

Patterns of Verbal Aggression on Social Media Platform X in Indonesia: A Thematic Analysis of User Motivations and Emotional Responses

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ABSTRACT

Cyber aggression has become a growing concern in digital spaces due to its negative impact on mental health, as repeated exposure to aggressive online interactions can contribute to anxiety, depression, emotional distress, and low self-esteem. Unlike face-to-face communication, cyber aggression often occurs publicly and continuously, increasing psychological pressure on individuals involved. Social media platforms such as X provide interactive environments where anonymity, rapid information exchange, and polarized discussions may encourage verbal aggression. This study aims to identify patterns of verbal aggression on the social media platform X in Indonesia by examining its causes, emotional responses, and behavioral motives. Using a qualitative approach with thematic analysis, data were collected from 391 active users of the platform. These factors interact with users' emotional states, leading to impulsive and hostile responses. Many perpetrators reported experiencing a sense of emotional relief after engaging in verbal aggression, indicating that such behavior may function as a maladaptive coping strategy for emotional regulation. Verbal aggression was primarily motivated by emotional expression and social criticism. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening digital literacy and ethical communication to foster healthier and more respectful online interactions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cyber aggression has been widely recognized as a psychological risk factor that may lead to mental health problems, including anxiety, depression, and decreased self-esteem, particularly when individuals are repeatedly exposed to hostile interactions in digital environments [1]. From a psychological perspective, continuous exposure to online hostility functions as a chronic stressor that can disrupt emotional regulation, impair social functioning, and increase psychological vulnerability. Alongside these concerns, the rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the way individuals access information, making communication faster, broader, and more immediate. Advances in technology, including artificial intelligence and 5G networks, have significantly reshaped patterns of interaction, work, and everyday social engagement.

Data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association indicate that in 2023, Indonesia recorded 221,563,479 internet users out of a total population of 287,696,200, resulting in an internet penetration rate of 79.5%, an increase of 1.4% compared to the previous year [2]. This extensive digital penetration not only expands access to information but also intensifies social interaction in online spaces. Within these environments, psychological processes such as emotional expression, identity defense, and social comparison frequently occur. As a result, digital platforms increasingly become contexts in which aggressive communication behaviors may emerge and escalate.

One of the most widely used social media platforms globally is X (formerly Twitter). According to Katadata, Indonesia has approximately 27 million active users of X, positioning the country as the fourth-largest user base worldwide [3]. X is also ranked among the five most frequently accessed social media platforms in Indonesia [4]. Functioning simultaneously as a medium for information exchange and social networking, X allows users to express opinions, share experiences, and engage in public discourse [5]. However, specific platform characteristics, such as anonymity, rapid dissemination of messages, and limited contextual cues, may increase the likelihood of hostile communication. In practice, X often becomes a space where hate speech, insults, provocation, and verbal attacks are expressed, particularly in response to political differences, social identities, or sensitive public issues.

Verbal aggression represents a distinct form of aggressive behavior expressed through language with the intention of causing psychological harm. Pyzalski [6] defines verbal aggression as a tendency to attack others through words in order to inflict harm. Similarly, Myers [7] conceptualizes aggression as physical or verbal actions, whether intentional or unintentional, that aim to injure or damage others. Baron and Richardson [8] further describe aggression as behavior directed toward individuals who are motivated to avoid such treatment. Berkowitz [9] emphasizes that aggressive behavior often arises as a response to frustration or negative emotional states.

To provide a comprehensive psychological explanation for this phenomenon, the present study adopts the General Aggression Model (GAM) proposed by Anderson and Bushman [10]. GAM conceptualizes aggression as the result of dynamic interactions between personal factors, such as emotions, impulsivity, and attitudes, and situational factors, including provocation, social context, and media exposure. These interactions influence internal states (affect, cognition, and arousal), which subsequently shape behavioral outcomes. Within digital environments such as social media, verbal aggression can thus be understood as the product of heightened negative affect combined with situational cues that reduce social accountability and perceived consequences.

Consistent with this framework, Infante and Wigley [11] define verbal aggression as an individual's tendency to attack another person's character, beliefs, or personal attributes through speech with the intention to dominate, humiliate, or intimidate. This form of aggression may manifest through insults, name-calling, excessive criticism, sarcasm, or demeaning remarks. Rather than occurring as isolated incidents, verbal aggression often reflects a relatively stable communication pattern associated with maladaptive emotional regulation and ineffective interpersonal strategies [12]. Research by Levine et al. suggests that verbal aggression is frequently impulsive and motivated by the desire for immediate emotional release, with limited consideration of long-term consequences [13].

Although verbal aggression may serve as a temporary outlet for frustration, dissatisfaction, or insecurity, its psychological consequences are substantial. Victims of verbal aggression are at increased risk of emotional distress, lowered self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation [14]. From the perpetrator's

perspective, persistent engagement in verbally aggressive behavior can damage interpersonal relationships and intensify social conflict. Accordingly, understanding verbal aggression is essential not only for identifying its antecedents but also for developing effective prevention strategies and promoting healthier patterns of digital communication. As emphasized by Eliani et al. [15], aggressive behavior, including verbal aggression, is intended to cause psychological or physical harm and may result in emotional damage and broader social disruption.

In the context of rapid digital expansion, verbal aggression is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but has increasingly shifted into online environments. Expressions of group identity and social support, such as political affiliation or sports fandom, are now commonly articulated through social media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and X. However, strong group identification combined with online disinhibition often amplifies aggressive communication, resulting in racist remarks, insults, and hostile criticism directed toward opposing groups within digital communities [16].

Multiple factors contribute to the emergence of verbal aggression on social media. Internal factors include negative emotional states and difficulties in emotion regulation, while external factors encompass social, cultural, and environmental influences [15]. Fanaticism toward specific individuals or groups has also been identified as a significant trigger, particularly in highly polarized or competitive contexts [16]. Furthermore, the perceived freedom of expression and reduced social sanctions in online settings may contribute to the normalization of verbally aggressive behavior.

Despite the growing body of research on internet use and social media in Indonesia, empirical studies that specifically examine verbal aggression on platform X within the Indonesian cultural context remain limited. Existing research often addresses cyber aggression in general terms without exploring the psychological dynamics, emotional consequences, and subjective experiences of perpetrators. Moreover, few studies explicitly apply a theoretical framework such as the General Aggression Model to explain how personal and situational factors interact to produce verbal aggression in digital environments.

Therefore, this study aims to address this gap by systematically examining verbal aggression on social media X in Indonesia using a psychologically grounded framework. Guided by the General

Aggression Model, the study seeks to explore: (1) situational and emotional factors that trigger verbal aggression, (2) internal emotional responses experienced by perpetrators after engaging in verbal aggression, and (3) their expectations and perceptions following the aggressive act. Through this approach, the study contributes to a deeper theoretical and contextual understanding of verbal aggression in Indonesian digital spaces and provides a foundation for the development of more effective intervention and prevention strategies.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of 391 users of the social media platform X who were residing in Indonesia. The inclusion criteria encompassed both male and female users who actively used platform X and self-reported having engaged in verbal aggression during their online interactions. In this study, verbal aggression was operationally defined as the use of words, phrases, or statements intended to insult, demean, provoke, or psychologically harm other users, in line with the definitions proposed by Infante and Wigley [11] and Anderson and Bushman [10]. Only respondents who explicitly acknowledged engaging in such behavior were included in the final analysis.

Participants were drawn from various regions across Indonesia, enabling the study to capture a range of sociocultural contexts related to social media use. The final sample of 391 participants was obtained after a data screening process, during which responses that failed to meet the inclusion criteria or did not adequately address the research questions were excluded. Demographic characteristics of the participants, including gender distribution, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequencies of Gender

Gender	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Man	49	12.5%	12.5%
Woman	342	87.5%	100.0%

The participant pool was predominantly female, with 342 participants (87.5%), while 49 participants (12.5%) were male. This gender imbalance is likely attributable to the voluntary and self-selected nature of online survey participation. Accordingly, this

distribution is recognized as a limitation of the sampling process and should not be interpreted as reflecting the actual prevalence of verbal aggression behavior across genders.

Table 2. Frequencies of Account Type Used for Verbal Aggression on X

Account Type	Counts	% of Total	Cumulative %
Fake Account	173	44.2%	44.2%
Both	71	18.2%	62.4%
Real Account	147	37.6%	100.0%

Based on the data analysis, three primary categories emerged concerning the type of account used when engaging in verbal aggression. Most respondents (44.2%) reported using fake accounts, followed by those using real accounts (37.6%), while 18.2% indicated using both types of accounts. This pattern is consistent with previous findings on online disinhibition, which suggest that perceived anonymity can lower social constraints and facilitate the expression of aggressive behavior in digital environments.

2.2 Design

This study employed a qualitative research design using a survey method with open-ended questions. An inductive and reflexive thematic analysis approach was applied, enabling themes to emerge directly from participants' responses rather than being predetermined by the researchers [17]. This methodological choice is consistent with the exploratory nature of the study, which aims to capture perpetrators' subjective experiences and interpretations of verbal aggression, rather than to test predefined hypotheses.

RESEARCH FLOW DIAGRAM

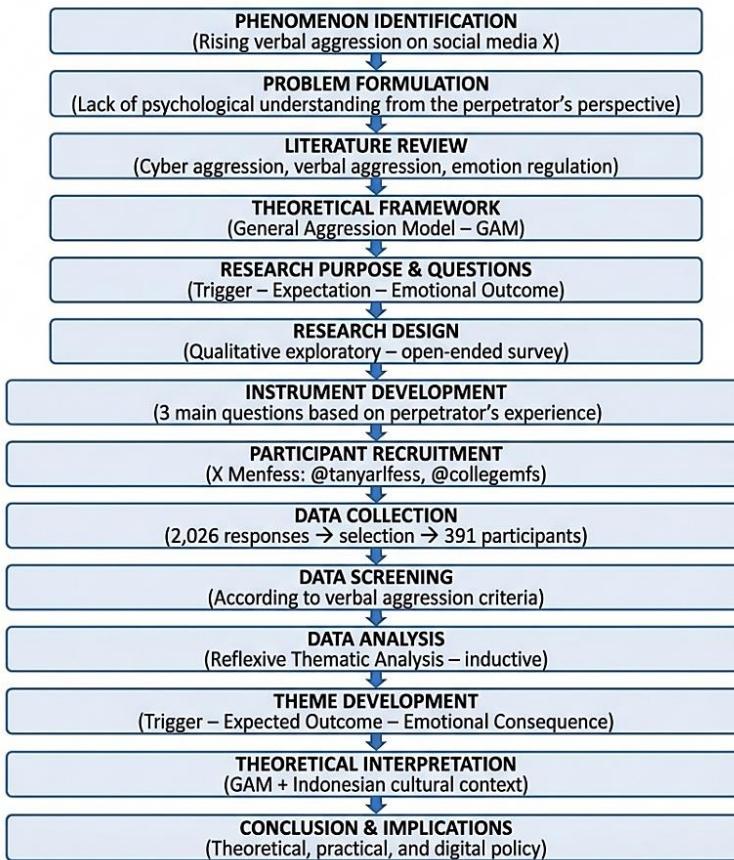


Figure 1. Research Flowchart Diagram

This study followed a systematic research process that began with the identification of the increasing phenomenon of verbal aggression on social media platform X. Based on this observation, the research problem was formulated to address the limited psychological understanding of verbal aggression from the perpetrator's perspective, an aspect that has received relatively little attention in previous studies. A comprehensive literature review was conducted to examine key concepts related to cyber aggression, verbal aggression, and emotion regulation, which were subsequently integrated into the General Aggression Model (GAM) as the theoretical framework guiding this study.

Guided by the GAM, the study aimed to explore the triggers of verbal aggression, the expectations underlying such behavior, and the

emotional outcomes experienced by perpetrators. A qualitative exploratory research design was employed using an open-ended online survey to capture participants' subjective experiences. The research instrument consisted of three open-ended questions developed to reflect perpetrators' lived experiences. The questionnaire included the following prompts: (1) *"Mention at least three situations that trigger this behavior."* (2) *"Mention at least three outcomes that you expect from this behavior."* and (3) *"How did you feel after doing it?"*

The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms. Participants were recruited through public "menfess" (mention-confession) accounts on platform X, including @tanyarlffess and @collegemfs, which function as anonymous message-sharing spaces widely used by Indonesian social media users. This recruitment strategy enabled broad outreach among active users; however, it also represents a convenience and self-selection sampling approach and may have introduced selection bias, as individuals who are more active or expressive online were more likely to participate.

A total of 2,026 responses were collected during a seven-day data collection period, from December 24 to December 31, 2024. A data screening process was conducted to identify respondents who explicitly acknowledged engaging in verbal aggression based on predefined criteria. Responses that were irrelevant, incomplete, or did not meet the operational definition of verbal aggression were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 391 participants. The selected data were analyzed using inductive reflexive thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and meanings within participants' narratives. Themes were developed around triggers, expected outcomes, and emotional consequences of verbal aggression, and the findings were interpreted using the General Aggression Model while taking the Indonesian cultural context into account. The study concludes by discussing theoretical contributions, practical implications, and recommendations for digital policy related to online verbal aggression.

2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using reflexive thematic analysis as articulated by Braun and Clarke, with an emphasis on meaning-making and researcher interpretation rather than frequency-based coding [18]. An inductive approach was adopted, allowing themes to

emerge directly from the data without the use of a predetermined coding framework. Although the General Aggression Model (GAM) informed the broader theoretical interpretation of the findings, it was not applied as a deductive template during the coding process.

The analytical process involved several iterative stages. First, participant responses were organized according to each guiding question. This was followed by an initial familiarization phase, during which the data were read repeatedly to gain an overall sense of participants' experiences. Next, initial codes were generated to capture salient behavioral and emotional expressions evident in the responses. These codes were then grouped based on semantic similarity, leading to the construction of broader themes that reflected recurring patterns of verbal aggression. Finally, the themes were reviewed and refined to ensure internal coherence and close alignment with the original data.

Coding was conducted by the primary researcher, with ongoing revisiting of the dataset to maintain internal consistency across coding decisions. In line with the reflexive nature of this analytical approach, inter-rater reliability was not calculated. Instead, analytical rigor was supported through transparent documentation of coding decisions and repeated verification of the correspondence between themes and participant responses.

Microsoft Excel was used to facilitate data organization and coding management. Jamovi version 2.3.28 was employed solely for descriptive statistical analyses, such as calculating frequencies and percentages of demographic variables and generating supporting quantitative summaries, rather than for qualitative coding.

2.4 Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained electronically prior to completion of the questionnaire. Participants were clearly informed about the purpose of the study, the anonymous nature of their responses, and their right to withdraw from participation at any stage without any negative consequences.

No personally identifiable information was collected, and all data were anonymized throughout the processes of analysis and reporting. The study protocol was reviewed and approved by the relevant institutional ethics committee, thereby ensuring compliance with established ethical standards for psychological research.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. *Situations that trigger aggressive behavior on social media X*

The thematic analysis revealed six core situations that trigger verbal aggressive behavior among users of the social media platform X in Indonesia. These themes were developed through an iterative coding process that involved initial open coding of participants' narratives, followed by axial coding to group conceptually related codes, and culminating in selective coding to form broader thematic categories. The distribution of these thematic categories is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Situations Triggering Verbal Aggression on Social Media X

situations Behavior	Triggering (n)	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Fake News and Misinformation	10	2.6	2.6	
Emotional and Psychological Instability	54	13.8	16.4	
Difficulties of Daily Life	42	10.7	27.1	
Disagreement and Differences of Opinion	144	36.8	63.9	
Social and Ethical Violations	56	14.3	78.3	
Provocation and Conflict	85	21.7	100.0	

As presented in Table 3, disagreements and differences of opinion emerged as the most dominant trigger of verbal aggression, accounting for 36.8% of the responses. These disagreements were primarily related to political discourse, ideological differences, government policies, and contested public narratives. Participants frequently described their aggressive responses as defensive or corrective in nature, particularly when confronting opinions that were perceived as misleading, inaccurate, or morally unacceptable.

“Because someone incited a riot, I responded, and also because I disagree with their statement, which has been proven false.”
(S35)

This pattern suggests that verbal aggression is often rationalized as a form of moral positioning or symbolic resistance rather than as impulsive hostility. In this context, aggression appears to be embedded in ongoing processes of meaning-making within contested online public spaces.

The second most prominent category, provocation and conflict (21.7%), reflects interactional dynamics that are characteristic of social media environments. Antagonistic communication, fandom rivalries, and identity-based provocations were frequently described as escalating rapidly, particularly through reciprocal exchanges. Provocation often acted as a catalyst that intensified pre-existing emotional states, indicating that verbal aggression in these situations emerged through interaction rather than from a single, isolated trigger.

Social and ethical violations (14.3), including harassment, discrimination, fraud, and acts of violence, also prompted aggressive responses. In these cases, participants framed their behavior as expressions of moral outrage or justified retaliation against perceived injustice. Aggressive responses were often positioned as efforts to defend social norms or protect vulnerable individuals or groups.

In contrast, the themes of emotional and psychological instability (13.8%) and difficulties of daily life (10.7%) highlight the spillover of offline stress into online behavior. Participants described using social media as an emotional outlet when experiencing mood dysregulation, interpersonal difficulties, or accumulated daily stress. Verbal aggression in these contexts was often portrayed as a means of emotional release rather than as a deliberate attempt to harm others.

Overall, these findings indicate that verbal aggression on social media platform X is multidimensional. Rather than being driven by a single factor, such behavior appears to emerge from the interaction between social conflict, moral evaluation, and individual emotional vulnerability within digital communication spaces.

3.2. Expected outcomes of aggressive behavior on social media X

Participants articulated five primary expectations following their engagement in verbal aggression. These aggressive acts were not merely described as spontaneous emotional outbursts; rather, they were often associated with anticipated psychological or social outcomes. An overview of these expectation categories is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Expected Outcomes of Verbal Aggression on Social Media X

Expected Outcomes	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Self-Awareness and Personal Reflection	91	23.3	23.3
Emotional Expression and Relief	161	41.3	64.6
Providing Social Criticism and Education	39	10.0	74.6
Preventing Negative Behavior through Social Sanctions	46	11.8	86.4
Attitude Change and Social Responsibility	54	13.8	100.0

The most dominant expectation identified was emotional expression and relief, accounting for 41.3% of participant responses. Participants commonly described verbal aggression as a means of releasing accumulated emotions, reducing internal tension, and restoring a sense of emotional balance. This finding is consistent with the concept of emotion-focused coping, in which individuals prioritize immediate affect regulation over consideration of longer-term interpersonal consequences.

In addition to emotional relief, a substantial proportion of participants reported expectations related to self-awareness and personal reflection (23.3%) as well as attitude change and social responsibility (13.8%). These responses suggest that verbal aggression is not always perceived by perpetrators as purely destructive. Instead, it is sometimes framed as a communicative strategy intended to stimulate reflection, either within oneself or in others.

Notably, expectations related to social sanctions and social criticism indicate that some participants viewed verbal aggression as a legitimate means of enforcing social norms. This perception points to a blurring of boundaries between moral regulation and verbal

hostility, particularly within online environments where formal accountability mechanisms are limited or inconsistently applied.

3.3. *Feelings experienced after committing verbal aggression on social media X.*

Table 5. Feelings Experienced After Engaging in Verbal Aggression on Social Media X

Feelings Experienced	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative (%)
Emotional Distress	37	9.5	9.5
Guilt	46	11.8	21.2
Catharsis	233	59.6	80.8
Neutral	71	18.2	99.0
Enthusiasm	4	1.0	100.0

The most salient emotional outcome reported by participants was catharsis (59.6%), which was characterized by feelings of relief, calmness, and emotional release. This finding supports participants' earlier expectations of emotional relief and further underscores the role of social media as a perceived outlet for emotional expression.

Nevertheless, the co-occurrence of guilt (11.8%) and emotional distress (9.5%) points to the presence of psychological tension rather than a uniformly positive emotional outcome. While verbal aggression may temporarily reduce emotional arousal, it can simultaneously evoke post-action regret, moral discomfort, and cognitive dissonance. This emotional ambivalence challenges overly simplistic interpretations of aggression as purely cathartic or therapeutic.

Moreover, the presence of neutral emotional responses (18.2%) suggests a degree of normalization of aggressive communication, in which such behavior is experienced as emotionally inconsequential or routine. This pattern indicates that repeated exposure to hostile interactions in digital environments may contribute to the normalization of verbal aggression within everyday online discourse.

Discussion

This study provides a nuanced understanding of verbal aggression on social media platform X in Indonesia by demonstrating how situational triggers, behavioral expectations, and emotional outcomes are dynamically interconnected. Consistent with prior studies on online aggression and cyber aggression [18], [19], [20],

emotional dysregulation and social conflict emerged as central drivers of aggressive behavior in digital environments. Similar to findings by Levine et al. [13] and Berkowitz [9], participants described verbal aggression as a response to frustration, negative affect, and interpersonal provocation.

However, the present findings also extend and diverge from previous research in several important ways. While earlier studies often conceptualize verbal aggression as impulsive or reactive behavior driven by momentary emotional arousal, the current study reveals that verbal aggression on social media X is frequently intentional, morally framed, and oriented toward anticipated outcomes. Participants did not merely report acting out of uncontrolled emotion; instead, many described explicit expectations such as emotional relief, moral correction, social education, and the enforcement of social norms. This outcome-oriented framing has been less visible in prior quantitative studies that primarily rely on standardized aggression scales and focus on frequency or intensity rather than subjective meaning.

These differences may be explained by methodological and contextual factors. First, unlike many previous studies that examine cyber aggression from the perspective of victims or use closed-ended survey instruments, this study employed an exploratory qualitative design focused on self-identified perpetrators. The use of open-ended questions allowed participants to articulate their own justifications, moral reasoning, and emotional interpretations of aggressive behavior, thereby capturing dimensions that may be obscured in deductive or scale-based approaches. Second, the cultural context of Indonesia, characterized by strong collective values and heightened sensitivity to social harmony, may amplify moral reactions to perceived norm violations. In this context, verbal aggression may be rationalized as a form of moral regulation or social control rather than solely as personal hostility.

The coexistence of catharsis and guilt further distinguishes the present findings from classical interpretations of catharsis theory. While traditional catharsis models suggest that aggressive expression reduces negative affect, the current results indicate a more ambivalent emotional trajectory. Participants frequently reported emotional relief alongside guilt, regret, or emotional discomfort, suggesting that verbal aggression may function as a short-term emotion regulation strategy

with longer-term psychological costs. This finding aligns with critical perspectives that question the therapeutic value of aggressive expression, particularly in digital environments where interactions are public, persistent, and subject to moral evaluation by broader audiences.

From the perspective of the General Aggression Model (GAM), the findings support the model's emphasis on the interaction between personal factors (e.g., emotional instability, daily stress) and situational inputs (e.g., provocation, ideological conflict, perceived injustice). However, the results also suggest that applications of GAM in online contexts may benefit from incorporating additional components, such as moral justification and audience-oriented performativity, which appear central to verbal aggression on social media. In online spaces, aggressive behavior is not only a reaction to stimuli but also a performative act shaped by perceived audiences, social identities, and moral positioning.

The study contributes theoretically by offering an integrative experiential sequence linking triggers, expectations, and emotional outcomes, rather than treating these elements as isolated variables. Practically, the findings indicate that interventions aimed at reducing verbal aggression should move beyond content moderation alone. Programs that enhance emotional regulation literacy, moral reasoning in digital communication, and constructive conflict navigation may be more effective in addressing the psychological roots of online aggression. At the platform-design level, features that encourage reflective pauses, contextual framing, or de-escalation prompts may help reduce impulsive aggression while preserving space for critical expression.

Taken together, these findings underscore that verbal aggression on social media is a psychologically complex phenomenon shaped by emotional processes, social interaction patterns, and moral self-positioning. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing more nuanced theoretical models and ethically informed interventions in digital communication environments.

4. CONCLUSION

This study does not aim to provide a fully representative account of verbal aggression on social media in Indonesia. Rather, it offers an exploratory qualitative examination of how verbal aggression is experienced, interpreted, and rationalized by self-identified

perpetrators on social media platform X. Through thematic analysis of open-ended responses, the study addresses its research objectives by identifying (1) situational triggers, (2) expected outcomes, and (3) emotional consequences associated with verbally aggressive behavior in online interactions.

The findings indicate that verbal aggression on social media X emerges from the interaction between situational stressors and emotional regulation processes, rather than from isolated individual traits alone. Disagreements and differences of opinion, provocation and conflict, and perceived social or ethical violations function as situational triggers. At the same time, emotional and psychological instability and difficulties in daily life act as internal amplifiers that lower the threshold for aggressive expression. This pattern aligns with existing models of online aggression while also extending them by illustrating how offline emotional strain and online social dynamics intersect in shaping aggressive digital behavior.

Importantly, the study reveals a psychological tension in perpetrators' experiences. Verbal aggression is simultaneously framed as a means of emotional release (catharsis) and accompanied by post-aggression guilt or emotional ambivalence. This coexistence challenges overly simplistic interpretations of online aggression as either purely maladaptive or purely instrumental. Instead, the findings suggest that verbal aggression may function as a short-term emotional regulation strategy that carries longer-term psychological costs. These insights refine the application of the General Aggression Model (GAM) in digital contexts by emphasizing the roles of self-justification and moral rationalization in sustaining aggressive online behavior.

From a cyberpsychology perspective, this study contributes an integrative understanding of verbal aggression by linking triggers, motives, and emotional outcomes into a coherent experiential sequence, rather than treating them as separate phenomena. This perspective underscores that online verbal aggression is not merely a communicative act but a psychologically meaningful behavior shaped by emotional needs, social identities, and perceived moral positioning within digital environments.

4.1 Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. First, the use of a non-random, self-selected sample recruited through Menfess accounts introduces selection bias and limits the

generalizability of the findings. Participants who chose to respond may have had stronger opinions or greater engagement with online conflict, which could shape the themes that emerged. Second, the marked gender imbalance, with female participants comprising 87.5% of the sample, may have influenced the prominence of certain themes, particularly those related to emotional expression, moral reasoning, and self-reflection in aggressive communication. As a result, the findings should be interpreted with caution when considering broader gender patterns of online aggression.

Third, verbal aggression was identified solely through self-reported accounts without external validation, which raises the possibility of social desirability bias, retrospective rationalization, or selective disclosure of intent. Participants may have downplayed harmful motivations or reframed aggressive behavior in morally acceptable terms. In addition, the use of an open-ended survey limited the ability to capture the full ethical and contextual complexity of specific interactional episodes, including power relations, conversational history, and audience effects that may shape aggressive exchanges online.

Future research could address these limitations by incorporating multiple perspectives, including those of victims, bystanders, and platform moderators, in order to capture the relational and interactive dynamics of verbal aggression more comprehensively. Mixed-methods approaches are also recommended, particularly designs that integrate qualitative thematic analysis with validated measures of aggression, emotion regulation, or moral disengagement. Such approaches would allow for stronger theoretical integration and offer greater potential for examining causal pathways. Furthermore, cross-platform comparative studies would be valuable in exploring how differing platform affordances, such as anonymity, algorithmic visibility, or moderation norms, shape patterns of aggressive communication in distinct ways.

From an applied perspective, the findings suggest that efforts to address online verbal aggression should extend beyond content moderation alone. Interventions that promote emotional regulation literacy, conflict navigation skills, and digital moral reasoning may be more effective in reducing harmful interactions. Psychological interventions could be designed to help users recognize emotional escalation, distinguish between criticism and aggression, and develop alternative strategies for expressing disagreement or dissent. At the

level of platform policy and design, features that encourage reflective pauses, provide contextual framing, or introduce de-escalation prompts may help reduce impulsive aggression while preserving space for legitimate expression.

Overall, this study contributes to the field of cyberpsychology and digital communication research by demonstrating that verbal aggression on social media is a psychologically complex phenomenon. It is rooted not only in emotional processes but also in social interaction patterns and moral self-positioning, underscoring the need for more nuanced theoretical models and ethically informed interventions in digital environments.

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