

CYBERBULLYING, HAPPINESS, AND STYLE OF HUMOR AMONG PERPETRATORS: IS THERE A RELATIONSHIP?

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Abstract

Purpose: Cyberbullying is becoming a universal concern among parent, teacher, and school. Undesirable consequences have impacted for many teenagers in the world. The current study explores the cyberbullying phenomenon among Indonesian teenagers especially to examine the style of humor and happiness as predictors of cyberbullying perpetrators.

Methodology: 156 respondents from a private senior high school at Palangka Raya city was involved in this study. Regression analysis was utilized to test the hypotheses.

Results: The result showed that only happiness, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor were related positively to the reports of cyberbullying conduct.

Implications: To lower cyberbullying among adolescents, both the family and the school must collaborate synergistically. Recommendations of the study are explained further in the article.

Keywords: *Cyberbullying, Happiness, Style of Humor, Perpetrators, Adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying is now a universal undesirable phenomenon among adolescents. The prevalence of cyberbullying in some countries shows different figures; that is estimated to range between 2% to 35%. In Sweden, the prevalence rates of cyberbullying were 5%, in China were 34.84%, in Canada were 10% ⁷. A study by Kowalski and Limber (2007) on a sample of 3767 students middle school in the United States found that 11% had been victims of cyberbullying, 7% had been cyber victims, and 4% had been cyberbullied at least once over the past couple of months. Li (2007a) found 54% of teenagers are victims of bullying and a quarter of them become victims of cyberbullying. 60% of cyberbullying victims were girls, while 52% of perpetrators of cyberbullying were the boy (Li, 2007b). Li (2007a) also found that 31.2% of teenage boys and 26.3% of adolescent girls become victims of cyberbullying, and 21.9% in teenage boys and 13.4% in adolescent girls were cyberbullied by their peers. In Asia sample, Huang and Chou (2013) reported from 545 junior-high-school students in Taiwan as much as 64% of the students reported having witnessed cyberbullying, 35% were cyberbullied, and 20.4% had cyberbullied others. Research by Faryadi (2011) on a sample of 365 university students found 16.6% of them had bullied someone outside the university between two and three times a month.

Moreover, most of the previous studies published in the journal show that work on cyberbullying was conducted in Europe and the United States with few studies conducted on Asian countries. Only one study conducted on Turkey which examined the relationship between sense of humor with cyberbullying perpetrators. In the literature of cyberbullying studies, there are few studies of cyberbullying that focusing on perpetrators. This study wants to fill the gaps and will provide an explanation of how a sense of humor influence the perpetrators. Meanwhile, in a cross-cultural perspective, it is important to examine the existing study from other cultures are generalizable across other cultures samples. Therefore, the current study was intended to extend the literature by specifically investigating the relationship between sense of humor, happiness, and cyberbullying among perpetrators.

Cyberbullying Phenomenon

Cyberbullying is an action of insulting, threatening, and deploying personal information via the internet and mobile phone carried by a person or group Cyberbullying can also be done via email, SMS, and also via video. The past research shows that cyberbullying conduct through mobile phone is higher than via the Internet, it is encouraged by the advancement of Android-based mobile phone that can be directly connected to the Internet. Some types of cyberbullying that can be identified as (a) 'Flaming' which is posting angry and vulgar content about someone, (b) 'Online harassment', where

offensive messages sent to someone, (c) 'Cyberstalking' is including threats, intimidation or repeatedly messaging with the intention to stalk the victim. (D) 'Denigration' (put-downs) is vicious statements about the victim (e) 'Masquerade' is pretending to be someone else, (f) 'Outing' is sending or posting material about the victim that contains private or embarrassing information, (G) 'Exclusion' Occurs when one person is singled out of an online group.

Previous studies have described the undesirable effects of cyberbullying, such as higher levels of symptoms of anxiety, and suicide attempts, lower school performance, low involvement in schools, an increase in depressive symptoms, ideation suicide, self-harm, and attempted suicide, a decrease in concentration, increased school absences, and decreased school performance, increase aggression reactive, aggression instrumental, depression and somatic symptoms, have more mental health problems and drug abuse, trigger suicide attempts, and low self-esteem on both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying, also increase school refusal, symptoms of depression and suicide. In qualitative research, the results showed that 68% of victims reported experiencing the impact of social and emotional behavior combined for each experience cyberbullying. The above research shows that the incidence of cyberbullying is not just isolated to a single domain; not cutting impact in some areas.

Style of Humor and Cyberbullying

[Martin et al.](#) have developed a new model to explain a sense of humor as a multi-dimensional personality feature. According to this model, the humor has two aspects; they are adaptive and maladaptive. Adaptive humor is divided into two, namely affiliative humor and self-developer humor. People with affiliative humor tell and share funny things to make other people laugh. They make jokes for positive purposes, namely to entertain themselves and others. People with self-developer of humor use humor to overcome problems and stress, as well as use it to relieve negative feelings.

Maladaptive humor divided into two, namely self-defeating humor and aggressive humor. Self-defeating humor occurs when humor is used to debase and belittle himself to make others laugh. In other words, making himself a laughingstock and ridicules deliberately. Aggressive humor demonstrated by using humor to debase others or satisfy himself to make other people become a laughingstock/ ridicule. The previous research shows that adaptive humor associated with positive things. Individuals who adopt adaptive humor had healthy physiological conditions have well developed interpersonal relationship, optimism, show high self-acceptance, and able to handle stress better.

Meanwhile, maladaptive humor indicates otherwise. [Kuiper et al.](#) study showed maladaptive humor that is used by teens tends to cause interpersonal conflict because it used to embarrass another person. [Yerlikaya](#) study showed that individuals with higher anxiety and depression turned out to be more use of self-destructing humor style. A person with maladaptive humor, especially aggressive humor tends to use humor to denigrate and humiliate others for the sake of ego-satisfaction. A person with aggressive humor has a tendency to use sarcasm and vulgar message in social media platform, as they also have a tendency of psychopathy. This study wants to examine whether maladaptive humor has a relationship with cyberbullying conduct among perpetrators.

Happiness and cyberbullying

Happiness is a very important thing in the lives of individuals. Happiness is associated with life satisfaction and quality of life. Happiness is related to the individual's subjective experience which is primarily concerned with the high positive effect that is owned by an individual and high life satisfaction. Several previous studies showed links between cyberbullying with happiness. [Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Lehto](#) found the victim of cyberbullying experienced decreased happiness. Also, the victims of cyberbullying experienced depressive tendencies. [Ali Padir, Eroglu, and Caliska](#)⁶ in their research from 274 samples of students found a significant negative correlation between happiness with cyberbullying victimization. [Navarro et al.](#) corroborate previous research that found a decrease of subjective well-being both the perpetrators and the victims. Happy people tend to make their circle happy because they want to share their happiness with others. Otherwise, unhappy people tend to be dislike and jealous when seeing others happy. They want to ruin others' happiness with aggressive conduct such as cyberbullying that happens in social media. Therefore, this study wants to examine whether an unhappy person tends to be involved in cyberbullying conduct.

Aim of the present study

Based on these researches, it is thought that identifying the type of humor used and happiness related to cyberbullies conduct will be an important source for researchers to understand the nature of cyberbullying behavior. Since there were limited researches in this subject, studying the humor styles of cyberbullies will be an important contribution to the literature. In this context, the present study investigated the influences of humor styles and happiness on cyberbullying

perpetration. To this end, the following hypotheses are developed for the present study:

H1. There are correlations between the humor styles and cyberbullying perpetration.

H2. The humor styles have a significant correlation to cyberbullying perpetration.

H3. Happiness has significant correlation to cyberbullying perpetration.

METHOD

Respondents

A total of 156 adolescents from a private senior high school at Palangka Raya city filled out questionnaires. They were involved voluntarily and had signed in informed consent. Age range of respondents between 16-18 years old ($M_{age} = 15.5$; $SD = .613$). 68 (43.6%) of boys adolescent and 88 (56.4%) of girls adolescent were involved in this study.

Questionnaires

The initial questionnaire was piloted among 35 students from one senior high school using convenience sampling. They were asked to read carefully the questions and to highlight any words/sentences that were ambiguous or difficult to understand. The majority agreed that the questionnaire was straightforward and thus easy to understand. There were two parts in the questionnaire, with the first focusing on the socio-demographic details of the participants, and the second focusing on cyberbullying conduct, sense of humor, and happiness. Content validity using professional judgment was applied. The internal consistency reliability using Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability of all questionnaire.

Cyberbullying

One item was used to measure the frequency of cyberbullying conduct. The items were modified from previous research. The questionnaire asked how many times the person does cyberbully recently. The item is "*Do you ever bully others by using the internet in social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)?*" Participants were asked to indicate the degree each item applied to them using a 5-point response format ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (almost every day).

Sense of humor

The sense of humor scale was used by [Martin et al.](#), for data collection. The results of the reliability testing generated 15 items. The sense of humor scale consisted of 4 types of humor, namely: affiliative humor ("*I rarely make other people laugh by telling funny stories about myself*"), self-developing humor ("*If I am feeling depressed, I can usually cheer myself up with humor*"), self-defeating humor ("*I let people laugh at me or make fun at my expense more than I should*") and aggressive humor ("*If someone makes a mistake, I will often tease them about it*"). Participants were asked to indicate the degree each item applied to them using a 4-point response format ranging from 1 (*extremely not agree*) to 4 (*extremely agree*). The test result of internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alpha showed satisfactory results (affiliative humor $\alpha = .686$), (self-developing humor $\alpha = .662$), (self-defeating humor $\alpha = .657$), and (aggressive humor $\alpha = .654$).

Happiness

The sense of humor scale was adapted from [Hills and Argyle](#) for data collection. The results of the reliability testing generated 15 items ("*I am intensely interested in other people,*" "*I feel that life is very rewarding,*" "*I have very warm feelings towards almost everyone,*" "*I rarely wake up feeling rested*"). Participants were asked to indicate the degree each item applied to them using a 4-point response format ranging from 1 (*extremely not agree*) to 4 (*extremely agree*). The test result of internal consistency reliability with Cronbach alpha showed satisfactory results (happiness $\alpha = .678$).

Data analysis

The main goal of the study is to examine the relationship between sense of humor, happiness and cyberbullying among perpetrators. Multiple regressions were used to determine the predictors for cyberbullying. The data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 20). While descriptive statistics were used to analyze respondents' demographic profiles.

RESULT

A total of 31 (19.9%) adolescents use the internet for an hour, 40 (25.6%) adolescents use the internet for 2 hours, 33 (21.2%) adolescents use the Internet for three hours, and a total of 52 (33.3%) adolescents use the Internet for more than three hours.

hours. If viewed from the purpose of the internet use, then there were 62 (39.7%) teens spend more time using the Internet to perform tasks, 53 (34%) teens to online social media, and 41 (26.3%) adolescents spent for the purpose of playing games online. A total of 112 (71.8%) never did cyberbully, 34 (21.8%) did cyberbully once or twice, 7 (4.5%) did cyberbully several time, and 3 (1.9%) did cyberbully often.

The result showed that only happiness, self-defeating humor, and aggressive humor were related positively to the reports of cyberbullying conduct. Pearson correlations analysis was utilized to test the hypotheses (see Table 1). Happiness was correlated negatively with cyberbullying ($r = -.161, p < .01$). Self-defeating humor was correlated positively with cyberbullying ($r = .262, p < .01$); and aggressive humor was correlated positively with cyberbullying ($r = .457, p < .01$); affiliative humor was not significantly correlated with cyberbullying ($r = .121, p > .05$); and self-developing humor was not significantly correlated with cyberbullying conduct ($r = .086, p > .05$).

Table 1: Intercorrelations and Reliability Coefficients for Sense of Humor and Cyberbullying Variables.

	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cyberbully	-	-	-.161	.121*	.086	.262**	.457**
Happiness	.678	-.161**	-	.345**	.154*	-.152*	-.021
Affiliative humor	.686	.121	.345*	-	.220**	-.126	.131
Self developing humor	.662	.086	.154**	.220*	-	.014	.172*
Self defeating humor	.657	.262*	-.152**	-.126	.014	-	.242*
Aggressive humor	.654	.457*	-.021	.131	.172**	.242**	-

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

To answer the research question, which types of sense of humor and happiness uniquely predict reports of cyberbullying, a multiple regression was computed. The result shows that the sense of humor and happiness predicted cyberbullying conduct $F(11.041)=24.465, p < .01, R^2 = .269, R^2_{adj} = .245$. Happiness was significant predictor for cyberbullying conduct ($\beta = -.182, t = -2.441, p < .001$) Only two variables of sense of humor were significant predictors; self defeating humor ($\beta = .158, t = 2.157, p < .001$); and aggressive humor ($\beta = .393, t = 5.320, p < .001$); meanwhile, affiliative humor ($\beta = .150, t = 1.951, p > .05$), and self developer humor ($\beta = .011, t = .150, p > .05$) were not significant. There was no evidence of multicollinearity for each of the predictors: affiliative humor (Tolerance = .910, VIF = 1.099), self developer humor (Tolerance = .930, VIF = 1.075), self defeating humor (Tolerance = .917, VIF = 1.090), and aggressive humor (Tolerance = .905, VIF = 1.105). Unstandardized betas, standard errors, and standardized betas for both regressions are presented in Table 2. Therefore, among the type of sense of humor which is intercorrelated, aggressive humor proved to be the most unique predictor for cyberbullying.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis for Sense of Humor predicting cyberbullying (N=156).

	B	SEB	beta	t
Happiness	-.030	.013	-.182**	-2.411
Affiliative Humor	.056	.029	.150**	1.951
Self Developer Humor	.005	.030	.011	.150
Self-Defeating Humor	.054	.025	.158**	2.157
Aggressive Humor	.146	.027	.393*	5.320
$F(11.041) = 24.465, p < .01, R^2 = .269, R^2_{adj} = .245$				

* $p < .01$, ** $p < .05$

DISCUSSION

The result indicates that from 156 respondents, 44 (28.2%) respondents cyberbullied others within the last 6 months in a social media platform. This result is in line with Balakrishnan study that indicates a low level of cyberbullying conduct in the samples. However, this prevalence is not to be ignored, and should be taken for the attention of authority, parents, and related stakeholders.

The present study also examined the relationship between happiness and the style of humor with cyberbullying conduct. Our

hypotheses were supported that happiness was significant correlates of cyberbullying conduct. The relationship was small suggesting that happiness plays some role in cyberbullying conduct. The previous research shows that happy individuals more energetic and passionate than individuals who are not happy. Besides, individuals who are happy are also more able to socialize with the surrounding environment. Individuals who are happy also have adequate self-esteem. But otherwise unhappy individuals who have low self-esteem is difficult to socialize and less able to empathize with others.

Sometimes unhappiness encourages teenagers bullying others to get immediate satisfaction. The feeling of envy that does not like to see other people happy, bring the desire to bullying others, so victims feel the unhappiness which is felt by the perpetrators. This research is corroborated by [Uusitalo-Malmivaara and Lehto](#) study that found the victim of cyberbullying has experienced a decrease in happiness. Also, [Navarro et al.](#) study found a decrease in subjective well-being both the perpetrators and the victims of cyberbullying.

Our hypotheses also supported that self-defeating humor and aggressive humor were significant correlates of cyberbullying conduct. Cyberbullying is characterized by insulting, harassing and degrading another person with the intention to hurt. The actions above have similarities with aggressive humor that is characterized as an act of self-satisfaction to make insulting jokes, humiliating jokes, to make fun of or lower one's social status. Individuals with high aggressive humor will have a tendency to bully others to obtain self-satisfaction and illusion of superiority.³⁸ The current study supports the findings of previous research that show there is a correlation between maladaptive humor styles namely aggressive humor and self-defeating humor with cyberbullying perpetration.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Several limitations of the current study should be declared, firstly using "self-report" as a data gathering tool is one of limitation, because it could not cover all domain of cyberbullying conduct comprehensively. This study was also being conducted only in one school, quite a small sample. Moreover, cyberbullying questionnaire that applied in this study only used one item that asks about how many time they bullied others. Finally, some suggestions were made related to the present study. To lower cyberbullying among adolescents, both the family and the school must collaborate synergistically. In the family, parents need to create a warm, love, caring, emphatic attitude, two-way communication, and emotional closeness with their children. Creating a positive family climate, it will provide a comfortable and safe place for children to fulfill their happiness. Parents should also educate their children on how to use the information technology properly. In this context, the parents also educate children about avoiding cyberbullying behavior, and how to deal with cyberbullying effectively. At school, the counselor's role is very important in designing psychoeducation programs for preventing cyberbullying conduct and create a positive school climate. The creation of a school environment that is free of bullying is highly recommended. School can also by their school counselor organize a seminar or training how to develop adaptive humor, how to use humor appropriately, and encourage the student not to use aggressive humor in any situation. Besides, teachers and counselors are encouraged to constantly remind the students to use adaptive humor.

(Ahmadi et al., 2014; Ang, 2015; Barlińska et al., 2003; Baumeister et al., 2003; Bellmore et al., 2015; Beran and Li, 2007; Cappadocia et al., 2013; Chacón et al., 2018; Crossline and Golman, 2014; Csikszentmihalyi and Hunter, 2003; De Koning and Weiss, 2002; Dredge et al., 2014; Erickson and Feldstein, 2007; Goebert et al., 2011; Gradinger et al., 2009; Hampes, 2016; Hojati et al., 2014; Kowalski et al., 2014, 2016; Låftman et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2013; Lefcourt and Thomas, 1998; Lindfors et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2003; Masui et al., 2013; Park and Peterson, 2006; Patchin and Hinduja, 2010; Peluchette et al., 2015; Peterson et al., 2007; Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2007; Safaria, 2016; Safaria et al., 2016; Sari, 2016; Schneider et al., 2012; Shariff, 2005; Tambunan, 2018; Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2009; von Marées and Petermann, 2012; Willard, 2004; Zhou et al., 2013)

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