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by Lely Ika Mariyati

The Role Of Dark Triad Personality On Cyberbullying: Is It Still A Problem?

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Abstract: The present study examines the relationship between Dark Triad Personality traits with cyberbullying behavior. Adolescents age 12-18 years old (N = 2407) completed a questionnaire on Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Narcissism traits, as well as the degree to which they cyberbullied others in the four weeks ago. Correlations showed that all three Dark Triad traits has significant positive correlation with cyberbullying. Multiple regression analysis showed that Machiavellianism emerged as a strongest predictor of cyberbullying, followed closely by Psychopathy and Narcissism respectively. These findings reinforce existing research that has suggested that personality traits are predictors of cyberbullying behavior among adolescents.

Index Terms: Dark Triad Personality, Cyberbullying, Adolescence

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1 INTRODUCTION

Cyberspace bullying cases have been increasing in recent times, alarming a significant number of authorities (Sari, 2016; Safaria, 2016; Safaria, Tentama, & Suyono, 2016). Many factors trigger this behavior, one of which is the accessibility of internet via mobile phones among teenagers (Weiss, 2014). A study of adolescents aged between 16 to 24 years, found that teenagers typically spend 27 hours per week surfing the internet (Anderson, 2016). A survey conducted by the Pew Research Center on 1,060 adolescents aged 13-17 years found 71% of them as active users of Facebook, 52% Instagram, and 33% Twitter (Lenhart, 2016). Indonesia is estimated to have 30 million adolescents using Twitter (Semiocast, 2013) and 50 million using Facebook (The Global review.com, 2013). In the current study, cyberbullying defined as repeated deliberate actions with the intention to insult, hurt and humiliate others through the internet media (Barlińska, Szuster, & Winiewski, 2013). In contrast to the common bullying at school, cyberbullying allows bullies to intimidate their victim through cyberspace (Fenaughty, & Harr, 2013; Freis, and Gurung, 2013).Thus, cyberbullying is a transformation of bullying that happens in cyberspace

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(Tanrikulu & Campbell, 2015; Park, Na, & Kim, 2014; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Vandebosch & Van Cleemput, 2008). A study on urban Canadian adolescents showed that 54% became victims of bullying and more than a quarter were victims of cyberbullying. As many as 60% of the cyberbullying victims were females, while 52% of cyberbullying perpetrators were males. One-third of the teenagers committed bullying, while 15% of them never did it (Li, 2005). Another study by Li (2007) on 461samples of Canadian and Chineseteens found that 31.2% of males and 26.3% of females became victims of cyberbullying. Meanwhile, 21.9% of males and 13.4% females cyberbullied others. Concerning the method used by perpetrators, it was foundthat one out of five of the respondents were cyberbullied via email (21.8%), one-third via chatrooms (30.8%), and 13% via mobile phone. One-third (30.9%) were cyberbullied by mixed media such as Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo Messenger or uploaded video. This study show that cyberbullying phenomena is still problem among adolescents. Several studies have examined the media used by cyberbullying perpetrators to attack their victims. Some of these media were, among others, email (20.4%), chatrooms (27.8%), mobile phones (5.6%), and mixed media such as SMS, Facebook, and BB (39.4%) (Li, 2007). The frequency of cyberbullying varies greatly; 54.9% experienced cyberbullying approximately four times; 20.3% experienced 4-10 times; 21.1% of them more than ten times. Meanwhile, 30.5% of cyberbully perpetrators have done it approximately four times, 43.4% did between 4-10 times, and 20.7% did more than ten times (Li, 2007). In Germany, a sample of 1987 teen respondents showed that 5.4% of them reported a victim of cyberbullying, while 14.1% had occasionally been cyberbullied. Among 77 perpetrators, 63 were also victims of bullying at school (Riebel, Jager, & Fischer, 2009). Some research indicates that cyberbullying occurred at age 15-18 years (Schneider et al., 2012; Goebert et al., 2011; Li, 2007). It is known that perpetrators of cyberbullying were often male students. Victims of cyberbullying were also more commonly found to be males rather than females (Smith et al., 2008; Slonje, & Smith, 2008; Agatston, Kowalski, & Limber 2007). Previous research also showed that self-esteem plays a role in the occurrence of cyberbullying. Patchin and Hinduja (2010) found both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying to have low self-esteem.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Undesirable Effects of Cyberbullying

Previous studies have suggested the negative effects of cyberbullying on many aspects such as educational functioning and mental health. Regarding educational functioning, cyberbully victims showed an increase in school absences as well as a decrease in concentration, educational achievement and performance (Schneider et al., 2012; Beran & Li, 2007). Next, cyberbully victims also showed higher levels of, anxiety (Goebert et al., 2011), increased symptoms of depression, suicide ideation, self-harm, and suicide attempts (Schneider et al., 2012; Gradinger et al., 2011). The undesirable effects of cyberbullying are also evident in the occurrence of reactive aggression, instrumental aggression, depression and somatic symptoms (Gradinger, et al 2009). Mental health problems and drug abuse (Gradinger, et al., 2011), as well as low self-esteem on both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying, were also found (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

2.2 Cyberbullying among Adolescents

Previous research has noted an increase in cases of cyberbullying among adolescents (Baldry, Farrington, & Sorrentino, 2015; von Marees, & Petermann, 2012). An estimated 20-40% of adults are victims of cyberbullying (Tokunaga, 2010). Research in Indonesia showed 28% of the sample had never experienced cybervictimization (N= 14), 25.5% experienced it occasionally once or twice (N= 26), 20.6% experienced it 2-3 times (N= 21), and 27.5% experienced it up to four or five times (N= 28). The remaining 12.7% are of participants who experienced cyber victimization almost every day or more than five times (N= 13) (Safaria, 2016). Cyberbullying in adolescents is triggered by several factors, such as personality, lack of empathy and anonymity of identity on the internet (Ang & Goh, 2010).

2.3 Cyberbullying and Dark Triad Personality

A Dark Triad Personality is a person with tendencies that lead to unwanted negative behavior (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). This personality consists of three different types, namely Machiavellianism, Narcissistic, and Psychopathy. Machiavellianism is the tendency to manipulate interpersonal relationships for personal gain (Christie, Geis, & Berger, 1970). Narcissistic is characterized by feeling grandiose regarding self and acts condescending towards others (Ang, Tan, & Mansor, 2011). Meanwhile, Psychopathy is shown through impulsive violent behavior, lack of empathy, thrill-seeking behavior, and low social anxiety (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). All these personality traits possess the tendencies to be exploitative and aggressive, with lack of guilt when causing harm to others (Jones & Paulhus, 2011; Jones, & Paulhus, 2010). Also, they showed an antagonistic core of callousness and manipulation (Jones & Figueredo, 2013) as well as a deficit in empathy (Wai & Tiliopoulos, 2012). Goodboy and Martin (2015) found that Dark Triad Personality has a significant relationship with cyberbully behavior, with Psychopathy becoming a unique predictor of cyberbully perpetrators. Garcia and Sikström (2014) found that Psychopathic and Narcissistic individuals tend to engage in socially malevolent behaviors such as self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness,

manifested in their Facebook status updates. Gibb and Devereux (2014) found that people who scored high on Psychopathy tend to engage in cyberbullying behaviors. Meanwhile, Pailing, Boon, and Egan (2013) found Psychopathy and Machiavellianism to be significantly correlated with violence tendency.

2.4 The present study

Past research on cyberbullying took samples from students and adults living in an individualistic culture (Goodboy & Martin, 2015; Pabian, Backer, and Vandebosch, 2015; Garcia & Sikström, 2014; Gibb & Devereux, 2014). Very few studies have been done on adolescents from Asian countries (collectivist culture). For that reason, this study aims to examine the role of Dark Triad Personality on cyberbullying among adolescents in Indonesia. The need for testing in different cultural contexts was highlighted by Ember and Ember (2000) who argued that many researchers generalize human behavior taken for granted. This means that scientists construed their theory or conclusion based on a single culture data and generalizing it to another culture despite differences between them. Theories need to be tested as cross-culturally as possible to discover universal explanations and design accurate, practical applications that can be implemented worldwide.

3. METHOD

3.1 Participants

A total of 2407 adolescents from 11 cities in Indonesia participated in this study. There were 49.9% juvenile male adolescents (N = 1089) and 50.1% females (N= 1093). They aged 12-18 years (M = 13, SD = 1.25); 10.7% aged 12 years (N= 234), 40.7% aged 13 years (N= 889), 24.4% aged 14 years (N= 533), 14.4% aged 15 years (N= 315), 6.3% aged 16 years (N= 138), 2.2% aged 17 years old (N= 49), and lastly 1.1% aged 18 years old (N= 24). Data were collected from randomly selected schools that have previously given consent.

3.2 Questionnaire

55 students from one senior high school were involved to piloting the questionnaire. The sample was collected by applying convenience sampling. Respondents were asked to check the questions, and give feedback when found any ambiguous words/sentences. Content validity and internal consistency reliability Cronbach alpha was used to test the reliability.

3.3 The Short Dark Triad

The Short Dark Triad (SD3) was adapted for data collection (Jones, & Paulhus, 2014). Results of the reliability testing generated 15 items. SD3 measures Machiavellianism (7-item, e.g., "I like to use clever manipulation to get my way"), Psychopathy (5-item, e.g., "Payback needs to be quick and nasty"), and Narcissistic traits (3 item, e.g., "I have been compared to famous people "). Participants should give a response using a 4-point format ranging from one (Strongly Disagree) to four (Strongly Agree). The internal consistency reliability showed satisfactory results, Machiavellianism (α = .739), Psychopathy (α = .783), and Narcissistic (α = .661).

3.4 Cyberbullying

One item cyberbullying scale was used to collect the data. The item was adapted from previous research (Bauman, 2009; Kwan & Skoric, 2013; Li, 2005). The questionnaire seeks to determine the number of times a person has recently conducted cyberbullying. The item is "Do you ever bully others by using the internet in social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)?" Participants should give a response using a 4-point format ranging from one one (never) to five (almost every day).

4. RESULTS

The data analysis uses regression analysis. Table 1 presents intercorrelations among variables and reliability coefficients.

Table1

Intercorrelations and Reliability Coefficients of Dark Triad and Cyberbullying.

	α	1	2	3
Cyberbully	-	-		
Machiavellianism	.739	.177*	-	
Psychopathy	.783	.134*	.039	.191
Narcissism	.661	.126*	.289*	-

*p < .001

The hypothesis predicted that Machiavellianism (H1), Psychopathy (H2) and Narcissism (H3) have a positive correlation with reports of cyberbullying conduct. Pearson correlation analysis supports all three hypotheses (see Table1). Machiavellianism correlates positively with cyberbullying (r= .177, p < .001); Psychopathy correlates positively with cyberbullying (r= .134, p < .001); Narcissism correlates positively with cyberbullying (r = .126, p< .01). In determining whether dark triad traits could uniquely predict cyberbullying, a multiple regression were computed. The result shows that dark triad can predict cyberbullying $F_{(2,178)}$ =38.357, p< .01, R^2= .050, R^2_{adj}= .049). Further, all variables were significant predictors; Machiavellianism (β = .27, t = 3.49, p < .001); Psychopathy (β = .27, t = 3.49, p < .001); Narcissism (β = .27, t = 3.49, p < .001). There was no multicollinearity for each of the predictors: Machiavellianism (Tolerance = .57, VIF = 1.76), Psychopathy (Tolerance = .67, VIF = 1.49), and Narcissism (Tolerance = .72, VIF = 1.39). Table 2 showed unstandardized betas, standard errors, and standardized betas for both regressions. Machiavellianism became the most strong predictor for cyberbullying.

Table 2

Multiple Regression Analysis of Dark Triad Traits Predicting Cyberbullying (N=2407)

	B	SEB	β
Machiavellianism	.021	.003	.154*
Psychopathy	.022	.004	.113*
Narcissism	.012	.004	.059*

$F_{(2,178)}$=38.357, p< .01, R^2= .050, R^2_{adj}=.049

*p = .01

5 DISCUSSION

The present study examined the relationship between Dark Triad Personality and Cyberbullying behavior. Our hypothesis that predicted Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Narcissism to be positively correlated to cyberbullying conduct, has been proven to be true. These rssult suggest that dark personalities have a significant role in cyberbullying behavior. Moreover, contrary to previous research (Goodboy & Martin, 2015; Pabian, De Backer, & Vandebosch, 2015), Machiavellianism was revealed to be the most influential predictor instead of Psychopathy. The most influential predictor was then followed closely by Psychopathy and Narcissism respectively. Machiavellianism is a personality characterized by externalization of blame, emotional coldness, and use of interpersonal strategies to manipulate others for personal gain (Paulhus, & Williams, 2002). They tend to see the world cynically with distrust by manipulating other people. They also tend to exploit the weaknesses of others; resent intense emotional involvement with others. High Machiavellians people have consistently been found to lack empathy (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Barlow, Qualter, & Stylianou, 2010). Narcissists have exaggerated positive views on their qualities and consistently look down on others. They tend to be self-centered, arrogant, and exploitative in interpersonal relationships, viewing others as a means to fulfill their needs for admiration and reinforcement (Rhodewalt & Peterson, 2009; Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides, 2002; Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000). Similar to Machiavellianism, Narcissism is associated with lack of empathy (Watson & Morris, 1991). Psychopathic individuals tend to perform destructive behavior patterns in interpersonal relationships, using skits and warmth to manipulate others to profit themselves. They also tend to have high impulsivity and a disposition towards reckless, inappropriate, immoral, or even violent conduct (Hare, 1999). They also show empathic deficiency and does not feel guilty for their behavior toward others (Del Gaizo & Falkenbach, 2008; Mahmut, Homewood, & Stevenson, 2008). Their inability to empathize is further complemented by the lack of remorse, guilt, and regret (Williams & Paulhus, 2004). All the dark triad personalities contribute to cyberbullying conduct to some extent. Adolescents with a Dark Triad Personality are more likely to bully others on social media. The Dark Triad Personality plays a role in increasing cyberbullying conduct. One factor that might have allowed Machiavellianism to develop into cyberbullying is the ability to hide our identity on the internet, enabling us to deceive the victims. In contrast to bullying, the victim and perpetrator have to deal face to face (Erdur-Baker, 2010; Ang & Goh, 2010). Therefore, an intervention to prevent the development of Dark Triad Personality among adolescents becomes an important strategy to decrease cyberbullying conduct. These interventions that aim to reduce cyberbullying action in adolescents should also teach them how to empathize with others as well as develop healthy cyberspace skills (Ang & Goh, 2010). Regarding limitation, the instrument used to measure the frequency of cyberbullying conduct was limited to using a single item. Therefore, future studies are advised to use multiple items to measure cyberbullying, ensuring better accuracy and comprehensive identification of cyberbullying.

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