

The relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents

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Abstract

Background: Cyberbullying is a serious problem experienced by almost all countries. In Indonesia; the highest internet users are adolescents, high internet use puts adolescents at risk of being involved in cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is bullying that is done through social media. Bullying carried out both traditionally and through social media has a psychological impact in the form of feelings of sadness and suicide attempts.

Purpose: To analyze the relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of adolescent suicide ideation.

Methods: This study was a correlational study with a cross-sectional approach of 1043 students from ten state high schools and four state vocational schools with random sampling. Adolescent involvement in cyberbullying was measured using The Second revision of the revised cyber bullying inventory-II (RCBI-II) and the risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents was measured using the Risk Factors of Suicidal Ideation (RFSI) instrument. Data analysis in research using Chi-Square test, kruskal-wallis test, and Mann-Whitney test.

Results: As many as 21.0% of adolescents involved in cyberbullying are at risk of suicidal ideation. The results of the study show that there is a relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: The risk of suicidal ideation is not only for adolescents who are involved as victims of cyberbullying but also affects adolescents who are involved as perpetrators.

Keywords: adolescents; cyberbullying; suicidal ideation

Introduction

Internet users in 2018 in Indonesia reached 171.17 million (64.8%), the highest internet users were in Java (55.7%) and in West Java (16.7%). The highest were aged 15-19 years (91%), and the highest penetration of internet users based on education level was high school students (90.2%). Based on these data, the highest internet users are adolescents. The survey results showed that 49.0% of internet users said they had been bullied on social media. As many as 31.6% do nothing when bullied, they just let it go. This shows that public awareness to follow up on cyberbullying problems is still very low.

The use of digital information and communication technology is an integral part of the daily lives of adolescents. Besides being used for positive things such as seeking information, entertainment, and communication, the use of information media and digital communication also shows the risk of cyberbullying in adolescents (Müller et al., 2014). Adolescents are one of the highest users of social media, so they are at risk of cyberbullying, which is a type of intimidation done through social media adolescents, social media users are at risk of being involved in cyberbullying 1.16 times (Müller et al., 2014). (Cole et al., 2016) adolescents who use social media are 1.16 times more likely to be involved in cyberbullying (Duarte et al., 2018). In cyberspace, forms of intimidation are carried out through information and communication technology, especially the internet, and cell

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phones, are known as cyberbullying (Garaigordobil & Machimbarrena, 2017). Cyberbullying refers to aggressive behavior that is carried out repeatedly through communication on social media that aims to frighten and harm other people (Müller et al., 2014) can reach a wider range of targets because it is done anonymously and happens at any time (Hutson et al., 2018). Cyberbullying includes abusive comments, threats, spreading rumors, and posting embarrassing photos via social media. The usual act of cyberbullying is to say harsh words and isolate someone (Chang et al., 2014; Müller et al., 2014).

Intimidation carried out both traditionally and through social media has a psychological impact in the form of feelings of sadness to suicide attempts (Merrill & Hanson, 2016). by Roberts et al. (2016) conducted Research in a Canadian psychiatry clinic on 109 adolescents as victims of cyberbullying and 108 adolescents as victims of bullying. This study showed that the problem appeared in more than two-thirds of patients most women who have a history of cyberbullying are suicidal.

The results of the study were that the problem that emerged in more than two-thirds of patients was suicidal ideation, especially in women with a history of cyberbullying. The results of research in the United States of 233 students revealed that students who were victims of cyberbullying had a much greater level of suicidal behavior (Williams et al., 2017). Research in Jakarta shows that 57.4% of adolescents are involved in cyberbullying. Cyberbullying hurts adolescents, namely an increased risk of smoking behavior and self-harm behavior (Wiguna et al., 2018). The results of research conducted in Yogyakarta showed that as many as 80% of teenagers experienced cyberbullying with intensities ranging from occasionally to almost every day. That shows that cyberbullying can be a psychological pressure for adolescents.

Cyberbullying can affect the lives of adolescents because it can have an impact on the physical and emotional health of adolescents in the long term (Hutson et al., 2018). But many don't know and understand cyberbullying and the impact of cyberbullying, especially the psychological impact experienced by adolescents who are involved in cyberbullying. Almost all countries consider cyberbullying to be a serious problem (Lozano-Blasco et al., 2020) and is common among students at school (Baldry et al., 2015; Dennehy et al., 2020; Lozano-Blasco et al., 2020; Zych, Farrington, & Ttofi, 2019). However, only a few victims report cyberbullying. The reasons that victims of cyberbullying don't ask for help are because they feel embarrassed, fear that the perpetrator will retaliate, and think that no one can take action to help them (Hoff & Mitchell, 2009).

This phenomenon shows that, although cyberbullying has a major impact on the lives of adolescents, reports of cyberbullying are rarely carried out and are considered not to be a big

problem because the impact cannot be seen directly, unlike traditional bullying. In Indonesia, there is little research on the psychological impact of cyberbullying. To increase awareness among adolescents, it is important to research cyberbullying and its relation to the psychological impact, especially suicidal ideation in adolescents. The research aims to analyze the relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of adolescent suicide ideation.

Materials and Methods

Design and participants

This study was a correlational study with a cross-sectional approach of 1043 adolescents from ten state senior high schools and four public vocational high schools in Tasikmalaya City, who were selected by random sampling. Researchers and schools selected adolescents as a random sample from four classes for each school based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria in this study were students who had gadgets and accounts on social media, active on social media for at least the last six months, log in on their social media accounts every day, and were willing to be respondents. The exclusion criteria were students who had a history of mental disorders, a history of chronic diseases, and children with special needs who were students in inclusive schools. Data collection period was May 2020 to July 2020. Data analysis used the Chi-Square test, Kruskal-Wallis test, and Mann-Whitney test.

Instruments

The Second Revision of the Revised Cyber Bullying Inventory-II (RCBI-II)

RCBI-II consists of two statement columns where each column consists of 10 items. The first column is "I did it" and the second column "It happened to me." Each column uses a Likert scale (never = 1, once = 2, 2-3 times = 3, more than 3 times = 4). If the participant gets a score of 10 in each column, it means that the participant is in the category not involved in cyberbullying. If the score in the "I did it" column is greater than the score in the "It happened to me" column, then the participant is categorized as the perpetrator, otherwise the participant is categorized as a victim (Topcua & Erdur-Bakerb, 2018).

Risk Factors of Suicidal Ideation (RFSI)

This instrument consists of 14 items and has a cut-off score of ≥ 31 , ranging from 16 to 56. If A score of ≥ 31 means the teenager has a risk of experiencing suicidal ideation. If ≤ 34 then they have a low risk of experiencing suicidal ideation (Yusuf et al., 2019).

Ethical consideration

This study obtained ethical approval from Padjadjaran University with number 27/ UN6.KEP/ EC/2020. Informed consent was obtained from each participant in this study.

Table 1. The Risk of Suicidal Ideation in Adolescents (n=1043)

Gender	No risk of suicide Ideation		Risk of Suicide Ideation		Total	
	Σ	%	Σ	%	Σ	%
Male	285	79.6	539	78.7	824	79
female	73	20.4	146	21.3	219	21
Total	358	100	685	100	1043	100

Table 2. Comparison The Risk of Suicidal Ideation in Cyberbullying Cases (n=1043)

The Risk of Suicide Ideation	Cyberbullying Characteristics				p*) Value
	Perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator/ Victim	Non-Perpetrator	
Non risk male	Non-Victim	110 (73.8%)	38(71.7%)	80(95.2%)	<0.001
Non risk female	78 (71.6%)	166(69.5%)	72 (67.3%)	223 (97.0%)	
Risk Male	15 (20.8%)	39 (26.2%)	15(28.3%)	4(4.8%)	<0.001
Risk female	31(28.4%)	73 (30.5%)	35 (32.7%)	7 (3.0%)	

*) Chi-Square Test

Table 3. Comparison Scores of Suicidal Risk Ideation in Cyberbullying Cases

The Risk of Suicide Ideation	Cyberbullying Characteristics				p*) Value
	Perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator/ Victim	Non-Perpetrator	
Median	29	30	30	26	<0.001
Range	17 – 53	16 – 59	17 – 51	16 – 53	

*) Kruskal-Wallis Test

Table 4. Comparison Scores of Suicidal Risk Ideation among Cyberbullying Characteristics

Comparison of cyberbullying characteristics	p*) Value
Perpetrator vs Victim	0.251
Perpetrator vs Victim/Perpetrator	0.214
Perpetrator vs Non-Victim/Non-Perpetrator	<0.001
Victim vs Victim/Perpetrator	0.785
Victim vs Non-Victim/Non-Perpetrator	<0.001
Victim/Perpetrator vs Non-Victim/Non-Perpetrator	<0.001

*) Mann-Whitney Test

Results

Based on Table 1, it shows that the risk of suicidal ideation among students of state senior high schools and state vocational high schools in Tasikmalaya City is mostly in the category of not at risk (79%). As many as 219 students (21.0%) were in the risk category, consisting of 73 male students (20.4%) and 146 female students (21.3%).

Based on Table 2, it shows that students who have the highest risk of having suicidal ideation are in the perpetrator and victim group (28.3% in male and 32.7% in female) and the smallest group is that not involved in cyberbullying (4.8% in male and 3.0% in female). Based on the Chi-Square test,

there was a relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents (p value <0.001, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3 and Table 4 present a comparison of the suicide ideation risk scores of the four cyberbullying groups. The results of statistical tests based on the Kruskal-Wallis test showed that the median score for the risk of suicidal ideation between perpetrators, victims, perpetrators/victims did not show any significant difference, except for groups not involved in cyberbullying. In the group that did not engage in cyberbullying, the median score for the risk of suicidal ideation was lower when compared to the other three groups. Based on the Mann-Whitney test, there was a significant difference between the

characteristics of the cyberbullying group and the group not involved in cyberbullying ($p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The current study investigates the relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation among adolescents. Adolescents who are involved in cyberbullying either as perpetrators, victims or perpetrators and victims are at risk of suicidal ideation, where adolescents who act as perpetrators and victims have a higher risk of suicidal ideation. Based on the results of the Chi-Square test, there was a relationship between cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation among adolescents ($p < 0.05$). Furthermore, the comparison between groups based on the median score showed that there was no significant difference between the perpetrator, victim, and perpetrator and victim, except for groups that were not involved in cyberbullying. The results of this analysis show that adolescents who are bound in cyberbullying either as perpetrators, victims, or perpetrators and victims have a risk of suicidal ideation.

Cyberbullying is related to a risk suicidal ideation. These results are consistent with similar studies conducted previously (Duarte et al., 2018; Goebert et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2016; Williams et al., 2017). The results showed as many as 219 adolescents (21.0%) were in the category at risk of suicidal ideation. Previous research conducted in Depok, West Java, on 207 students in two high schools showed that as many as 48.3% of students had suicidal ideation, and most of the students who had suicidal ideation were in the category of high suicidal ideation of 44.4% (Primananda & Keliat, 2019). These findings indicate that adolescents in Indonesia are vulnerable to the risk of suicide with different prevalence.

Females have a higher risk of suicide than males. The results of this research are in line with research conducted by Miranda-Mendizabal et al., (2019), which revealed that females have almost twice the risk of suicide than males. All forms of violence perpetrated on a person become a risk factor that causes adolescents to attempt suicide, both men and women. The more frequent bullying causes depressive symptoms to get worse, cause adolescents to have suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Victims of cyberbullying are 1.9 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who are not involved in cyberbullying, and cyberbullies are 1.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who are not involved in cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010).

Cyberbullying is one of the factors that cause adolescents to engage in suicidal risk behavior (Roberts et al., 2016). The results of the meta-analysis study identified 43 articles that showed a relationship between suicide attempts in children and adolescents with cyberbullying and suicidal

ideation. Suicidal ideation is more closely associated with cyberbullying than is traditional bullying (Geel et al., 2016).

Students who experienced cyberbullying in the past 12 months were four times more likely to have depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation, and five times more likely to be at risk of making more suicide attempts than students who did not experience cyberbullying (Schneider et al., 2012). Cyberbullying is positively related to depression and suicidal ideation, where depressive symptoms that adolescents feel can increase the risk for suicidal ideation (Tokunaga, 2010), which can lead to a greater likelihood of suicidal behavior (Ribeiro et al., 2016).

Several factors can influence youth involvement in cyberbullying, including individuals, family, friends, school, and internet usage (Dewi et al., 2020). Therefore, multiple approaches are needed to reduce and prevent cyberbullying. Mental nurses are assigned to reach students experiencing transitions, screening mental health in adolescents, providing a safe place for adolescents to explore their experiences of cyberbullying, and providing direction toward positive mental health (Williams et al., 2017). However, the high incidence of cyberbullying in adolescents and the absence of reports of cyberbullying is a challenge for mental health nurses. As a communicator, a mental nurse who identifies problems related to adolescents as a result of cyberbullying then communicates verbally or in writing to parents and teachers so that they can provide appropriate interventions in overcoming psychological problems faced by adolescents related to cyberbullying.

Conclusion

This study showed a relationship between adolescents' involvement in cyberbullying and the risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents. Adolescents who are involved in cyberbullying, either as perpetrators, victims or perpetrators or victims are at risk of suicidal ideation, where adolescents who act as perpetrators and victims have a higher risk of suicidal ideation. These findings indicate that adolescents in Indonesia are vulnerable to the risk of suicide, where female adolescents have a higher risk of suicide than males. Cyberbullying is a form of violence and can be one of the factors that cause adolescents to attempt suicide. Suicidal ideation as an experienced psychological impact is not only for adolescents who are involved as victims of cyberbullying but also the perpetrators and perpetrators/victims. If the idea of suicide in adolescents is allowed, it can become an act of suicide as a solution to the problems they are experiencing. To overcome problems caused by cyberbullying, especially the idea of suicide, cooperation from schools, parents, and health workers is needed to prevent and overcome the psychological impact of cyberbullying on adolescents.

Implications

This study shows that cyberbullying is high in Indonesia and is a common problem among adolescents. Cyberbullying has a psychological impact on adolescents. This study showed that suicidal ideation as an experienced psychological impact is not only for adolescents involved as victims of cyberbullying but also among the perpetrators and perpetrators/victims. As a preventive effort and to help overcome psychological problems due to cyberbullying, collaboration is needed between parents, teachers, and mental nurses in providing education related to cyberbullying to adolescents. Mental nurses can carry out health promotions to adolescents and families about the dangers of using social media and using healthy social media. Mental nurses can also provide counseling by providing emotional, intellectual, and psychological support, especially for adolescent victims of cyberbullying who are prone to experiencing psychological problems such as the risk of suicide.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declare that the disclosed information is correct and that no conflict of interest.

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