



Influencer Communication Strategies in Dealing with Cyberbullying on Instagram

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Abstract. Based on UNICEF data from cyberbullying as of 2019, the number of victims in Indonesia reached 45%. Cyberbullying has a negative impact, especially for influencers who have a large following. The purpose of this study was to find what kind of communication strategies used and how influencers deal with cyberbullying on Instagram in Indonesia. This study conduct based of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) from Timothy W. Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay. In addition, this study also focused in concept of crisis management in the scope of communication. The method used is qualitative descriptive with data collection techniques through interviews with influencers in Indonesia have a minimum of 10,000 followers. The result of this study is, there are three classifications of cyberbullying mild, moderate, and severe. There are three strategies carried out by influencers, namely denial, the diminishment strategy and bolstering. The denial strategy is an influencer's way of avoiding cyberbullying at a mild stage. Diminishment strategy is a way in which influencers limiting their communication with netizens and reduce the use of Instagram in order to minimize the impact of cyberbullying on a certain period of time. Bolstering strategy is the communication of influencers responding to cyberbullying by providing clarification in order to build a positive relationship between influencers and netizens from cyberbullying issues.

Keywords: cyberbullying, Instagram, communication strategy, influencer, SCCT Theory

1. Introduction

Cyberbullying occurs when a person intentionally and repeatedly harasses, abuses, or mocks another person online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices in a way that they do not feel entitled to reaction ability [1]. Cyberbullying is a cruel act that is intentionally shown for other people by sending or spreading harmful things or materials that can be seen as a form of social aggression in the use of the internet or other digital technologies. He provides a description of the variations of cyberbullying including, flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, cyberstalking, cyberthreats [2].

UNICEF and Gallup conducted the Changing Childhood Project, (2019) which surveyed more than 21,000 adults and young people in 21 nations. More than 77% of youngsters utilize the web everyday. Be that as it may, most of youngsters themselves see serious dangers for kids on the web, such as being bullied 79% [3]. What about in Indonesia ?. UNICEF reported in 2019, the victim of cyberbullying in Indonesia reached 45% [4]; based on the results of a U Report Indonesia survey of 2777 respondents [5].

We know that the more often someone accesses social media, the greater the risk of being cyberbullied [6]. Cyberbullying is an intentional aggressive act, carried out by a group or individual, using electronic media, repeatedly and from time to time against victims who cannot easily defend themselves [7]. Celebrities are figures that cannot be separated from the role of the media. On *The Surgery*, British radio show that aired on BBC Radio 1 [8], Gemma Cairney and Dr Radha handled the significant issue of web based harassing on the grounds that this is a tremendous issue in the UK and can disastrously affect casualties. In Indonesia, many celebrities get cyberbullying through social media. Celebrities are one of the targets of bullying on social media regardless of whether the celebrity is in a right or wrong position. Cyberbullying is carried out spontaneously, uncontrollably, using harsh, inappropriate sentences and at the same time not thinking about the psychological impact of the message on the victims [9].

This increase in cyberbullying behavior was demonstrated by an APJII survey which found that 49% of internet users said they had been bullied, ridiculed or harassed on social media. This survey also stated that 31.6% of victims of bullying allowed this action, 7.9% reciprocated, 5.2% deleted the ridicule, while only 3.6% reported the action to the authorities [10]. Social media is media that is used every day to be able to interact with followers and fans. Social media is also used as a means of establishing relationships, two-way communication, branding, and promotion. The strength of this social media is that celebrities and even ordinary people can be called influencers because they can influence many people through the content they create. Most cyberbullying occurs on the Instagram social media platform [11]. That means not only celebrities, but ordinary people who become influencers can also get the same cyberbullying.

This article aims to see how influencers manage communication when they are cyberbullied. Communication management can at least be a way to live a social life in cyberspace. Although cyberbullying can affect a person's psychology, the results of this article can provide an overview of how influencers can survive cyberbullying attacks.

2. Literature review/Study site

The use of social media is not only developing in a positive direction but also negative. The more social media users, the tendency for the level of cyberbullying will also increase. Several previous studies have provided an overview of how cyberbullying has

become an interesting research topic. Rifauddin researched the phenomenon of cyberbullying in adolescents with a research focus on the development of information technology such as the internet and social media which have an impact on people's behavior in socializing and communicating [12]. Meanwhile, the research entitled " Pengaruh Media Sosial terhadap Perilaku Cyberbullying di Kalangan Remaja " focuses on the influence of social media related to cyberbullying behavior and the importance of parental supervision of their children in their teens [13]. The difference between the two previous studies in this study is the research focus which focuses more on managing influencer communication (as a victim) who has a tendency to be more exposed to cyberbullying on the Instagram platform.

In this study, to describe how influencers manage communication when cyberbullying occurs, we use the Crisis Management concept and the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) from Timothy W. Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay.

2.1 Crisis Management

Crisis management in crisis management is a planned action in dealing with crises that occur with several steps, such as identification, analysis, isolation, and choice of strategy [14]. Crisis identification is the initial stage in managing a crisis. This identification is carried out through research and observation by collecting information and data regarding the crisis that occurred which can be used to plan further actions. We must predict crises based on the signals and plan to avert or combat them before they materialize. The identification of crisis traits, signs, and signals is important and necessary. It will also assist us in distinguishing between routine concerns and crises and in implementing strategies to prevent and control the crisis [15].

The next step is a crisis analysis. Information and data that has been collected will then be analyzed in depth including the causes of the crisis. At this stage, problem classification is needed to determine the actions taken by the organization to deal with the crisis. Crisis isolation is the third step that is carried out so that the crisis does not spread and cause destruction to the organization. Management must isolate the crisis before action is taken to prevent errors in determining actions. In the final stage, crisis management is carried out by determining the strategy to be taken in dealing with the crisis. By assessing the crisis scenario and adopting a crisis response approach that fits the crisis circumstances, a strategic communicative reaction can best protect the reputational resource [16]. The strategy must be prepared beforehand before being communicated to other parties.

2.2 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) means that, in order to adequately defend an organization's image, managers must modify their communication to account for any previous crises that relevant publics are aware of. SCCT is focused with how communication can be used to preserve and protect a company's valuable reputation [17].

SCCT was developed for the crisis-response phase of the crisis with an emphasis on organizational reputation as the primary outcome [18]. However, SCCT also has used purchase intention, emotions, and negative word of mouth as outcome variables [19].

There are three main reputation repair strategies: denial, diminish, and rebuild. Denial strategy aims to isolate the organization from the crisis. A crisis should not harm an organization if the organization is not responsible for it [20]. Denial should be made for misinformation crises when misinformation about the organization is disseminated. The diminishing strategy seeks to reinforce the view that organizations bear little responsibility for crises.

Rebuild strategies aim to generate positive information about the organization and include apologies and compensation. Bolstering is considered a secondary strategy and should not be used alone. Bolstering is an attempt to compliment those who have helped in times of crisis and to remind stakeholders of the organization's past good performance. Like rebuild strategies, bolstering strategies aim to create a positive perception of the organization. The safest crisis response strategy is the rebuild strategy, in which the victim is treated better, although on the other hand this strategy requires a higher cost even with a guaranteed reputation, and may not necessarily be good again. However, the main principle in crisis communication management is not to maintain profit, but to prioritize the safety and interests of the public and stakeholders [21]

3. Materials and Methods/ Methodology

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with primary and secondary data. Data collection techniques through interviews, observation and literature reviews. The informants we chose were influencers on Instagram who had more than 10,000 followers in early 2023. Until this research was made, we got several informants, one of whom was an influencer with 600,000 followers. We do not provide a maximum limit on the number of followers in this study. The assumption is, the more followers, it means that this informant has the power to influence many people/followers or is referred to as an influencer. In the early stages, we conducted interviews with informants, then conducted investigations by gathering information about the cyberbullying cases they had received. Observations were made on comments on their each post that had a tendency towards cyberbullying.

4. Results and Discussion

Influencers have different ways of dealing with different kinds of cyberbullying. There are several stages using crisis management steps which consist of 4 stages, crisis identification, crisis classification, crisis isolation, and strategy determination. At the strategy determination stage, several strategies were obtained based on the SCCT theory.

In the first stage, we identified variations or types of cyberbullying experienced by influencers based on interview results. There are four types of cyberbullying that are often accepted by influencers, such as, hate speech, dissing, body shaming, and sexual harassment. Table 1 provides an overview of the definitions of each type of cyberbullying and examples of sentences obtained by the informants.

Table 1: Identification of Cyberbullying

Types of cyberbullying	Definition	Example
Hate Speech	Biased and malicious speech directed against an individual	“Cantik pakai kerudungnya yang bener dong rambutnya keliatan itu hahaha”
Dissing	Carried out by the bully to spread malicious information about the victim.	“G*bl*k banget si lu kok bisa buat kesalahan kaya begitu ya”
Body Shaming	Giving other people or individual judgement related to the physical appearance in a negative way.	“Kok badan kamu gendut banget ya kaya gajah, ketauan pasti makan dan ngemil terus setiap saat”
Sexual harassment	gender-based harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual assault.	“cantik doang tapi gabisa di pake” “Badan kamu kok seksi si cantik, apalagi pinggang kamu itu loh bagus banget”

Table 1 shows that there are 4 types of cyberbullying that are often experienced by influencers and examples of messages or comments given by netizens. Some of these types of cyberbullying almost have the same characteristics. Especially on negative messages and those containing physical, gender and sexuality.

The first type is about hate speech. Hate speech is biased, hostile and malicious speech directed against an individual or group of people and expressing their actual or perceived inherent characteristics [22]. Dissing is the second type, which is carried out by the bully to spread malicious information about the victim. People publicly post private messages electronically to damage their reputation or sabotage their relationships with other people or organizations [23]. Both types have differences in the message conveyed. The focus of hate speech messages is on negative comments and/or comments with negative connotations. On dissing, influencers get negative comments from information that is not yet valid in its truth that is spread in cyberspace.

Other types of cyberbullying are body shaming and sexual harassment. Body shaming means giving other people or individual judgement related to the physical appearance in a negative way which make the person involved feeling inferior toward themselves. A manifestation of hurting words or mockery about someone else body and indifference attitude to the person involved [24]. Sexual harassment is recognized models categorize sexual harassment into gender-based harassment, unwanted sexual attention, and sexual assault [25].

Analysis of the types of cyberbullying is then classified into levels, namely mild, moderate and severe. Hate speech is included in the mild category, dissing is in the mild and moderate categories, body shaming is in the moderate and severe levels, and sexual harassment is in the severe level.

Table 2: Influencers Communication strategy based on classification of cyberbullying

Types of cyberbullying	Classification	Isolation	Strategy
Hate Speech	Mild	Ignoring, not respond, delete the negative comment	Denial
Dissing		Write a (text) clarification and upload on instastory (duration 24 hours) reduce the intensity of social media use	
Body Shaming	Moderate	Isolate, seclude himself from the public	Diminishment
	Severe	Uploading a video clarification through their instagram feed with the caption	
Sexual harassment		Clarification content must be able to build positive relationship with followers	Bolstering

During the crisis isolation stage, Influencers take initial action to deal with the cyberbullying. Every action in crisis isolation is based on the type of cyberbullying, from refusal, not responding, to creating content in the form of clarification videos. Table 2 shows the process from cyberbullying identification, classification, isolation, to strategy selection. Based on the classification of cyberbullying types, there are three classifications, namely mild, moderate, and severe. The denial strategy is used for mild cyberbullying, when influencers refuse, don't respond, and even delete negative comments on their accounts.

Diminishment is a strategy that is carried out at mild and moderate cyberbullying levels. This strategy focuses more on reducing the intensity of using social media to self-isolation or not appearing in public for a certain period of time. The bolstering strategy is part of the rebuilding strategy. It's just that, this strategy emphasizes more on establishing relationships. Bolstering is used when influencers are experiencing heavy cyberbullying. Influencers upload clarifying videos. Next, he will rebuild through content with the aim of building positive relationships with followers.

5. Conclusion

The result of this study is, there are three classifications of cyberbullying mild, moderate, and severe. There are three strategies carried out by influencers, namely denial, the diminishment strategy and bolstering. The denial strategy is an influencer's way of avoiding cyberbullying at a mild stage. Diminishment strategy is a way in which influencers limiting their communication with netizens and reduce the use of Instagram in order to minimize the impact of cyberbullying on a certain period of time. Bolstering strategy is the communication of influencers responding to cyberbullying by providing clarification in order to build a positive relationship between influencers and netizens from cyberbullying issues. We hope that the results of this research can provide references to cyberbullying victims on how to deal with and manage communication with their followers. At least, the experience of influencers proves that we need time for ourselves, including reducing and limiting access to social media usage for certain periods. The communication management that they do is able to make them survive in living a social life on the internet.

6. Ethical Approval

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: Qualitative data are available on request.

Conflicts of Interest: We declare no conflict of interest.

7. Grant information/Funding

This research received no external funding.

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