

TECHNOLOGY AND CYBERBULLYING IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LOKOJA

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Abstract

This research investigates the prevalence of cyberbullying within Federal University Lokoja, with a focus on understanding the experiences of victims and how it affects their academic performance. The study assessed the current state of cyberbullying and its potential impact on academic performance and proposed recommendations for institutional interventions. A random survey research design was employed, drawing data from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected through a survey distributed to the university's student population, and the responses were analyzed using statistical tables and simple percentages. The study revealed a significant prevalence of cyberbullying, with 26.3% of the surveyed population admitting to being victims. This indicates a current concern that may escalate over time if not addressed. A noteworthy implication emerged from the perception that cyberbullying may correlate with poor student performance, emphasizing the urgency for proactive measures. The research strongly recommends reviewing and updating existing institutional policies based on the findings. The suggested revisions include incorporating clear definitions of cyberbullying, establishing effective reporting mechanisms, and implementing disciplinary measures. These measures aim to create a more robust framework for addressing cyberbullying within the university community.

Keywords: Technology, Cyberbullying, Academic Performance and Policy Review.

Introduction

The rapid integration of technology into various aspects of our lives has undoubtedly transformed how we communicate, socialize, and engage with information. While these technological advancements offer numerous benefits, they have also given rise to a distinct and concerning form of aggression known as cyberbullying. Unlike traditional forms of bullying that occur in physical spaces, cyberbullying leverages digital platforms, providing a new avenue for individuals to harass, intimidate, or harm others. The ubiquity of smartphones, social media, and online forums has facilitated the instantaneous and widespread dissemination of information, enabling cyberbullying to transcend geographical boundaries. This form of aggression encompasses a range of behaviors, from online harassment and spreading false information to exclusion and manipulation. The anonymity afforded by the digital realm often emboldens perpetrators, making it challenging for victims to identify and confront their harassers. As technology has become more advanced, cyberbullying is now able to occur from several outlets, including cellular phones, Internet chat rooms, online blogs, e-mails, and instant messaging. Many college students find themselves spending countless hours using some form of digital technology. According to CTIA-The Wireless Association (2010), wireless use in the United States increased by 78% from 2005 to 2009, with 276.6 million subscribers and more than 1.36 trillion text messages. Moreover, social media sites provide an environment where victims often become targets of cyber bullies. The most common social networking sites where cyberbullying occurs are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. One of the most popular social media Web sites, Facebook (2010), reported over 3.5 billion Web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, and photos shared each week by its more than 350 million users. These sites are intended to provide a positive social networking and recreation outlet. Despite this fact, individuals are victimized, and most victims

do not know the person or persons responsible for their acts. With the capability of cyberbullying occurring anywhere, jurisdictional laws make disciplining cyberbullies extremely difficult. School officials have had difficulty monitoring online activities, knowing when to report this abuse to law enforcement, and distinguishing First Amendment rights of freedom of expression from harassment (Shariff & Hoff, 2007; Willard, 2007).

This evolution in bullying dynamics has profound implications, particularly in educational settings. Tertiary institutions, in particular, have become arenas where students may experience cyberbullying, impacting their academic performance, mental well-being, and overall campus experience. All students are affected by the effects of this kind of violence, but the victims are the ones who suffer the most. The victims experience physical, mental, and relational trauma, which may have long-term repercussions. The decline in academic performance is one of the most noted outcomes, although receiving little attention from researchers. It is necessary to nurture academic excellence to ensure that any person may realize their potential inside the school system and, as a result, access possibilities within the labor market. Therefore, it is of the utmost significance to research its connection to bullying. Amnesty International issued a warning in 2019 that thousands of instances of bullying continued to go unreported and that the system was "turning a blind eye" to the issue (Olweus, 2019). It is thought to develop a meaningful reporting system and assist individuals in preventing this pervasive phenomenon.

However, to accomplish this goal, the issue must first be appropriately diagnosed, and then students, lecturers, and parents must be made more aware of how critical it is to avoid and report incidents of this kind. The influence of this phenomenon on the social dimension may be shown in several ways, one of which is by demonstrating the impact that bullying can have on a person's academic and professional potential. Our primary objective is to conduct a case study of the

Students of Federal University Lokoja. This study will involve an in-depth analysis and diagnosis of the prevalence of the phenomenon in this area of the research, and it will be used to determine whether or not the phenomenon has any effects on academic performance.

This phenomenon has been studied very little in the Nigerian environment, so this will be our primary objective. Amnesty International issued a warning in 2019 that thousands of instances of bullying continued to go unreported and that the system was "turning a blind eye" to the issue. It was of the opinion that it was important not only to put in place a helpful reporting system but also to assist students in preventing this pervasive problem (Juvonen, 2021). Thus, the pervasive integration of technology into tertiary education environments has given rise to a significant and growing concern about the prevalence and impact of cyberbullying among students. As online communication becomes integral to academic and social interactions, there is a pressing need to understand the patterns, consequences and contributing factors of cyberbullying within tertiary institutions. A comprehensive investigation into this issue is necessary to develop targeted prevention and intervention strategies because it potentially compromises students' well-being and academic success in the digital age. Therefore, this research seeks to fill the knowledge gap by thoroughly examining cyberbullying in tertiary education settings and providing insights for developing effective countermeasures.

Research Questions

1. To what extent does cyberbullying manifest in tertiary institutions, and what forms does it predominantly take among students?
2. What role do social media platforms play in facilitating cyberbullying incidents within tertiary education?

3. What coping mechanisms do students employ when faced with cyberbullying?
4. How do existing policies and institutional frameworks address cyberbullying in tertiary institutions?

Research Objectives

1. To uncover the various forms and patterns of cyberbullying prevalent among students in tertiary education settings
2. To explore the role of social media platforms in facilitating cyberbullying incidents and propose strategies for leveraging these platforms for prevention and intervention
3. To examine the coping mechanism employed by students facing cyberbullying and emulate the availability and effectiveness of support systems within the academic environment.
4. To develop recommendations and strategies to create a safer online environment within tertiary institutions, promoting a culture of respect and responsible digital citizenship

Concepts Clarification

Cyberbullying has many concepts, revealing different interpretations adopted by the scientific community. Some of the studies analyzed did not build a definition for cyberbullying but borrows bullying concepts, namely, aggression and harassment, already existing in the literature. A polyphony of definitions for cyberbullying was found in the collection, suggesting that the scientific community did not achieve consensus on the understanding of the nature and limits of the phenomenon, perhaps because of "immaturity" or as a reflection of these procedures, since digital relationships are dynamic and influenced by new technologies, incorporated continuously into the cyber universe. However, such polysemy generates some inconsistency in the research data and hinders comparison between studies. The translations of definitions proposed

in English and appropriated by Latin-language studies may also vary semantically and lead to differentiated understandings, as in the example of the meanings between cyberbullying and digital harassment. German studies use the term cyber mobbing. Such terms retranslated into Portuguese produce differentiated emphases. In the case of the translation of harassment, the character of systematic persecution is evident, which is not necessarily present in the phenomenon of cyberbullying.

Boehm et al. (1999) identified different designations for cyberbullying, such as cyberstalking, online aggression, cyber harassment, Internet harassment, Internet bullying, and cybernetic victimization or cyber-victimization. Most scholars considered the hostile nature of the act and the intent to cause suffering crucial to the definition of cyberbullying.

As Aluede et al. (2008) evaluate, the characterization of cyberbullying as just a form of "digital bullying" has been a trend. After analyzing several studies, they conclude that there is a debate about whether a general definition (bullying) should be used or a more specific one.

Willard (2007) described it as "being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the Internet or other digital technologies" She listed eight different forms of cyberbullying:

1. Flaming: Online fights using electronic messages with angry and vulgar language.
2. Harassment: Repeatedly sending nasty, mean, and insulting messages.
3. Denigration: "Dissing" someone online. Sending or posting gossip or rumors about a person to damage his or her reputation or friendships.
4. Impersonation: Pretending to be someone else and sending or posting material to get that person in trouble or danger or to damage that person's reputation or friendships.

5. Outing: Sharing someone's secrets or embarrassing information or images online.
6. Trickery: Talking someone into revealing secrets or embarrassing information or images online.
7. Exclusion: Intentionally and cruelly excluding someone from an online group
8. Cyberstalking: Repeated, intense harassment and denigration that includes threats or creates significant fear.

Effects of Cyberbullying

The negative impacts of cyberbullying are numerous. Consequences of cyberbullying can include poor academic performance, school dropout, physical violence, and suicide, and it is a method of bullying that is frequently hidden from adults (Willard, 2006a). According to Patchin and Hinduja (2008), cyberbullying is linked to severe effects such as low self-esteem, family problems, academic problems, school violence, and delinquent behavior. However, the worst consequences are suicide and violence. While cyberbullying has some of the same negative impacts as traditional face-to-face bullying, it can be done without any physical contact or knowledge of the perpetrator's identity (Willard, 2006). These random acts of harassment go well beyond the scope of traditional face-to-face bullying because, unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying can occur not only at school but in the home and any place where technology is accessible (Shariff & Hoff, 2007; Stover, 2006; Strom & Strom, 2005). Studies have suggested that although it may occur less frequently than face-to-face bullying, up to 70% of students in the United States have experienced cyberbullying (Juvonen & Gross, 2008; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). Therefore, there is a need for further studies to obtain a conceptualized view of the number of students across the United States and beyond who have experienced some form of cyberbullying.

Theoretical Framework

Social Cognitive Theory

The Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), provides a valuable framework for understanding cyberbullying within tertiary institutions. This theory posits that individuals learn by observing the behaviors of others and the consequences of those behaviors. In the context of cyberbullying, students may observe and internalize aggressive online behaviors, either directly or vicariously, through social interactions and digital communication platforms. The theory highlights the role of observational learning in shaping behavior. In the digital realm, students may witness or experience cyberbullying incidents, influencing their perceptions and potential engagement in similar behaviors. Understanding the observational aspect is crucial for deciphering how cyberbullying behaviors are transmitted and perpetuated within the academic environment. Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes modelling as a critical mechanism for learning. In the context of cyberbullying, individuals may emulate the online behaviors of their peers, particularly if such behaviors are perceived as socially rewarding or powerful. This modelling process contributes to the replication and diffusion of cyberbullying within the student community. Bandura's theory introduces the concept of reciprocal determinism, emphasizing the dynamic interplay between personal factors, behaviors, and the environment. In the case of cyberbullying, individual characteristics, such as attitudes toward online aggression and the perceived efficacy of such behaviors, interact with the digital environment and social dynamics within tertiary institutions to influence the prevalence of cyberbullying. Social Cognitive Theory underscores the role of self-regulation in moderating behavior. Individuals with well-developed self-regulation skills are better equipped to resist cyberbullying behaviors or manage the situation when faced with online aggression. Understanding the factors contributing to or hindering self-regulation is

essential for devising interventions that empower students to navigate the digital landscape responsibly. The theory also emphasized the impact of environmental factors on behavior. In the digital age, the online environment, including social media platforms and communication channels, significantly influences the occurrence and dynamics of cyberbullying. Exploring how these environments shape attitudes and behaviors is critical for implementing targeted interventions and creating a safer online space within tertiary institutions.

The Social Learning Theory has been applied extensively to understanding aggression (Bandura, 1973) and psychological disorders, particularly in the context of behaviour modification (Bandura, 1969). It is also the theoretical foundation for the technique of behaviour modelling, which is widely used in various contexts (Bandura, 1993). For example, the most pervasive examples of social learning situations are television commercials. For instance, commercials suggest that drinking a certain beverage or using a particular hair shampoo will make the user popular and win the admiration of attractive people.

Empirical Review

Donatus and Victoria (2015) investigated the prevalence of bullying among primary school pupils in Ondo State, Nigeria. The sample consisted of 600 students selected through a multistage sampling technique from six secondary schools in the State. A structured questionnaire that sought information on the subject's involvement in bullying was provided. The validity and reliability of the instrument were ensured through content validity and test-retest reliability techniques, respectively. The results of data analysis on the experience and manifestation of bullying showed that less than half of the sample (28%) had experienced bullying, while 42% had bullied other students. It also revealed that the emotional form of bullying was most experienced and that boys

had experienced and manifested bullying more than their female counterparts. The results point to the need for violence prevention programmes in schools.

Adeyemi (2013) investigated the effectiveness of self-instructional and bully-proof strategies in managing school violence among transitional students in Junior Secondary Schools in Ibadan, Nigeria. The study adopted a pre-test, post-test, control group experimental design using a 3x2x2 factorial matrix. 108 Junior Secondary One students were selected from three local government areas in Ibadan through purposive sampling techniques. The scales used in the study were the School Violence Scale ($r = 0.68$) and Locus of Control Scale ($r = 0.71$), while Seven hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Analysis of Covariance and Scheffe Post-hoc were used for data analysis. Hypothesis one revealed a significant main effect of treatments ($F_{2, 95} = 18.29$; $p < 0.05$), while the bully-proof strategy ($F = 25.57$) was more effective than self-instructional ($F = 27.86$). In addition, hypothesis 5, which examines the interaction effect of treatments and locus of control on managing school violence, was significant ($F_{2, 95} = 3.98$; $p < 0.05$). Further results revealed that hypotheses 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 were insignificant. Given the findings, suggestions and recommendations were raised for effectively utilizing counselling strategies for managing school violence.

Egbochuku (2007) examined bullying in Nigerian schools: prevalence study and implications for counselling. School bullying is becoming a threat that no school can afford to dismiss. Although many demographic variables associated with bullying have been examined, there has been no study in Nigeria which has looked into a comparison between Government and Private/Mission schools. This neglected demographic variable in addition to establishing the incidence of bullying in schools in Benin City, Edo state. It was found that 78% of the children have been victims of bullying on at least one occasion, and 71% have lashed out at others at least

once. However, more boys than girls were found to be both bullies and victims ($\chi^2 = 18.570$, $p < 0.01$). Boys reported being kicked or hit more often than girls ($\chi^2 = 13.302$, $p < 0.01$). The result shows that it was more common for bullying to take place in the classroom in government schools than in private schools ($\chi^2 = 43.773$, $p < 0.05$). The result demonstrated significant differences between the schools investigated. However, significantly more private schools reported kicking and hitting taking place in the playground than in the government schools, whereas bullying is more likely to take place in the classroom in government schools. It is recommended that counsellors play a significant role in combating the patterns of unhappiness and violence, out of which much bullying arises.

Research Methodology

Using the random sampling technique, 200 students (50 freshmen, 30 sophomores, 65 juniors and 55 seniors) volunteered to participate at Federal University Lokoja (total enrollment of 13,327). The participants included 90 females and 110 males. However, while analyzing the responses, it was discovered that about ten students still needed to complete their survey, which was termed as outliers and deleted, leaving the research with 190 undergraduate students' responses. The age range includes students aged 18-25 ($n=60$), 25-35 ($n=55$), 35-45 ($n=40$), and 45-above ($n=35$).

Research Instrument

For convenience and cost management, the researcher printed and distributed questionnaires among the research community to reach the targeted population. This research adopted the electronic questionnaire format (Google form). The authors permitted the use of this survey. Dr Peter Uzomba, a fellow lecturer in the Department of Economics at Federal University

Lokoja, assessed and approved the survey. This three-part survey contained demographic data and a 10-item survey. The definition of the theme of discussion was also included.

Data Collection

After the questionnaire was assessed and approved, the email address of the study participant was obtained from the school ICT centre. Surveys were emailed to approximately 7000 undergraduate students of Federal University Lokoja five (5) times consecutively and in phases of intervals of one month. The total responses yielded in the five attempts resulted in 200 participants, with about ten deleted outliers. One setback of using an online survey is the potential low response rate (Dillman, 2007). However, considering the population's size, it was perceived as the most effective and efficient method. Data were analyzed using statistical tables and simple percentages.

Findings

Question 1: Do you have an Objective Knowledge about cyberbullying?

Table 1: Respondents' Overview of Cyberbullying

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	180	94.7
NOT	0	0
UNDECIDED	10	5.3
TOTAL	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses provided suggest a high awareness of cyberbullying, with a majority (94%) acknowledging its existence. This indicates a recognition of the importance of addressing this issue in society. The lack of undecided responses (0%) suggests a clear stance.

Question 2: How do you perceive cyberbullying?

Table 2: Prevalence of Cyberbullying within the University Community

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Very distressing	46	23.7
Minor concern	10	5.3
Pervasive societal problem	55	28.9
An alarming reflection of the dark side of our digital society	60	42.1
Total	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to question 2 provide insights into the diverse perceptions of cyberbullying among the participants. A significant portion (42.1%) views it as "an alarming reflection of the dark side of our digital society," indicating a deep concern about the negative impact of cyberbullying on the online environment. Another substantial portion (28.9%) perceives it as a "pervasive societal problem," emphasizing the widespread nature of this issue. The category "very distressing" (23.7%) suggests a considerable emotional impact on respondents, while a smaller percentage (5.3%) sees it as a "minor concern." These varied perspectives highlight the complexity of

addressing cyberbullying and the need for comprehensive strategies that consider both its emotional toll and societal implications.

Question 3: have you ever been a victim of cyberbullying?

Table 3: Perception of Cyberbullying

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	50	26.3
NO	110	57.9
UNDECIDED	30	15.8
TOTAL	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to question 3 indicate that a notable percentage (26.3%) of the participants have been victims of cyberbullying. This highlights the prevalence of this issue in the surveyed group. A majority (57.9%) claims not to have experienced cyberbullying, while a smaller but significant portion (15.8%) remains undecided. It is essential to address the experiences of those victimized, emphasizing the importance of support systems, education, and preventive measures to create a safer online environment for everyone. Additionally, understanding the reasons behind the undecided responses may provide valuable insights for further investigation or intervention.

Question 4: If your answer to question (3) above is yes, what was the experience?

Table 4: Experience of Victims

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Online becomes a potential source of hostility	15	30
Social isolation	5	10
The constant barrage of negative messages	20	40
Relentless online harassment and false information	10	20
Total	50	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to question 4 provide a breakdown of the experiences of those who have been victims of cyberbullying. The most commonly reported experience is the constant barrage of negative messages (40%), indicating a persistent and harmful form of online harassment. Cyberspace becoming a potential source of hostility (30%) and relentless online harassment and false information (20%) also feature prominently, emphasizing the pervasive and damaging nature of cyberbullying. A smaller percentage (10%) reported social isolation, suggesting that the impact extends beyond online interactions to affect individuals' real-world relationships. These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address the various aspects of cyberbullying experiences.

Question 5: What form does cyberbullying usually take at Federal University Lokoja

Table 5: Forms of Cyberbullying Facilitated by Social Media

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Hate speech	30	15.8
Trolling	60	31.6
Doxin	25	13.2
Exclusion	30	15.8
Flaming	40	21.1
Cyberstalking	15	7.9
Total	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to Question 5 provide insights into the prevalent forms of cyberbullying at Federal University Lokoja. Trolling is the most frequently mentioned form (31.6%), indicating a significant occurrence of intentionally provocative online behavior. Flaming (21.1%) and hate speech (15.8%) also represent substantial proportions, highlighting the prevalence of aggressive and offensive online communication. Exclusion (15.8%) points to the impact of social isolation through digital means. Doxing (13.2%) and cyberstalking (7.9%) are reported less frequently but still indicate concerns about the malicious exposure of personal information and persistent online harassment. Addressing these specific forms of cyberbullying is crucial for developing effective preventive measures tailored to the university context.

Question 6: What role do social media play in facilitating cyberbullying at Federal University Lokoja?

Table 6: Role of Social Media in Enhancing Bullying

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Cyberstander	70	36.9
Public shaming	45	26.7
Amplification of content	50	26.7
Anonymity and impersonation	25	15.2
Total	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to Question 6 shed light on social media's various roles in facilitating cyberbullying at Federal University Lokoja. The most prominent role is identified as "Cyberstander" (36.9%), indicating the involvement of individuals who witness cyberbullying but do not actively intervene. "Amplification of content" (26.3%) suggests that social media platforms contribute to the widespread dissemination of harmful content, exacerbating the impact of cyberbullying incidents. "Public shaming" (26.7%) underscores the role of social media in exposing individuals to public scrutiny. Additionally, "Anonymity and impersonation" (13.2%) highlight the challenges posed by online platforms that allow users to conceal their identities, potentially leading to increased incidents of cyberbullying. Addressing these specific dynamics is crucial for implementing targeted strategies to mitigate the impact of social media on cyberbullying within the university community.

Question 7: Does Cyberbullying have any correlation with poor student performance?

Table 7: Correlation between Cyberbullying and Poor Students Academic Performance

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
YES	150	78.9
NO	30	15.8
UNDECIDED	10	5.3
TOTAL	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

responses to Question 7, indicating a perception that cyberbullying correlates with poor student performance, are noteworthy. With 78.9% of participants affirming this correlation, it suggests a strong belief among the surveyed population that cyberbullying has a negative impact on academic achievement. The overwhelming agreement (78.9%) underscores the perceived seriousness of the issue. This high consensus could be indicative of a widely held belief that the emotional and psychological toll of cyberbullying can adversely affect a student's ability to focus, engage, and perform academically. The prevalent view aligns with the understanding that cyberbullying does not only pose social and emotional challenges but may also manifest in tangible consequences for a student's overall well-being, including academic outcomes. If there is indeed a correlation between cyberbullying and poor academic performance, addressing cyberbullying could become a priority not only for student well-being but also for maintaining a conducive learning environment.

Question 8: What coping mechanism do students usually employ when confronted with cyberbullying?

Table 8: Coping Mechanism to Victims of Cyberbullying

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Digital Detox	54	28.4
Building resilience	46	24.2
Documenting and reporting	25	13.2
Seeking support from trusted friends and relatives	65	34.2
Total	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to Question 8 provide insights into the coping mechanisms employed by students at Federal University Lokoja when faced with cyberbullying. A significant portion (34.2%) seeks support from trusted friends and relatives, highlighting the importance of social connections and emotional assistance in navigating cyberbullying experiences. "Digital detox" (28.4%) suggests that some students opt to temporarily disengage from digital platforms to alleviate the impact of cyberbullying. "Building Resilience" (24.2%) emphasizes the proactive approach of developing emotional strength to withstand and overcome cyberbullying incidents. "Documenting and Reporting" (13.2%) indicates a recognition of the importance of documenting evidence and reporting incidents, reflecting a desire for institutional intervention. These coping mechanisms showcase a diverse range of strategies, emphasizing the need for comprehensive support systems and educational initiatives to empower students in addressing cyberbullying effectively.

Question 9: How do existing policies and institutional frameworks address the menace of cyberbullying at Federal University Lokoja?

Table 9: Institutional Response to Cyberbullying

OPTION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Effective	50	26.3
Ineffective	95	50
UNDECIDED	45	23.7
TOTAL	190	100

Source: Field Survey 2024

The responses to Question 9 suggest a mixed perception of how existing policies and institutional frameworks address cyberbullying at Federal University Lokoja. While a notable portion (26.3%) views these measures as practical, a more significant majority (50%) considers them ineffective. The significant undecided responses (23.7%) indicate a level of uncertainty or lack of clarity regarding the efficacy of current policies. This feedback highlights the need for a thorough evaluation of existing policies, potential revisions, and improved communication to ensure students understand the available mechanisms for addressing cyberbullying. Enhancing these frameworks may involve collaboration between students, faculty, and administration to create a safer digital environment within the university.

Discussion of Finding

The research findings at Federal University Lokoja indicate a significant prevalence of cyberbullying, with 26.3% of the surveyed population admitting to being victims. Various forms of cyberbullying, including trolling, flaming, hate speech, exclusion, doxing, and cyberstalking, were reported. It is also discovered that the perceptions of cyberbullying varied, with 42.1% viewing it as an alarming reflection of the dark side of the digital society and 28.9% considering it a pervasive societal problem. Victims commonly experienced a constant barrage of negative messages, indicating the persistent and harmful nature of online harassment. The research also discovered that social media played a substantial role in facilitating cyberbullying, with cyberstander behavior, content amplification, public shaming, and anonymity for impersonation being identified as critical dynamics. With 78% of the respondents agreeing to the relationship between cyberbullying and poor students' academic performances, it indicates that cyberbullying can adversely affect a student's ability to focus and perform well academically. Coping mechanisms included seeking support from friends and relatives, digital detox, building resilience, and documenting/reporting incidents. Concerningly, there is a divide in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of existing policies and institutional frameworks, with 50% considering them ineffective. This underscores the need for a thorough evaluation and potential revision of current policies and improved communication to address cyberbullying more effectively within the university community.

Limitations of the Study

Evidently, this research was a pilot study; the data collected was limited to Federal University Lokoja, Kogi State undergraduate students. Thus, caution should be used to generalize results to other universities within and outside Nigeria. Another limitation of the study was using an online survey. Online surveys are limited in that they typically have a low response. An

additional limitation is that survey responses sometimes need to be more generally accurate predictors of actual behaviors. Conclusion and Implications

Conclusion

In conclusion, the study underscores the need for immediate actions to curb the rising trend of cyberbullying. By addressing this issue through policy enhancement, Federal University Lokoja can foster a safer and more supportive online environment, contributing to its students' overall well-being and academic success. This research serves as a call to action for institutions to proactively combat cyberbullying and create a conducive digital space for their student community.

Recommendations

Cyberbullying on social media among undergraduate college students is a problem that needs immediate attention. These occurrences can cause a student to lose perspective of who they are and can lead to suicide, violence, and school dropout. College and university officials should address this issue because of the increase in technology use and instances of cyberbullying. There should be prevention strategies in place to address this problem. The most effective way to tackle the issue includes:

Enhance Awareness Programs: Conduct workshops, seminars, and awareness campaigns to educate students about the consequences of cyberbullying and the importance of fostering a positive online environment. An example can be seen from the University of California, Berkeley, which implemented comprehensive awareness programs that led to a notable decrease in cyberbullying incidents, creating a more informed and responsible online community.

Strengthen Institutional Policies: Review and update existing policies to address cyberbullying, incorporating clear definitions, reporting mechanisms, and disciplinary measures. A perfect example of the effective nature of this can be observed in Harvard University's revamped anti-bullying policies, incorporating digital behavior guidelines, resulting in a more robust framework for addressing cyberbullying on campus.

Establish a Support System: Create a dedicated support system, such as a helpline or counseling services, where students can seek assistance when faced with cyberbullying incidents. The University of Michigan implemented a 24/7 support line that provides counseling and guidance for students dealing with cyberbullying, fostering a culture of support and resilience.

Collaborate with Social Media Platforms: Partner with social media platforms to implement tools and features that combat cyberbullying, such as reporting mechanisms, content moderation, and proactive detection algorithms. Instagram's introduction of AI-powered tools to detect and filter offensive comments has successfully reduced cyberbullying on its platform.

Integrate Cyber Ethics Education: Incorporate cyber ethics courses into the curriculum to teach students responsible online behavior, digital citizenship, and the impact of cyberbullying on individuals and society. The University of Oxford implemented a mandatory cyber ethics course that contributed to a heightened awareness of responsible online conduct among its student body.

Promote Positive Online Behavior: Encourage and recognize positive online behavior through campaigns highlighting and rewarding students engaging in constructive and supportive interactions. Stanford University initiated a "Digital Kindness Challenge" that encouraged students to share positive content and uplifting conversations online, contributing to a more positive digital culture.

These recommendations draw from successful initiatives implemented in various educational institutions and online platforms, showcasing effective strategies to tackle and reduce cyberbullying. The key lies in a holistic approach that combines education, policy reinforcement, support mechanisms, and collaboration with online platforms to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment.

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