

Exploring the influence of language politeness, humor styles, and positive communication on cyberbullying among generation Z students

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Abstract: This study evaluates the impact of language politeness, humor styles, and positive communication on cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z, as well as the role of interpersonal skills as a moderating variable. Using a correlational quantitative design with path analysis, the research involved 389 students from South Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, and Central Sulawesi. The sample was obtained through proportional stratified random sampling and a validated questionnaire that measured language politeness, humor style, positive communication, and cyberbullying behavior. The validity and reliability of the instrument were assessed using goodness of fit indices (GFI) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Data analysis included normality testing, correlation analysis, and path analysis. Findings revealed that language politeness does not directly affect cyberbullying, but humor style has a significant negative impact. Interpersonal skills mediate the relationship between language politeness, humor style, and cyberbullying. Positive communication and strong interpersonal skills can reduce the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behavior.

Keywords: Cyberbullying behavior, Humor style, Interpersonal skills, Language politeness, Positive communication.

1. Introduction

Cyberbullying poses a significant threat to the safety, comfort, personal identity, and overall well-being of individuals engaged in online interactions through social media platforms. This phenomenon has become a concerning trend in social media, evolving into a form of criminal behavior that inflicts severe harm on its victims. Reports link cyberbullying to consequences such as decreased confidence, increased insecurity, social withdrawal, self-harm, depression, and even suicide [1]. Teenagers and young adults are particularly vulnerable, as they are in a critical phase of self-identity development, and their psychological well-being is heavily influenced by social interactions [2, 3].

Common forms of cyberbullying among adolescents include negative comments on social media, sexual harassment, editing images to become pornographic, and isolating individuals from groups [4]. Adolescents, often facing a quarter-life crisis, are especially susceptible to cyberbullying. During this period, they may experience heightened insecurity and compare their achievements with others, making them more vulnerable to online harassment [5, 6]. Victims of cyberbullying often feel inferior and withdraw from both virtual and real-life social environments [7]. Thus, studying the factors that cause bullying is crucial.

Research indicates various factors leading to cyberbullying. For instance, the use of social media can foster cyberbullying and cyber engagement, create online communication patterns, and support

academic achievement [8]. Teenagers utilize online communication not only to interact with others but also for self-actualization and self-identity development [9, 10]. Posting personal content can increase the risk of becoming a cyberbullying victim [11]. Despite the risks, Generation Z continues such behavior [12].

The primary motivation for online communication is interacting with friends [13]. In digital environments, intimate self-actualization helps connect with new people [14]. However, high-intensity social media use, intimate self-actualization, and risky online communication often lead to cyberbullying, especially as perpetrators [15]. Students who frequently post content online are more prone to negative behaviors like harsh comments and online harassment [16]. This risk also increases the likelihood of becoming a victim, especially through explicit content sharing or sexting [17].

Impoliteness on social media can make victims uncomfortable and harmed by cyberbullying [18]. Polite communication can prevent cyberbullying and minimize its risk. Those who communicate politely tend to be wiser, humble, and kind, avoiding language that threatens others' self-image [19]. Therefore, this study examines the effect of language politeness on cyberbullying behavior on social media. Humor style is another communication factor. Although humor builds intimate communication, inappropriate humor can lead to cyberbullying [20]. Adolescents often struggle to discern whether internet jokes are intimidating, indicating a lack of awareness of aggressive humor [21]. Thus, humor style predicts Z-generation cyberbullying behavior.

Positive communication skills, which involve interacting positively, openly, and supportively, are believed to predict cyberbullying behavior [22]. These skills can reduce bullying in schools [23], but their effect on cyberbullying requires further study. Therefore, positive communication serves as a predictor variable in this study. Some findings suggest that the three variables supporting communication, namely language politeness, humor style, and positive communication, influence interpersonal skills [24]. While these three variables may not explicitly affect interpersonal skills, they play a role in determining the levels of interpersonal skills [25]. Besides that, research carried out by Iroda, et al. [26] found that in terms of personal levels, individuals with good interpersonal relationships, such as a warm family, can increase their level of empathy and reduce the level of personal cyberbullying (as perpetrators) [27].

Cyberbullying is a significant issue that threatens the well-being of individuals, particularly among Generation Z, who are highly active on social media platforms. This phenomenon, which includes negative comments, online harassment, and exclusion from social groups, has been linked to severe consequences such as decreased self-esteem, social withdrawal, depression, and even suicide. Adolescents are especially vulnerable due to their stage of self-identity development, making them more susceptible to the emotional and psychological impacts of online abuse. Given the growing prevalence of cyberbullying in this generation, it is crucial to explore factors that may mitigate its occurrence, such as language politeness, humor style, and positive communication. Understanding how these factors influence cyberbullying behavior can help develop effective strategies to reduce its prevalence and protect the mental health of Generation Z.

The study aims to answer the following questions: 1) Does language politeness directly affect cyberbullying behavior?; 2) Does humor style directly affect cyberbullying behavior?; 3) Does positive communication skill directly affect cyberbullying behavior?; 4) Does language politeness moderated by interpersonal skills indirectly affect cyberbullying behavior?; 5) Does humor style moderated by interpersonal skills indirectly affect cyberbullying behavior?; and 6) Does positive communication skill moderated by interpersonal skills indirectly affect cyberbullying behavior?

2. Literature Review

Cyberbullying has garnered significant attention due to its detrimental impact on adolescents in virtual communication [28]. Most literature emphasizes individuals (students) as primary actors. Factors stimulating cyberbullying often involve communication with others [29]. Studies report that impoliteness on social media makes victims uncomfortable. Using impolite language in comments can

hurt victims, making them question themselves, such as thinking, "Am I really like that?" [30]. Furthermore, students who communicate politely can prevent cyberbullying and minimize its occurrence [31]. Awareness of polite communication promotes kindness and avoidance of damaging words [32].

Humor style is another communication factor influencing cyberbullying [33]. Although humor can enhance interpersonal relationships, inappropriate humor correlates with cyberbullying [34]. Sarcasm or aggressive humor encourages cyberbullying through comments, videos, or photos on social media [35]. Adolescents' engagement in damaging unclear humor online is worsened by the assumption that scary humor is typical. As a result, cyberbullying among students might be triggered by intimidating humor. Adolescents' engagement in damaging unclear humor online is worsened by the assumption that scary humor is typical. As a result, cyberbullying among kids might result from intimidating humor [36].

Positive communication skills also play a significant role in influencing cyberbullying [37]. Research indicates that positive communication skills decrease bullying in schools [38]. However, a direct positive relationship between communication and cyberbullying is not found. Generally, the three communication variables (impoliteness, humor style, and positive communication skills) do not explicitly affect interpersonal skills but determine their level [39].

2.1. The Role of Positive Communication in Preventing Cyberbullying

Recent studies have highlighted the crucial role of positive communication in not only preventing cyberbullying but also enhancing overall interpersonal relationships. Positive communication, defined by its emphasis on respect, empathy, and constructive dialogue, plays a key role in fostering a supportive online environment. According to a study by Dou, et al. [38] students who frequently engage in positive communication online are significantly less likely to participate in or become victims of cyberbullying. The study found that when individuals adopt communication behaviors that include empathy and active listening, they reduce the likelihood of escalating conflicts into cyberbullying incidents. This shows that fostering positive communication can serve as a protective factor against the negative behaviors commonly associated with digital interactions.

2.2. Positive Communication and Empathy

The connection between empathy and positive communication is well-established in the literature. Empathy allows individuals to understand the emotional state of others, which in turn fosters more respectful and considerate communication. Fredrick, et al. [23] demonstrated that schools implementing empathy-based communication programs saw a significant reduction in bullying, including cyberbullying. Their research revealed that when students were taught to communicate with empathy, They exhibited fewer instances of cyberbullying and more instances of constructive social behavior. The importance of empathy in constructive communication cannot be overstated when it comes to building a more inclusive and secure online space.

2.3. Improving Interpersonal Relationships through Positive Communication

Beyond preventing cyberbullying, positive communication has been shown to improve the quality of interpersonal relationships. In a study by Musetti, et al. [40] the researchers found that individuals who practiced positive communication skills, such as giving constructive feedback and engaging in supportive dialogue, were more successful in building and maintaining strong relationships. This applies both online and offline, as positive communication fosters trust and mutual respect. Their findings emphasize that teaching positive communication not only reduces negative online behaviors like cyberbullying but also promotes healthier, more resilient relationships in various social contexts.

2.4. Impact of Positive Communication on Conflict Resolution

Another important aspect of positive communication is its role in conflict resolution. Anastasov, et al. [41] explored how effective communication skills, including active listening and respectful dialogue, help individuals manage and resolve conflicts without resorting to aggression or bullying. Their study concluded that students who were trained in positive communication were better equipped to navigate disagreements without escalating them into hostile interactions, including cyberbullying. This research highlights that positive communication is not just about preventing harmful behavior but also about equipping individuals with the tools to handle conflicts constructively, which is crucial in online environments where misunderstandings can easily arise.

2.5. The Long-Term Benefits of Positive Communication

Longitudinal studies have shown that positive communication has lasting effects on social behavior. For instance, a study by Gao, et al. [42] tracked adolescents over several years and found that those who consistently engaged in positive communication were less likely to exhibit antisocial behaviors, including cyberbullying, as they grew older. The research suggests that instilling positive communication habits early in life can lead to long-term improvements in social interactions and reduce the prevalence of online aggression. This underscores the importance of incorporating positive communication training into educational programs to promote healthy online and offline interactions throughout adolescence and into adulthood.

Interpersonal skills refer to the ability to develop effective interactions, solve nonverbal communication codes, express oneself in social life, and address interaction tasks. Thus, interpersonal skills encompass social interaction skills and the ability to develop effective societal interactions [43]. Findings show that individuals with good interpersonal relationships, such as warm family connections, exhibit high empathy and personal cyberbullying as perpetrators [44]. In Although humor can enhance interpersonal relationships, ambiguous or intimidating humor can lead to cyberbullying through comments, photos, and videos [45]. This study considers interpersonal relationships as a moderating variable in the occurrence of cyberbullying across the three communication aspects. The research model is illustrated in Figure 1.

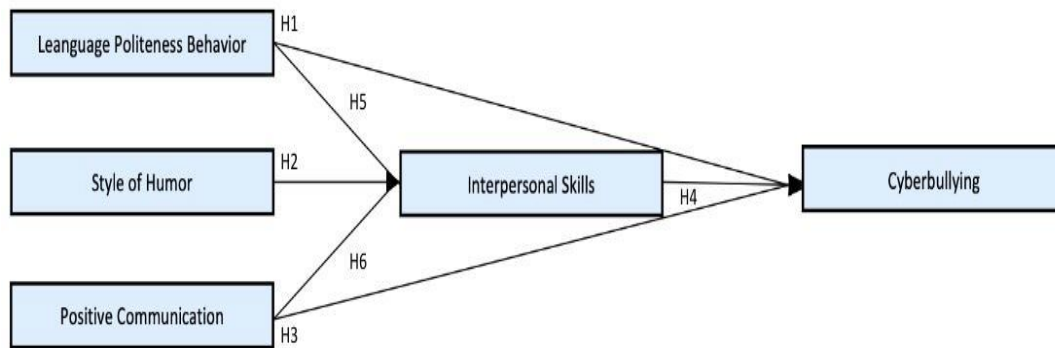


Figure 1.
Research model.

2. Method

The main variables in this study were linguistic politeness, humor style, positive communication, cyberbullying behavior, and interpersonal skills. The study used a correlational quantitative design and validated instruments to measure these characteristics. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) verified the reliability of these tools by making sure the models were well-fitting. Both Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's Omega demonstrated excellent levels of internal consistency, further establishing

reliability. These tests show that the instruments were valid and reliable for this study, which means that the constructs were measured accurately.

Students from the years 1995–2010, sometimes known as Generation Z, are well-versed in social media because they came of age during a time of tremendous technological development [46]. Participants were undergraduates attending colleges in South Sulawesi, West Sulawesi, and Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. Sample size was determined using proportional stratified random sampling. The total population in each province was 10,000 students (South Sulawesi), 5,000 students (West Sulawesi), and 8,000 students (Central Sulawesi). The sample sizes were 162 students from South Sulawesi, 81 students from West Sulawesi, and 146 students from Central Sulawesi, totaling 389 students. This sampling method ensured that each province's sample size proportionately reflected its population, enhancing the validity and generalizability of findings to the Generation Z student population across the three provinces.

The instrument used in this study is the Language Politeness Behavioral Instrument, designed to assess language politeness behavior [47]. It encompasses verbal and non-verbal politeness aspects fostering a positive environment through traits like sympathy and friendliness. The instrument includes 40 Likert-scale questions, adapted to remove the Neutral option, aiming to better capture respondents' true attitudes. The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results in Table 1 confirm the instrument's validity and reliability, with RMSEA at 0.084 indicating low error, and high GFI, CFI, TLI values (0.987, 0.985, and 0.981) indicating good model fit. McDonald's Omega and Cronbach's alpha also show high consistency (0.854 and 0.858) in measuring language politeness.

Table 1.

Goodness fit indices and confirmatory factor analysis of language politeness.

Measurement	Indices	Criterion	Measurement model
Validity test	RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.084
	GFI (Goodness of fit)	≥ 0.90	0.987
	CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	192.240/51
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.985
	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.981
Reliability test	McDonald's	> 0.60	0.854
	Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.858

The Humor Style Questionnaire (HSQ), adapted from Heintz and Ruch [48] measures the following three types of comedy styles using a Likert scale: affiliative, aggressive, and self-defeating. It was decided to add "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" to the scale in order to counteract the tendency of respondents to select the Neutral option. Table 2 details the results of validity and reliability tests conducted with 210 students, which demonstrate that the HSQ is appropriate for use in this model. Strong model fit is demonstrated by high GFI, CFI, and TLI values (0.986, 0.979, and 0.969), while a low RMSEA value of 0.092 suggests minimal error. Measures of humor style are consistently measured by McDonald's Omega and Cronbach's alpha, with values of 0.846 and 0.864, respectively.

Table 2.

Goodness fit indices and confirmatory factor analysis of humor style.

Measurement	Indices	Criterion	Measurement model
Validity test	RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.092
	GFI (Goodness of fit)	≥ 0.90	0.986
	CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	103.284/24
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.979
	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.969
Reliability test	McDonald's	> 0.60	0.846
	Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.864

The positive communication instrument was adapted from the Questionnaire Siamian, et al. [49]. Positive feedback and courteous, supportive communication are assessed by this tool. A Likert scale with the options "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree" was used to measure the instrument. According to the appropriateness index results shown in Table 3, the suggested model is a good match for the empirical data. With an RMSEA of 0.121, the model's error rate is relatively low. The model also fits the data well according to the high values of GFI(0.961), CFI(0.957), and TLI (0.952). There is strong evidence that this instrument consistently measures positive communication, as McDonald's Omega and Cronbach's alpha both have high values (0.926 and 0.926, respectively).

Table 3.

Goodness fit indices and confirmatory factor analysis of positive communication.

Measurement	Indices	Criterion	Measurement model
Validity test	RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.121
	GFI (Goodness of fit)	≥ 0.90	0.961
	CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	1532.815/230
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.957
	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.952
Reliability test	McDonald's	> 0.60	0.926
	Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.926

The Cyberbullying Perpetration instruments, which were modified from those of Lee, et al. [50] were used to evaluate cyberbullying behavior. These measures focused on verbal/written bullying, visual sexual bullying, and social exclusion. To improve the accuracy of the Likert-scale model in capturing responses from participants in Indonesia, the "neutral" option was removed. You might choose between four possible responses: "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." Table 4 displays the results of the validity and reliability tests, which confirm that the instrument is in line with the observed data. High GFI, CFI, and TLI values (0.982, 0.984, and 0.977, respectively) validate model fit, and RMSEA (0.105) shows low error. Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's Omega both show that cyberbullying behavior is consistently measured (0.871 and 0.860, respectively).

Table 4.

Goodness fit indices and confirmatory factor analysis of cyberbullying behavior.

Measurement	Indices	Criterion	Measurement model
Validity test	RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.105
	GFI (Goodness of fit)	≥ 0.90	0.984
	CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	267.470/51
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.982
	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.977
Reliability test	McDonald's	> 0.60	0.871
	Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.860

Interpersonal skills were assessed using the Interpersonal Competence in Peer Relationships (ICQ) instrument, adapted from Furman, et al. [43]. The ICQ measures domains like initiating interactions, assertion, emotional support, advice, and conflict management. It features 40 Likert-scale questions adjusted to exclude the neutral option, typical for Indonesian respondents. Table 5 presents results from a field trial with 210 participants, confirming validity and reliability through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). RMSEA (0.087) indicates low error, and high GFI, CFI, TLI values (0.974, 0.974, and 0.972) demonstrate good model fit. McDonald's and Cronbach's alpha scores (0.941 and 0.941) indicate consistent measurement of interpersonal skills.

Table 5.

Goodness fit indices and confirmatory factor analysis of interpersonal skill.

Measurement	Indices	Criterion	Measurement model
Validity test	RMSEA	$\leq 0,08$	0.087
	GFI (Goodness of fit)	≥ 0.90	0.974
	CMIN/DF	$\leq 2,0$	1261.771/381
	CFI	≥ 0.90	0.974
	TLI	≥ 0.90	0.972
Reliability test	McDonald's	> 0.60	0.941
	Cronbach's	> 0.60	0.941

The research employed path analysis to explore relationships between independent variables (language politeness, humor style, positive communication) and the dependent variable (cyberbullying behavior), moderated by interpersonal skills. Path analysis assesses direct, indirect (mediation), and moderating effects in complex models. Prior to analysis, a normality test using JASP verified data distribution. Skewness and kurtosis values (within -1.96 to +1.96) confirmed data close to normal: language politeness (skewness: 1.76, kurtosis: 1.89), humor style (skewness: 1.18, kurtosis: -1.99), positive communication (skewness: -1.68, kurtosis: -1.92), cyberbullying behavior (skewness: -2.92, kurtosis: -1.94), and interpersonal skills (skewness: 1.79, kurtosis: 1.74).

3. Results

In this study, we examined the correlations between variables before conducting path analysis. The correlation analysis show that language politeness, humor style, positive communication, and interpersonal skills are related to student cyberbullying behavior, as outlined in Table 6.

Table 6.

Linearity test.

Variables		Language politeness	Positive communication	Humor style	Interpersonal skills	Cyberbullying behavior
Language politeness	Pearson's	-				
	p-value	-				
Positive communication	Pearson's	-0.165	-			
	p-value	0.001	-			
Humor style	Pearson's	0.109	0.392	-		
	p-value	0.031	<0.001	-		
Interpersonal skills	Pearson's	-0.042	0.678	0.477	-	
	p-value	0.413	<0.001	<0.001	-	
Cyberbullying behavior	Pearson's	-0.144	0.531	0.147	0.435	-
	p-value	0.004	<0.001	0.004	<0.001	-

Several significant correlations among the variables were revealed based on the correlation analysis reported in Table 6. The results demonstrated a mild inverse association between positive communication and language politeness, with a statistically significant negative correlation between the two ($p < 0.01$, Pearson's $r = -0.165$). This means that as positive communication levels rise, language politeness tends to fall slightly. An increase in comedy style is linked to enhanced language politeness, as there was a small but statistically significant association between humor style and language politeness ($p < 0.05$, Pearson's $r = 0.109$). The relationship between humor style and positive communication was shown to be somewhat favorable and statistically significant ($p < 0.001$, Pearson's $r = 0.392$), suggesting that when humor style is improved, positive communication also tends to grow. Language politeness was not substantially correlated with interpersonal skills ($p > 0.05$, Pearson's $r = -0.042$), indicating that changes in interpersonal abilities do not impact language politeness. On the other hand, good communication abilities ($p < 0.001$, Pearson's $r = 0.678$) and a humorous approach ($p < 0.001$, Pearson's $r = 0.477$) were strongly correlated with interpersonal skills. It follows that a more

upbeat demeanor and sense of humor are likely to accompany an improvement in social skills. The importance of interpersonal skills in facilitating good communication and comedy is shown by these links.

Higher levels of cyberbullying conduct were linked to lower levels of language politeness, according to a statistically significant negative connection between cyberbullying behavior and language politeness ($p < 0.01$, Pearson's $r = -0.144$). As cyberbullying behavior grows, positive communication and humor style also tend to grow, as indicated by the strong positive correlation between cyberbullying and positive communication ($p < 0.001$, Pearson's $r = 0.531$) and the weak positive correlation between cyberbullying and humor style ($p < 0.01$, Pearson's $r = 0.147$). In addition, there was a moderate positive association between cyberbullying activity and interpersonal skills ($p < 0.001$, Pearson's $r = 0.435$), suggesting that higher levels of interpersonal skills are linked to increased cyberbullying conduct. The results give light on the relationship between the factors that were the focus of this investigation. The researchers next used a path analysis to see whether interpersonal skills moderated the correlations between cyberbullying behavior and the independent variables, as well as the direct and indirect effects of those variables on cyberbullying conduct. The path analysis yielded the following results.

Table 7.
Results of direct effects test.

						95% confidence interval		
			Estimate	Std. error	z-value	P	Lower	Upper
Language politeness	→	Cyberbullying behavior	-0.071	0.060	-1.187	0.235	-0.189	0.046
Humor style	→	Cyberbullying behavior	-0.167	0.076	-2.204	0.028	-0.315	-0.018
Positive communication	→	Cyberbullying behavior	0.301	0.41	7.424	<.001	0.222	0.381

Based on the results of the direct effects path analysis presented in Table 7, the direct effect of the independent variables on cyberbullying behavior is as follows:

3.1. Research Question 1: Does Language Politeness Behavior Directly Affect Cyberbullying?

The path analysis results indicate that language politeness does not directly influence cyberbullying behavior, with a significance value of 0.235 ($p > 0.05$; estimate = -0.071). Therefore, language politeness does not have a direct impact on cyberbullying behavior. Students who use polite language may still be involved in cyberbullying. Other factors such as humor style, positive communication, and others show a more dominant influence on cyberbullying behavior.

3.2. Research Question 2: Does Humor Style Directly Affect Cyberbullying Behavior?

The path analysis results show that humor style directly influences cyberbullying behavior, with a significance value of 0.028 ($p < 0.05$; estimate = -0.167). Therefore, humor style has a direct impact on cyberbullying behavior. In this case, the higher the level of humor styles that tend to offend, the more likely students are to engage in cyberbullying. The more frequently individuals use humor styles that can potentially harm others, the greater the likelihood they will be involved in cyberbullying behaviors.

3.3. Research Question 3: Do Positive Communication Directly Affect Cyberbullying Behavior?

The path analysis results indicate that positive communication directly influences cyberbullying behavior, with a significance value of < .001 ($p < 0.05$; estimate = 0.301), showing a strong positive relationship between positive communication and cyberbullying behavior. Therefore, positive communication has a direct impact on cyberbullying behavior. In this case, the higher a person's level of positive communication, the lower their cyberbullying behavior tends to be. Positive communication

plays a role in reducing an individual's involvement in cyberbullying. When individuals possess positive communication skills, such as empathetic listening, respectful expression of opinions, and building positive relationships, they are more likely to resolve conflicts effectively and avoid engaging in cyberbullying behaviors.

Table 8.
Results of indirect effects test.

								95% confidence interval		
				Estimate	Std. error	z-value	P	Lower	Upper	
Language politeness	→	International skills	→	Cyberbullying behavior	0.007	0.010	0.756	0.450	-0.012	0.026
Humor style	→	International skills	→	Cyberbullying behavior	0.070	0.025	2.764	0.006	0.020	0.120
Positive communication	→	International skillss	→	Cyberbullying behavior	0.075	0.025	3.022	0.003	0.026	0.124

The following are some hypotheses derived from the path analysis of indirect effects shown in Table 8. They concern the moderating role of interpersonal skills variables in the link between cyberbullying behavior and independent variables:

3.4. Research Question 4: Does Language Politeness Moderated by Interpersonal Skills Indirectly Affect Cyberbullying?

Based on path analysis, it was found that Language politeness towards Cyberbullying behavior through Interpersonal skills does not have an indirect effect with a value of 0.450 ($p > 0.05$; estimate = 0.007). Thus, polite language behavior does not significantly influence cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills. This means that interpersonal skills do not play a significant mediating role in explaining the relationship between polite language behavior and cyberbullying behavior.

3.5. Research Question 5: Does Humor Style Moderated by Interpersonal Skills Directly Affect Cyberbullying?

Based on path analysis, humor style on Cyberbullying behavior through Interpersonal skills has an indirect influence with a value of 0.006 ($p < 0.05$; estimate = 0.070). Thus, humor style has a significant influence on cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills. Thus, humor style indirectly influences cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills. Humor style can influence cyberbullying through its impact on interpersonal skills. Humor that demeans or offends others can affect how individuals interact with others and develop unhealthy interpersonal skills, potentially increasing their involvement in cyberbullying behavior.

3.6. Research Question 6: Does Positive Communication Skill Moderated by Interpersonal Skills Indirectly Affect Cyberbullying?

Based on path analysis, Positive communication on Cyberbullying behavior through Interpersonal skills has an indirect influence with a value of 0.003 ($p < 0.05$; estimate = 0.075). Thus, Positive communication has a significant influence on cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills. Thus, positive communication has an indirect influence on cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills. Positive communication can influence cyberbullying behavior through its influence on interpersonal skills. Positive communication that involves active listening, respectful expression of opinions, and empathetic understanding can help individuals build good interpersonal skills. This can prevent individuals from engaging in cyberbullying behavior.

Based on the research findings, the first hypothesis suggesting that language politeness has no direct effect on cyberbullying behavior is not supported. The study confirms the second hypothesis, indicating that humor style indeed has a significant negative direct effect on cyberbullying behavior, and the third hypothesis, which states that positive communication has a direct positive effect on

cyberbullying behavior, is also supported. However, the fourth hypothesis, which posits that language politeness does not indirectly affect cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills, is not supported as interpersonal skills do not mediate this relationship.

Furthermore, the fifth and sixth hypotheses, which propose that humor style and positive communication respectively have indirect effects on cyberbullying behavior through interpersonal skills, are accepted based on path analysis. Interpersonal skills moderate the relationship between these variables. To illustrate these relationships, Figure 2 depicts the path coefficients showing both direct and indirect effects. It visually represents how polite language behavior (-0.07), humor style (0.68), and positive communication (0.3) directly influence cyberbullying behavior. Additionally, it shows the indirect impacts through interpersonal skills: polite language behavior (0.07), humor style (-0.17), and positive communication (0.3). This figure helps in understanding the strength and direction of these effects among the studied variables.

4. Discussion

Based on the research findings, it is evident that language politeness behavior does not directly influence the cyberbullying behavior of Z-generation students. Despite individuals exhibiting polite language and behaviors, they are not completely immune to engaging in cyberbullying. This suggests that while politeness reflects adherence to social norms, it does not inherently prevent individuals from participating in negative online behaviors, as noted by Zhan, et al. [29]. Social and environmental factors, alongside individual characteristics, play crucial roles in cyberbullying dynamics [51]. Language politeness, although a marker of social decency, does not guarantee immunity from engaging in cyberbullying, particularly in anonymous or semi-anonymous online contexts [52]. The second hypothesis underscores that humor style significantly impacts cyberbullying behavior directly. The findings indicate that higher levels of humor styles among Gen Z students correlate with an increased likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying. This aligns with previous research suggesting that humor, especially aggressive or offensive humor, can lead to negative interpersonal interactions, including in cyberspace [33]. Humor styles that demean others or reinforce negative stereotypes can escalate conflicts and contribute to cyberbullying behaviors [53, 54]. For instance, self-defeating humor, which belittles oneself, can also potentially lead individuals to participate in cyberbullying, reflecting a lack of sensitivity to the impact of their actions [45]. Moreover, humor styles are often used to indicate close relationships, although humor styles frequently tend to take the form of microaggressive behavior [54, 55]. This microaggressive behavior indirectly triggers individuals to engage in cyberbullying [56]. Microaggressions are viewed as part of jokes considered normal, but they result in poor mental health for the victims of microaggressions [54].

The third finding affirms that positive communication directly influences cyberbullying behavior in a positive manner. Individuals with strong positive communication skills, such as empathetic listening and respectful expression, are less likely to engage in cyberbullying behaviors. Positive communication fosters constructive conflict resolution and enhances social relationships, thereby mitigating the occurrence of cyberbullying [45]. Such skills create a supportive and inclusive online environment where individuals feel heard and respected, reducing the likelihood of resorting to negative behaviors [41]. The fourth finding indicates that language politeness behavior's indirect influence on cyberbullying through interpersonal skills is not statistically significant. This implies that while politeness may reflect social norms and values, it does not significantly enhance interpersonal skills that could mediate cyberbullying behavior. Interpersonal skills, crucial for navigating social interactions, do not act as a substantial mediator between language politeness and cyberbullying behavior among Z-generation students [57]. However, effective interpersonal skills are vital in managing conflicts and reducing negative behaviors in social contexts [58].

The fifth finding demonstrates a significant indirect effect between humor style and cyberbullying behavior mediated by interpersonal skills. Humor styles that offend or demean others contribute to poor interpersonal interactions, fostering an environment conducive to cyberbullying [59]. Negative humor

styles can damage social relationships and hinder conflict resolution abilities, thereby increasing the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behaviors [60]. Effective interpersonal skills, such as empathetic listening and conflict management, play a critical role in mitigating the negative effects of aggressive humor styles [61]. The sixth finding underscores the interconnectedness of positive communication, interpersonal skills, and cyberbullying behavior. Positive communication not only directly reduces cyberbullying but also enhances interpersonal skills, which in turn further diminishes the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behaviors [62]. Effective interpersonal skills enable individuals to foster respectful and supportive relationships, thereby creating a positive online environment [40]. Good communication skills contribute to understanding and trust among individuals, facilitating conflict resolution and preventing cyberbullying behavior [42].

5. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, several key conclusions emerge regarding the relationship between communication styles, interpersonal skills, and cyberbullying behavior among Generation Z students. First, the study reveals that language politeness alone does not directly prevent cyberbullying. Despite exhibiting polite behavior, individuals are still susceptible to engaging in negative online behaviors, suggesting that politeness does not serve as a safeguard against cyberbullying. Second, humor style significantly influences cyberbullying behavior, with higher levels of humor styles linked to increased likelihoods of cyberbullying. Humor that demeans or offends others can provoke conflicts and contribute to negative interactions, both online and in social contexts. Third, positive communication skills play a crucial role in reducing cyberbullying behaviors. Individuals who demonstrate empathetic listening, respectful expression of opinions, and the ability to build positive relationships are less likely to engage in cyberbullying, fostering a safer online environment. Fourth, while interpersonal skills do not directly mediate the relationship between language politeness and cyberbullying, they are instrumental in managing conflicts and social pressures, thus indirectly influencing online behaviors. Fifth, interpersonal skills moderate the impact of humor styles on cyberbullying behaviors. Poor interpersonal skills may exacerbate conflicts triggered by offensive humor, contributing to cyberbullying incidents. Lastly, positive communication indirectly affects cyberbullying through its enhancement of interpersonal skills. Strengthening communication skills promotes positive social interactions and reduces the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behaviors. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of fostering positive communication and robust interpersonal skills to mitigate cyberbullying among young adults in digital environments.

6. Limitation

One limitation of this research is its limited focus on university students from only three provinces in Sulawesi, Indonesia. These geographic and demographic specifications may limit the ability to generalize the findings of this study to a broader population. In addition, the research design used does not allow for drawing causal inferences. It cannot observe how the relationship between language politeness, humour style, positive communication, and cyberbullying behaviour develops over time.

7. Suggestion

1. Future research is recommended to involve broader samples, covering different regions, educational institutions, and demographic backgrounds. This approach will ensure that the findings are more representative and can be applied to various populations.

2. Future research should apply a longitudinal study design to gain a deeper understanding of causal relationships and changes that occur over time. By tracking participants at multiple points in time, this research will provide insight into how communication styles, interpersonal skills, and cyberbullying behaviour develop and interact with each other over a longer period.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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