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The Phenomenon of Cyberbullying Among Teenagers: A Case Study on Junior High School Students

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Abstract: This research aims to describe the phenomenon of cyberbullying among students at SMP Negeri 5 Bandung, with a focus on students' experiences in facing intimidation, harassment and insults that occur through social media and messaging applications. The sample used in this research consisted of 30 grade 7 students, consisting of 12 boys and 18 girls. Through a quantitative approach, data was collected using a questionnaire distributed to students from several junior high schools in Bandung. The results showed that the majority of students experienced some form of bullying via digital platforms, although with varying levels of intensity. In addition, students' perceptions of harassment and insults show a gap in understanding, with most respondents feeling that harassment and insults are not relevant to their experiences. This research provides important insights into the impact of cyberbullying on students' mental health and the importance of awareness of this phenomenon among students, teachers, and parents.

Keywords: Cyberbullying; Phenomenon; Students; Teenagers

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1. Introduction

Cyberbullying has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon in the digital age, with significant impacts on adolescents, particularly among junior high school students [1,2]. Cyberbullying is defined as aggressive behavior intentionally carried out through electronic means, such as text messages, emails, and social media, with the intent to harm, intimidate, or exclude others. Unlike traditional bullying, which often involves face-to-face interaction, cyberbullying can occur anytime and anywhere, given the easy access to communication technologies. This creates a new dynamic in social relationships among teenagers that is difficult for parents and educators to manage and control [3,4].

One of the defining characteristics of cyberbullying is the anonymity provided by technology [5]. This anonymity gives the perpetrator a sense of security in carrying out aggressive actions because they do not have to face the victim and their identity is not always known. This condition often makes the victim feel more isolated and unsure of how to defend themselves. Additionally, the digital nature of cyberbullying allows harmful information or images to spread very quickly, and once this information is disseminated, it is difficult to fully erase it from the internet [6,7].

Research shows that the prevalence of cyberbullying varies depending on the definition used and the age group being studied [8]. Among adolescents, particularly junior high school students, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are the most common venues for cyberbullying. In addition, text messages and instant messaging apps are also widely used for carrying out cyberbullying [9,10]. Junior

high school students, who spend considerable time online, are more vulnerable to becoming either victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying because they are still in the process of developing their self-identity and often lack the social skills to manage conflicts constructively.

The psychological impacts of cyberbullying are severe, leading to mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and sleep disturbances. Victims of cyberbullying tend to feel more isolated and struggle to build self-confidence. Furthermore, the shame and fear of being judged by others, often expressed online, can affect their academic performance and social relationships at school. The relentless nature of cyberbullying, which can occur at any time, causes victims to feel there is no safe place, not even at home [11].

Moreover, the consequences of cyberbullying can also lead to an increase in risky behaviors, such as substance abuse, as well as an increased desire for suicide among adolescents who are heavily exposed to cyberbullying. A study by Whittaker and Kowalski (2015) also shows that students who are victims of cyberbullying often feel more stressed and anxious, which can worsen their mental health in the long term. This impact is not only felt by the victims but also affects their social environment, including friends and family [8].

Although cyberbullying is increasingly researched, there are still many challenges in defining and identifying its various forms, especially among adolescents[12]. Some forms of cyberbullying, such as spreading rumors or social exclusion, may be harder to identify compared to direct threats or harsh messages. On the other hand, since cyberbullies often feel there are no immediate consequences for their actions, they are more likely to continue the behavior without fear [13].

Prevention and intervention in cyberbullying are critically important, especially among junior high school students who are undergoing significant emotional and social transitions. Educational programs that involve training on digital ethics and skills for coping with cyberbullying are essential. Additionally, support from families and schools to recognize early signs of cyberbullying and take appropriate action is crucial in addressing this issue [14,15].

The greatest challenge in preventing and intervening in cyberbullying [14] among junior high school students is the lack of understanding and awareness of its impacts. Many students may think they are only "joking" or "playing around" on social media without realizing that their actions can have a profound impact on the mental well-being of their peers. Therefore, it is important to develop programs that involve a deep understanding of the emotional impact of cyberbullying and teach junior high students to take responsibility for their actions online.

The phenomenon of cyberbullying is getting deeper because today's teenagers tend to spend more time in cyberspace, both for socializing, studying and being creative[16]. Therefore, it is important to understand how the cyberbullying phenomenon develops among teenagers, especially at educational levels such as junior high school. Knowing the causes, impacts, and ways to overcome them can help build better policies in dealing with this problem in schools

This research aims to describe the phenomenon of cyberbullying among junior high school students in Bandung with a focus on students' experiences in facing intimidation, harassment and insults that occur on social media and messaging applications.

2. Materials and Methods

This research uses quantitative descriptive methods with the aim of describing the phenomenon of cyberbullying among students at SMPN 5 Bandung. Data was collected using an instrument in the form of a questionnaire designed to measure the level of cyber bullying experienced by students. This instrument has been validated by experts. This questionnaire consists of 15 questions covering the three main indicators of cyberbullying,

namely intimidation, disclosure, and insults, using a 4-point Likert scale that includes answer choices Very Appropriate, Appropriate, Not Appropriate, and Very Inappropriate.

The research sample consisted of 30 grade 7 students at SMPN 5 Bandung, with details of 12 male students and 18 female students. Sample selection was carried out purposively. Questionnaires were distributed to selected students via a Google form link, and they were asked to fill in honestly according to their natural experiences related to cyberbullying. To analyze the data obtained, researchers used descriptive statistical analysis techniques. The collected data calculated the percentage of answers to each question item to measure the frequency of cyberbullying incidents. The results of this analysis can provide a clearer picture of the phenomenon of cyberbullying, namely intimidation, harassment and insults towards SMPN 5 Bandung students.

3. Results

Based on the objective of this study, the results section begins by exploring the experiences of junior high school students in Bandung with regard to cyberbullying. Specifically, it focuses on how students encounter and respond to acts of intimidation, harassment, and insults on social media platforms and messaging applications. Through this analysis, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the prevalence, forms, and psychological impacts of cyberbullying on these students. The results of the analysis regarding aspects of intimidation can be seen in Figure 1.

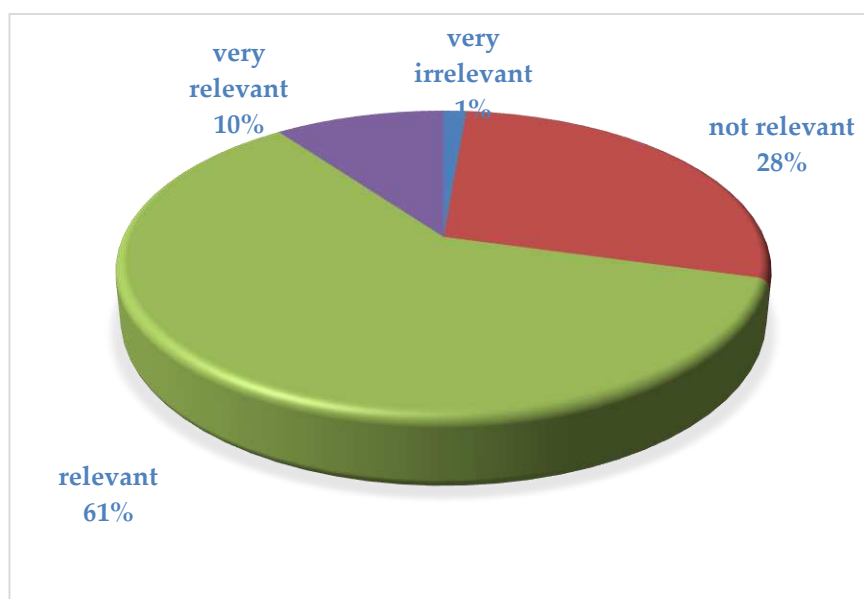


Figure 1. Results of the analysis of aspects of intimidation

The results of the analysis of the intimidation aspect in Figure 1 show that the majority of respondents, 61%, felt that the statements or questions related to intimidation in the questionnaire were consistent with their experiences. This indicates that intimidation is one of the main forms of cyberbullying experienced or observed by students. In this context, intimidation may include threats, insults, or other actions intended to harm verbally or psychologically through digital media.

Meanwhile, 28% of respondents stated that the intimidation aspect did not align with their experiences. This data reveals variations in the forms of cyberbullying experienced by students, where intimidation may not be the main factor they encounter. This opens opportunities to explore other forms of cyberbullying, such as rumor-based harassment, online social exclusion, or defamation. This response also highlights the importance of a holistic approach to understanding the diverse impacts of cyberbullying on

students. Interestingly, 10% of respondents felt that the intimidation aspect was very consistent with their experiences. This group indicates that some students may be deeply affected by digital intimidation, both emotionally and psychologically. These findings underline the need for special attention to students in this category, as they are likely to face greater pressures compared to others. Interventions such as counseling, psychological support, or involving teachers and parents could be essential steps to help students cope with the impact of intimidation.

On the other hand, only 1% of respondents stated that the intimidation aspect was very inconsistent with their experiences. This reflects that digital intimidation, while significant for the majority of students, is not always a universal form of cyberbullying. These findings highlight the importance of educating students about various forms of cyberbullying so that they can better recognize its signs and impacts. Overall, this analysis provides an in-depth picture of the role of intimidation in cyberbullying among middle school students and can serve as a basis for developing more effective policies, prevention programs, and interventions in educational settings [17], [18].

The results of the analysis of the harassment aspect can be seen in Figure 2

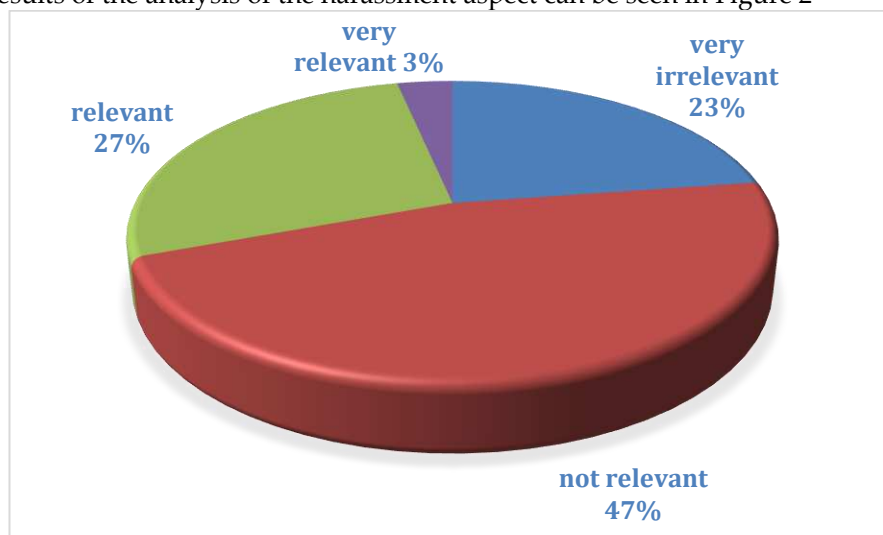


Figure 2. Results of analysis of harassment aspects

Based on the Figure 2 depicting the aspect of harassment, the results show a diverse distribution of responses regarding the relevance or suitability of perceptions about harassment among students. The graph is divided into four categories "very relevant," "relevant," "not relevant," and "very irrelevant." Below is an explanation and narrative regarding the results. A small portion of respondents, 3%, felt that the aspect of harassment was very relevant to their experiences or observations. Although the percentage is low, it indicates that a small segment of individuals may have experienced severe harassment or are highly aware of the negative impact of harassment in their social environment.

27% of respondents felt that the aspect of harassment was relevant to what they observed or experienced. This shows that about one-third of the respondents acknowledge that harassment is a phenomenon occurring around them and aligns with their experiences, though they may perceive it in a lighter or less intense form. While not as high as the "Not Relevant" category, this figure still demonstrates that harassment is a significant issue for many students. However, 47% of respondents felt that the aspect of harassment was not relevant to what they observed or experienced. This is the largest group, indicating that nearly half of the respondents do not perceive or see harassment as a relevant issue in their lives. They may not have experienced harassment directly or may not consider these actions as harassment that needs attention. Additionally, 23% of respondents felt that the

aspect of harassment was very irrelevant, meaning they did not see or feel harassment as a problem relevant to their environment. This percentage may reflect a lack of awareness or understanding of more subtle forms of harassment, which often occur verbally or emotionally in the digital world.

These results reflect that although harassment is a problem faced by some students, there is still a large segment that feels the phenomenon is not very relevant to their lives. This perception may be influenced by factors such as a lack of awareness about the more subtle forms of harassment or limited personal experience with harassment. Furthermore, harassment is often harder to identify for those who have not directly experienced it or who perceive it as something trivial or less impactful. However, despite many feeling that harassment is not relevant or appropriate to their experiences, it is important to continue raising awareness and understanding about the various forms of harassment, both physical and online. This will help create a safer and more respectful environment among students and reduce the potential for harassment that is either unrecognized or not taken seriously by some individuals[19], [20].

The results of the analysis of the insult aspect can be seen in Figure 3.

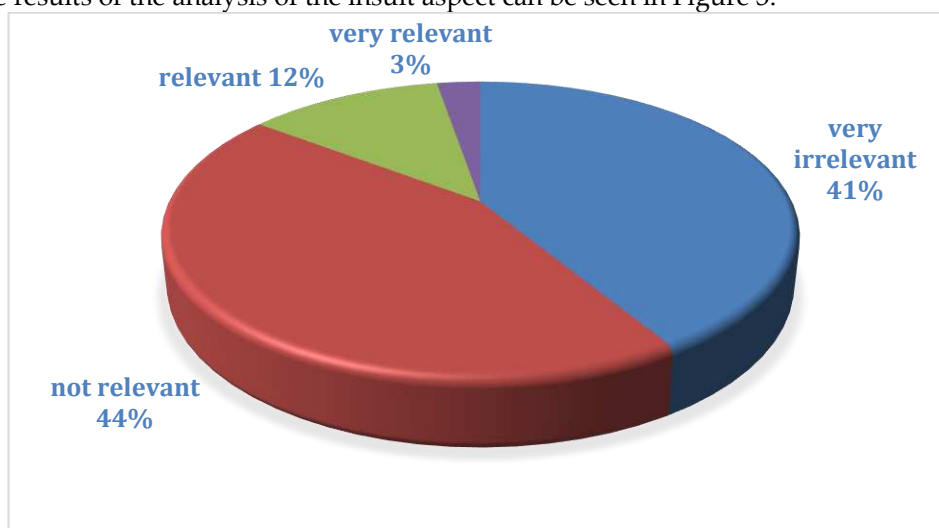


Figure 3. Results of analysis of insult aspects

Based on the graph depicting the aspect of insults, the results show a highly varied perception among respondents regarding the relevance or appropriateness of their experiences or observations related to insults. The graph is divided into four categories "very relevant," "relevant," "not relevant," and "very irrelevant." Below is the narrative and explanation regarding the results. 3% of respondents felt that the aspect of insults was very relevant to what they experienced or observed. Although this percentage is small, it indicates that a small segment of individuals may have experienced insults directly or are highly aware of the impact of such behavior in their environment. They may have had more intense experiences with insults, both verbal and non-verbal, that have had a significant psychological impact on them. 12% of respondents felt that the aspect of insults was relevant to what they observed or felt. While not as large as the "Very Relevant" category, this figure indicates that around one-tenth of respondents consider insults a relevant phenomenon that occurs around them, although perhaps in a lighter or more limited context. This suggests that some students may have witnessed or experienced insults in milder or indirect forms.

However, 44% of respondents felt that the aspect of insults was not relevant to what they experienced or observed. This figure shows that almost half of the respondents do not perceive or see insults as a relevant issue in their lives. They may not have experienced insults directly or do not view such behavior as something that needs attention or concern.

This could also suggest that they have not yet recognized or had enough experience to understand insults as an issue affecting individual well-being. The most striking result is that 41% of respondents felt that the aspect of insults was very irrelevant to what they experienced or observed. This is the largest group, indicating that nearly half of the respondents do not feel that insults are a relevant issue in their environment at all. Most of them may consider insults unimportant or not impactful, or they may not realize that insults can deeply affect someone.

4. Discussion

These results reflect that although insults are a phenomenon that can have emotional and psychological impacts on some individuals, a large portion of respondents feels that it is not relevant or significant in their lives. This perception may be influenced by a lack of understanding of the effects of insults, especially if the behavior is not overtly noticeable or is often seen as something trivial. Additionally, many respondents may not have direct experience with insults, or they do not view insults as a serious issue that requires attention. However, even though most respondents feel that insults are not relevant or very irrelevant to their experiences, it is important to continue raising awareness of the various forms of insults, both direct and online. Increasing understanding of how insults can affect an individual's mental and emotional state will help create a healthier and more respectful environment, both at school and in society. Further intervention and education on the impact of insults are necessary to ensure that this phenomenon is recognized and addressed appropriately.

5. Conclusions

This section is not mandatory but can be added to the manuscript if the discussion is unusually long or complex. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the phenomenon of cyberbullying, including intimidation, harassment and insults, is quite relevant to the experiences of students at SMP Negeri 5 Bandung, although the level of understanding and awareness of this varies. Most students feel that bullying is a problem that needs to be addressed, but many are not fully aware of the impact of harassment and insults that occur online. Students who are exposed to cyberbullying tend to feel significant psychological impacts, although most students do not realize it or consider it a serious problem. This shows that there is a gap between students' real experiences and their understanding of cyberbullying. Several important steps can be taken to overcome the problem of cyberbullying among junior high school students. First, there needs to be increased awareness in schools with a comprehensive education program regarding cyberbullying, which includes education about forms of bullying, harassment and insults in cyberspace and their impact on students' mental health. Apart from that, education for parents is also needed so that they can recognize the signs of cyberbullying in children and provide appropriate support. Schools should strengthen anti-cyberbullying policies, by providing safe and easily accessible reporting channels for students. Finally, the use of technology to prevent cyberbullying can also be optimized, such as applications that can detect and provide early warnings of bullying behavior in cyberspace. With these steps, it is hoped that cyberbullying can be minimized and create a safer and more supportive environment for students.

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