Cyberbullying and its Relationship to Mental Health Issues among Adolescents

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Abstract
Cyberbullying has recently received significant attention, particularly involving adolescent. A majority of cyberbullying victims also face various mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression, and more alarmingly, suicidal tendencies. If not addressed early, cyberbullying can have detrimental effects on individuals and society as a whole. Therefore, the mental health of adolescent is a crucial element that deserves primary attention, as this group represents the assets that will drive the country's future development. In terms of methodologically, search engines such as PubMed, Science Direct, and Google Scholar were used, focusing on cyberbullying behaviors and their relationship with adolescent mental health, encompassing both local and international studies. This paper is expected to provide a clearer picture of how the issue of cyberbullying can lead to various uncontrolled behaviors and affect adolescents mental health, helping relevant parties to address the symptoms of cyberbullying.
Keywords: Cyberbullying, Adolescents, Mental Health

Introduction
In the era of globalization, adolescent are increasingly exposed to the digital world and technology. Advance skills in telecommunications nowadays not only bring positive impacts but also contribute to occurrence of online bullying. Various forms of cyberbullying occur both during and after school hours, (Karsodiktomo et al.,2020). These include cyberbullying through images or video clips, text messages, mobile phone calls, chat room, emails, instant messaging and websites. Studies from abroad have found that cyberbullying negatively affects victims such as low self-esteem, increased level of depression and lack of interest in activities (Anderson et al. 2014)

Research data from both local and international studies have been collected to provide an overview of the negative impact of cyberbullying among adolescents. Findings from previous studies indicate that cyberbullying can bring severe effects on adolescents mental health. Cyberbullying reaches an unlimited number of people with increased exposure across time and space compared to traditional bullying (Grifoni et al. 2021). Therefore, Wang et al. (2019) stated that many existing studies focused on examining cyberbulling among adolescents. The key aspect of online bullying is that one aggressive act can repeatedly victimize the target without any further action by the perpetrator after the initial act of bullying (Dooley et al. 2021).

The life of today's youth have completely changed with the advent of rapidly evolving communication technology, which has made it easier for them to perform tasks according to their respective fields of need (Syazwana et al. 2021). The Ministry of Education, (MoE) Malaysia has also embraced the call for technological development by introducing flexible and interactive learning systems such s smart classroom, online teaching and learning as well as the use of social media platforms like Telegram, YouTube, WhatsApp and TikTok to disseminate knowledge to the students. Findings of the study by Noormalina and Yusmarwati (2019) stated that the elements of information and communication technology (ICT) use in education have been designed and implemented to meet the policy of integrating ICT into education.

Although there are many positive effects from technological advancements in the world of education today, there are also negative impacts, such as the occurrence of cyberbullying among adolescent due to uncontrolled use of social media and technology. For instance, according to data released by dateReportal: Global Digital Insight (2023), found that social media usage in Malaysia as of January 2023 was 26.8 million, which is 78.5% of the total population. Based on these statistics, the social media platforms with the highest usage were WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram (Hamizi, 2023).

Furthermore, the study conducted by Azianura and Rahim (2019) found that nearly all the adolescent interviewed admitted that they use the internet as a platform to express their feelings, shows their hidden identities that cannot be displayed in the real world and gain more freedom to be themselves without worrying about any obstacles or negative views from the surrounding society.

In recent years, there has been an increasing amount of literature in cyberbullying among adolescents. Serious attention and continuous research about cyberbullying from various diciplines of knowledge are required (Che Haniza et al. 2018). Studies about cyberbullying in future must be focused on implementing for promoting successful cyberbullying prevention and management strategies and addressing the phenomenon at local and international, considering differences due to different contexts (Grifoni et al. 2021). In view of all that has been mentioned so far, the studies provide important insights into the intervention of cyberbullying among adolescents.

Methodology
The writing of this concept paper is based on content analysis, which involves reviewing previous studies through reading articles and journals related to cyberbullying from search

engines such as PubMed, Science Direct and Google Scholar as well as books related to cyberbullying issues and mental health among adolescents. The search for articles and journals related to cyberbullying issues and adolescents mental health used several keywords through internet search engines. Some of the keywords used in the information search include "cyberbullying issues",'adolescents mental health", "suicidal ideations" and "bullying".

Literature Review
Definition of Cyberbullying
According to the official website of the Malaysian National Security Council (MKN), cyberbullying is a repeated act aimed at intimidating, angering and embarrassing someone using communication technology such as texts, chats, emails, social networking sites, mobile phones and online gaming.

Cyberbullying also refers to the use of digital technology to harass, damage reputations or intimidate someone. Bullying activities can occur through various online platforms such as social media sites, emails, websites and text messages. According to Vaillancourt et al. (2017), cyberbullying is defined as the use of information and communication technology as a mean to embarrassed, threaten, sexually harras or socially exclude someone.

In summary, cyberbullying is a form of negative behaviour towards others by using digital technology or various social media platforms to assert one's authority over another individual.

Types of Cyberbullying
Cyberbullying is a form of communications which conducted through technology with the intent to bully, harass, embarrass or threaten someone's life through negative words, the spread of bad information about others and the sharing of video or images that can tarnish someone's image (Azianura and Rahim, 2019).

Willard (2007) identified six types of indirect aggression conducted through computer-mediated communication (CMC) such as :-

Table 1
Types of Cyberbullying

Types of Cyberbullying	Description
Flaming	Online fighting which means that electronic messages with hostile and vulgar language are used to harm another
Defamation	Carried out by spreading secrets or embarrassing information about the repeated sending of messages
Cyber harassment	Involves threats of injury or intimidation
Ridiculing	Maligning to degrade someone for example by sending cruel images of others to spoil their social relations or reputations
Hacking	Impersonating someone's online accounts, with the aim to make them lose face, harm their friendship and reputation
Exclusion	Exclude someone from an online group simply because they don't like that person or a group of people.

Definition of Mental Health
World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with normal life stresses, work productively and had the ability to contribute to their communities (WHO,2004). This aligns with the findings from a study by Haizwanie and Norzaini (2021), which states that when an individual has a positive level of mental health, they are capable of handling and managing stress effectively.

Meanwhile, according to Sofiah et al. (2020), mental health is defined as the degree or manner in which an individual controls their emotions, adapts to their surroundings and manages their own life in terms of self-control by controlling their emotions, thought and behaviour, career and also social interactions. This is supported by research that states mental health encompasses an individual's ability to manage their emotions, cognition, physical and behavioral aspects when facing crisis or any challenge in their own life, family and community (Zuhaila et al. 2023).

Adolescent health is the physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being of adolescents, enabling them to lead healthy and harmonious live in an environment that supports optimal health into adulthood (The National Adolescents Health Policy in Malaysia, 2019).

According to Norakmar et al. (2022), mental health encompasses well-being, happiness and an individual's ability to face challenges, accept the current situation openly and maintain a positive attitude.

In summary, mental health focuses on an individual's ability to control their well-being from a cognitive aspect while facing various situations in life.

Previous International Studies on Cyberbullying
According to UNESCO (2017), cyberbullying seriously threatens human rights and obstructs the universal right to education. This align with the third goal in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 2030 agenda, which aims to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

Any form of bullying may cause physical and psychological effects on victims such as anxiety, fear, depression, behavioral issues and academic struggles. However, cyberbullying can bring more serious emotional damage towards children (Gordon, 2021).

Cyberbullying impacts both short-term and long-term mental well-being, alongside physical health issue and academic achievement among the victims. According to Vaillancourt et al. (2017), cyberbullying is associated with higher levels of depression and anxiety, emotional distress, suicidal ideation and attemps, somatic complains, poor physical health and externalizing problems such as increased deliquency and substance abuse compare to their non-bullied peers.

A survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre from April 14th to May 4th, 2022,found that nearly half of American adolescent aged 13 to 17 (46%) reported experiencing at least one out of six types of cyberbullying (Vogels, 2022). In addition, among the factors contributing to these cases, many of them stated that their physical appearance made them targets. Approximately, 15% of all adolescent believed that they were cyberbullied because of theor appearance.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO) during a conference held in Copenhagon, Denmark in March 2024, released the second volume of the Health Behaviour in School-age Children (HSBC) study, focusing on bullying patterns and peer violence among adolescent in 44 countries.The findings revealed that 15% of adolescents (about 1 in 6) have experienced cyberbullying with rates being almost equal between boys (15%) and girls (16%). This indicates an increase from 2018 where the rates increase from 12% to 15% for boys and 13% to 16% for girls in 2022.

There are many negative impacts on adolescent life regarding cyberbullying. Some of them are disturbance of personal privacy and psychological aspect. In addition, another effects of cyberbullying encompass safety threats, lower achievement in academic, mental health issue and emotional disturbance, prompting UNICEF to state that "no child is truly safe in this digital world" (Zhu et al. 2021). Generally, cyberbullying can affect a person's mental health, psychological, social or emotional health (Oliseyenum and Ali,2021).

In 2012, one widely covered case of a cyber sexual grooming victim involves a teenage girl who suffered from cyberbullying for three years, leading her to hang herself. A month before her tragic death, she uploaded a video on YouTube revealed how her pictures had been exploited online by a fake social media account user. This online personal attack ultimately resulted in her suicide, as she struggled to manage her emotions, even after changing schools multiple times (Butts, 2024).

This incident aligns with the findings of Schonfeld et al. (2023) which state that students involved in bullying and cyberbullying (both perpretators and victims) are highly likely to experience suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or suicidal behavior. Previous studies also found that cyberbullying affects psychological factors leading to depression, low self esteem and suicidal ideation among cyberbullying victims (Wanlop et al. 2024).

In summary, the findings in international studies presented clearly highlight the seriousness of cyberbullying issues occurring abroad and the need for appropriate interventions. For instance, children and adolescents who have daily support systems from their parents benefit more compared to personal social support system, where continuous communication and support occur through close relationships between bullying victims and their parents (Ademiluyi et al. 2022).

Previous studies on Cyberbullying in Malaysia
Cyberbullying not only prevalent abroad but also within the country. For instance, a report from the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) revealed a sharp increase in cyberbullying cases , with several tragic suicide cases linked to online harassment. As of 2024, the MCMC received a large number of complaints due to online harassment. Since 2020, the data shows that 6,598 complaints received related to online bullying sexual harassment up until July 2024,Additionally, from 2016-2021, MCMC recorded a total of 15,238 complaints concerning online harassment.

A study by Ariffin et al. (2021) revealed a shocking case of cyberbullying in 2019. The incident involved a 16 years old teenager who committed suicide after reviewing a poll on her Instagram. Her followers suggested she should end her life. This tragic incident happened on May 13th 2019. The effects of this incident include a heightened awareness of the severe consequences of cyberbullying in Malaysia. This aligns with previous research findings that indicate one of the effects of cyberbullying can cause victims to become anxious, depressed and experience other mental health issues, leading them to feel that suicide is the best solution to escapism (Hakim et al.2022)

Lee et al. (2023), state that problematic social media use, including social media addiction, may pose a risk for increased cyberbullying and cybervictimization. According to a study by Muhamad Luqmanul Hakim et al. (2022), state that the unrestricted use of technology makes cyberbullies more daring in mentally abusing victims with negative words, aiming to hurt the victims feelings and causing emotional and mental distress.

Another type of cyberbullying is body shaming. This act can cause various effects on an individual's mental and psychological well-being. According to Neevia et al. (2023), victims of body shaming are at risk of experiencing depression, lost of resilience, low self esteem, isolation, eating disorders and increased risk of suicide especially among adolescent.

Meanwhile, cyberbullying is increasingly spreading in many countries due to the wider internet access and the rapid use of technology worldwide (Nazirah and Norshahidah, 2024). This aligns with the observation that in cyber world today, cyberbullying can easily occur without knowing who the perpetrators are (Mokhlis, 2019).

Generally, cyberbullying victims always had negative feelings such as shame, fear, sadness,worry, dissapointment and helplessness which prevent them to standing up to the bullies (Fauziah et al. 2009). According to Hasniza et al. (2018), among the negative implications for victims are depression, low self-esteem, hopelessness, social anxiety, loss of focus, feelings of isolation and ultimately a tendency towards suicide.

Therefore, the development of adolescent mental health is crucial and should be discussed (Najiah et al. 2022). The impact of cyberbullying on mental health issues undeniably significant. Study by Nazirah and Norshahidah (2024), stated that based on percentages, which show that respondets who reported experiencing cyberbullying had higher mean levels of depression, anxiety and stress compared to respondents who had never been victims of cyberbullying.

Adolescence is a phase of conflict, transitioning from childhood to teenage years. Findings from Najiah and Hezzrinmohd (2023), state that adolescent who fail to identify their own identity can lose judgement, make life decisions based on societal norms and eventually fall into behavioral problems which can contribute to mental health issues. Previous studies found that the aggressiveness of bullies towards heir victims impacts the victims, affecting their emotions and psychology (Wan Shahrazad et al.2019). In additions, cases such as cyberbullying, social media addiction, pornography, information sharing and digital gaming addiction are common among adolescent (Wan Rafik & Fariza, 2020).

In summary, the findings from international and local studies clearly show the seriousness of cyberbullying issues not only abroad but also within the local context. Consequently, previous researchers have suggested the need for implementing intervention programs at the school level because the effects of cyberbullying are more severe compares to traditional bullying (Mapatan et al. 2022).
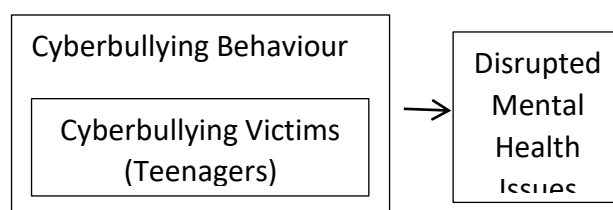
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 : Conceptual Framework of the study

Figure 1 illustrates a conceptual framework based on a review of past studies. This research model depicts the relationship between cyberbullying issues and mental health among adolescent both locally and internationally. The independent variable is cyberbullying while adolescent mental health issues are the dependant variable.

Disscussion and Conclusion

This research significantly enhances the understanding of cyberbullying among adolescent. Generally, the study's finding can shed light on how cyberbullying issues lead to various uncontrollable behaviour and affect adolescent's mental health. Moreover several intervention methods is crucial in addressing the seriousness issue of cyberbullying in Malaysian secondary schools. One of the effective approaches is the development of a specialized group counselling module that can serve as a guide for guidance and counselling teachers in providing interventions to students who are victims of bullying at school.

The findings of this study can also assist certain parties especially the Ministry of Education (MoE), Malaysia in determining the necessary steps to enhance efforts to prevent and reduce

the cyberbullying statistics in Malaysia. These findings will also enrich the literature, thereby increasing knowledge on cyberbullying issues. This study only presents a conceptual framework to examine the issue of cyberbullying and its relationship with mental health issues. Based on the review of past studies, this research could continue, considering the significant relationship between cyberbullying and mental health issues among adolescent.

The intervention process of cyberbullying among adolescents need therapeutic approach especially toward the victims. This approach can focuses on helping individuals to recognize the consequences and to make better choice in life. In conjunction with that, applying Choice Theory Reality Therapy to cyberbullying victims can provides insight into the cognitive and emotional process that can help counsellors to understand the situation in the helping process. Glasser (1990), Wubbolding and Brickell (1999) recommended the W (Wants), D (Doing and Direction), E (Evaluate) and P (Panning) strategies in counselling.

By integrating CTRT into the study of cyberbullying can provides theoretical insights to understand factors that drives cyberbullying behaviors among teenagers. It emphasizes the role of motivation and personal choice among victims. This theoretical contribution enriches the understanding of cyberbullying and support the development of more effective intervention programs in the future.

Within the context of secondary schools in Malaysia, the study on cyberbullying will help students to understand and develop appropriate coping strategies when facing cyberbullying issues enabling them to become healthy and well-rounded adolescents emotionally and physically. The ultimate goal is to produce Malaysian Citizens who are knowledgeable, skilled, noble, responsible and capable of achieving personal well-being, as well as contributing to the harmony and prosperity of the family, society and country, in line with Falsafah Pendidikan Kebangsaan (National Education Philosophy) Malaysia.

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