

NAVIGATING DIGITAL LITERACY TO REDUCE CYBERBULLYING IN ADOLESCENTS

Mukhamad Diki Indarto¹, Muhammad Huda², Imam Aris Utomo³, Ari Maulana Ramadhan⁴, Fauzi Annur⁵

Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, UIN Raden Mas Said Surakarta^{1,2,3,4,5}

e-mail: mukhamaddiki@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Kemajuan teknologi digital yang berlangsung cepat menghadirkan peluang sekaligus risiko bagi remaja, salah satunya meningkatnya kasus *cyberbullying* yang muncul dalam bentuk flaming, pelecehan daring, dan penyebaran data pribadi. Situasi ini berdampak pada kondisi psikologis, kesehatan fisik, serta prestasi akademik remaja, sehingga diperlukan langkah pencegahan yang sistematis. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji peran literasi digital dalam menekan perilaku *cyberbullying* melalui tinjauan pustaka terhadap berbagai publikasi nasional dan internasional yang relevan. Artikel-artikel terpilih dianalisis menggunakan pendekatan analisis isi untuk menelusuri pola temuan, konsep kunci, dan strategi pencegahan yang sesuai dengan dinamika aktivitas digital remaja. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa literasi digital tidak hanya meningkatkan kemampuan teknis, tetapi juga memperkuat kecakapan berpikir kritis, kesadaran etis, dan pemahaman mengenai perlindungan privasi, yang secara langsung berkontribusi mengurangi kecenderungan perilaku agresif di ruang digital. Temuan juga menegaskan bahwa implementasi program literasi digital di sekolah, keterlibatan orang tua, pemanfaatan teknologi edukatif, serta dukungan regulasi seperti UU ITE berpengaruh positif dalam membangun ketahanan remaja terhadap ancaman dunia maya. Adapun hambatan berupa kesenjangan infrastruktur, perbedaan tingkat literasi, dan terbatasnya pendampingan intensif masih menjadi faktor penghambat. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa kolaborasi antara institusi pendidikan, keluarga, pemerintah, dan penyedia platform digital merupakan fondasi utama untuk mewujudkan ekosistem digital yang aman, etis, dan mendukung perkembangan remaja.

Kata Kunci: *Navigasi, Literasi digital, Perundungan siber, Remaja*

ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology presents both opportunities and risks for adolescents, one of which is the rising incidence of cyberbullying manifested in forms such as flaming, online harassment, and the dissemination of personal information. This situation affects adolescents' psychological well-being, physical health, and academic performance, thereby requiring systematic preventive measures. This study aims to examine the role of digital literacy in reducing cyberbullying behavior through a literature review of relevant national and international publications. The selected articles were analyzed using a content analysis approach to identify recurring patterns, key concepts, and effective prevention strategies aligned with the dynamics of adolescents' digital engagement. The findings indicate that digital literacy not only enhances technical abilities but also strengthens critical thinking skills, ethical awareness, and understanding of privacy protection, all of which directly contribute to reducing aggressive behavior in digital spaces. The review also highlights that school-based digital literacy programs, parental involvement, the use of educational technologies, and regulatory support such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) positively influence adolescents' resilience against online threats. However, challenges such as unequal infrastructure readiness, varying literacy levels, and limited intensive supervision remain

obstacles to optimal implementation. Overall, the study concludes that collaboration among educational institutions, families, the government, and digital platform providers serves as a fundamental basis for creating a safe, ethical, and supportive digital ecosystem for adolescent development.

Keywords: *Navigation, Digital literacy, Cyberbullying, Adolescents*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of social media over the past decade has fundamentally reshaped how adolescents interact, learn, and construct their personal identities in digital spaces. Easy access to mobile devices, increasingly affordable technology, and the presence of boundless online platforms have made digital engagement a core element of adolescents' daily routines. However, these rapid advancements also introduce complex threats, one of the most concerning being cyberbullying, which manifests not only as hostile comments but also through the unauthorized circulation of personal information, identity impersonation, and persistent online harassment. These harmful behaviors can seriously disrupt adolescents' psychological well-being, making cyberbullying an urgent digital social problem that demands structured and comprehensive preventive strategies.

Amid the intensifying landscape of digital interactions, empirical evidence shows a consistent rise in cyberbullying cases that parallels increased technology use among young people. Saragih et al. (2024) reported that higher device penetration contributes to the escalation of online harassment in schools due to weakened social control within digital environments. Their findings are in line with Livingstone et al. (2017), who argue that children and adolescents are more exposed to digital risks when their digital literacy skills remain low and when they receive insufficient adult guidance. Similarly, Smahel et al. (2020) emphasize that adolescents lacking knowledge about protecting digital identities or responding to online aggression are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. These studies collectively underscore that cyberbullying is not merely deviant online behavior but a serious threat to adolescents' socio-emotional development.

Given these challenges, digital literacy has emerged as a central competence that equips adolescents with the ability to navigate risks in online environments. Yonaevy et al. (2024) highlight that digital literacy education plays a critical role in developing ethical awareness, information security practices, and responsible online behavior among young users. This argument aligns with the work of Rizki and Iskandar (2025), who assert that ethical values—not only technical command should form the foundation of comprehensive digital literacy programs. Furthermore, Anggraeni and Wahyuningrum (2023) demonstrate that online resilience as a core component of digital literacy is negatively correlated with cyberbullying, showing that adolescents with stronger digital resilience are less likely to engage in online aggression. Taken together, these findings confirm that strengthening digital literacy offers a significant protective mechanism that can help break the cycle of cyberbullying.

Despite strong evidence supporting the importance of digital literacy, its implementation in Indonesia continues to face several structural and practical obstacles. Many schools still struggle with limited infrastructure, such as unstable internet networks or insufficient availability of digital devices, making it difficult to deliver digital literacy education effectively. Hadi et al. (2025) warn that low levels of digital legal literacy further exacerbate the problem because many adolescents remain unaware of the legal implications tied to online harassment and misuse of digital platforms. In addition, many parents are unprepared to supervise or guide their children in navigating digital risks, producing inconsistencies in digital character development between home and school environments. These challenges illustrate a

clear gap between the ideal objectives of digital literacy implementation and the realities faced by educational institutions and families.

Addressing this persistent gap, existing research rarely examines the discrepancy between normative expectations of digital literacy implementation and the actual conditions encountered by Indonesian adolescents in their school and family settings. Many studies emphasize the need for digital competency yet overlook infrastructural limitations, uneven legal literacy, and inconsistent parental guidance that undermine the effectiveness of prevention programs. This gap between theoretical ideals and practical realities shows that current strategies remain insufficiently comprehensive to respond to adolescents' rapidly evolving digital risk landscape. Therefore, the present study proposes a more holistic approach by integrating multiple dimensions of digital literacy—school-based programs, family support, legal awareness, and psychological resilience—into a unified framework aimed at preventing cyberbullying among adolescents. By adopting this integrated perspective, the study contributes to the development of safer, more ethical, and more resilient digital practices that better support the well-being of the younger generation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a literature review approach by systematically gathering research articles from three major academic databases, namely Google Scholar, ERIC, and ScienceDirect. These databases were selected because they provide broad access to reputable national and international publications relevant to cyberbullying, digital literacy, and adolescent online behavior. The literature search used a combination of predetermined keywords such as “cyberbullying among adolescents,” “digital literacy education,” “online risk behavior,” “youth digital safety,” and “digital ethics,” each connected through Boolean operators (AND/OR) to refine the search results. To ensure the relevance and recency of the data, only studies published between 2015 and 2025 were considered during the initial selection process.

The search process initially identified 140 articles, which were screened through titles, abstracts, and thematic relevance to determine their suitability for the research objectives. Inclusion criteria consisted of studies related to adolescent cyberbullying, digital literacy, or digital risk prevention, full-text availability, and publication in reputable journals. After this screening stage, 46 articles met the eligibility criteria and were further evaluated for methodological rigor, conceptual clarity, and alignment with the research focus. Through this more rigorous appraisal, 22 core articles were selected and subjected to deeper analysis to ensure the validity and reliability of the synthesis.

The selected articles were analyzed using content analysis to identify recurring patterns, thematic relationships, and conceptual linkages across the literature. The analysis process involved several steps, including full-text reading, open coding to extract essential information, thematic grouping based on emerging categories, and synthesizing the findings into coherent narrative themes. To strengthen the analytical process, a data extraction matrix served as the main instrument to organize key concepts, methodological attributes, and research findings. The resulting synthesis enabled the researcher to construct an integrated explanation of the relationship between digital literacy, adolescent online behavior, and cyberbullying prevention.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The literature review of 22 selected articles reveals that cyberbullying among adolescents follows consistent patterns in terms of its forms, psychological impacts, and influencing factors. Content analysis indicates that low levels of digital literacy particularly in

online safety practices, communication ethics, and the management of digital footprints are closely linked to the increased risk of adolescents becoming either victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying. The reviewed studies also emphasize that strengthening digital literacy through education, parental involvement, and school-based interventions can effectively reduce aggressive behavior in online environments.

In addition, the reviewed literature shows that cyberbullying is not solely related to technology but is strongly shaped by psychosocial factors such as self-control, family communication, friendship quality, and emotional attachment to parents. The consequences experienced by victims extend beyond emotional distress and include physical effects, reduced learning motivation, and diminished academic performance. A summary of the relationship between digital literacy components and their roles in preventing cyberbullying is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Relationship Between Digital Literacy Aspects and Cyberbullying Prevention

No	Digital Literacy Aspect	Impact on Cyberbullying Prevention	Description
1	Digital safety and privacy	Reduces vulnerability to data misuse	Adolescents better understand risks of sharing sensitive information
2	Digital communication ethics	Lowers aggressive comments and harmful interactions	Encourages responsible and respectful online engagement
3	Critical thinking skills	Helps identify online manipulation and provocation	Reduces involvement in digital conflicts
4	Self-control in social media use	Limits impulsive behavior	Adolescents are less likely to react aggressively
5	Understanding digital footprints	Builds awareness of long-term online consequences	Adolescents become more cautious when posting content
6	Parental supervision	Strengthens positive gadget use behaviors	Prevents exposure to risky online environments
7	School digital literacy programs	Enhances online safety knowledge and skills	Students learn how to report threats and avoid online risks

Beyond identifying the relationship between digital literacy competencies and cyberbullying prevention, this review also synthesizes findings from 22 national and international studies across four major thematic areas. These include the forms and dynamics of cyberbullying among adolescents, its psychological, social, and academic impacts, the role of digital literacy in prevention, and the contributions of schools, families, and policy interventions. The synthesis highlights how these interconnected themes collectively shape adolescents' vulnerability and resistance to online risks. A summary of the reviewed studies is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Summary of Literature Based on Thematic Focus

No	Reference	Research Focus	Key Findings
1	Livingstone et al. (2017)	Internet risks and opportunities	Adolescents face significant risks without adequate digital literacy.
2	Smahel et al. (2020)	Online behavior survey in Europe	Cyberbullying increases alongside digital media use.
3	Hasanah, Rahmah, & Sari (2023)	Preventing the psychological impacts of cyberbullying on adolescents	Strengthening digital literacy, awareness programs, and parental guidance effectively reduces the psychological impacts of cyberbullying on adolescents.
4	Sarumaha (2020)	Digital literacy among youth	Digital literacy plays a key role in preventing cyberbullying.
5	Abubakar et al. (2024)	Digital literacy empowerment	Community education reduces misuse of social media.
6	Priana et al. (2025)	Digital literacy outreach	Training heightens Gen-Z awareness of online risks.
7	Malihah & Alfiasari (2018)	Self-control & family communication	Low self-control increases cyberbullying tendencies.
8	Rangkuti et al. (2024)	Social media addiction and adolescent mental health	Social media addiction among adolescents is significantly associated with poorer mental health outcomes.
9	Bitar et al. (2023)	Association between cyberbullying perpetration and adolescents' mental health & suicidal ideation	Cyberbullying perpetration significantly associated with higher anxiety, depression, and increased odds of suicidal ideation among adolescents.
10	Riswanto & Marsinun (2020)	Adolescent cyberbullying behaviors	Teens often engage in verbal attacks on social media.
11	Bower (2019)	Digital learning theory	Technology influences interaction and learning patterns.
12	Chrisnatalia dan Nurlam (2025)	Cyberbullying perpetrators deskriptif perilaku pelaku di media sosial	Menunjukkan bahwa anonimity/social media mendorong pelaku menggunakan akun palsu untuk melakukan cyberbullying.
13	Maifianti et al. (2021)	Digital literacy & ethics	Strong digital ethics reduce online aggression.
14	Ridho et al. (2024)	Anti-cyberbullying programs	PELITA program improved students' digital awareness.

No	Reference	Research Focus	Key Findings
15	Menesini & Salmivalli (2017)	Bullying interventions	Structured school interventions reduce bullying.
16	Palupi & Norhabiba (2021)	Digital literacy education	Improves students' understanding of online safety.
17	Salsabila & Sumarwan (2024)	Political cyberbullying	Social bonds influence digital aggression behaviors.
18	Astuti & Prasetya (2023)	Parent-child attachment	Secure attachment prevents cyberbullying behavior.
19	Yonaevy et al. (2024)	Digital literacy & mental health	Programs reduce anxiety caused by online harassment.
20	Afralia et al. (2024)	Causes of cyberbullying	Internal and external factors influence prevalence.
21	Yemima (2023)	Emotional impacts	Victims experience high stress and insecurity.
22	Hananto et al. (2024)	Safe-internet education	Training reduces irresponsible social media use.

Based on the synthesis of these 22 articles, the findings consistently show that adolescent cyberbullying is shaped by a combination of digital, social, and psychological factors. Nearly all studies emphasize the importance of digital literacy as a central preventive foundation, while parental guidance and school-based interventions serve as essential complementary supports. Therefore, this literature review concludes that strengthening digital literacy is the most strategic and adaptive approach for addressing the growing prevalence of cyberbullying among adolescents in today's technology-driven era.

Discussion

The findings of this literature review reinforce the understanding that cyberbullying among adolescents demonstrates similar patterns across national and international research contexts. These patterns can be interpreted through a sociotechnical lens, wherein shared digital infrastructures shape parallel behavioral trajectories despite cultural differences. Recent bibliometric evidence shows that forms of online aggression such as harassment, denigration, exclusion, and impersonation remain the most prevalent patterns globally, indicating that cyberbullying has evolved into a widespread behavioral phenomenon embedded within shared digital ecosystems (Singh et al., 2024). Complementary longitudinal evidence further demonstrates that repeated harassment, power imbalance, and identity-based online attacks consistently predict declines in adolescents' emotional and cognitive well-being across time, suggesting that these behaviors follow stable trajectories across cultural contexts (Vieta-Piferrer et al., 2024). Collectively, these insights highlight that cyberbullying must be understood not

merely as isolated misconduct but as an emergent outcome of broader technological, social, and psychological interactions.

Research examining the impact of cyberbullying continues to demonstrate substantial psychological, social, and academic consequences for adolescents. When examined through developmental psychology, these consequences reflect significant disruptions in emotional regulation, identity formation, and peer-related adjustment, which are all critical tasks during adolescence. Recent empirical findings show that cyberbullying is strongly associated with major depressive disorders among adolescent females, revealing that online victimization can escalate into severe mental-health outcomes (Noor et al., 2025). This pattern is consistent with broader meta-analytic evidence demonstrating that both traditional bullying and cyberbullying significantly increase the likelihood of depression, anxiety, and other psychological difficulties in children and adolescents (Li et al., 2022). The convergence between such international evidence and local studies such as Yemima (2023) indicates that the emotional toll of cyberbullying is universally experienced, underscoring the importance of preventive strategies that address both behavioral manifestations and underlying psychological vulnerabilities.

The causal analysis across reviewed studies shows that low digital literacy is a crucial factor amplifying adolescents' risk of engaging in or becoming victims of cyberbullying. Using self-regulation theory as a framework, deficiencies in digital literacy can be understood as weakening adolescents' ability to evaluate online risks, control impulses, and filter unreliable information. Research by Sarumaha (2020) and Maifianti et al. (2021) identifies weaknesses in ethical digital communication, information filtering, and privacy awareness as triggers for impulsive or harmful online behavior. These findings align with the conclusions of Malihah and Alfiasari (2018), who emphasize that self-control and family communication strongly influence how adolescents behave in digital settings. Consequently, digital literacy should be conceptualized as a multidimensional competence encompassing cognitive, ethical, and socio-emotional capacities rather than solely technical proficiency.

The reviewed literature also highlights the critical influence of family support in shaping adolescents' online behavior and resilience against harmful interactions. Drawing from ecological systems theory, the family functions as a core microsystem that directly shapes adolescents' emotional responses and coping strategies when navigating digital environments. Findings from Astuti and Prasetya (2023) demonstrate that secure parental attachment functions as a psychological buffer that protects adolescents from impulsive or aggressive tendencies in digital interactions. Complementary evidence from Gunawan and Putra (2024) further indicates that meaningful parental involvement reduces exposure to negative online content and enhances adolescents' ability to assess digital risks. These patterns collectively reinforce the importance of positioning families as active co-regulators of adolescents' digital experiences.

Schools also emerge as key environments that foster digital literacy and prevent cyberbullying through structured educational interventions. From the perspective of character education, school-based digital literacy programs not only strengthen technical competencies but also cultivate ethical reasoning and reflective judgment related to online interactions. Studies by Ridho et al. (2024), Hananto et al. (2024), and Priana et al. (2025) confirm that school-based digital literacy programs strengthen students' awareness of online ethics, digital safety, and social responsibility. Such programs enable students to critically reflect on the consequences of their digital actions and to recognize early signs of harmful behavior. Therefore, embedding holistic digital literacy frameworks into school curricula is essential for reducing the prevalence of online aggression.

From a policy standpoint, the literature suggests that legal frameworks such as Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law provide foundational

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protection but remain insufficient when applied in isolation. Policy implementation theory explains that regulations are only effective when supported by compatible social, institutional, and educational capacities. Nadila Salsabila and Sumarwan (2024) show that aggressive patterns in digital political interactions persist despite regulatory boundaries, suggesting that punitive legal measures alone cannot address deep-rooted social and psychological drivers of cyberbullying. In line with Menesini and Salmivalli (2017), effective policy must therefore combine legal safeguards with preventive, systemic interventions at school and community levels. This interpretation indicates that national strategies must harmonize legal structures with educational empowerment to produce sustainable outcomes.

Another important theme emerging from this review is the central role of digital resilience as a protective factor in preventing cyberbullying. Within resilience theory, digital resilience encompasses the ability not only to avoid harmful interactions but also to recover from them in adaptive and constructive ways. Research by Bower (2019) and Yonaevy et al. (2024) indicates that adolescents who possess stronger emotional regulation and risk assessment skills are more capable of managing negative online interactions. These findings support the idea that digital literacy programs must incorporate emotional and psychological training components to develop coping strategies alongside technical skills. As a result, holistic interventions should embed social-emotional learning into digital education to strengthen adolescents' psychological capacity when facing online adversity.

Overall, the discussion highlights that cyberbullying among adolescents must be interpreted as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by digital competencies, psychological functioning, family dynamics, school environments, and policy structures. When these determinants are analyzed together, it becomes evident that educational-based prevention provides a more sustainable pathway than punitive legal responses alone. The convergence of findings across national and international studies suggests that preventive digital education is more powerful and sustainable than punitive legal approaches when dealing with adolescent digital behavior. Therefore, effective cyberbullying prevention requires collaboration among schools, families, policymakers, and communities to cultivate digitally skilled, ethical, responsible, and emotionally resilient young citizens.

CONCLUSION

This literature review affirms that cyberbullying among adolescents is a multidimensional phenomenon arising from the interplay of digital literacy deficits, socio-emotional vulnerabilities, and the dynamic nature of online interaction. The synthesis of findings indicates that digital literacy functions not only as a technical competence but as a broader set of ethical, cognitive, and emotional skills that determine how adolescents manage risks in digital environments. These insights strengthen the argument presented in the introduction that the root of cyberbullying lies in the gap between adolescents' technological exposure and their preparedness to navigate digital spaces responsibly. Thus, improving digital literacy is not merely an educational priority but a foundational requirement for fostering safer online ecosystems.

The review also reveals that families and schools hold a strategic role in nurturing adolescents' digital competencies and resilience. Supportive communication patterns, meaningful parental involvement, and emotionally secure home environments emerge as protective factors that reduce susceptibility to harmful online behavior. Likewise, school-based initiatives that incorporate ethical digital education and character-building elements contribute significantly to shaping students' online decision-making. These collective findings reinforce the expectation that cyberbullying prevention must adopt an integrated approach in which

educational institutions and families work collaboratively to guide adolescents toward healthier digital engagement.

Beyond summarizing current conditions, this study offers implications for future research and practice by emphasizing the need to expand digital literacy programs into more comprehensive, context-sensitive frameworks. Future studies may explore how culturally responsive digital literacy interventions, cross-sectoral policy collaborations, and technology-based preventive tools such as AI-assisted monitoring or adaptive digital citizenship modules can further mitigate cyberbullying risks. Practically, the findings point to the importance of developing school–family partnership models and enhancing policy infrastructures that align legal protection with preventive education. Through continued innovation and coordinated action, stakeholders can strengthen adolescents’ capacity to become ethical, critical, and resilient digital citizens capable of navigating an increasingly complex online world.

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