

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN *CYBERBULLYING* AND STRES LEVELS IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRAK

Mahasiswa berada pada fase perkembangan yang rentan pada tekanan. Apabila diluar batas ke mampumannya dapat memicu stres. Mahasiswa mem butuhkan media sosial sebagai alat me ngembangkan diri. Penggunaan media sosial tinggi berpotensi terjadi *cyberbullying*. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengetahui hubungan antara *cyberbullying* dengan tingkat stres mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Kesehatan Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Penelitian me nggunakan desain kuantitatif korelasional dengan pen dekatan *cross-sectional*. Total sampel sebanyak 129 responden dengan teknik *purposive sampling*. Pengumpulan data me lalui kuesioner *cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey* dengan valid (0,436-0,928) dan kuesioner *Perceived Stres Scale (PSS-10)* dengan *Cronbach's alpha* (0.81). Data di analisis dengan uji *Spearman's Rho*. Hasil penelitian me nunjukkan korelasi positif antara korban dengan tingkat stres mahasiswa (*p-value=0.001*) dan terdapat hubungan antara perilaku *cyberbullying* dengan tingkat stres (*p-value=0.003*). Penelitian ini di harapkan dapat mem berikan pe mahaman dampak *cyberbullying* ter hadap tingkat stres.

ABSTRACT

The Relationship between Cyberbullying and Stres Level on Students. Children are at that stage of development when they can be pressured. If that pressure becomes more than they can bear, it can lead to stres. There's no alternative for students to social media as a means of self-development. Excessive use of social media can also result in cyberbullying. The purpose of this study was to find out the relationship between cyber bullying with stres on health student students in Faculty of Health Science University Muhammadiyah Surakarta. Design and methods: This research utilised a quantitative correlational cross-sectional design. A total of 129 respondents were sampled using purposive sampling. Data were collected through questionnaires consisting of the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey with a validity of (0.436-0.928) and the Perceived Stres Scale (PSS-10) questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha of (0.81). The data were analysed using Spearman's Rho test. The findings indicate an association between cyberbullying victimisation and the school-related stres of students (*p-value = 0.001*) as well as a relationship between cyberbullying behavior and school-related student stres (*p-value = 0.003*). This line of research should generate insight into the effects of cyberbullying on stres.

INTRODUCTION

Students are in a transitional period towards adulthood, which is the age range of 18–25 years.¹ At this stage, students are still highly vulnerable to pressure because they must adapt to a

new environment and are expected to think critically to enhance their academic performance. Students must also be able to interact effectively, adapt to the learning process, and manage various social and academic challenges.² Pressure beyond their capacity can affect students' psychological well-being and be a significant cause of stress.

Stress is a state of uncontrollable physical, environmental, and social demands.³ Negative thoughts and feelings, as well as relationship conflicts, are also factors that contribute to stress.⁴ Stress is a common occurrence in educational environments, including universities.⁵ According to *the World Health Organization* (2021), around 350 million people experience the effects of stress, with the prevalence of stress among students globally reaching 38.91%. Research on students in Jakarta shows that out of 41 students, 24 experienced moderate stress, while 2 experienced severe stress.⁶ Research at Muhammadiyah University Surakarta found that there were 22 students with moderate stress and 13 students with severe stress.⁷ In addition, the study found that high internet addiction is associated with high stress levels.⁸ Effective ways to reduce the impact of stress include managing stress by engaging in enjoyable activities (relaxing), consuming healthy and nutritious food, and getting adequate rest.⁹ Furthermore, the support of close ones is invaluable when individuals face problems.¹⁰

Developing insight among students in Indonesia, social media has become an important tool for students to collaborate, search for information, and join discussions on specific topics.¹¹ Additionally, social media can serve as a valuable learning medium for students.¹² Social media makes it easy for users to communicate and interact with others online, and according to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), social media users in Indonesia have reached 79.5%.¹³ Although beneficial, social media also has negative impacts, such as misunderstandings, comment fights, and a lack of socialization, which can trigger *cyberbullying*. Research by Purnomo found that social media use can affect an individual's psychological well-being.¹⁴

Cyberbullying is a harmful act, such as intimidation or exclusion, by an individual or group.¹⁵ Among students, *cyberbullying* arises due to differences in opinion, academic competition, or personal issues that can trigger *cyberbullying* in an academic environment.¹⁶ It can be concluded that *cyberbullying* can be done intentionally or unintentionally, which can cause dislike and result in harm to someone.

Several studies have shown a tendency for *cyberbullying* behaviour among university students, such as a study of students at UIN Ar-Raniry in Banda Aceh, where 221 students exhibited moderate *cyberbullying* behaviour, while 66 students exhibited severe *cyberbullying* behaviour.¹⁷ *Cyberbullying* behaviour was also observed among students at the Faculty of Psychology, Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Malang, with 4 students exhibiting high levels of *cyberbullying* behaviour.¹⁸

The Cyberbullying Research Centre's 2024 survey of *cyberbullying* victimisation found that 55% of students had experienced *cyberbullying* and 27% had been intimidated on social media in the previous 30 days. *Cyberbullying* was also studied by Jamil and Kurniasari among undergraduate nursing students at Muhammadiyah University of East Kalimantan, revealing that 62 individuals experienced low-level *cyberbullying* victimisation and 46 individuals experienced high-level *cyberbullying*.¹⁹

Cyberbullying victimisation (victims) and *cyberbullying* offending (perpetrators) have poorer mental health than individuals who are not involved in *cyberbullying*.²⁰ *Cyberbullying* victimisation (victims) can affect an individual's mental health; the higher the level of victimisation, the greater the risk.²¹ Repeated *cyberbullying* can disrupt a person's mental health, leading to stress, depression,

and anxiety. According to Monteagudo, *cyberbullying victimisation* (victims) shows high levels of stress.²² That supports study findings that more stress symptoms were associated with cyberbullying victimization than not being a victim of cyberbullying.¹ To mitigate this, it is essential to enhance awareness of network ethics, utilize technology effectively, cultivate self-restraint, and engage in law enforcement.²⁴ Moreover, it's the support from family that plays a crucial role in monitoring and guiding kids through the digital sphere.²⁵

Growing reliance of students on social media may increase the incidence of cyberbullying. The detrimental effect of this phenomenon will disturb mental health, particularly in the expression of more stress. Previous studies have investigated the relationship between cyberbullying and stress in general; however, few studies have been conducted among the student population, especially university students in Indonesia. All of these reasons lead researchers to conduct research on the association between cyberbullying and stress levels among college students at the Faculty of Health Science, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta.

METHOD

This study was conducted at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, from May to August 2025. A quantitative cross-sectional research design was employed in the present study to establish the relationship between the independent variable (cyberbullying) and the dependent variable (stress).

The population in this study was active students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, Indonesia, totaling 2,875, consisting of Nursing (N), Physiotherapy (P), Public Health (PH), and Nutrition Programmes from year 2022-2024. The sampling method used was purposive sampling, in which 129 students were selected as research subjects based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

The inclusion criteria for this study were active students of Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, Faculty of Health Sciences, aged 18-25 years, who were willing to participate as respondents, cooperative, and willing to complete *the Google form*. The exclusion criteria for this study were students who were on leave from college and those who were unwilling to participate in the research questionnaire.

The data collection technique consisted of a questionnaire, administered via Google Forms, with two instruments. The first instrument was *the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey*, which consisted of 18 questions. The researcher previously used a *product moment* test with a total calculated $r (0.436-0.928) > r \text{ table } (0.361)$ and a reliability test with a *Cronbach's alpha* $(0.962) > 0.60$. The *Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10)* questionnaire, with 10 questions in Indonesian, obtained a *Cronbach's alpha* of 0.81, which is considered good. This may be susceptible to social desirability bias, where respondents tend to give answers that are considered good and do not answer honestly, thereby avoiding the stigma of being a *cyberbullying* offender.

This study has obtained *Ethical Clearance* approval from the Health Research Ethics Committee (KEPK) of the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, with Number: 1220/KEPK-FIK/V/2025 issued on 17 May 2025.

RESULTS

The analysis results are presented in this section, providing a clearer understanding of the variables under study. The collected data are interpreted and compared with existing theories and previous research findings. Data analysis begins with respondent characteristics and continues with the connection between cyberbullying and stress levels.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents (n=129)

Respondent Characteristics	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	19	14.6
Female	110	84.6
Age		
19 years	11	8.6
20 years old	38	29.7
21 years old	66	51.6
22 years old	10	7.8
23 years old	2	1.6
24 years	1	0.8
Programme		
Physiotherapy	23	17.7
Nutrition	33	25.4
Nursing	51	39.2
Public Health	22	16.9
Semester		
3	24	6.2
5	97	18.6
7	129	75.2
Place of Residence		
With parents	42	32.3
Boarding house	87	66.9
Parents' occupation		
Working	118	90.8
Not working	10	7.7
Level of Education		
Primary School/Equivalent	6	4.6
Secondary School/Equivalent	8	6.2
High School/Equivalent	46	35.4
University	69	53.1
Parental Income		
< 1,000,000	6	4.6
1,000,000 - 3,000,000	44	33.8
>3,000,000	79	60.8
Use of social media		
Active use	122	93.8
Not actively using	7	5.4

Table 1 describes the features of the 129 respondents who took part in this study, and were all enrolled students at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University Surakarta. Most of the respondents were female (84.6) and 21 years old (51.6). Of these the highest number of users came from the Nursing (39.2%), followed by Nutrition (25.4%), Physiotherapy (17.7%) and Public Health (16.9) in the 7th semester proportionally to their percentage distribution of 75.2%.

The majority of students were living in boarding houses (66.9%). The mother and/or father of 90.8% of the students were employed, with a university education being most frequently reported [53.1%], while >3,000,000 was the most reported income [60.8%]. Students were frequent users of social media (93.8%).

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of Cyberbullying Behaviour (Offending) and Cyberbullying Experience (Victimisation)

Cyberbullying Offending Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	126	96.9%
Medium	3	2.3%
High	0	0%
Total	129	100%

Cyberbullying Victimisation Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	109	83.8%
Medium	20	15.4%
High	0	0%
Total	129	100%

The prevalence of cyberbullying (offending) and being cyberbullied was measured by the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey questionnaire, which is made up of 18 items, which have been validated and assessed for reliability. The findings presented in Table 2 illustrate that most of the respondents engaged in low level of cyberbullying offending behaviour, 96.9% (n =126) and moderate with 2.3% (n =3), as well as victims or Cyberbullying Victimisation which again falls within low category at 83.8 (n=109, and this time it is slightly below if we are to further classify them in moderate category's at a rate of 15.4%(n=20).

Table 3. Distribution of Stres Levels

Stres Level Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low	9	6.9%
Moderate	97	74.6%
High	23	17.7%
Total	129	100%

Table 5 shows the results of student stres levels, with the majority being moderate at 74.6% (n = 97), followed by high at 17.7% (n = 23), and low at only 6.9% (n = 9).

Table 4. Data Normality Test

Variable	Sig. (P)	Conclusion
<i>Cyberbullying Offending</i>	0.00	Data is not normally distributed
<i>Cyberbullying Victimisation</i>	0.00	Data is not normally distributed
Stres Level	0	Data is not normally distributed

Based on Table 4, a normality test was conducted using the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* method, indicating that cyberbullying and stress levels were not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, a non-parametric test was used to continue the correlation analysis.

Table 5. Correlation Test of Cyberbullying Victimization and Cyberbullying Offending with Stres Levels

Variable Independent	Variable Dependent	Correlation Correlation (ρ)	P-Value
Cyberbullying Victimization	Stres level	0.28	0.00
Cyberbullying Offending	Stres level	0.25	0.00

The results of Table 5 analysis using *Spearman's Rho* correlation test showed a weak connection among *cyberbullying victimisation* and stress levels among students, with $p=0.28$; $p=0.00$. The next result showed a weak connection between *cyberbullying offending* and stress levels among students, with $p=0.25$; $p=0.00$.

DISCUSSION

This study involved 129 student respondents, with the majority aged 21 (51.6%) and the majority of respondents being female (84.6%). Students remain vulnerable because they are expected to think critically to enhance their academic performance. If this pressure exceeds a person's ability, it can result in health problems, such as increased stress²⁷. This study shows that 97 students had moderate stress levels, followed by 23 students with high stress levels, and only 9 students with low stress levels. These findings align with Wijaya & Lunanta, which indicates that 14% of students experience severe to very severe stress.⁶ These findings also align with Ambarwati's findings that women predominantly fall into the moderate and high stress categories compared to men.³

To fulfil their need for self-development, students choose to use social media, which has many benefits. This is supported by the results of this study, which show that students at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Muhammadiyah University Surakarta, are active in using social media, with 122 (93.8%) respondents indicating this. Based on the results of *cyberbullying* measurements using the *Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey* instrument, it was found that respondents fell into the low category (83.8%) and the medium category (15.4%). These findings indicate that the phenomenon of *cyberbullying* can occur as a result of the sophistication of information technology, which has shifted daily life towards digitalisation.¹⁶ This study is also in line with the fact that the use of social media carries a three times greater risk of *cyberbullying*.²⁸ It can be concluded that high activity in the use of social media can affect the level of *cyberbullying* experienced by an individual.

Respondents had low experience of *cyberbullying offending* or as perpetrators, namely 96.9%, with moderate behaviour among 2.3% of students. Thus, the behaviour of *cyberbullying* was quite low. This study is in line with Maulidar that someone who has a high level of self-control in using social media will also have a low tendency to engage in *cyberbullying* behaviour.¹⁷

The results of the correlation test in this study, using *Spearman's Rho*, showed a weak connection between *cyberbullying victimization* and stress levels among students ($p = 0.001$), indicating that the higher the involvement in *cyberbullying* activities, the higher the stress levels experienced by students. This association is weak but statistically significant. Thus, it may be

inferred that cyberbullying influences on psychological health are changes in stress. Supporting the results found in this study, the persons who have been bullied online will demonstrate a higher level of stress.

These findings are consistent with Ningrum & Amna that high levels of *cyberbullying victimisation* will lead to lower mental health.²⁹ This study is also consistent with findings that *cyberbullying* has a detrimental impact on victims, such as feeling depressed, anxious, uncomfortable, and other mental health disorders. Other findings found that respondents who experienced *cyberbullying* experienced mild to moderate levels of stress.¹ Therefore, it can be concluded that individuals who experience *cyberbullying* tend to have poor mental health and may experience increased stress levels among students. This research is also supported by Monteagudo , which indicates that *cyberbullying* in university environments has a high prevalence rate, with *cyberbullying victims* exhibiting high levels of depression, anxiety, and stress.²²

The correlation test between cyberbullying offending and the students' stress level ($p = 0.00$) suggests that stress may be a contributing factor to cyberbullying offending. The association is relatively low but strong enough to warrant further investigation. This finding is in line with the statements of Tobing and Septiningtyas' respondents that they conducted cyberbullying to score a point on other people through their experiences that were twisted indelicately, causing them stress, frustration, and shame.³¹

This study supports the view that *cyberbullying* offenders engage in *cyberbullying* because they experience stress or pressure, which leads them to *cyberbully* others. These findings are also in line with Aser and Paramitha that offenders engage in *cyberbullying* to vent or take revenge on others, so that others feel what the *cyberbullying* offenders felt before. Another finding revealed that perpetrators of *cyberbullying* (*cyberbullying offending*) have high levels of stress and often perform poorly academically.³³ This study reinforces that stressful life events or events that cause stress (*stressful life events*) increase the likelihood of someone engaging in *cyberbullying*.³⁴

This research provides further evidence on an existing body of evidence that suggests that cyberbullying is stressful not only for victims but also for bullies. The tension felt by those who perpetrate regarding the emotional pressure they feel, such as frustration and a sense of humiliation, and their wish to release it in the form of aggressive online behaviour. It is thus essential to identify the psychological structure underlying this phenomenon, and to develop educational and psychosocial support activities targeted at stimulating healthy use of social media amongst students, controlling one's own behaviours and recognizing the impact of cyberbullying in order to diminish instances of this behaviour while promoting student mental health within campus.

This study was dominated by female respondents compared to male respondents. Women are more likely to be victims than perpetrators (*cyberbullying offending*). This finding is consistent with, which states that women are at greater risk of becoming victims (*cyberbullying victimisation*) than men, who are more likely to be perpetrators of *cyberbullying*, thereby influencing generalisation.³⁵ This study has limitations due to *self-selection* bias, as the questionnaire was completed via an *online form*.

CONCLUSION

This paper demonstrates that there is an association between victims (*cyberbullying victimisation*) and the stress levels of students ($p\text{-value}=0.001$) as well as perpetrators (*cyberbullying*

offending) and stress levels (p -value=0.003). This indicates that perpetrators of cyberbullying as well as victims can face psychological stress. To combat these impacts, there is a need to raise awareness of online ethics for self-restraint, wise use of technology, and rigorous adherence to laws.

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