

The Moderating Role of Empathy in the Relationship Between Fanaticism and Cyberbullying Among Adolescent K-pop Fans on Social Media

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is an aggressive act committed through the internet that has a negative impact on individuals. This phenomenon is often associated with the fanaticism of K-pop fans towards their idols, as seen in online disputes or *fanwar*. Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of others, is hypothesized to moderate this relationship. This study aimed to determine the role of empathy in the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior tendencies among adolescent K-pop fans. A quantitative method was employed, using Hayes Process Model 1 and quadratic regression analysis on 217 respondents aged 12–23 who were K-pop fans and users of social media platform X. The results showed that empathy significantly moderated the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying tendencies among adolescent K-pop fans, with a significant moderation index (int_1) of -2.094 ($p < .05$). Additionally, both fanaticism and empathy exhibited a curvilinear relationship, collectively accounting for 66% of the variance in cyberbullying behavior. Specifically, fanaticism had a 38.16% larger partial effect on cyberbullying compared to empathy.

Abstrak

Perundungan siber merupakan tindakan agresif yang dilakukan melalui internet yang berdampak negatif pada individu. Fenomena ini sering dikaitkan dengan fanatisme penggemar K-pop terhadap idola mereka, seperti yang terlihat dalam pertikaian daring atau *fanwar*. Empati, kemampuan untuk memahami dan berbagi perasaan orang lain, dihipotesiskan untuk memoderasi hubungan ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menentukan peran empati dalam hubungan antara fanatisme dan kecenderungan perilaku perundungan siber di kalangan penggemar K-pop remaja. Metode kuantitatif digunakan, menggunakan Hayes Process Model 1 dan analisis regresi kuadrat pada 217 responden berusia 12–23 tahun yang merupakan penggemar K-pop dan pengguna platform media sosial X. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa empati secara signifikan memoderasi hubungan antara fanatisme dan kecenderungan perundungan siber di kalangan penggemar K-pop remaja, dengan indeks moderasi signifikan (int_1) sebesar $-2,094$ ($p < 0,05$). Selain itu, baik fanatisme maupun empati menunjukkan hubungan kurvilinear, yang secara kolektif mencakup 66% varians dalam perilaku perundungan siber. Secara khusus, fanatisme memiliki efek parsial 38,16% lebih besar pada perundungan siber dibandingkan dengan empati.



INTRODUCTION

In its development, social media has had a major impact on the spread of Korean culture, popularly known as the “Korean Wave” in the global world, including Indonesia. One of the most popular prod-

ucts is Korean pop music, namely K-pop. This is proven by data from The Korean Foundation in 2022, which was conducted in 118 countries, including Indonesia. The survey results showed an increase in K-pop fans, reaching 156.6 million (Hastutik, 2022).

Fans are people with emotional beliefs about another person or something famous (Duffett, 2013). In Indonesia, social media X has become the platform of choice for K-pop fans to interact with each other because it is considered more flexible and interactive, especially with its distinctive feature, which is trending topics. This feature helps fan groups increase their idols' engagement (Highfield et al., 2013). The phenomenon of cyberbullying between K-pop fans that was trending on social media X in May 2022 was a fight between fans insulting each other to the point of threatening the victim (Izzati, 2022). The phenomenon of cyberbullying is similar and has also occurred in the X application, one of which was the hacking of social media accounts by spreading identities that caused victims to become depressed and rush to the hospital ("*Korban Cyber Bullying BLINK Sampai Masuk Rumah Sakit, Tagar #BlinksCyberBullying Jadi Trending*," 2022). Interestingly, the cyberbullying phenomenon above encouraged researchers to conduct initial observations on social media X from July to August 2022. From this observation, a negative phenomenon was found that led to cyberbullying actions carried out between fan groups, namely, fanwar. The fanwar often began with mutual insults and bad-mouthing between idols, which led to personal matters, such as bringing down each other, among fans using the X application. The negative actions carried out between fan groups are claimed to be a form of fans' love for their idols.

Initial interviews were conducted with several K-pop fans on October 16–18, 2022. The results showed that three out of five adolescent K-pop fans interviewed admitted to having made negative comments in the form of insults and insults to other K-pop artists, which then led to insulting other X application users in private. One of the insults thrown was, "Your face is the same as your idol; both of them are similar to *an**ng*." This initial interview aligned with the results of research conducted by Aviningtyas (2019), which found that fans often provoke each other by uploading harsh negative comments on their X social media accounts. The behavior that has been described leads to cyberbullying.

Willard (2007) describes seven forms of cyberbullying activities, including flaming (online arguments by sending angry messages), harassment (sending rude and offensive messages), denigration (posting fake news or hoaxes), impersonation (posing as someone else to damage that person's reputation), outing and trickery (deceiving or inciting others to spread someone's personal information), exclusion (intentionally removing someone from a group), and cyberstalking (acts of threatening or intimidating someone). So far, cyberbullying can easily occur because cyberbullying perpetrators feel safe because of the element of anonymity or hiding behind an account that does not necessarily use their real identity (Ningrum, 2019). Navarro et al. (2018) revealed several impacts experienced by victims of cyberbullying, including physical impacts, namely experiencing headaches and sleep disorders, then psychological and emotional impacts, namely feeling afraid, anxious and experiencing symptoms of depression, which ultimately have an impact on the victim's psychosocial, for example, experiencing a decrease in concentration levels or academic grades.

Cyberbullying in development is very vulnerable to occur in adolescence, as the use of smartphones has become a necessity (Jalal & Idris, 2021). In addition to smartphone use, theoretically, many factors can predict the emergence of cyberbullying behavior, some of which are (1) self-disclosure, where the level of openness of adolescents in the online realm can trigger an increase in cyberbullying in adolescents (Yeşilyurt et al., 2021); (2) loneliness, where cyberbullying can occur because it is based on psychological loneliness in individuals (Al Qudah et al., 2020); (3) self-esteem, where

individuals with low self-esteem can easily be triggered and carry out cyberbullying (Kowalski et al., 2019); and (4) Dark Triad personality, where these three sets of personalities positively increase cyberbullying behavior in adolescents (Safaria et al., 2020).

In addition, in reality, fanaticism also plays a role as a factor that can give rise to cyberbullying behavior. As conveyed by Kartono (2017), fanaticism is included in the internal factors that are important in stimulating the emergence of specific behaviors that lead to criminality in adolescents. Fanaticism is defined as a form of extraordinary individual devotion to an object. The meaning of devotion, in this case, is related to passion, intimacy, and extraordinary dedication. The object in question can refer to a brand, product, individual, television show, or other consumption activities (Chung et al., 2008). Marimaa (2011) revealed five characteristics of fanaticism, including having a firm belief from an unshakable understanding, imposing one's beliefs on others, having a dualistic worldview, devotion to a goal, and devotion that is more important than the object being devoted to. In their research, Eliani et al. (2018) revealed that fanaticism has a positive relationship with a person's actions to behave verbally aggressively on social media, such as cyberbullying.

Several factors, including attraction, empathy, longing, sense of belonging, and emulation, influence the sense of connectedness of fans with idols for fanatic individuals (Brooks, 2021). In this study, the author focuses on measuring the role of empathy as a skill that can encourage individuals to minimize conflicts, such as fanaticism. Baron et al. (2006) explain that empathy is an individual's ability to feel the emotional state of others, feel sympathy, try to solve problems, and take the perspective of others. Davis (1980) defines empathy as a person's reaction to another person's experience. This reaction consists of two responses: cognitive (the ability or tendency to understand the perspective of others) and emotional reactions. Davis (1980) states that empathy has four aspects: perspective-taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress.

Empathy allows individuals to connect with others and helps others respond to them with full attention and support. Further discussion of empathy, both cognitively and affectively, is closely related as a predictive factor for the emergence of cyberbullying actions (Del Rey et al., 2016). Primasari (2018) also explained that there is a negative relationship between empathy and cyberbullying, meaning that the higher the empathy an adolescent has, the lower their cyberbullying behavior. However, it is further explained in the study that increasing cognitive empathy can be a strategy to prevent cyberbullying in individuals, especially in the adolescent age range.

After comparing and looking at previous research on cyberbullying, which is still widely associated with emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, and self-control of an adolescent (Alfaruqy, 2023; Kristiawan & Soetjningsih, 2023), other studies explain the role of fanaticism and empathy on the tendency of cyberbullying behavior, but these studies were conducted separately, as research conducted by Del Rey et al. (2016) and Taniyo & Safaria (2020). Meanwhile, this study aims to determine the role of fanaticism in moderating the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop fans on social media X. With this original side, this study is assumed to be able to contribute to the development of science, especially in psychology. The results of this study are also expected to be used as an educational guide for adolescent K-pop fans to become wiser users of social media, especially social media X.

This study consists of major and minor hypotheses. The central hypothesis of this study is that empathy can be an important moderator for the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop fans, meaning that the presence of empathy as a moderator can play a role in weakening the relationship between the fanaticism of fans and cyberbullying behavior. The first minor hypothesis of this study is that fanaticism has a positive role in cyberbullying behavior in

adolescent K-pop fans, meaning that the higher the fanaticism, the higher the tendency to carry out cyberbullying. The second minor hypothesis is that empathy has a negative role in cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop fans, meaning that those with high empathy will avoid carrying out cyberbullying behavior.

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach with a non-experimental design. The type of research used is a cross-sectional study, namely, measurement or observation of independent variable data and dependent variables carried out simultaneously (Sugiyono, 2007). Furthermore, data obtained from related variables are analyzed to see the picture and assess the validity of reliability on the scale of each variable.

Population and Sample

Subject groups in a population must have the same characteristics and be differentiated from other subject groups (Azwar, 2016). The population of this study is a group of K-pop fans who use social media X throughout Indonesia. Furthermore, the sample collection technique used is the purposive sampling technique, namely the selection of subjects based on specific characteristics or considerations (Sugiyono, 2018), so that the subjects used in this study have the characteristics of all adolescent K-pop fans with an age limit of 12–23 years (Santrock, 2003).

Method of Collecting Data

The data collection method uses a psychological measuring instrument called a psychological scale. The measuring instrument in this study consists of three types of scales: fanaticism, empathy, and cyberbullying. The fanaticism scale used modifies the fanaticism scale compiled by Taniyo and Safaria (2020), which refers to the five characteristics of fanaticism according to Marimaa (2011): having a firm belief from an unshakable understanding, imposing one's beliefs on others, having a dualistic worldview, devotion to a goal, and devotion that is more important than the object being devoted to. The empathy scale modifies the measuring instrument based on four aspects of empathy, according to Davis (1980): perspective-taking, fantasy, empathic concern, and personal distress. This study modified the cyberbullying scale, which refers to seven forms of cyberbullying activities, by Willard (2007): flaming, harassment, denigration, impersonation, outing and trickery, exclusion, and cyberstalking. All items on the measuring instrument have been checked for feasibility through expert judgment (Azwar, 2015). The expert judgment of this study was conducted by five experts in their fields. Their judgment will be calculated based on Aiken's V formula (Azwar, 2021), with five score categories ranging from 1 (*very irrelevant*) to 5 (*very relevant*). When viewed in the number of judgment categories table, a value of .80–1 is obtained for one item. Furthermore, the reliability estimation of the measuring instrument in this study uses Cronbach's alpha formula with a coefficient limit of either larger than or equal to .75.

RESULTS

This study was conducted through Jotform, which was distributed through social media, specifically WhatsApp, X, and Instagram. Respondents were asked to complete the instruments online according to their situation. The trial's respondents were adolescent K-pop fans who were active users of the X application. The trial was conducted, and 61 respondents were the subjects of the trial according to the criteria.

Data Analysis

The data analysis technique in this study uses simple moderation data processing and analysis techniques, using the moderation process analysis: by Hayes Process Model 1 and quadratic regression analysis to analyze the relationship of one or more independent variables with one dependent variable in the minor hypothesis. Hypothesis testing in this data analysis technique includes assumption tests—normality, linearity, multicollinearity—and moderation interaction tests.

The scales given to expert judgment include a fanaticism scale containing 20 items, an empathy scale containing 24 items, and a cyberbullying scale containing 35 items. After receiving an assessment from expert judgment, the overall assessment score on each scale was analyzed using Aiken's V coefficient with a standard assessment for one item of .80 to 1, which can be seen in the table of rating categories. The fanaticism scale has seven failed items and 13 valid items, with the lowest value of .40 and the highest value of .90. The empathy scale has two failed items and 22 valid items, with the lowest value of .65 and the highest value of .95. Finally, the cyberbullying scale has four failed items and 31 valid items, with the lowest value of .60 and the highest value of .95.

The measuring instrument that has gone through the expert judgment stage is given to the research subjects in the trial stage. According to the criteria, 61 respondents filled out the trial scale. Furthermore, the results of the trial of the measuring instrument were analyzed through two stages: the abort stage and the adjustment stage. The trial analysis on the fanaticism scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of .802, with a corrected item correlation value between .310 and .601. In the fanaticism scale trial results, 11 items were left that could be used further, and two items were dropped. The empathy scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of .773 with a corrected item correlation value between .303 and .476. There were 13 valid items left, and nine items were dropped. Finally, the cyberbullying scale obtained a Cronbach's alpha value of .900 with a corrected item correlation value between .332 and .707 with 23 valid items remaining.

Descriptive analysis using empirical data is the initial step in providing an overview of the data obtained in the field. This analysis will display the minimum score, maximum score, average score (mean score), and standard deviation of each variable, namely fanaticism, empathy, and cyberbullying. The next step is categorization, which aims to determine the high, medium, and low scores obtained for each variable. Categorization of the fanaticism variable, there are 84 respondents of adolescent K-pop fans who have low fanaticism with a percentage of 38.7%, 111 respondents are in the medium category with a percentage of 51.2%, and as many as 22 respondents are in the high category with a percentage of 10.1%. So, on average, adolescent K-pop fans who are respondents to this study have a medium level of fanaticism categorization.

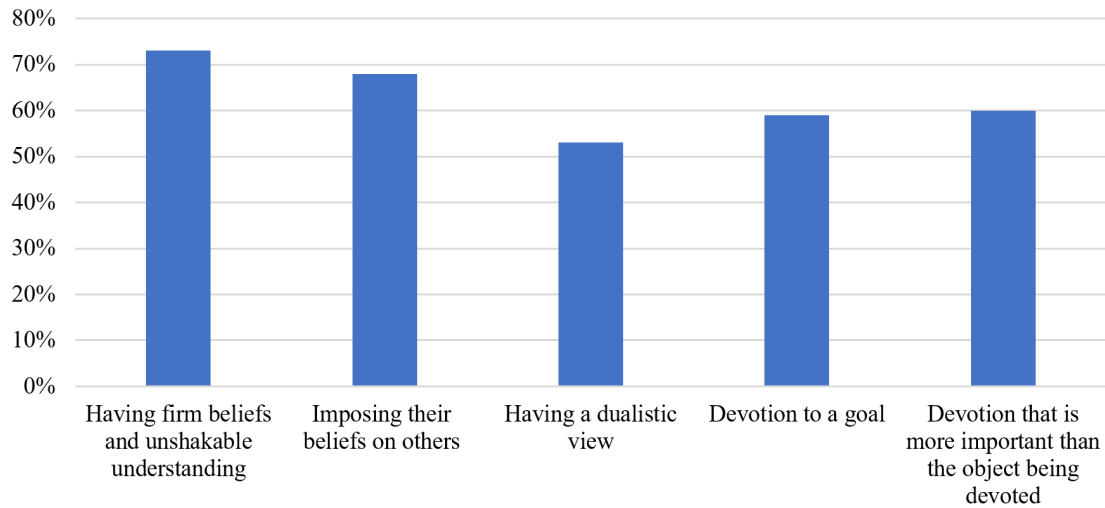


Figure 1.
Diagram of Fanaticism Variables in Respondents

The diagram above shows that most adolescent K-pop fans, in the range of 53% to 73%, show characteristics of fanaticism. The most prominent characteristics of adolescent K-pop fans are having firm beliefs and unshakable understanding (73%), followed by imposing their beliefs on others (68%), the devotion that is more important than the object being devoted to (60%), devotion to a goal (59%), and having a dualistic view (53%). So, the fanaticism of adolescent K-pop fans in the moderate category is more dominated by the characteristics of having firm beliefs and an unshakable understanding. This shows that K-pop can be essential to adolescents' identity and social life. Fanaticism, in this case, can be positive and negative for adolescents. Positive if it motivates them to achieve goals and socialize with people with the same interests. Negative if it triggers hostility between fans or interferes with their daily activities.

In empathy variable categorization, 13 adolescent K-pop fan respondents have empathy in the low category with a percentage of 6%, 73 respondents in the medium category with a percentage of 33.6%, and as many as 131 respondents in the high category with a percentage of 60.4%. On average, adolescent K-pop fans who are respondents to this study have a high level of empathy categorization.

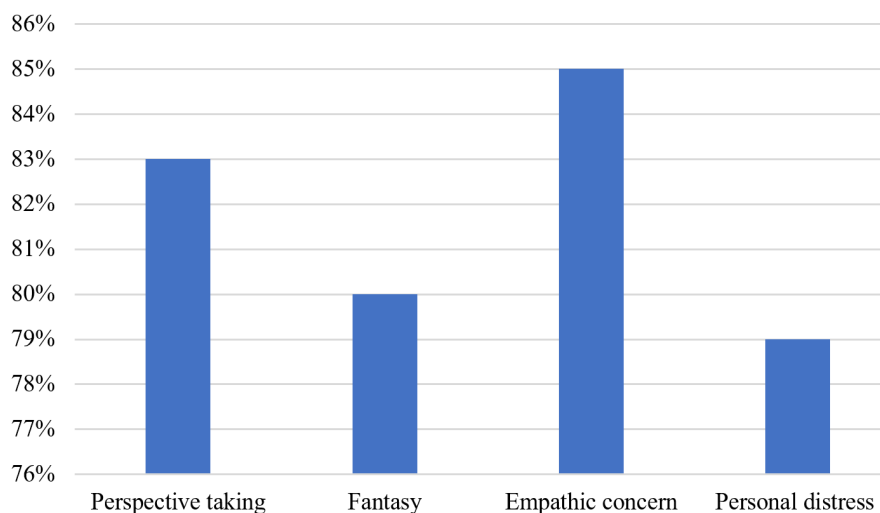


Figure 2.
Empathy Variable Diagram on Respondents

Adolescent K-pop fans generally showed a high level of empathy in all aspects measured. The highest empathy aspect shown by adolescent K-pop fans is an empathic concern, which means feelings of sympathy and “other-oriented” concern for others who are less fortunate (85%), followed by the perspective-taking aspect, which means the tendency to spontaneously take the psychological perspective of others (83%), the fantasy aspect, which means the tendency for someone to transform themselves imaginatively into the feelings and actions of imaginary characters in books, films, and dramas (80%), and personal distress aspect or anxiety that is oriented towards oneself. Anxiety in facing unpleasant interpersonal settings (79%) is the lowest aspect shown by adolescent K-pop fans. The findings of this study conclude that the empathy of adolescent K-pop fans in the high category is more dominated by the aspect of empathic concern.

Cyberbullying variable categorization found 152 adolescent K-pop fans who showed low cyberbullying behavior, with a percentage of 70%, 46 respondents were in the medium category, with a percentage of 21.2%, and 19 respondents were in the high category, with a percentage of 8.8%. On average, adolescent K-pop fans who were respondents to this study tend to behave in the low cyberbullying category.

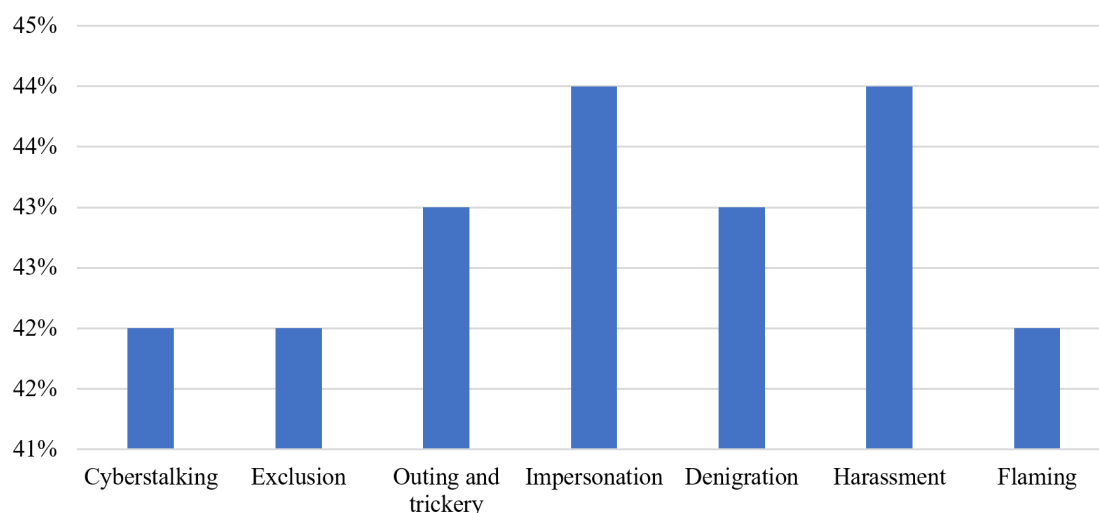


Figure 3.
Cyberbullying Variable Diagram on Respondents

As seen in the diagram above, it is known that all cyberbullying activities listed in the diagram have a relatively similar percentage, which ranges from 42% to 44%. This shows that adolescent K-pop fans tend to be involved in various forms of cyberbullying equally. The dominant form of activity is impersonation, which is disguising yourself as someone else to damage that person’s reputation, as well as harassment or sending rude and offensive messages (44%), followed by the tendency for other cyberbullying behaviors such as denigration and also outing and trickery (43%), and then activities of flaming, exclusion, and cyberstalking (42%). However, in terms of categorization, the level of cyberbullying among adolescent K-pop fans is in the low category. The results of the diagram provide a relatively clear picture of the prevalence of cyberbullying behavior tendencies among adolescent K-pop fans, which, of course, is a serious concern because it can have an impact on the welfare of the adolescents themselves.

Assumption Test

Before conducting a quadratic regression analysis, an assumption test must be conducted first to identify whether or not there is a deviation in the research. The assumption tests include normality, linearity, and multicollinearity tests. The following is an explanation of the results of each assumption test.

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the sample was normally distributed (representative). This normality test used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (KS-Z) technique. In this study, a significance level (p) of .20 ($p > .05$) was obtained. Thus, it was concluded that the sample in this study was able to represent the characteristics of its population.

Linearity Test

The linearity test aims to confirm whether there is a linear nature that connects the independent variable with the dependent variable with the condition that p (F -linearity) $< .05$ and p (deviation from linearity) $> .05$. After conducting a linearity test between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior, the F -linearity was obtained at 273.982 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p < .05$) and F -deviation from linearity of 2.754 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p < .05$). These results indicate that the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying is not linear.

Furthermore, in empathy with cyberbullying, F -linearity was obtained at 197.504 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p > .05$) and F -deviation from linearity at 2.858 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p < .05$). It can be said that empathy does not have a linear effect on cyberbullying behavior. These findings are exciting because both fanaticism and empathy have a non-linear (curvilinear) relationship with a person's tendency to engage in cyberbullying.

Based on the results of the linearity test on the two independent variables, which show that the data is not linear, the linear relationship pattern is considered less appropriate in explaining the data information in the study, so it was decided to test using non-linear regression by comparing several non-linear regression models. Based on the calculation of the quadratic equation, it can be concluded that this quadratic regression model shows a relationship pattern of fanaticism influenced by cyberbullying. The quadratic regression model can be expressed as $21.236 + .033Y + .003Y^2$ for fanaticism. The maximum value of fanaticism based on the quadratic regression model occurs at $Y = -5.5$ and is estimated at 21.145.

Multicollinearity Test

A multicollinearity test was conducted to identify whether there is a strong correlation between two or more independent variables, with the criteria of tolerance $> .10$ and $VIF < 10$. The results of the multicollinearity test on the fanaticism and empathy variables obtained tolerance values of .815 ($> .10$) and .815 ($> .10$), respectively, with VIF values of 1.227 (< 10) and 1.227 (< 10), respectively. Based on these results, it is concluded that there is no intercorrelation or collinearity between the fanaticism and empathy variables.

Hypothesis Testing

This study used Hayes Process Model 1 analysis on the major hypothesis and quadratic regression analysis on the minor hypothesis to prove several research hypotheses.

Major Hypothesis Test

Based on the moderation process analysis results, Hayes Process Model 1 for the major hypothesis obtained an int_1 value at $t = -2.094$ and a pair value of .037 ($p < .05$), so it can be concluded that the empathy variable acts as a moderator. Empathy has an effect that can influence the strength or weakness of the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying.

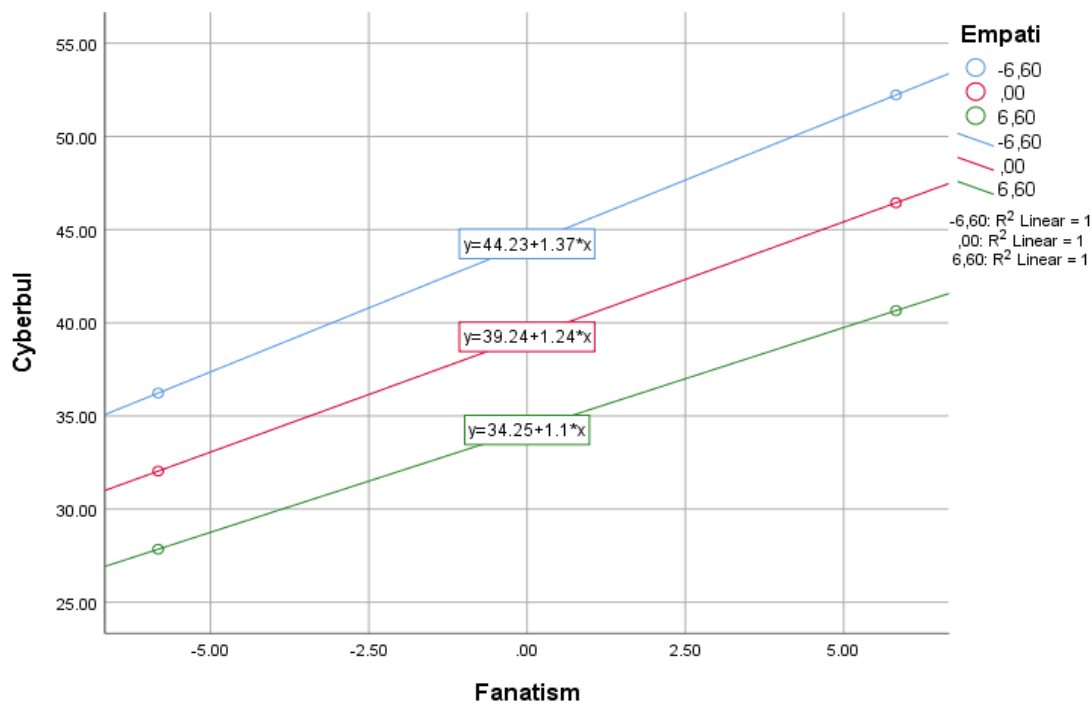


Figure 4.
Empathy Variable Moderation Effect Graph

The graph above shows a moderation analysis where empathy (labeled as “empathy”) appears to moderate the relationship between fanaticism (“fanaticism”) and cyberbullying (“cyberbull”). There are three lines representing different levels of empathy, namely (a) the blue line represents low empathy (−6.60), (b) the red line represents average empathy (.00), and (c) the green line represents high empathy (6.60).

The results of the graphs in this study also explain how the moderation effect is by empathy, namely: (1) when empathy is low (blue line), the slope (1.37) is the steepest line, indicating that fanaticism has a stronger positive relationship with cyberbullying, while low empathy may exacerbate the impact of fanaticism on cyberbullying; (2) when empathy is average (red line), the slope (1.24) is slightly less steep, indicating that empathy, on average, slightly moderates the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying, but the association is still positive; (3) when empathy is high (green line), the slope (1.1) is the flattest line. This indicates that high empathy reduces the impact of fanaticism on cyberbullying. The relationship is still positive but weaker.

It can be concluded overall that when empathy increases, the strength of the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying decreases, referring to the explanation of the moderating effect of empathy above. This shows that empathy acts as a protector (preventive) or a factor that reduces the negative impact of fanaticism on cyberbullying.

Minor Hypothesis Test

The results of the first minor hypothesis test on fanaticism towards cyberbullying obtained a value (t) of 12.071 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p < .01$). The results obtained indicate that fanaticism has a very significant positive role in cyberbullying. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the first minor hypothesis proposed is accepted. This means that the higher the fanaticism of K-pop fans, the higher the cyberbullying behavior shown by K-pop fans. Likewise, the lower the fanaticism shown by K-pop fans, the lower the cyberbullying behavior.

The results of the second minor hypothesis test on empathy toward cyberbullying behavior obtained a value (t) of -9.638 with a significance level (p) of .000 ($p < .01$). These results indicate that the empathy variable has a negative and very significant role in cyberbullying behavior. Thus, the second minor hypothesis proposed is accepted. This means that the higher the empathy towards K-pop fans, the lower the tendency of K-pop fans to engage in cyberbullying. Conversely, the lower the empathy of K-pop fans, the higher the tendency of fans to engage in cyberbullying.

Coefficient of Determinant

In this study, it is known that fanaticism and empathy simultaneously provide an effective contribution of 66% to cyberbullying behavior. When viewed separately, the fanaticism variable contributes 38.16%, and the empathy variable contributes 27.84%. With a total effective contribution of 66% to cyberbullying behavior, it is also known that the remaining 44% effective contribution is influenced by other variables not discussed in this study. It is known that the fanaticism variable contributes more to the tendency of cyberbullying behavior shown by K-pop fans than the empathy variable, referring to the results of the total effective contribution.

DISCUSSION

The presence of social media has become a space where various points of view can collide (Gettari et al., 2023). As the interactions that appear on social media can be interactive and open (Huang et al., 2017), of course, it is a challenge in itself. The challenge is determining the boundary between giving criticism and comments that attack individuals, such as cyberbullying. Moreover, the main element in social media is anonymity, so that anyone can have the opportunity to become a perpetrator of cyberbullying (Barlett, 2015). With anonymity, adolescents feel free to follow the rules to become more open in expressing themselves on social media (Santhoso, 2019).

Cyberbullying is known as a series of aggressive actions carried out repeatedly through social media, such as insults, humiliation, and even threats (Tokunaga, 2010). Savage and Tokunaga (2017) further explained that cyberbullying is an act carried out intentionally to tease or joke with others. Therefore, cyberbullying is considered a negative act as it has serious impacts that affect both the perpetrator and the victim (Horner et al., 2015). This disturbing phenomenon of cyberbullying has become a public concern, and many studies have examined the factors that contribute to cyberbullying on social media, including callous-unemotional traits (Sarifa & Mahanani, 2020), conformity (Syadza & Sugiasih, 2017), and moral disengagement (Panggabean et al., 2022).

This study aims to determine the role of empathy in moderating the relationship between fanaticism and the tendency of cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop fans. The results of 217 respondents spread across 18 provinces in Indonesia showed that empathy can moderate the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior. Empathy has been proven to have a significant role in influencing the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-Pop fans, meaning that the higher the level of empathy of adolescent K-pop fans, the weaker the relationship between fanaticism and cyberbullying. In other words, empathy has been proven to be one of the determining factors for adolescents in restraining their aggressive behaviors, such as fanaticism and cyberbullying (Davis, 1980). Therefore, empathy is important in psychological and social adjustment among adolescents (Castillo et al., 2013). This empathy helps adolescents better understand their own and other people's emotions and the consequences of their future behavior.

The minor hypothesis results showed that fanaticism has a very significant positive role in cyberbullying behavior. Conceptually, fanaticism is a person's extreme belief in an object. Fanatic behavior usually displays various characteristics such as excessive enthusiasm, emotional, attachment, uncontrollable feelings of love, and long-term interests (Eliani et al., 2018). Therefore, fanaticism can be

identified as a motivation behind fans' aggressive behavior, such as cyberbullying on social media (Andriani et al., 2021). Fanatic fans tend to have low awareness, which often leads to uncontrolled behavior such as cyberbullying (Maya, 2015). In this study, 51.2% of the respondents had a moderate fanaticism. Based on these results, it is undeniable that fanaticism can influence individuals to become intolerant and cause conflict between individuals or groups (Gulo et al., 2023). If left unchecked, this fanaticism will also cause individuals to ignore critical thinking or be unable to see arguments and facts (Marimaa, 2011). Even so, fanaticism is not always a negative phenomenon. Sometimes, someone who shows this fanaticism is also willing to participate in the suffering of others. So, fanaticism can be good or bad, depending on how and why (reasons) someone acts fanatically (Marimaa, 2011).

Furthermore, empathy has a very significant negative role in cyberbullying behavior. The results of this analysis are in line with research by Kowalski et al. (2014) that shows low empathy is an early risk factor for cyberbullying. This low empathy is undoubtedly related to the high tendency of individuals to behave antisocially, such as cyberbullying (Zych et al., 2021). Regarding the risk of low empathy, Hesty and Surya (2020), in their findings, stated that empathy therapy can increase individual awareness of the dangers of cyberbullying.

If examined further, this study discovered that around 60.4% of empathy in adolescent K-pop fans is in the high category. In other words, these adolescents can put themselves in other people's shoes and feel the same emotional experiences as other people's emotions (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). Acquiring a high level of empathy is related to most respondents, or around 89.4%, dominated by women. This is reinforced by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006), who concluded that female adolescents scored higher than males in cognitive and affective empathy.

Furthermore, this study also found that the respondents showed high empathic concern and perspective-taking. As the definition of empathic concern is the orientation of warm feelings, sympathy, and care for others who are experiencing misfortune (Davis, 1980), then, instead of remaining passive when observing others becoming victims of cyberbullying, respondents or adolescents who have deep empathic concern will tend to help victims who experience cyberbullying (Van Cleemput et al., 2014). Furthermore, for respondents with high perspective taking, it can be interpreted as being able to see things from the perspective of other individuals (Davis, 1980). Research by Chotimah and Widyana (2020) states that the presence of perspective-taking skills can reduce the tendency of cyberbullying behavior carried out by adolescents. This is because perspective-taking increases the possibility of individuals understanding and sympathizing with others (Santrock, 2014).

This study has limitations and obstacles during the data testing in the field and the analysis process, including the difficulty of collecting more respondents to fill out the scale online, so the results of this study cannot describe the actual situation. Furthermore, there are difficulties in analyzing the quadratic model regression; the Y value = -5.5 was found as the maximum point, which means that the value is not realistic in a practical context. This shows that in a realistic data range, the relationship between cyberbullying and fanaticism may not reach its maximum point in this model. Therefore, this model needs to be re-evaluated, or further research can develop another model more aligned with the existing data. It is also important to consider other factors influencing fanaticism and include them in the model to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Finally, researchers cannot directly monitor respondents when filling out the scale, so the information provided by each respondent through this research scale may differ based on the understanding and opinions of each respondent.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study prove that empathy has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between fanaticism and the tendency of cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop fans. It can be

concluded, in this study, that adolescent K-pop fans aged 12–23 years have high empathy, which is a protective factor for these fans to reduce the negative influence of fanaticism on cyberbullying behavior. This study also found that both fanaticism and empathy showed a curvilinear relationship to the tendency of cyberbullying behavior in adolescent K-pop. Even so, fanaticism and empathy can be predictive factors for the emergence of adolescent tendencies in carrying out cyberbullying behavior. It is hoped that it can open up opportunities and become a reference in the development of intervention programs for aggressive behavior, such as empathy-based cyberbullying, referring to the findings of this study regarding the importance of empathy.

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