

# The Effect of Psychological Crime of Virtual Bullying on Social Media on Victims Under the ITE Law

Muhammad Alfarizy\*, Ummi Yusnita, Nur Lailatuka Syafa'atul Uzma

Faculty of Law, Universitas Krisnadwipayana, Jakarta

✉ Correspondent: alfarizymuhammad21@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying takes many forms and adapts rapidly to technological developments. This study explores the psychological effects of virtual bullying on social media on victims, with the legal basis set out in Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law). Online bullying has become a major problem in the digital age, significantly impacting the psychological well-being of victims, and often having a more severe impact than conventional bullying. This study aims to identify the forms of virtual bullying regulated by the ITE Law, analyze the psychological impact on victims, and evaluate the effectiveness of legal protection provided by the ITE Law. Using a normative juridical approach, this research evaluates the articles in the ITE Law that are relevant to cyberbullying and relates them to the cases that occur. The results show that cyberbullying can cause various psychological disorders, including anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem. The ITE Law provides a strong legal framework to address these acts, with strict criminal sanctions and protection mechanisms for victims. However, the effectiveness of the ITE Law is highly dependent on consistent implementation by law enforcement as well as increased public awareness and education regarding digital ethics. This study concludes that collaborative efforts between the government, educational institutions, and communities are needed to reduce the incidence of virtual bullying and ensure that victims receive the support they need.

**Keywords:** Cyberbullying; ITE Law; Legal Protection; Victim Psychology; Virtual Bullying.

## A. INTRODUCTION

In this increasingly advanced digital age, social media has become an indispensable part of everyday life. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and WhatsApp not only facilitate personal communication, but also serve as tools for sharing information, interacting with the wider community, and even for professional purposes. However, behind the benefits and convenience offered by social media, there is a serious and growing threat of virtual bullying or cyberbullying. Virtual bullying is a form of violence or intimidation perpetrated through digital media. Perpetrators of virtual bullying use information technology to harass, threaten, or humiliate victims. Unlike traditional bullying that occurs physically or verbally in real social settings, virtual bullying has unique characteristics that make it more dangerous. The anonymity of the perpetrator, the wide reach, and the ability to spread quickly make virtual bullying a serious challenge for victims and law enforcement.

Anonymity allows perpetrators to commit violence without fear of being recognized or punished, while the wide reach and rapid dissemination means that information that harms victims can be seen by many people in a short time (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008). The psychological impact of virtual bullying is very serious for victims. Many studies show that victims of virtual bullying often experience a range of psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even suicidal thoughts. The long-term impact of

virtual bullying can affect the victim's quality of life in various aspects, including education, social relationships, and mental health. Victims often feel isolated, embarrassed, and helpless, which can ultimately interfere with their personal and professional development. A study by and Patchin, found that victims of cyberbullying were more likely to experience higher levels of anxiety and depression than those who were not bullied. This research suggests that the impact of cyberbullying can be just as, if not more, damaging than bullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2008).

The impact of cyberbullying can be just as, if not more, damaging than that of traditional bullying. This is because virtual bullying can happen anytime and anywhere, leaving little room for victims to feel safe or escape the harassment they are experiencing. In Indonesia, regulations regarding cybercrime are regulated in the Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law). The ITE Law is a legal umbrella that regulates all forms of electronic activities and transactions, including crimes committed through digital media. The ITE Law has several articles that specifically highlight the act of virtual bullying, such as Article 27 paragraph (3) which regulates insults and/or defamation through electronic media (Kowalski & Giumetti, 2017).

One of the main challenges in enforcing the ITE Law is the lack of public awareness regarding the dangers of virtual bullying and how to report it. Many victims are afraid to report because they fear retaliation from the perpetrator or do not believe that their case will be taken seriously by the authorities. This is exacerbated by the lack of socialization and education on the dangers of cyberbullying and victims' rights under the ITE Law (Karyanti & Aminudin, 2019). Many people do not know that acts of virtual bullying can be reported and prosecuted, or how to report such acts. In addition, the limitations of law enforcement in identifying and handling these cases are also a major obstacle. The identity of the perpetrators, who are often anonymous or use fake accounts, makes the law enforcement process difficult. Law enforcement requires technical expertise and adequate resources to track and identify perpetrators of cyberbullying (Manullang, 2024). However, in many cases, these limitations cause many perpetrators to escape punishment, while victims do not get the justice they need. To address this problem, in-depth research is needed on the effects of the psychological crime of virtual bullying on social media on victims, as well as how the ITE Law can be more effective in tackling this problem.

This study aims to analyze the forms of virtual bullying on social media (Sholikhudin & Handayani, 2024), the psychological impact it has on victims, and the effectiveness of the ITE Law in handling virtual bullying cases. With a deeper understanding of this issue, it is expected to make a significant contribution to the development of better policies and more effective law enforcement in protecting victims of virtual bullying as well as preventing similar crimes in the future. This research is also expected to provide concrete recommendations to increase public awareness about virtual bullying, improve reporting and case-handling mechanisms, and strengthen the capacity of law enforcement to deal with cybercrime. One way to increase public awareness is by conducting education and socialization campaigns on the dangers of virtual bullying and the rights of victims. This campaign can be conducted through social media, schools, and communities to reach a wider audience. In addition, the mechanism for reporting and handling virtual bullying cases needs to be improved. The government and law enforcement need to provide easily accessible and safe reporting channels for victims to report acts of bullying. In addition, training and capacity building for law enforcers need to be improved so that they have the necessary skills and knowledge to handle cyberbullying cases effectively. Thus, it is hoped that a safer and

more comfortable digital environment can be created for all social media users, especially for those who are vulnerable to becoming victims of virtual bullying. This research is also expected to make a significant contribution to the development of better policies and more effective law enforcement in protecting victims of virtual bullying and preventing similar crimes in the future.

Based on the above background, the objectives of this study are to analyze the impact caused by virtual bullying, examine the effectiveness of the ITE Law in tackling virtual bullying, and examining the effectiveness of the ITE Law in tackling cyberbullying.

## **B. METHOD**

This research uses a normative juridical approach, which focuses on applicable legal norms and their application in practice. This approach was chosen to analyze the ITE Law regulations related to virtual bullying and the psychological impact it has on victims.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Forms of Psychological Crime Virtual Bullying on Social Media**

Virtual bullying, also known as cyberbullying, is an act of violence or intimidation committed through digital media. The development of this phenomenon is growing rapidly along with the increasing use of information and communication technology, especially social media (Meinarni, 2019). Cyberbullying can occur on various platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others. Anonymity on the internet often gives perpetrators the courage to act without fear of being recognized or punished. Definition of Virtual Bullying Cyberbullying is defined as the use of information and communication technology to harass, intimidate, threaten, or humiliate individuals or groups. Willard explains, states that cyberbullying includes any form of message or action through digital devices that is intended to cause psychological suffering to the victim (Willard, 2007). These forms include insults, threats, spreading rumors, and online sexual harassment. Forms of virtual bullying cyberbullying takes many forms and can adapt quickly according to technological developments. Some common forms of cyberbullying are:

- 1) **Insults and Defamation:** This is one of the most common forms of cyberbullying. The perpetrator spreads false or defamatory information about the victim to damage the victim's reputation. Insults can take the form of harsh words, degrading comments, or content that makes fun of the victim's physique or personal character;
- 2) **Harassment:** Persistent harassment, such as sending unwanted messages, threatening, or intimidating the victim. This harassment can take the form of violent or threatening texts, images, or videos;
- 3) **Social Exclusion:** Intentionally excluding someone from a social group or online community. For example, not inviting the victim to certain online groups or events, or actively excluding them from conversations or social interactions;
- 4) **Impersonation:** The perpetrator creates a fake account or accesses the victim's account without permission to spread false information or harm the victim. Impersonation can damage a victim's reputation and cause serious legal and social problems;

- 5) Sexting: Sending or distributing sexual images or messages without permission. This often involves teenagers and can cause deep psychological trauma to the victim;
- 6) Doxing: Spreading the victim's personal information online without permission. This can be home addresses, phone numbers, or other personal data that can be used to harass or harm the victim; and
- 7) Cyberstalking: Stalking or monitoring conducted through digital media with the aim of intimidating or frightening the victim. Cyberstalking can involve repeated messaging, tracking of online activity, and physical or sexual threats.

## **2. The Effect of Bullying on the Victim's Psychology**

Bullying, as a form of aggressive behavior that is persistent and deliberately perpetrated to injure, degrade, or inconvenience an individual, has a profound impact on the psychological well-being of the victim (Smith, 2020). In this context, psychological impact is often identified as a direct result of chronic stress resulting from repeated and sometimes prolonged experiences of bullying. The main impacts that often occur are related to psychiatric conditions such as anxiety and depression. Anxiety often arises in response to constant perceived threats, both physical and verbal, as well as the presence of unsafe and uncomfortable social situations.

Depression, on the other hand, often arises as a result of feeling isolated, helpless, and unable to cope with stressful situations. In addition, feelings of low self-esteem and decreased self-confidence are other impacts that often result from bullying. Bullies often use words or behaviors that degrade and insult the victim, which in turn can cause the victim to feel worthless, incapable, and unworthy (Uba et al., 2010).

This can harm the victim's self-image and their confidence in various aspects of life. Other impacts that can arise are sleep disturbances, decreased interest in preferred activities, as well as feelings of anger, frustration, or even hopelessness. These are all complex psychological responses to the continuous and sometimes unavoidable situation of bullying. It is important to understand that these psychological impacts can vary depending on factors such as the intensity of the bullying, the social support the victim receives, their coping strategies, and their psychological state. And the individual's previous emotional state. Understanding these complexities is important in designing effective intervention and support strategies for victims of bullying (Hidayah et al., 2022).

Virtual bullying has a serious psychological impact on victims. Research shows that the impact of virtual bullying can be just as severe, if not more severe, than traditional bullying. Some common psychological impacts experienced by victims of virtual bullying include:

- 1) Depression: Victims often experience prolonged feelings of sadness, loss of interest in daily activities, and feelings of helplessness. Depression caused by virtual bullying can interfere with daily life and lead to suicidal thoughts;
- 2) Anxiety: Victims may feel anxious or fearful every time they access social media or the internet. These feelings of anxiety can cause sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, and physical reactions such as heart palpitations or cold sweats;
- 3) Constant humiliation and harassment can destroy a victim's self-esteem and leave them feeling ashamed and isolated;

- 4) Post-Traumatic St (PTSD): Some victims may experience PTSD, which is characterized by flashbacks, nightmares, and intense anxiety. These symptoms are often triggered by memories or situations that remind the victim of their bullying experience;
- 5) Social Isolation: Victims of cyberbullying often withdraw from social interactions for fear of further harassment. This isolation can aggravate the victim's psychological state and hinder their social development; dan
- 6) Physical Health Problems: The psychological impact of cyberbullying can also affect the physical health of the victim. Prolonged stress can lead to health problems such as headaches, indigestion, and a decreased immune system.

### 3. How ITE Law Regulates and Tackles Virtual Bullying on Social Media

Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law) regulates and tackles bullying on social media through several provisions that refer to the protection of individuals from cyberbullying. These include a clear definition of cyberbullying, regulation of actions that can be considered cyberbullying, case reporting, legal handling, sanctions for perpetrators, protection for victims, and public education efforts (Tompul et al., 2024). The definition of cyberbullying in the ITE Law refers to the use of information and electronic technology to degrade, humiliate, or intimidate others through digital platforms.

The legal provisions in the ITE Law emphasize that actions such as the dissemination of slanderous content, insults, or threats on social media can be considered cyberbullying. Victims of bullying have the right to report the case to the authorities, and the legal process will follow the steps of investigation, prosecution, and law enforcement by the provisions of the ITE Law.

Legal sanctions stipulated in the ITE Law include fines and/or imprisonment for perpetrators of cyberbullying. Meanwhile, protection for victims includes the right to obtain compensation for the losses they experience due to cyberbullying and efforts to maintain the confidentiality of victims' data.

In addition, the ITE Law also encourages public education and awareness efforts about ethical and responsible behavior in the digital world. This is done through socialization and education campaigns to foster digital awareness at various levels of society (Rahman, 2019).

Thus, ITE Law has a significant role in tackling bullying on social media and promoting a safe digital environment that respects individual rights.

Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law) is the legal foundation that regulates all forms of electronic activities and transactions, including crimes committed through digital media. The ITE Law has several articles that specifically highlight acts of virtual bullying. For example, Article 27 paragraph (3) of the ITE Law regulates insults and/or defamation through electronic media, which is one form of cyberbullying. However, despite the existence of the ITE Law, its implementation and enforcement still face various challenges. Public awareness regarding their rights under the ITE Law is still low (Saputra, 2022). Many victims are afraid to report for fear of retaliation from the perpetrator or do not believe that their case will be taken seriously by the authorities. The limitations of law enforcement in identifying and handling these cases are also a major obstacle (Hz, 2018). The identity of perpetrators, who are often anonymous or use fake accounts, complicates the law enforcement process. Law enforcement requires technical expertise and adequate

resources to track and identify perpetrators of cyberbullying. To address these issues, efforts are needed to raise public awareness about the dangers of virtual bullying and the rights of victims under the ITE Law. In addition, reporting and handling mechanisms for virtual bullying cases need to be improved, and law enforcers need to be trained and empowered to deal with cybercrime more effectively. A deeper understanding of virtual bullying and its impact, as well as the important role of the ITE Law, is expected to create a safer and more comfortable digital environment for all social media users.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Virtual bullying on social media has become an increasingly pressing issue in this digital age, with significant impacts on the psychological well-being of victims. Bullying on digital platforms is often more difficult to detect and address compared to traditional bullying due to its anonymous and ongoing nature. Victims of cyberbullying can experience a range of psychological problems, including anxiety, depression, decreased self-esteem, sleep disturbances, and other behavioral disorders. These psychological impacts can vary depending on the intensity and duration of the bullying, as well as the victim's social support and coping strategies.

Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transaction Law (ITE Law) plays an important role in addressing virtual bullying and protecting victims. The ITE Law provides a clear definition of cyberbullying and regulates actions that can be categorized as cybercrimes, such as the dissemination of content containing defamation, insults, or threats. Victims have the right to report cyberbullying cases to the authorities, which will then undergo a process of investigation, prosecution, and law enforcement by existing provisions.

The sanctions stipulated in the ITE Law include fines and/or imprisonment for perpetrators, to provide a deterrent effect and prevent similar actions in the future. In addition, the ITE Law also protects victims, including the right to compensation for the losses they have suffered and efforts to maintain the confidentiality of their data. The importance of psychological support and rehabilitation for victims is also recognized, to help them recover from the negative impacts of bullying.

Alongside law enforcement, the ITE Law also emphasizes the importance of public education and awareness of digital ethics and responsibility in using technology. Continuous socialization and education campaigns are expected to raise awareness about the dangers of cyberbullying and teach more responsible behavior online.

Overall, the ITE Law has provided a strong legal framework to protect individuals from cyberbullying and deal with perpetrators in the digital world. However, its effectiveness is highly dependent on consistent implementation and collaborative efforts from various parties, including the government, law enforcement, educational institutions, and the wider community. With the right measures in place, it is hoped that incidents of virtual bullying can be minimized and victims can get the protection and support they need to recover and move on with their lives.

#### **REFERENCES**

Hidayah, A. N., Kartini, I. A., & Susanti, R. (2022). *Aspek Hukum Cyberbullying di Kalangan Remaja Dalam Perspektif Undang-Undang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik.*

- Community Services and Social Work Bulletin*, 1(2), 53.  
<https://doi.org/10.31000/cswb.v1i2.5866>
- Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2008). Cyberbullying: An Exploratory Analysis of Factors Related to Offending and Victimization. *Deviant Behavior*, 29(2), 129–156.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620701457816>
- HZ, T. U.-U. (2018). *Analisis Kriminologis Terhadap Tindak Pidana Cyberbullying Pada Remaja* [Skripsi, Universitas Lampung]. <http://digilib.unila.ac.id/id/eprint/30612>
- Karyanti, M. P., & Aminudin, S. P. (2019). *Cyberbullying & Body Shaming*. Penerbit K-Media.
- Kowalski, R. M., & Giumetti, G. W. (2017). Bullying in the Digital Age. In *Cybercrime and its Victims* (pp. 167–186). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315637198-10>
- Manullang, S. O. (2024). Unveiling Bullying in Education: A Sociological and Legal Inquiry. *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 16(3), 3660–3671.  
<https://doi.org/10.35445/alishlah.v16i3.4464>
- Meinarni, N. P. S. (2019). Tinjauan Yuridis Cyber Bullying Dalam Ranah Hukum Indonesia. *Ganaya: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Humaniora*, 2(1), 299–308.
- Rahman, M. T. (2019). Tinjauan Yuridis Terhadap Kejahatan Cyberbullying di Indonesia. *Jurnal Hukum Unissula*, 35(2), 456–469.
- Saputra, R. P. (2022). Penyuluhan Tindak Pidana Cyber Bullying Berdasarkan Undang–Undang Nomor 19 Tahun 2016 tentang Informasi dan Transaksi Elektronik. *Bernas: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat*, 3(3), 457–469.
- Sholikhudin, R., & Handayani, B. (2024). Perlindungan Hukum Terhadap Anak dari Tindak Pidana Kekerasan Berdasarkan Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia Nomor 35 Tahun 2014 tentang Perubahan Atas Undang-Undang Nomor 23 Tahun 2002 tentang Perlindungan Anak. *Kultura: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum, Sosial, Dan Humaniora*, 2(2), 255–264.
- Smith, A. (2020). The Psychological Effects of Bullying. *Journal of Psychology*, 15(2), 45–58.
- Tompul, V. B. R., Krisnalita, L. Y., Kusumadewi, Y., & Mutiarany, M. (2024). Pengaruh Bullying Terhadap Kesehatan Mental Khususnya Pada Remaja. *Community Development Journal: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 5(2), 2886–2889.
- Uba, I., Yaacob, S. N., & Juhari, R. (2010). Bullying and Its' Relationship With Depression Among Teenagers. *Journal of Psychology*, 1(1), 15–22.
- Willard, N. E. (2007). *Cyberbullying and Cyberthreats: Responding to the Challenge of Online Social Aggression, Threats, and Distress*. Research Press.