

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANONYMITY AND CYBER SEXUAL HARASSMENT BY TWITTER USERS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

Hubungan Anonimitas Dan Cyber Sexual Harassment Oleh Pengguna Twitter: Studi Cross-Sectional

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ABSTRACT

Background: Cases of cyber sexual harassment are increasing, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. SAFEnet data showed cases of online sexual harassment and in 2020 increased by 40%, namely 659 cases. **Purpose:** This cross-sectional study aimed to determine the relationship between anonymity and Twitter users' desire to commit cyber sexual harassment and test the Deindividuation theory. **Methods:** The population in this study were Twitter users aged 16-54 years. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a sample of 280 respondents, who were selected randomly. Data collection through questionnaire distribution, using the Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ) scale. **Results:** Through data analysis with SPSS 25.0, it was found that the Pearson Product Moment correlation value between anonymity and Cyber Sexual Harassment (CSH) was (r) 0.749 > r_table 0.113. **Conclusion:** The research shows that there is a relationship between anonymity and Twitter users' willingness to commit cyber sexual harassment, with a positive relationship direction. The lower the anonymity, the lower the desire to commit CSH, and vice versa.

Keywords: anonymity, cyber sexual harassment, deindividuation theory, twitter

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Kasus pelecehan seksual siber meningkat terkhusus di masa pandemi Covid-19. Data SAFEnet menunjukkan kasus pelecehan seksual secara online dan pada tahun 2020 meningkat 40%, yakni 659 Kasus. Tujuan: Studi cross-sectional ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hubungan anonimitas dengan keinginan pengguna Twitter melakukan pelecehan seksual siber dan menguji teori Deindividuasi. Metode: Populasi pada penelitian ini adalah pengguna Twitter usia 16-54 tahun. Jumlah sampel ditentukan dengan rumus Slovin dengan sampel sebanyak 280 responden, yang dipilih secara acak (random). Pengumpulan data melalui penyebaran kuesioner, dengan menggunakan skala Sexual Experiences Questionnaire (SEQ). Hasil: Melalui analisis data dengan SPSS 25.0, ditemukan bahwa nilai korelasi Pearson Product Moment antara anonimitas dengan Cyber Sexual Harassment (CSH) adalah (r) 0,749 > r_tabel0,113. Kesimpulan: Penelitian menunjukkan terdapat hubungan antara anonimitas dengan keinginan pengguna Twitter melakukan pelecehan seksual siber, dengan arah hubungan yang positif. Semakin rendah anonimitas, semakin rendah keinginan untuk melakukan CSH, dan sebaliknya.

Kata Kunci: anonimitas, cyber sexual harassment, teori deindividuasi, twitter

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INTRODUCTION

Cyber Sexual Harassment (CSH) occurs on all social media, one of which is Twitter. Data from the National Commission on Women shows that in 2019, there were 281 cases of online sexual harassment and in 2020 there was a 40% increase to 659 cases (SAFEnet, 2020). The National Commission on Women also reported that it has received reports of an increase in online gender-based violence from victims: 2017 (97 cases), 2018 (97 cases), 2019 (281 cases), and continued to increase until October 2020 by 659 cases. Other research also shows that the younger generation is the most victimised, and 70% of victims are women (Fajriani & Bahri, 2015; Kemala, 2020)

Twitter is a means of interaction and communication for certain communities, which have similar hobbies, preferences, tastes, such as the photography community, Peduli Air Susu Ibu Ekslusif (ASIX) (Rosemary & Rachmatan, 2013). Twitter is often considered journalism because of its ability to quickly share images and information (Sari *et al.*, 2021; Wijayanti, 2016). Through this platform, users instantly upload images and spread their news and thoughts to millions of people.

Twitter, which is supposed to be a place to express oneself, has been misused to harass others. For example, it happened to one account that did not want to be named when she uploaded a photo on Twitter. A photo that looks polite using a hijab instead brings up a negative comment from an anonymous account that demeans the person in the photo. The user felt sad that a photo that should not have been sexually charged had to receive comments that were out of bounds, and she was afraid that the photo would be used for other negative things.



Figure 1. Screenshot of an example of sexual harassment on Twitter

Source: Research Result (2022)

Sexual harassment can come in many forms. including flirting. whistling. comments with sexual connotations, pornographic humour, pinching, poking, patting, touching in certain parts, sexual gestures, invitations to date with threats, or sexual intercourse to rape (Fajriani & Bahri, 2015). In addition, sexual harassment is usually committed by men to women and children (Fajriani & Bahri, 2015).

Barak mentioned the similarities between offline and online sexual harassment, with four categories: active verbal sexual harassment, passive verbal sexual harassment, active graphic gender harassment, and passive graphic gender harassment (Barak, 2005). Sexual harassment can change both physical and psychological conditions in victims and survivors of sexual harassment or violence both online or cyber and offline.

The impact on victims varies depending on the severity and intensity of the sexual harassment. One of the impacts that can worsen the victim's life is the psychological impact such as wanting to take revenge on the perpetrator, retaliatory attacks or even blaming themselves. Victims also tend to become victims of sexual harassment again when they report the case. In addition, some victims experience a decline in school performance, no-shows in certain courses, persistent feelings of guilt and even loss of reputation and self-confidence (Shopiani *et al.*, 2021; Triwijati, 2007; Zulfa *et al.*, 2022).

Cyber Sexual Harassment (CSH) is influenced by several factors. Based on the results of research conducted by Santana, anonymity in social media users increases the amount of inappropriate behaviour in a person's comment column (Santana, 2014). This can happen because people feel safe doing this if they hide behind their real personal conditions. There are four factors that provide comfort and freedom to someone when opening themselves in online media, namely: 1) anonymity; 2) limitations of bodily identity (disembodied); 3) limitations of physical space and time (dislocated); and 4) opportunities to show different identities (Saputra, 2019).

M. E. Kabay (2001)defined anonymity as "unknown" or can be identified as a condition or state of not being known or recognised (Kabay et al., 2012; Kabay, 1998). The easier it is for others to reach the identity of the account, the lower the level of anonymity. This means that if a person can easily identify the identity of an anonymous account, then that person can easily verify who the person behind the anonymous account is. Referring to this belief, Kabay divides anonymity into four aspects: Untraceable Anonymity, Traceable Untraceable Username and Anonymity, Traceable Username (Kabay et al., 2012).

This phenomenon is in line with the modern theory of deindividuation initiated by Festinger, Pepitone and Newcomb in 1952. Deindividuation is assumed when a person will behave unnaturally and differently from their daily life, which is where this behaviour arises when individuals join certain groups referred to as deindividuation (Jessup, Connolly, & Tansik, 1990). Anonymity increases the amount of out-of-norm behaviour, Suler (2004)named phenomenon as the Online Disinhibition Effect, a condition in which the loss (disregard) of social rules and inhibitions

present in in-person interactions during interactions with others on the internet (Suler, 2004). In online environments, people often feel freer to speak, behave, or express themselves without fear of the same social consequences as in face-to-face interactions. This phenomenon can be defined as a person's inability to control spontaneous behaviour, thoughts, or feelings, as well as online actualisation when communicating with others in a way that they do not when speaking face-to-face.

Some studies have examined anonymity with some aspects deindividualisation theory or the Online Disinhibition Effect (Mukhoyyaroh, 2020) or the relationship between the theory and cyber bullying (Ma'rifah, 2022). The novelty of this research is that there are no studies that specifically look at the anonymity factor with the desire to commit sexual harassment in the cyber world, especially on Twitter social media. This study aimed to find a relationship between whether anonymity on Twitter affects the desire of other individual Twitter users to sexually humiliate others.

METHOD

Research Design

The research sought to find the relationship between variables through the correlation method namely to determine the relationship between the anonymity variable and the desire to commit cyber sexual harassment (CSH), The data collection method was conducted through a survey with online questionnaire distribution. The questionnaire included questions relating to tracked and untracked anonymity, to measure variable X (Vx), while questions relating to types of harassment both verbal and graphic to measure variable Y (Vy).

Research Population and Sample

The population in this study were Twitter users who were Indonesian citizens and domiciled in Indonesia with an age range of 13-64 years. Taking the age of 13 years refers to the terms and conditions set by Twitter, where Twitter users are at least 13 years old or 16 years old if they enter using third-party applications. Meanwhile, the determination of the maximum age limit of users refers to data released by Katadata in 2020 where internet users in Indonesia are at least in the age range of 55-64 years (Setyowati, 2020).

This study does not require ethical clearance because it was conducted online during the Covid-19 pandemic. However, informed consent was obtained in writing from each respondent who filled out the research survey.

Table 1. Research Population

No	Period	Total
1	October 2020	13.200.000 users
2	January 2021	14.050.000 users

Source: Statista.com., 2021

From the total population above, the sampling then used the Slovin formula. The

Slovin formula was expressed as follows. The population of this study was 14,050,000 using a tolerance limit of 6% and the calculation results were rounded off to make it easier for researchers. Then the calculation of the research sample was 277 which was rounded up to 280.

Based on the sample calculation above, the respondents in this study were adjusted to 280 people from the total Twitter social media users in Indonesia. Data analysis used the help of SPSS (Statistical Product and Service Solution) 25.0. for Windows, with the Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis technique to determine whether there is a relationship between variable X and variable Y.

RESULT

Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics of the respondents (Table 2) include age, gender, occupation, and duration of Twitter use and occupation. Respondents were mostly female with 5 age ranges, namely 16-20 years old (65%), 21-25 years old (29.6%), 26-30 years old (2.8%), 31-35 years old (0.7%), and above 35 years old only 5 people (1.7%). Respondents were mainly students and university students.

Table 2. Age Characteristics of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage %
16 – 20 y. o	182	65
21 – 25 y. o	83	29,6
26 - 30 y. o	8	2,8
31 - 35 y. o	2	0,7
>35 y. o	5	1,7
Total	280	100,0

Source: Research Result (2022)

Table 3 shows how long respondents have used Twitter social media, namely less than 1 month (21.4%), 1 - 6 months (22.9%),

7-12 months (8.9%), and more than 1 year (46.8%).

Table 3. Duration of Respondents using Twitter

Duration of Respondents using Twitter	Frequency	Percentage %
Less than a month	60	21,4
1-6 months	64	22,9
7-12 months	25	8,9
More than a year	131	46,8
Total	280	100,0

Source: Research Result (2022)

The Relationship between Anonymity and Cyber Sexual Harassment

The frequency of the two variables—anonymity—calculated findings indicated that Twitter users disclose contact list links on their personal accounts or information about where they work or live. Nonetheless, the information revealed that a greater proportion of respondents (N=86) never use their true name in their Twitter account.

Regarding the indication of desire to engage in cybersexual harassment (CSH), most respondents indicated that they had never attempted to engage in sexual or intimate conversations with others on Twitter about things pertaining to their sexuality. 8% of respondents said that they frequently talked to others on Twitter about sexual or **Table 4.** Correlation Test of *Product Moment*

other personal issues related to their sexuality. This demonstrated how users of social media can still exercise self-control in abstaining from utilizing the platform to recognize that doing so was against the law.

The data also showed that most respondents admitted that they had never sent links to pornographic websites to someone on Twitter and only 6 respondents answered that they had never or very often shared pornographic links with other people on Twitter.

The Pearson Product Moment correlation test was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between Anonymity (X) and the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment by Twitter users (Y).

Correlations Cvber Sexual Anonymity Harassment Anonymity Pearson Correlation .749** .000 Sig. (2-tailed) 280 280 Pearson Correlation .749** Cyber Sexual Harassment 1 Sig. (2-tailed) .000

280

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Source: Research Result (2022)

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The results showed that among Twitter social media users can be seen by comparing the Sig (2-tailed) value with the alpha value, namely 0.05, where if the Sig (2-

tailed) value was smaller than the alpha value

then there was a relationship between the two variables. The alpha value for this study was 0.000 < 0.05, as indicated by the Sig (2-tailed) value in the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Test table above. Thus, it might

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be said that there was a connection between Twitter users' demand for anonymity and their propensity to engage in cybersexual harassment.

The Pearson Correlation (r) value with the r-table value, which was 0.113 with a significance level of 5% and N=280, can also be used to determine whether a relationship existed in this study. The Pearson Correlation (r) value indicated that it was 0.749 higher than the value found in the r-table, which was 0.113. Thus, it might be said that there was a connection between Twitter users' demand for anonymity and their propensity to engage in cybersexual harassment.

The main correlation in this study was a positive correlation. It can be seen from the Pearson Correlation value which was a positive number of 0.749. It means that the correlation between the two variables was directly proportional, meaning that the higher the anonymity, the higher the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment by Twitter social media users. The lower the anonymity, the lower the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment among Twitter social media users.

The Pearson Correlation (r) result of 0.749 in this study was in the strong category. Therefore, it can be concluded that the relationship between Anonymity and the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment among Twitter social media users was strong. Based on the results of the Pearson Product Moment correlation test above, H-0 was rejected, and H-a was accepted. The results of this study stated that the hypothesis that has been proven in the sample can be applied to the population, where the hypothesis in this study was that there was a relationship between anonymity and the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment.

DISCUSSION

The results of hypothesis testing showed that there was a relationship between anonymity and the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment by Twitter users with a correlation coefficient of 0.749. The main relationship between these two variables was also positive, which showed that if anonymity increases, the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment also increases. On the other hand, if anonymity decreases, Twitter users' desire to carry out cyber sexual harassment will also decrease.

Anonymity is a condition where the identity of an individual cannot be identified. People who experience this loss of identity become less aware of their surroundings and less able to regulate their behavior, which makes them more likely to accepted norms (Mukhoyyaroh, 2020). Twitter users' anonymity and cybersexual harassment have a 0.000 < crucial alpha value of 0.05 Sig (2-tailed) significance value.

Low anonymity in this study influences the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment. This can be seen from the fact that 28.6% of respondents have used real names and 23.5% often to seldom used real names on Twitter social media. The research results also found that 31.1% of users who, even though they used pseudonyms, generally related to their personality and things they liked, such as favorite artists or athletes. 31.8% of users also felt that the identity they share on Twitter was also related to their identity in the real world. This indicated that Twitter social media users were not completely anonymous.

This low level of anonymity is directly proportional to the results of the Cyber Sexual Harassment variable. Researchers found that 72.1% of Twitter users have never even tried to talk about sexual or other personal things related to

sexuality to other people on Twitter. 77.5% have never sent sexual photos to other people on Twitter and 81.8% have never shared adult photos on other social media.

The results of this hypothesis test are also in line with what was explained by Mukhoyyaroh (2020),"Anonymity considered beneficial because you can express or do personal and emotional things through online interactions easily". This disclosure or behavior can have a damaging impact because individuals are trapped into committing cyber violence, both visual and verbal, and committing other pornographic acts. On the other hand, users who use real identities on social media tend to think repeatedly when they want to do something on social media. However, anonymity on Twitter social media still exists. This is because creating a Twitter account is simple and only requires entering your desired username and password. In addition, you might choose to delay email verification, which encourages users to create many accounts that are handled by a single person on a single device. This is the reason that a lot of profiles on various social media platforms with "weird" or improper names browse.

According to the confession of a respondent with the initials ER, she has three Twitter accounts where one account uses his real name, one account uses a fake name which is used to follow developments in K-POP issues, and one account for stalking other people. This **Twitter** user acknowledged that the information she provides under her real name is limited to what others are interested in knowing about her; on her second account, she uses it for K-POP; and on her other account, she uses it for both information-seeking and stalking other people. It is forbidden and she does not want anybody else to know that she is doing something like that.

The respondent with the initials HS also admitted that he only connected with friends he really knew on Twitter and could freely share what he wanted to share without having to fear being judged. This is in line with research conducted by Ilma et al., (2020), she stated that the closer someone is on social media, the lower their social anxiety will be. Research conducted on Instagram by Ilma et al., (2020) showed that people tend to show the good side of their main account because they are afraid that if they express themselves too much, they will be bullied by negative responses. Thus, they create a second or even third account filled with other people. They did it, so they can freely express their selves on that account (Ilma et al., 2020).

The theory used in this research is individuation theory. This theory discovered that there is a phenomenon where if someone gathers into one group there is a process of reduced awareness of their identity (Kabay et al., 2012; Kabay, 1998). The theory used in this research is relevant to the results obtained that anonymous Twitter users tend to behave outside the norm and outside their true nature in the real world. According to George Zimbardo, "The process of deindividuation is influenced by several external factors, such as the smallness or size of a group, anonymity belonging between feelings of individuals & euphoria in the group" (Vilanova et al., 2017). The research results are in line with research results regarding cyberbullying and cyber sexual harassment with Deindividuation theory, which occurred in Bangladesh (Nova et al., 2019) and in Indonesia (Amry & Pratama, 2021; Permana & Koesanto, 2023) that the use of anonymity in social media accounts influences a person's desire to carry out cyber harassment or bullying against other people, because the perpetrator's identity is hidden or secret, making them feel safe to behave abnormally.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This research proves the theory of deindividuation that a person, in this case a Twitter user, will behave abnormally, that is, not show his or her identity, especially if he or she is in a certain community (Twitter). The results of Pearson Product Moment calculations showed that the correlation value between anonymity and the desire to commit Cyber Sexual Harassment (CSH) by Twitter users is 0.749 and the r-table value (5% significance level and N=280) is 0.113. This means that there is a correlation or positive relationship between anonymity and the desire to carry out CSH by Twitter users. The positive value of the Pearson Correlation, which was 0.749, means that the higher the anonymity, the higher the desire to do CSH and vice versa.

This relationship shows that encouraging people to use real identities on social media can help prevent behavior that is outside the norm when it comes to internet usage. Users who would otherwise feel compelled engage in cybersexual harassment should reconsider, as their identity will be readily discovered and tracked. The study's conclusions advise Twitter to tighten up its regulations around the submission and creation of new social media accounts. Since it is so simple to create a social media account, there is a greater chance that numerous new fraudulent accounts may surface. If it is unable to forbid users from making new accounts, Twitter has the authority to penalize individuals who are accused of harassing other users on the social media platform in a sexual manner. This research has shortcomings and limitations. Hence, it is hoped that future research can examine more deeply the relationship between anonymity and sexual harassment. Moreover, it is also hoped to examine the factors that cause or motivate someone to

behave outside of the accepted norms when using Twitter and other social media.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

Author RR wrote the manuscript, while HMS proofread the manuscript. ABW carried out data collection and data analysis. However, NS assisted in data analysis.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no conflict of interest.

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