

The Role of Government in Combating Cyberbullying: Public Policy Challenges in the Digital Age

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines a phenomenon that has become increasingly common in recent times—digital-based bullying, or cyberbullying, which frequently occurs on social media platforms. The purpose of this study is to identify the various forms of cyberbullying, explore its underlying causes, and evaluate its impacts on victims—particularly children and adolescents. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through observations of social media activities, as well as reviews of academic journals, media reports, and government policy documents. The findings indicate several prevalent forms of cyberbullying, including insults, hoax dissemination, verbal harassment, physical appearance-related comments (body shaming), and doxing. The main contributing factors to these behaviors include the anonymity provided by the digital world, low understanding of digital ethics and literacy, a lack of empathy, peer group influence, and a history of being victims of bullying. The impacts of cyberbullying are quite serious, manifesting in mental health issues, excessive anxiety, heightened insecurity, decreased motivation for life, and lower academic performance. Therefore, addressing this issue requires collaborative efforts among various parties—families, educational institutions, communities, social media providers, and government agencies. Preventive measures can be implemented through digital ethics education and the enhancement of social literacy to create a healthier and safer digital environment for children and adolescents.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the digital generation has brought rapid changes in various aspects of life, especially in social interactions. With the advent of social media, digital platforms, and various online communication applications, the world has become increasingly connected without geographical boundaries. However, this ease of access and interaction has had negative impacts, one of which is online bullying or cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying using digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming systems, and cell phones.

Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying has more complex characteristics and is difficult to detect because it is hidden and can occur anytime and anywhere, without any spatial or temporal boundaries. According to a report published by (Kompasiana, 2025) around 48 percent of children and adolescents in Indonesia have been victims of cyberbullying, indicating that this phenomenon has become a serious threat to the current virtual generation. This situation is influenced by a lack of supervision from parents and the community, so that victims often feel isolated and find it difficult to get help.

The Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (KOMINFO) of the Republic of Indonesia also pays special attention to this issue. On several occasions, the Minister of Communication and Information Technology has expressed his appreciation for efforts to educate the public about internet ethics through various software and media, including educational movies, which aim to raise awareness among the public, especially children and teenagers, to use technology wisely and avoid behavior that harms others.

Scientific research also shows the significant impact of cyberbullying on the psychological condition of victims. A study by (Utami, A. S. F., & Baiti, 2018) found a coefficient of determination (R^2) value of zero.240 or 24%, which means that social media use explains about 24% of the variability in cyberbullying behavior among teenagers, with the remaining 76% influenced by other factors outside the study.

The data collected by (Maya, 2015) from six high school and vocational school students in Malang aged between 15 and 17 years old shows that one of the six informants was a perpetrator of cyberbullying who had a Facebook account created by his older sibling by manipulating his age. This informant saw bullying posts from his older sibling and did the same thing, such as writing abusive comments, spreading rumors, making threats, and so on.

Many studies have discussed the relationship between social media use and cyberbullying, but the majority only look at it from a technological perspective. In fact, society overlooks the important role of social supervision especially from parents and the surrounding environment as the key to preventing and reducing cyberbullying.

In addition, the public is still unsure about the effectiveness of the government's aggressive digital education programs, such as the digital ethics campaign from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (KOMINFO), because not many have tested their actual impact. Therefore, this study attempts to take a step forward. Researchers will combine social supervision and digital education factors into the analysis to gain a more comprehensive understanding of why cyberbullying occurs among adolescents.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to describe and analyze the phenomenon of cyberbullying as a new form of bullying that has developed in the digital age. This approach was chosen to examine social behavior, meaning, and dynamics that occur in human interactions in the digital space, which cannot be measured solely through numbers and statistics.

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the forms of cyberbullying and the social impact and response to this issue. This study does not focus on testing hypotheses, but rather seeks to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the perpetrators or victims who are directly involved.

The research was conducted online by analyzing secondary data from online media reports and relevant scientific journals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cyberbullying is bullying that occurs in the digital world, whether through social media, chat applications, or other digital platforms, and can have a serious impact on the psychological condition of the victim. Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, 2021 (from the Indonesian digital literacy campaign)

The development of digital technology and social media has made it easier for everyone to communicate and show off, but on the other hand, it has also become a new medium for deviant behavior such as cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is defined as aggressive and repeated actions carried out through electronic media with the aim of psychologically harming another individual (Willard, 2007).

In the Indonesian context, these forms often occur on popular platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X (Twitter), and WhatsApp. Utami, A. S. F., & Baiti (2018) state that phenomena such as body shaming, doxing (disclosure of personal data), and verbal abuse are often carried out openly on social media, especially against teenage girls. This is reinforced by Maya (2015) findings, which indicate that students are the most vulnerable group because their emotional maturity is not yet stable and is greatly influenced by online social interactions.

Cyberbullying does not occur in isolation, but is influenced by many interrelated factors. Based on data analysis and social psychology theory, some of the main causes of cyberbullying include:

Anonymity in the Digital

World One characteristic of the internet is the ability of users to hide their identities, which makes perpetrators feel safe from consequences. Suler (2004) Disinhibition Effect theory explains that individuals tend to lose control of ethical behavior when they feel invisible, thus encouraging deviant behavior such as:

1. Lack of responsibility for online behavior; not feeling guilty about negative comments or actions
2. Courage to express negative things; more daring to use harsh language, attack, or mock others online

Low Digital Literacy

Social Empathy Teenagers who lack an understanding of digital ethics tend to be unaware that their actions can have serious consequences for others. Siroj, M., & Zulfa (2024) emphasize that perpetrators of cyberbullying often do not understand the psychological consequences of their actions due to a lack of empathy developed through direct social interaction, including:

1. Lack of understanding of digital ethics, not knowing the boundaries of politeness, privacy, and law in the virtual world.
2. Lack of awareness of the impact of online actions, not realizing that comments or posts can hurt others.

Environmental Influence

Many perpetrators of cyberbullying engage in such behavior due to peer pressure or as a form of group solidarity. This is consistent with social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), which states that deviant behavior can be learned through observation and imitation of others, such as:

1. Modeling or imitation of negative behavior imitating aggressive behavior observed from friends, influencers, or online communities.
2. Venting negative emotions through cyberspace using the internet as a place to vent anger, disappointment, or frustration.

Some cyberbullies are victims of bullying in the real world who then channel their emotions into the digital space. This is also explained in the frustration-aggression theory, which states that unresolved frustration can result in aggressive behavior.

Research from Salsabila Aini (2023) also found that low parental supervision of internet use and dependence on social media increase the risk of adolescents becoming involved in cyberbullying, both as perpetrators and victims.

The effects of cyberbullying are complex and can affect various aspects of the victim's life. Some of the most dominant effects found in this study include:

Psychological Impact

Victims of cyberbullying exhibit symptoms of anxiety, stress, depression, and even suicidal tendencies. A study by Siroj, M., & Zulfa (2024) found that adolescent victims experience sleep disorders, loss of interest in learning, and a significant decline in self-esteem. Cyberbullying also triggers prolonged trauma because digital traces are difficult to erase and continue to haunt victims.

Social and Academic Impact

Victims tend to withdraw from their social environment and show a decline in academic performance. A school environment that does not support victims often exacerbates their mental condition.

Physical Impact

Although cyberbullying occurs online, some victims show physical effects such as headaches, loss of appetite, and psychosomatic symptoms.

According to data from Kompasiana (2025), the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology noted that 48% of children and adolescents in Indonesia have been victims of cyberbullying, but many of them do not report it because they are afraid, ashamed, or do not know where to seek help.

The Role of Family, School, and Community in Prevention and Handling

The prevention of cyberbullying must involve all elements of the social environment that influence the development of children and adolescents, namely family, school, and community.

1. The Role of Parents

Parents play a crucial role as the first mentors in shaping a child's character. News (2024) states that open communication between parents and children is essential for detecting suspicious behavior early on. Digital education and monitoring children's activities on social media should be done wisely, not repressively.

2. The Role of Schools

Schools can integrate digital ethics and social media literacy into the curriculum, as well as provide responsive counseling services. The Kependik (2023) shows that schools that are active in anti-bullying education have lower rates of cyberbullying.

3. The Role of Society

Social campaigns, awareness programs, and healthy digital communities also contribute to fostering a positive internet culture. Social media platforms also need to be more stringent in taking action against accounts that violate anti-bullying policies.

The Indonesian government has taken various measures to prevent cyberbullying, both through regulation and public education:

1. National Digital Literacy Campaign

Programs such as Siberkreasi and Kominfo Digital Literacy aim to increase public understanding of internet ethics.

2. Production of Educational Media

As reported by News (2024), the government, through Kominfo, supports the production of educational films on the theme of cyberbullying as a medium for raising awareness of the dangers of digital violence.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research and discussions that have been conducted, it can be concluded that cyberbullying is a form of psychological violence that is increasingly worrying in the digital age, especially among teenagers who actively use social media. Common forms of cyberbullying include insults, spreading false information, harassment, and exclusion in the digital space.

Factors that contribute to cyberbullying include: anonymity in the virtual world, low digital literacy, lack of empathy, social environmental influences, and the perpetrator's personal experience of having been a victim. The impact of this behavior is very complex, both psychologically and socially, as well as academically, and has the potential to cause long-term trauma.

Cyberbullying is not just an individual problem, but a social threat that must be addressed collectively, given its impact on the mental health of the younger generation and social resilience in the virtual world.

Researchers suggest that cyberbullying is not only a technical issue, but also a matter of human character and empathy. The best solution, according to researchers, is collaboration between technology, education, families, and legal policy on social media.

Maintain digital ethics: "Type comments wisely and responsibly when interacting online."
Build open communication with parents: "Be a safe place for children to talk about and ask questions about their daily routines."

Provide counseling services for schools: "Schools must have guidance counselors or forums where students can ask questions about their feelings." For social media platforms, there must be more "transparency and accountability; clearly display anti-bullying policies that are easily accessible to all users."

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