Cyberbullying for Chinese Indonesian Youth: The Impacts and The Coping Strategies

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Abstract. This study examined the cyberbullying impact on young people, as well as coping strategies to deal with it. The significance of this study was to find appropriate strategies to minimize the adverse effects of cyberbullying related to personal lives, studies, and work. Additionally, this study tried to prevent someone from becoming an unexpected cyberbully by describing the types of cyberbullying that might be done. The approach used was a qualitative method using thematic analysis to analyze the data. This study involved 15 Chinese Indonesian participants with religion Christian and Catholic, from aged 19 to 22 years old, who were studying at Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia in 2022. To summarize, increasing socialization about the forms of cyberbullying, how victims deal with it, what to do when witnessing cyberbullying, and how to decrease the tendency to be cyberbullies should be done to significantly reduce the bad effects of cyberbullying.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, victims of cyberbullying, forms of cyberbullying, Chinese Indonesian youth

1. Introduction

Cyberbullying can be defined as intentional repetitive action and is carried out to harm others through technologies such as e-mail, cell phone messaging, social networks, websites, chat rooms and instant messaging [1]. Many studies in many countries such as the US, Germany, and Indonesia, showed that cyberbullying had a significant impact on health [2,3,4,5]. In addition, it also had negative effects on mental health such as increasing anxiety and low self-esteem [6]. Moreover, cyberbullying could have negative impacts on decreasing well-being and even in some cases, it made its victims commit suicide [7,8].

Consequently, cyberbullying should receive special attention so that it does not have a bad impact on young people. Therefore, many studies on cyberbullying have been carried out in Indonesia such as those carried out on Instagram and WhatsApp as well as in the form of literature studies [9,10,11]. However, the research other than the literature study was conducted

before the covid 19 attack, so it was necessary to look at the impact of cyberbullying after covid 19.

This research complemented existing research in Indonesia by looking at cyberbullying from the side of Chinese Indonesian youth who are Christian and Catholic. This study aimed to look at from both sides as victims and perpetrators, so it had two research questions: (1) How did these young people deal with the cyberbullying they receive? (2) What did they do to reduce their tendency to become cyberbullies?

On one hand, this research explored cyberbullying received by young people along with the strategies used to deal with it. Therefore, this study was expected to explore the accepted forms of cyberbullying and the strategies they used to minimize its negative impacts. On the other hand, this research also looked at the tendency of potential cyberbullies and how to reduce this tendency. Hence, this research was expected to contribute to reducing the adverse effects of cyberbullying.

2. Method

This study used a qualitative research approach where a set of open questions was presented to all participants in face-to-face meetings and conversations over the phone or on the Internet. In oral and written form, all questions and answers were in Indonesian.

The given questions consisted of two sets: being a victim and being a perpetrator. Initially, questions were given in written form. However, the participants stated that they could not express their opinion at length if it was in written form, so they wanted the answer to be given orally. Questions were first sent to the participants for the study. Then according to the agreed schedule, they answered verbally via face-to-face. All answers given by participants were recorded as archives.

The approach used a qualitative method using thematic analysis to analyze the data. This study involved 15 Chinese Indonesian participants with religion Christian and Catholic, aged 19 to 22 years old, who are studying at Petra Christian University, Surabaya, Indonesia. The participants could be categorized as gender-balanced consisting of 8 women and 7 men.

For data analysis, this research used thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data [12]. The data analysis technique has been proven effective in identifying themes that emerge from qualitative data, such as interview transcripts emphasizing the individual understanding of experiences in real-life situations [13].

Data analysis was also carried out in Indonesian to ensure that the original meaning of the data was preserved. The quotes cited in this article were translated into English after the data analysis was completed. The first step in conducting the analysis was data immersion. All data were read and understood. Then, the data was coded to mark a particular topic, for instance, code: "health" for each data related to the impacts on health. The second step was code design. Every time a new topic was found, a new code was added. This process continued until all data had been read and all topics found were coded. The third step was forming and refining the theme from steps 1 and 2. After all of the data were coded, each related code was included in one pattern/theme.

This process was continued until all code was included in a theme. In the process, one theme was able to be changed into two themes, or on the other hand, two themes were combined into one theme to make it easier to conclude. To maintain confidentiality, each data was assigned a number as the key to access the data instead of based on the participant's name. Each participant was assigned a code numbered #1 to #15.

3. Results and Discussion

The discussion of the results is divided into five parts, each of which discusses as victims and as perpetrators.

3.1. Forms of Cyberbullying

This study showed that the forms of cyberbullying received by the participants were not different from the previously known forms. First, they got insulting comments on their social media, such as on Instagram and Facebook. All participants were disturbed by negative comments on their posts.

Second, they found posts in the form of videos, pictures, and articles that made them feel bad. Actually, these posts were not addressed to them personally, but they still felt annoyed. Additionally, they also found posts that just meant to be joking. For this type, they wanted to know the motivation of the posts' creator. If they felt that it was only a joke, they would not consider it cyberbullying. Especially, if the creator was someone they know, then they laughed at the posts even if it looked like cyberbullying. In fact, in some cases they were involved in spreading it. However, they would consider it as cyberbullying when the purpose of the posts was to insult.

Third, they felt offended when their friends unfollow or unfriend them. The level of offense became even greater as their friendship grew closer. "I did not understand why they unfollowed me. I did not dare to ask directly so I tried to find out the cause from other friends. I was very uncomfortable and tried very hard to find out what I had done wrong." (#3Another participant emphasized his desire to maintain the friendship he already had. "I considered friendship, including on social media, to be very important. I wanted to maintain the friendship I already have." (#14)

Fourth, they felt cyberbullying when they were not involved in the community, such as being included in the WhatsApp Group. "I always reflect every time I was not included in the WhatsApp group. I did feel harassed." (#4)

The third and fourth parts can be considered as relational bullying which has a very big influence on victims because they felt their relationships with their friends were getting worse [14]. On the other hand, as cyberbullies, the forms used were not different from when they became victims.

These results were in-line with the existing types of cyberbullying [15]. It means that the cyberbullying received by the participants and carried out as cyberbullies did not deviate from the forms that were already known.

3.2. Reasons for accepting cyberbullying

The participants gave five different reasons why they became victims of cyberbullying: ethnicity, physical characteristics, religion, ownership, and special characteristics.

3.2.1. Ethnicity

There were two types of perpetrators who bully because of ethnicity: those from the same ethnicity and those from different ethnicities. The same ethnic group did cyberbully because the victim had characteristics, such as physical characteristics which were different from ethnic characteristics in general. A participant who has darker skin than most Chinese Indonesians was being bullied on Instagram by other Chinese Indonesians. "I once posted a photo on IG. Unfortunately, I am a dark-skinned Chinese Indonesian. As a result, many comments on the IG photo post with questions that make it uncomfortable and embarrassing." (#8)

In fact, she had been bullied since childhood because of her skin colour. Fortunately, she had already been able to accept her irreversible conditions so the negative impact of the cyberbullying was minimized.

On the contrary, there was cyberbullying that came from other ethnicities. Some participants felt bullied by the video which was not specifically aimed at her directly but her ethnicity. Of course, the creator of this video was from different ethnicity. "I have never experienced cyberbullying personally, but I had seen videos on TikTok made by a group of non-Chinese Indonesian people. They made questions and answers like who owns the shop between them. All in unison answered with their eyes made narrow by being pulled by hand. I knew it was pointed to Chinese Indonesian" (#9)

Even though it did not attack personally, videos like that made her as part of the ethnic being bullied feel uncomfortable. Everything related to ethnicity is sensitive if used as a joke, so it is better to avoid it, especially if the maker comes from a different ethnicity. This is in-line with research linking cyberbullying based on ethnicity with mental health [16].

3.2.2. Physical

All participants have normal physical characteristics; not different from most people so no participants were bullied because of their physique. However, some participants had bullied a friend with certain physical characteristics which was considered a joke when they were children. These results were consistent with research which stated that one of the main reasons for doing both cyberbullying and physical bullying was the body with special characteristics, especially disabilities [17].

> "Physically, I've never been bullied. However, I once saw my friend when in Senior High School being bullied. She posted a video on TikTok and got nasty comments about her physique." (#10)

> "I never did physical cyberbullying and never was bullied because of physics. However, I've also seen on TikTok of physical cyberbullying by editing someone's video to make it look weird so that many people can bully it." (#11)

"I had never experienced cyberbullying but I had seen people cyberbullying others and had seen my friend became a victim because of their physical differences." (#12)

3.2.3. Religion

Religion is also the reason someone becomes a victim of cyberbullying. Even though a post was not personally offensive, participants felt bullied if they attacked or insulted their religion. "I often saw on social media that many posts from the majority religion mocked Christianity. This is ironic because it did not seem to be a big problem. However, otherwise, it would immediately go viral and be blasphemed." (#13)

This participant felt aware of his condition so that he could respond more wisely. However, he felt bad and had been treated unfairly. Cyberbullying based on religion is a sensitive reason if accepted by the participants, just like many studies that look for the effect of cyberbullying based on religion [18]. Moreover, all participants were Christian and Catholic, so they felt they could not do much if they found posts that insulted their religion.

3.2.4. Ownership

A person's ownership is often the main requirement to join a particular community. There were communities based on ownership of very specific brands such as the community of BMW car owners. Not having goods owned by a community means not being a member of the community.

This condition was also the cause of cyberbullying. "When all my friends have I-phone and I have androids, I feel like I'm not a member of the community. When they were engrossed in discussing the I-phone, I felt ostracized. Especially if someone posts as if mocking, this will make me feel bad." (#1)

The same thing happens when someone does not own a branded item that many friends in their community have. They did not have to have goods from the same brand but must have branded goods so they could be recognized as members of the community. "When I only used unbranded bags, my friends started cyberbullying subtly. I knew myself so I did not consider being part of their community because I really did not have the money to buy a branded bag." (#6)

The same case also occurs when someone is not able to do the same activities as members of a community. "I could not go on vacation to Thailand with them. As a result, they thought that I was not compatible with this community. Though, the real reason was that I did not have any money. From then on, I felt like I did not belong in their community." (#3)

The participants' opinion was in line with research on the relationship between cyberbullying and cell phone ownership in adolescents [19]. People who do not own an item can be considered as not a member of the community, accordingly giving reasons for cyberbullying.

3.2.5. Special Characteristics

A person's unique characteristics can be used as the basis for cyberbullying. One participant has a unique name then many of his friends used his name as a joke. In fact, his teacher also called him by that name. As a result, his close friends who meant to joke did not even realize they were bullying him. "My name is Ho, my friends changed it to Kimia H2O. Initially, I really hated the name and asked my parents to change it. Fortunately, my mother explained the meaning of the name which was actually quite extraordinary. Finally, I could accept it gratefully when my friends joked with that name. (#5)

There was a participant whose parent is a pastor. As a result, a lot of cyberbullying was directed at him based on the characteristics of his parents. "Whatever I did, especially the bad ones, I got comments from my friends. They always linked my actions with being a pastor's son. In fact, I'd be happier if what I did wasn't tied to my parents." (#6)

Perpetrators cyberbully people who they think have strange names because they feel their names are better than the names of the victims, so they feel they deserve to belittle the victims. Similarly, the perpetrator cyberbullied the pastor's son for the same reason. However, the perpetrator might feel jealous because their parents are not a pastor [20]. Indeed, the perpetrator could have many reasons to cyberbully.

3.3. Coping Strategies

All participants have succeeded in minimizing the negative impact of cyberbullying so that the strategy they describe is a success story from their struggle. The results of this research were relatively the same as the research on success stories in dealing with cyberbullying in Thailand using strategies: do nothing, react, share to others, and use technical solutions [21].

3.3.1. Do Nothing

When receiving cyberbullying, some participants chose to remain silent and do nothing. They were actually sad but did not know how to respond to cyberbullying directed at them. "At first, I was sad. My skin colour has been like this since birth, I could not choose. Finally, I could see my skin tone as unique. Then, nowadays, I could smile if any of my friends joke about that skin colour. (#8)

The situation for victims will get worse if they cannot accept conditions that cannot be changed. Moreover, if cyberbullying remains massive then the impact can get worse and even commit suicide.

Fortunately, they were able to accept conditions that they cannot change. They must do introspection to determine the appropriate course of action when receiving cyberbullying. "When cyberbullying, I would first ask myself what was the cause. If I did not make any mistakes, then I will ignore it and continue my life? Life is very beautiful just to be angry." (#9). This opinion is very appropriate because one of the successful ways to overcome both cyberbullying and physical bullying and will not become cyberbullies is to learn to deal with stress and anger [22].

3.3.2. React

While in the process, many of the participants responded immediately without thinking comprehensively when they received cyberbullying. They have not been able to contain their emotions so they immediately take revenge. They did not think about the repercussions of their countermeasures. This was the opinion of the participants when they were still easily aroused by emotions. "I became angry and insulted their ethnicity. It ended up in a big fight. (#3 #4)

Actions like this will usually cause bigger problems. Fortunately, they were able to think before they react. "When I saw a video that insults my ethnicity, it did not feel good. However, I found that many considered the video as a joke so there were no comments that blaspheme the video. I was just thinking, what will happen if the maker of a similar video like this is Chinese Indonesian and jokes about the ethnic majority. I believe there would be a lot of anger and comments that blaspheme the ethnic Chinese Indonesian who made the video." (#9)

They had to learn to decide which cyberbullying to respond to and which ones to ignore. "I always try to determine which posts should be taken seriously and which should be taken as a joke." (#7). This ability to choose requires patience, so reducing aggressive behavior is the key to success in defeating cyberbullying [23].

3.3.3. Share to others

The willingness to share what is experienced as a victim will be very helpful to overcome the bad effects of cyberbullying. One of the participants said that being close to their parents really helped them to overcome cyberbullying. "When I became a victim, I told my mother. I was comforted and supported by my mother so I was strong in dealing with cyberbullying." (#14) These results are in-line to many studies that conclude the important role of parents in overcoming and preventing cyberbullying [24].

Additionally, the community also plays a very important role in supporting the victims of cyberbullying. "When I was in elementary and middle school, I was only sad and cried when I was bullied. If I am being bullied now, I will definitely tell my friends so that they will be angry and there will be war comments." (#8) This participant understands the important role of the community in supporting him/her. These results are in agreement with many studies on the role of communities in controlling cyberbullying [25].

3.3.4. Technical Solutions

When receiving cyberbullying, some participants used technical solutions. A participant increased the ability to edit the picture. "I had experienced cyberbullying because my photos were said to be ugly. Accordingly, I learned to edit photos or use a lot of filters so that my photos look professional." (#14)

Several other participants learned to use technical facilities provided by social media such as block, unfollow, unfriend, and the like, to overcome cyberbullying. These methods were used to remove inappropriate comments. This is the same as the results of research which states that one of the effective ways to deal with cyberbullying is to use technical solutions [26].

3.4. Witnessing Bullying

When witnessing a cyberbullying incident, some participants reacted negatively. They realized that it was not good so they tried to turn it into a positive way. The most often negative reactions were to let it happen to the victim who was their friend "You were an adult" (#1 #5). In fact, the victims actually wanted support from witnesses of cyberbullying. This reaction was perceived by the victims as indifference.

Additionally, the participants laughed at the victim. "I have never cyberbullied. However, I usually laugh with other friends when we saw a friend bullied by other friends" (#2 #3). Whereas, this laughing reaction was often seen by victims as a sign of agreement with the bullying that was done to them.

On the other hand, some participants acted positively when they became witnesses of cyberbullying. They reminded the perpetrator to end the bullying. "I thought that was enough. The victim already looked uncomfortable. That was a sign to end it" (#3). "If it was too far and too harsh, I reminded him personally, such as via direct message on Instagram or Line." (#4)

In fact, some participants took further action by directly defending the victims. "I once had a friend with autism used as a joke on social media. I defended the victim by saying that it was unwise to bully an autistic child. She did not really want to be born like that either." (#14)

The action to defend victim often caused the perpetrator to cyberbully the defender, especially if the methods was not appropriate. Therefore, it is necessary to socialize the skills to properly defend the victim. This result was similar to the research which suggested equipping young people to have appropriate intervention skills for defending cyberbully victims [27]. Furthermore, the right reaction when witnessing bullying will reduce the impact on the victim. Especially for physical bullying, the right reaction can make someone not be the next victim [28].

3.5. Cyberbullies
Many participants had never done cyberbullying, while others had done it but have now stopped. Participants who never did it explained the reasons. First, they were afraid that their bullying will remain on record forever. "I never did cyberbully since a digital footprint last forever." (#1)

Secondly, they did not want their parents to be linked with the bad things they did. "I never do that. Moreover, I am a pastor's son. I don't want my parents to get shame because of my actions." (#6). Third, they actually wanted to bully but did not continue since they were aware of the consequences. So, their opinions just stopped in their mind. "I've disagreed with artist A several times. Actually, I wanted to comment negatively, but just stopped in my mind, because I realized the consequences." (#2)

Generally, an effective way to avoid cyberbullying is to learn not to mind other people's business. Thus, they have more time to do useful things than to waste time by cyberbullying. None of the participants were doing it at this time because they spend a lot of time doing their college assignments.

On the other hand, the participants who started cyberbullying were just joking. "I've done cyberbullying, but not on purpose. He is my best friend who has the same ethnicity and religion as me. At first, it was just a joke but it turned out to be taken seriously then he was so angry. When I knew he dislike and hurt, I immediately apologized." (#12)

To not be the perpetrator, one of the significant keys is to have empathy [29]. Thus, it is possible for a person not to be the perpetrator. It will happen when before starting a joke, everybody thinks about how she/he will feel and the bad impact on that person.

4. Conclusion

This study contributed to research on cyberbully since having participants who were Chinese Indonesian Christians and Catholics. Accordingly, this study showed the forms of cyberbully among participants were no different from existing forms. However, they did feel accept cyberbully when their ethnicity and religion were treated inappropriately. Additionally, they felt as victims when they were not accepted as part of a virtual community.

The strategies used by the participants when facing cyberbullying were do nothing, react, share to others, and use technical solutions. This study has shown that the negative impact of cyberbullying can be minimized by the participants. The process of dealing with cyberbullying was not easy, but it could be done with strong self-motivation coupled with support from parents and the community.

Moreover, the tendency of the perpetrator of cyberbullying could be significantly reduced when a person was able to manage stress and anger and has high empathy. Then, the sensitivity to understanding the boundary between jokes and bullying would affect a person's tendency to become an unexpected perpetrator of cyberbullying.

To summarize, increasing socialization about the forms of cyberbullying, how victims deal with it, what to do when witnessing cyberbullying, and how to decrease the tendency to be cyberbullies should be done to significantly reduce the bad effects of cyberbullying.

This study has limitations because it only looked at the current state of cyberbullying without looking at their background as children, so further research needs to be done. In addition, this research can be continued by taking participants from different ethnicities and religions. In addition, it can also be done at different age ranges, different backgrounds, and in different cities.

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