

Emotional Detachment and Cyberbullying Among Generation Z in Samarinda City

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Keywords: This study examines emotional detachment and cyberbullying among Generation Z students in Samarinda and their dynamics in digital interactions. It uses a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, beginning with a quantitative phase (questionnaires) followed by a qualitative phase (in-depth interviews). The quantitative sample included 150 students from three schools, with data collected using a 1–5 Likert scale and analyzed descriptively. The qualitative phase involved 30 informants and thematic analysis. Results show emotional detachment at a high level (mean 3.55) and cyberbullying at a moderate level (mean 2.99). Qualitative findings reveal that emotional detachment does not directly increase cyberbullying but creates a gap between empathy and action. Students generally recognize the harm of cyberbullying but tend to remain passive, avoid conflict, or not intervene. The study concludes that cyberbullying is influenced not only by individual behavior but also by emotional distance, digital communication patterns, low social courage, and limited collective response. It recommends strengthening empathy-based digital literacy, self-disclosure, social courage, and a healthy communication culture in schools.

Keywords: Emotional detachment; Cyberbullying; Generation Z; mixed methods; Samarinda.

PENDAHULUAN

The advancement of digital technology has transformed how adolescents build relationships, express themselves, resolve conflicts, and perceive others. Generation Z, raised in a highly digital environment, engages extensively with social media, messaging apps, online games, and virtual communities, shaping their interaction patterns, learning approaches, and social development (Swandhina & Maulana, 2022). Social interaction has shifted from physical spaces to digital environments that are faster, more open, and harder to control.

While digital platforms offer benefits such as easier access to information, broader social networks, and faster communication, they also create risks, particularly cyberbullying harmful behavior conducted through digital media. This includes mocking, exclusion, harassment, and humiliation via comments, messages, or posts. Willard (2007) identified forms such as flaming,

harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing, exclusion, and cyberstalking, while Moreno et al. (2019) emphasized its serious impact on adolescents' psychological well-being and social safety.

Cyberbullying has become a critical issue, especially as social media is deeply embedded in adolescents' lives. In Indonesia, 45% of adolescents have experienced cyberbullying (Akmal, 2024), and its prevalence is reinforced by the routine use of digital platforms (Putri, 2022). Thus, cyberbullying is not merely a technological issue but also relates to mental health, social relationships, and communication culture in educational settings.

This study focuses on students in Samarinda, a growing urban and educational center in East Kalimantan. Research was conducted at SMAN 16 Samarinda, SMKN 4 Samarinda, and SMKN 1 Samarinda to capture diverse patterns of digital interaction. Cyberbullying is examined through potential behaviors such as harmful comments, ridicule, exclusion from group chats, and dissemination of humiliating content, explored through questionnaires, interviews, and observations.

The study adopts Willard's (2007) framework to identify cyberbullying behaviors and highlights the role of peer dynamics in shaping school climate (Şahin & Ayaz-Alkaya, 2023). It also applies the Online Disinhibition Effect (Suler, 2004), which explains how anonymity and lack of direct interaction increase impulsive and aggressive behavior online. Additionally, the bystander effect (Darley & Latané, 1968) explains why witnesses often fail to intervene.

A key variable in this study is emotional detachment, defined as the tendency to maintain emotional distance, suppress feelings, and limit emotional involvement. Adolescents with emotional detachment may struggle with trust, self-disclosure, and empathy. This aligns with findings that self-awareness is linked to self-concealment among Generation Z (Astuti et al., 2025).

To explain this, the study uses Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which suggests that early emotional bonds influence individuals' ability to form secure and empathetic relationships. Insecure attachment may lead to avoidance, emotional suppression, and reduced sensitivity to others, which can contribute to cyberbullying behavior.

Research shows that emotional factors such as poor emotion regulation (Jiang et al., 2020; Mujidin et al., 2023), low emotional intelligence (Méndez et al., 2020), and lack of empathy (Segura et al., 2020) are associated with cyberbullying. Prior studies also link cyberbullying to mental health issues, including depression (Fiqih et al., 2021; Varela et al., 2022; Humairah & Komalasari, 2024), and other problematic behaviors (Estévez et al., 2022).

Family and social environments also play a role. Authoritarian parenting (Akbar & Fatah, 2022), parental influence (Febriati et al., 2025), and moral identity (Panggabean et al., 2022) contribute to bullying behavior. Character education, including religious values (Sakoan, 2024) and traditional social activities (Kuswanto et al., 2022), is important in prevention.

This study differs from previous research by positioning emotional detachment as the independent variable and cyberbullying as the dependent variable, using Bowlby (1969) and Willard (2007) as theoretical foundations. It employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis with qualitative insights into students' experiences, communication patterns, and school responses.

The study argues that cyberbullying should be understood as a socio-digital behavior influenced by emotional conditions, not just technology use. School interventions often focus on rules and monitoring but may overlook emotional factors. Students with high emotional detachment may be less empathetic and more likely to normalize harmful behavior. This concern is reinforced by increasing psychological vulnerability among youth (Fauzi & Tarigan, 2023; Harahap & Sampurna, 2024; Pasaribu, 2025).

The novelty of this study lies in integrating emotional detachment, Attachment Theory, and cyberbullying within a mixed-methods framework, focusing on students in Samarinda. It aims to broaden cyberbullying research by incorporating emotional distance and attachment quality.

Finally, this study hypothesizes that higher emotional detachment is associated with higher levels of cyberbullying behavior. It seeks to analyze this relationship and explore the forms, causes, and dynamics of cyberbullying among students. The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to social psychology and digital behavior, and practically to developing school-based prevention strategies emphasizing empathy, emotional connection, and digital literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Generation Z and Digital Behavior

Generation Z is an age cohort who has grown up in a digital environment; thus, their social activities, communication, and self-identity formation largely take place through social media, messaging applications, online games, and virtual communities. These characteristics afford Generation Z a high degree of closeness to technology, while simultaneously exposing them to socio-psychological risks arising from digital interaction. Fauzi and Tarigan (2023) explained that Generation Z is often associated with the term “strawberry generation”, referring to a generation that has grown up in socially more open digital circumstances yet faces challenges in coping with emotional and social pressures. Astuti, Rachmawati, and Mumpuni (2025) further demonstrated that Generation Z exhibits certain tendencies in terms of self-awareness and self-concealment, which may be related to the ways in which they present or conceal their personal conditions within social relationships.

Emotional Detachment

Emotional detachment can be understood as an individual's tendency to maintain emotional distance, limit self-disclosure, restrain the expression of feelings, avoid emotional dependency, and refrain from deep involvement in the affective experiences of others. Individuals with emotional detachment do not necessarily lack emotions; rather, they tend to limit the ways in which they display, share, and respond to emotions within social relationships. In adolescent life, emotional detachment may manifest through behaviors such as suppressing feelings, feeling uncomfortable disclosing personal problems, finding it difficult to trust others, withdrawing when facing pressure, and avoiding excessively deep emotional closeness. The primary theory relevant to explaining emotional detachment is Attachment Theory, as developed by John Bowlby (1969). Bowlby explained that an individual's patterns of emotional attachment are formed through relationships with significant figures and influence the way a person develops a sense of security, trust, openness, closeness, and emotional responsiveness in social relationships. Individuals with secure attachment tend to be more capable of building relationships that are open, stable, and responsive. Conversely, individuals with insecure attachment may exhibit avoidant tendencies, self-concealment, difficulty trusting others, and the maintenance of emotional distance. In this study, emotional detachment is positioned as the independent variable because the tendency to maintain emotional distance may influence the way students perceive the feelings of others in both social and digital interactions. Students with high emotional detachment may experience difficulties in responding to others' emotions, including when their actions cause negative consequences for peers. Gaudiino and Di Stefano (2023) and Huyghebaert-Zouaghi, Berjot, and Gillet (2022) demonstrated that detachment is associated with psychological well-being, particularly when individuals face emotional pressures and digital demands.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to behavior intended to hurt, attack, humiliate, threaten, or exclude others through digital media. Cyberbullying can occur through social media comments, private messages, posts, group chats, the dissemination of screenshots, fake accounts, and other forms of digital communication. Unlike conventional bullying, cyberbullying can take place without physical contact, can be perpetrated anonymously, can spread widely, and can leave a digital trail that prolongs the psychological impact on the victim. The concept of cyberbullying in this study draws on the work of Nancy E. Willard (2007). Willard categorized cyberbullying into several forms: flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking. Flaming refers to online arguments or harsh comments. Harassment involves the repeated sending of hurtful messages. Denigration is the dissemination of information intended to damage a person's reputation. Impersonation occurs when an individual uses another person's identity to harm the victim. Outing and trickery involve the disclosure of secrets or private information. Exclusion refers to the act of excluding someone from a digital group or conversation. Cyberstalking constitutes persistent acts of harassment or threats directed at the victim through digital media. Cyberbullying can also be explained through the Online Disinhibition Effect proposed by John Suler (2004). Suler explained that individuals may become bolder, more impulsive, more open, or more aggressive when in digital spaces due to anonymity, physical distance, the absence of direct eye contact, and weakened social control. This theory is important because it helps explain why individuals who might not dare to attack others in face-to-face settings may more readily engage in harsh comments, mockery, ridicule, or exclusion through social media and group chats.

Conceptual Framework

This study was commenced by observing the digital phenomenon among Generation Z in Samarinda, particularly students at SMAN 16, SMKN 4, and SMKN 1, which indicated a high dependence on social media interaction accompanied by the widespread prevalence of cyberbullying. Theoretically, this line of reasoning is grounded in Bowlby's Attachment Theory to examine the phenomenon of emotional detachment, Willard's Cyberbullying Theory, and Suler's Online Disinhibition Effect to explain aggressive behavior in cyberspace. The primary focus of the study lies in examining the variable of Emotional Detachment (X), with indicators of emotional distance, and the variable of Cyberbullying (Y), encompassing acts ranging from flaming to exclusion, both of which are presumed to have a significant positive relationship. The analysis was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, beginning with Phase 1: Quantitative Descriptive. In this phase, data were collected through questionnaires to statistically describe the levels of emotional detachment and the prevalence of cyberbullying among students, as well as to test the strength of the relationship between these variables. The quantitative findings were subsequently further explored through Phase 2: Qualitative, employing interviews and observations to investigate the reasons underlying students' emotional distancing behaviors and their digital communication patterns. Ultimately, all findings were integrated to achieve the research objective, namely to make a tangible contribution to schools in formulating cyberbullying prevention strategies grounded in the strengthening of empathy and the quality of social relationships.

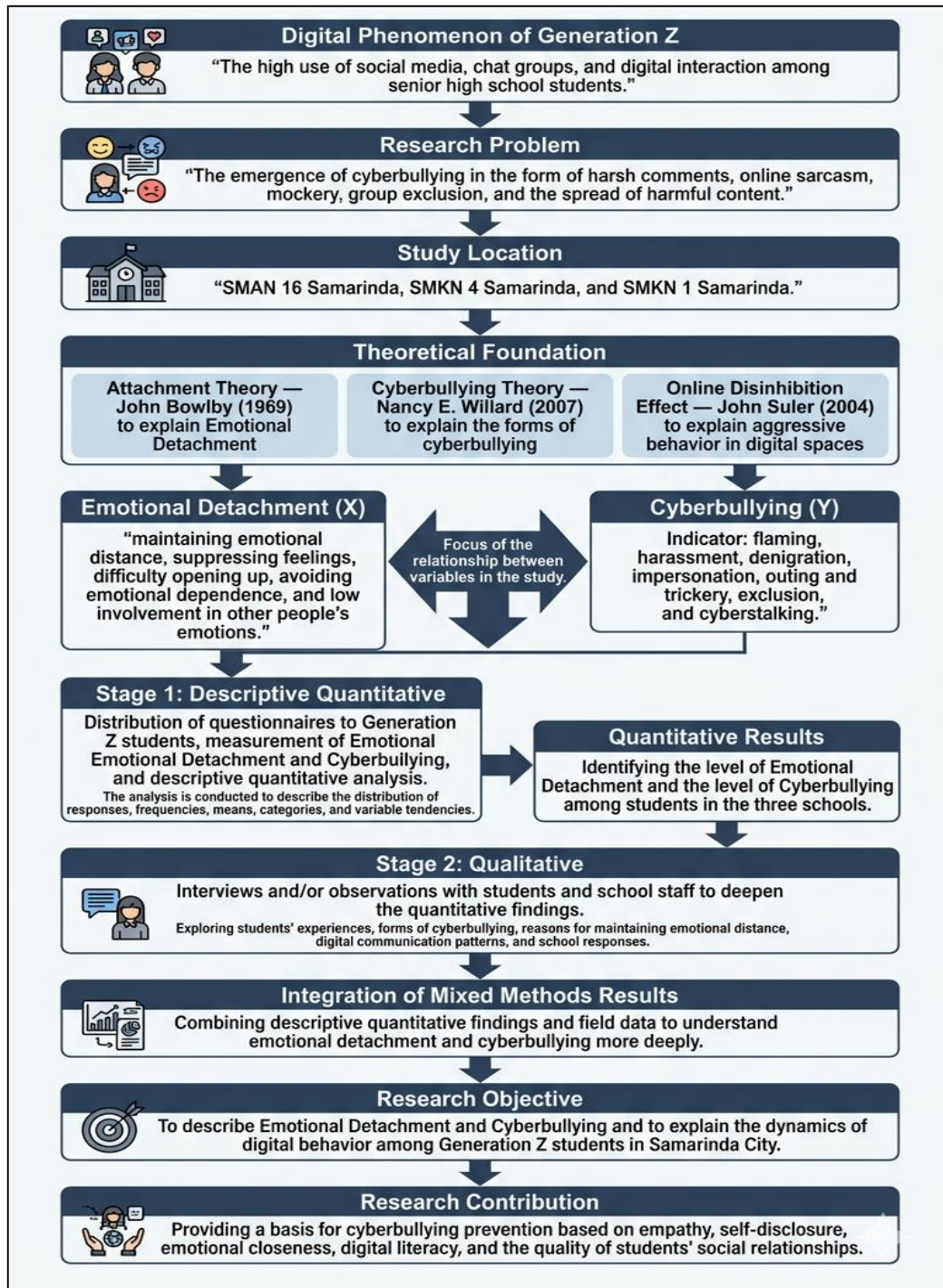


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a sequential explanatory design, beginning with a quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase to deepen the interpretation of findings. This approach was chosen to analyze the relationship between emotional detachment and cyberbullying both statistically and through students’ lived experiences. Sugiyono (2022) emphasizes that combining methods allows for a more comprehensive understanding through the integration of quantitative and qualitative data.

The research was conducted among Generation Z students at SMAN 16 Samarinda, SMKN 4 Samarinda, and SMKN 1 Samarinda. These schools were selected to represent both general and vocational high school environments, enabling a diverse view of students' social and digital interaction patterns. SMAN 16 reflects a general academic setting, while SMKN 4 and SMKN 1 represent vocational contexts characterized by intensive communication through classes, practical training, group work, student organizations, and digital group chats. The participants were 150 students selected through purposive sampling, based on criteria such as active enrollment, belonging to Generation Z, active use of social media or messaging applications, and willingness to participate.

Quantitative data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire with a 1–5 Likert scale to measure emotional detachment and cyberbullying. The qualitative phase involved in-depth interviews with 30 purposively selected informants to explore cyberbullying forms, digital interaction experiences, reasons for emotional distance, and school responses. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis following Clarke and Braun (2017), including coding, theme development, review, and interpretation. Data validity was ensured through triangulation by comparing questionnaire results, interview findings, and field data, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between emotional detachment and cyberbullying among Generation Z in Samarinda.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative results in this study were obtained through the distribution of questionnaires to 150 Generation Z students from three schools in Samarinda: SMAN 16 Samarinda, SMKN 4 Samarinda, and SMKN 1 Samarinda. Each school was represented by 50 respondents, ensuring a balanced number of respondents across each research site. Data collection was conducted using a closed-ended questionnaire instrument with a 1–5 Likert Scale, designed to measure two main variables: Emotional Detachment (X) and Cyberbullying (Y). The Emotional Detachment variable was measured to determine students' tendencies to maintain emotional distance, suppress feelings, limit self-disclosure, and avoid overly close emotional involvement. Meanwhile, the Cyberbullying variable was measured to determine students' behavioral tendencies in engaging in harsh comments, online mockery, digital ridicule, exclusion from groups, and other actions harmful to others through digital media.

Table 1 Research Respondent

No.	School	Total Respondent	Percentage
1	SMAN 16 Samarinda	50 students	33.33%
2	SMKN 4 Samarinda	50 students	33.33%
3	SMKN 1 Samarinda	50 students	33.33%
Total		150 students	100%

The data obtained from the questionnaire were subsequently analyzed using quantitative descriptive analysis. This analysis was employed to describe the response tendencies of the respondents through the calculation of frequencies, percentages, total scores, and mean values for each statement item. The results of this descriptive analysis provide an initial overview of the levels of Emotional Detachment and Cyberbullying among students across the three schools before

proceeding to the analysis of the relationship between the two variables. Accordingly, this section serves as the basis for determining whether students' tendency toward emotional distance falls within the low, moderate, or high category, as well as the level of cyberbullying tendency that emerges in students' digital interactions.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
X1.1 I tend to maintain emotional distance from others.	8	18	34	55	35	150	3.61
X1.2 I feel uncomfortable to share personal problems with others.	10	20	35	52	33	150	3.52
X1.3 I prefer to suppress my feelings rather than express them to others.	7	19	31	58	35	150	3.63
X1.4 I find it difficult to trust others in emotionally close relationships.	9	22	36	51	32	150	3.50
X1.5 I feel safer when not overly dependent on others emotionally.	6	17	38	56	33	150	3.62
X1.6 I tend to withdraw rather than seek support when under pressure.	11	25	37	49	28	150	3.39
X1.7 I often find it difficult to show emotional concern toward others.	8	21	33	54	34	150	3.57
X1.8 I feel there is no need to become too involved in other people's emotional problems.	10	18	36	53	33	150	3.54
X1.9 I tend to close myself off when relationships with others become too close.	7	20	35	55	33	150	3.58
X1.10 I am more comfortable solving problems on my own without involving other people's feelings.	9	23	34	52	32	150	3.50

Table 2 Responses for Emotional Detachment Variable (X)

The findings show that item X1.3 had the highest mean (3.63), indicating that the strongest tendency in Emotional Detachment is suppressing feelings rather than expressing them. This aligns with Attachment Theory by John Bowlby (1969), which explains that individuals with insecure attachment tend to limit emotional expression, self-disclosure, and openness in relationships. Statistically, this value falls within the high category (3.41–4.20), meaning most respondents agreed with this behavior.

In contrast, the lowest item was X1.6 (mean = 3.39), reflecting the tendency to withdraw under pressure, which falls within the moderate category (2.61–3.40). This suggests that although respondents tend to maintain emotional distance, not all consistently withdraw in stressful situations. Consistent with Bowlby (1969), individuals may respond differently to pressure, including withdrawal or seeking support.

Overall, the Emotional Detachment variable had a mean of 3.55, categorized as high. This indicates that respondents generally exhibit emotional distance, suppress feelings, limit self-disclosure, and avoid close emotional involvement. The small difference between the highest and lowest means (0.24) suggests consistent responses across items. From Bowlby’s (1969) perspective, this reflects a relatively stable emotional pattern in how respondents manage closeness and emotional relationships.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total	Mean
Y1.1 I have written harsh comments directed at others on social media.	18	32	40	38	22	150	3.09
Y1.2 I have replied to messages or comments with hurtful words.	20	34	39	36	21	150	3.03
Y1.3 I have participated in spreading jokes or ridicule about someone online.	17	31	41	39	22	150	3.12
Y1.4 I have mocked or belittled someone through online posts or comments.	24	38	40	31	17	150	2.86
Y1.5 I have shared embarrassing information about someone without considering their feelings.	22	36	39	34	19	150	2.95
Y1.6 I have participated in excluding someone from an online group or conversation.	16	30	42	40	22	150	3.15
Y1.7 I have used a social media account to indirectly mock a particular person.	19	35	40	37	19	150	3.01
Y1.8 I have created or shared content that could humiliate someone else online.	25	39	38	31	17	150	2.84
Y1.9 I have persistently sent messages that made another person feel harassed.	23	37	41	32	17	150	2.89
Y1.10 I have joined in laughing at or supporting the act of mocking someone on social media.	21	35	39	36	19	150	2.98

Tabel 3 Responses for Cyberbullying Variable (Y)

The results show that item Y1.6 had the highest mean (3.15), indicating that the most prominent form of cyberbullying was exclusion, such as removing or ignoring someone in online groups. This finding aligns with Nancy E. Willard (2007), who defines exclusion as a key form of cyberbullying involving social ostracism in digital interactions. Statistically, this value falls within the moderate category (2.61–3.40), indicating that such behavior exists but is not dominant.

The lowest item was Y1.8 (mean = 2.84), referring to creating or sharing humiliating content. This relates to denigration and outing and trickery in Willard's (2007) framework, which involve damaging someone's reputation through digital content. Although lower, this behavior still appears within respondents' tendencies.

Overall, the Cyberbullying (Y) variable had a mean of 2.99, categorized as moderate. This supports Willard's (2007) Cyberbullying Theory, which highlights multiple forms of harmful digital behavior, including mockery, exclusion, and harassment. The small difference between the highest and lowest means (0.31) indicates relatively consistent responses, suggesting that cyberbullying is distributed across various behaviors, with exclusion being the most prominent.

The instrument used a 1–5 Likert Scale, with category intervals calculated as $(5 - 1) / 5 = 0.80$.

Table 4 Interpretation of the Likert Scale's Mean

Interval Range	Category
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low
1.81 – 2.60	Low
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate
3.41 – 4.20	High
4.21 – 5.00	Very High

Table 5 Descriptive Analysis of the Variables

Variable	Total Item	Mean	Interval	Category
Emotional Detachment (X)	10	3.55	3.41 – 4.20	High
Cyberbullying (Y)	10	2.99	2.61 – 3.40	Moderate

Based on these interval criteria, the Emotional Detachment (X) variable, which consisted of 10 items, obtained a mean value of 3.55. This value falls within the interval of 3.41–4.20, thus belonging to the high category. This finding indicates that the respondents exhibited a fairly strong tendency toward emotional detachment. This tendency was evident through attitudes of maintaining emotional distance, restraining the expression of feelings, limiting self-disclosure, and avoiding overly close emotional involvement with others. Meanwhile, the Cyberbullying (Y) variable, which also consisted of 10 items, obtained a mean value of 2.99. This value falls within the interval of 2.61–3.40, thus belonging to the moderate category. These results indicate that the tendency toward cyberbullying among the respondents was at a moderate level. This means that behaviors such as writing harsh comments, directing mockery online, spreading ridicule, excluding someone in digital spaces, or sharing content that may harm others were still found among the respondents, though their intensity had not yet reached a high category.

The results of the descriptive analysis showed that Emotional Detachment (X) was in the high category, while Cyberbullying (Y) was in the moderate category. This condition indicates that the respondents tended to maintain strong emotional distance in their social relationships, while the tendency to engage in cyberbullying still emerged at a moderate level. Overall, these results suggest

that the emotional aspect of individuals may constitute an important factor that warrants attention in understanding digital interaction behavior, particularly among Generation Z in Samarinda.

Qualitative Findings

The findings confirm that the relationship between emotional detachment and cyberbullying among Generation Z is complex and non-linear. Although emotional detachment was high (mean = 3.55), cyberbullying remained at a moderate level (mean = 2.99). This indicates that emotional detachment does not directly lead to aggressive behavior, but rather shapes how adolescents respond to digital interactions, often in passive and emotionally restrained ways. This can be explained by the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004), where anonymity, invisibility, and the absence of nonverbal cues reduce emotional engagement. Although adolescents may possess empathy, they often fail to express it through action. This is reinforced by Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which suggests that individuals with insecure attachment tend to maintain emotional distance as a self-protective strategy in complex digital environments.

Interview findings reveal a clear gap between empathy and action, particularly among bystanders. While students reported feeling concern when witnessing cyberbullying, most chose not to intervene to avoid conflict or maintain personal comfort. This suggests that emotional detachment contributes to low social courage in digital spaces. As a result, cyberbullying persists not only due to perpetrators, but also due to collective inaction, leading to its normalization in everyday communication.

These findings also indicate that formal regulations, such as the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE), have not been fully effective, as legal values are not well internalized in adolescents' daily digital practices. Students rarely consider legal consequences when engaging on social media, highlighting a gap between normative regulations and actual behavior. Therefore, purely repressive policy approaches are insufficient and must be complemented by educational strategies addressing cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

Furthermore, the study highlights weak emotional support and low collective intervention within school environments. Although empathy exists, the lack of action reflects limited social solidarity. This aligns with the bystander effect (Darley & Latané, 1968), where individuals are less likely to act in group settings, a tendency amplified in anonymous and large-scale digital environments. It also supports cyberbullying theory (Willard, 2007), which emphasizes that such behavior thrives in permissive environments with weak social control.

Overall, cyberbullying among Generation Z is shaped not only by individual factors but also by digital communication structures, weak policy internalization, and limited social support. Emotional detachment widens the gap between empathy and action, fostering passive responses to harmful behavior. Therefore, a multidisciplinary approach is needed, integrating communication science, governance, and social development, through empathy-based digital literacy, stronger educational roles in building healthy communication cultures, and policies that promote collective awareness and social responsibility.

Discussion

The qualitative findings in this study were used to deepen the interpretation of quantitative results obtained from 150 Generation Z students at SMAN 16 Samarinda, SMKN 4 Samarinda, and SMKN 1 Samarinda, with 50 respondents from each school and 30 students involved in in-depth interviews. Quantitative analysis showed that Emotional Detachment (X) was in the high category (mean = 3.55), while Cyberbullying (Y) was in the moderate category (mean = 2.99). This indicates that students tend to maintain emotional distance, suppress feelings, and limit self-disclosure;

however, this does not directly translate into high levels of cyberbullying. Instead, emotional detachment is more reflected in passive, restrained, and less open patterns of digital interaction.

These findings align with Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969), which posits that emotional attachment influences trust, openness, and closeness in relationships. The high level of emotional detachment, particularly the strongest item, “I prefer to suppress my feelings rather than express them to others” (mean = 3.63), suggests a tendency toward insecure attachment, where individuals are less comfortable expressing emotional needs. Interview data support this, showing that students prefer silence, avoid personal discussions, and limit involvement in others’ emotional issues. This reflects not a lack of empathy, but a restriction in emotional expression, consistent with Astuti, Rachmawati, and Mumpuni (2025) on self-awareness and self-concealment among Generation Z.

For cyberbullying, the overall mean (2.99) indicates moderate levels, with exclusion being the most common form (“I have participated in excluding someone from an online group or conversation,” mean = 3.15). This aligns with Willard’s (2007) framework, which includes exclusion as a key form of cyberbullying. The findings suggest that cyberbullying is more often expressed through exclusion, mockery, and hurtful communication rather than overtly aggressive acts.

Interviews reveal that such behaviors are often normalized and not perceived as serious. Students frequently view exclusion, ignoring messages, or joking at others’ expense as part of peer dynamics. This can be explained by the Online Disinhibition Effect (Suler, 2004), where anonymity, invisibility, and lack of direct feedback reduce awareness of emotional consequences, making harmful behavior seem ordinary.

The relationship between emotional detachment and cyberbullying is not linear. Despite high emotional detachment, cyberbullying remains moderate, suggesting that emotional detachment contributes more to passive responses than active aggression. Students may recognize harmful behavior but choose not to intervene, support victims, or report incidents.

This pattern is consistent with the bystander effect (Darley & Latané, 1968), where individuals are less likely to act in group settings due to diffused responsibility. In digital environments, this effect is amplified by large audiences and unclear accountability. Students with high emotional detachment are more likely to remain passive, avoid conflict, or feel disengaged from responsibility.

These findings also reflect Generation Z characteristics. Fauzi and Tarigan (2023) describe this generation as facing emotional and social pressures within open digital environments. In this study, students often maintained emotional distance and avoided involvement in online conflicts. While not always perpetrators, they contribute to cyberbullying ecosystems through silence, observation, or passive participation.

Consistent with prior research, emotional factors play a key role. Emotion regulation (Jiang et al., 2020; Mujidin et al., 2023), emotional intelligence (Méndez et al., 2020), and empathy (Segura et al., 2020) are all linked to cyberbullying. In this study, empathy was present but insufficient to drive active intervention.

Cyberbullying is also influenced by moral and social factors. Panggabean, Hastuti, and Herawati (2022) highlight the role of moral identity, yet this study shows that moral awareness does not always lead to action. Social norms, fear, and the desire to maintain peer acceptance often inhibit students from responding to cyberbullying, indicating that it is a cultural issue within digital school environments.

Furthermore, formal regulations appear insufficiently internalized. Students often do not consider ethical or legal consequences, especially when harmful behavior is perceived as joking or

routine interaction. This reveals a gap between formal norms and everyday digital practices. Therefore, prevention strategies must go beyond punishment, emphasizing digital literacy, empathy development, ethical communication, and social courage.

Overall, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings shows that high emotional detachment does not directly increase cyberbullying but fosters passivity, limited emotional engagement, and weak responses to harmful behavior. Drawing on Bowlby (1969), Willard (2007), and Suler (2004), cyberbullying among Generation Z in Samarinda is shaped by emotional attachment patterns, limited empathy expression, group norms, and weak social control in digital spaces. These findings highlight the need for school-based interventions that strengthen empathy, self-disclosure, emotional connection, and collective responsibility in digital communication.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that emotional detachment and cyberbullying among Generation Z in Samarinda have a complex relationship, particularly within the dynamics of digital interaction among secondary school students. The quantitative results based on 150 respondents from SMAN 16 Samarinda, SMKN 4 Samarinda, and SMKN 1 Samarinda showed that emotional detachment was in the high category with a mean value of 3.55, while cyberbullying was in the moderate category with a mean value of 2.99. These findings indicate that students tend to maintain emotional distance, suppress feelings, limit self-disclosure, and avoid overly close emotional involvement; however, this tendency does not directly result in high levels of cyberbullying behavior. The qualitative findings further clarify that emotional detachment manifests more in the form of passive attitudes, conflict avoidance, and low social courage when students witness cyberbullying in digital spaces. Students do not necessarily lose empathy for victims, yet such empathy is often not translated into concrete action, such as reprimanding the perpetrator, assisting the victim, or reporting the incident to school authorities. Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of Attachment Theory in explaining emotional detachment, Willard's concept of cyberbullying in understanding forms of aggressive digital behavior, and the Online Disinhibition Effect in interpreting why negative behavior emerges more readily in digital spaces. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a foundation for schools to design cyberbullying prevention programs that more directly address the emotional, social, and behavioral dimensions of students, rather than being based solely on rules or sanctions.

Future research is recommended to expand the research sites to include a greater number of schools, both public and private, so that the findings can provide a broader representation of emotional detachment and cyberbullying among Generation Z. Subsequent studies may also employ a larger number of respondents and involve different educational levels, such as junior high school, senior high school, vocational school, or higher education institutions, so that the dynamics of cyberbullying can be compared based on age and the psychological developmental stages of students. Future research may also incorporate additional variables that potentially influence cyberbullying, such as empathy, emotion regulation, moral disengagement, self-control, intensity of social media use, parenting styles, peer support, and school climate. These variables are important for explaining in greater depth why some students are able to refrain from cyberbullying behavior, while others tend to be passive or become involved in negative behavior in digital spaces. Furthermore, subsequent research may employ a longitudinal design to examine changes in emotional detachment and cyberbullying over a specific period. Such an approach is important because adolescents' digital behavior may change along with their age, social experiences, social media use, and school interventions. Experimental research or intervention-based programs may also be conducted to test the effectiveness of empathy training, digital literacy programs, group

counseling, or character education in reducing the tendency toward cyberbullying. Future research is also recommended to explore more deeply the perspectives of teachers, parents, school counselors, and peers. By involving a wider range of stakeholders, the study of cyberbullying will not only center on students' experiences but will also be able to explain how the family and school environments shape the culture of digital communication. Such an approach will strengthen the understanding that cyberbullying prevention requires collaboration among students, schools, families, and the digital community.

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