

Teenagers are Subjected to Cyber Bullying in Social Media Ask.fm

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Penyusun :

- Zainal Abidin Achmad
- I Made Anom Wiranata
- Sjafiatul Mardiyah

The Faculty of Social and
Political Sciences
Universita Airlangga

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Abstract

Ask.fm has become a medium for doing the bullying by targeting the teenagers. Since this media has become one of the favorite social media for teenagers in Indonesia. The main activities undertaken by teenagers through Ask.fm is asking questions and answering questions. When interacting through Ask.fm, the owner of this account can do so by using the original name as their identity or as anonymous. The anonymous feature provided by Ask.fm is often used to do bullying on teenagers.

However, there are a lot of questions and answers that are roughly even led to an insult to the harassment. This can be described as Cyber bullying through the social media. Cyber bullying on teenagers is defined as a situation in which a child, pre-teen, or teen repeatedly tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or being targeted by children or other teenagers by using short message service, e-mail, social media, or a wide variety of other types of digital communication media.

¹⁵*This study uses the theory of determination of technology and the theory of New Media. The theory explains that the new media is bringing new forms of interaction between people to a personal relationship in a way that cannot be done by the media earlier. The new media also contains the power and limitation, losses and gains, and vacillation.*

To explore the perception of teenagers about the Cyber bullying, this study used qualitative research methods with in-depth interviews. The teenagers who become the informants of study and interviewed have the following requirements: teenagers who have Ask.fm account; teenagers who have experienced bullying; and teenagers who have committed bullying through Ask.fm.

The conclusions of this study are: 1) Ask.fm in social media is perceived as bad thing because the high level of Cyber bullying on teenagers. 2)

One of the features in Ask.fm which facilitates the bully is the anonymous feature. The perpetrators of Cyber bullying feel safe because his identity is not visible when asking questions that contain insults or scorn. 3) Interestingly, the informants did not become a deterrent to use Ask.fm despite experiencing bullying. This is due to the high curiosity. 4) As a result of having experienced bullying, informant joining in bullying is inadvertent through questions. They do not realize that such action is bullying.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, Ask.fm becomes one of the favorite social media for many teenagers. It is a social network application that allows fellow users to know each other better by asking them to answer questions. Through Ask.fm, users can ask anything to the other users, without giving the identity (anonymous). However, it can also show their credentials (username) by disabling anonymous features. Anonymous in Ask.fm is a term for the giver to ask questions with no identity.

The main activity in Ask.fm is to provide questions and answers. As the time passes, many questions and answers that are deviant emerge. These words are rude and even lead to the mocked up to abuse. This can be described as the problem of Cyber bullying ⁵ the media.

Cyber bullying is defined as a situation in which a child, pre-teen, or teen repeatedly tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or being targeted by children or other youth by using short message services, e-mail, social media, or a wide variety of other types of digital communication media (Smith et al., 2008). It also ¹⁷ can be defined as harsh treatment that is performed by a person or group of people with the help of electronic tools that is done repeatedly and continuously to a target trouble defensively (Padgett et al., 2013).

Ask.fm established in Latvia and launched on June 16, 2010 was founded by Mark Terebin. Ask.fm has the slogan "Where the World Want to Know" is determined by Ask.fm by providing questions to the user of Ask.fm. On February 9, 2015 Ask.fm users has reached 150 million (<http://belajar-apa-saja.webnode.com/news/apa-itu-ask-fm-dan-bagaimana-cara-kerjanya/>).

Creating an account of Ask.fm can be done directly through the website by filling in the form of identity username, full name, password, email and date of birth. Otherwise, people can access via Facebook or twitter account which is already owned by the prospective user. In Ask.fm, users can only view their profile, to answer questions, and give a "like" on every question has been answered. Users cannot see the followers, unlike Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Users can add images to the answer, reply with video recording devices, and of course receive a notification each time a user gets a question.

Although Cyber bullying does not involve personal contact between the offender and the victim, it may under-

mine victim psychologically and emotionally. Generally, the offender will commit a disclaimer on their bullying actions. It is often said that the intention of such actions is merely joking or fad, but it is different from the reality (<http://infopsikologi.com/apa-pengertian-Cyber-bullying-dan-bagaimana-bentuknya/>).

Here are some examples of cases caused by Cyber bullying in social media Ask.fm. Clara Pugsley is one of the teenagers who become victims of excessive use of Ask.fm. She was found dead in a forest in Killargue, Dormahair, after attending a party given by a neighbor. Initially, she was allegedly killed by her friend. But it later emerged that she was killed in a suicide due to the taunts of schoolmates and on social networks. Since she used Ask.fm, a number of requests or questions against her that led to bullying grew. This is what makes Ask.fm to be accused to have a big role in that case.

It was also experienced by Erin Gallagher, a girl from Ireland who decided to finish her life after getting the bullying in Ask.fm for a week. Most of the troll (a term for bullying actors) insulted her weight. Suicide threat was delivered to the perpetrators of bullying against her, especially to someone who was not named. In the end, the threat becomes a reality. Erin was found dead in her home, just six ¹⁶ weeks after a case of Clara was discussed by the public (<http://inet.detik.com/read/2014/06/30/095417/2622839/398/bukan-omong-kosong-Cyber-bullying-berujung-bunuh-diri>).

The cases above are only a few cases of Cyber bullying experienced by teenagers in Ask.fm. Teenagers who seem controversial and less desirable in the environment are likely to be an easy target for perpetrators of Cyber bullying. The answers of the questions asked in Ask.fm apparently serve as visual stimuli that can trigger the emotions of the haters. According to data from nobullying.com sites, stating that the perpetrators of Cyber bullying prefer to vilify or intimidate victims through social media. Then Ask.fm is one of the four social media most used for Cyber bullying (<http://nobullying.com/Cyber-bullying-bullying-statistics-2014-finally/>).

Some forms of cyber bullying that have occurred are copying the private conversation, spreading rumors, manipulating images of people and sending it to others, sending threats in e-mail, misleading someone via e-mail, openly embarrassing someone in a chat room and sending messages with sexual comments (Vandebosch and Van Cleemput, 2008). Cyber bullying is clearly different from

flirting via the internet or mobile phones. One major difference is that the perpetrators of Cyber bullying really want to hurt the feelings of others (Dehue, 2008).

Based on the data, between 2012 to the present, Ask.fm was associated with many cases of Cyber bullying, some of which led to suicide, particularly in young people. For this reason, Ask.fm has partnered with various organizations including the Internet Watch Foundation and INSAFE England. This site also has a "Safety Center" that describes the resource as "Questions and Answers for Parents", "Abuse Policy", "Safety and Security Essentials" and "Dos and Don'ts" (<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.askfm&hl=en>).

Based on the background described, researchers paid attention to the teenager users of social media Ask.fm domiciled in Surabaya. They were the teenagers who had experienced bullying and those who have done the bullying. Researchers attempt to dig up as much information as possible on how Ask.fm was used and abused by teens, and how often they experienced Cyber bullying in Ask.fm. Researchers have confidence that the teenagers in Surabaya also experienced a similar incident when interacting via Ask.fm. Researchers are also trying to find the possibility of mode or other unique thing about Ask.fm use as a medium for doing the bullying. For this reason, it is important to understand how the perception of teenagers in Surabaya is against Ask.fm which evolves into a medium of Cyber bullying.

Theoretically, the use of social media cannot be separated from the motivation that drives someone to do something (McQuail: 2000). There are several motivations that encourage someone to use social media. First, the information means that the concept of hyperlinks and memes on the internet allows users in search of information. Through the Internet, users will be faced with a wave of very much information and are necessary for people who first used the Internet to be able to function it optimally. Second, personal identity factor means that users are using social media in order to associate the actors in the media with a certain character to himself. Third, integrative factors and social interaction means that is when the Internet has managed to leave the conventional media in one step. Fourth, the entertainment factor means that people are using social media for the purpose of obtaining pleasure and entertainment (Rahman, 2011).

Cyber bullying is bullying that occur using electronic technology. Electronic technologies are devices such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat, and website. Cyber bullying can also be done in text messages or emails, rumors sent via email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles (<http://www.stopbullying.gov/Cyberbullying/what-is-it/#whyCyberbullying>).

Cyber bullying is a term that refers to the activity to disturb other people by using a computer or computer network as a tool, a means, or a crime scene. Cyber bullying is a serious problem and dangerous for people and the country. Motivations of perpetrators of Cyber bullying are quite varied. Some are done with anger and desire for revenge,

frustration, seeking attention; some are even making it just for entertainment in their spare time. There are also some people who have a motive just for a joke (Dehue, 2008).

Prolonged cyber bullying can destroy a person's self-confidence, a person becomes a morose, full of worry, always feeling guilty or failed for not being able to overcome the interference happened to him. There's even a victim of cyber bullying who are thought to end his life because he can no longer bear to be disturbed (Mishna et al., 2010).

Teenagers who become victims of cyber bullying will experience stress that can lead them to commit acts that stir up trouble. Adolescent perpetrators of cyber bullying are usually choosing to disrupt teenagers who are considered weaker, cannot fight and cannot defend themselves. The perpetrators are usually those who want to rule or to dominate. Victims of bullying are usually teenagers who are often ridiculed and humiliated because of their appearance, skin color, their families, or the way they behave. However, the victims of cyber bullying can also be popular, most intelligent, and most prominent kids in the environment that the perpetrator envy (Dehue, 2008).

Why is it important to know the perception of adolescents to use Ask.fm as a medium to conduct Cyber bullying? Because the patterns of human behavior is based on their perception of reality (social) that have been studied previously. Human perception of things was based on past experience and learning, relating to people, objects or events that are similar. The lack of previous experience in dealing with an object, making one would interpret the object based on supposition or a similar experience. It makes a person accustomed to responding to an object in a certain way, so that one often fails to perceive the same difference in another object that are similar. Humans tend to treat the object as before, but there are many other details in the object (Mulyana, 2006).

The factors that determine the perception is divided into two, namely: functional factors and structural factors (Krech et al., 2008). Functional factor is a factor derived from the needs, past experience and other things including what we refer to as personal factors. Functional factors that determine the perception is the objects that meet the objectives of individuals who do perceptions. What determines the perception is not the shape or type of stimuli but those characteristics that give a response to these stimuli, while structural factors are factors that come solely from the nature of the physical stimulus to the effects of the nerve caused to the nervous system of the individual. According to Gestalt theory, structural factors determine the perception, if we want to understand an event, we cannot examine the factors that are separated but look at the overall relationship.

The communications theory of Technological Determinism was molded by Marshall McLuhan (1962). The basic idea behind the theory is that changes in the way humans communicate are what shape our existence. McLuhan feels that our culture is molded by how we are able to communicate. To understand this, there are a few main points you must comprehend. First, inventions in communication technology cause cultural change. Secondly,

changes in modes of communication shape human life. Thirdly, as McLuhan himself puts it, "We shape our tools, and they in turn shape us". The theory of technological determinism postulates that technology is the force that shapes the society in which we live. According to technological determinism, technology develops autonomously and plays a principal role in the development of society.

This theory implies that technology basically controls a large sphere of society and therefore determines a good deal of what it embodies (West and Turner, 2000). There are several giant evolutions in the way humans have learned to communicate over time. Each of these innovations works as an extension of one of the human senses. McLuhan has divided human history into 4 critical periods of time. In each case, the moving on from one era to another is brought on by a new mode of communication which causes some sort of significant change in society. First there was the 'tribal age', followed by the 'literate age', the 'print age', and finally the 'electronic age', which is where society is now.

McLuhan describes Technological Determinism in terms of what each society deems the important way to communicate. What one could hear was truth for people of the 'tribal age', while what was available to read defined the truth for those alive during the 'print age'. In essence, the same exact words can have completely different meaning based on whether they are spoken person to person, printed on paper, or presented through instantaneous communication (i.e. television or radio).

The term 'new media' appeared to incarceration a sense that quite fast from the late 1980s on, the world of media and communications began to look quite different and this difference was not restricted to any element of that world, although the actual timing of change may have been different from medium to medium. This was the case from printing, photograph through television, to telecommunications. Of course, such media had continually been in a state of technological, institutional and cultural change or development; they never stood still. Yet, even within this state of constant flux, it seemed that the nature of change that was experienced warranted an absolute marking off from what went before. This experience of change was not, of course, confined only to the media in this period. Other, wider kinds of social and cultural change were being identified and described and had been, to varying degrees, from the 1960s onward (Lister, 2009).

The following are indicative of wider kinds of social, economic and cultural change with which new media are associated: A shift from modernity to postmodernity: a contested, but widely subscribed attempt to characterize deep and structural changes in societies and economies from the 1960s onwards, with correlative cultural changes. In terms of their aesthetics and economies, new media are usually seen as a key marker of such change (Harvey, 1991).

Intensifying processes of globalization is a dissolving of national states and boundaries in terms of trade, corporate organization, customs and cultures, identities and beliefs, in which new media have been seen as a contributory element (Featherstone, 1990).

A replacement, in the West, of an industrial age of manufacturing by a 'postindustrial' information age is a shift in employment, skill, investment and profit, in the production of material goods to service and information 'industries' which many uses of new media are seen to epitomize (Castells, 2000).

A decentering of established and centralized geopolitical orders is the weakening of mechanisms of power and control from Western colonial centers, facilitated by the dispersed, boundary-transgressing, networks of new communication media.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research was conducted with qualitative methods by using in-depth interview techniques (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). Researchers determine and select informants who meet the following requirements: teenagers who live in Surabaya, have Ask.fm account, active in Ask.fm, had experienced bullying or committing bullying in Ask.fm.

Based on the criteria for determining the informants, the researchers managed to get nine teenagers. Five teenagers are high school students and four teenagers are junior high school students. The process of collecting data in this study was conducted by direct observation of the habits of teens using Ask.fm; interviews with informants; as well as the study of books and articles in journals about social media and Cyber bullying. Data obtained from interviews were categorized in several sub topics, then analyzed and summarized.

3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

At first, these informants were using ask.fm, as guided by the same motivation. All originated from social relationships with friends who previously had used Ask.fm. Since the informant noticed that their friends use Ask.fm, they are interested in and seek to satisfy their curiosity by installing Ask.fm on their mobile phone.

All informants are active users of Ask.fm. One of the causes of their activeness in Ask.fm is because they are students. They have free time to do activities in Ask.fm by creating a variety of diverse questions and answer questions put by a friend in Ask.fm. They also pay attention and read updated information from their friend's account.

All informants understand that they often find words and phrases that rude, or expletives in Ask.fm. And they are aware that it is a negative influence. But these informants do not really understand that bullying through electronic technology and the internet is called Cyber bullying.

They come to understand that electronic technology included as a medium of Cyber bullying are devices and equipment such as mobile phones, computers, tablets, and communication tools including social media sites, text messaging, chat, website. Some forms of Cyber bullying is done via text message or email; rumors sent via email or posted on social networking sites; by spreading embarrassing pictures and videos; creating fake profiles or fake websites. Cyber bullying was finally realized by informants that this is a serious problem and harmful to people

and the state. It is said to be a result of the impact of Cyber bullying is a significant and durable.

Talking about the experience of the informants when receiving bully on Ask.fm, they give response to the bully. The response given by the informants are feeling to get revenge. They considered that the bully is outrageous, that foster feelings of annoyance and upset against perpetrators of bullying. The insults and verbal abuse experienced by informants reinforce their efforts for revenge.

Type bullying received by the informants have different causes. Generally, teens are often ridiculed and humiliated because of their appearance, skin color, their families, or the way they behave. However, the victims of cyber bullying can also be popular, most intelligent, and most prominent kids in the environment that the perpetrator envy.

Two informants were bullied because of their attitude when interacting with school friends; one informant was bullied for being the cleverest pupils in the class; three informants were bullied for their comments on facebook; two informants were bullied because of family problems revealed on twitter accounts of their friends; one informant was bullied because he was considered as the cause of the loss of his school futsal team; one person was bullied because of punishment from the school.

Why are teenagers so easy to do Cyber bullying? Cyber bullying is easier to do than conventional violence because the perpetrator does not need to be face to face with others who are being targeted. They can say things that are bad and easily intimidate the victims because they are behind a computer screen or at the screen of a mobile phone without having to see the impact on the victim.

Furthermore, teenagers who become perpetrators of Cyber bullying are not aware that their actions have a prolonged impact. Cyber bullying can eliminate self-confidence; can make someone become personally morose and have the feeling of worry and guilty; can make someone feel as losers because they were not able to overcome the interference that happened to him. As it happened to the nine informants who have experienced bullying through Ask.fm, they have feelings of shame, sadness, disappointment, or anger against the perpetrators of Cyber bullying. Moreover, the perpetrators were not identified. By concealing their identity, the perpetrators of Cyber bullying have the freedom to do this negative action.

Ask.fm have a higher rate of bullying than other social media because Ask.fm has that "ask anonymously". A person can ask questions to other people as much as 300 characters without having to specify his/her name or ID. Features "hide my name" that allows the questioner cover his identity without a trace and can ask whatever they can. The element of anonymity is what allows the user assume ask.fm as a heaven for carrying out and doing the bullying to someone, without fear of ever discovered (Omernick and Sood, 2013).

Anonymity is a key of deindividuation. Deindividuation is a state of loss of awareness of self (self awareness) and evaluative sense of self (evaluation apprehension) in group situations that allow anonymity and divert attention from the individual (Forsyth, 2010). What makes someone less personally identifiable may increase the effect and

lead to a reduction of individual responsibility over their actions. They seemed to have a feeling of not guilty of the acts committed (Chang, 2008).

Bullying received by the informants proves that the emergence of new media does not always bring positive benefits. Cyber bullying is one of the negative effects resulting from the presence of the new media. Cyberbullying research and understanding is critical for many reasons. To begin with, adolescence is one of the most critical stages in the development of emotional and cognitive schemes and will shape and evolve the "adult personality" (Ortega et al., 2012). Secondly, cyberbullying is difficulty faced by more than half of all high school students (Goebert et. al., 2011) that can result in mental health consequences, including abusing drugs and alcohol as well as suicidal tendencies (Baker & Helm, 2010). Baker and Helm (2010) also found that being bullied was widely accepted among youth, showing that most students expect to be harassed in one form or another. The implication of these research studies is that society is beginning to not only accept, but expect, electronic communication behaviors that are emotionally and physically damaging.

Different response were shown by the informants when they received bully in Ask.fm. Some indeed intended to revenge, some being provoked as a result of bullying were swearing at other social media such as facebook and twitter, some had responded by fad, some had a private conversation with the perpetrators to resolve it personally.

Although the informants had experienced bullying in Ask.fm, they remain active in using Ask.fm. As explained in the theory of new media, the need to interact without having to meet makes it easy for anyone to use social media.

Regarding the fact that Ask.fm is one of the media that is often used for Cyber bullying, each informant had varied responses. Most informants considered that Ask.fm indeed is identical and can not be separated from Cyber bullying. This is because anyone is free to make inquiries, either positive or negative. The other informant assume that any social media of Cyber bullying can occur. However, the perpetrators of Cyber bullying in Ask.fm get the security and convenience of doing the bullying because of its anonymous features in it (Silke, 2003).

There was only one informant who had pessimism when commenting on efforts to prevent bullying in Ask.fm. According to him, action to reduce Cyber bullying in Ask.fm is futile. As long as there is still a feature to hide the identity, then there will always be Cyber bullying. And he is confident that day by day, the more perpetrators of Cyber bullying are unidentified.

The informants provide advices for other teens on how to avoid Cyber bullying. First, young people should ignore the questions which criticise or insults. Second, do not answer questions that are considered to exceed the limits or outrageous. Third, create protection against Ask.fm account by rejecting anonymous accounts. To protect teenagers from being exposed to bullying and to avoid doing the bullying, there are good suggestions submitted by one of the informants (the bully victim because of a bad attitude in friendship). He suggested that fellow users Ask.

fm remind each other in a good way, through a personal approach. In addition to that, give an appeal to the youth to use Ask.fm responsibly.

Although the informants remain active in using Ask.fm, two of the four informants expressed more disappointment than obtaining pleasure. Disappointment that appears happens more because of many negative questions that arise. They use Ask.fm to get new friends and new experiences, but in fact, they get questions that are rude and insulting. In contrast to the perception held by the informant who once got bullied because of their versatility, he gets satisfaction when using Ask.fm. This happens because the informant is happy to interact with their friends and he ignores the questions that bully him.

Compared to other social media, all informants agreed that Ask.fm is the most frequently used for Cyber bullying. They say that because Cyber bullying in Ask.fm very worried about the level of rudeness. Words and sentences are very vulgar, filthy, and disgusting.

Social media is considered by most people as the technology developing excessively, the various pros and cons emerged from a group of conventional and modern groups. Conventional group considered that social media do not make people grow communicative with other humans. (Holmes, 2012). Cons attitude question is that bullying is more frequent in Ask.fm. It proves that it had deviated from the original intention of making this medium.

Sentences that are used for bullying in Ask.fm targeting teenagers in Surabaya are unique, distinctive Suroboyo local language in the form of swear words, insults parents' names, physical derogatory, designations genitals, and prostitution locations in Surabaya.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the data, analysis, and discussion in the previous sections, here are some conclusions about the perception of teenagers in Surabaya against Ask.fm as a medium for Cyber bullying:

First, Ask.fm can be categorized as a medium of Cy-

ber bullying. Ask.fm is perceived as a social media which is bad or negative, due to high levels of Cyber bullying on Ask.fm. Sentences that are used for bullying in Ask.fm targeting teenagers in Surabaya are unique, distinctive Suroboyo local language in the form of swear words, insults parents' names, physical derogatory, designations genitals, and prostitution locations in Surabaya. Sentences that are used for bullying, has a unique, local languages and typical Suroboyo in the form of swear words, insults name of parents, physical insult, designations genitals and of prostitution in Surabaya. They have feelings of shame, sadness, disappointment, or anger against the perpetrators of Cyber bullying.

Second, the perpetrators of bullying can not be known because it uses anonymous feature (not known). This feature has become a reason for that cause of bullying. Perpetrators of Cyber bullying feel safe because their identity is not visible when asking questions containing insults. As long as this feature is provided on Ask.fm, then Cyber bullying will continue to happen.

Third, although the level of Cyber bullying in Ask.fm is high, the teenagers in Surabaya is not deterrent to use it. The Ask.fm users remain keen to use because of curiosity to know and get friendship. The need to interact without having to meet, makes it easy for anyone to use social media.

Fourth, there are some advice to avoid Cyber bullying. 1) Ask.fm users should ignore the questions which criticises or insults. 1) Do not answer questions that are considered exceed the limits or outrageous. 3) Create protection against Ask.fm account by rejecting anonymous accounts. 4) Ask.fm users should remind each other in a good way, through a personal approach, in addition to giving an appeal to the youth to use Ask.fm responsibly.

Fifth, bullying that afflicts teenagers in Ask.fm make them, who were initially victims of bullying, eventually join in bullying behavior inadvertently through the questions. They did not realize that their actions were included as bullying.

Acknowledgements

Teenagers who become informants are in the age range 12 to 17 years (those who become school students). They likely to have different perceptions of the adolescents aged 18 to 22 years (those who become university students) because of differences in social environment and form of friendships. Another limitation is the different types of schools. All informants coming from state schools are likely to have different perceptions from students from private schools or private schools based on religion (eg: Islamic schools or Catholic schools).

This study enriches the information about the use Ask.fm deviating from its original purpose as a medium for mutual questioning and answering. Although research on Cyber bullying scattered in various references, the uniqueness of this study is the use of words in insults and invective that use local language typical of Suroboyo.

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