

Cyberattack: Cyberbullying Impact on LGBT Teenager's Mental Health and the Way to Deal with it

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ABSTRACT

This thesis discusses cyberbullying impact on LGBT teenager's mental health and the way to deal with it. The objective is to bring awareness to the readers about the issue and hopefully it could bring a better change to the society. To do so, this thesis will use cyberbullying concept to explain the definition and its negative impact, and a thesis journal to explain things that the cyberbullying victim can do to deal with cyberbullying impact. Moreover, the 'findings' of this thesis will be presented in screenplay. It starts with a story about a high school boy named Jonathan who becomes the victim of cyberbullying after his sexual orientation got exposed on the school anonymous gossip blog. As a result, He is suffering from mild depression. Luckily, in the end, he can find confidence within himself that it makes him has the courage to fight back against his bullies.

Keywords: cyberbullying; mental health; LGBT teenager; screenplay

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying, by definition, is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets (*What Is Cyberbullying*, 2021). Cyberbullying can occur through text and online apps such as social media, forums or gaming, where people can view, participate or share content (*What Is Cyberbullying*, 2021). In addition, cyberbullying can include sharing personal or private information about someone else with the intent of embarrassment or humiliation (*What Is Cyberbullying*, 2021). According to a poll released by UNICEF and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), it is stated there that one in three young people in 30 countries said they have been a victim of online bullying, with one in five reporting having skipped school due to cyberbullying and violence (UNICEF, 2019 as cited in *Cyberbullying Statistics*, 2021). This data show how cyberbullying has become a frequent phenomenon in many different countries and how many people, especially the young ones, has become victims of cyberbullying. In our home country, Indonesia, cyberbullying has also become a serious issue here. A statistic shows how big the percentage of people who have become cyberbullying victims in Indonesia is. According to a poll that was conducted in 2019 by Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII), it is stated there that there is about 49 percent of 5.900 respondents of netizens (internet users) have claimed that they have been a target of cyberbullying (Pratomo, 2019).

Furthermore, what is more surprising is that cyberbullying is most likely targeted sexual minorities, like, LGBT teenagers than heterosexual ones. LGBT is an abbreviation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, and they are a part of sexual orientation's types or classifications. Sexual orientation, by definition, is a term that people often use to describe their pattern of emotional, romantic or sexual attraction (*Sexual Orientation*, 2020). Sexual orientation may include attraction to the same gender (homosexuality), different gender (heterosexuality), both men and women (bisexuality), all genders (pansexual), and neither (asexuality) (*Sexual Orientation*, 2020).

more likely to be bullied or harassed online than heterosexual ones (GLSEN, 2019, as cited in Blumenfeld, 2021.) As a result of this phenomenon, the LGBT teenager who becomes the victim of cyberbullying can develop internalized self-hatred to oneself or other people in the LGBT community. This act of self-hatred can be toxic and damaging to one's mental health (Mastroianni, 2021). This situation can eventually put them at a high risk of developing mental illnesses like anxiety and depression (Mastroianni, 2021).

Moreover, cyberbullying can also have an adverse social effect on its victim. This adverse social effect can be in a form of social isolation from friends and peers in real life. According to an article on the Very Well Family website, cyberbullying causes the youngster to be excluded and ostracized at school (Gordon, 2021). As a result, the cyberbullying victims can often feel alone and isolated (Gordon, 2021). According to an article on the Nursing Answers website, Social isolation can compromise the victims' physical, emotional, and mental health. The victims can often feel anxiety, depression, and aggression (DeWall, Deckman, Pond & Bosner, 2011, as cited in *Impact of Social Exclusion on Physical and Mental Health*, 2018).

With all that being said, in this thesis I want to discuss the effects of cyberbullying on LGBT teenagers' mental health and it will be presented in a form of screenplay. Screenplay, in short, is a story told with pictures, in dialogue and description, and placed within the context of dramatic structure (Field, 2005). Screenplay allows its writer to express their creative ideas in action and dialogue, which later can be used as a blueprint to make a movie. As a movie enthusiast, I choose to make my creative thesis in the form of a screenplay because one day, when I have the opportunity, I want to turn this screenplay into a movie. The genre that I choose for my screenplay is drama, with a more specific focus on the sub-genre of teen drama. Drama, by definition, is a genre that relies on the emotional and relational development of realistic characters (Buffam, 2011).

The movie within this genre often takes its topic from intense and real-life issues because drama movies tell a real story of human struggles in our world (Buffam, 2011). While in the teen drama genre, it can be broadly defined that the characters in the story are going through a transition period to adulthood (Mathis, 2017). The reason why I choose this genre is because teen drama allows me to make a story that can feel relatable to the young audience. For one, the main character in my screenplay is also a teenager struggling with one of the most common issues that are happening to a teenager, which is cyberbullying. With the use of this genre, I believe that it could help me to paint this issue most dramatically and realistically. So that it makes the audience who watches or reads my screenplay could understand how it feels like to be in the main character's shoes.

The objective of my creative work is, hopefully, it could be beneficial for heterosexual and non-heterosexual teenagers in Indonesia. Many teenagers in Indonesia are still not aware of cyberbullying cases that are happening around them, especially the one that has been targeting the LGBT community. This is because many people in Indonesia have seen LGBT and cyberbullying as taboo topics or something that is not to talk about publicly. As a result, this situation makes teenagers in Indonesia uninformed about this issue. Therefore, for the heterosexual teenagers who watch or read this work, it might help them become aware of the cyberbullying cases that are happening around them and hopefully, they can sympathize with the victims by giving out support and helping them fight the bullies.

Meanwhile, for the non-heterosexual teenagers, this story might help them to be wise with what they are doing on social media because it is a well-known fact that the LGBT teenagers are an easy target for the cyberbullying perpetrator. Hopefully, this story also could make them know how to get out of the cyberbullying situation and teach them how to stand up to their bullies.

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For my thesis, I am gathering the data using secondary research. My research includes books, journals, and articles on the internet that revolve around cyberbullying and mental health issues among LGBT teenagers. For my creative work, I would like to focus on the effect of cyberbullying on the LGBT teenager's mental health. So, in order to deepen my knowledge on this issue, I read Boca-Zamfir Mioara's journal *Psychological effects of Cyberbullying in Adolescence Theoretical Analysis* (Zamfir, 2016) and Allison M. Schenk's journal *Psychological Impact of Cyberbully Victimization among College Students* (Schenk, 2011). This journal has successfully made me understand many things about cyberbullying and its negative effects on the victim's mental health. In addition, I read the Institute of Medicine's journal with the title *violence affecting LGBT youth* (2013) to make me understand the statistics of cyberbullying cases among the LGBT identifying youth and how it can affect their mental health. Lastly, for the definitions and data that are being presented in this journal I have mainly found them from reliable sources on the internet, such as the university's journal and official website.

To explain more about cyberbullying and its negative effects, I will be using the cyberbullying concept from Allison M. Schenk (2011) and it follows with Miora Boca-Zamfir, Batni and teams research findings to support her cyberbullying concept. Schenk believes that cyberbullying has strongly connected with mental health. Cyberbullying has been proved to be responsible for making its victim more prone to develop mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, and paranoia (Schenk, 2011). The victim of cyberbullying will also often experience emotional consequences such as feeling frustrated, stressed, sad/hurt, or angry. Typically the victim's response or reaction to cyberbullying includes feeling unsafe, scared, drinking alcohol and sleeping more, and believing the negative things that are being said (Schenk, 2011).

Furthermore, in a research that was conducted by Zamfir it is revealed that there are certain online activities that can be categorized as cyberbullying and how it can affect the cyberbullying victim's mental health. Online activities such as online harassment (sending an offending or threatening messages to an individual or group), denigration (spreading rumours through electronic devices), outing and trickery (disclosing someone's private information to other people with an intention to compromise the victim) and exclusion (excluding someone from group chat or other social media platforms) can be categorized as cyberbullying (Riebell et al., 2009 as cited in Zamfir, 2016). The youth who have experienced one of these types of online harassment will be more prone to develop mental illness such as anxiety and depression (Kokkinos et al., 2014 as cited in Zamfir, 2016). For this, I will show it in my screenplay that Jonathan is being cyberbullied with an outing and trickery type. In my screenplay this part can be seen when Jonathan's cyberbullying perpetrator has outed him (revealing his sexual orientation) on the school anonymous gossip forum. As a result, this situation makes Jonathan's schoolmates who see that post sending hate comments on his social media, and this situation makes Jonathan suffering from mild depression.

Moreover, in Batni and teams' cyberbullying research finding, they found a data from national survey in America that observed more than 6,000 students in the 6th to 12th grade. The result shows 42% of LGBT identifying youth have reported that they are being harassed or bullied online, compared to only 15% in the non-LGBT youth who have reported to experience the same problem (GLSEN, 2011 as cited in Batni et al., 2013). As a result, this situation makes the LGBT identifying youth who experienced cyberbullying become more prone in developing mental illnesses (GLSEN, 2011 as cited in Batni et al., 2013).

With all that being said, it is clear that cyberbullying can negatively affect the victims in many ways, but in my creative work, I would like to focus on mild depression and social ostracization. To explain mild depression, I will use mild depression concept from R. P. Snaith (1987). R. P.

Snaith is basically believes that a person who is suffering from mild depression will have the exact symptoms of a person with depression but it will be less intense and it is not going to affect one's social and work life in major way (Snaith, 1987). According to Snaith, the most common symptoms that a person with mild depression will likely to experience are: a) poor or loss of appetite or increased of appetite b) insomnia c) loss of interests in usual activities d) excessive inappropriate guilt (Snaith, 1987). In my screenplay, this part can be seen when my main character, Jonathan, got his sexual orientation exposed by anonymous person on the school anonymous gossip blog. He starts to show several symptoms of mild depression when he is start obsessing with reading and replying to hate comments that he have on his social media that it makes him up all night and eventually loss his appetite. Luckily, in the story Jonathan can get help from his counseling teacher and friends that this situation makes him can overcome his mild depression before it becomes severe.

Moreover, cyberbullying can make the victims experience ostracization from their social peers or friends. According to Zamfir, cyberbullying can negatively affect the victim's social life, such as isolation from friends and colleagues (Zamfir, 2016). Social ostraction is a common yet painful experience (Wesselmann et al., 2013). There is a research that was written and conducted by Sage university students and it is stated there that ostracism is a form of social control used to influence group of people who many perceived as burdensome. The authors propose that individuals will ostracize a group member only when it is justified (i.e., the member seems burdensome) but will compensate a member who is ostracized undeservedly (Wesselmann et al., 2013). In my screenplay, this part can be seen when Jonathan gets rejected by his fellow classmates when he is trying to join in one of their groups. The reason why Jonathan's classmates do this to him is because they think that his homosexuality behavior is out of the social norms and thus it makes him deserved to be excluded from the rest of their social groups.

Next, in this thesis I would like to talk about things that the cyberbullying victims can do to deal with the cyberbullying impact. According to a research paper that was written and conducted by psychology students, Michelle Kilpatrick Demaray & Christine Kerres Malecki, they found that social support provided by parents, teachers, classmates, close friends, and the school can become an important resource for the cyberbullying victim as it can help them to avoid the adverse effects of bullying such as depression (Demaray & Malecki, 2003). In my screenplay, this part can be seen when the main character, Jonathan, has received his first cyberbullying and ostracization from school friends, he tries to tell his mother about that situation during their phone call, but she quickly ends the call before he gets the chance to talk about it. This situation then makes Jonathan feeling alone and depressed. Luckily, his school counseling teacher and close friends are there for him, and they give him support and advice about how to deal with the impact of cyberbullying. As a result, Jonathan can finally gain his confidence back and has the courage to fight back against his bullies, which makes them do not want to mess with him anymore.

In addition, taking a stand against the bully will also make the harassment stop coming at the victims. According to a research that was written and conducted by Wingate University School of Graduate and Adult Education doctorate's student, it is stated there that one of the tips that the cyberbullying's victims can do to stop cyberbullying's vicious cycle is not to just stand there and do nothing about the bully's evil action since this situation only makes them feel more empowered and keep on harassing the victim (Kaclick, 2011). Therefore, taking active action, such as reporting the bully to the teacher, parents, or officials, can help discourage them from bullying the victims (Kaclick, 2011). In my screenplay, this part can be seen when the main character, Jonathan, is being teased by Audi and his friends, he does not stand there and takes the insults. Instead, he fights back by threatening Audi about telling his dirty little secret to his

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mother if he does not stop bullying him. Audi then begs Jonathan not to tell his secret to his mother and swears to stop bothering him for good.

CONCEPT OF THE CREATIVE WORK

Premise

When a high school student gets his sexual orientation exposed by an anonymous user on the school anonymous gossip blog, he will get cyberbullied and ostracized from his social circle. This situation then can trigger his mental health badly, making him suffer from mild depression.

Design Principle

To deliver the story, I will show Jonathan's struggle and pain as cyberbullying victim who just got outed by an anonymous person on the school anonymous gossip blog. I will also show how this situation can negatively affect his mental health and social life at school and what kind of action he will take to overcome that problem.

Pitch

- a. Jonathan is a popular 17 years old high school student who has never been in a relationship because he feels like he has not met the right person yet, and this situation has made him longing for a love partner.
- b. One day, a new transfer student, Ricky, comes into his life, and he can finally learn about love, but, unfortunately, this situation gets ugly real quick as there is someone in his school who is exposing Jonathan's real feelings towards Ricky on the school anonymous gossip blog, The Gossip, that this situation results in him being cyberbullied and ostracized by a lot of his friends on school.
- c. Jonathan slowly gets his social life back and makes up with Mickey and Ricky that they become friends again.

Characters

Main Characters:

- Jonathan Susanto
Age: 17

Jonathan lives with his parent in a big house that is located in an elite residence. Despite this fact, he feels lonely because his parents hardly ever come home because they always spend most of their time working in the office or attending conferences abroad. Jonathan is an ambivert person that there is a time for him when he prefers to be alone and does not want to be bothered by anyone, and there is a time when he wants to hang out with his friends until late at night. Jonathan is also a typical person who can easily get along with many people but never wanting to have a deep relationship with any of them because, for him, the only friendship that matters to him is his friendship with Mickey and David. Jonathan's favorite things to do in his spare time are texting his friends and checking on his social media every minute. Moreover, when it is a school holiday, he likes to spend his time going on a camping trip since he loves nature and enjoys watching its scenery very much.

Supporting Characters:

- Mickey Wijaya
Age: 17

Mickey and Jonathan have been best friends since they were in middle school. Mickey is an extrovert. He loves to talk and spends his time hanging out with people. Despite this, he still prefers to spend most of his time playing and hanging out with his two best

friends, Jonathan and David. Moreover, Mickey loves playing basketball. This is what made him join the school's basketball team. Mickey is the type of person who acts on his emotion. He tends to make a decision based on his emotions and not on facts or consideration of the best outcomes.

- Ricky Hartono

Age: 17

Ricky is a new transfer student from Bandung. He had to move school in his senior year because his father had just gotten promoted and transferred to Jakarta, which made him and his entire family move there. Jonathan is only Ricky's friend as he has difficulty blending in with other people in school. He is a type of person who is shy and introverted, making it difficult for him to make new friends. Moreover, Ricky is the type of person who extremely cares about what other people think of him. That is why he prefers to stay away from any unnecessary drama or conflict because he wants to keep his good image. When it comes to his grades in school, Ricky is typical of an average student. There are subjects that he is good at, and there are also subjects that he is not really good at.

- Jessica Tanjung

Age: 32

Ms. Jessica is a type of teacher who can be playful or fun but also strict at the same time. She is a hypersensitive person as she really cares deeply about everything and everyone around her. Since Ms. Jessica was little, it has been her dream to become a psychologist because she wants to help others get out of their problems. This is the reason why she took a major in Psychology and became a counseling teacher at Bethlehem Christian High School. One of the things that she hates in life is that inequality or unjustness still exists in our lives.

- David Gunawan

Age: 17

David and Jonathan have been best friends since Junior high school. David is a type of average student that does not really stand out from the school's crowd. Just like most students, there are subjects that he is good at, and there are also subjects that he is struggling with. People often perceive him as a good friend because he is very loyal to people he loves and cares about. Moreover, David is not a typical violent person, but he is ready to fight anyone who has betrayed his trust or the people he loves. He also does not like to judge other people as he believes that nobody in this world is perfect. He prefers to spend most of his free time hanging out with his two best friends, Mickey and Jonathan.

- Ben Kartadinata

Age: 17

Ben and David are good friends because they are going to the same class on most of their subjects in High school. Ben is a smart student that gets an A in all of his subjects. He is a typical IT nerd who loves to spend his free time learning about the tech stuff on the internet, making him fluent in operating any kind of technology. Ben and one of his friends have contributed to developing and creating the school anonymous gossip blog, The Gossip, and this also makes him become the administrator of it. At school, Ben does not have many close friends, but he is the type of person who is friends with everyone. Even though he has a shy personality and is a bit of an introvert, he still enjoys talking with everyone in school and helping people in need of his help.

- Anwar Suwandi

Age: 46

Mr. Anwar has been the headmaster of Bethlehem Christian High School for three years now. Mr. Anwar can be perceived as a person who is charismatic and friendly because he likes talking to students and teachers that he sees at school. However, Mr. Anwar can be seen as insensitive because he tends to let whatever goes onto his head come out of

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his mouth without giving any consideration. Moreover, Mr. Anwar takes his job very seriously. He will make sure that everything goes in order and will not tolerate students making a problem in school.

- Audi Sugiarto

Age: 17

Audi is the captain of Bethlehem Christian High School's basketball team. His position on the Basketball team has made him popular with girls at school. Audi and Mickey are on the same basketball team but are not friends since Mickey and the rest of the kids on the basketball team secretly don't like him. Audi can be perceived as someone who is very cold and bossy. When it comes to his social life, he is only hanging out with his three friends that are in his gang. Academic-wise, He does not do very well in almost every subject. He also has a hobby of picking on someone that is weaker than him.

- Pretty Girl

Age: 17

She is the prettiest girl in school. Everyone in school knows her. Her looks make every boy in school have a crush on her. She is the type of person who cares about her appearance so much that she likes to check on her makeup every minute. She enjoys spending her time alone with her phone than with her friends.

- One of Audi's Friends

Age: 17

He is one of Audi's friends. He likes to follow Audi anywhere he wants to go. Audi and his two other friends are his only friends of him. He likes basketball as much as Audi. He dresses and talks like Audi. He likes to pick on someone that is weaker than him, just like Audi.

- Math Teacher

Age: 60

The math teacher is the only math teacher in Bethlehem Christian High School. He has been working there for 35 years now. He is the type of person people see as intelligent, hard worker, and patient. Many kids in Bethlehem Christian High School like him despite the fact that they are not very fond of the subject that he taught. His students always respect him that they always finish each of the assignments or tasks that he gives.

- Doctor

Age: 37

The doctor is someone who people always see as someone that is friendly and helpful. He has been working at Bethlehem Christian High School for ten years. He also highly cares about each one of his patients. He always makes sure that his patients never forget to eat healthily and take their medicine.

Conflict

The conflicts that will happen in my screenplay will be Character vs. Society, Character vs. Self, and Character vs. Character. However, the one that will be more dominating in the story is Character vs. Character. Character vs. Society, by definition, is when the protagonist is placed in opposition to society or a cultural tradition. Meanwhile, by definition, character vs. self is a type of conflict that takes place inside a character's mind. And last, Character vs. Character, by definition, is when the character's needs are at odds with another character (*What Is Conflict in Literature? 6 Different Types of Literary Conflict and How to Create Conflict In Writing*, 2021). Character vs. Society conflict will be presented in the middle part of the story. The main character, Jonathan, has clashed with his schoolmates because there are contradicting beliefs between his and theirs. For Jonathan, he believes that there is nothing wrong with having a secret crush on his guy friend but his schoolmates see that as an unacceptable behavior because they believe that boys should like girls and not the same gender. Moreover, in the next part of the story, Character vs. Self conflict will be presented here. Jonathan is suffering from mild

depression because of the endless hate comments that he gets on his social media. This situation makes him not want to eat anything for several days and collapse at school. Last, in the last part of the story, Character vs. Character conflict will be presented here. David is beating up Mickey for betraying their friendships and exposing Jonathan's sexual orientation to everyone in school.

Synopsis

A new school year in Bethlehem Christian High School has just begun. Jonathan Susanto has started his first day as a senior by attending counseling class, where he soon meets Ricky Hartono, a new transfer student from Bandung. They later get along pretty well and become a good friend on the first day. The problem arises when Jonathan develops a romantic feeling toward Ricky, and Jonathan's secret admirer does not feel happy about it. His secret admirer then decides to make an anonymous post on the school anonymous gossip blog, *The Gossip*, in which this person exposes Jonathan's real feelings for Ricky. As a result, Jonathan receives many hate comments on social media. This situation also results in him being bullied and ostracized at school. This situation then takes a toll on his mental health, and it causes him to suffer from mild depression, but luckily, his friends and counselor come to give him support. Jonathan then finally can get out of his mild depression and gain back his confidence to fight back against his bullies.

CONCLUSION

During the process of making this creative thesis, I realized about how dangerous the effect of cyberbullying to the LGBT teenager's mental health is. This is what drives me to make a screenplay with this kind of issue because I want to make my audiences also aware of it. If my audiences were ever experiencing and/or witnessing cyberbullying I hope that my work could guide them to do the right thing. In order to make them understand about the issue, I have depicted the behavior and struggle of a real cyberbullying victim in my screenplay. My audiences could see this through the main character of my screenplay, Jonathan. In the story, Jonathan becomes a cyberbullying victim after an anonymous person has exposed his sexuality and romantic feelings toward his friend, Ricky, on the school anonymous gossip blog, *The Gossip*. This situation later takes a toll on his mental health because his schoolmates have sent him hate comments and ostracized him in school. As a result, Jonathan suffers from mild depression that makes him lose his appetite to eat for several days.

Moreover, in this work, I also give up some tips on dealing with the impact of cyberbullying. Hopefully, these tips could be useful for my audiences who are currently experiencing cyberbullying or bullying in their lives, in a way, that when they are applying these tips, it could get them off from the endless cycle of bullying. For example, these tips can be seen in one of the scenes in my screenplay, when Jonathan decides to fight back against Audi, his offline school bully, with a threat. As a result, Audi is now afraid to bully him, and Jonathan can finally get off from his endless cycle of bullying.

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