

Social Environment and Internet Engagement as Predictors of Cyberbullying in Young People

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ABSTRACT

Social media has become an important part of young people's lives, not only as a means of communication and entertainment, but also as a space for intense social interaction. The high intensity of internet use brings both positive opportunities and risks, one of which is cyberbullying which has a serious impact on mental health, such as anxiety and depression. This study aims to analyze the effect of internet usage intensity and social environment on cyberbullying tendencies in college students. The research method used a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional design. Data were obtained through a five-point Likert scale online questionnaire filled out by 83 respondents from various generations. Descriptive analysis showed that aspects of social media use were quite high, while direct experience of cyberbullying was relatively lower. Social environment support was moderate, but awareness of cyberbullying prevention was high. The findings indicate that the intensity of internet use potentially increases the risk of cyberbullying, but social environmental factors and digital awareness can serve as important protections. This research provides practical contributions in the form of recommendations for digital literacy, strengthening family support, and social media monitoring to create a safer digital ecosystem for the younger generation.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital era, social media has become a vital space for young people to interact, express, and build social identities. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are not only a means of entertainment, but also the main medium in shaping opinions, social networks, and even daily lifestyles [1]. This high intensity of use shows that social media is no longer just a supplement, but an integral part of teenagers' lives. However, deep involvement also raises the risk of deviant behavior that has the potential to disrupt psychosocial development, as warned by Hartarto[2] This condition makes social media an ambivalent space, because on the one hand it provides positive opportunities, but on the other hand it poses new threats to the younger generation.

One form of risk that is increasingly surfacing is cyberbullying, which is the behavior of psychological violence, humiliation, or intimidation carried out digitally either directly to individuals or openly in online public spaces [3]. The impact is very serious because it can trigger anxiety, depression, and reduce the sense of security in interactions [4]. Data in Indonesia shows that almost half of students aged 12-15 years have been involved in this practice, both as victims and perpetrators, confirming how widespread the reach of cyberbullying is among adolescents [5]. This fact shows that digital space, although virtual, has real consequences that cannot be ignored. Therefore, understanding the factors that drive this behavior is an urgent need.

In this context, the two main factors that are thought to have a major influence on cyberbullying tendencies are internet use intensity and social environment [6]. The intensity of internet use describes how long and how often young people are connected to the digital world, the higher the chance of being exposed to negative interactions [7]. On the other hand, the social environment, both in the form of family and peers, plays an important role as a stronghold of protection or even as a trigger for deviant behavior. When social support is strong, adolescents tend to have resistance to online pressure; conversely, lack of support can increase vulnerability to cyberbullying [8]. Thus, the relationship between internet use intensity and social environment is a crucial point that needs further research.

A number of previous studies have shed important light on this issue. Studies on digital interactions have shown a significant influence on forms of cyber-based violence such as cyber dating abuse among Generation Z, indicating that high digital exposure has serious consequences. [9]. Other findings show that support from parents and peers helps adolescents develop adaptive responses to cyberviolence, which includes threats, harassment, and online dissemination of

harmful content [8]. In addition, research on cyberbullying emphasizes the importance of digital literacy education and social media etiquette as strategies to reduce negative impacts [10]. This set of findings reinforces the understanding that social factors and the intensity of digital interactions both play an important role in the phenomenon of cyber violence.

However, existing studies still leave a number of gaps that need to be addressed. Most studies have focused on aspects of family communication or specific cases such as cyber dating abuse, without simultaneously examining the influence of the wider social environment and the intensity of internet use on cyberbullying. In addition, previous research tends to focus on one form of digital platform, whereas each platform has different interaction dynamics and risks. The lack of integration between these two variables in one research model results in a fragmented understanding of the factors that cause cyberbullying, which requires a more comprehensive study.

Based on this gap, this study seeks to present a more complete approach by integrating the influence of social environment and internet usage intensity together to understand cyberbullying behavior in the younger generation. This approach is a novelty, as there are rarely studies that place the two variables in one comprehensive analytical framework. Thus, this study is expected to provide a new perspective on how external factors (social environment) and digital behavioral factors (intensity of internet use) interact with each other in influencing the risk of young people's involvement in cyberbullying.

The main objective of this study is to identify the extent to which the intensity of internet use affects the tendency of cyberbullying, and to analyze the role of the social environment in strengthening or weakening this influence. In addition to making theoretical contributions, the research findings are also expected to have practical impacts, such as being the basis for digital literacy programs, social media ethics campaigns, and family and school intervention strategies in creating a healthy digital ecosystem. In this way, the research is not only relevant at the academic level, but also directly beneficial for efforts to prevent and control cyberbullying in society.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative design with a cross-sectional approach, where data collection is carried out at one specific time to determine the effect of social environment and intensity of internet use on cyberbullying in the younger generation [11]. This design was chosen because it is able to provide an overview of the relationship between variables in a relatively short time and in accordance with the research objectives. The study population was young people who actively use social media, while the sample was determined through a survey technique by distributing questionnaires online. From this process, 83 respondents were obtained, all of whom met the criteria of being active social media users so that they were considered representative to be analyzed in the context of this study.

Research Instruments

The research instrument was a questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). This scale was chosen because it is one of the psychometric scales commonly used in measuring respondents' perceptions and attitudes. The instrument was organized in the form of a grid with five main aspects, namely: (1) Aspects of Social Media Use (APMD), (2) Aspects of Social Environment (ALS), (3) Experience of Cyber Violence (APKS), (4) Actions and Responses to Cyber Violence (TRTKS), and (5) Awareness and Attitudes towards Cyber Violence (KSTKS). Each aspect consists of 3-4 statement items adapted from previous research (Alotaibi & Mukred, 2023).

Table 1
The Significance of The Relationship in The Model

Scale		Category
1.00	1.80	Strongly Disagree
1.81	2.60	Disagree
2.61	3.40	Neutral
3.41	4.20	Agree
4.21	5.00	Strongly Agree

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted in two main stages. First, descriptive analysis was used to describe the distribution of respondents' answers, including the mean, median, mode, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum ranges. This analysis is useful for providing an overview of respondents' perceptions of each variable studied. Second, inferential analysis was conducted using Jamovi software to test the effect of the independent variables, namely social environment and intensity of internet use, on the dependent variable, namely cyberbullying. The use of Jamovi was chosen because this tool provides a graphical interface that makes it easier for researchers to conduct quantitative analysis more efficiently and accurately.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The data for this study was obtained through the distribution of online questionnaires completed by 83 student respondents from various batches. Demographic information collected included gender, age, semester of study, and class. These characteristics are important to provide an overview of the profile of research participants, so that it can be the basis for further interpretation of the main findings obtained. The following presents the results of the demographic analysis of respondents.

Table 2
The Significance of The Relationship in The Model

	Characteristics	N (83)	Percentage(%)
Gender	Male	22	26.51%
	Female	61	73.49%
Age	17 Years	1	1.20%
	18 Years	14	16.87%
	19 Years	36	43.37%
	20 Years	16	19.28%
	21 Years	11	13.25%
	22 Years	4	4.28%
	24 Years	1	1.20%
Semester	I	13	15.48%
	III	52	63.10%
	IV	1	1.19%
	V	9	10.71%
	VII	6	7.14%
	Others	2	2.38%
Batch	2018	1	1.20%
	2020	1	1.20%
	2021	7	8.43%
	2022	10	12.05%
	2023	53	63.86%
	2024	11	13.25%

The demographic analysis results show that the majority of respondents are female (73.49%), while only 26.51% are male. In terms of age, most respondents are in the age range of 18-20 years (79.52%), which is a productive age category and actively uses social media. Based on semester, most respondents came from semester III (63.10%), followed by semester I (15.48%), which shows that the majority of respondents are still in the early phase of college. When viewed from the class, the most respondents came from the class of 2023 (63.86%), followed by the class of 2024 (13.25%). This finding illustrates that the research participants are dominated by new and beginning students, who usually use social media more intensely in academic and social activities. Overall, the characteristics of these respondents show the profile of a digitally active young generation, which is in accordance with the research focus on the influence of social environment and intensity of internet use on cyberbullying.

Descriptive Analysis of Variables

Descriptive analysis was carried out to provide an overview of respondents' perceptions of the research variables. Each variable is measured through several statements arranged using a Likert scale of 1-5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The analysis results are presented in the form of mean, median, mode, minimum, and maximum values to describe the tendency of respondents' answers to each indicator. The following presents the results of descriptive analysis of research variables.

Table 3
The Significance of The Relationship in The Model

Section	Note	Mean	Median	Modus	Min	Max
Aspects of Social Media Usage	Social media has a huge impact on my daily life.	3.73	4	4.00	1	5
	I spend a lot of time on social media every day	3.60	4	4.00	1	5
	I often see or experience negative comments on social media	2.70	3	3.00	1	5
	I feel that content on social media often contains hate speech or insults.	3.22	3	3.00	1	5
Aspects of Social Environment	My social environment, such as family and friends, has a positive view of social media use.	3.30	3	3.00	1	5
	My friends influence the way I interact on social media.	3.12	3	3.00	1	5
	I feel supported by my social environment when I experience problems on social media.	3.35	3	3.00	1	5
	My social environment often warns me about the negative impacts of social media.	3.48	4	4.00	1	5
Experience of Cyber Violence	I have experienced cyberbullying on social media.	3.30	3	3.00	1	5
	I feel that cyberbullying is common among social media users.	3.12	3	3.00	1	5
	Cyberbullying on social media affects my mental health.	3.35	3	3.00	1	5
	I feel cyberbullying is more common among the younger generation.	3.48	4	4.00	1	5
Aspects of Actions and Responses to Cyber Violence	I feel comfortable talking about my experience of cyberbullying with family or friends.	2.12	2	1.00	1	5
	I feel that social media platforms are responsible for addressing cyberbullying cases.	3.37	4	4.00	1	5
	I am more cautious about sharing personal information on social media to prevent cyberbullying.	2.82	3	2.00	11	5

Section	Note	Mean	Median	Modus	Min	Max
	I feel that social media use needs to be monitored to reduce cyber violence.	3.57	4	4.00	1	5
Awareness and Attitude towards Cyber violence	I agree that education on social media ethics and safety is important to reduce cyber violence.	3.02	3	3.00	1	5
	I feel that awareness of the impact of cyber violence needs to be raised among the younger generation.	3.12	3	3.00	1	5
	I believe cyber violence can be reduced through the efforts of social media platforms and family supervision.	3.84	4	5.00	1	5

The analysis showed that respondents rated social media as having considerable influence in their daily lives, with a mean of 3.73, median of 4, and mode of 4. Respondents also claimed to spend a lot of time on social media every day (mean 3.60). However, the experience of seeing negative comments (mean 2.70) and hate speech content (mean 3.22) is relatively lower than other indicators. This indicates that although social media is an important part of daily life, respondents do not always feel directly exposed to negative content.

The results of the analysis of the social environment aspect show that the average respondent's answer is in the moderate category (mean ranges from 3.12-3.48). The social environment, such as family and friends, is considered to have a positive view of social media use (mean 3.30) and often warns about its negative impact (mean 3.48). Support from the social environment when facing problems on social media is also quite pronounced (mean 3.35). This finding shows that the role of the social environment is still quite influential in shaping respondents' interaction patterns on social media.

On the cyberbullying experience variable, respondents gave answers with a mean ranging from 3.12-3.48. They claimed to have experienced cyberbullying directly (mean 3.30) and considered that cyberbullying is quite common among social media users (mean 3.12). In addition, the impact of cyberbullying on mental health was also perceived (mean 3.35), with the perception that this phenomenon is more common among the younger generation (mean 3.48). These results confirm that while not all respondents have experienced it first-hand, awareness of its prevalence and impact is high.

This variable showed more varied results. Respondents were less comfortable talking about cyberbullying experiences with family or friends (mean 2.12), suggesting barriers to communication regarding personal experiences. However, there was a good level of awareness of the responsibility of social media platforms in handling cyberbullying cases (mean 3.37) and the importance of monitoring social media use (mean 3.57). The attitude of caution in sharing personal information is at a moderate level (mean 2.82). Thus, although the personal response to cyberbullying is not optimal, there is recognition of the important role of external parties in its prevention.

The results of the analysis on this variable show a fairly high level of awareness. Respondents rated the importance of education on social media ethics and safety (mean 3.02) and the need to raise awareness among the younger generation (mean 3.12). The statement with the highest mean score on this variable was the belief that cyberbullying can be reduced through the role of social media platforms and family supervision (mean 3.84). This shows that although respondents still face obstacles in the personal response aspect, the collective awareness towards cyberbullying prevention and control efforts is relatively strong.

Discussion

The results showed that respondents considered social media to have a major influence in their daily lives, with a relatively high average usage. This finding is in line with Fransiska and Purnama [12], [13] who assert that the higher the intensity of social media use, the greater the likelihood of individuals being exposed to negative content such as demeaning comments or hate speech. This is also in line with research by Gunawan [14] which states that social media plays a dual role as a means of building relationships as well as a source of psychological distress. In addition, Yolanda

and Marhamah [15], [16] added that intense involvement in digital activities without adequate digital literacy can increase the risk of risky behavior, including cyberbullying.

Analysis of the social environment aspect showed that respondents felt supported by family and peers in facing challenges on social media. This result strengthens the findings of Stevenson, Wuryanningsih, and Nasution [17], [18], [19], which show that social support serves as a protective factor in reducing the psychological impact of cyberbullying. Correspondingly, Noret and Yildiz's [20], [21] research reinforces the finding that adolescents who have close relationships with family and friends are better able to deal with social pressure in cyberspace than those who do not receive support. In addition, Yigit [22] explained that social support not only helps in handling cyberbullying cases, but also prevents the behavior from developing further.

In the cyberbullying experience variable, respondents claimed to have experienced or realized cyberbullying, either directly or through observations in their environment. This finding is in line with Efaningrum's research [23] which reported that the prevalence of cyberbullying among students is quite high, with a significant impact on psychological well-being. Gohal [24] also emphasized that cyberbullying has the same harmful effects as traditional bullying, and tends to be even more difficult to overcome because it occurs in an open virtual space. Furthermore, research by Azfa [25] showed that the experience of being a victim of cyberbullying is closely related to increased levels of depression, anxiety, and insecurity in adolescents.

The results show that respondents are still uncomfortable talking about their cyberbullying experiences with family or friends, even though they realize the important role of social media platforms in dealing with such cases. This is consistent with the findings of Muhammed [26], who stated that victims of cyberbullying often choose to remain silent due to shame or fear of stigma. However, the results of this study also show hope in external factors, as emphasized by Craig [27], who found that digital platform interventions have a major role in reducing the number of cyberbullying cases. Zidova's research [28] adds that parental supervision efforts, if done wisely, can increase children's courage to report negative experiences they have online.

The last variable shows that respondents have a fairly high level of awareness of the importance of digital ethics education and cyberbullying prevention. This result is in line with the findings of [29], [30], which emphasize that digital literacy is a key factor in reducing the risk of engaging in harmful behavior online. This emphasizes the importance of systematic digital ethics education in schools in reducing the intensity of cyberbullying behavior and confirms that the collective awareness of the younger generation, coupled with family supervision, is a strategic step to create a healthier and safer digital ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that social media plays a major role in the lives of young people with high intensity of use, increasing the risk of exposure to negative content and the potential for cyberbullying; however, the social environment in the form of family and peer support proved to be an important protective factor that can help reduce the psychological impact of cyberbullying, while respondents' awareness of the importance of digital ethics and the role of social media platforms in prevention was also quite high; These findings suggest that the intensity of internet use is indeed associated with the risk of cyberbullying, but social environmental factors and digital awareness have a significant contribution in mitigating its impact, so interventions in the form of digital literacy, family involvement, and regulation of social media platforms are needed to create a healthier and safer digital ecosystem for the younger generation.

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