



Psychological Study of the Bystander Effect in Cyberbullying and Forms of Immoral Crowds in the Digital Era

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: <i>Submitted/Received August 05, 2024</i> <i>First Revised September 10, 2024</i> <i>Accepted November 12, 2024</i> <i>First Available online December 01, 2024</i> <i>Publication Date December 23, 2024</i></p> <p>Keyword: <i>Bystander Effect;</i> <i>Cyberbullying;</i> <i>Digital Media;</i> <i>Immoral Behavior;</i> <i>Social Media</i></p>	<p>Over the years, cyberbullying has become a focus of technological developments, particularly digital media. This phenomenon has led to significant negative impacts. Cyberbullying is not just a simple case involving a few individuals, but has become widespread with the spread of social media. This affects not only perpetrators and victims, but also those who choose to remain silent despite knowing about it, or become bystanders, who then engage in negative encouragement by liking or commenting, thus forming a personality that contradicts norms or forms of immoral crowds. The method used in this study is a bibliometric approach, analyzing various studies from 2015 to 2025. The results explain that the Bystander Effect in Cyberbullying and Forms of Immoral Crowds in the Digital Era are correlated with one another. The study explains that a person's silence will affect the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of cyberbullying, resulting in long-term impacts. Victims can experience feelings of inferiority, fear, and even mental damage. Meanwhile, perpetrators can feel powerful, or even experience social pressure that can lead to mental damage. Observers or bystanders can experience mental sanctions that can lead to changes in immoral behavior. In conclusion, the three discussions have the same correlation and connection which will lead to badness and damage so that comprehensive steps are needed to remain wise in handling technological developments and responding to cases of cyberbullying like this.</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought about significant changes in the way humans interact and communicate. The virtual world has become a space for expression and information exchange, but behind its convenience, technology has also grown with various complex social dynamics. One prominent phenomenon is cyberbullying, a type of harassment that uses digital media as a medium to carry out negative actions against others. The Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) does not yet have an official translation of the word "Cyber." However, the KBBI does include the word "Sibernetika," which is the official translation of "Cybernetics," which is the science of communication and surveillance, specifically concerned with the comparative study of automated surveillance systems (such as the nervous system and the brain). According to UNICEF (2020), cyberbullying is a form of oppression that exploits digital technology (Natalia, 2024). It can occur on social networks, chat platforms, gaming platforms, and mobile phones. However, according to Think Before Text, cyberbullying is aggressive and deliberate behavior perpetrated by a group or individual, repeatedly and occasionally using electronic media, against someone who is believed to have difficulty resisting the behavior.

Based on data released by the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI), at least 45% of young people in Indonesia are victims of cyberbullying (Jatimnow, 2022). Violations of children's rights in 2021 show a still quite high number. Data from public complaints shows that in 2019 there were 4,369 cases, in 2020 it increased to 6,519 cases and in 2021 it still reached 5,953 cases. The official UNICEF website releases that cyberbullying can occur on social media, chat platforms, gaming platforms, and mobile phones. According to Broadband Search, 73% of students have experienced bullying in their lives, 44% of which occurred within the last 30 days. The results of a study by Rumra, et al. (2021) of the Nursing Study Program at Surya Global Health College, Yogyakarta, showed that the majority of students had experienced cyberbullying, with 73.7% being in the low-level category. The forms of cyberbullying included flaming (60.5%), harassment (39.5%), cybertalking (10.5%), denigration (7.9%), impersonation (18.4%), outing (5.3%), WhatsApp (94.7%), and Facebook (21.1%). Research by Maurya (2022) found that the prevalence of cyberbullying victims has increased in the past three years. Among women, this figure rose from 3.8% to 6.4%, while among men, it increased from 1.9% to 5.6%. Approximately 33% of women and 16.6% of men experience symptoms of depression in young adulthood. Nearly 7.5% of women and 2.3% of men reported having considered suicide in the past year.

Based on the data obtained, it is known that cyberbullying in Indonesia occurs annually with inconsistent consistency but remains significant. Cyberbullying can develop and be carried out through all social media platforms, including chat platforms and news platforms like Facebook. The data also revealed that the majority of students, both male and female, have experienced cyberbullying at various levels, at low levels. Cyberbullying can have long-lasting effects on victims, including depression and even suicidal thoughts.

The prevalence of cyberbullying impacts not only the perpetrators and victims, but also bystanders. In the context of social psychology, the bystander effect describes a person's tendency to not act when witnessing a situation that requires assistance. According to Andi and Basti in Latane and Darley, the bystander effect is when an individual in a situation chooses to simply observe, witnessing the danger occurring, and doing whatever it takes to help or stop the incident (2024, 496). In the digital realm, this phenomenon is further complicated by

anonymity and psychological distance, which blur moral responsibility. This condition is known as Immoral Crowds. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's repository (2019), immoral crowds are those whose actions contradict societal norms. Often, individuals reinforce immoral behavior by showing passive support, such as liking or commenting on things that normalize online violence.

This situation illustrates a significant research gap. The silence of observers on social media often escalates into active involvement in immoral mass behavior, such as the spread of hate speech, mass bullying, and cancel culture. This suggests that passive behavior not only impacts victims but can also reinforce the emergence of destructive collective behavior. Therefore, further research is needed to examine:

1. How do psychological factors such as empathy, conformity, and moral disengagement combine with social and technological factors to shape these dynamics?
2. What underlies the bystander effect on cyberbullying behavior and its relationship to the emergence of immoral crowds in the digital era?

This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to broaden the understanding of passive social behavior and collective morality in the digital space, as well as practical contributions to the development of educational and preventive strategies to reduce immoral behavior online.

2. METHODS

This study uses a bibliometric approach because it can provide a comprehensive overview of the direction, trends, and patterns of research related to cyberbullying, the bystander effect, and immoral crowds. The research stages include:

2.1 Data Search Strategy

The search was conducted using the keywords "cyberbullying," "bystander effect," and "immoral crowds." Two primary sources were used: Google Scholar through its Publish or Perish (PoP) software, and Scopus for more curated publication data.

2.2 Data source

1. Google Scholar (Publish or Perish): Used to collect large volumes of publications, evaluate citation metrics, h-index, and research progress.
2. Scopus: Provides high-quality data for formal bibliometric analysis.

2.3 Publication Time Range

The publication data analyzed was for the period 2015–2025.

2.4 Inclusion Criteria

1. Articles in English.
2. Focus on cyberbullying, the bystander effect, digital crowd behavior, or online morality.
3. Document types include journal articles and proceedings.

2.5 Bibliometric Analysis Techniques

1. Performance Analysis: Assessing the number of publications, citations, h-index, and author productivity.
2. Co-occurrence Analysis: Mapping conceptual relationships through keywords using VOSviewer, resulting in clusters such as cyberbullying, empathy, aggression, and collective trolling.

2.6 Data Synthesis Process

The analysis results from Publish or Perish and Scopus were then synthesized to address the research objectives. The synthesis included:

1. Identification of research theme trends.
2. Determination of topic clusters.
3. Identification of influential authors such as TKH Chan (2023), Pepler (2021), and You & Lee (2019).
4. Assessment of the direction of research development, which indicated that studies on the relationship between the bystander effect and immoral crowds are still limited but growing rapidly.

Visualization using VOSviewer helps clearly illustrate patterns of relationships between concepts. The data is then analyzed thematically to understand the psychological dynamics emerging in related publications.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Co-occurrence Mapping and Literature Reviews Results

Bibliometric analysis found 142 related publications with a total of 3,724 citations and an average of 26.23 citations per article, with an h-index value of 35. These results indicate that this field of study has a fairly strong and growing scientific influence.

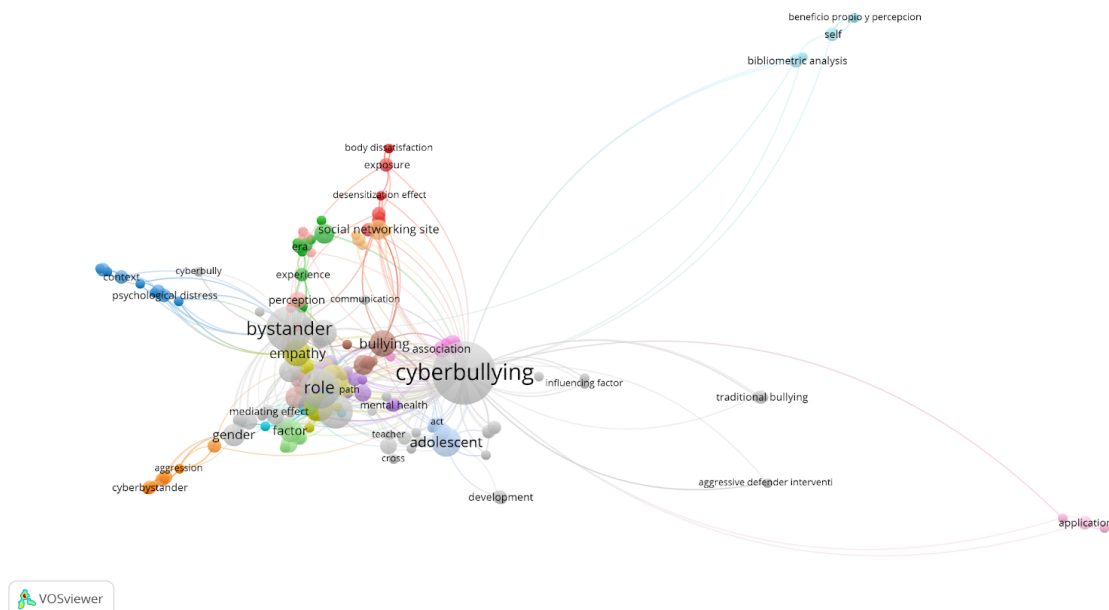


Image 1. Mapping of Co-occurrence of Keywords Related to Cyberbullying, Bystander Effect, and Immoral Crowds Using VOSviewer

This visualization shows the relationships between keywords in publications from 2015–2025. Node size represents the frequency of keyword occurrence, while color groups keywords into distinct thematic clusters. Lines between nodes indicate the strength of conceptual connections between terms in the literature.

Table 1.
Results of Literature Reviews

No	Research Title	Journal Name	Author	Year	Results
1.	The bystander effect in cyberbullying on social network sites: Anonymity, group size, and intervention intentions.	Telematics and Informatics	You, Leping, & Lee, Yu-Hao.	2019	This research shows that the bystander effect in cyberbullying is triggered by anonymity and the number of bystanders, which creates a sense of irresponsibility. Intentions to help increase when the number of bystanders is small but decline when the number is large, making it easier for individuals to blend into the "immoral crowd." These findings explain how the dynamics of digital crowds can make responses to cyberbullying increasingly passive.
2.	Identifying immoral posts on social media platforms: a review.	Modelling and Management	Saqia, B., Khan, K., & Rahman, A. U.	2025	This article highlights how the emergence of AI-based language applications and cross-cultural translation technology (CCTT) is changing the dynamics of communication between individuals. While these technologies lower social and linguistic barriers, they also impact psychological processes such as empathy, social perception, and conformity tendencies when individuals interact with automated systems. Reliance on AI can lead to

					moral disengagement as users feel removed from personal responsibility in communication. These findings suggest that the interaction between psychological factors and technology is shaping new communication patterns that have implications for social relations, learning, and ethical perceptions in the digital space.
3.	<i>Pengaruh Sikap Empati dan Bystander Effect terhadap Perilaku Bullying Siswa di SMA</i>	Journal of Education Research	Isma, I., Jamain, R. R., & Putro, H. Y. S.	2025	Based on the research results in the article, it can be concluded that empathy has a significant negative influence on bullying behavior so that the higher the level of empathy that students have, the lower their tendency to be involved in bullying, while the bystander effect partially does not show a significant influence on bullying behavior, but when tested simultaneously with empathy, the two variables still contribute by being able to explain around 28.8% of the variation in bullying behavior, which means that there are still more than half—namely 71.2%—of other factors outside this study that also influence the emergence of bullying behavior in high school students.
4.	The Role of the Bystander Effect on Body Shaming Intensity in	KnE Social Sciences.	Maulani, S. Y., Widyatno, A.,	2022	This article discusses the role of the bystander effect in increasing the intensity of body shaming among

	Psychology Students in Malang City.		Hitipeuw, I., & Harsono, Y. T.	<p> psychology students. The greater the tendency of witnesses to remain silent, indifferent, or unresponsive when body shaming occurs, the stronger the motivation for the perpetrator to continue the act. The passive attitude of these bystanders creates a social environment that allows perpetrators to feel that their actions are acceptable, harmless, or without consequences, so that body shaming is increasingly considered normal in everyday interactions. This article also emphasizes that although the influence of the bystander effect is not completely dominant and there are still many other factors that influence body shaming behavior, the presence of passive witnesses remains an important trigger that strengthens the perpetrator's courage to continue insulting or making negative comments about others' bodies. Thus, this article emphasizes that efforts to prevent body shaming must involve empowering witnesses so that they no longer remain silent, but are able to provide social responses that stop the behavior, such as reprimanding, supporting the victim, or expressing firm disapproval, because changes in bystander </p>
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					attitudes can reduce the social space that allows body shaming to continue.
5.	Recent developments in the psychology of crowds and collective behaviour	Current Opinion in	Drury, Jhon.	2020	In his article, Drury reveals that collective action can persist and produce psychological changes due to group support. Drury also argues that riots can spread if there is a commonality or something that unites them, such as a sense of empowerment toward a shared out-group. In collective behavior, too, shared social identity can increase high-risk behavior.
6.	Crowd Behaviour and Collective Action	Understanding peace and conflict through social identity theory: Contemporary global perspectives	La Macchia, S. T., & Louis, W. R.	2016	Classical literature viewed crowds as irrational, impulsive, and prone to immoral acts. Anonymity also led to a loss of morals and was considered contagious. However, modern research has revealed that crowds are not immoral. Rather, they simply act in accordance with social norms, what they perceive as "norms," and not due to a loss of morality.
7.	<i>Perilaku Pengeroyokan Saat Unjuk Rasa: Ditinjau dari Contagion Theory pada Kerumunan (Crowd)</i>	Flourishing Journal, 2(7)	Sari, T. Y., & Noorrizki, R. D.	2023	In this study, mob violence against victims occurs because crowd dynamics encourage individuals to act outside of moral and social norms. The feeling of anonymity encourages perpetrators to absolve themselves of moral responsibility. The lack of social control also increases vulnerability, making crowd behavior increasingly out of

					control, and allowing immoral behavior to spread. Crowds are also typically composed of individuals who are easily influenced due to a lack of rational and logical thinking.
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3.2. Psychological Factors in the Bystander Effect

Several psychological factors have been found to influence bystander behavior, including:

1. Empathy: Individuals with low empathy are less likely to intervene.
2. Conformity: Users follow digital crowd norms, including dysfunctional ones.
3. Moral disengagement: Anonymity and psychological distance make individuals feel irresponsible.

You & Lee (2019) found that the greater the number of bystanders, the lower a person's intention to help, while anonymity reinforces apathy.

3.3. The Role of Technology in Strengthening Immoral Crowds

Technologies such as social media algorithms and communication automation influence user behavior. The use of AI in communication can make individuals feel detached from personal responsibility, increasing the risk of moral disengagement. Drury (2020) explains that collective behavior can form when individuals perceive a shared social identity, including one that encourages immoral behavior.

3.4. The Relationship Between the Bystander Effect and Immoral Crowds

The bystander effect in digital spaces can be a gateway for the formation of immoral crowds. When many passive bystanders fail to stop cyberbullying, group norms can shift to allow for violence. This allows immoral behavior to become increasingly legitimized and widespread.

4. CONCLUSION

The bystander effect in cyberbullying arises because many internet users feel that the incidents they witness are not their personal responsibility. The anonymous, expansive digital environment, which lacks face-to-face interaction, makes it easier for people to assume that someone else will help, leading them to remain silent or simply spectate. This situation is further exacerbated by an online culture that often normalizes abusive comments, excessive joking, or the use of anonymous accounts as a form of escape from real-world social rules.

Immoral crowds are formed on social media, where many people gather in a single comment stream and collectively engage in unethical behavior, such as insulting, humiliating, or spreading someone's personal information. These digital crowds typically arise from a desire to follow trends, a desire to differ from the majority, or a feeling of security hiding behind a screen and avoiding the direct consequences of their behavior. Psychological factors such as diffusion of responsibility, social pressure, anonymity, and the loss of empathy due to fast-paced interactions online play a major role in the emergence of the bystander effect and immoral crowds.

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