



Cyberbullying and Adolescent Identity Crises: A Real Threat to the Mental Health of the Younger Generation

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Submitted/Received September 05, 2025 First Revised Oktober 14, 2025 Accepted November 24, 2025 First Available online December 05, 2025 Publication Date December 09, 2025</p> <p>Keyword: Cyberbullying, Identity crisis, Mental health, Teenagers</p>	<p><i>Cyberbullying has become one of the most common forms of digital violence experienced by today's youth. This phenomenon is showing an increasingly alarming trend because it is directly linked to identity formation and mental health among young people. This study aims to examine the relationship between cyberbullying, adolescent identity crises, and their impact on mental health through bibliometric analysis. Scientific publication data was collected using the Publish or Perish application, then analyzed and visualized with VOSviewer to map trends, concept clusters, and the direction of research development. The analysis results indicate that cyberbullying does not merely manifest as online verbal aggression but also serves as a trigger for identity crises that can lower self-esteem, induce anxiety, and increase the risk of psychological disorders among adolescents. The mapping also confirms that the roles of family, school, and digital literacy are crucial elements in prevention and intervention. These findings underscore that the issue of cyberbullying must be understood as a psychosocial issue involving identity development processes, not merely as an act of online violence; therefore, an environment-based preventive approach is necessary to protect adolescents' mental health.</i></p> <p>© 2025</p>

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a crucial phase in the process of self-identity formation. During this stage, individuals strive to recognize, explore, and establish the values, roles, and life goals that shape their identity. This process is heavily influenced by social interactions within their immediate environment. However, technological advancements and the internet

over the past two decades have significantly transformed the way adolescents interact and build their identities. According to data from DataReportal (2024), technological advancements—particularly in social media usage in 2024—have reached a significant milestone, with over five billion active user accounts recorded globally, representing an increase of approximately 5.6 percent from the previous year. This phenomenon is also highlighted domestically; according to a report from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII, 2024) released by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo, 2024), it shows high internet penetration rates and the fact that 48 percent of users are children under 18 years of age. This data sufficiently demonstrates that the digital world has now become a new space for teenagers to socialize, express themselves, and gain social recognition.

This shift not only provides opportunities for teenagers to expand their networks and knowledge but also introduces new threats that are no less serious, one of which is cyberbullying. This statement is reinforced by Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs (Menkomdigi) Meutya Hafid, who highlighted the high incidence of cyberbullying; she revealed that 48 percent of children who have ever accessed social media reported experiencing cyberbullying, according to a report by Kompas.com (2025). Meanwhile, based on an article from Goodstats (2025), the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) reported that throughout 2023 there were 3,800 cases of bullying, nearly half of which occurred in schools and Islamic boarding schools. Then, in 2024, the agency received 2,057 complaints related to child protection, with 954 cases already addressed. Although the number of complaints decreased compared to the previous year, the bullying trend remains consistently high, indicating that schools are still vulnerable environments for children. Looking back, the upward trend in bullying cases has been evident for the past few years. JPPI's annual data shows significant trends: for example, in 2020 there were 91 cases of violence in schools, rising to 142 cases in 2021, 194 cases in 2022, surging to 285 cases in 2023, and reaching a peak of 573 cases in 2024.

Cyberbullying does not occur only in Indonesia but is also widespread across various parts of the world, prompting one of the world's largest organizations to address the issue. UNICEF (2019) reported that among more than 170,000 young respondents across 30 countries, approximately one-third of children and adolescents reported having been victims of online bullying, and "One in five adolescents reported having skipped school due to cyberbullying and violence," according to the results of UNICEF's U-Report survey.

Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying has more complex characteristics because it can occur anytime and anywhere, is anonymous, and spreads rapidly through social media. These conditions make it harder for victims to escape and increase the risk of prolonged psychological distress.

Various studies show that cyberbullying has a significant impact on adolescents' mental health. In a study involving a large sample of 4,984 adolescent girls in Bangladesh, 8% reported experiencing cyberbullying in the past 12 months. Among them, 31% were diagnosed with major depressive disorder (MDD). Adolescents who experienced cyberbullying were approximately 3.97 times more likely to develop MDD than those who did not experience cyberbullying. This study supports the assertion that victims are prone to anxiety disorders, depression, diminished self-esteem, and even suicidal ideation. Furthermore, cyberbullying can disrupt the process of identity formation. Adolescent

victims often internalize the negative comments they receive online, leading to an identity crisis—that is, uncertainty about who they are and what values they hold.

According to Avci (2024), adolescents' engagement in social activities on digital media can indeed accelerate the process of identity exploration, but on the other hand, it also increases the risk of identity distress due to exposure to unstable and negative feedback. In other words, social media is a double-edged sword: it provides a space for expression while simultaneously amplifying social pressures that can disrupt the stability of adolescents' identities. A paraphrase of these findings suggests that excessive and unhealthy virtual social interactions can accelerate the development of identity confusion and worsen an individual's psychological well-being.

This phenomenon demands serious attention from various stakeholders, including families, schools, and society. Cyberbullying is not merely a matter of antisocial behavior but a developmental issue that can hinder adolescents' psychosocial tasks in achieving identity maturity. Therefore, comprehensive preventive and curative efforts are needed, including digital literacy education, media ethics training, enhancing adolescents' psychological resilience, and stricter digital platform policies against cyberbullying behavior.

Based on this background, this study focuses on the relationship between cyberbullying and adolescent identity crises, as well as their impact on the mental health of the younger generation. This study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the mechanisms linking the two, while also serving as a foundation for the development of relevant psychological interventions and educational policies in today's digital era. Thus, this article aims to analyze the relationship and connection between exposure to cyberbullying and the emergence of identity crises in adolescents, identify the impact of this phenomenon on mental health, and serve as a foundation for the development of relevant psychological interventions and educational policies in the current digital era.

2. METHODS

This study employs bibliometric methods to analyze publications on the phenomenon of cyberbullying and its impact on adolescent identity crises and the mental health of the younger generation as a real threat to their mental well-being. In this study, bibliometric analysis is used to obtain a comprehensive description of how cyberbullying shapes, disrupts, or exacerbates the process of adolescent identity formation, as well as how these conditions affect their mental health. The analysis was conducted by reviewing theories, previous findings, and relevant prior research patterns.

The next step involved developing an analytical framework that included a search strategy using the keywords "cyberbullying," "identity crisis," "mental health," and "adolescents." To obtain a comprehensive set of publications, we used Publish or Perish as a tool to extract bibliographic data from Google Scholar and other academic databases, covering the publication period from 2020 to 2025. Once the data was collected, a selection process was conducted to ensure that the analyzed publications were truly relevant to the research topic. The analytical framework was then mapped using VOSviewer to aid in visualizing relationships between concepts and research trends. Subsequently, the data was screened and compiled to ensure the analyzed publications

were genuinely relevant to the research topic, thereby supporting accurate interpretation.

The analysis process continued by identifying patterns, trends, and interconnections among research elements, such as mental health issues, adolescent identity development, and the intensity of cyberbullying. The results of this analysis were then formulated to address the research objectives: to provide a comprehensive overview of research developments regarding cyberbullying and adolescent identity crises, and to highlight their implications for the mental health of the younger generation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Results

The bibliometric analysis in this study began with a systematic literature review using a collection of scientific publications gathered from the reputable Google Scholar database with the assistance of the Publish or Perish (PoP) application. The Publish or Perish (PoP) application was chosen because it is capable of systematically and comprehensively extracting scientific publication metadata, including information regarding the title, year of publication, keywords, and citations—all of which are crucial and necessary for this bibliometric analysis.

In the initial step, we conducted a search using the primary keyword “Cyberbullying” via the search feature to map the initial research landscape, identify the number of publications relevant to the topic of cyberbullying, and obtain an initial overview of research trends, which was then used as a basis for the screening and further analysis process. In the process, 500 scientific articles were indexed on Google Scholar between 2020-2025. These findings focused on the theme of cyberbullying in various contexts, covering behavioral, psychological, and social aspects, as well as the dynamics of interpersonal relationships that emerge in digital environments.

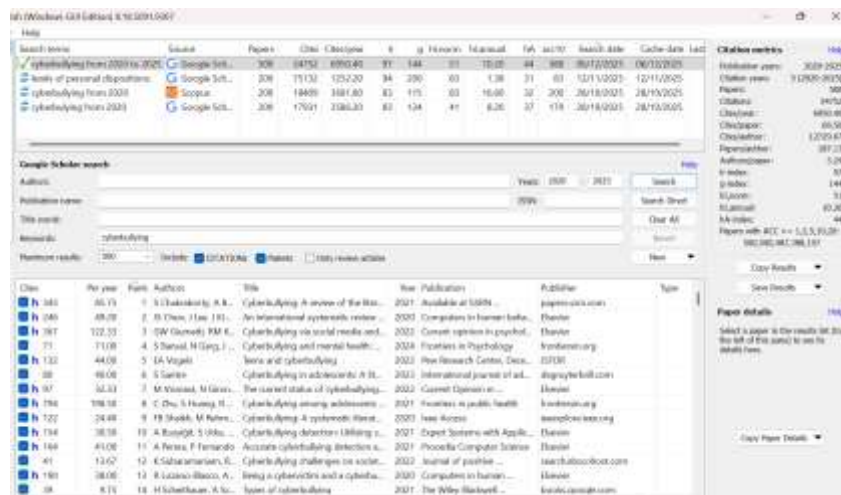


Figure 1. A search for publications indexed in Google Scholar from 2020 to 2025 using the keyword “cyberbullying” via the Publish or Perish application.

To gain a clearer and more specific understanding of the research topic, we then conducted an advanced search using a combination of keywords—“cyberbullying,” “identity crisis,” “mental health,” and “adolescents”—aimed at identifying publications that directly address the relationship between cyberbullying, identity crisis, and mental

health among adolescents as victims. The search results for the same period yielded 951 relevant scientific articles, indicating that this issue has become a growing focus of attention in international research, while also underscoring the urgency of understanding its dynamics and impacts in greater depth.

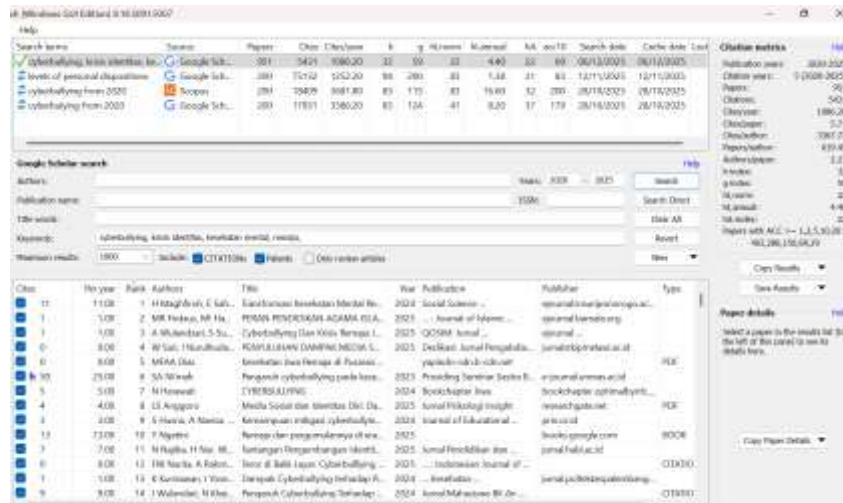


Figure 2. A search for publications indexed in Google Scholar from 2020 to 2025 using the Publish or Perish application and the keyword combination cyberbullying, identity crisis, mental health, and adolescents.

In the next step, all the articles we obtained from the two search phases described above were exported in RIS format, which is the standard format used for processing literature data in bibliometric software. The data was then processed using VOSviewer, a software tool used to visualize relationships between keywords, co-occurrence patterns, and to perform clustering and mapping of research networks based on bibliographic data, thereby generating a systematic map illustrating the knowledge structure, primary research focus, and the development of research related to cyberbullying and its impact on identity crises and mental health among adolescents.

Based on the data obtained through the systematic procedures described above, the results and discussion regarding the research structure and the relationships among keyword variables in the literature related to cyberbullying, identity crisis, and adolescent mental health are presented using the VOSviewer application.

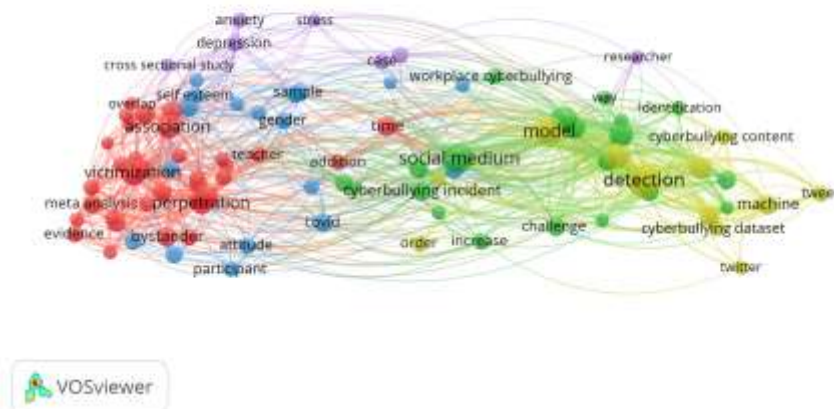


Figure 3. Network visualization from VOSviewer using the keyword cyberbullying.

The network visualization from VOSviewer shows the structure of cyberbullying research, divided into several clusters based on keyword associations in scientific publications. Each color in the visualization represents a specific thematic cluster, while node size indicates keyword frequency and the lines connecting words indicate the strength of relationships between topics. Overall, four major clusters dominate: the psychosocial and mental health cluster (red), the methodological and sociodemographic variables cluster (blue), the technology and cyberbullying detection model development cluster (green), and the cluster related to social media and digital content (yellow). The dense inter-cluster connections indicate that the issue of cyberbullying is studied from various perspectives and does not stand alone, but rather is interconnected across psychological, social, educational, and technological aspects.

1. Red Cluster – Psychosocial and Mental Health Impacts

Looking at this red cluster, it is evident that the research focuses on discussions of social psychology (psychosocial aspects) and also highlights the impact of cyberbullying on adolescents’ mental health. This is evident from the main keywords such as victimization, perpetration, self-esteem, anxiety, stress, and depression, which confirm that research in this cluster emphasizes the experiences of victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying, the resulting psychological effects, and the emotional consequences experienced by adolescents. In addition to the keywords mentioned above, this cluster also includes terms such as bystander, meta-analysis, and cross-sectional study, indicating that research in this cluster encompasses studies on various roles in cyberbullying cases as well as commonly used methodological approaches. Based on the research focus in this cluster, it is evident that this cluster is highly relevant to the issue of adolescent identity crisis as it reflects the vulnerable psychological and emotional conditions during that developmental stage.

2. Blue Cluster – Demographics, Education, and Social Context

Looking at this blue cluster, it is evident that the research focuses on themes related to sociodemographic variables (a measure used to describe social and economic dynamics as well as structures within society) and the social environment of adolescents. In this cluster, several key terms stand out, such as gender, teacher, participant, and sample, indicating that research in this cluster extensively discusses differences in individual characteristics as well as the role of the educational environment in shaping risks or protective factors against cyberbullying. Additionally, the keyword “COVID” appears in this cluster, indicating an increase in online activity among adolescents during the pandemic period; this is why it has become a key context reinforcing this phenomenon. Consequently, researchers recognize that social and demographic factors play a crucial role in understanding adolescents’ vulnerability to cyberbullying and how the environment—particularly schools—significantly impacts experiences of cyberbullying.

3. Green Cluster – Technology & Models for Detecting Cyberbullying

Based on the analysis of the green cluster, technological development has emerged as the latest trend in cyberbullying research. This cluster focuses on keywords such as “model,” “detection,” “challenge,” and “social media,” indicating that the research highlights topics related to the development of algorithms and predictive models to automatically detect and identify cyberbullying across various social media platforms, such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and others. Research in this cluster investigates various technical challenges, such as the need for high-quality and reliable data, the importance of linguistic diversity, and the ever-changing dynamics of teenage conversations. It can be concluded from this cluster that technological innovation can help researchers and relevant parties recognize patterns of cyberbullying early on, while also serving as a preventive measure against cyberbullying.

4. Yellow Cluster – Social Media & Cyberbullying Content

In this final cluster, the research focuses on the digital space—where cyberbullying most frequently occurs—particularly social media platforms such as Twitter (now X), TikTok, Instagram, and others. Key findings related to terms like Twitter, tweet, cyberbullying content, identification, and dataset indicate that the primary data sources for this research largely consist of social media platforms. Twitter (now X) is the most frequently used platform due to its open nature, which makes it easier for researchers to collect and analyze conversations related to online aggressive behavior. Thus, this cluster demonstrates that social media plays a significant role in shaping current adolescent interactions, and from this data, researchers can develop an automated cyberbullying detection system, as discussed in the green cluster.

The relationships between clusters indicate that the phenomenon of cyberbullying is closely linked to psychosocial, sociodemographic, and technological aspects. The red cluster (psychosocial) is strongly connected to the blue cluster (demographic) because factors such as gender, teacher–student relationships, and the school context influence

“overlap” on the left side highlights the phenomenon of dual roles, where an individual can be both a victim and a perpetrator, illustrating the dynamics of identity crises and social relationships among adolescents in the digital age.

From late 2021 through mid-2022 (the green-to-light-yellow zone), the focus of research shifted toward mapping cyberbullying incidents within broader contexts, such as workplace cyberbullying and cyberbullying incidents. This shift indicates that during that period, researchers began to recognize that cyberbullying incidents were not limited to adolescents but were also affecting professionals, although adolescents remained the primary group impacted. The terms “order,” “time,” “increase,” and “challenge” indicate serious concern among researchers, as the world was gripped by the COVID-19 pandemic during that period—marked by the term “COVID”—leading to a significant rise in digital media usage.

The period leading up to 2022–2023, dominated by bright yellow, indicates a shift in focus toward technological solutions, with explorations into machine learning, automated detection models, tweet analysis, and cyberbullying datasets. This shift suggests that an increasing number of studies are not only highlighting the impacts but also attempting to present concrete technological solutions to prevent repeat victimization, enhance digital safety, and mitigate negative effects on adolescents’ mental health.

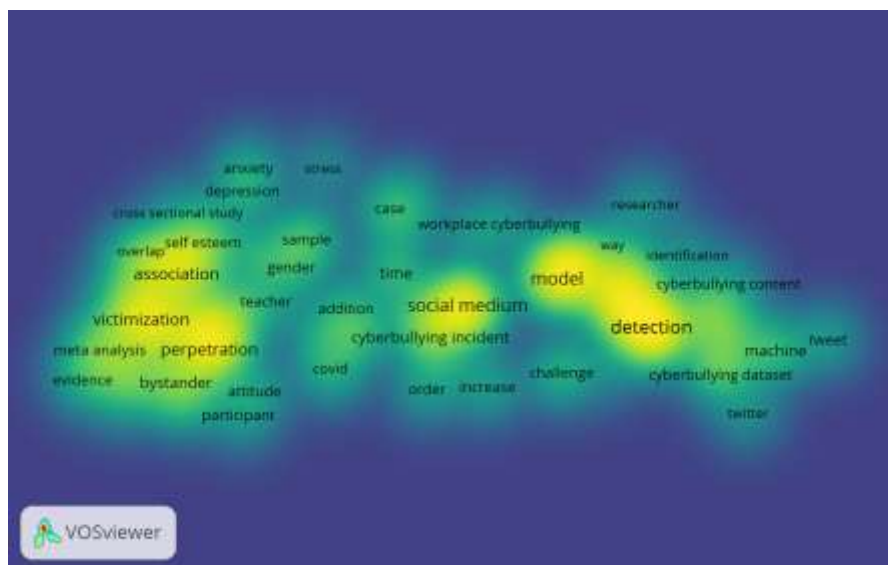


Figure 5. Density visualization from VOSviewer using the keyword cyberbullying.

When viewed through the lens of density visualization, there are two main areas of focus in cyberbullying research. The yellow zone on the left side indicates a high density of terms such as victimization, perpetration, bystander, self-esteem, depression, and anxiety. This reinforces the understanding that research has primarily focused on the psychological and social impacts of cyberbullying on adolescents, particularly regarding identity crises, self-esteem, and mental health disorders.

On the other hand, the yellow zone on the right side of the map focuses on keywords such as “model,” “detection,” “machine,” “cyberbullying dataset,” and “tweet.” This clearly

The blue cluster represents the theoretical foundation that serves as a starting point for understanding the relationship between cyberbullying and identity crises among adolescents. The prevalence of terms such as “cyberbullying,” “psychology,” “issues,” and “experienced,” as well as connecting words like “is” and “from,” indicates that research in this cluster focuses on defining cyberbullying as a psychosocial phenomenon, rather than merely a technology-based act of violence. Cyberbullying is considered to arise from social interactions in digital spaces, where individuals—especially adolescents—bring the dynamics of their developmental psychology into virtual environments saturated with new social norms.

From a developmental psychology perspective, adolescents are in a phase of self-discovery influenced by the need for recognition, social acceptance, and the formation of self-image. This cluster map shows that cyberbullying is not merely a form of aggression but also a manifestation of an unstable identity formation process. Adolescents involved—whether as perpetrators or victims—have a strong connection to the need to establish their presence in the digital world. An identity crisis can trigger digital aggressive behavior as a form of compensation or, conversely, increase vulnerability to online attacks due to a weak sense of self.

Academically, this cluster serves as a conceptual framework underpinning further research on how cyberbullying relates to adolescent identity formation within the digital ecosystem. By outlining its definitions, characteristics, and psychological aspects, the blue cluster establishes a crucial foundation for understanding this phenomenon not only from a technological perspective but also as an issue of identity development among the younger generation.

2. Red Cluster – Identity Crisis and Psychological Impact

The red cluster focuses on more in-depth research on cyberbullying, specifically the identity crisis commonly experienced by adolescents and its impact on their mental health. In this cluster, keywords such as identity crisis, phenomenon, experienced, children’s mental health, influence, and exposure were dominant, indicating that cyberbullying has a broad scope—not merely as a digital-based aggressive act, but as a cause of psychological distress rooted in the instability of adolescents’ self-identity.

During their development, adolescents go through a phase of searching for and forming their self-identity, where they observe, learn, and absorb standards, values, beliefs, and social norms from their environment, including social media—a space where, in this era, adolescents more frequently express themselves. However, exposure to idealized representations on social media—such as standards of the perfect body, beauty, popularity, and lifestyle—ultimately creates intense psychological pressure. When adolescents fail to meet these standards, they are not only at risk of becoming victims of cyberbullying but also have the potential to become perpetrators of cyberbullying, through which they may seek validation and mask their feelings of low self-esteem.

This cluster demonstrates that the digital space does not always have a positive impact on its users; on the contrary, if not used wisely, it can cause users to experience psychological stress due to intense social competition, where digital identity often determines self-worth. The mismatch between the ideal identity presented online and one's actual self can ultimately trigger self-concept distortion, low self-esteem, and even symptoms of mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. Therefore, identity crises and cyberbullying are interrelated through complex psychosocial mechanisms.

Academically, the red cluster underscores that the issue of cyberbullying cannot be separated from adolescent identity formation and their mental health. Digital identity is no longer merely a representation of the self but has become an aspect that can determine psychological well-being. Based on these findings, researchers need to emphasize the importance of interdisciplinary research that incorporates developmental psychology perspectives—particularly regarding identity crises, digital media, and mental health in adolescents—to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying among adolescents.

3. Green Cluster - The Role of the Environment (Parents, Schools, and the Academic Perspective)

The green cluster highlights that the immediate social environment plays a crucial role, rather than relying solely on the individual, in terms of responses to cyberbullying and its impact on adolescent identity crises. In this green cluster, several keywords emerged, such as study, perspective, parents, mental health, bullying, and research, leading researchers to conclude that this study focuses on the roles of family, school, and the digital space—where adolescents interact and express themselves—in relation to cyberbullying.

The role of parents is crucial in their children's development, particularly during adolescence, where parents play a vital role in supervision, emotional communication, and providing psychological support to adolescents. This underscores that effective parenting extends beyond discipline and self-control; it also involves active parental engagement in their children's digital activities. This includes helping children understand the dynamics of social media and ensuring parents are prepared to serve as a safe haven when their children face digital violence. This is vital because many victims of cyberbullying remain silent due to shame, fear, or a lack of trust in the adults around them.

Furthermore, the perspective on schools is beginning to shift, such that schools are no longer viewed merely as formal educational institutions, but as vital venues for shaping children's digital character. Digital literacy, technology-based empathy, and education in online communication ethics are the focus of this cluster. Thus, schools are not only responsible for addressing cyberbullying incidents that have

already occurred but must also play a preventive role through a curriculum that instills awareness of the risks to digital identity and mental health.

According to the literature, the green cluster indicates that cyberbullying is not an isolated phenomenon. Psychological impacts such as identity crises, anxiety, and even depression are not solely caused by digital interactions but are also influenced by the quality of supervision, support, and digital literacy within the environment in which adolescents grow up. By positioning the roles of family and school as protective factors, this cluster provides a more practical and solution-oriented direction for research, particularly in the context of social interventions targeting the younger generation.

4. Yellow Cluster – Child Behavior & Developmental Factors

Findings in the yellow cluster indicate that cyberbullying is not caused solely by external social environmental factors, but is in fact influenced by the psychosocial developmental dynamics of children and adolescents. The dominance of terms such as child, behavior, adult, exposure, and regarding indicates that research in this cluster views the evolution of behavior and self-identity during the growth period as involving cyberbullying as part of the process.

Furthermore, children and adolescents are in a phase where exploration and the formation of self-identity are particularly strong. During this developmental phase, they attempt to mimic behavioral patterns perceived as capable of enhancing social status or gaining recognition from their peer group. However, when exposure to social media interactions is not fully supervised by adults, children and adolescents may use social media as their experimental arena, which ultimately creates the potential to harm others, including through cyberbullying activities.

In the context of development, cyberbullying behavior is often not merely an act of aggression that is fully conscious or controlled by the perpetrator, but rather a form of exploration of a deviant or distorted sense of self. This does not rule out the possibility that children and adolescents may become cyberbullies in order to be accepted, recognized, or even feared by those around them. Meanwhile, victims of cyberbullying may experience social trauma that affects the formation of their self-esteem and self-concept, thereby impacting how they assess themselves, their social relationships, or even their future personal competencies; this occurs due to the hindrance of emotional and cognitive development in children and adolescents.

From an academic perspective, this yellow cluster underscores that cyberbullying should not be viewed solely as deviant adolescent behavior or a digital crime; rather, adults must understand this issue as a developmental phenomenon, as it fundamentally arises from social learning processes, identity formation, and the

need for acceptance during a phase of development that is not yet stable. Thus, research examining cyberbullying must take into account developmental psychology factors, the dynamics of social imitation, and the emotional characteristics of adolescents who have not yet fully matured.

The results of bibliometric mapping using VOSviewer indicate that studies on cyberbullying among adolescents form a logical, interconnected network. The blue cluster describes cyberbullying as a psychosocial phenomenon in digital interactions related to adolescent identity formation. The red cluster shows that cyberbullying is not merely online aggression but also a trigger for identity crises resulting from pressure to meet ideal standards on social media, thereby leading to distortions in self-concept and psychological distress.

These findings are supported by the yellow cluster, which indicates that identity crises resulting from cyberbullying directly contribute to mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, social trauma, and aggressive imitative behavior among adolescents whose identities are not yet stable. Furthermore, the green cluster confirms that these impacts are influenced by the social environment, particularly the roles of parents, schools, digital literacy, and educational policies as protective factors.

Overall, research on cyberbullying not only focuses on its definition but also explores adolescents' vulnerabilities and the importance of environmental support in prevention and intervention. This logical framework opens up opportunities for interdisciplinary, solution-oriented research aimed at promoting the mental health of the younger generation.

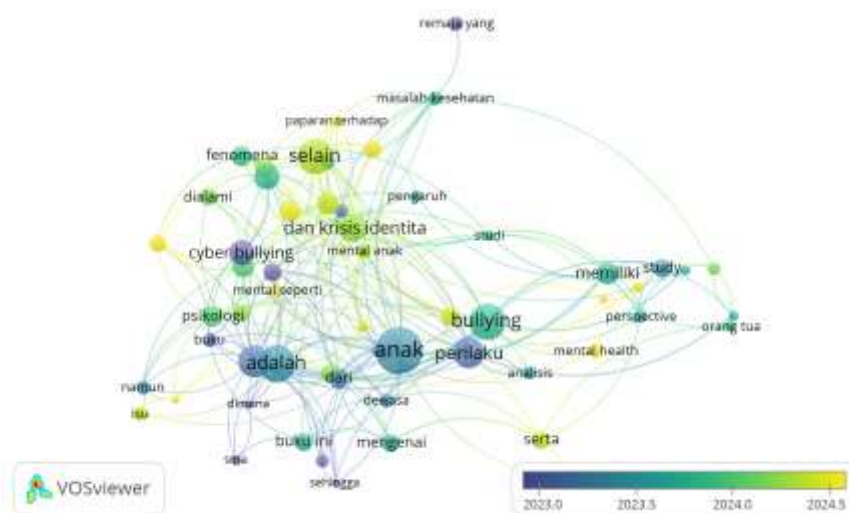


Figure 7. An overlay visualization from VOSviewer combining the keywords cyberbullying, identity crisis, mental health, and adolescents.

When analyzed from the perspective of overlay visualization, it is evident that this visualization illustrates the evolution of research related to the combination of four key terms—cyberbullying, identity crisis, mental health, and adolescents—from 2021 to 2024. The analysis begins in the left area of the map, which is dominated by shades of blue

to light green for the period from 2022 to early 2023; these colors indicate that the concept previously focused on in research was the study of the psychological phenomenon of cyberbullying among children and adolescents. This is marked by the emergence of keywords such as cyberbullying, psychology, phenomenon, experienced, and mental, showing that the research focus during that period heavily emphasized the psychosocial impacts on adolescents, particularly regarding emotional conditions and negative experiences in socializing within digital environments. Therefore, the dominance of these keywords supports the view that the phenomenon of cyberbullying is a crucial issue for the developmental psychology of children and adolescents who are in the process of seeking and building their self-identity.

In the central part of the map, a shift in research focus is evident, marked by a color transition toward a yellowish-green hue that begins to emerge by 2023. During this period, researchers did not merely describe the phenomenon; they began analyzing identity crises and adolescent behavior as consequences of cyberbullying. During this period, researchers began highlighting how exposure to social norms in digital media—such as popularity, lifestyle, and beauty standards—can trigger internal conflict and mental health issues.

Moving to the right side of the map, dominated by yellow for the mid-2023 to 2024 period, there is a shift in research focus back toward the theme of the social environment as a protective factor. This means researchers are beginning to adopt a solution-oriented approach through family support, digital supervision, and media literacy. This theme underscores that current research places greater emphasis on strategic, social-environment-based intervention measures that can mitigate the risks of cyberbullying and its impact on adolescents' mental health.

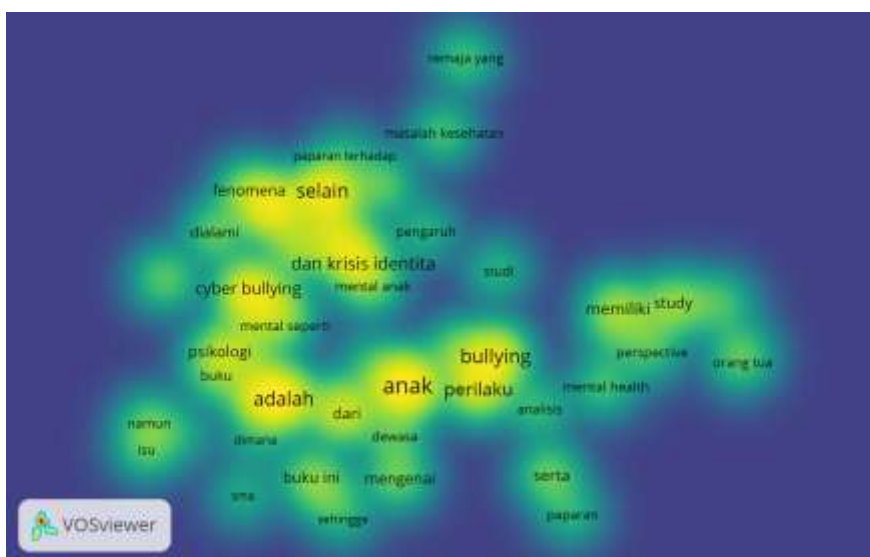


Figure 8. Density visualization from VOSviewer using the keywords cyberbullying, identity crisis, mental health, and adolescents.

When viewed through density visualization, the yellow color on the map indicates the keywords that appear most frequently and have been studied the most, whereas the green and blue colors indicate keywords that appear least frequently in the research. We begin at the center of the map, which shows a dominance of deep yellow for the keywords

“child,” “bullying,” “behavior,” “identity crisis,” “is,” and “phenomenon.” This concentration indicates that research on cyberbullying is most strongly focused on children and adolescents as the primary population of study. Additionally, it positions cyberbullying behavior as a core issue frequently linked to identity crises and psychosocial phenomena.

Moving to the left side of the map, there is a concentration of yellow-green hues around keywords such as psychology, cyberbullying, experienced, mental, and phenomenon. This concentration indicates that the psychological impact resulting from the experience of being a victim of cyberbullying is the primary focus of research. Consequently, studies in this area extensively address emotional disturbances, mental stress, and the dynamics of self-concept among adolescents involved in aggressive digital interactions.

Next, on the left side of the map, a greenish hue is visible around keywords such as “study,” “perspective,” “parents,” “mental health,” and “research.” Although not as dense as the previous area, this still indicates that the topic of the role of the environment (family, school, and mental health perspectives) is beginning to attract attention from researchers as a strategic approach to social environment-based interventions that can reduce the risk of cyberbullying and its impact on mental health among adolescents.

B. Discussion

The results of the bibliometric mapping indicate that research on cyberbullying, identity crises, and adolescent mental health forms an interconnected knowledge structure, with two main pathways: the psychosocial pathway and the technological pathway. Within the psychosocial pathway, the VOSviewer visualization shows that cyberbullying is not only understood as aggressive behavior in the digital space but is also part of the dynamics of adolescent identity development.

This explanation aligns with the literature stating that victims of cyberbullying experience reduced self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and identity disturbances. This is consistent with the findings in an article by Azkiyatus and Dany (2023) in the journal *Twikrama*, which demonstrates that cyberbullying has a significant impact on adolescents’ psychological well-being.

These findings are further reinforced by research on the mental health of adolescents who are victims of cyberbullying, which indicates increased anxiety, depression, and even psychological trauma (Poltekkes Kupang, 2024).

In addition to the psychosocial track, the technology-related cluster highlights research developments in the use of machine learning for the automated detection of cyberbullying on social media. Nevertheless, the mapping results indicate a lack of integration between technological approaches and psychological understanding. Most detection systems rely solely on keywords or linguistic patterns, without considering emotional context or factors related to adolescent identity development. This highlights a research gap that needs to be addressed so that technology can become a more effective tool for preventing cyberbullying.

One of the most important findings is the identification of a negative cycle between cyberbullying, identity crises, and adolescent mental health. Adolescents experiencing an identity crisis show a higher tendency to become both perpetrators and victims of cyberbullying because they are more easily influenced by social pressure and the need for validation.

Conversely, the experience of being a victim of cyberbullying worsens self-concept and deepens an identity crisis, which in turn triggers psychological disorders. This cycle demonstrates that interventions focused solely on one aspect will not be effective, as these three factors influence and reinforce one another.

On the other hand, a cluster of studies on the role of the family and school environments indicates the potential to break this cycle. Parental support, positive communication, and regulations on digital media use have been shown to act as protective factors against the effects of cyberbullying. This aligns with research findings indicating that family and school involvement plays a crucial role in reducing the risk of mental health disorders among adolescents who are victims of cyberbullying (Gembira PKM, 2024).

Additionally, educational institutions with comprehensive digital literacy programs can help adolescents understand how to interact safely online, build a healthy digital identity, and enhance their psychosocial resilience.

3. Implications for Case Studies: The Importance of Selecting Representative Cases

The inherent complexity of the cyberbullying phenomenon in the digital age requires a careful methodological approach, particularly in the context of case study research. With an extremely high prevalence rate of victims—estimated by Komdigi to be around 48% of the child internet user population—this issue is no longer an anomaly but the norm, and given the massive diversity of its forms, a single case study is inherently unrepresentative and prone to producing biased findings. If researchers focus solely on a single case—for example, cyberbullying in the form of sustained harassment on a public social platform, the study will fundamentally fail to capture the crucial dynamics of other forms, such as doxxing (the unauthorized disclosure of personal information) or fraping (identity impersonation), which frequently occur in private or semi-private spaces that are difficult to detect (Arista & Hartini, 2025). This limitation prevents researchers from understanding how contextual factors—which are crucial variables in qualitative studies—interact with different types of aggression.

Therefore, a research approach using a single-case study design should be abandoned in favor of a multiple-case study design aimed at theoretical replication. Rather than statistical generalization (such as in surveys), the goal of a multiple-case study is analytical generalization—that is, extending specific findings to a broader theoretical framework. Researchers must deliberately select several contrasting and representative cases to ensure that their findings can cover the full spectrum of victims' experiences and perpetrators' tactics. For example, a researcher might select Case A, which involves trolling on a public platform, to test the extent to which Routine Activity Theory (which emphasizes the absence of guards and attractive targets) can explain the phenomenon. On the other hand, a researcher might select Case B, which involves exclusion in a closed social group, to test the extent to which Social Learning Theory (which focuses on behavior learned from the immediate social environment) is more relevant. A systematic comparison of these cases will yield a more in-depth typology, identifying how anonymity (high in public spaces) versus relationship closeness (high in private groups) influences the selection of bullying tactics by perpetrators.

Furthermore, the urgency of conducting a dual-case study is underscored by the severe and immediate psychological impact. Research indicates that victims of cyberbullying face a significantly higher risk of mental distress and suicide (Madaniya, 2023). By analyzing various cases, researchers can identify different mitigation strategies. For example, effective coping mechanisms for victims of harassment in public spaces may involve blocking and reporting, whereas for victims of outing (whose privacy has been permanently violated), coping mechanisms may be more centered on deep social support from family or clinical intervention. The results of the dual-case analysis, therefore, will enable researchers to formulate differentiated and more effective policy recommendations. Aristianto et al. (2025) emphasize that recommendations must be holistic, meaning they should include improving digital literacy for parents (to monitor hard-to-detect private spaces) as well as enhancing AI detection technology (to moderate public spaces) (SciTePress, 2025). In addition to methodological and practical considerations, ethical considerations also necessitate the use of multiple case studies. By working with multiple cases, researchers can better protect the anonymity of victims and perpetrators in an ethical manner, as specific details of each case (e.g., the platform used, the type of bullying) can be obscured and generalized across cases, minimizing the very high risk of de-anonymization given the sensitivity of cyberbullying data involving privacy. Therefore, for researchers who wish to make a substantive contribution to understanding and combating cyberbullying in Indonesia, a representative dual-case study design is no longer merely a methodological option, but a scientific necessity.

4. CONCLUSION

These findings have important implications for research and practice. Future research should integrate psychosocial and technological approaches, for example by developing detection algorithms that take into account the user's emotional context, rather than merely linguistic indicators. In practice, interventions must be implemented at multiple levels, ranging from psychological support for individuals, digital literacy programs in schools, and supportive parenting at home, to the development of safety features on social media platforms.

However, this study has limitations because it relies on publication databases, so it may not cover the entire global literature (publication bias). Additionally, bibliometric visualizations only show conceptual relationships between texts, not causal relationships. Therefore, further research is recommended to use longitudinal or mixed-methods empirical designs so that the relationship between cyberbullying, identity, and mental health can be understood more deeply.

Overall, these findings confirm that cyberbullying among adolescents is a multidimensional phenomenon involving the interplay of psychological, social, and technological factors. A holistic and collaborative approach involving families, schools, mental health professionals, and technology developers is essential to protect adolescents from the long-term effects of cyberbullying in the digital age.

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6. AUTHORS' NOTE

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