

## Cyberbullying in Social Media

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**Abstract.** Misuse of social media platforms, especially cyberbullying, is a problem in society. Cyberbullying is an act that is deliberately carried out by someone to embarrass, insult, threaten, or curse another person. The purpose of this study is to dig deeper into cyberbullying. This study uses a qualitative method by means of interviews. The results of this study describe the impact of cyberbullying from the perspective of the victim. Data from the victim's perspective suggests decreased self-confidence, difficulty in completing tasks, and increased stress. Support from the surrounding environment is needed to help victims recover and become motivated again in their daily activities.

**Keywords:** *cyberbullying, social media, impact*

**Abstrak.** Penyalahgunaan platform media sosial, khususnya *cyberbullying* menjadi problem di masyarakat. Cyberbullying adalah tindakan yang sengaja dilakukan oleh seseorang untuk memperlakukan, menghina, mengancam, atau mengutuk orang lain. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menggali lebih dalam terkait *cyberbullying*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan cara wawancara. Hasil penelitian ini mendeskripsikan dampak dari *cyberbullying* dari perspektif korban. Data dari perspektif korban mengemukakan penurunan kepercayaan diri, kesulitan dalam menyelesaikan tugas, dan peningkatan stres. Dukungan dari lingkungan sekitar dibutuhkan untuk membantu korban pulih dan kembali termotivasi dalam aktivitas sehari-hari.

**Kata kunci:** *cyberbullying, media sosial, dampak*

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### Introduction

Cyberbullying has become a major and fast-expanding problem in the digital era, particularly with social media and online communication platforms used so extensively. Targeting individuals or groups, this type of bullying—which is marked

by recurrent abusive behaviour via digital means—often goes unpacked because of the absence of direct, in-person engagement. Hurting users of all ages but disproportionately hurting teenagers, cyberbullying has become a big issue in both developed and developing nations. Online platforms' anonymity and lack of instantaneous repercussions have created an environment where destructive behaviour can grow free from control. Particularly among teenagers who are heavy users of digital platforms, a phenomenon that has risen greatly since the start of the COVID-19 epidemic, the emergence of cyberbullying is seen in Indonesia. The rise in cyberbullying incidents corresponds with more general psychological and societal transformations brought about by internet engagement.

Cyberbullying is the use of electronic communication—text messages, social media, online forums, or otherwise—to harass or threaten a person. According to Smith (2012), this is an aggressive, recurrent behaviour meant to damage others, either emotionally or mentally. Langos (2012) underlines that cyberbullying is deliberate and usually consists of harassment, threats, or public humiliation meant to inflict psychological discomfort on the victim. Such behaviour has a major psychological cost, and victims of cyberbullying sometimes suffer from long-standing mental health problems like anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Cyberbullying is rather common in Indonesia, which calls for attention. A study by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) indicates that thirty per cent or more of Indonesian teenagers have engaged in cyberbullying—either as victims or offenders. This figure highlights how urgently the growing problem of online harassment—which affects the younger generation—must be addressed.

There are several main causes of the growing frequency of cyberbullying, most of them have to do with the development of digital technologies and social media usage. The absence of accepted social conventions in online environments is one main reason cyberbullying has become so common. Digital platforms can lack the monitoring or responsibility that controls behaviour in the physical world, unlike in-person meetings when social signs and conventions are precisely specified. Here

especially pertinent is Durkheim's idea of anomie, which shows how aberrant behaviour can result from the lack of clear social conventions in modern, fast changing surroundings. Regarding cyberbullying, people feel more confident to act aggressively as they are sheltered by the supposed anonymity and distance digital media offers (Deguchi et al., 2020). Further aggravating this problem was the COVID-19 epidemic, which compelled most social contact to occur online. Teenagers and young adults found themselves spending more time online as businesses and colleges migrated to digital platforms, so creating more possibility for unpleasant interactions including cyberbullying.

Since children and teenagers depended more on technology for entertainment, communication, and education, cyberbullying during the epidemic grew noticeably. According to a 2020 Mashabi & Galih study, pandemic internet activity linked with an increase in cyberbullying events. This is mostly because internet platforms give teenagers a stage where they may behave out without quick repercussions in the lack of direct adult supervision. The rise in internet activity along with the stress and loneliness the epidemic brought about produced a perfect environment for destructive and aggressive behaviour. Since cyberbullying can have long-lasting effects on a person's psychological well-being, the victims—both physically and emotionally—have suffered much.

With several research showing how badly cyberbullying affects mental health, its consequences are significant and broad. Cyberbullying victims frequently experience anxiety, depression, and in severe cases suicidal thoughts. Kowalski et al. (2014) claim that victims of cyberbullying are more prone to suffer from social disengagement, persistent stress, and trouble creating personal relationships. The psychological consequences can be severe; victims can feel overwhelmed and powerless against the continuous online abuse. Research by Jubaidi & Fadilla (2020) shows that one in five children who report cyberbullying also contemplate suicide as a result of their victimisation. These concerning figures highlight the need to tackle

cyberbullying not only as a social problem but also as a public health risk demanding quick action.

Studies on cyberbullying in Indonesia help one to understand the degree of the issue and its broad influence. Research by Sukmawati & Kumala (2020) and Yulieta et al. (2021) look at the psychological effects of cyberbullying and expose victims' often protracted emotional suffering in which case it can show up as long-term trauma, social anxiety, or poor performance. According to Lusiana & Arifin (2022), the age group of the victims determines how affected cyberbullying is. While teenagers and later adolescents are more likely to participate in dangerous behaviours such as drug misuse or early sexual engagement as a coping technique, smaller children usually react to bullying by becoming angry and withdrawing. This research emphasizes the need for focused treatments addressing the long-term and instantaneous consequences of cyberbullying.

It is very rare to find research that combines psychology, sociology, and anthropology in discussing cyberbullying. A multidisciplinary approach will deepen understanding from the victim's perspective comprehensively. From a sociological standpoint, several theoretical models help one to grasp cyberbullying. According to Talcott Parsons's functionalist theory, especially in highly competitive situations like social media (Denanda et al., 2021), deviant behaviours including cyberbullying result in reaction to society demands to retain or improve social standing. In this regard, cyberbullying can be considered as a tool for people to assert control or superiority over others, therefore supporting their place in a social hierarchy. By seeing cyberbullying as a result of social inequality, Karl Marx's conflict theory offers still another prism through which to view it. Marxists contend that people with more power or influence use cyberbullying as a weapon to subjugate or profit from those who are less fortunate, therefore aggravating social tensions (Turner, 2013). Furthermore, the symbolic interactionism of George Herbert Mead provides understanding of the part communication plays in cyberbullying. This theory holds that people, frequently without thinking about the psychological effects on the victim,

utilise symbols—such as language, images, or social media posts—to impose power or control in online contacts (Nalah et al., 2013).

Anthropological methods of cyberbullying help one to better grasp how values and cultural standards impact behaviour in digital environments. Watson & Denny (2020) contend that more general cultural and societal changes brought about by technological developments also influence cyberbullying, not only resulting from personal deviation. In this sense, cyberbullying can be considered a mirror of changing social hierarchies and power relations inside digital networks. Through an analysis of the cultural settings in which cyberbullying takes place, anthropologists can assist in pinpointing the particular social elements influencing the frequency of this activity in particular societies.

Examining the phenomena of cyberbullying in Indonesia from both sociological and anthropological angles is the aim of this work. This study intends to give a whole knowledge of the problem by means of an analysis of the social structures, power dynamics, and cultural elements influencing cyberbullying. It aims to investigate how cyberbullying impacts teenagers psychologically and socially as well as to find the fundamental causes of its rise in the digital age. Moreover, this study seeks to provide understanding of how particular cultural norms and values support the frequency of cyberbullying as well as how treatments may be customized to fit the special social dynamics of impacted groups. By offering practical suggestions for legislators, teachers, and parents to help avoid and lessen the negative consequences of online harassment, this study hopes to add to the more general conversation on cyberbullying. The reasons for using the victim's perspective are emphasized in this article. First, the victim's perspective will be able to deepen the victim's understanding of cyberbullying towards the perpetrator. Second, to prevent revictimization. And to increase awareness of both the perpetrator to avoid cyberbullying and encourage victims to be braver in responding to cyberbullying. The research question in this article is how the impact and how to overcome cyberbullying from the victim's perspective.

### **Method**

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The qualitative analysis involved coding the interview transcripts to identify common themes and patterns related to the experiences of cyberbullying (Jailani, 2023). This method allowed for an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena being studied, capturing the complexity and depth of the participants' experiences.

This research utilizes a phenomenological approach to explore and understand the lived experiences of individuals affected by cyberbullying on TikTok. The phenomenology paradigm is chosen to deeply observe, interpret, and gather information about participants' perceptions and interpretations of their experiences, without making judgments about right or wrong (Fadhila & Syafiq, 2020). This approach allows researchers to gain a nuanced understanding of the subjects' experiences.

The criteria for participation in this study include individuals of either gender, aged between 18 and 25 years old. Participants must have experienced or currently be experiencing cyberbullying on TikTok, and this cyberbullying must have had a noticeable impact on their daily lives. Subjects were selected using purposive sampling, where participants were chosen based on the specific characteristics outlined above. This method ensures that the sample is representative of the population experiencing the phenomenon being studied (Suriani, et al 2023). Data were collected through one-on-one interviews with the participants. The interviews were structured to allow participants to share their experiences in detail, focusing on how cyberbullying has impacted their daily lives (Anggito & Setiawan, 2018). The interview questions were designed to elicit in-depth responses, providing comprehensive insight into the participants' perceptions and experiences.

## **Result**

### **Nana's case**

Nana is a content creator on TikTok who often posts videos every day. The content he uploads is when he dances, vlogs and sometimes he does it live. Nana started using the Tiktok application in 2021 when the Covid pandemic began to increase in Indonesia. Nana felt bored with her daily activities, so she finally started to find Tiktok and tried to occasionally upload her activities there. Without realizing it, this has continued until now. Nana has a hobby of editing videos, so she often uploads daily vlogs. Many people like her vlog, but several times there have been negative comments on the videos that Nana has uploaded. Insulting comments about her body began to appear, such as "So fat", "never exercised, huh?", "You don't deserve to dance!", were some of the hurtful comments she often received. At first, Nana tried to ignore these comments, but still every night she couldn't sleep because she thought about these things. Over time, this made Nana less confident and often felt anxious every time she opened the TikTok application. "Every time I see those comments, I feel like am I not worthy of being a content creator?" This makes Nana hesitate to do anything, she becomes afraid of other people's views of her. However, when she told her friend, she received positive support which made Nana more confident. Her friends also helped to report accounts that commented negatively on Nana's TikTok. This makes Nana remain enthusiastic about creating content. Nana became consistent in uploading TikTok videos 3 times a week. The informant expressed their experience with verbal abuse by stating,

*"At first, I tried to ignore their comments, but every time I opened my account and saw their remarks, I started to feel that maybe they were right, and it made me lose confidence. I often felt anxious every time I opened the app."*

They also discussed how the negative comments led to feelings of inadequacy, saying,

*"Seeing those comments made me lose my confidence, and I felt unworthy of being a content creator. What they said was true."*

Furthermore, the informant shared their struggle with verbal bullying, particularly regarding personal appearance, adding,

*"They always insulted me, especially about my physical appearance. I often cried when I saw their comments."*

### **Sita's Case**

The second participant, Sita diligently creates dancing content on Tiktok too. She often follows popular trends and posts them, quite a few people often comment and react to the videos that Sita uploads. There was a time when he thought about creating a new dance with his own ideas. After the video was uploaded, he felt happy because it turned out there were several comment notifications from other accounts. But this didn't last long, after opening it, it turned out the contents were like

*"what the heck is this, it's not fun", "the choreography is just ordinary", "the dance on the other account is good".*

Sita bravely responded to some of the initial comments, because according to her it was her account so it was up to her. But the more he responded, the more negative comments came. Finally, Sita felt depressed about this, every night she couldn't sleep and for some time she was not active on Tiktok. He keeps thinking about how to make his content acceptable to other people, what he should do. Until now, he still feels confused about this and has not found a solution to the problem. The informant described their experience with verbal abuse, initially saying,

*"At first, I didn't really care about their comments because it's their account and their right, but over time, I couldn't stop thinking about it, and I couldn't sleep every night."*

They also shared how the negative comments led to feelings of inadequacy, expressing,

*"Those comments made me feel like I wasn't fit for dancing and that my dancing was terrible."*

Additionally, the informant opened up about verbal bullying, stating,

*"I was constantly insulted in the comments, and it eventually made me feel stressed and unable to sleep every night."*



### **Sociological Perspective**

Sociological perspective explains cyberbullying as a result of social structures that reinforce power hierarchies and inequalities. Social media is positioned as a virtual public space for cyberbullying. Our society is sociologically experiencing anomie. Anomie is a condition in which social norms become unclear or collapse due to rapid social change, such as the development of social media. The concept of anomie introduced by Émile Durkheim is particularly relevant in the context of the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying can cause anomie because it creates a situation where social norms regarding healthy interactions become unclear or violated (Daniel & Bahari, 2024). This disrupts their emotional balance, causing feelings of uncertainty, stress, and identity crisis similar to those described by Durkheim (Nastiti & Primasari, 2015). In the case of cyberbullying, individuals who are victims may experience similar effects to anomie, such as mental health disorders, anxiety, and depression. Feelings of alienation and loss of direction due to online bullying can worsen psychological conditions and increase the risk of extreme actions, including suicide (Kim, 2024). As identified by Durkheim, the instability of social norms and the disruption of behavioural guidelines can trigger identity crises and mental disorders, which are particularly relevant to the serious impacts experienced by victims of cyberbullying in today's digital age. From Durkheim's perspective, Nana's experience with cyberbullying illustrates the concept of anomie.

The negative comments directed at Nana and Sita reflect a breakdown in digital norms of politeness and respect, highlighting how social media can exacerbate the effects of anomie. The disregard for established social norms in online interactions results in emotional distress and identity crises for victims, demonstrating the relevance of Durkheim's theory in understanding the impact of cyberbullying in the digital age.

### **Anthropological Perspective**

Anthropology looks at cyberbullying in the context of human culture and behaviour related to digital technology. Anthropology looks at how identities are formed and maintained through new social rituals such as cancel culture, doxing, and flexing. Cancel culture is a popular practice on social media where people collectively attempt to boycott someone who is perceived to be violating social norms due to offensive statements or actions, often towards a public figure (Mayasari, 2022).

Doxing in the context of cyberbullying is the act of spreading someone's personal information without permission, which can lead to privacy violations, cyberbullying, and physical harm, as well as exacerbating an unhealthy culture of online judgment (Permata & Nurhadiyanto, 2024). Flexing in the context of cyberbullying refers to excessive displays of wealth, status, or achievements on online platforms, which can make victims feel depressed or inferior through detrimental social comparison (Astuti, 2023).

Based on Lévi-Strauss's anthropological perspective, cyberbullying can be interpreted as a social phenomenon regulated by symbolic structures and certain communication patterns in digital society (Menoh, 2013). Lévi-Strauss, with his structuralism theory, argues that cyberbullying behaviour reflects unconscious rules and binary oppositions (such as perpetrator-victim, power-weakness) that regulate social interactions in cyberspace (Welte, 1967). In this context, cyberbullying is seen as a manifestation of tensions and power dynamics that exist in social structures, but are expressed through digital media.

In Nana's case, the negative comments reflected an implicit structuralism that enforced certain standards and judgments of beauty. The support of her friends highlighted the potential for changing these basic patterns, as it helped Nana navigate and challenge prevailing social norms. This intervention enabled Nana to continue her creative pursuits, demonstrating how shifts in structuralism and supportive relationships can influence an individual's experiences and self-concept.

### **Psychological Perspective**

Carl Rogers, a humanist psychologist, emphasized the importance of self-acceptance and developing individual potential. The cases of Nana and Sita can be analyzed through the concepts of self-concept and self-actualization. Self-concept is a person's view and assessment of themselves, including beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions about their abilities and personal values (Defghi et al., 2023). This concept shapes how individuals think, feel, and behave in everyday life. Nana and Sita's self-concept is influenced by their social interactions on TikTok. Negative comments damaged Nana and Sita's self-concept, making them feel inappropriate as content creators.

In contrast to Sita who did not receive support from anyone, Nana received support from her friends to help improve her self-concept and increase her self-confidence. According to Carl Rogers, self-actualization is a continuous process of becoming one's true self and developing one's full potential (Nurdahlia, 2022). It involves authentic personal growth and self-fulfillment through honest experiences free from external pressures. Rogers believed that every individual has the potential to grow and achieve great things, and Nana shows signs of achieving her potential through her fight against cyberbullying and consistent content creation. However, in Sita's case, she was hampered in the process of self-actualization due to the negative comments she received. This causes stress and damages Sita's self-esteem.

### **Discussion**

Though certain parts of society consider cyberbullying as normal or even minor, in psychology, sociology, and anthropology it is recognised as aberrant behaviour. The frameworks used by different disciplines to understand social interaction and human behaviour define this difference in vision. Particularly among teens, cyberbullying is sometimes minimized or normalized in daily life since it occurs in digital environments disconnected from conventional social standards and under direct control is lacking (Tregubova & Morozov, 2021). From a psychological

standpoint, meanwhile, cyberbullying is seen as a deviant behaviour since it seriously negatively affects the victim. Viewing this behaviour as detrimental not only to the individual's mental health but also their more general social functioning, psychologists stress its negative effects.

Cyberbullying is considered in psychological terms as a major departure from normal behaviour since it directly compromises the victim's mental well-being, emotional stability, and self-esteem. Studies by Ok Libertariani et al. (2022) highlight the significant psychological consequences, in which victims can feel isolated, depressed, or anxious. These consequences can become chronic and cause long-term mental health problems including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or perhaps suicidal thoughts. From this vantage point, the emphasis is on the personal impact—how cyberbullying compromises the psychological integrity of the victim, causing emotional breakdowns, academic decline, and even physical symptoms such as nausea and disturbed sleep. Psychologically, this is why cyberbullying is seen as deviant (Dennehy, et.al, 2020), it not only disturbs the victim's immediate surroundings but also has a long-lasting effect on their capacity to manage life issues.

From a sociological standpoint, nevertheless, cyberbullying is sometimes misunderstood. Particularly among young people in Indonesian society, this kind of behaviour can be considered as the standard in digital contact (Purboniesih, et.al, 2022). Particularly in less controlled environments like social media, the rather high tolerance for aggressive or damaging behaviour in online environments reflects society acceptance of some types of deviance. According to Durkheim's theory of deviance, actions deemed detrimental from an individual psychological standpoint would not always be considered as aberrant by society as a whole. Actually, in some situations cyberbullying could be seen as a kind of social control, in which people employ online abuse to impose group standards or exercise authority. In Indonesia, where collectivist ideals may stress preserving harmony in physical environments, the somewhat low focus on digital civility can result in a situation whereby violent

online behaviour is accepted or overlooked as long as it does not translate into in-person contacts.

Anthropologically speaking, cyberbullying can be seen as a component of more general cultural changes brought about by the arrival of digital technologies. The explosive growth of social media has changed people's interactions, communications, and assertion of social authority. Cyberbullying can be considered as a way to protect one's social position or retaliate to perceived slights in societies where public reputation and social status are valued, such as Indonesia (Purboningsih, et.al, 2023). Scholars of digital culture would contend that the acceptance of cyberbullying indicates the ways in which conventional social norms are being renegotiated in the setting of online contact (Carlson & Frazer, 2021). In the digital age, cultural standards that traditionally controlled in-person contacts are changing and new kinds of deviant behaviour—often not yet completely understood or controlled—are resulting.

The psychological and social effects on the victims are significant even if society may accept or tolerate some degrees of cyberbullying. Tyora et al. (2021) conducted research which reveals that victims of cyberbullying sometimes suffer from long-term mental health problems like sadness, anxiety, and a great loss of self-esteem. These consequences influence victims' perspective of themselves and their role in the world, therefore transcending momentary emotional suffering. Many times, victims withdraw from social events out of concern for more injury or shame. Their mental health suffers so much that it can cause academic failure, social isolation, and, in severe circumstances, suicide thoughts. Studies reveal that continuous stress causes patients to have symptoms such headaches, sleep problems, and gastrointestinal problems, therefore indicating the physical impacts (Ok Libertariani et al., 2022). The societal effect of cyberbullying exposes an interesting conundrum. Although society might not see cyberbullying as deviant, the behaviour still affects social dynamics in great extent. Cyberbullying can cause the victim to lose social capital since their peers view them differently and thereby damage their reputation.

As onlookers must choose sides—either backing the victim or the aggressor—it can also cause divides inside social groups. In this way, cyberbullying supports social hierarchies by letting people either preserve or improve their social status by means of humiliation of others. These impacts undermine social cohesiveness and trust in communities even while the larger population does not instantly see them as deviant.

The divergent opinions on cyberbullying between psychology and sociology also draw attention to the dichotomy between personal welfare and society expectations. Psychologically speaking, the emphasis is on the particular victim and the bad consequences they go through. Cyberbullying is considered deviant since it disturbs the victim's capacity to live normal in society and creates emotional damage. From a sociological perspective, on the other hand, the emphasis moves to the group and actions like cyberbullying could be seen as part of the greater social dynamic preserving or challenging power structures inside a group.

In Indonesian society, where social peace and moral norms are widely valued, there is frequently resistance to characterize cyberbullying as plain abnormal, particularly in the digital sphere. This is partially because online behaviour is still seen as less "real" than in-person encounters, which implies that the moral indignation that would follow bullying in a physical setting is often lacking in online environments. Cyberbullying is thus often accepted or even condoned given the rough-and-tumble character of digital life. This moral uncertainty helps cyberbullying to continue even if psychological data indicates its negative consequences on people.

In summary, even if society might be more tolerant of cyberbullying, the psychological viewpoint stresses its deviant character since the great negative effects it causes on victims. Particularly in Indonesia, the public tolerance for this behaviour reflects larger cultural views towards digital environments, where standards are still developing. Nevertheless, it is impossible to ignore the psychological damage victims suffer, it is imperative to solve this problem by means of both laws and education, reducing the harmful effects. The combination of personal damage and society

acceptance emphasizes the complexity of cyberbullying as a cultural and personal phenomena.

### **Conclusion**

The research reveals that cyberbullying had impacts on victims' daily lives due to informant's perspective. The psychological impact was diminished self-confidence, hesitation in performing tasks, and increased stress levels. Support from the surrounding environment is crucial to help victims recover and regain their self-confidence, allowing them to engage in content creation and other activities with renewed motivation and freedom. The study underscores the importance of individual agency in overcoming the challenges posed by cyberbullying. However, it also highlights the critical role of a supportive social environment in providing the necessary encouragement and motivation. Sociologically, the cyberbullying was the result of the social structure. As well as, anthropologically, cyberbullying was the expression of cancel culture, doxing and flexing. These findings suggest that addressing cyberbullying requires a comprehensive approach that includes both personal resilience and external support systems, which can significantly enhance victims' recovery and well-being.

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