

# Understanding Cyber Aggression in Social Media Users with the Social Psychology Paradigm

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**Abstract.** Cyber aggression has become a hot issue of research studies over the past ten years. Some researchers explain these phenomena in the form of oppressive behavior, harassment and hatred that occurs in cyberspace. At present, the social-psychological theory approach is still considered as a precise discipline in explaining the dynamics of cyber aggression and its predecessor factors. The approach used in this article is a critical review method. This method implemented by finding theoretical references along with the latest research results of cyber aggression cases and problems. Several theoretical studies and the latest research results have revealed that the behavior of cyber aggression is another form of traditional aggression behavior, especially verbal aggression that uses online media or social networking. This paper also describes several approaches to social psychology theory in explaining the phenomenon of attacking behavior in cyberspace comprehensively. In general, it can be explained that cyber aggression is formed from interactions between an innate person or personal attributes and external attributes as dimensions of the environment learning. It originates from individual cyber contexts and communication characteristics in cyberspace in the form of social media algorithms.

**Keywords:** Cyber aggression, social psychology, social media user, social psychology paradigm

## 1. Introduction

The study of aggressive behavior on the internet, especially through social media in recent years is very intensive as the consequences of information and communication technology development, especially social media and the like. It can be seen through many new terminologies used in research journals that discuss the behavior of violence or cyber aggression in the interaction of individuals in cyberspace or online such as hate speech (cyberhate, online hate speech), assault or cyber aggression (cyber aggression, cyberbullying, electronic aggression), cyber victimization cyber harassment [1-7]. In general, these concepts refer to forms of online attack behavior based on hostility, anger, and hatred by using information technology aimed to disturb, harassed, intimidate and intimate individuals or groups by spreading anti-tribal messages, certain religions, and races even spread fanatical radical understandings that leading to acts of terrorism.

The development of information technology has provided people a borderless space to express their thoughts and feelings through social media. Most of the cyberspace conflict due to negative attitudes towards other groups based on the perception of in-group by individuals as representatives of out-groups. The presence of an out-group is perceived as a threat by the individual. As a result, it develops negative emotions and arises the

utterance of hatred and other cyber-aggression behaviors [8]. Hater's behavior arises due to displeasure with a particular person or group with the behavior, lifestyle, statement, and performance or activities of a person or group. The cyber aggression is creating social media posting to attack others through internet media, social networking sites or content creation through sites, blogs, online instant messages. Such as; Facebook, WhatsApp, Line and so on both via cellphone and computer.

The perpetrators of cyberhate spread the message, opinion or information, whether written by himself as the first writer or just simply share other people's opinions, as a form of support to the message. In addition, the purpose of the message is to influence or invite directly or indirectly to hate and even antagonize certain people or groups that are categorized as enemies or threats. The above phenomenon exacerbated by the algorithms that are applied in mainstream social media platforms used by netizens. One algorithm has polarized people in specific groups that sometimes covered in waves of information with each other, or commonly known as filter bubbles. Netizens will be directed towards extreme alignments of one issue because of the social media algorithm assumption. This algorithm records netizens' behavior patterns through their activities. Such as liking, commenting, disliking, replying, following and unfollowing to block [9].

Based on the above problems, this article examines the dynamics of cyber aggression behavior with a theoretical framework approach to social psychology, especially those related to online communication characteristics and the dynamics of factors that contribute to cyber aggression by individuals on social media. This article aims to address issues related to how the social psychology theory framework in explaining cyber aggression behavior and some predictors that are assumed to be antecedent.

## 2. Method

This article uses a literature review approach by exploring various theories, principles, or ideas to analyze and solve problems formulated in the background. The data used in this study is secondary data. The data was obtained from the results of research conducted by previous researchers. Sources of data are obtained from books and scientific papers published in journals (printed and non-printed) dealing with the problems that are discussed in this paper. To understand cyber aggression, we first put together a collection of research on the behavior of assault and intimidation on cyberspace by using keyword searches in interdisciplinary scientific databases, ranging from social sciences and humanities to computer science. After the collection of work has been compiled, we strive to synthesize the information presented in the manuscript and organize it in the following themes and research future. The discussion in this article outlines open issues and approaches to potential social psychological theory that can be used as a basis for future research. This article uses descriptive analysis, which systematically describes the dynamics of concepts and problems, then is given an understanding and explanation so that they can be understood properly.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### Results

#### *The rapid development of IR 4.0 worldwide,paired with technological advances and sophisticated machin Cyber Aggression*

Cyber aggression is an act of attacking other people committed by individuals in cyberspace or online media. Cyber aggression is the same as traditional aggression behavior carried out in the realm of reality or traditional aggression because cyber aggression is another form of aggression itself. Even the two are closely related to Vanzsonyi et al [10] say that those involved in traditional aggression are more likely to become cyber-aggressors.

Aggression in the reality context is the behavior of hurting and harming others both physically, such as hitting, kicking, piercing, and so on, as well as psychological losses through verbal aggression such as threatening, insulting, intimidating, cursing and so on. A good theory of aggression is one that can explain how aggressive patterns are developed, what provokes people to behave aggressively, and what sustains these actions after they are initiated. The type of aggression behavior also develops, in line with the development of social interaction in the realm of society that is close to information and communication technology called cyber aggression. Cyber aggression is another form of verbal aggression by attacking in cyberspace. The aggression has carried out through status, links in the form of; insulting, derogatory, threatening, terrorizing, revealing personal

information, abusive language, harassment, public humiliation through unwanted posts, pictures, and video recordings and so on that harms the victim [11].

### ***Social Psychology Paradigm***

Social psychology is a science that studies the experience and behavior of human beings as individual in relation to social stimulus situations, or interest in the behavior of people in group situations. Meanwhile, according to Gordon W. Allport, social psychology is the science that seeks to explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behavior of individuals are influenced by reality, imagination or the presence of others [12].

Hogg & Vaughan [12] stated that there are at least four levels of analytical study in social psychology, the first is intrapersonal/social thought, the psychological process that occurs in individuals when organizing their experiences in their social environment that lead to cognitive balance and cognitive schemes. The form of social behavior of individuals analyzed in this level is how individuals think about others and understand their social world, it is discussed in the concepts of social perception, social cognition, self and social identity, social attitudes, social prejudice.

Second is interpersonal and social relations, namely interactions between individuals in certain situations. The main analysis of this level is the behavior of individual interactions with other people or interpersonal attraction, as well as the individuals' response toward an interaction as a social stimulus. Analysis of these studies including interpersonal attraction, interdependent relationships, social influence, prosocial behavior, altruistic and aggressive behavior. The third is the process of interaction between individuals that focuses on the role of social positions such as status, identity, power, and others. While the focus of the analysis of the study is the behavior in the group process as a social stimulus situation, the sub-study is the behavior of intragroup and intergroup. Intragroup behaviors are such as group identity, norms, cohesiveness, conformity, obedience, organizational culture, leadership and decision making. Whereas intergroup behavior is the dynamics of relationships between groups and other groups in the form of studies, competition, cooperation, conflict and resolution, politics, peace, cross-cultural [12].

### ***Social Media***

Social media is online media that are used as a means of social interaction online on the internet by using website-based technology or applications that can transform communication into an interactive dialog. Through social media, users can communicate with family, friends, idol and public figures even with government officials. Social media users usually called as netizen, can easily and quickly access information from various sources and communicate with people from all parts of the world with only the telecommunications device in their hands wherever they are. There are various types and forms of social media and each of them has characteristics that are sometimes different from each other such as, Facebook, Blog, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and so forth.

We can recognize social media through its characteristics. Some of the characteristics of social media are ;1) the feature of social media as the first user-based. With this features, social media encourages its users to participate and provide feedback on a message or content on social media. The message can be received or read by many people. 2) Openness. In general, social media provides opportunities for users to comment, vote, share, etc freely. 3) Conversation features. Social media allows the interaction of content, both in reaction or conversation between users. The message recipient freely determine to interact with the message. 5) Connectivity, through social media, the users can connect with others through links and other sources of information. The fast process of sending messages in social media compared with other media makes a lot of information connected in one social media [13-15].

Social media has an algorithm to determine the flow of information and the implications of the content produced. Initially, the algorithm on social media was made track some data easier. As result, it certainly ease for the advertising industry. The existence of an algorithm also makes it easier for advertisers to target their market. But Pariser [9] sees a dangerous irregularity of the existing algorithmic system in social media services. Pariser mentioned that the algorithm will eventually create an information bubble that makes a person intellectually isolated. As a result, those who never have a different perspective from others, then the possibility to drag on his own view is very large. It would make him define the world from only one perspective. Social media algorithms

shape online personalization and create filter bubbles, which direct individuals to the echo chamber. Both the information bubble and echo space represent important functions in learning and adopting deviant behavior. One negative side effect of information bubbles is users disproportionately exposed to material and associations that confirm and reinforce the biases they previously had [16-17].

## Discussion

Based on the latest finding of literacy searches on cyber violent behavior, it can be concluded that cyber aggression is included in the group study of violent behavior on the internet or cyberspace along with cyberhate and cyberbullying. Bennett et al [11] and Pyzalski [18] use the term electronic aggression more closely with similar considerations. While Dempsey et al (in Lerner, 2013) said cyber aggression is a more appropriate term than cyberbullying to explain the behavior of attacks on social media. Because cyber aggression is broader than cyberbullying based on the characteristics of behavior and victims [5]. Similarly Goldstein [19] in his research on adolescent cyber behavior and violence also uses the term cyber aggression by dividing the category of relational aggression, and overt aggression.

Social psychology explains that the aggressive behavior that carried out by the crowd using the theory of social identity models of deindividuation effect (SIDE), namely the spread of responsibility or deindividuation where individuals who are anarchist in mass riots dissolve in togetherness energy. According to Le Bon, [20] individuals who are in a crowd will lose control of themselves and then gain extraordinary strength that can encourage them to join into the emotions of groups. This causes the process of reduced awareness of self-identity so that it becomes anomie that will make individuals experience changes in behavior that is different from their daily behavior. An anonymous perspective as a cause of adverse effects on the use of the internet and social media [21]. According to this theory, users who behave anonymously have a great opportunity in expressing hate speech and brutally attacking others in cyberspace. Users of social media which anomalous or in a vague identity that will make a person in a state of de-individualization, namely decreased self-awareness. The perpetrator feels not recognized by the opposing party and feels comfortable in his group. Also, insulting comments, damaging people or other parties are considered normal. The more controversial is the status is written, the hotter the hate speech that is shared. Not just triggering the adrenaline of each party who feels their opinions are most correct [22].

While Spears [23] states that in cyber interactions group identification can be strengthened anonymously, mediated by online communication, in turn, can contribute to increasing prejudice between groups. Each group develops an identity based on, different perspectives and feels better than other groups. Social dominance theory (SDT) views group conflicts as a conceptual wall between groups that leads to polarization and prejudice, it happens easily in matters of religious and political ideology, and can even develop in all other fields. The development of information technology gives people the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings through social media. Mostly the occurrence of conflicts in cyberspace is caused by negative attitudes towards other groups. This attitude based on the perception of groups by individuals as representatives of out-groups. The presence of an out-group is perceived as a threat by the individual. So, it arises thenegative emotions and the utterance of hatred and other cyber-aggression behaviors [8].

Social norm theory sees that adolescents are often trapped in problematic behavior in interpersonal relationships, such as delinquency, prejudice between groups, aggression behavior, or bullying, related to their attributes and social competencies such as; attitudes, empathy, social interest, emotional self-regulation, and low social skills [24-27]. Festl et al. [28] said that cyberbullying is a psychosocial phenomenon, so it is necessary to investigate the dynamics of interactive variables influence, including social competencies especially sub variable social skills. Virtual-based communication styles on social media hinder our ability to physically feel the emotions or distress of others. As result, it reduces our ability to empathize with the other people. When individuals do not have empathy, it will be easy to aggress and oppression in cyberspace, such as; debate, humiliate, or expose discriminatory comments. Intermittent communication and lack of eye contact on social media also make it easy for someone to deal with personal pressure from others, so emotions like feeling guilty and shame don't occur. This is problematic because such emotions are very important in terms of internalizing empathy with others and preventing violations of social norms Bilton, Muris & Meesters, in [27].

Another approach is the theory of socio-ecological developmental models such as research conducted by Eichhorn in [29]. Eichhorn explained how the online environment opens up the possibility for more rapid and

radical re-contextualization of hate speech. This finding is online with research by Vanderhoven et al. [30] concluding that the role of education in schools in teaching students to use safe social media is very important to do, considering a large number of research reports and government reports on risk behavior by adolescents in using media social. A positive school climate can increase student engagement with peers and reduce aggression in interactions between these students [31]. The same thing with Bandura's social learning theory explains that the social environment and personal attributes such as; cognition, perception and social attitudes of individuals also contribute to aggressive behavior, including online aggression carried out by adolescents [32].

According to the planned theory of behavior, the behavior of cyber aggression or hate speech on the internet is caused by the intention of individuals to attack others. The intention of attack on social media is influenced by three factors, namely individual attitudes toward blasphemous behavior on social media, subjective norms and perceptions of behavioral control. The attitude dimension will encourage individuals to like and dislike the behavior of cyber aggression, while the subjective norm dimension contains beliefs held by individuals regarding to the limit attack behavior is agreed or not by people who are significant to themselves. Furthermore, the third dimension from TPB that determines the intention of cyber aggression behavior is self-confidence over the perception of the perpetrators' control. The theory of planned behavior was originally a theory of reasoned action [33]. Individual behavior is entirely under individual control. So the intention is the only determinant of behavior [34-37].

#### 4. Conclusion

Several studies have found that sometimes the communication behavior and response of individuals on social media is far different from their daily communication behavior as indirect face-to-face interactions. Individuals can be free to express and think, expressing what they think, what they feel, seem not assertive, narcissistic, and arrogant, because they feel not burdened by the strictness of norms and values that apply in direct interaction face to face. While there is a steady stream of media stories reporting cases of cyber aggression, especially in online social media, research efforts in the academic community are spread across a variety of different topics and humanities and computer science. Various approaches and theoretical frameworks continually built in explaining cyber behavior. Social psychology has a large contribution and focuses on understanding phenomena, cyber aggression, threats, and factors that influence it. Finally, some efforts to detect cyber aggression and identify predators and victims are still become open issues that must be resolved before its intervention and prevention methods can be revealed comprehensively. We do believe that this review presents a multidisciplinary agenda to guide the future research.

#### 5. References

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