

## THE COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN HANDLING CYBERBULLYING AND ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

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### Abstract

This study discusses the role of counselors in dealing with cyberbullying and the psychological impacts it has on school students. Cyberbullying is a form of digital bullying that can cause stress, decreased academic achievement, low self-esteem, to depression and suicidal tendencies in victims. The purpose of this study is to identify the role of counselors in preventing and handling cyberbullying and effective guidance and counseling service strategies in overcoming the psychological impacts of victims. The method used is library research, data collection by searching for sources and reconstructing from various sources such as books, journals and existing research. The results of the study show that counselors act as facilitators, mediators, and educators who implement interventions in the form of awareness training, individual counseling, soft skill development, and collaboration with parents and schools. This intervention is effective in reducing negative psychological impacts such as stress and low self-esteem and improving students' mental well-being. In conclusion, counselors have an important role in creating a safe and supportive school environment through structured and collaborative guidance and counseling services to deal with cyberbullying and its psychological impacts.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying., Counselor., Psychological Impact.

### 1. Introduction

The rapid development of the information technology sector in the current era of globalization has a significant impact on the education system. Global demand encourages the education sector to adapt to technological innovation in order to improve the quality of the learning process, especially in the utilization of technology while learning. Information technology relates to advances in information systems that integrate computers and remote communication. (Baharrudin, R. 2010). The development of the internet has positive and negative consequences, especially for the younger generation. One of the bad impacts that often occurs is cyberbullying. In today's technological age, computers provide internet access with various functions. Various actions, both positive and negative, can occur on social media platforms.

Before the internet, acts of bullying were done in person in everyday life causing pain and discomfort to people. This term was known as bullying. Today, bullying can occur through a variety of different channels, such as social media, known as cyberbullying. Research by Hinduja and Patchin shows that this behavior is done intentionally using electronic media, such as emails or images that are usually uploaded on social platforms (e.g. YouTube) in a demeaning, mocking, or disruptive tone. Cyberbullying is a new form of bullying with similar characteristics and effects. Many perpetrators of cyberbullying have also been involved in acts of bullying, and it is common for victims of cyberbullying to have previously been subjected to bullying in a school setting.



Bullying may stop after the school term ends, but cyberbullying can continue anywhere. Cyberbullying is carried out in cyberspace by utilizing information and communication technology to repeatedly and intentionally hurt or humiliate others. Currently, counseling guidance (BK) teachers try to provide support to students who use gadgets, because learning activities are generally carried out online. However, on the other hand, there are some students who misuse gadgets to commit cyberbullying. The psychological impact of cyberbullying is enormous, especially for adolescents and students who are experiencing.

Victims of cyberbullying have a high risk of experiencing stress, anxiety, depression, decreased self-confidence, sleep disturbances, and even self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The role of counselors is crucial in providing psychological support, assisting the recovery process, and acting as agents of education and prevention. The counselor's responsibility is not only to assist victims, but also to raise awareness among students, teachers, and parents about the dangers of cyberbullying and the importance of digital etiquette. In today's digital era, counselors' ability to understand the dynamics of online interactions and their impact on mental health is necessary. Therefore, this article aims to further discuss the role of counselors in dealing with cyberbullying, emphasizing the psychological intervention methods that can be applied, the approaches used, and the importance of cooperation between schools, families, and communities in creating a safe and healthy digital environment.

## 2. Methods

**Methods** This article uses a library research method by reviewing various scientific literature, journals, books, and reports from relevant educational and mental health organizations. The aim is to identify and analyze the role of counselors in dealing with victims of cyberbullying, as well as strategies that can be applied in counseling practice.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Definition Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying perpetrated through digital technologies such as social media, text messaging, email, or other platforms. Examples of these acts include insults, threats, deception, or the dissemination of threatening personal information, which can cause psychological harm to the victim. Cyberbullying differs from conventional bullying in that the perpetrator can access the victim from anywhere at any time, and information can spread quickly and be difficult to delete. The consequences of cyberbullying are very serious, ranging from emotional distress, decreased academic performance, to suicide risk.

The use of communication tools to bully and bring down others, cheating, illegally spreading personal information in public, and various other open attacks that make the victim shunned by people around him are all definitions of cyberbullying according to several experts (Priyatna, 2012). "Cyberbullying" can also mean sending cruel messages on social media (Willard, 2005). In addition, Willard explains that cyberbullying includes defamatory speech, including harassment, abuse, or discrimination, and disclosing personal information with offensive, vulgar, and insulting comments. According to Hinduja and Patchin, cyberbullying is different from regular bullying because it can happen at any time and anonymously, and it spreads quickly through the

internet network. Victims find it difficult to find a safe place because of this, even in the home environment. Kowalski et al. (2012) stated that cyberbullying includes the use of technology to harass, threaten, humiliate, or negatively attack a specific person. “Cyberbullying involves the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature”, said Smith et al. (2008). This means that -Cyberbullying involves the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature.

Cyberbullying is when a person or group intentionally commits acts that hurt others repeatedly by using computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. According to Fahmi Gunawan (2018), from the various definitions of cyberbullying, it can be concluded that cyberbullying is an action carried out with the intention of hurting or humiliating others and carried out with the help of the internet or social media.

### 3.2. Types of Cyberbullying

According to Willard, the forms of cyberbullying are divided into several activities, namely: (Willard 2005)

- a. Flaming, Sending abusive, angry, vulgar messages directed at a person or persons privately or to an online group
- b. Harassment, Sending chain messages that offend others.
- c. Cyberstalking, Online stalking that usually leads to real-life stalking
- d. Denigration (put-down), Sending or posting harmful, untrue, or cruel messages about someone to another person.
- e. Impersonation, Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material that makes that person look bad or puts that person in potential danger.
- f. Outing and Trickery, Sending or posting material about someone that contains sensitive, private, or embarrassing information, including forwarding private messages or images. Engaging in tricks to solicit embarrassing information that is then made public.
- g. Exclusion, The act of specifically and intentionally excluding someone from an online group. Kowalski added one more category of cyberbullying, namely happy slapping. Happy slapping is the act of recording another person who is physically abused and then sending it via cell phone for others to see.(Harasymiw 2012)

### 3.3. Causes of Cyberbullying

Ciberbullying is caused by various factors that can trigger it, namely individual factors, family factors, school factors, friend factors, and social media abuse.

1. Individual Factors, cyberbullying is an action that is carried out with control within the individual, so this is the main factor that triggers cyberbullying. According to Merrill and Hanson, individuals who are considered weak are at great risk of cyberbullying. This is caused by several factors, namely: (Slonje, R., & Smith, P. K. 2008)cyberbullying

merupakan Tindakan yang dilakukan dengan control yang ada pada diri individu, sehingga ini merupakan faktor utama yang menjadi pemicu dari terjadinya cyberbullying. Menurut Merrill dan Hanson, individu yang dianggap lemah memiliki resiko besar dalam cyberbullying. Hal ini disebabkan oleh beberapa faktor yaitu: (Slonje, R., & Smith, P. K. 2008)

- a. Experience of Violence, The experience of violence experienced in the past can trigger this because the violence experienced by the individual holds anger, frustration and other feelings that are not channeled so that he commits this cyberbullying.
  - 1) Formation of Negative Behavior Patterns, Individuals who have experienced violence will tend to imitate the behavior they have experienced as a form of revenge for unchanneled emotions.
  - 2) Lack of Empathy Bad experiences that individuals have experienced in the past cause a reduced sense of empathy for others which makes it difficult for individuals to understand others.
  - 3) Seeking Power Individuals commit cyberbullying with the aim of showing the power they have so that they no longer experience things they don't want like in the past.
  - 4) Unsupportive Social Environment If an individual does not get support for his past from his immediate social environment, then he will look for alternatives to express his negative emotions by venting digitally by cyberbullying.
- b. Perception, The perpetrator of cyberbullying has the perception that by doing this he will have certain powers and have popularity, he also thinks that the victim he is targeting deserves this, and the perception that social media or the digital world is not real and there will be no sanctions for the actions he takes.
- c. Self-esteem and self-control Self-esteem and self-control are also factors that trigger cyberbullying actions, which are usually carried out by individuals who have high self-esteem and low self-control.
- d. Gender, Gender not only affects how a person bullies or is bullied, but also affects the type, reasons, and reactions to cyberbullying.
- e. Age, Cyberbullying can be carried out by various ages but Asthanasiou revealed that adolescents over the age of 16 have a smaller chance of committing cyberbullying.
- f. Psychological Control, Cyberbullying is usually carried out by individuals who are experiencing emotional disorders or problems so that they lack control and lead to this.
- g. Substance Use, Psychoactive substance use is associated with adolescent cyberbullying. There were significant differences between victims of cyberbullying and traditional bullying in the consumption of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs with small to moderate effect sizes. Victims of cyberbullying scored higher on the problematic use scale compared to students who did not report cyberbullying experiences, although the effect size was small. Faktor Keluarga, faktor keluarga memiliki peran besar terhadap

tindakan yang individu lakukan, cara kontrol emosi dan adaptasi sosial bermula dikeluarga. Kontrol keluarga yang minim terhadap individu dapat menyebabkan tindakan cyberbullying.

2. Friend Factors, friends can trigger individuals to commit cyberbullying because a healthy friendship environment can incite or pressure someone to commit acts of cyberbullying and friends can also provide protection to cyberbullying perpetrators.
3. School factors, schools play a major role in the formation of digital culture. The lack of direction and understanding provided by the school environment regarding the digital world can trigger abuse.
4. Use of Social Media / Internet, the use of the internet that is too excessive and used for a long duration can be a trigger factor for cyberbullying because of the stimulus - a stimulus that may be able to love cyberbullying actions. (UNICEF Indonesia. 2020)

#### 3.4 Peran Konselor Dalam Menangani Dan Mencegah Cyberbullying

Counselors have a huge responsibility in addressing and preventing cyberbullying. These roles include:

- 1) Providing emotional support: Creating a safe space for victims to share their experiences without fear.
- 2) Psychological assessment: Identifying the level of psychological impact and designing an appropriate counseling approach.
- 3) Individual and group counseling: Strengthen victims' psychological resilience and promote self-recovery.
- 4) Digital literacy education: Teaching students and parents about digital etiquette and how to deal with cyberbullying.
- 5) School and family collaboration: Establish communication between teachers, parents, and students to create a safe environment. (Rogers, C. R. 1951)

The counselor's role in dealing with cyberbullying includes three main aspects:

- 1) Psychological Intervention, Counselors conduct an initial assessment to understand the victim's psychological condition, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, or trauma. Furthermore, the counselor provides individual or group counseling services to help victims rebuild confidence, manage emotions, and find positive meaning from the bad experience.
- 2) Education and Prevention, Counselors act as digital literacy agents by educating students about the ethics of using social media, the dangers of cyberbullying, and how to report and deal with such acts. Anti-cyberbullying campaigns through seminars, posters and social media can be part of prevention efforts.
- 3) Collaboration and Advocacy, Counselors need to collaborate with teachers, homeroom teachers, parents, and school authorities to ensure comprehensive treatment of victims. In addition, counselors also become advocates to fight for the protection and rights of students from online violence.

In understanding and dealing with cyberbullying cases, several psychological theories can be used by counselors, including: Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory:5 Counselors must create an environment that is empathic, full of unconditional positive regard, and 5 Rogers, C. R. (1951). Client-Centered Therapy: Current Practice, Implications, and Theory. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. active listening. This helps the victim feel safe and valued, so as to open up and restore her self-esteem. Lazarus & Folkman's Coping Theory: Individuals deal with psychological distress through two types of coping strategies, namely problem-focused coping (facing problems directly) and emotion-focused coping (regulating emotions due to problems). Counselors help clients develop these two strategies in dealing with the stress of cyberbullying.

School counselors act as the main servants who facilitate student victims of cyberbullying by involving parents and other school components so that handling can be carried out thoroughly and effectively. They provide individual and family counseling services as a curative effort to help victims overcome the psychological impact. In addition, counselors also intervene with perpetrators and witnesses of cyberbullying to build understanding and positive behavior change. Family counseling is important so that parents have the understanding and skills to assist children, maintain harmonious relationships between children, parents and schools to support the recovery process and ongoing prevention. Thus, the counselor not only deals with the victim individually, but also seeks to improve the social system in the school.

In prevention, counselors actively design and implement preventive guidance and counseling service strategies. These strategies include awareness training, character education, soft skills development related to social media ethics, and anti-cyberbullying digital literacy. Psychoeducation involving students, teachers and parents is also organized to increase understanding of the dangers and ways to prevent cyberbullying. Counselors empower victims and witnesses to have strong confidence and self-esteem to return to school and interact socially in a healthy manner. Collaboration with class teachers, homeroom teachers, school committees, parents and related parties is key to creating a safe and conducive school environment. In addition to their roles as counselors and educators, guidance and counseling teachers also function as mediators in school-based restorative justice programs. The counselor facilitates meetings between the parties involved in cyberbullying cases to build active and empathetic communication, formulate mutual agreements, and find peaceful solutions that are accepted by all parties. This restorative justice approach is effective in reducing recurrent bullying and supporting a more positive and supportive school culture.

### 3.5 Counselor Strategies to Prevent Cyberbullying

The counselor can take several actions such as:

1. Implementing Social Emotional Learning In this context, the efforts that can be made by counselors are to provide an understanding of empathy, patience, self-control, and the ability to socialize with the hope of minimizing cyberbullying and increasing humanity.

2. Provide Comprehensive Counseling Services Counselors can provide an understanding of this by providing various services such as classical services, individual counseling, group counseling, and providing responses to the case.
3. Organize Digital Education Counselors can conduct digital campaigns and education about cyberbullying, teach ethics, how to socialize well and tips that can minimize the occurrence of cyberbullying.
4. Involve Parents and Schools Parents and schools have a big role in preventing cyberbullying with the cooperation between counselors, schools and parents is expected to have more significant control over students.

### 3.6 The psychological impact of cyberbullying

The psychological impact of cyberbullying, especially as this type of bullying often occurs anonymously and can be accessed through digital devices at any time. (Kowalski, 2014)

1. Victims of cyberbullying may experience psychological effects such as the following: psychological disorders such as anxiety, depression, decreased life satisfaction, and suicidal ideation in adolescents and young adults. They also often experience decreased happiness and negative personality changes, such as increased neuroticism and decreased extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Modecki, 2014).
2. Emotional and Social Symptoms: Victims of cyberbullying may exhibit emotional symptoms such as depression, anxiety, social phobia, and paranoia. They also tend to avoid social environments and deal with problems in friend and school relationships. They are also more likely to engage in self-destructive behaviors and consume addictive substances.
3. Suicide Risk Cyberbullying has always been associated with higher suicidal ideation, plans, and attempts for both perpetrators and victims. This risk increases after the onset of cyberbullying.

## 4. Conclusions

Cyberbullying is a form of violence perpetrated through digital media, such as social media, instant messaging or other online platforms. It involves the dissemination of messages that insult, threaten or humiliate an individual, as well as the unauthorized sharing of personal information. This form of bullying differs from traditional bullying in that it can happen anytime, anywhere, and is done anonymously, making the victim feel unsafe even in their personal environment. Various factors can trigger cyberbullying, ranging from individual conditions (such as experiences of violence, lack of empathy, and low self-control), the influence of family and friend environments, to unhealthy use of social media. Cyberbullying has a serious impact on the psychological condition of victims, such as anxiety, depression, social withdrawal, and even suicidal thoughts.

The role of counselors is very important in preventing and handling this case. Counselors not only provide emotional support and counseling services, but also educate students, parents, and teachers about digital etiquette and the adverse effects of online bullying.

Through a collaborative approach and comprehensive educational strategies, counselors help create a safe, supportive and digital violence-free school environment. A restorative justice-based approach is also an effective measure to build understanding and improve perpetrator behavior and strengthen resilience.

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