to be kind and respectful to others in the online sphere (Abaido, G.M., 2019; Liang, H., 2022; Masoumi, D., et.al., 2024).

3. Methods

Research Approach

This research employs a qualitative approach with the objective of comprehensively investigating the psychological impact of cyberbullying language on internet users in Indonesia. Researchers seek to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings associated with the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

Research Design

The research design employed is that of a case study. The decision to utilise a case study was made due to the focal point of this research being Indonesian citizens who are targeted by cyberbullying. Case studies enable researchers to collect rich and detailed data about the phenomenon of cyberbullying in a specific context.

Research Participants

The participants in this study were selected from among Indonesian citizens who are active on social media and have experienced cyberbullying. The selection of participants was carried out using purposive sampling, a technique that involves the selection of participants who have characteristics that are in accordance with the research objectives.

Data Collection Technique

The data presented in this study were collected through two primary methods: in-depth interviews and social media content analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with Indonesian citizens to explore their experiences, perceptions, and feelings regarding cyberbullying. Concurrently, social media content analysis was conducted to identify the forms of cyberbullying language used and its impact on Indonesian netizens.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data was analysed using thematic analysis techniques. Thematic analysis was conducted by identifying themes that emerged from the interview data and social media content analysis. These themes were then interpreted to understand the impact of cyberbullying language on the psychology of Indonesian netizens.

4. Results

This study demonstrates that cyberbullying has a significant impact on the mental health and psychological well-being of Indonesian internet users, with five impacts on their psychology. Firstly, those targeted by cyberbullying often experience increased anxiety, feeling worried, anxious and fearful of negative comments or messages directed at them. Secondly, cyberbullying can also cause depression in Indonesian citizens. These individuals experience a sense of sadness, hopelessness, and a disinterest in previously enjoyable activities. Thirdly, the use of derogatory and injurious language by cyberbullies can result in a diminution of self-esteem, leading to feelings of inadequacy, ineptitude, and uncertainty regarding one's capabilities. Fourthly, those subjected to cyberbullying often exhibit a propensity to retreat from social interactions, experiencing feelings of embarrassment, fear, and discomfort when engaging with others. Finally, the psychological distress induced by cyberbullying can manifest physically, giving rise to sleep disturbances, headaches, digestive disorders, and an impaired immune system.

5. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that cyberbullying language constitutes a grave issue with the po-

tential to adversely impact the mental health and psychological well-being of Indonesian citizens. The phenomenon of cyberbullying frequently encompasses elements of racial or ethnic discrimination, a factor that can intensify the psychological impact on victims. This is attributable to the fact that Indonesian society possesses a rich and distinctive culture and traditions, and netizens frequently engage in the discourse of sensitive local issues. Consequently, they may become subject to relentless cyberbullying from individuals or groups with divergent viewpoints.

This research also demonstrates that social media has become a prevalent platform for cyberbullying, given its capacity to facilitate user interaction and information exchange. However, these platforms can also be exploited to disseminate rumours, disseminate offensive comments, and distribute embarrassing content, which can have a particularly deleterious effect on the psychological well-being of victims. The pervasiveness and difficulty of eradicating cyberbullying on social media platforms underscores the urgency of addressing this pressing issue.

The psychological impact of cyberbullying on Indonesian internet users can include stress, anxiety, depression and prolonged trauma, with the potential to impact both their personal and professional lives. Those who experience cyberbullying may encounter difficulties in concentrating at work, lose motivation and even resign from their positions. Given the ongoing prevalence of cyberbullying in Indonesia, there is an urgent need for effective solutions to address this issue. A multifaceted approach to combating this issue is imperative, encompassing the provision of digital literacy education, the provision of psychological support to victims of cyberbullying, the enhancement of law enforcement, and the implementation of restrictions by social media platforms on cyberbullying. Digital literacy education plays a pivotal role in empowering citizens to utilise social media responsibly and safely, thereby enhancing their ability to identify and avoid cyberbullying.

It is imperative that victims of cyberbullying are provided with the requisite psychological support to enable them to overcome the detrimental impact of such behaviour. This support can be provided through various means, including counselling, therapy, or support groups. The implementation of stringent legal measures to combat cyberbullying perpetrators can serve as a deterrent, thereby preventing the recurrence of such incidents. Social media platforms have a responsibility to implement measures to prevent and address cyberbullying on their platforms. These measures may include content moderation, user reporting, and the provision of resources for victims of cyberbullying. This research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the Indonesian context, and it also underlines the importance of digital literacy education and psychological support for Indonesian citizens in facing the challenges of cyberbullying in the digital era. It is anticipated that this research will serve as a foundational reference for future studies and contribute to the development of more effective cyberbullying prevention and management strategies.

Table 1: List of cyberbullying words on netizens in Indonesia

Racist Slurs	Description Explanation
Stupid and Backward	Insulting the level of intelligence and civilisation of certain groups, degrading their intellectual abilities.
Stupid	Negative stereotypes are often thrown around, generalising and undermining the intellectual capabilities of fellow Indo-nationals.
Forest Human Base	Demoting people by associating them with primitive and wild life.

Separatist Basis	Accusing certain groups of wanting to secede from Indonesia creates negative stigma and suspicion.
Local Terrorist Base	Insulting certain groups of netizens by equating them with criminals.
Etnis Primitif	Demeaning the culture and civilisation of certain tribes, considering them as a backward group.
Black Decay	Insulting skin colour with negative connotations, associating black skin with something dirty and undesirable.
You're just a burden on the state	Declare certain groups as groups that harm the country.
You're Just a Thorn in the Ground Indonesia	Insulting certain groups as harmful and only taking advantage of Indonesia.
You're just causing trouble	Accusing certain groups of causing unrest and instability, spreading fear and prejudice.
You're just bullies	Accusing certain groups of being the source of problems and conflicts, spreading hatred and hostility.
You're just the rubbish of society	A very rude and demeaning expression of hatred.
You are not human	Degrading the dignity of certain groups, equating them with animals or other non-human beings.
Rough	Generalising the character of certain groups as violent and ignoring the fact that each group has individuals with diverse traits.
All he does is cause trouble	Accusing certain groups of being trouble-makers, spreading negative and harmful stereotypes.
Dirty and Smelly	Insulting the hygiene and physical appearance of certain groups, creating unfounded negative stereotypes.
Human Cannibals	Spreading false and horrible stereotypes about certain groups, creating fear and disgust.
You'd better go extinct	Extreme expressions of hatred, calling for genocide and ethnic cleansing.
Black Monkey	Equating certain groups with animals, insulting the colour of their skin, and dehumanising them.
Forest People	Demeaning certain groups as uncivilised and backward, ignoring their rich culture and civilisation.
Prawn Brains	Insulting the intelligence level of a certain group, degrading their thinking ability.
Lazy	Negative stereotypes are often thrown around, generalising and undermining the work ethic of certain groups.
Primitive	Demeaning certain groups as underdeveloped and backward, ignoring the fact that certain groups have rich and diverse cultures.

Dreadlocks Curly Hair	Insulting the physical appearance of certain groups, denigrating their ethnic characteristics.
Drunkard	Negative stereotypes are often thrown around, generalising and demeaning certain groups by associating them with bad behaviour.

The data presented in the table indicates that victims of cyberbullying experience profound emotional distress, particularly in the context of racist slurs, which can engender feelings of embarrassment, humiliation, and a loss of self-esteem. Extreme expressions of hatred, such as "you're just the scum of the earth" or "you better go extinct," can elicit feelings of hopelessness and profound trauma.

Furthermore, the consequences of persistent and intense cyberbullying can manifest in mental health disorders, including stress, anxiety and depression. The impact of such victimisation can be profound, often manifesting in feelings of insecurity, paranoia and a loss of self-confidence, which can lead to significant disruption in the victim's social and academic lives. In severe cases, the consequences of cyberbullying can even extend to suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, attacks that target a victim's self-identity, such as ethnicity or race, can inflict considerable damage to their sense of identity and self-esteem. This can result in feelings of social isolation and marginalisation, which can, in turn, lead to feelings of depression and loneliness. Furthermore, the social impacts of cyberbullying are inevitable, as it can cause victims to feel insecure in their social lives.

6. Conclusion

Cyberbullying in Indonesia has become a significant concern, particularly for individuals who are active on social media platforms. The language employed in such bullying, which includes hate speech, insults, threats, and the propagation of false information, can have a detrimental effect on the mental health and psychological well-being of these individuals. The psychological consequences of cyberbullying can encompass increased anxiety, depression, diminished self-confidence, social withdrawal, and even physical health issues. This research emphasises the necessity for digital literacy education and psychological support for citizens in order to address the challenges posed by cyberbullying in the digital age. Key recommendations to tackle this issue include the provision of digital literacy education, the provision of psychological support to victims, the implementation of law enforcement measures against perpetrators, and the implementation of restrictions by social media platforms on cyberbullying. This research makes a significant contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of cyberbullying in the Indonesian context and is expected to serve as a reference for future research and the development of more effective cyberbullying prevention and handling strategies.

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