Conformity and Cyber-Aggression Behavior in Adolescent Social Media Users

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Abstract. This study aims to determine the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior among adolescent social media users in Kupang City. A quantitative correlational approach was employed, involving 383 adolescents aged 12 to 22 years who are active social media users. The instruments used were conformity and cyber-aggression scales. Data analysis using Spearman's Rho test revealed a significant positive correlation between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior, with a correlation coefficient of 0.115 and a significance value of $p = 0.025$ ($p < 0.05$). Although this correlation is positive and significant, the small coefficient value indicates that the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression in adolescents is relatively weak. These findings suggest that the higher the level of conformity in adolescents, the greater their tendency to engage in aggression on social media; however, other factors such as self-control, emotional intelligence, and parenting styles may also play an important role.

Keywords: Conformity, Cyber-Aggression, Adolescents, Social Media

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan antara konformitas dan perilaku cyber-aggression pada remaja pengguna media sosial di Kota Kupang. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional dengan partisipan sebanyak 383 remaja berusia 12–22 tahun yang aktif menggunakan media sosial. Instrumen yang digunakan adalah skala konformitas dan skala *cyber-aggression.* Hasil analisis menggunakan uji Spearman's Rho menunjukkan adanya hubungan positif yang signifikan antara konformitas dan perilaku *cyber-aggression* dengan koefisien korelasi sebesar 0,115 dan nilai signifikansi $p = 0,025$ ($p < 0,05$). Meskipun korelasi ini positif dan signifikan, nilai koefisien yang kecil mengindikasikan bahwa hubungan antara konformitas dan *cyber-aggression* pada remaja tergolong lemah. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa semakin tinggi tingkat konformitas remaja, maka semakin tinggi pula kecenderungan mereka untuk melakukan agresi di media sosial, namun faktor lain seperti kontrol diri, kecerdasan emosional dan pola asuh orang tua kemungkinan juga berperan penting.

Kata kunci: Konformitas, Cyber-Aggression, Remaja, Media Sosial

Introduction

The development of information technology has changed the way individuals send and search for information. Technology responds to human needs for interaction by providing social media. Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), (2024) announced that the number of internet users in Indonesia in 2024 reached 221,563,479 people out of a total population of 278,696,200 people in Indonesia in 2023. Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (2023) revealed that the largest group of social media users in Indonesia is teenagers aged 13-18 years old, with a total of 108 million (75.50%) of the total active social media user population in Indonesia reaching 143 million.

Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood characterized by various changes, both in terms biological, cognitive, and socioemotional (Aprilia et al., 2020). Santrock (2020) states that the adolescent period usually begins at the age of 10-12 years and lasts until the age of 18-21 years, where the search for freedom and identity becomes the main focus. In socio-emotional aspects, adolescents tend to prioritize relationships with peers and often experience conflicts with parents (Santrock, 2020). This situation makes adolescence a challenging period, requiring special attention (Aprilia et al., 2020).

Afriany et al. (2019) explains that using social media has various impacts on teenagers, both positive and negative. Social media offers a positive space to build relationships and get social support, for example, it can increase self-esteem, reduce feelings of isolation (McInroy, 2020). On the other hand, social media also raises various problems, one of which is cyber-aggression behavior which is increasingly prevalent among teenagers. A study in the United States in 2018 found that 34% of respondents had engaged in acts such as sharing vulgar videos without permission,

spreading rumors, or sending threatening messages (Minsha et al., 2018). In Indonesia, a study in Padang found that 17.2% of adolescents aged 15-21 used social media to attack others, including friends, public figures, teachers, or group-based religion, ethnicity, and race (Mardianto et al., 2019). The phenomena described above are then called cyber-aggression.

Cyber-aggression is a behavior where individuals hurt others in cyberspace (Runions et al., 2017). Forms of cyber-aggression behavior range from sending images, messages, or videos containing defamation, insults, or threats through social media (Arifi & Widiasih, 2024). Cyber-aggression has negative impacts on both victims and perpetrators. Victims can feel vulnerable and isolated, experience shame, mood disorders, learning difficulties, loss of appetite, and sleep disorders (Sukmawati et al., 2020). Meanwhile, the impact on the perpetrators includes losing friends (Sukmawati et al., 2020), the possibility of being expelled from educational institutions (Afrianzi et al., 2018), and facing fear and shame (Syena et al., 2019).

Conformity plays an important role as a cause of cyber-aggression behavior, especially among adolescents who are often involved in online communication (Bleize et al., 2022). Conformity is a form of social environmental influence in which individuals change their attitudes and behavior to align with prevailing social norms (Lestari & Fauziah, 2016). Conformity puts pressure on group members to comply with group norms. Individuals tend to conform to larger groups because of fear of rejection from those around them (Lestari & Fauziah, 2016). Positive conformity among peers can encourage adolescents to develop, especially when they engage in activities that match their passions and interests (Putu & Tobing, 2023). Conversely, negative conformity has a negative impact because adolescents tend to be afraid of rejection, which can trigger feelings of loneliness or hostility (Aryani, 2019).

Previous research highlighted that social identification significantly influences conformity and cyber-aggression among adolescents on WhatsApp and emphasized the need for targeted investment to reduce cyber-aggression behavior (Bleize et al., 2021). Research shows that adolescents often conform to aggressive

behavior, mainly due to peer group norms and perceived pressure (Bleize et al., 2021). ChildFund International in Indonesia conducted a study in 2022 on bullying, sexual exploitation, and online violence against children in four provinces, including East Nusa Tenggara (NTT). The study involved 1,610 respondents from school and college students aged 13-24 years, and found that five out of ten children had been perpetrators of online bullying, while six out of ten children had been victims, with the risk of online violence in NTT relatively the same as big cities like Jakarta despite limited internet access in NTT. Therefore, this study aims to further explain the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior among adolescent social media users in Kupang City.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design to determine the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior ini adolescents who use social media in Kupang City. The subjects in this study amounted to 383 adolescents aged 12-22 years old who live in Kupang City and actively use social media. The independent variable in this study is conformity, while the dependent variable is cyber-aggression.

The instruments used in the study consisted of two scales. The conformity scale was developed by (Lusiana, 2017), consisting of 24 itmes with content validity confirmed through expert review and item validity coefficients ranging from 0.347 to 0.693, and demonstrated good internal consistency reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.851. The Cyber-Aggression Questionnaire for Adolescents scale by (Hamida et al., 2023), consisting 12 items and showed acceptable reliabillity with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.786 and construct validity supported by confirmatory factor analysis (CFI=0.974; TLI=0.931; RMSEA= 0.049).

The scale were distributed via google form through several social media such as WhatsApp and Instagram. The conformity scale has four answer choices, namely STS (Strongly Disagree), TS (Disagree), S (Agree), SS (Strongly Agree), and the cyber-

aggression scale has five answer choices, TP (Never), J (Rarely), KK (Sometimes), S (Often), SL (Always). Data were analyzed using Spearman correlation test in Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP) due to non-normal data distribution based on the Saphiro-Wilk test.

Result

Table 1.

Classifications of respondents by age

Category	Age	Total	Persentage
Early Adolescence	12-14	102	26,63%
Middle Adolescence	15-17	114	29,77%
Late Adolescence	18-22	167	43,60%
Total		360	100%

Based on the table above, the majority of respondents are in the late adolescent category at 43,60%, middle adolescents 29.77%, and early adolescents 26.63%.

Table 2.

Classification of respondents based on gender

Gender	Total	Persentage
Male	100	26,11%
Female	283	73,89%
Total	383	100%

Based on the table above, it is known that the majority of respondents are female, 266 people (73.89%), while males number 94 people (26.11%).

Table 3.

Clasification of respondents based on education level

Education	Total	Percentage
SMP	121	31,59%
SMA/SMK	103	26,89%
Kuliah	159	41,51%
Total	383	100%

Based on the table above, it is known that the largest number of respondents came from the college group as many as 159 people (41,51%), junior high school 121 people (31.59%), and senior high school/vocational school level as many as 103 people (26.89%).

Table 4.

Clasification of respondents based on duration of social media use

Duration	Total	Persentage
1-2 hours	96	25,07%
3-4 hours	139	35,29%
5 hours/more	148	38,64%
	383	100%

Based on the table above, it is known that as many as 148 respondents (38,64%) use social media for 5 hours or more every day, 139 respondents (35.29%) use social media for 3-4 hours per day, and 96 respondents (25.07%) access social media for 1-2 hours per day.

Table 5.

Hypothesis Test Results

Variables	Spearman's Rho	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Conformity Cyber-aggression	0,115*	0,025	383

Based on the table above, it is known that there is a significant positive relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior in adolescent social media users ($\varrho = 0.115$; $p = 0.025$). The significant value (p) smaller than 0.05 indicates that the relationship between the two variables is statistically significant. This means that the higher the conformity, the higher the cyber-aggression behavior.

Discussion

This study aims to determine the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior in adolescent social media users in Kupang City. Based on the results of the Spearman's Rho correlation analysis, a significant positive relationship was found between the level of conformity and cyber-aggression behavior with a correlation coefficient of 0.115 and a significant value of $p = 0.025$ ($p < 0.05$). This small correlation may be due to the complex and multifaceted nature of cyber-aggression, which is influenced by various other factors such as peer pressure, self-control,

anonymity, and psychosocial conditions that were not measured in this study (Yurifa et al., 2023).

The results of this study are in line with previous studies showing that conformity plays an important role in influencing aggressive behavior on social media. Research by Yurifa et al. (2023) explains that the moderate level of conformity reflects a phase in which adolescents are still very concerned about social acceptance, but still have the awareness to maintain their identity. This condition makes adolescents quite responsive to group norms, which can have an impact on their behavior.

Although moderate levels of conformity can help adolescents build harmonious social relationships and strengthen group identity, excessive conformity or in groups with negative norms can increase the risk of maladaptive behavior such as cyberbullying (Velensia et al., 2021). This can be explained through the theory of Baron and Byrne (2005), which states that individuals tend to adjust their attitudes and behaviors to conform to group norms in order to be accepted and avoid social rejection. Research also confirms that peer pressure on social media can reinforce negative behavior, including cyber-aggression, especially in adolescents who are seeking identity and acceptance(Arya, 2020).

Research conducted by Mardianto et al. (2019) in Padang reported that as many as 17.2% of adolescents aged 15-21 years had committed attacks on social media. This attack is a form of cyber-aggression which includes aggressive actions such as sending hurtful messages, spreading embarrassing videos or photos without permission, and pretending to be someone else for negative purposes.

Further analysis showed that males tend to show higher levels of cyber-aggression than females, both verbally and non-verbally. In addition, the middle adolescent group also showed a higher percentage of high cyber-aggression compared to other age groups, in line with the theory that middle adolescence is a phase of intense identity and social acceptance search (Chen, 2023). The duration of social media use also plays a role as a risk factor, where adolescents who use social

media for more than two hours per day are more likely to engage in cyber-aggression behavior (Mishna et al., 2018).

The main contribution of this study is to provide empirical evidence on the role of conformity in cyber-aggression behavior in adolescents, especially in Kupang City. This study adds insight into how peer pressure norms on social media can influence aggressive behavior. The results of this study imply the importance of educational programs that teach adolescents to develop critical attitudes towards peer pressure or negative social media norms.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study on the relationship between conformity and cyber-aggression behavior in adolescent social media users in Kupang City, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between the two variables. The results of the Spearman correlation test showed a correlation coefficient of 0.115 with a significance value of 0.025 (p <0.05), which indicates that the higher the level of conformity possessed by adolescents, the higher their tendency to engage in aggressive behavior on social media.

Suggestion

Adolescents are expected to be more aware of the influence of peer groups in social media activities and be able to think critically so that they are not easily carried away by social pressures that encourage negative behavior such as cyber-aggression. Parents need to guide and supervise their children's activities and provide examples of positive behavior. Educational institutions are advised to create an environment that supports students' social-emotional development. For further researchers, it is hoped that they will explore other factors that contribute to cyber-aggression, such as self-control, empathy, self-esteem, parenting patterns, and exposure to violence in the media.

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