



Adolescent Self-Disclosure in Cyberbullying Cases on Twitter (X)

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Abstract. This research aims to analyze the self-disclosure of adolescents in cyberbullying cases on Twitter (X). In this era of technological advancement, acts of intimidation have shifted to the digital realm, a behavior known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is frequently encountered on social media, with Twitter (X) being one of the platforms where it occurs. It is not uncommon for cyberbullying victims to be adolescents or still in secondary school. Adolescents facing cyberbullying on Twitter (X) often find themselves in complex and challenging situations. When it comes to self-disclosure, their responses to the experience of cyberbullying vary. Adolescents who have been victims of cyberbullying may express feelings of hurt, confusion, or anxiety. The research method used in this thesis is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The study was conducted online. Primary data were obtained from informants through in-depth interviews and observations of the informants' Twitter (X) accounts, while secondary data were sourced from books, journals, articles, and websites. Informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of four adolescents who were victims of cyberbullying on Twitter (X). The data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman data analysis technique. The results of this study show that the self-disclosure of adolescents who experience cyberbullying on Twitter (X) reveals varied reactions to their cyberbullying experiences. Through several aspects used to assess self-disclosure, such as amount, valence, accuracy/honesty, intention, and intimacy, it was found that adolescents who experience cyberbullying tend to disclose more on Twitter (X) compared to in real life. Adolescents rely more on Twitter (X) to share their experiences of cyberbullying.

Keywords: Self-disclosure, Cyberbullying, Adolescent, Twitter (X).

1 Introduction

Bullying is aggressive behavior intentionally aimed at hurting or harming others, carried out repeatedly and involving an imbalance of power, making it difficult for the victim to defend themselves. With the advancement of technology, bullying has now shifted to the digital realm. Cyberbullying involves using online platforms such as social media, text messages, or email to spread insulting, harassing, or degrading messages, images, or content about someone. This phenomenon expands the reach and impact of bullying, as victims can be exposed on a larger scale without clear physical or temporal boundaries, leading to significant psychological effects on the mental health of those affected.

UNICEF, through its official website, reports that the majority of adolescents have

been victims of online violence. According to UNICEF, more than 70% of adolescents worldwide have experienced online violence, cyberbullying, and digital harassment. The global children's organization conducted a survey among adolescents from 160 countries. Data from UNESCO indicate that the proportion of children and adolescents affected by cyberbullying ranges from 5% to 21%, with girls at higher risk than boys [Khaliq, 2019].

Cyberbullying is most commonly reported on YouTube at 79%, followed by Snapchat at 69%, TikTok at 64%, and Facebook at 49%. As children grow older, the likelihood of experiencing cyberbullying increases. Between the ages of 10 and 18, with a two-year age interval, the chance of experiencing cyberbullying increases by 2% [Security.org, 2023].

In Indonesia, data published by UNICEF in 2022 revealed that 45% of 2,777 Indonesian children surveyed admitted to being victims of cyberbullying [Wisprianti & Sari, 2021]. Other statistics show that around 42% of children have experienced cyberbullying, 35% have been threatened online, 58% acknowledged frequently encountering online harassment and insults, and 58% admitted that they did not report the cyberbullying incidents to their parents [Barus & Dwiana, 2016].

In this digital era, social media has become an important part of people's lives, one of which is Twitter (X). Twitter (X) is an app and website that offers a social networking platform in the form of microblogging, allowing users to send and read messages commonly known as tweets. Having a Twitter (X) account enables individuals to access various types of information according to their needs and interact with other Twitter (X) users.

In 2021, the majority of Twitter (X) users were from the 35-44 age group, representing 28.4%, followed by the 25-34 age group at 26.6%, the 18-24 age group at 25.2%, the 45+ age group at 12%, and the 13-17 age group at 7.8% [Annur, 2022]. This indicates that adolescents are becoming increasingly familiar with using Twitter (X). The continuous availability of internet access on smartphones also contributes to the growing number of adolescents using Twitter (X). Generally, adolescents use the platform for interacting, seeking information, and expressing their feelings through tweets [Saifulloh & Ernanda, 2018].

Victims of cyberbullying on social media, including Twitter (X), are not limited to celebrities or public figures; many are ordinary people who are suddenly attacked by other Twitter (X) users. In fact, victims of cyberbullying often include adolescents or even middle school students. Adolescents who face cyberbullying on Twitter (X) often find themselves in complex and challenging situations.

When engaging in self-disclosure, adolescents' reactions to their cyberbullying experiences vary. Some feel comfortable sharing their experiences openly, using the platform as a means to seek support from friends or family. These adolescents may express feelings of hurt, confusion, or anxiety related to the bullying they have endured.

On the other hand, some adolescents are hesitant to disclose their cyberbullying experiences. They may fear negative consequences or judgment from others, leading

them to limit the information they share or refrain from discussing the experience altogether. Adolescents who face cyberbullying also often engage in selective self-disclosure, revealing only a small portion of their experience while keeping certain details private to protect their privacy, yet still remain open to select individuals.

Victims of cyberbullying often experience differences in their level of openness between social media and real life. Some victims feel more open on platforms like Twitter (X) because they can express their emotions anonymously. However, in real life, they may be more reserved, fearing judgment or ostracization from their social environment. Nevertheless, the degree of openness can vary from individual to individual. Some may remain consistent in their openness across both realms, while others may compartmentalize the two to protect themselves. These differences in openness on social media and in real life can serve as a self-protection mechanism for victims of cyberbullying.

According to a study by Jooyeon Won & DongBack Seo [2017], titled “Relationship Between Self-disclosure and Cyberbullying on SNSs”, individuals who frequently share personal information actively are more likely to experience cyberbullying, whether through comments or written messages, as well as images or videos. However, those who share personal information passively (infrequently or sparingly) are less likely to experience written cyberbullying, although there is a slight negative correlation with visual cyberbullying. In essence, people who are less active in sharing information are less likely to become victims of cyberbullying compared to those who share more frequently.

Another relevant study by Renwen Zhang & Jiawei Sophia Fu [2020], titled “Privacy Management and Self-Disclosure on Social Network Sites: The Moderating Effects of Stress and Gender”, found that privacy concerns are negatively associated with the amount, intimacy, and honesty of self-disclosure on social networking sites. However, stress levels moderate this relationship. The more stress an individual experiences, the weaker the negative relationship between privacy concerns and the amount and intimacy of self-disclosure.

Additionally, Debi Prahesti Candra Sari's [2017] research, “Self-Disclosure in Adolescent Victims of Cyberbullying”, revealed that the self-disclosure of cyberbullying victims significantly decreases after experiencing cyberbullying, as they become more closed off to their surroundings.

Considering the reality faced by adolescents who have been victims of cyberbullying on social media, particularly on Twitter (X), the author is interested in exploring **“How is self-disclosure among adolescent in cyberbullying cases on Twitter (X)?”** It is evident that during their teenage years, individuals go through a phase of ambivalence and tend to search for their identity in various ways, including by exploring the outside world. However, it is not uncommon for them to encounter negative experiences in their interactions on social media.

2 Methodology

Research methodology is defined as a form of scientific activity that is planned, structured, and systematic, with specific objectives, both practical and theoretical [Raco, 2010]. The research conducted utilizes a qualitative method, which enables the researcher to describe and explain an event comprehensively using verbal language without reliance on numerical data.

The approach used in this qualitative research is the phenomenological approach. This is because the research aims to gain a deep understanding of the subjective experiences of adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying on Twitter (X). Qualitative research with a phenomenological approach seeks to describe the essence of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspective of those who have experienced it.

This research was conducted indirectly, with observations made on social media Twitter (X) and online interviews. The informants or subjects of this research are adolescents aged 14-18, who own a Twitter (X) account, are Indonesian citizens, have experienced or become victims of cyberbullying, and have experienced cyberbullying within the last three years. The informants involved in this research have given their consent, and their identities are kept confidential in the research report.

The data collected by the researcher comes from sources at the research location. The data consists of historical information regarding adolescents who have become victims of cyberbullying on Twitter (X). In this case, the researcher uses two types of data: Primary Data and Secondary Data. Primary Data is collected indirectly through social media Twitter (X), which includes interviews, documentation, and observations of the informants' Twitter feeds. Secondary Data is gathered by searching for and collecting similar data from previous research. This includes data from academic publications, electronic news, and other written information.

In this research, the data collection technique involves conducting interviews via video call or chat to obtain information and insights from the informants through pre-prepared questions. Additionally, the researcher uses the Purposive Sampling technique. Purposive Sampling is a method of sample selection where the researcher deliberately chooses participants or sampling units based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives.

The data analysis technique used in this research is the Miles and Huberman model. Miles and Huberman, as cited in Sugiyono's book [2005], state that activities in qualitative data analysis are interactive and continuous until the data is saturated. The data analysis process involves three main activities: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a serious issue that involves the use of digital platforms to intimidate, harass, or harm individuals or groups. This can manifest in various forms, including sending hurtful messages, spreading rumors, sharing embarrassing information, or even creating fake profiles to impersonate someone. Cyberbullying can have severe

emotional and psychological impacts on victims, such as anxiety, depression, and even thoughts of self-harm. According to UNICEF's official website, cyberbullying is defined as bullying that utilizes digital technology. This phenomenon can occur on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, and mobile phones [Unicef, 2020].

With the ongoing development of the internet, the various forms of cyberbullying on social media platforms have also become increasingly diverse. Adolescents and young adults face risks from multiple types of online harassment, such as cyberstalking, outing, non-consensual sharing of personal information (doxxing), social media account misuse (fraping), identity deception (catfishing), and much more. Examples of cyberbullying behaviors include sending offensive messages or emails, sharing hurtful posts on social media, spreading rumors online, distributing false or embarrassing information about others, impersonating someone online to damage their reputation, and establishing hate groups or websites targeting specific individuals [Social Media Victims law Center, 2024].

Cyberbullying can have lasting detrimental effects on the physical, mental, and emotional health of adolescents, leading to feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, decreased self-esteem, depression, as well as suicidal thoughts and behaviors, alongside gastrointestinal issues and sleep disturbances. Numerous researchers have explored the relationship between cyberbullying and suicidal behavior among adolescents, finding that individuals who experience online bullying are more likely to engage in self-harming actions and exhibit suicidal tendencies [Ju, 2023].

3.2 Self-Disclosure

Self-disclosure is a key aspect of interpersonal communication. Self-disclosure refers to revealing a situation, whether from the past or one currently being experienced. It has two sides: being open to others and being open for others. In other words, self-disclosure means that the communicator is open to their audience, and the audience, in turn, is also open to the communicator [Hanani, 2017].

In its development, the process of self-disclosure occurs not only through face-to-face communication but has expanded into written, auditory, and even visual forms via internet-based technology. There are two main assumptions of self-disclosure [Nurdin, 2020], which are:

1. Self-disclosure is carried out by individuals to achieve personal social goals, which include self-clarification, relational development, social validation, and social control.
2. Self-disclosure has a dyadic effect, meaning that two people involved in communication have an equal level in conversation, correlation, and encourage reciprocal self-disclosure.

Aspects of self-disclosure, according to Devito [1997], as cited on the Kajian Pustaka website [Riadi, 2019], are:

1. Amount: This refers to the quantity of self-disclosure, which can be measured by knowing the frequency of interactions and the duration of time an individual takes to disclose information to others.
2. Valence: This is the positive or negative nature of self-disclosure. Individuals can disclose either pleasant or unpleasant things about themselves, praise aspects of

themselves, or engage in self-deprecation. The value factor also influences the nature and level of self-disclosure.

3. **Accuracy/Honesty:** This refers to the accuracy and honesty with which an individual discloses information. The accuracy of self-disclosure is limited by the extent to which an individual knows themselves. Self-disclosure can vary in terms of honesty. An individual may be entirely truthful, exaggerate, omit important parts, or even lie.
4. **Intention:** This refers to how much individuals reveal about what they intend to disclose and their level of awareness in controlling the information they share with others.
5. **Intimacy:** This is the extent to which individuals disclose the most intimate details of their lives, from things that are personal or impersonal to things that may be entirely false.

The following presents the research finding obtained through online interviews with informants gathered via social media platform Twitter (X). The Interviews were conducted with four adolescent informants who experienced cyberbullying on Twitter (X). The first informant is Def (@fluf_yuni*co*n), a 17-year-old female from Palembang who experienced sexual harassment and threats of personal information disclosure. The second informant is Kampang (@ka*alket*pan*), an 18-year-old male from Surabaya, who received hate speech. The third informant is Eas (@e_z*et*a), a 17-year-old female from Pekanbaru, who became a victim of body shaming. Lastly, the fourth informant is Er (@rm*ul*m**am) a 17-year-old female from Salatiga, who experienced terror and revenge porn.

Self-disclosure in real life occurs through direct interactions with others, such as family members, close friends, or partners. This process involves deep and personal verbal and non-verbal communication. However, the low level of anonymity and the high risk of social judgment or stigma often discourage many adolescent victims of cyberbullying from revealing their experiences. Barriers such as shame and fear of rejection further reinforce this reluctance.

From the research results, it was found that out of the four informants, only one, the fourth informant, stated that they shared their experience with trusted individuals in their real life. In self-disclosure, there are several aspects used to assess one's openness [Riadi, 2019], namely:

1. **Amount**
In real life, self-disclosure tends to be more limited in quantity. Out of the four informants, only one disclosed their experience in real life. This individual shared their experience of cyberbullying on Twitter (X) with a close friend they trusted, in a more private and limited setting.
2. **Valence**
Self-disclosure in real life tends to focus on the negative aspects of the cyberbullying experience. The victim shares their pain, fear, and sadness in depth, often in a serious and emotional interaction.
3. **Accuracy/Honesty**
The victim who opens up in real life feels the need to be honest and accurate when disclosing their experience due to the direct interaction with the listener. This

often requires great courage, as there is a risk of receiving an immediate emotional response from others.

4. Intention

The intention behind self-disclosure in real life is usually to seek concrete emotional support. The victim hopes to receive direct and deep support from close individuals who can provide emotional assistance.

“...about the incident I experienced, I shared it with my trusted close ones...”
(Informant 4).

This statement from the informant reflects their choice to share their experience with trusted individuals to gain emotional support and recovery.

5. Intimacy

Intimacy in real-life self-disclosure is higher due to direct contact and face-to-face interaction. The informant feels that speaking to someone in person creates a stronger emotional bond and more personal support.

Self-disclosure on Twitter (X) offers a higher level of anonymity, allowing adolescent to share their experiences more comfortably and safely. Users can use anonymous or pseudo accounts that protect their real identities.

The four adolescent victims of cyberbullying interviewed expressed that they preferred to talk about their experiences on Twitter (X). Even though one of the four informants also disclosed their experiences in real life, this individual also engaged in self-disclosure on Twitter (X), meaning they practiced self-disclosure in both spaces. Two of the informants mentioned that their anonymous Twitter (X) accounts gave them a sense of security to talk about their experiences without fear of being judged directly. Additionally, the support from other Twitter (X) users provided them with a sense of emotional support after experiencing cyberbullying. This can be observed through the aspects of self-disclosure:

1. Amount

In terms of self-disclosure on social media Twitter (X), all four informants stated that they preferred to disclose their experiences on the platform. They used social media as a space to speak more freely.

The four adolescent victims of cyberbullying interviewed expressed that they preferred to talk about their experiences on Twitter (X). Even though one of the four informants also disclosed their experiences in real life, this individual also engaged in self-disclosure on Twitter (X), meaning they practiced self-disclosure in both spaces.

Based on the researcher's observation of the Twitter (X) feeds of these four adolescent cyberbullying victims, all of them wrote about the incidents they experienced as a way of defending themselves, seeking help, and finding emotional support.

2. Valence

In terms of valence, the information shared on Twitter (X) includes a mix of positive and negative valence. The victims shared their negative experiences but also received support and positive comments from other Twitter (X) users.

“When I spoke up, I still got weird DMs. But many people also sent me words of encouragement, including you” (Informant 1).

“Not everything I received was hate speech. Some people gave me support in

DMs. Even in the comments, some shared interesting perspectives on my experience” (Informant 2).

3. Accuracy/Honesty

The honesty of the victims in disclosing their experiences on Twitter (X) varied. From the researcher’s observation, some victims felt freer to speak honestly because their Twitter (X) accounts were anonymous, and their real profiles were not displayed.

“...from the start, I didn’t show who I was. Only a few people who follow me on Instagram know my face” (Informant 1).

4. Intention

The intention behind self-disclosure on social media—Twitter (X)—was to seek emotional support and validation from the online community. Adolescents experiencing cyberbullying on the platform sought support from others who might have similar experiences or hoped for moral support.

“So, I just vented on Twitter, and fortunately, many people supported me and gave me positive words. Although I was initially hesitant and scared of how people would react, afraid that they would say I was being overly sensitive, fortunately, many commented kindly” (Informant 3).

5. Intimacy

The intention behind self-disclosure on social media—Twitter (X)—was to seek emotional support and validation from the online community. Adolescents experiencing cyberbullying on the platform sought support from others who might have similar experiences or hoped for moral support.

The intimacy of the information shared on social media can be very high because anonymity eliminates the need for face-to-face communication. This provides a sense of safety without the fear of embarrassment or shame when disclosing personal or negative experiences.

Based on the analysis of amount, valence, accuracy/honesty, intention, and intimacy, the majority of adolescent cyberbullying victims in this study preferred to share their stories on Twitter (X). This is due to the sense of security and anonymity that allows them to express themselves without fear of direct judgment or more severe social consequences.

However, the research also shows that while informants chose to disclose in both real life and on social media—Twitter (X)—the intimacy and honesty of real-life interactions remain crucial in the emotional recovery process. Face-to-face interaction allows for a deeper and more immediate emotional response and provides more personal support.

4 Conclusion

Adolescent self-disclosure in cases of cyberbullying reveals differences between real-life interactions and those on Twitter (X). Analyzing the aspects of self-disclosure amount, valence, accuracy/honesty, intention, and intimacy shows that teenagers who experience cyberbullying tend to disclose more on social media platforms like Twitter (X) compared to real-life settings.

In real life, most teenagers choose not to share their negative experiences with others, except with trusted individuals. Adolescent who experiences cyberbullying are more likely to disclose themselves in Twitter (X) rather than in real life. This preference is driven by anonymity, ease of sharing, and the presence of a supportive community that offers emotional support without direct judgment. Self-disclosure on Twitter (X) tends to be negative and emotionally driven.

Adolescents use the platform as a space to express their emotions, whether to seek support or simply to release their feelings. Fear of stigma and negative judgement is the primary reason they refrain from self-disclosure in real life. They worry about being judged, blamed, or perceived as weak if they share their experiences with people around them.

Twitter (X) feels like a more comfortable place to share their experiences than speaking to people in real life. Therefore, based on research conducted in the aspect of intimacy, victims feel more comfortable sharing their cyberbullying experience on the social media platform Twitter (X) because victims do not need to communicate directly or face-to-face with people, so that victims feel more comfortable and do not need to feel ashamed of the incident they experience because the account they have is anonymous and does not show their real identity.

The findings of this study support the theory of self-disclosure by demonstrating that social media platforms such as Twitter (X) play a crucial role in shaping the self-disclosure patterns of adolescent victims of cyberbullying. Twitter (X) serves as a safe space for them to express their emotions, albeit with certain consequences.

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