

Cyberstalking Among Adolescents: Looking at Responses, Privacy Consequences, and Prevention Strategies

Nadya Poernamasari*¹, Citra Safira², Naomi Putri Bahari Simeon³

¹Program Studies Communication Science, Universitas Trunojoyo Madura, Indonesia

²Program Studies Communication Science, Universitas Semarang, Indonesia

³Program Studies Communication Science, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research is to find out the responses of cyberstalking victims in managing privacy, the impact of cyberstalking, and ways to prevent it. The high level of digital interaction and space for cyberstalking often causes harm, disturbance, and threats. Strategies for preventing and overcoming cyberstalking are essential efforts to know. The research method uses a qualitative approach by conducting observations, in-depth interviews, and literature studies. In-depth interviews were conducted with teenagers who were victims of cyberstalking. The results show that cyberstalking activities have a psychological impact on victims. The emergence of cyberstalking habits begins with the assumption of a habit of curiosity that is constantly carried out so that it shifts to a high sense of detrimental curiosity. Practical strategies to protect individuals include privacy management, avoiding sensitive information, and raising awareness of early detection of cyberstalking activities. Prevention can be done by limiting information disclosure when doing digital activities.

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*Corresponding Author: Nadya Poernamasari
Email: Nadya.poernamasari@trunojoyo.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of cyberstalking creates anxiety for the victims. Victims of cyberstalking can have various negative impacts on their victims. Young people who are victims of cyberstalking experience psychological impacts such as feelings of stress, hurt, paranoia, insomnia, betrayal, anger, fear, and, in some cases, even depression (Jansen van Rensburg, 2017). The development of technology allows perpetrators to carry out cyberstalking freely. The number of people connected to the internet in 2024 reached 221,563,479 out of a total population of 278,696,200 Indonesians in 2023. That figure is equivalent to 79.5 percent (CNN Indonesia, 2024). With social media users, it has now become inseparable from everyday life. In 2023, Data Reports revealed 167 million social media users in Indonesia. Not only that, in 2024, 78.5% of internet users are predicted to use at least one social media account (Yonatan, 2024). It means that Indonesian society is inseparable from interaction on social media. These conditions may lead to cyberstalking.

In some cases, cyberstalking perpetrators carry out their actions by searching for victim data through social media and utilizing these data for personal, other people, or even groups (Afif, 2022). Cyberstalking activities continue to grow, along with many activities on social media. Cyberstalking is also carried out against coworkers, friends, girlfriends and ex-girlfriends. Cyberstalking activities will become normal, and even independent (private) activities are now often public consumption (Sugiharto, 2020). Another form of cyberstalking is profile stalking on social media, for example, flooding the victim's email with messages, creating fake accounts on behalf of the target, and conducting covert monitoring by sending malware to the victim's electronic device. According to Kaspersky, a software company, citing data that shows most victims of cyberstalking are women. Meanwhile, 20 to 40 percent of the targets of this action are men (Maulana, 2023). Other acts of cyberstalking can include making false accusations, threats, identity theft, and damage to data or equipment. Cyberstalking includes covert movement where a person obtains personal information about another person through the internet, usually social networking sites. There is no specific regulation in dealing with cyberstalking crimes. The regulation related to cyberstalking still adopts the regulation in ITE Law Number 19 of 2016 Amendment to ITE Law Number 11 of 2008 (Anisah & Nurisman, 2022).

The application of Law Number 19 of 2016 concerning Amendments to Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Electronic Information and Transactions (after this in this paper, abbreviated as ITE Law). In Article 27, paragraphs (1) to (4) of the ITE Law, it is stated that prohibited acts are acts of intentionally and without the right to distribute, transmitting making accessible Electronic Information and Electronic Documents that have content that violates decency, gambling, insult or defamation, extortion and threatening. Article 29 states that every person is prohibited from intentionally and

without the right to transmit Electronic Information and Electronic Documents that contain threats of violence or frightening personally addressed. Violations of Article 27 and Article 29 of the ITE Law can indeed be subject to criminal penalties as stipulated in Article 45. The act of cyberstalking, as long as the act of distributing electronic information by the perpetrator, does not contain elements of a violation of decency, gambling, insult/defamation, extortion or threatening, and threats of violence or frightening are considered to fulfill the elements of the crime in it.

The emergence of irresponsible parties (mainly social media) can also negatively impact. Cyberstalking is included in the crime that can occur in cyberspace, currently known as cybercrime. In using social media, a person likely creates more than one anonymous account, with an identity that he deliberately disguises, and the social media account is deliberately created to follow someone. High curiosity goes to the details of a person so as not to fall into the category of cyberstalking. Generally, women are most at risk of being victims of cyberstalking, as with other forms of gender violence (Arifianto, 2021). Various cyberstalking cases occur in society and cause disturbances. The perpetrator carries out his actions in various modes that cause harm to the victim. Another problem that must be discussed is using anonymous accounts, which complicates the law enforcement process. Thus, further analysis is needed regarding this matter. The purpose of the research is to find out the response of cyberstalking victims in managing privacy, the impact caused by cyberstalking, and ways of prevention that can be done.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

As technology evolves, cyberstalking has become a growing problem requiring informed and practical initiatives to educate and protect potential victims (Wilson et al., 2021). The term cyberstalking is used to refer to the repeated use of the internet, email, or other electronic communication devices to stalk, harass, warn, or threaten specific individuals or groups of individuals, such as sending harassing or threatening emails to other users (General, 1999) (D'Ovidio & Doyle, 2003) (Perry, 2006). Cyberstalking is similar to traditional stalking in that negative emotions, trauma, and fear are evoked by the victim's intrusive communications (Short et al., 2015) (Pereira & Matos, 2016) (Worsley et al., 2017) (Kaur et al., 2021). They are creating policies to prevent cyberstalking efficiently and effectively (Dhillon & Smith, 2019). Cyberstalking arises from many factors; it can be from oneself, other people, and even the environment that uses the internet. The behaviors include false accusations, threats, identity theft, and data tampering. Cyberstalking is classified into two different groups according to the existing samples collected: first, self-reported stalking victims and instances of stalking behavior (both online and offline) reported in the normative sample (Short et al., 2015).

Cyberstalking, which leads to repeated invasion of an individual's privacy through electronic

mail or computer-based communication with the intent to control, coerce, intimidate, harass, or threaten (Bahrir, 2020), inflicts harm on victims. Victims of cyberstalking and/or harassment experience many harmful and adverse mental health consequences, including depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and panic attacks (Stevens et al., 2021). It is essential to educate people, especially adolescents, about the potential risks of misusing social media to avoid cyberstalking (Deslian & Pernando, 2023). Communication in the family influences preventive behavior (Sanusi & Sugandi, 2020). Cyberstalking can also be an extraordinary crime because it causes many other criminal impacts, such as those that occur in online communication media today (Oktavany, 2021). Although talking by people behind anonymous accounts is annoying, it has not been clearly regulated in Indonesia. Indonesian criminal law regulates cyberstalking as long as the act contains the delivery of illegal content, such as threats, obscene content, and insults (Octora, 2019).

METHODOLOGY

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods to reveal facts from the field. At the same time, this research approach uses a phenomenological approach to collecting information to understand an event or experience and matters relating to the actors involved in a particular situation. The phenomenological approach seeks to understand the meaning of an event that focuses on human subjective experience. The phenomenological approach is used in this study based on the experiences felt by teenagers who have been victims of cyberstalking on social media and cyberstalking. Data collection techniques include observation, interviews, and literature study. In this study, the sources of data and information generated through observations or interviews with informants will be analyzed by researchers. Collecting other data in the form of a bibliography and other data used in this study are primary and secondary data. The data analysis technique uses an interactive model, according to (Miles et al., 2014) namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. Researchers use this data analysis to describe the data collected through interviews, observations, documents, and so on to clarify the phenomenon. The analysis steps start with data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Media Privacy Awareness

Efforts to prevent cyberstalking are inseparable from individual awareness of their privacy settings on social media; avoiding disclosure of personal information online has encouraged actions that can reduce a person's interest in cyberstalking. Privacy disclosure on social media can increase risks. First, misuse of personal data that is shared without permission can jeopardize the privacy and security of users. Second, increased Social Comparison. There is a tendency for someone to look for

other people's information and then compare lives from the content they see. According to Informant A, the urge to find information about someone is very high, but not using a real account. Often, it is to see someone's achievements and activities. The urge often arises when activities use social media.

"Usually on Instagram I often see people's posts. 'I use a fake account so that I don't get caught if I'm stalking, so I just stalk people for fun to find out what the people I'm stalking are doing or what they're doing' (Source: interview, 2023).

Perpetrators are motivated to carry out their actions by the availability of desirable information, susceptibility to stalking, love, hate, resentment, curiosity, or simply the desire to see something present in every perpetrator. It can motivate perpetrators and users to create other accounts, bully, hack, steal identities, spread vague messages, and make comments.

Third, self-information control bias. This potential arises when a person's sense of curiosity shifts to high curiosity, which encourages the emergence of one's habits. Maintaining privacy allows a person to control their personal information and decisions to protect their identity from external influences. According to informant B, the motives for stalking are religious, ranging from curiosity, comparison, and motivation.

"Initially, I just created fake accounts for various activities for fun. There are people who are more comfortable using a fake account to view stories and posts. There are also those who want to see the achievements of enemies who are impossible to follow using a real account. Usually the intention is just to motivate". (Source: interview, 2023).

Fourth, emotional activities that trigger stress. High curiosity about comparing one's achievements with others triggers the desire to over-build information. Excessive personal information on social media can cause emotional stress. This condition gives rise to the behavior of not being the first to post. The desire to be recognized is one of the factors for this behavior.

As an individual's right on social media, Privacy plays a vital role in determining how others can access, use, and share their personal information on social media platforms. It involves privacy settings on social media accounts, such as determining who can see posts, profile information, and other online activities. Awareness about the more public nature of content shared through social media and the need for users to be mindful of the content they share is a crucial way to address these issues.

This trend confirms that the phenomenon of stalking on social media, especially on Instagram, shows aggressive behavior carried out online that is carried out repeatedly and aims to find out, scare, intimidate, or control the victim. Cyberstalking activities will become routine, and even independent (private) activities are now often public consumption. So that cyberstalking activities become commonplace for the millennial generation (Sugiharto, 2020). Encouraging the positive use of the internet is an effort to prevent this behavior from decreasing (Syah & Hermawati, 2018).

How Cyberstalking is Taken for Granted: Fake Accounts Interactive Strategies for Coping with Social Pressure

The complexity of behavioral characteristics of bold communication plays a role in the context of cyberstalking. Adolescents often face situations of high curiosity, while on the other hand, efforts to build self-branding on social media become a habit of showing the value of self-knowledge. It gives rise to anon in behavior to find out about other people. Fake or second accounts are considered a strategy to overcome social pressure in communicating interpersonally through Instagram social media (Suri & Perkasa, 2023). The importance of popularity and recognition is not absolute, but its development demands that it be done.

"I use a fake account, so I just stalk people, just for fun to find out what they are doing. I keep following people I know but those people don't know me and it's impossible to follow using a real account, it's embarrassing if their real identity is known. In the past, I also had people stalking me, until all my social media accounts knew. only a few years later. I turned off social media by closing my account, then I turned it back on again," (Source: interview, 2023).

Victims of cyberstalking are negatively impacted, including fear, anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. One of the most visible cases of social withdrawal is the deactivation of social media due to fear, invasion of privacy, and anxiety. This condition makes social media possible. Activities that are considered normal for the perpetrator have an impact on the victim. Perpetrators may commit crimes based on the space provided by their targets, such as identifying information on the target's Instagram profile or public account. His desires and preferences lead to the emergence of online harassment by stalking and causing loss of privacy and personal information.

It is easy for the perpetrator or target of the stalking phenomenon because of the opportunities created by the public and the private. Social media that has space provides a place for the perpetrator to carry out his actions, allowing a person to become a target and victim. Fake accounts normalize cyberstalking behavior, characterized by the emergence of actions due to idle impulses that can use other identities, giving rise to actions that continue to be carried out so that they become a habit. It even leads to emotional activity. According to informant X, the activities carried out are inseparable from efforts to discover someone's activities.

"I saw the story, because I didn't like it, I contacted him directly and asked directly why. So I can immediately monitor where he lives, I'm still teasing him, maybe that's all I'm doing." (Source: interview, 2023).

Victims and perpetrators may be based on the same commonality of monitoring people about fulfilling their emotional needs, such as curiosity, love, hate, and self-motivation. So, the phenomenon of stalking is not only a cybercrime but can also be a very sensitive one.

Optimizing Privacy Management: Suppressing Sensitive Communications

Communication privacy management involves individuals' rules and decisions in organizing their personal information. Individuals have rights over their personal information and seek to control that information. Such measures can reduce hyperactivity on social media. In interpersonal relationships, privacy management is essential in reducing anxiety and uncertainty. Consideration of the choice

between one's own rules regarding what to say and what to keep from the public often needs to be clarified. According to informants who are victims of cyberstalking, the behavior causes anxiety and curiosity about the impetus for the action. It gives a sense of apprehension about the act.

"At first I didn't realize there was such an effort. Once upon a time, I didn't know who the person was, it seemed like I was using a fake account. The problem is that in every story there must be an account that sees it. I found out that the account was fake from what I saw and asked my friends too. A fake account has empty posts, more followers than people following. Then the profile photo is strange. Then you can see that the username has been changed several times. After a while, you will definitely find out yourself, your behavior is only in unclear DMs to get a response from me like that, to the point of even criticizing me and making unclear comments. In order to get a response from me, at first I was very disturbed and even provoked by emotions," (Source: interview, 2024).

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The importance of awareness and protection of cyberstalking victims

The motives for stalking vary. Not only revenge and hatred for the victim's past treatment but also the perpetrator's admiration for the victim has encouraged this behavior to become a standard action when using social media. The act of stalking, getting vague messages with fake accounts, has become a recurring pattern. It is easy to be targeted if the user is weak. According to informants of stalking victims, it is not only because the account is closed or publicly available but also because criminals use all means of technological media to reveal victimization to disable or obtain the desired information. Perpetrators also use the identities of close friends in carrying out their actions. Awareness, checking information, and taking action are essential to self-protection.

"Once there was a perpetrator who used my identity, my friend said, I once chatted with him, the discussion was not clear. My name, my identity is the same, just a different number. Then my friend started to get suspicious, told me. "Honestly, I was uncomfortable with this because it wasn't just one of my friends who was chatting, but there were several people who were chatting with him who didn't speak clearly." (Source: interview, 2024).

The perpetrator holds the identity of the closest person to attract the victim's attention. Under these conditions, the victim will avoid suspicion and other actions. Protection and open suspicion can self-detect the problems that arise. Such stalking behavior has an impact on the psychological condition of the victim, which encourages anxiety and self-confidence. Excessive conditions, feelings of anxiety, and fear of oneself due to stalking also have a positive impact, such as increased vigilance in all activities in the digital world, even though they cause excessive emotions or attraction. Communication processes can include not posting carelessly and filtering before sharing, sharing suspicions with

trusted people, avoiding over-sharing personal information, and considering the impact of each post before sharing it online. Maturity in assessing people's opinions in cyberspace can vary, so not being affected by negative comments and reporting negative comments are two of the efforts that can be made. These efforts help individuals minimize the risk of becoming cyberstalking victims through responsible communication patterns.

CONCLUSIONS

Cyberstalking activities provide excessive unwanted attention to a person through online media. Perpetrators of cyberstalking can have various motivations, such as defamation, spite, or admiration. Such diverse motives make this act taken for granted. However, the habit that continues to be repeated harms the victim, causing psychological impacts ranging from anxiety to the act of closing social media accounts. Teenagers are often victims of these actions, biased by the limits of information disclosure that is shared publicly. This condition makes awareness of privacy management important. Checking and updating privacy settings regularly, avoiding interactions with strangers, and strengthening online security are initial prevention efforts. Awareness of the risks of cyberstalking and appropriate precautions are essential in protecting oneself from the threat of cyberstalking crimes. It is important to look at future research to determine the threat of cyberstalking regarding trust-building relationships in digital communication and communication strategies for displaying digital identity.

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