

## Cyberbullying among Malaysian Youth: The Case of Selangor

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### Abstract

This study aims to identify Selangor youth's engagement in cyberbullying activities. The study was carried out by a cross-sectional survey of 400 youths in four districts in Selangor namely, Hulu Langat, Serdang, Sabak Bernam and Klang. The study found that Selangor youth's engagement in cyberbullying activities to be at low level. The findings also indicated that the most common form of cyberbullying activity committed among this particular group of youth was to block others in instant messaging application such like WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger and etc. Several recommendations are made to overcome this social problem, quite a few actions were highlighted to take into consideration such as parental monitoring, cyber education, counselling, media awareness and campaign and the role of internet providers.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying, Youth, Youth Development; Social problem

### Introduction

Globally, people enjoy better access to communication technologies such as email, blogs, chat applications, and social networking through smartphones or laptop/PC. In line with the rapid evolution of these technologies, people are prone to be exposed to several social problems, among those who are easily affected is youth. According to Cankaya (2010), Eski (2012) and Tpocu, et.al (2010), due to the advancement of internet usage and communication gadgets, youths are highly exposed to cyberbullying activities. Cyberbullying can simply be defined as bullying via communication technologies through smartphones, emails, instant messaging, and social networking's. The aim of cyberbully perpetrators is to disrupt or intimidate other individuals via message or expressions online (Brady, 2010). Normally, cyberbullies will send messages/information with intention to hurt, to humiliate, and degrade their victims.

The existence of social networking sites has attracted internet usage among youths whereby the virtual world has exposed them to the risks of cyberbullying, which has the potential to affect anyone involved. According to Li (2006), the evolution of technology culminates the trend of negative behaviors in the virtual world and eventually it has been the forefront of social problems, one of them is cyberbullying. A study by the Global Youth Online Behavior Survey (Microsoft survey) on 7,600 children aged between 8 to 17, they have demonstrated that one out of every three children in Malaysia were victims of cyberbullying. The study also concluded that the level of awareness on cyberbullying awareness among parents in Malaysia was low only 38% of the parents were concerned about the issue while slightly more than a quarter have talked to their children about the risks of online communication.

The difference between traditional bullying and cyberbullying is the fact that virtual bullying has no boundary compared to the physical world. The anonymity of the online bullies and the speed it offers have embolden youths to engage in cyberbullying activities. In addition to the cause, scholars have placed their interests on the impact cyberbullying among youths. Based on past research on cyberbullying, some of researches have discussed on the negative impacts of cyberbullying. Bauman (2012) for example, concluded that cyberbullying victims generally undergo stress and anxiety, which later would affect their academic performance. (Goddard, 2008) has specifically focused on female cyberbully victims and concluded that most of them were distracted in their study after being cyberbullied. Meanwhile, Erdur-Baker and Tanrikulu (2010), and Ybarra and Mitchell, (2004) found cyberbully victims to be emotionally unstable and tend to demonstrate aggressive behavior in the future.

Despite continuous and rigorous efforts of global studies conducted to understand cyberbullying in a bigger scale. Up till now, it remains unclear why cyberbullying still occur since the issue does not entail a solid understanding on the persistence in cyber harassment. Hence, this study aims to fill the gap by looking into Malaysian youths' engagement Malaysia in cyberbullying activities, particularly in – Selangor. This study will discuss in detail, the level of their cyberbullying engagement and the types of cyberbullying activities involved, later several highlighted to prevent cyberbullying.

### **Literature Review**

One study conducted by Balakrishnan (2015) has aimed to explore cyberbullying issues among young adults. In this study has survey around 393 youth (aged 17 – 30 years old) in Malaysia. He concluded that internet usage frequency could initiate cyberbullying among youths while the internet and existing social networking sites could instigate cyberbullying among Malaysian youth. These findings has correspondingly confirmed that cyberbully victims have a tendency to become cyberbully themselves or otherwise.

The study of Ang (2015) summarizes the features, prevention strategies and interventions for cyberbullying issues. The conclusions of this study are the frequency in which internet use plays an important role in the occurrence of cyberbullying and highlights its cause, which is proactive aggressive, weak relationships between parents and their children. (2015) proposes empathy training and modifies beliefs that support intrusion, guidelines for internet usage behavior and develop strong and positive bonds of teens as almost tactics to combat cyberbullying.

The study by Hawker and Boulton (2000) and Blanchard (2011) there are several types of cyberbullying, the impact and prevention strategy. Blanchard (2011) confirmed the dating violence, abuse and distribution of text messages that interfere with personal information on social media sites as the most frequently conducted by cyberbullying. This behavior can lead to upward pressure, conflict, social anxiety, sadness and disappointment. In the study by Hawker and Boulton (2000), they found that cyberbullying can cause extreme effects such as suicide victims. To prevent cyberbullying, Blanchard (2011) stressed the importance of technology in solving cases cyberbully while the role of social service workers and law enforcement needs to be authorized.

### **Methodology**

This study was questionnaire carried out by a cross-sectional survey consisting of 38 items to measure cyberbullying engagement among youth. For each item, the respondents were given a five Likert scale of answer ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (always). In addition to the cyberbullying engagement items, the instrument also surveys their demographic background and internet usage pattern. Prior to the actual data collection, a pilot study was conducted to test the instrument's reliability. The instrument's resulted Cronbach alpha value is .888, which passed the recommended value of .700 by Nunally (1978). Based on the margin error of 5% and confidence level are 95%, the Rao soft statistical sampling tools suggested a maximum total of 377 respondents. This study however, aims for a bigger sample of 400. A multi cluster sampling was performed and via this procedure, 400 youths aged between 15 to 40 years old were selected as respondents. The data collection process was conducted around four districts in Selangor namely Sabak Bernam, Klang, Hulu Langat and Serdang Selangor. Each district was represented by 100 respondents. SPSS was used to analyse the frequency, percentage and mean score.

### **Result**

#### *Respondents' Demographic Background*

Table 1 demonstrates the respondents' demographic background. The sample consists of 50.2% female respondents and 49.8% male respondents. The mean age of the sample was 21.2 and most of them fall into the age group of 20-22 (39.0%) age group. Regarding their educational achievement, most of them possessed skill certificates/STPM and Degree/Master/PhD (31.3%), followed by those with SPM/SPMV (26.0%). In terms of their employment status, slightly more than 70% were unemployed. Their average household income was RM3491.96 with 19.8% earning more than RM4,001 a month. Furthermore, 39.8% of the respondents had between 5-6 household members while another 36.8% had 4 household members or less.

Table 1:

## Respondents' Demographic background

Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
<b><u>Gender</u></b>			
Male	199	49.8	
Female	201	50.2	
<b><u>Age</u></b>			21.2
19 years and below	142	35.5	
20-22 years	156	39.0	
23 years and above	102	25.5	
<b><u>Education achievement</u></b>			
Never been to school	6	1.5	
Primary school	7	1.8	
PMR	16	4.0	
SPM/SPMV	104	26.0	
Skill certificates/STPM	125	31.3	
Diploma	17	4.3	
Degree/Master/PhD	125	31.3	
<b><u>Working status</u></b>			
Employed	117	29.3	
Unemployed	283	70.7	
<b><u>Household income (n = 346)</u></b>			RM3491.96
RM1000 or less	71	17.8	
RM1001-RM2000	103	25.8	
RM2001-RM4000	93	23.3	
RM4001 or more	79	19.8	
<b><u>Number of household members</u></b>			
4 or less	147	36.8	
5-6	159	39.8	
7 or more	94	23.5	

*Internet Usage Background*

Table 2 depicts the respondent's internet usage pattern. The resulted mean score for internet usage experience was 6.4 years due to 54.7% of them have spent 6 years of long periods of time in using it, which confirmed their proficiency in using the internet. More than three quarter of them (82.5%) have subscribed to internet services they preferred to surf the internet at (52.5%). On average, the respondents spent about 10.5 hours a day on the internet with 26.8% of them spent between 8-12 hours a day. The respondents usually surf the internet at night.

Table 2:

Patten of internet usage

Factor	Frequency	Percentage	Mean Score
<b><u>Experience in using the internet</u></b>			6.4 years
3 years or less	98	24.5	
4 to 5 years	83	20.8	
6 years or more	219	54.7	
<b><u>Subscribed to any internet services?</u></b>			
Yes	330	82.5	
No	70	17.5	
<b><u>Main place to use the internet</u></b>			
Home	210	52.5	
Work place	44	11.0	
Cyber cafe	22	5.5	
Educational institution	106	26.5	
Public area	18	4.5	
<b><u>Main time to use the internet</u></b>			
Morning	25	6.3	
Afternoon	38	9.5	
Evening	35	8.8	
Night	111	27.8	
Every time	191	47.8	
<b><u>Time used for internet usage</u></b>			10.5 hours
3 hour or less	80	20.0	
4-7 hour	100	25.0	
8-12 hour	107	26.8	
13 hour or more	113	28.3	

#### 4.3 Overall mean for score cyber bully

Table 3 showed the overall mean score of cyberbullying. Based on the range of score calculation, the level of mean score was pooled into three categories namely low (0-1.33), moderate (1.34-2.66) and high (2.67-4.00). Interestingly, the results confirmed that majority of youth in Selangor (90.0%) were eventually engaged in cyberbullying but only at a low level. The overall mean score recorded of cyberbullying activities is  $M = .052$ .

Table 3:

Overall mean score Cyber bully

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean score
Low (0-1.33)	360	90.0	0.52
Moderate (1.34-2.66)	34	8.5	
High (2.67-4.00)	6	1.5	

*Cyberbullying among youth in Selangor*

The study concluded that blocking others in instant messaging application (M=1.33) was one of the most common act of cyberbullying amongst youth. Others than blocking other online, ignoring others (M=0.96), condemning someone and using slang while instant messaging them (M=0.91) and intention to remove someone from online group chats or instant messaging application (M=0.88) were the common form of cyberbullying. Further analysis has confirmed that youth were less engaged scamming activities, getting other people's personal information and post it on the Web (M=0.30), conducting sexual harassment to others by phone or internet (M=0.30) and or stealing webcam image of other people without their permission (M=0.30).

Table 4:

## Statements that defined cyberbullying

STATEMENTS	MEAN SCORE
Blocking others in instant messaging application	1.33
Ignoring others	0.96
Condemn and using slang while using instant messaging applications	0.91
Intend to remove someone from an online group chat or instant messaging applications	0.88
Specifically and purposefully remove other group members of the member group in online chats or instant messaging apps	0.78
Bullying someone in an online social utility because of their physical appearance or their character	0.77
Do not allow others to participate in a conversation	0.76
Send religious or political messages without permission	0.75
Hide my identity when communicating with others	0.64
Invite others to join social applications containing gossip or inappropriate chats	0.64
Write something bad about someone else	0.64
Use software to obtain other people's personal information	0.56
Pretend to be someone else in the virtual world	0.55
Send harassment word through email or instant message to others	0.54
Send an email or instant message containing insults	0.50
Make calls for the purpose of scaring others	0.47
Steal or get someone else's password	0.47
Talk on behalf of others by stealing their nickname without their knowledge	0.47
Send an email or instant message containing lies and something bad about someone else	0.45
Disturbing others and forcing them to chat via instant messaging applications	0.43
Publish pictures and personal videos of others without their permission	0.43
Share other people's personal information of others online without their permission	0.42
Send threatening email or instant messages	0.39
Send unwanted content into other people's computers without their permission	0.39
Slandering others via the internet, spreading rumours with the intention of humiliating them	0.39
Send pornographic information to the people I know or not know	0.38
Spreading rumors that may affect you	0.38

Threatening others through calls or messages	0.38
Urged people to vote or sign the political groups, sports groups or religious groups	0.37
Using someone else's personal information without their permission	0.37
Editing photos or video and share them online or upload on You Tube with the intention to ridicule them	0.34
Publish other personal information via email or instant messaging without their permission	0.34
Threaten others by forcing them to do things they do not like, such as preventing you from spreading their personal things online	0.32
View pornographic images through Webcam	0.32
Send pornographic emails	0.31
Scam other to get their personal information and post it on the Web	0.30
Conduct sexual harassment to others through phone or the internet	0.30
Use a webcam image of another person without their permission	0.30

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### Discussion and Recommendation

Result show that 10.0% of youth in Selangor have moderately engaged in cyberbullying activities. The results are somewhat different to other countries. Baldry et al. (2019) for example, has concluded that 29.2% of youth in Italy were engaged in cyberbullying, Martínez-Monteagudo et al. (2019) confirmed that 19.4% youth in Spain have cyberbullied others, Yang et al. (2018) found 17.6% of youth in China were the perpetrators of cyberbullying, Jenaro et al. (2018) noted that 15.2% of Chilean youth have engaged in cyberbullying, meanwhile Leung et al. (2018) in their study have reported as high as 58% of Hong Kong Chinese students were involved in cyberbullying.

Within the scope of this study, the most committed forms of cyberbullying were blocking others in instant messaging application, ignoring others, condemning and using slang while messaging online. The study shows a contrast finding to Martínez-Monteagudo et al. (2019), Yang et al. (2018) and Leung et al. (2018) who found youth engagement in cyberbullying were mostly related to teasing someone, calling someone with bad names, say mean things about someone, aiming to hit or hurting someone, threatening someone, and spreading rumors about someone in order to make others loathe them. Several factors are found to be the cause of this diversity.

Shin and Ahn (2015) for example, found that youth who spent more time playing games during weekdays, being active mobile phone users, and possesses high confidence in cyberspace were more likely to be involved in cyberbullying. Lee and Shin (2017) then confirmed that the male and the amount of time they spent on online games and chat services, increase the possibility of them getting involved in cyberbullying. Gámez-Guadix and Gini (2016) on the other hand, investigated the influence of age and the desire to enhance one's peer status to be the strongest influence on committing cyberbullying.

Although Selangor youth's involvement in cyberbullying activities was found to be low precautionary actions and proactive planning are needed to ensure that this particular social issue do not get out of hand. This study has come out with several recommendations that can related to cyberbullying issues which is parental monitoring, cyber education, counselling, media awareness and campaign and most of all the important role played by internet providers.



Parents play a vital role in preventing cyberbullying activities. In the era where the pace of technological evolution, as the main users of internet in Malaysia, youths are easily exposed to cyberbullying activities. Every parent should supervise and monitor their children's online activities, take precautions against cyberbullying activities, educate their children on the dos and don'ts in the virtual space by informing them on impact of cyberbullying.

Cyber education is an important part of virtual communities. Hinduja and Patchin (2008); Patchin and Hinduja (2009); Patchin and Hinduja (2010) have agreed on the importance of cyber education as a remedy to overcome social issue such as cyberbullying. Cyber education includes information of the ethics of using computer, online security and safety, privacy violations, and mostly limiting personal information sharing. These are the main points that should be taught to youth.

Counselling can be a systematic avenue to support individuals and learn how to protect themselves online (Carter, 2013). Among the topics highlighted by (Carter, 2013) are the development of a repertoire of leisure time skills, debrief regarding the after exposure or perpetration to cyber bullying and regulating behaviors in need satisfying ways.

Media offers a good and a bad side of things related to youth development. Despite the increasing possibility of youth's involvement in cyberbullying, media can be utilized to enhance people's awareness on the impact of cyberbullying. A media awareness campaign is a strong platform to remind people on the risks of cyberbullying. Online forums can be used to educate youths on cyber bullying including and spread information on the motives for cyberbullying, its impacts and measures to take for those who are victims of cyberbullies. Furthermore, several social media sites enable users to block perpetrators, if they feel uncomfortable virtually.

Based on Carter (2013) study, internet service provider hold responsibility in adopting codes and policies on online safety to prevent youth from being susceptible to becoming victims of cyberbullying. Understandably, online users are given the choice to report any online misconducts such as pages containing abusive contents, sexual harassment, scams or violent threats by clicking on the report button online or contact the website operator. Every parties has responsible and play role to prohibit cyberbully issues from new incoming generation.

## **Conclusion**

Cyberbullying is an emerging issue that causes inflictions and imposes negative implications if not taken seriously by all parties. In this study aims to identify Selangor youth's engagement in cyberbullying activities. The study found that Selangor youth's engagement in cyberbullying activities to be at low level. The findings also indicated that the most common form of cyberbullying activity committed among this particular group of youth was to block others in instant messaging application such like WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger and etc. All related parties inclusive of parents, teachers, educators and communities should create a positive social environment that is able to prevent cyberbullying. Parenting awareness especially, is crucial to ensure their children's safety whether physically or virtually. More efforts should be made to reduce and prevent the cyberbullying as it could risk the health and well-being of youths today. Future research should focus on the identifying cyberbullying factors, which is important for the future development of youth.



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