

The correlation between parental communication pattern, self-esteem, and moral disengagement with cyberbullying behavior in early adolescents: A cross-sectional study

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Cyberbullying has become a new case in young millennials that can lead to being a serious problem if it is not faced properly. Many cases cannot be resolved because the victims did not tell the truth clearly to their parents and teachers. It may cause a lack of self-esteem among the students and also make the perpetrator become morally disengaged. The purpose of this study was to identify the correlation between parental communication patterns, moral disengagement, and self-esteem with cyberbullying behavior in junior high school.

Methods: A cross-sectional study was performed with 362 junior high school students in Indonesia using purposive sampling. Variables in this study were moral disengagement, self-esteem and parental communication patterns with cyberbullying behavior. The data were collected with the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, the cyberbullying behavior scale, the moral disengagement scale and the family communication pattern scale. Bivariate analysis with Chi-square was used to analyze the data.

Results: This study found out that there were 223 students, 61.6% were female, and 43.6% were aged 14 years. There were 187 students (51.7%) who had mild cyberbullying behavior. The study revealed that there were significant correlations among cyberbullying behavior with moral disengagement ($p = 0.005$), self-esteem ($p = 0.008$), and parental communication pattern ($p = 0.019$).

Conclusions: Parental communication, moral disengagement and self-esteem have a correlation with cyberbullying behavior. It was expected that the schools need to implement a training to improve social skills in junior high school students.

Keywords: cyberbullying; moral disengagement; parental communication pattern; self-esteem

Introduction

The development of communication and information technology also has great impact on the development of today's generation, which we know as millennials society (society 5.0 era). Convenience in almost all daily activities can now be accessed very easily everywhere and any time. But, besides those great impacts, we cannot be blind to one of the negative impacts which be experienced by our young generation, that is cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying is a type of bullying which uses digital technologies and take place on social media, messaging

platforms, gaming platforms or websites (Febriana and Fajrianti, 2019). Practically, it has many negative impacts on victims such as depression low self-esteem, difficulty concentrating in class, anxiety and suicide (Talei and Ardani, 2009; Patchin and Hinduja, 2012; Rahayu, 2012). Other studies have found that bullying causes stress, emotional, social anxiety, and risk of drug use (Sartana and Afriyeni, 2017). Another study revealed that students who experienced bullying in cyberspace were twice as likely to experience adverse health effects, such as headaches and stomachache, than those who did

not experience bullying (Nursalam et al., 2019). In addition, another study stated that only one out of three adolescents who had been victims of cyberbullying shared their experiences with their parents, teachers and friends (Mendez-Baldwin et al., 2015). It shown that many cases are still uncovered and victims did not receive proper intervention to recover from the situation.

The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) stated child victims of cybercrime in Indonesia reached 679 cases and are growing very rapidly (KPAI, 2019). The prevalence among junior high school students was around 48.2% (Safaria, 2016). One factor that makes a child becomes of cyberbullying perpetrator is a grudge against the victim (Pandie and Weismann, 2016). There are several factors influencing the motives of cyberbullying behavior, namely family factors, failure to control oneself, and environmental factors. The poor quality of communication between parents and adolescents can cause adolescent behavior deviations (Nursalam et al., 2019). Other research also stated that through positive communication and interaction within the family, parents and adolescents can strengthen interpersonal relationships, so that adolescents would not be easily influenced by negative invitations, including becoming bullies, by their friends (Firdanianty, Lubis, et al., 2016).

Based on the preliminary survey in four junior high schools in four different districts of Jambi City, Indonesia, it was found that junior high school students tend not to open up with their parents if they become victims of bullying in social media. Students are also reluctant to report the incident to their teachers and tell their close friends about problems instead. When it comes to asking about committing cyberbullying, they seemed to be reluctant to tell the truth. They said that they tend to be victims of bullying in social media. Considering the lack of research related to cyberbullying in Indonesia, this study aimed to identify the correlation among parental communication patterns, moral disengagement, and self-esteem with cyberbullying behavior in junior high schools in Jambi City.

Materials and Methods

Study Design

This was a quantitative study with a cross sectional design which aimed at determining the tendency of the early adolescents with cyberbullying behavior in junior high schools. The study sample was selected by purposive sampling technique. The study location was chosen by multistage random sampling. The study was carried out in two months between October and November, 2020. The independent variables were parental communication patterns, moral disengagement, and self-esteem, while the dependent variable was cyberbullying behavior.

Respondents

The population of this study was all students from four selected junior high schools in Jambi City, with 6,541 students in total. The sample size was 362 students selected by purposive sampling methods and calculated using Lemeshow formula (Sopiyudi Dahlan, 2016). The samples were divided into four junior high schools using proportional sampling technique. The inclusion criteria were students registered as first, second and third year in selected public junior high schools in four districts (Kota Baru District, represented by Public Junior High School 14; Telanaipura District, Public Junior High School 17; East Jambi District, Public Junior High School 9, and Paal Merah District, Public Junior High School 4). The students must be able to communicate and willing to participate. The students will be excluded if they did not attend school during the data collection process.

Instrument

Cyberbullying Behavior Questionnaire

The data were collected using Cyberbullying Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ), which consists of 20 items covering a wide range of work-related cyberbullying behaviors (Jonsson, Muhonen and Backstrom, 2017). The participants scored the items on a four-point scale, 1 = never, 2 = monthly, 3 = weekly, 4 = daily. The scale has an internal consistency with a coefficient alpha of 0.638 to 0.879 (Husna, Tentama and Purwadi, 2020).

Table 1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents (N = 362)

Variables	n	%
Genders		
Male	139	38.4
Female	223	61.6
Age (years)		
11	8	2.2
12	77	21.3
13	101	27.9
14	158	43.6
15	17	4.7
16	1	3
Cyberbullying information		
Social media	252	69.6
Friends	60	16.57
Teacher	15	4.1
Parents	10	2.76
Not know	25	6.9
Parents' education levels		
Primary school	29	8.0
Junior high school	86	23.75
Senior high School	197	54.1
Bachelor high school	50	13.8
Family Income		
≥ Rp 1.750.000,-	150	41.4
≤ Rp 1.750.000,-	212	58.5

Table 2 Relationship between parental communication pattern, self-esteem, and moral disengagement with cyberbullying behavior (N = 362)

Variable	Cyberbullying behavior				Total		p-value
	Mild		Strong		n	%	
	n	%	n	%			
Parental Communication							
Bad	86	46	103	58.9	189	52.2	0.019
Good	101	54	72	41.1	173	47.8	
Self-Esteem							
Low	86	46	101	57.7	187	51.7	0.008
High	101	54	74	42.3	175	48.3	
Moral Disengagement							
Mild	110	58.8	76	43.4	186	51.4	0.005
Strong	77	41.2	59	56.6	176	48.6	
TOTAL	187	100	175	100	362	100	

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was developed by Rosenberg in 1965. It consists of 10 items that refer to self-respect and self-acceptance rated on a four-point Likert-scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 4 (totally agree). Five items were worded positively (i.e., 1, 3, 4, 7, and 10) and five items negatively (i.e., 2, 5, 6, 8, and 9) (Martin-Albo, Nunez and Navarro, 2007). The scale has an internal consistency with a coefficient alpha of 0.40 to 0.97 (Tinakon and Nahathai, 2012).

Moral Disengagement Scale

Moral disengagement constructs include vilifying victims through attribution of blame, reinterpreting conduct or moral justification, hiding personal causal responsibility, and misrepresenting the consequences of individual action (Bussey, Fitzpatrick and Raman, 2015). The participants in this study were asked how much they agreed, starting from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3= agree, 4 =strongly agree). The scale of internal consistency found a coefficient alpha of 0.80 to 0.87 (Whang and Yang, 2010).

Family communication pattern

The family communication pattern consisted of 28-item Likert scale (Gupta, 2019). This study used the four-point scale, namely 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3= agree; 4 = strongly agree. The scale of internal consistency had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.869.

The validity and reliability of the test were carried out at a public junior high school in Jambi City on August 8, 2020, with the total of 67 question items. The validity value with the RSES was 0.87. The CBQ was on a scale of 0.98, the moral disengagement scale was at 0.87, and the parental communication pattern scale was at 0.85. The reliability test of the overall instruments, cyberbullying behavior, self-esteem, moral disengagements and family communication pattern, were 0.88, 0.86, 0.83, and 0.81, respectively.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using univariate analysis to describe the demographic characteristics, cyberbullying

behavior and all independent variables (i.e., self-esteem, moral disengagement and parental communication pattern). The normality data was tested by Kolmogorov Smirnov test for large sample. It was found that the p-value were under 0.05 for all variables, which means the data were not normal (Sopiyudi Dahlan, 2016). The data used median to categorize all variables. The bivariate correlation used Chi-square test to analyze independent and dependent variables. The correlation coefficients varied from -1 to +1. This study indicates a perfectly positive linear relationship. For a positive coefficient, as one variable increases, the other also increases. The analysis found strong relationship between independent and dependent variables in which $\alpha = 0.05$ was used for analysis. The data analysis was processed in Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS file version 1.0.0-51). The data analysis included data screening and assumption of primary data analysis.

Table 3 The types of cyberbullying behaviors in early adolescence (N = 362)

Type of cyberbullying	n	%
Flaming		
Low (6-9)	194	53.6
High (10-24)	168	46.4
Harassment		
Low (2)	215	59.4
High (3-8)	147	40.6
Denigration (put downs)		
Low (3-4)	245	67.7
High (5-12)	117	32.3
Cyber-stalking		
Low (2)	302	83.4
High (3-8)	60	16.6
Impersonation		
Low (1)	312	86.2
High (2-5)	50	13.8
Outing		
Low (2)	198	54.7
High(3-10)	164	45.3
Exclusion		
Low (1)	239	66.0
High (2-5)	123	34.0
Cyber-threat		
Low (3)	291	80.6
High (4-15)	71	19.4
Anonymity		
Low (3)	290	80.1
High (4-15)	72	19.9

Ethical Consideration

This research has got ethical approval with number: LB.02.06/2/123/2020. The ethical review was tested for all aspects in this research, including scope of study, methodology and the questionnaire. The researchers applied ethics principles of anonymity / confidentiality, beneficence and non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice. An explanation of the background and aim of the study, as well as informed consent, were contained together with the instrument.

Results

The total of 362 early adolescents registered in four junior high schools in Jambi City based on several sub-districts were recruited. The characteristics of early adolescents showed that the majority 223 (61.60%) were female, and almost a half, 158, were aged 14 years old (43.60%; see [Table 1](#)).

[Table 2](#) shows that parental communication pattern, self-esteem, and moral disengagement have significant correlation with cyberbullying behavior of students at the four public junior high schools. All p-value were below 0.05; parental communication ($p = 0.019$); self-esteem ($p = 0.008$); and moral disengagement ($p = 0.005$).

[Table 3](#) shows that all cyberbullying types were in low categories, but high categories in few variables nearly reached a half, namely flaming ($n = 168$; 46.4%), outing ($n = 164$; 45.3%), and harassment ($n = 147$; 40.6%).

Discussions

The majority of respondents were female and almost a half of 158 were at the age of 14 years old. Boys and girls both participate in cyberbullying, although for different reasons. They also use different methods. Girls tend to use a more passive approach, such as spreading rumors and reputation and relationship damage. Boys tend to use direct and cyber-threats intended to revenge. In addition, another view says that, in carrying out their actions, women are more often the target of cyberbullying, while men tend to be the main perpetrators of violence in cyberspace (Pandie and Weismann, [2016](#)).

This study found there were associations between self-esteem, parental communication pattern, and moral disengagement with cyberbullying behavior. Several factors that could influence the variables were friends, parents and school environment, parents' educational levels, and parents' salary (Aini, [2018](#)).

Self-esteem was a component of self-concept factors that can influence self-concept such as pressure from outside from good peers (Yuliayana and Wichaikull, [2014](#)). A peer group was a group of friends who had strong emotional ties and students who could be accepted, socialized, exchanged ideas, and experiences in providing the change and the development of social life. The experience of being a victim can lower person's self-

esteem, or people with low self-esteem are more likely to be targeted as victims.

The quality of communication between parents and adolescents should be improved so the adolescents could get guidance and education to avoid cyberbullying. The poor quality of communications between parents and adolescents can cause adolescent behavior deviations (Gunawan, [2013](#)). Other research stated communication between parents and adolescents that is less than optimal will cause adolescents to be easily influenced by deviant behavior (Luk et al. [2010](#)). Positive communication and interaction within family, parents and adolescents can strengthen interpersonal relationships, so adolescents will not be easily influenced by invitations to do negative activities from their friends (Firdianity, Djua et al., [2016](#)).

Reframing behavior is accomplished through moral justifications, euphemistic labelling, and advantageous comparisons, which enable the individual to view their immoral behavior as ultimately moral or benign. Individuals could also morally disengage by changing their perceptions of their own personal responsibility for the behavior by displacing or diffusing responsibilities to others. Moral disengagement mechanisms blame the target for their suffering, or dehumanize the target, act to reframe the individual's perceptions about the target's role for the behavior. Finally, the harmful outcomes of the immoral behavior can be minimized or viewed as providing benefits for the victim (Bandura, [2002](#)). Cyber-communication may promote hostile attributions of intent, and triggering attributions of blame (Runions, [2013](#)). Ambiguous communications, that are common on social media, may provoke self-justifications of cyber-aggression as retaliatory responses, with responsibility for the perceived provocation attributed to the other person; one's own behavior is perceived as merely a reaction. These processes may be particularly pertinent to aggressive-victims (i.e., bully-victims), whose responses to perceived provocation fuel cycles of bullying (Salmivalli and Nieminen, [2001](#)).

This study also found most adolescents have mild moral disengagement, self-esteem and cyberbullying behavior. This study was in line with Jiang et al. ([2021](#)), that stated adolescents whose information was on the topic of self-acceptance and competence, or having good self-esteem, could judge themselves better than most people. According to other research, the sources related to bullying and self-esteem have consistently found that victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims (Patchin and Hinduja, [2012](#)). Among people with different levels of self-esteem, victims of bullying tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims.

This study has several limitations. It only identified the correlation between independent and dependent variables with cross-sectional approach that cannot show causality. This study also did not examine any intervention to increase self-esteem, improve family

communication, address moral disengagement, or prevent cyberbullying behavior. Therefore, further study is needed to address these aspects.

Conclusions

There is a correlation between self-esteem, moral disengagement, parental communication pattern and cyberbullying behavior in early adolescence in junior high school. Further research need to address factors related to moral disengagement between genders, improvement by social group about self-esteem, and disengagement in cyberbullying behavior.

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