



The Relationship Between Self-Control and Cyberbullying Behavior among Generation Z Users of X

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Abstract

Cyberbullying has become an increasingly serious problem in digital communication, particularly among young social media users. This study aims to examine the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. This research employed a quantitative approach with a correlational design. The sample consisted of 347 Generation Z respondents who actively used X and resided in City X, selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a self-control scale based on Averill's theory and a cyberbullying behavior scale based on Willard's theory. The data were analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation. The results showed a significant negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior, with a correlation coefficient of -0.281 and a significance value of 0.000. The coefficient of determination indicated that self-control explained approximately 7.9% of the variance in cyberbullying behavior, while the remaining 92.1% may be influenced by other factors. These findings suggest that higher self-control is associated with lower cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. However, cyberbullying behavior is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained by self-control alone. Therefore, cyberbullying prevention efforts should also consider other factors, such as emotional regulation, empathy, peer influence, digital literacy, online disinhibition, and social media use intensity.

Abstrak

Cyberbullying menjadi salah satu masalah yang semakin serius dalam komunikasi digital, khususnya di kalangan pengguna media sosial usia muda. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis hubungan antara self-control dan perilaku cyberbullying pada pengguna X dari Generasi Z. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional. Sampel penelitian terdiri atas 347 responden

Kata Kunci:

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Generasi Z yang aktif menggunakan X dan berdomisili di Kota X, yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan skala self-control berdasarkan teori Averill dan skala perilaku cyberbullying berdasarkan teori Willard. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan uji korelasi product-moment Pearson. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya hubungan negatif yang signifikan antara self-control dan perilaku cyberbullying, dengan nilai koefisien korelasi sebesar -0,281 dan nilai signifikansi 0,000. Koefisien determinasi menunjukkan bahwa self-control menjelaskan sekitar 7,9% varians perilaku cyberbullying, sedangkan 92,1% sisanya kemungkinan dipengaruhi oleh faktor lain. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa semakin tinggi self-control, semakin rendah kecenderungan perilaku cyberbullying pada pengguna X dari Generasi Z. Namun demikian, perilaku cyberbullying merupakan fenomena kompleks yang tidak dapat dijelaskan hanya melalui self-control. Oleh karena itu, upaya pencegahan cyberbullying juga perlu mempertimbangkan faktor lain, seperti regulasi emosi, empati, pengaruh teman sebaya, literasi digital, online disinhibition, dan intensitas penggunaan media sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying has become an increasingly significant problem in digital communication, particularly on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X, TikTok, WhatsApp, and other online platforms. The rapid development of digital technology has made online interaction easier, faster, and more accessible, but it has also created opportunities for harmful behaviors to occur in virtual spaces. Cyberbullying generally refers to bullying behavior carried out through digital, electronic, or online media (Grover & Raju, 2023). Breguet, as cited in Adawiyah & Munir (2021), defines cyberbullying as the repeated use of digital or electronic media by individuals or groups to spread aggressive or hostile messages intended to harm, intimidate, or cause discomfort to others. In Indonesia, this issue has become increasingly relevant. A UNICEF survey conducted through the U-Report Youth Engagement Platform found that 45% of 2,777 adolescents aged 14–24 years had experienced cyberbullying (UNICEF, 2021). This finding indicates that cyberbullying is not only a technological issue but also a serious social and psychological problem among young people.

One social media platform that has become highly relevant in discussions of cyberbullying is X, formerly known as Twitter. X allows users to publish short posts, respond to other users, quote posts, repost content, and participate in public conversations in real time. These features make X an open and dynamic communication space, but they may also increase the possibility of verbal aggression, public humiliation, harassment, and hostile interactions. Twitter was officially rebranded as X in July 2023 after Elon Musk acquired the platform. Before the rebranding, Twitter was known as a microblogging platform that allowed users to share short messages with a character limit, making it easy for information and opinions to spread quickly (Rezeki, 2020). According

to We Are Social, as cited in Annur (2023), Indonesia had approximately 27.5 million X users as of October 2023, making it the country with the fourth-largest number of X users globally. This large number of users shows that X has become an important digital space for social interaction in Indonesia, including among young users.

Generation Z is one of the most active groups in digital and social media environments. This generation, generally defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in an era where the internet, smartphones, and social media are integrated into everyday life. Because of their intensive exposure to digital platforms, Generation Z users are more likely to engage in online communication, express opinions publicly, and participate in various forms of digital interaction. Duarte (2024) reports that more than half of X users are under the age of 35, with users aged 18–24 and 25–34 representing a large proportion of the platform's user base. This indicates that young users, including Generation Z, form a significant segment of X users. However, the same digital familiarity that enables communication and self-expression may also increase exposure to online conflict, impulsive responses, and cyberbullying behavior.

Cyberbullying behavior is influenced by various psychological and social factors, one of which is self-control. Kowalski, as cited in Imani et al. (2021), explains that personality characteristics are among the factors that contribute to cyberbullying. Individuals with aggressive tendencies may have difficulty regulating their emotions, controlling their responses, and considering the consequences of their actions. In the context of social media, weak emotional regulation and impulsive behavior may lead individuals to post hostile comments, spread harmful content, or participate in online harassment. Therefore, self-control becomes an important psychological factor in understanding why some individuals are more likely to engage in cyberbullying than others.

Self-control refers to an individual's ability to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior before taking action. Rahmatiani et al. (2023) explain that self-control involves the ability to consider various aspects and consequences before making decisions. Individuals with good self-control are more capable of managing impulses, delaying immediate reactions, and choosing responses that are socially appropriate. In addition, self-control is closely related to low impulsivity, which means that individuals with higher self-control are less likely to act without thinking (Stavrova et al., 2020). In online communication, this ability is particularly important because social media interactions often occur quickly and emotionally. Users who have stronger self-control may be better able to avoid aggressive responses, refrain from harmful comments, and consider the possible impact of their digital behavior on others.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior. Studies by Devia & Pratama (2021), Fatma & Agustina (2023), Kristiawan & Soetjningsih (2023), Prasetya et al. (2024), and Sriati et al. (2022) generally found a negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior. These studies indicate that individuals with higher self-control tend to show lower levels of cyberbullying behavior. However, previous studies have focused on different

populations and social media contexts, such as adolescents in specific regions, university students, and users of platforms such as WhatsApp and Instagram. For example, Sriati et al. (2022) and Kristiawan and Soetjningsih (2023) focused on university students, while Prasetya et al. (2024), Devia and Pratama (2021), and Fatma and Agustina (2023) examined adolescents in different regional or platform-based contexts.

Although research on self-control and cyberbullying has been widely conducted, studies specifically examining this relationship among Generation Z users of X remain limited. This gap is important because X has distinct communication characteristics, including open conversations, rapid information circulation, public replies, reposts, and quote posts, which may create different patterns of online aggression compared to more private or visually oriented platforms. Therefore, this study aims to examine the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. By focusing on this specific population and platform, this study is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the psychological factors associated with cyberbullying behavior in contemporary digital communication. The findings may also provide practical insights for promoting responsible social media use and reducing cyberbullying among young users.

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design. This design was used to examine the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. A correlational design was considered appropriate because the study did not aim to manipulate variables, but rather to determine whether there was a statistically significant relationship between the two variables.

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z individuals residing in City X. Based on data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2022, the population was 142,798 people. The sample consisted of 347 respondents, determined using the Isaac and Michael table with a 5% margin of error. The sampling technique used in this study was purposive sampling. The respondents were selected based on the following criteria: being part of Generation Z, namely individuals born between 1997 and 2012 or aged approximately 12–27 years; actively using X; and residing in City X.

Data were collected using psychological measurement scales in the form of questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of two scales: a self-control scale and a cyberbullying behavior scale. The self-control scale was developed based on Averill's (1973) theory of self-control, which includes three aspects: behavioral control, cognitive control, and decision control. The initial self-control scale consisted of 32 items. Meanwhile, the cyberbullying behavior scale was developed based on Willard's (2007) theory, which includes several forms of cyberbullying, namely flaming, harassment, cyberstalking, denigration, impersonation or masquerading, outing and trickery, and exclusion. The initial cyberbullying behavior scale consisted of 38 items.

The validity of the instruments was examined using the Content Validity Ratio (CVR). After the content validity test, item discrimination analysis was conducted by

correlating each item score with the total score using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Items with an item discrimination value below 0.25 were considered unsuitable and were removed from the instruments. Based on the results of the validity and item discrimination tests, 13 items from the self-control scale and 6 items from the cyberbullying behavior scale were excluded. Therefore, the final instruments consisted of 19 items for the self-control scale and 32 items for the cyberbullying behavior scale.

The reliability of the final instruments was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The self-control scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.817, while the cyberbullying behavior scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.977. These values indicate that both instruments had good reliability and were appropriate for use in this study.

Data analysis was conducted through several stages. First, the collected data were processed through editing, coding, scoring, and tabulation. Second, prerequisite tests were conducted, including the normality test and linearity test. The normality test was used to determine whether the data were normally distributed, while the linearity test was used to examine whether the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior was linear. After the prerequisite tests were fulfilled, the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis. This analysis was used to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed through prerequisite tests and hypothesis testing. The prerequisite tests included normality and linearity tests, while the hypothesis was tested using Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis. The normality test was conducted to determine whether the data for each variable were normally distributed. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Normality Test Results

Research Variables	Skewness Value	Kurtosis Value
Self-control	0.334	0.825
Cyberbullying	0.344	-0.983

Based on Table 1, the self-control variable obtained a skewness value of 0.334 and a kurtosis value of 0.825. Meanwhile, the cyberbullying behavior variable obtained a skewness value of 0.344 and a kurtosis value of -0.983. These values indicate that both variables were normally distributed because the skewness and kurtosis values were within the acceptable range of -1.96 to 1.96. Therefore, the data met the normality assumption required for parametric statistical analysis.

After the normality test was fulfilled, a linearity test was conducted to determine whether the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior was linear. The results of the linearity test are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Linearity Test Results

Research Variables	Linearity	P
Self-control and Cyberbullying	36.496	0.000

Table 2 shows that the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior was linear, as indicated by a significance value of 0.000, which is lower than 0.05. This result indicates that the two variables had a statistically significant linear relationship. Therefore, the data fulfilled the linearity assumption and could be further analyzed using Pearson's product-moment correlation.

The hypothesis test was conducted to examine the relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results

Research Variables	Pearson Correlation	P
Self-control and Cyberbullying	-0.281	0.000

Based on Table 3, the Pearson correlation coefficient was -0.281 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value was lower than 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted. This means that there is a significant negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. The negative correlation indicates that higher self-control is associated with lower cyberbullying behavior. Conversely, lower self-control is associated with a higher tendency to engage in cyberbullying behavior.

To determine the contribution of self-control to cyberbullying behavior, the coefficient of determination was calculated by squaring the correlation coefficient. The result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Coefficient of Determination

Research Variables	r	r ²	Percentage
Self-control and cyberbullying behavior	-0.281	0.079	7.9%

Table 4 shows that the coefficient of determination was 0.079, or 7.9%. This means that self-control explains approximately 7.9% of the variance in cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. Meanwhile, the remaining 92.1% may be explained by other factors not examined in this study, such as emotional regulation, empathy, peer influence, anonymity, digital literacy, online disinhibition, social media intensity, and previous experiences of being involved in online conflict. Therefore,

although self-control has a significant relationship with cyberbullying behavior, its contribution is relatively limited.

The findings of this study indicate that self-control is negatively related to cyberbullying behavior. This means that individuals with higher self-control tend to be more capable of regulating their emotions, controlling impulsive responses, and considering the consequences of their online actions. In the context of X, where users can respond quickly to posts, quote other users, repost content, and participate in public debates, self-control becomes an important psychological capacity. Users with good self-control may be more careful in expressing opinions, avoiding hostile responses, and refraining from posting comments that may harm others.

This finding is consistent with the theoretical explanation that self-control enables individuals to regulate behavior before taking action. Rahmatiani et al. (2023) explain that self-control involves the ability to consider various aspects and possible consequences before making a decision. In social media interactions, this ability is particularly important because online communication often takes place rapidly and emotionally. When users encounter provocative posts, criticism, or disagreement, self-control helps them delay impulsive reactions and choose more appropriate responses.

The result is also in line with Stavrova et al. (2020), who state that self-control is closely related to low impulsivity. Individuals with strong self-control are less likely to act without thinking. This is relevant to cyberbullying behavior because many forms of cyberbullying, such as flaming, harassment, denigration, and hostile replies, may occur as impulsive reactions to online interactions. Therefore, individuals with lower self-control may be more vulnerable to engaging in aggressive digital behavior because they have difficulty managing emotional impulses and considering the impact of their actions on others.

The findings of this study support previous research showing a negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior. Prasetya et al. (2024) found a negative correlation between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among adolescents. Similarly, Kristiawan and Soetjningsih (2023) reported that higher self-control was associated with lower cyberbullying behavior among university students. Devia & Pratama (2021) also found a negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among adolescent social media users. These studies strengthen the conclusion that self-control is an important psychological factor associated with cyberbullying behavior.

However, the strength of the relationship found in this study was relatively weak, as indicated by the correlation coefficient of -0.281. This suggests that self-control is not the only factor influencing cyberbullying behavior. Cyberbullying is a complex phenomenon shaped by multiple individual, social, and technological factors. For example, individuals with low empathy may be less sensitive to the emotional impact of their online behavior on others. Peer influence may also encourage users to participate in harmful online interactions, especially when aggressive comments are normalized within

a group. In addition, anonymity and the online disinhibition effect may make individuals feel less responsible for their actions in digital spaces.

The relatively small contribution of self-control also indicates that prevention efforts should not focus only on strengthening individual self-control. Broader interventions are needed, including digital literacy education, empathy development, emotional regulation training, ethical social media use, and awareness of the legal and psychological consequences of cyberbullying. For Generation Z users, these interventions are particularly important because they are highly active in digital spaces and often use social media as a primary means of communication, self-expression, and social interaction.

In the context of X, cyberbullying prevention should also consider the platform's communication characteristics. X enables rapid public interaction, which can intensify conflict and increase the possibility of hostile responses. Features such as replies, reposts, and quote posts may allow negative content to spread quickly and reach wider audiences. Therefore, users need not only self-control but also critical awareness of how their digital behavior may affect others. Strengthening self-control can help users pause before responding, evaluate the possible consequences of their posts, and avoid participating in harmful online interactions.

Overall, the results of this study confirm that self-control has a significant negative relationship with cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. Although the contribution of self-control is relatively limited, the finding remains important because it shows that psychological regulation plays a role in reducing aggressive behavior in digital communication. These results suggest that efforts to prevent cyberbullying should integrate self-control development with other preventive strategies, such as digital ethics education, emotional regulation, empathy training, and responsible social media literacy.

CONCLUSION

This study found a significant negative relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z users of X. The Pearson correlation coefficient was -0.281 with a significance value of 0.000, indicating that higher self-control is associated with lower cyberbullying behavior. Conversely, lower self-control is associated with a higher tendency to engage in cyberbullying behavior. These findings confirm that self-control plays an important role in helping individuals regulate their responses, control impulsive behavior, and reduce aggressive actions in digital interactions.

The coefficient of determination showed that self-control explained approximately 7.9% of the variance in cyberbullying behavior. This indicates that although self-control is significantly related to cyberbullying behavior, its contribution is relatively limited. Therefore, cyberbullying behavior cannot be explained only by self-control, as other psychological, social, and digital factors may also influence it, such as emotional regulation, empathy, peer influence, anonymity, digital literacy, online disinhibition, and intensity of social media use. Based on these findings, efforts to prevent

cyberbullying among Generation Z users of X should not only focus on strengthening self-control but also include broader educational and psychological interventions, such as digital literacy, empathy development, emotional regulation, ethical social media use, and awareness of the consequences of cyberbullying.

This study has several limitations. First, the research only involved Generation Z users of X in City X, so the findings cannot be generalized to all Generation Z users or to users of other social media platforms. Second, this study used a correlational design, which means that the results only show a relationship between self-control and cyberbullying behavior and cannot explain causal effects. Third, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may be influenced by respondents' honesty, memory, and social desirability bias. Therefore, future research is recommended to involve broader and more diverse samples, compare different social media platforms, and examine other variables that may influence cyberbullying behavior, such as empathy, emotional regulation, digital literacy, peer influence, and online disinhibition. Future studies may also use mixed-method or longitudinal designs to obtain deeper and more comprehensive findings.

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