

Cyberbully: Cultural Stereotypes Among Young Adults

Muhammad Anwar Fahmi Hari Das Abdullah, Syahira Natasha Es Erwan Ezil, Amani Alyaa Mohamad Jamal, Akmal Arief Mohd Nazri, Hana Aliyah Muhammad Aiman, Nur Alanna Khalish Ibrahim & *Mohd Sufiean Hassan
University Teknologi MARA, Cawangan Melaka, Malaysia

**MUHAMMAD ANWAR FAHMI HARI DAS
ABDULLAH**

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka
email: anwar425@uitm.edu.my

SYAHIRA NATASHA ES ERWAN EZIL
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka

AMANI ALYAA MOHAMAD JAMAL
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka

AKMAL ARIEF MOHD NAZRI
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka

HANA ALIYAH MUHAMMAD AIMAN
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka

NUR ALANNA KHALISH IBRAHIM
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka

***MOHD SUFIEAN HASSAN**
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies
University Teknologi MARA Cawangan Melaka
email: mohdsufiean@uitm.edu.my

ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying is a hostile purposeful act committed by a group of individuals utilizing electronic forms of communication against a victim who is unable to defend themselves repeatedly and over time. Cyberbullying has been a widespread occurrence among teenagers and young adults. For some populations, it has become a major issue. The goal of this research is to find out how cyberbullying affects young adults. Apart from that, it investigates the link between stereotypical cyberbullying or bullying in general and the consequences it has on others, both domestically and abroad. The goal of this study is to look at different types of people and how bullying affects them in general. The participants in this study range in age from 13 to 30, although our primary focus is on youths. The result shows that cyberbullying can affect the victim's mental health. It can increase depressive affect, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal behavior, and somatic symptoms.

Keywords: Cultural Stereotypes, Cyberbullying, Anonymity, Defense Mechanism, Youth of Color

INTRODUCTION

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have changed the way people communicate and create connections. People are never distant from technology, from toddlers to pensioners. According to the Center for the Digital Future's 2017 report (2017 Digital Future, 2017), 92 percent of Americans use the Internet, spending an average of 23.6 hours a week online. Traditional bullying, according to Olweus (1993, 2013), is an aggressive behavior meant to inflict hurt or discomfort that is frequently repeated over time and happens between individuals with a power imbalance in their relationship. Using this description of conventional bullying as a starting point, Cyberbullying has been defined by Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, and Tipett (2008) as "an hostile, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of interaction, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself" (p. 376; see also Smith, 2015). Langos (2012) identified between two types of cyberbullying: direct and indirect. Cyberbullying that is limited to just the perpetrator and victim is referred to as direct cyberbullying. Indirect cyberbullying, on the other hand, occurs across various media channels and has the capacity to reach far beyond the victim and perpetrator.

Other academics have gone much further in their classification of the many forms of cyberbullying (e.g., flaming, exclusion, outing and trickery). Li (2007), Willard (2005), and Pyalski (2005) are recommended for a review of these types of classification (2012). Cyber incivility and cyber violence are terms that are associated with cyberbullying, although they are, in our opinion, two distinct phenomena. (2012, p. 148) Giumetti, McKibben, Hatfield, Schroeder, and Kowalski. Rude/discourteous acts occurring through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as e-mail or text messaging," according to the definition. Although cyberbullying and cyber incivility are connected and both have bad consequences, they are conceptually distinct, notably in terms of power imbalance and purpose to hurt, which is considerably more unclear with cyber incivility than with cyberbullying (Kowalski, Toth, & Morgan, 2017).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this modernized era, cyber bullying has become a very common thing among young adults. It has become a serious problem for these groups. In this research, we can confidently assume that all college and university students are computer and internet literate. As a result, they can be classified as cyber users who are vulnerable to cyberbullying. Because colleges and universities are frequently equipped with those facilities for free, college and university students can readily and freely access the internet and computer capabilities. This may increase the likelihood of students being exposed to the world of cyberspace, increasing their vulnerability to cyberbullying. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of cyber bullying among young adults. Other than that, it also studies the relationship between stereotypical cyberbullying or bullying in general and the effects it has on other people, be it domestically or internationally. The focus of this research is to study different types of people and how bullying, in general, may affect them. When we conduct our research, we can identify the source of the problem and help the victims of bullying from stereotypes. Recent studies show that Cyberbullying has now become a social harassment issue in several educational institutions throughout the world. In addition to being tied to broader social and economic

factors, new communication technologies have offered the ideal support for the development of this sort of harassment in peer relationships.

Firstly, to examine the relationship between negative environments and cyberbullying among young adults. Different people were brought up differently, their brains also develop at their own pace. For instance, when a child was brought up by a single parent, they have a higher chance of being cyberbullied. Furthermore, cyberbullies are most likely created in a home with a lot of stress. Negative parental behavior is also very important because it plays a huge role in educating young adults properly. Free social support is also associated with cyberbullying as young adults are exposed to social media without parental observation.

Secondly, to study the relationship between the sense of superiority among young adults and cyberbullying. This can relate to social fringes as well, with different classes in society, it can create some sense of superiority. For instance, the popular students bully the less popular students. This will also subconsciously create social pressure and the ignorance of consequences among these young adults.

Thirdly, to examine the relationship between the discrimination and stereotyping of different races and cyberbullying. Some people who have not matured yet tend to have the thinking that different races would impact another race differently. This will create misunderstandings and discrimination among society.

Research Objectives

This study aims

1. To investigate the relationship between a negative environment and cyberbullying among young adults.
2. To examine the relationship between a sense of superiority and cyberbullying among young adults.
3. To explore the relationship between discrimination of different races and cyberbullying among young adults.

NEGATIVE ENVIRONMENT

Children's intellectual, social, and emotional development are influenced by their family and parents, which can enrich and improve their educational experiences and outcomes. Family and parents are essential for their children's healthy growth; happy, healthy children have a good impact on the school climate, resulting in improved academic outcomes. Among middle and high school students, a number of familial risk variables have also been investigated. Cyberbullied youth are more likely than their non-bullied peers to live in single-parent households (Bevilacqua et al., 2017; Bottino et al., 2015; Fanti et al., 2012) and have a negative family environment (Guo, 2016) characterized by family conflict (Ortega-Barton, Buelga, & Cava, 2016), poor parental attachment (Baldry et al., 2015).

Given the rising amount of time that adolescents and young adults spend online, online experiences of racial discrimination can have long-term consequences for developmental outcomes. Internalizing symptoms such as sadness, suicidal ideation, and loneliness are more common among children who have been victimized, not only in middle and high school but also for years following. Cyberbullying and online discrimination, harassment, and victimization have been linked to a variety of internalizing (i.e., depressive symptoms, anxiety)

and externalizing (i.e., lower academic motivation, poor school outcomes, increased problem behavior, and aggression) symptoms (Edwards et al., 2016; Tynes, Hiss, Ryan, & Rose, 2015; Uman a-Taylor, Tynes, & Rose, 2015). Thus, a Negative Environment is one of the factors of cyberbullying since one's personality is born from how they have been living.

H1: Negative environment positively associated with cyberbullying among young adults.

SENSE OF SUPERIORITY

Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, and Tipett (2008) defined cyberbullying as "an aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and overtime against a victim who cannot easily defend himself or herself," building on this definition of traditional bullying (p. 376; see also Smith, 2015). Cyberbullying that is limited to just the perpetrator and victim is referred to as direct cyberbullying. Indirect cyberbullying, on the other hand, occurs across various media channels and can reach far beyond the victim and perpetrator. Cyber incivility and cyber violence are terms that are associated with cyberbullying, although they are, in our opinion, two distinct phenomena. Giumetti, McKibben, Hatfield, Schroeder, and Kowalski (2012, p. 148) defined cyber incivility as "rude/discourteous behaviors occurring through Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) such as e-mail or text messages".

Despite the parallels between cyberbullying and traditional bullying, it is critical to recognize the differences in the behaviors. One of the most significant differences between cyberbullying and regular bullying is anonymity. With the existence of anonymity, the cyberbullies feel superior as they can freely bully everyone without feeling scared. Even though people are never as anonymous online as they think they are, the inability to identify an online criminal can make victims feel weak in comparison to their attacker. Furthermore, most traditional bullying occurs during the school day (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007; Nansel et al., 2001), whereas cyberbullying occurs at any time (Bradshaw, Sawyer, & O'Brennan, 2007). Cyberbullying can occur at any time of day or night due to its nature. Thus, Sense of Superior is one of the factors of cyberbullying among young adults.

H2: Sense of superiority positively related to cyberbullying among young adults.

DISCRIMINATION AND STEREOTYPING AMONG EACH OTHER

Cyberbullying have evolved into a major psychological issue in educational institutions and society at large. Humans live in constant connection with one another, forming a social group, an organization, or a socio-cultural society in the process. When faced with risks such as societal limits or problems, stereotypes can be employed as a quick explanation for either positive or negative labeling. For instance, the British implemented a policy that divided Malaysia's major ethnic groups, namely Malays, Chinese, and Indians, resulting in racial polarization. Incidents like the May 13, 1969, riot are part of Malaysia's dark history of inter-racial interactions. The study by Mansor and Nazri (2014), explained that racial stereotypes in Malaysia were more reflective of individual interests, self-esteem, and social status rather than views on the behavior of ethnic groups such as previous studies.

For another example, the findings to date have been inconsistent. In some cases, boys tend to be overrepresented as bullies, cyberbullies and bully/victims (Ackers, 2012; Arseneault, Bowes, & Shakoor, 2010; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Dehue et al., 2008; Gradinger et al., 2009; Perren & GutzwillerHelfenfinger, 2012; Slonje & Smith, 2008); in other cases, girls have been reported to be the most involved in cyberbullying (Jones et al., 2013; Schenk & Fremouw, 2012) Thus, discrimination is also a factor to cyberbullying among youths and can happen to anyone.

H4: Discrimination and stereotype among young adults are shown positively in cyberbullying.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study explains the Cyberbully occurring nationally. This study involves young adults from the age of 13 until 30, but our main targets are youths. We applied a quantitative method in this study. We focus strongly on objective measurements and statistical, mathematical, or numerical analysis of data that we have collected through an online survey. We conducted an online survey from our group's personal Instagram Stories. We attached the link to the survey where they will be asked to answer a selection of multiple-choice answers and several subjective questions. We chose this method due to the restriction to pass physical forms or surveys that we can conduct in various places such as the market or shopping complex. But the pandemic that's spread across the globe has limited our movements; hence we decided to go digital and create an online survey using Google Form. This does not only solve our problem, but it also reduces our workload of paperwork from checking one form at a time; it also improves our numerical data as at the end of the day, we could always check devices for new responses, simplifying the findings and breaks down each answer accordingly and into pie charts which ease our job of the results and inserting them into our report. Another reason we chose to conduct an online survey is that it is easier for us to reach our target group, as they have their phones and other devices with them 24/7. Therefore, we can efficiently distribute the link to the form and tell them to share it among their friends on various platforms. This will increase the number of respondents, but it will also indirectly improve the social awareness of internet users regarding this matter and inflict their inner curiosity to learn more regarding this issue.

Based on that survey, the respondents are divided into groups by gender of male and female, and 98.4 percent of them in total are from the 18 – 30 age group, which is our main target as they have more familiarity with the issue, given that they have more hours with their tech. Therefore, it is not odd that they are the majority group of the survey. But there is also a tiny section of the answer, with 1.6 percent of them being 13 -17 years old. We found out that most of them agree that a negative environment does have a relation with cyberbullying, and 51.6 percent of them answered that they had experienced this issue firsthand. Lastly, we asked for their reason for cyberbullying and received mixed responses from them, but they all agree that cyberbullying is an issue that needs to be discussed and concluded on. Thus, this paper will discuss cyberbullying that is happening among young adults.

RESULT

As shown in **Table 1**, are the findings based on our survey on the question regarding their gender, majority of the responders are male while the other percentage are females. While in

Table 1, the largest age group are youths from the age of 18-30 years old while only a tiny percentage of it is from the 13-17 years old age group. Therefore, it can be said that we got our target group, mainly youths and millennials, regarding their knowledge and experience on ‘Cyber Bully’. In **Table 2**, most of them answered with ‘Yes’ as they agree that there is a negative environment associated with cyberbullying. Still, the feedback we got from **Table 3** caught us by surprise as many of them answered ‘No’ regarding their experience with cyberbullying if they have ever been involved or directed personally regarding stereotypes of their race. Lastly, we got a majority answer of a ‘Yes’ from **Table 4** as it shows that anonymity can be the cause of cyberbullying.

Our other findings discovered that most of them agreed that cyberbullying needs to be addressed, especially in modern society, as we need to understand that it is not good to cyberbully others based on their race. Since one’s mistakes do not resemble the race instead of as an individual. But when asked if cyberbullying should be made illegal, we received numerous answers whether it should be made unlawful or not. One of their reasons is that cyberbullying is a choice; it is indeed a harmful and cruel mentality, yet it is hard to prove as the evidence should be solid to prove. Plus, it is an ill opinion that does not justify a race, just because of a few rotten apples. In the end, they all come to an agreement that cyberbullying is an unhealthy and hostile attitude that needs to be tackled and execute a thorough research on how to solve this matter and the best way to overcome and give everyone an equal opportunity, based on what they can offer, regardless of their race.

Table 1. Demographic profile (n=63)

Variable	Frequency (n=63)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	32	50.8
Female	31	49.2
Age		
18 – 30 years old	62	98.4
13 -17 years old	1	1.6

Table 2. Negative environment cause cyberbullying (n=63)

Variable	Frequency (n=63)	Percentage (%)
Can a negative environment cause cyberbullying?		
Yes		
No	55	87.3
	8	12.7

Table 3. Experienced cyberbullying regarding your race

Variable	Frequency (n=63)	Percentage (%)
Have you ever experienced cyberbullying regarding your race?		
Yes	31	49.2
No	32	50.7

Table 4. Created an anonymous spam account to stalk anyone

Variable	Frequency (n=63)	Percentage (%)
Have you ever created an anonymous spam account to stalk anyone?		
Yes	40	63.5
No	23	36.5

DISCUSSION

Firstly, we discovered a relationship between cyberbullying and a negative environment among young adults. For the third question, 55 respondents (87.3%) out of 63 responses answered 'yes'. This result refers to the question “does a negative environment cause cyberbullying”. Based on the responses from the third question, most respondents do agree that a negative environment encourages cyberbullying. Secondly, we have explored the relationship between discrimination of different races and cyberbullying among young adults. As an example, the fourth question states 31 respondents who have experienced cyberbullying. This shows that cyberbullying is a common recurrence in our country. With the majority being negative feedback regarding stereotypes from the respondents, it is clear that stereotyping could also result in cyberbullying. And as stated, since there is a lot of negative feedback, it is safe to say that cultural stereotyping affects peoples' physical and mental health. Most people get away with this because social media is an anonymous platform. People hide behind screens and feel powerful enough to say whatever they want to, with or without thinking about how it would affect others. Cultural stereotyping also comes from misunderstandings and conflicts among citizens. Sometimes, it can be hard to just simply forgive and forget about certain things especially when it deeply affects a person. Lastly, cultural stereotyping may come as a defense

mechanism for some. Some people find it hard to lose in arguments or conversations hence, they unintentionally use cultural stereotyping as a way to validate their points. Next, we have found the relationship between a sense of superiority and cyberbullying among young adults. Based on the last question, 40 respondents (63.5%) have created an anonymous spam account to stalk others. People often forget that other people have their highs and lows hence they feel like they are better than everyone else. Making anonymous spam accounts will make it easier for them to hide behind screens to say things without thinking first.

As a way to minimize cyberbullying, there should be campaigns regarding cyberbullying awareness for many to learn more before saying something that might be offensive and hurtful to some. Next, schools should introduce the impacts of cyberbullying to students early on as exposure. This way, they would be more careful with what they say or do online. Other than that, parents play a huge role in shaping their children. Parents need to teach their kids to respect others regardless of who they are. Something as simple as respect, doesn't need to be a hard thing to do. People should be more careful with what they say because cyberbullying is not a small matter. Some may consider cyberbullying trivial. People are often unfamiliar with how badly cyberbullying can affect people. Cyberbullying can affect the victim's mental health. It can increase depressive affect, anxiety, loneliness, suicidal behavior, and somatic symptoms.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, a lot of people are still unaware of how huge of an impact cyberbullying can bring. Teenagers and young adults have become victims of cyberbullying on a large scale. It has become a big issue for certain people. It can take a huge toll on someone. People should be more cautious with their words since cyberbullying is dangerous. Based on the questionnaires, the responses show that cyberbullying does happen among young adults. Even though cyberbullying may be considered trivial to some people, it is to be reminded that a majority of the youth are badly affected by cyberbullying. Lastly, here are a lot of factors that encourage cyberbullying such as negative environments, a sense of superiority and discrimination, and stereotyping among young adults.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Dr. Mohd Sufiean Hassan is a Senior lecturer at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Melaka Branch. Email: mohdsufiean@uitm.edu.my.

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