

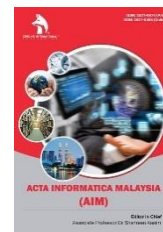
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RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA CYBERBULLYING ON STUDENTS IN SELECTED AFRICAN COUNTRIES

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the psychosocial impact of cyberbullying on social media among students in Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon. The study adopted a quantitative research methodology in collecting data from 99 students across the selected African countries using a well-designed electronic questionnaire (e-questionnaire). The study found that cyberbullying on social media has psychosocial implications for the student. Furthermore, the study revealed ways and strategies to mitigate the spread and act of cyberbullying of students on social media platforms. Conclusively, the study unpacked the psychosocial impacts of cyberbullying on students. Therefore, the research, without a doubt, contributed to an in-depth understanding of various aspects of the psychosocial impact of cyberbullying on social media on students and as well as a possible profound solution to mitigating cyberbullying.

KEYWORDS

Bullying, Cyberbullying, Psychosocial, Social media, Students

1. INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying is electronic bullying with mixed effects on the bullied. Social media presents positive as well as negative impacts on our society. Social media promotes access to instant news and events happening around the society in advancing social awareness and creating knowledge and information on the go. On the negative side, some social media users are using these platforms to create injury and terror on others in the form of cyberbullying. Advancement in technology and the increasing sophistication in disseminating information worldwide have led to an increase in social media's negative and positive impacts on users. Social media enhances communication among people globally, even from their various comfort zones (Grigg, 2010).

Some researchers reported that social media enables communication among people globally but has positive and negative impacts on users (Aborisade and Adebayo, 2018). Okurumeh and Ukaoha observed that the strength of social media solely lies in its viral capacity to share information and enable users to construct ideas (Okurumeh and Ukaoha, 2015). These ideas could be shared through Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, Messenger, and Instagram, which, over the years, have witnessed a massive upsurge. Social media is regarded as electronic media that allows people to create content and views and share it with others over the Internet. People of different ages tend to spend a larger part of their time on social media either through smartphones, laptops, iPads, or different types of computers.

Such constant use of social media could increase the risk of bullying or being bullied, leading to user's obsessive publicizing of daily routine to the social world with potential adverse psychosocial impacts (Kokkinos et al.,

2014). Interestingly, social media platforms are targets for cyber-related crimes and abuse because of the high population and perceived false sense of security of users; therefore, there is a need for more concern on how it generally affects the users (Okurumeh and Ukaoha, 2015). To that effect, many studies abound on social media and cyberbullying. Still, this study distinctly focused on determining the psychosocial impacts of social media cyberbullying on students in selected African countries through a quantitative research method.

2. OVERVIEW OF CYBERBULLYING

Bullying simply refers to the intentional perpetration of a wrongful act against someone or a group of persons. Such unlawful acts could be written, verbally, gesture, or even physical (Laas and Boezaart, 2014). Bullying can be intimidating on the side of the victim, mind-controlling, assaultive, and emotionally destabilising. Cyberbullying on social media is a daily occurrence, with people of different backgrounds taking advantage of others, either aware or unaware (Johnson et al., 2016). The receptiveness of cyberbullying varies among individuals as some people tend to react positively through blocking the bully to cut off the communication, reporting the bully to a friend, or deleting messages without reading them to avoid being bullied. In contrast, other persons may suffer anxiety, academic challenges, and even depression (Cassim, 2013). Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occurs on media platforms, which can be through the use of instant messaging, online chat forums, texts, videos, and others (Cassim, 2013).

Cyberbullying can be through cell phones, internet chats, and electronic mails, whereby people release threatening statements, spreading rumours or insulting others (Calvete et al., 2010; Cross et al., 2014; Chukwuere et

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al., 2017). Cankaya and Tan observed that cyberbullying also includes online harassment, name-calling, sharing rumours, embarrassment, and many more, which is regarded as an illegal action (Cankaya and Tan, 2011; Johnson et al., 2016). Cankaya and Tan further articulate cyberbullying as cyber aggression, unwarranted spreading of internet virus, invading privacy through hacking into accounting, spreading nude pictures, and using abusive language on people (Cankaya and Tan, 2011). Cyberbullying to date poses a serious challenge to social media users (Reddy, 2018). According to Apostolides bullying is the use of aggressive behaviour to abuse an individual, which could be emotionally, physically, or even spiritually (Apostolides, 2017). Any age group can be bullied at any point on social media.

Moyo and Abdullah reported that the use of social media had grown concerns from different people regarding its potential addiction, bullying, and effects on students globally (Moyo and Abdullah, 2013). Notwithstanding the possibility of affecting academics positively and improvement of experience, its continuous usage leads to addictions. Cyberbullying causes a series of problems to the bullied; among the problems are substance abuse, anxiety, withdrawal from other people, depression, loneliness, and poor concentrations (Popovac and Leoschut, 2012).

3. THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPACT OF CYBERBULLYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Social media in the current dispensation has become a common term understood by many and an avenue for communication and constituting a wide area of subject for research (Nwammuo and Salawu, 2018). Research has shown that too much use of social media leads to different mental health conditions such as anxiety disorder, depression, and loneliness (Kokkinos et al., 2014). Reddy posits that the untoward effects on the use of social media might be far-reaching and, at times, be unpredictable by the individual (Reddy, 2018). The usage of social media may negatively affect a student's future at the time of job hunting because some big companies employ the use of social media in running an online check on the characters of their prospective candidates. In that regard, past social media posts may come back to hurt the candidate, leading to failure to secure the desired job. Studies have shown that stakeholders in Nigeria are desperately concerned over the awkward behavioural pattern of the youths using social media (Aborisade and Adebayo, 2018).

Vanguard attested to this fact and further reported that Abuja-based parents are alarmed about the negative psychological implications of cyberbullying on their children (Vanguard, 2017). These impacts pose lots of harm and destruction to their morals and education. However, social media has various positive effects, such as enhancing easy socialisation for shy individuals. Notwithstanding, frequent social media users tend to develop an anxiety disorder, interpersonal conflict, and withdrawal challenges; these impacts can dent relationship circles (Farhangpour and Matendawafa, 2014). The use of social media frequently encourages the users to engage in different types of nastic behaviours or the other, for instance, a study conducted by American Law and Espelage reported that 10 to 33% of youths between the age of 11 and 19 years reported having been bullied online, while 15% of the younger people reported having bullied others online (American Law and Espelage, 2013). Human behaviours are modified by distinct factors such as psychological, cultural, biological, and social, and therefore behaviours enhance interactions between man and his immediate surroundings (Obikeze and Obi, 2015).

In that regard, human beings can be influenced by the social elements, and with the rapid evolution of social media and the frequent engagement of individuals on the Internet, users are more exposed to psychological challenges. Cyberbullying on social media affects the confidence and trust of social media users in the network technologies they are using and leads to emotional traumas (Cassim, 2013). Cyberbullying predisposes victims to prolonged social instability, poor physical and mental health (Sikhakhane et al., 2018).

4. MITIGATING CYBERBULLYING ON SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

Cyberbullying is devastating to society through emotional torture and devastation; therefore, there is a high need for mitigating the accompanying awkward impacts (Cowie, 2013). Public awareness should

be among the primary area of focus for social media users (Grigg, 2010). Public awareness on the need for the masses to take cognisance of the way they use the social media, for instance in the area of using mobile phones for sharing of the picture and other information that could help in abuse, also social media users should learn how to block any bully or ignore abusive chats courageously. Cyberbullying cuts across all age groups and walks of life and should be tackled from every facet; for instance, maintained that cyberbullying is a serious concern to schools because of its impacts on peers and, therefore teachers should be watchful in curtailing those bullies (Nilan et al., 2015). Among the suggested ways of mitigating cyberbullying is setting up disciplinary policies, identifying perpetrators, and appropriately sanctioning the offenders. Cassim posits that to improve the devastating impacts of cyberbullying on social media users, network technology operators must put in place adequate securities against those bully contents and maintain the safety of the users (Cassim, 2013). Also, all role-players should collaborate in addressing the problem of cyberbullying. Chandarman and van Niekert maintained that there is a pressing need for cyberbullying awareness campaigns to equip stakeholders and employees with knowledge for safe online interactions (Chandarman and van Niekert, 2017). The international cyberbullying best practice also advocates this. The devastating impacts of cyber-bully cannot be neglected.

Against this background, Smit posits that the challenges in mitigating cyberbullying are not only embedded in legislative applications but in the actual provision of preventive measures in the school's environment, which will serve as a grass-root solution and also developing policies that will prohibit all forms of cyberbullying and adequate encouragement of positive communication among social media users (Smit, 2015). To further address cyberbullying, understanding the nature, the extent, and risk factors of cyberbullying in society, especially schools, will help in proper channeling of resources toward addressing it and also help in policy-making and implementations (Juan et al., 2018). Institution of intervention programmes geared toward restoring victims to their formal proper psychosocial state and arresting and prosecution of perpetrators (Sikhakhane et al. 2018). The public and private sector, academia, and other nations' partnership promulgating awareness of cyberbullying and further educating nations on the pressing need to curb cyberbullying (Kortjan and von Solms, 2014). Hlophe, Morojele and Motsa (2017) further maintained that more research needs to be conducted to raise further awareness against cyberbullying and its impacts on the psychosocial wellbeing of the social media user (Hlophe et al., 2017).

5. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVE/QUESTIONS

Cyberbullying has been increasingly gaining research attention over these years due to the accompanying devastating impacts on social media users. Online bully or cyberbullying is a new phenomenon that affects girls more online and boys physically, while others researchers believed that cyberbullying occurs more at K-12 grades and increases at colleges (Notar et al., 2013; Brewer et al., 2012). Researchers found that cyberbullying is rooted in a more traditional form of a bully, which entails physical confrontation. Still, cyberbullying tends to flourish in this dispensation due to broader cyber-space making it more devastating to the bullied (Mienie, 2013). The face of cyberbullying can be challenged and eliminated.

According to academic researchers should dedicate and investigate the prevalence of cyberbullying; awareness should be created in the government offices, public gatherings, malls, religious institutions, and many more on the consequences of social media cyberbullying on students (Chukwuere et al., 2017). The researchers also suggest that anti-cyberbullying strategies should be introduced in the classrooms. These authors and many others proved the reality of cyberbullying in society and at learning institutions. Against this, the researchers elected to research the psychosocial impacts of cyberbullying on students in selected African countries such as Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon. The research questions for the study are contained below:

- What are the psychosocial impacts of cyberbullying on social media users?
- How can cyberbullying be mitigated among social media users, especially students?

6. METHODS

This study adopted a quantitative descriptive approach to understanding the psychosocial impacts of cyberbullying on students in selected African countries using social media platforms. According to social media

platforms provide an alternative tool for conducting a research survey, but researchers are not exploring the platforms (Mirabeau et al., 2013). Mahrt and Scharkow believed that a questionnaire could be circulated and collected digitally (using social media platforms) than on hardcopy (Mahrt and Scharkow, 2013). As quantitative research, a questionnaire was deployed to the sampled population: students who have witnessed or experienced cyberbullying on the social media platform/s. In this digital age, the population of data has increased, making it difficult for data sampling on social media (Liang and Zhu, 2017). However, the Social Media Research Group suggests that data volume from social media research can be associated with a group of users based on demographics, interest, and many more (Social Media Research Group, 2016). For this study, the data volume was drawn from the student's (participants) population based on their witness and experience of cyberbullying on social media. The study applied a cross-sectional approach to students using social media platforms in Nigeria, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and Cameroon over a period of four months. The questionnaire was designed to determine students who have been cyberbullied, witnessed, experienced, or understood the concept of cyberbullying on the social media platform.

Convenience random sampling was used in selecting the students (users for this study). The study involves students from Nigeria (23), Ghana (43), Zimbabwe (23), and Cameroon (10). The locations were deployed through students' social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and others. Online open-ended questionnaires were prepared on Google Form and distributed to different social media users across Facebook, Twitter, and others. Google Forms is a free tool on Google for users to build online questionnaires. According to social media platforms have become a primary data source in quantitative research (Liang and Zhu, 2017). The researchers further highlight the use of social media harvesting, which involves collecting data from social media platforms. The harvesting process can be done "unobtrusively and automatically" without affecting users (Liang and Zhu, 2017). The data was collected between June 2019 and September 2019.

Table 1: Country participants and their sample size

Country	Sample Size
Nigeria	23
Ghana	43
Zimbabwe	23
Cameroon	10
TOTAL	99

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis and discussions of this study were done according to the study objectives/questions, including the demographic information of the participants (students). The data analysis was done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) tool and Microsoft spreadsheet in determining the descriptive statistics in tables. While the content analysis was adopted to discover common themes from participants on the "Other forms of suggestions to mitigate cyberbullying" below in understanding suggestive measures by the participants in mitigating cyberbullying on social media. The question is open-ended which is analysed using the content analysis technique. Content analysis can be a qualitative research tool to unpack themes and categories from large text related to the research topic and researchers' interest (Haggarty, 1996; Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2017). The content analysis uncovers literal meaning from the large text, as seen in this study on the open-ended question.

7.1 Demographic information

The demographic information focused on understanding the demographic distribution of the participants (students) in the study. The study found that 64 (64.0%) of the students were male, while 35 (35.0%) were female. The composition of the participants is male. The participants' age groups indicate 34-39 (23%), 40 and above (21%), 23-28 (20%), 29-33 (18%) and 18-22 (17%). The study highlights that participants in the age range of 34-39 years participated more in the study. This study involves students from selected African countries when asked to indicate their years of study. The study found that 38% of the students are postgraduates, graduate 34%, the third year 7%, postdoctoral 6%, SHS 6%, fourth and second year 6%

respectively, and first-year 2%. The indication shows that postgraduate (master's and PhD) students participated more in the study. The high participation of postgraduate students is linked to the age group of the participants. It shows that majority of the participants are mature adults with appropriate knowledge of the study.

7.2 What are the psychosocial impacts of cyberbullying on social media users?

Cyberbullying is increasing among students and harming their psychosocial factors, which directly impact academic progress and success. Students' knowledge about cyberbullying and the implication determines how serious they will take the impacts in their lives and society. This question, "I have knowledge about cyberbullying on social media," was asked, aimed to determine students' knowledge level about cyberbullying off-and-on social media. The study revealed that 52 (52.5%) of the students have average knowledge, while 40 (40.4%) have perfect knowledge, and no knowledge 7 (7.0%). The finding indicates that students have average knowledge about cyberbullying. The results confirm views that lack of sensitisation campaigns on cyberbullying is the cause of the mass cyberbullying among students in educational institutions (Chandarman and van Niekert, 2017). As a result, there is a need for educational institutions' counseling and guidance units to embark on cyberbullying awareness campaigns to empower online users on its implications. Students' knowledge about cyberbullying can be linked to their witness, experience, and their percussions on others.

Table 2: The consequence of cyberbullying on social media (witnessed, depressed, quitting, and engagement)

No	Constructs			
		Yes	No	Not sure
1	I have witnessed cyberbullying on social media	63	23	13
		63.6%	23.2%	13.1%
2	I have felt so depressed because of cyberbullying on social media	40	43	16
		40.4%	43.4%	16.2%
3	I have felt like quitting social media because of cyberbullying	29	58	12
		29.3%	58.6%	12.1%
4	Have you engaged in the act of cyberbullying others on social media	7	84	8
		7.1%	84.8%	8.1%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 2 presents' four (4) kinds of questions that aimed to determine whether the students have witnessed cyberbullying felt depressed, quitting social media because of cyberbullying, and engaged in the act of cyberbullying others on social media. The study found that 63 (63.6%) of the students have experienced or witnessed one form of cyberbullying on social media. The second question aimed to understand whether students have felt depressed because of cyberbullying on social media. From the finding, 43 (43.4%) of the students posit that cyberbullying has not made them feel depressed. However, 40 (40.4%) of the students have felt depressed because of social media cyberbullying.

According to Table 1, the third question sought to understand whether cyberbullying can cause students to quit social media. The finding shows that 58 (58.6%) students have not felt like quitting social media because of cyberbullying. This indicates that students are coping and managing cyberbullying in order not to quit social media. Finally, 84 (84.8%) of the students have not bullied others on social media. The finding shows that students' awareness of cyberbullying restricts them from engaging in the act of bullying others on social media. In support of this finding, research report proves that only 15% of the younger people have bullied others online (Low and Espelage's, 2013).

Table 3: Different methods of cyberbullying on social media			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Different methods of cyberbullying on social media	Use of post	68	17.9%
	Like	22	5.8%
	Chat	54	14.2%
	Video	56	14.7%
	Picture	70	18.4%
	Comment/s	68	17.9%
	Text	42	11.1%
Total		380	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 3 presents different forms of activities students perform on social media in bullying others, or it shows methods of cyberbullying on social media. The study shows that 70 (18.4%) of the students suggest that pictures are the most used method of cyberbullying on social media. In comparison, the use of post and comment (68 – 17.9% respectively) is also commonly used. In a hierarchy, pictures, posts, comments, video, chat, text, and like are different methods of cyberbullying on social media. Cassim (2013) indicates that instant messaging, online chat forums, texts, videos, and others are daily activities performed on social media (Calvete et al., 2010; Cross et al., 2014; Chukwuere and Chukwuere, 2017).

Table 4: Most used social media platforms for cyberbullying			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Most used social media for cyberbullying	Facebook	88	33.6%
	Twitter	48	18.3%
	WhatsApp	53	20.2%
	Instagram	42	16.0%
	YouTube	26	9.9%
	Duo	1	0.4%
	LinkedIn	4	1.5%
Total		262	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

There are different kinds of social media platforms used in cyberbullying. Table 4 question aimed to determine the most used social media students in developing countries commonly use daily. According to Table 4, 88 (33.6%) of the students believe that Facebook is the most used social media platform for cyberbullying, followed by 54 (20.2%) on WhatsApp, Twitter 48 (18.3%), Instagram 42 (16.0%), YouTube 26 (9.9%), LinkedIn 4 (1.5%) and Duo 1 (0.4%). The finding indicates that cyberbullying occurs across different forms of social media platforms. Facebook is mostly used because of its openness for the public to post, comment, chat and perform other functions with other users without one necessarily being accepted into a friend zone.

Table 5: Ways of cyberbullying on social media platforms			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Ways of cyberbullying on social media	Racial words	51	8.5%
	Force to do something	26	4.4%
	Gossip	30	5.0%
	Threats	47	7.9%
	Abusive words	70	11.7%
	Request for sex	33	5.5%
	Request for nude pictures	41	6.9%
	Request for relationship	23	3.9%
	Spread rumours/False information	67	11.2%
	Sexual expressed picture	47	7.9%
	Sexual expressed video	40	6.7%
	Racial messages	38	6.4%
	Love associated messages	16	2.7%
	Call names	36	6.0%
Sexual remarks	32	5.4%	
Total		597	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 6: Different psychosocial factors that motivate cyberbullying on social media			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Different psychosocial factors that motivate cyberbullying on social media	Hostility	40	7.8%
	Stress	30	5.8%
	Hopelessness	26	5.0%
	Depression	44	8.5%
	Physical illness	17	3.3%
	Lack of social support	46	8.9%
	Personal life issues	54	10.5%
	Family issues	36	7.0%
	Societal issues	55	10.7%
	Peer influence	68	13.2%
	For fun	52	10.1%
	Retaliation	47	9.1%
Total		515	100.0%

Fieldwork, 2019

Different psychosocial factors can motivate students to engage in cyberbullying on social media. Table 6 present those psychosocial factors intending to understand if they, in any way or the other, influence students to participate in cyberbullying. The finding reports that each of the above psychosocial factors (Table 6) influences students' cyberbullying actions on social media. However, 67 (13.2%) of the students indicate that peer influence motivates them to participate in cyberbullying, while social issues 55 (10.7%), personal life issues 54 (10.5%), for fun 52 (10.1%), and many more motivate students to participate in cyberbullying against fellow students and others on social media. On the other hand, cyberbullying is inspired or motivated by several psychosocial factors; without the above factors and many others, the act of cyberbullying on social media will possibly not occur. In summation, psychosocial factors impact students' engagement in cyberbullying on social media.

Table 7: Social determinants factors that motivate individuals to engage in cyberbullying on social media			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Social determinants factors that motivate individuals to engage	Culture	43	13.9%
	Gender	47	15.2%
	Age	37	11.9%
	Social pressure	80	25.8%
	Belief	49	15.8%
	Status	54	17.4%
Total		310	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Human behaviours are modified by distinct factors such as psychological, cultural, biological, and social, and therefore behaviours enhance interactions between man and his immediate surroundings (Obikeze and Obi, 2015). Table 7 focused on social determinants factors that motivate students to engage in cyberbullying on social media. The study recorded that 80 (25.8%) of the students indicated that social pressure is the leading social determinant factor that moves them to engage in cyberbullying on social media. Furthermore, student social status (54 – 17.4%) can also motivate them to cyberbully others, while their belief system (49 – 15.8%) increases and adds to their chances of engaging in cyberbullying on social media. These are a hierarchy of social determinant factors: social pressure, status, belief, gender, culture, and age, which define the motive of student's engagement in cyberbullying.

7.3 Educational Implications Of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying has a dire implication on students' academic progress and performance. This section of the study indicated the educational implication of cyberbullying of students on a five-point Likert scale, from

strongly agree (1) to neutral (5). However, the study rearranged the scales into following range: Strongly agree (SA) + Agree (A) = Total (A) or (TA), Strongly disagree (SD) + Disagree (D) = Total (D) or (TD) and Neutral (N).

TA, TD, and N will be the main focus in the analysis and discussions for this study.

Table 8: Educational implications of cyberbullying									
No	Construct	SA	A	TA	SD	D	TD	N	No
1	I will miss classes when cyberbullied on social media	5	22	27	20	32	52	20	1
		5.1%	22.2%	27.3%	20.2%	32.3%	52.5%	20.2%	
2	I do feel like quitting school because of cyberbullying	9	10	19	27	36	63	17	2
		9.1%	10.1%	19.2%	27.3%	36.4%	63.7%	17.2%	
3	Cyberbullying on social media affects students' academic performance	35	44	79	2	7	9	11	3
		35.4%	44.4%	79.8%	2.0%	7.1%	9.0%	11.1%	
4	I dislike seeing other students because of the impacts of cyberbullying on me	5	22	27	15	27	42	30	4
		5.1%	22.2%	27.3%	15.2%	27.3%	42.5%	30.3%	
5	Cyberbullying discourages students from using the Internet to sources educational materials online	15	32	47	13	29	42	10	5
		15.2%	32.3%	47.5%	13.1%	29.3%	42.4%	10.1%	

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 8 presents different implications of social media on students' educational journeys. The first question aimed to determine whether cyberbullying makes students miss classes. The finding proves that 52 (52.5%) students indicate that cyberbullying has not prevented them from missing their classes. The result can be interpreted that students are more focused and managing the implication well to the extent it does not hinder or prevent them from attending their classes. The second question aimed to ascertain whether students felt like quitting school because of the implications of cyberbullying on them. The finding indicates that 63 (63.7%) of the students suggest that cyberbullying on social media has not made them feel like quitting school entirely. The outcome also shows the students are coping well with the cyberbullying impacts on their studies.

Likewise, the third question sought to ascertain the effects of social media on students' academic performance. The research shows that 79 (79.8%) of the students believed that cyberbullying had impacted their academic performance. This means that cyberbullying has a direct impact on student learning and performance in their academic performance. The study further shows that 42 (42.5%) of the students suggest that cyberbullying on social media has not built hatred in them against their peers and fellow students. This indicates that students can separate cyberbullying implications on social media from their physical daily lives and regards to one another. Finally, the student revealed that 47 (47.5%) of the students suggest that cyberbullying on social media discourages them from using online educational resources to support their studies. The finding slightly differs from those who agreed (TA) on the question because many (42 – 42.4%) disagreed (TD). Nonetheless, cyberbullying on social media impacts the students, which discourages them from using online educational tools and resources irrespective of the mild nature of the implications.

7.4 The psychosocial implication of cyberbullying

There are many psychosocial consequences of cyberbullying on social media users. Table 8 presents ten (10) questions towards covering psychosocial consequences.

The first question sought to determine whether students will stop visiting and using social media because of bullying on social media. The research finding indicates that 46 (46.4%) of the students disagree that social media cyberbullying prevents them from visiting social media. This means that students are ready to distance themselves from social media because of cyberbullying. Question two (2) focused on understanding whether students can unfriend anyone who bullied them on social media. The study indicates that 89 (89.9%) suggest that they will distance and unfriend those who bully them on social media. This shows that students are ready to distance themselves from those who bully them on social media. Distancing is a preventive measure in protecting themselves on social media.

The third (3) question sought to understand the implication of cyberbullying on students' self-esteem. The study found that 84 (84.9%) of the students revealed that cyberbullying on social media negatively impacts their self-esteem. The effect can lead to isolation from peers, withdrawal from social media platforms, loss of self-confidence, inability to share a picture, comment, post comment/s, picture/s, video/s, liking, and many others. The fourth question aimed to identify whether the cyberbullying of students on social media will make them disassociate from a friend and social gathering. As shown in Table 9, 49 (49.5%) students indicate that they are likely to disassociate themselves from social media platforms and social meetings with peers, schoolmates, and other events because of the implication of cyberbullying on social media. This finding revealed that cyberbullying on social media leads to them withdrawing from friends and public gatherings. Social and friends withdrawal can be attributed to the social media effect (Farhangpour and Matendawafa, 2014).

Furthermore, a question was asked to understand whether students will hate people around them because of the impact of cyberbullying on social media. According to question 5, 72 (72.8%) of the participants (students) say they will not develop hatred against people around because they were bullied on social media. This also shows that students are controlling and managing the harmful effects of cyberbullying on social media. In addition, question six (6) reveals whether students' relationships are affected by the aftermath of cyberbullying on social media. As the study revealed (44 – 44.4%), the students' relationships are negatively affected because of the effect of cyberbullying. The effect is on personal relationships, loved ones (families, friends, and peers), romantic relationships, relationships with classmates, and others. Research findings by suggest that cyberbullying on social media can dent the relationship circles of the users (Farhangpour and Matendawafa, 2014).

Furthermore, question seven (7) aimed to determine whether cyberbullying on social media affects a student's social behaviour and attitude. The study found (90 – 90.9%) a negative effect on students' social behaviour and attitudes toward others and society because of cyberbullying on social media. Question eight (8) focused on understanding the emotional impact of cyberbullying on social media on students. The study implies that 88 (88.9%) of the students strongly agreed that cyberbullying on social media harms their emotions. The finding indicates that emotions run down as a result of cyberbullying. According to cyberbullying implies causing emotional trauma (Cassim, 2013). The ninth (9) question aimed to ascertain whether cyberbullying triggers students to bully others on social media. The finding indicates that 66 (66.6%) of the students confessed that cyberbullying on social media triggers them to bully others online. This finding implies that the unmanaged impacts of cyberbullying on social media trigger bullying against others. Increased usage of social media makes it possible for users to be bullied (Mienie, 2013). The tenth (10) question provides the finding

that 71 (71.7%) of the students indicated that cyberbullying triggers aggressive behaviour in the bullied.

Table 9: Psychosocial implications of cyberbullying

No	Construct	SA	A	TA	SD	D	TD	N
1	I will stop using and visiting social media when cyberbullied	14	20	34	14	32	46	19
		14.1%	20.2%	34.3%	14.1%	32.3%	46.4%	19.2%
2	I unfriend or unfollow anyone who cyberbullied me	48	41	89	2	2	4	6
		48.5%	41.4%	89.9%	2.0%	2.0%	4.0%	6.1%
3	Cyberbullying on social media impacts individual self-esteem	38	46	84	6	5	11	4
		38.4%	46.5%	84.9%	6.1%	5.1%	11.2%	4.0%
4	I will disassociate myself from friends and social gatherings when cyberbullied on social media	22	27	49	9	22	31	19
		22.2%	27.3%	49.5%	9.1%	22.2%	31.3%	19.2%
5	I hate people around me because I was cyberbullied on social media	4	6	10	26	46	72	17
		4.0%	6.1%	10.1%	26.3%	46.5%	72.8%	17.1%
6	My relationship is affected because of cyberbullying on social media	10	34	44	14	25	39	16
		10.1%	34.3%	44.4%	14.1%	25.3%	39.4%	16.2%
7	Cyberbullying on social media affect student's social behaviour and attitudes	27	63	90	2	4	6	3
		27.3%	63.6%	90.9%	2.0%	4.0%	6.0%	3.0%
8	There are emotional impacts of cyberbullying on social media	32	56	88	2	4	6	5
		32.3%	56.6%	88.9%	2.0%	4.0%	6.0%	5.1%
9	Cyberbullying triggers students (people) to bully others	14	52	66	5	18	23	10
		14.1%	52.5%	66.6%	5.1%	18.2%	23.3%	10.1%
10	Cyberbullying triggers aggressive behaviours on bullied	22	49	71	4	11	15	13
		22.2%	49.5%	71.7%	4.0%	11.1%	15.1%	13.1%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

8. HOW CAN CYBERBULLYING BE MITIGATED AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS, ESPECIALLY STUDENTS ?

The effect of cyberbullying on students is increasing on social media. The increase should be halted or eliminated for students to effectively use social media platforms to advance their social and academic activities and protect their mental health.

Table 10: Awareness, penalty and policy formulation

No	Construct	SA	A	TA	SD	D	TD	N
1	Improve the awareness of cyberbullying at religious institutions, malls, and public gatherings	57	35	92	2	3	5	2
		57.6%	35.4%	93.0%	2.0%	3.0%	5.0%	2.0%
2	Penalise individuals that carried cyberbullying against others on social media	49	39	88	1	3	4	7
		49.5%	39.4%	88.9%	1.0%	3.0%	4.0%	7.1%
3	Formulation of policies at higher education institutions to address cyberbullying	56	35	91	0	3	3	5
		56.6%	35.4%	92.0%	0%	3.0%	3.0%	5.1%
1	Improve the awareness of cyberbullying at religious institutions, malls, and public gatherings	57	35	92	2	3	5	2
		57.6%	35.4%	93.0%	2.0%	3.0%	5.0%	2.0%
2	Penalise individuals that carried cyberbullying against others on social media	49	39	88	1	3	4	7
		49.5%	39.4%	88.9%	1.0%	3.0%	4.0%	7.1%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 10 focused on understanding different ways to mitigate the cyberbullying of students on social media. Question one (1) on Table 10 tried to determine whether creating awareness about cyberbullying and the implications at the religious institutions and public gatherings will assist in mitigating cyberbullying. The study found that 92 (93.0%) of the students believed that awareness at religious institutions and a public meeting would help to increase awareness. This implies that the more people are aware of cyberbullying and the implications, the higher chances of preventing them from cyberbullying others (students) or getting bullied. Table 10 further aimed to determine whether penalising students (individuals) who carried cyberbullying on social media will help in preventing others from participating in the act.

The study finding shows that 88 (88.9%) of the students suggest that penalising cyberbullies will prevent others from the action. The study finding implies that penalties will mitigate students from engaging in the act of cyberbullying others on social media. Finally, the last question (3) focused on understanding whether the formulation of policies at higher education or institutions will mitigate students from engaging in cyberbullying on social media. 91 (92.0%) of the students believed that the formulation of an anti-cyberbullying policy at higher education institutions would assist in combating the act on social media platforms. The formulation of cyberbullying policy will assist in outlining the consequences of cyberbullies and their penalties.

Table 11: Preventive strategies in overcoming cyberbullying			
		Responses	
		N	Percent
Preventive strategies in overcoming cyberbullying	Change social media account	44	16.2%
	Change email	32	11.8%
	Change phone number	27	10.0%
	Avoid social media	19	7.0%
	Activate caller identifier	65	24.0%
	Unfriend or unfollow abusers	80	29.5%
	Bully back	4	1.5%
Total		271	100.0%

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Table 12: Parents and guidance, government policies, lecturer and don't bully others								
N o	Construct	SA	A	TA	SD	D	TD	N
1	Parents and guidance should guide and monitor the social media or online behaviours of the students	46	38	84	2	7	9	6
		46.5 %	38.4 %	84.9 %	2.0 %	7.1 %	9.1 %	6.1 %
2	The government should formulate policies to address cyberbullying	54	36	90	1	1	2	7
		54.5 %	36.4 %	90.9 %	1.0 %	1.0 %	2.0 %	7.1 %
3	Lecturers in higher education institutions should orientate their students across all levels of study on the effects of cyberbullying	57	38	95	0	2	2	2
		57.6 %	38.4 %	95.0 %	0% %	2.0 %	2.0 %	2.0 %
4	Don't bully others if you wouldn't like to be bullied	73	22	95	3	0	3	1
		73.7 %	22.2 %	95.9 %	3.0 %	0% %	3.0 %	1.0 %

Source: Fieldwork, 2019

Different strategies such as confrontation, silence, reporting bullies, and others can mitigate the increase of cyberbullying on social media (Hellfeldt et al., 2020). Table 11 highlights some preventive strategies that students can adopt in dealing with cyberbullying on social media. The students depict in this hierarchy that unfriending or unfollowing abusers 80 (29.5%), activating caller identifier 65 (24.0%), change social media account 44 (16.2%), change email 32 (11.8%), change phone number 27 (10.0%), avoid social media 19 (7.0%), and bully back 4 (1.5%) are potential strategies to adopt. These preventive measures can assist students in handling the implications or effects of cyberbullying on social

media platforms, especially unfriending and unfollowing abusers. Smit posits that the challenges in mitigating cyberbullying are embedded in legislative applications and the actual provision of preventive measures, which will serve as grass-root solutions in schools (Smit, 2015).

The study further revealed other measures that could be used in addressing or mitigating the negative effects of cyberbullying on social media. As recorded in Table 12, the number 1 question aimed to understand whether parents and guidance should monitor students' social media or online behaviours. The finding depicts that 84 (84.9%) of students held that parents and guidance should step in to monitor students' social media or online behaviours in order to discover any unruly actions and behaviours students are putting up online. Furthermore, the monitoring will assist in identifying any forms of bullying activities on social media against students or any student engaging in the act of bullying others. The second question (question 2) focused on determining whether government policies will help address cyberbullying. The finding proves that 90 (90.9%) of the students suggested that the formulation of an anti-cyberbullying policy by the government can be used to address cyberbullying on social media. Although government policy cannot do it alone, awareness campaigns and other forms of mitigation can assist.

The third question highlights the need for university lecturers to orient their students across all levels of studies to understand the effects and implications of cyberbullying. 95 (96.0%) of the students believed that orientation and education by their lecturers would assist in driving down the message on the effects and implications of cyberbullying on social media platforms. Finally, the fourth question seeks to find out whether the principle of "don't bully others if you wouldn't like to be bullied" will assist in mitigating the effects and negative implications of cyberbullying on social media. The study found that the great majority of the students support the principle, which will help to handle any forms of cyberbullying on social media.

9. OTHER KINDS OF SUGGESTIONS TO MITIGATE CYBERBULLYING

The final question in the study seeks to draw suggestions from the students on what measures they believe will be used in mitigating cyberbullying on social media platforms. The question states, "Suggest other ways to mitigate cyberbullying on social media users". This section of the study applied content analysis to understand those measures, as suggested by the students. Figure 1 presents the summary of potential suggestions from the participants towards mitigating cyberbullying on social media.

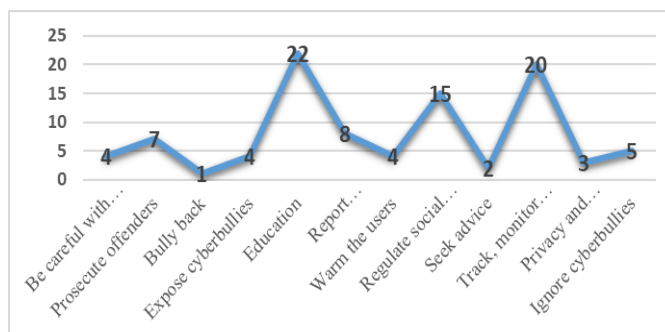


Figure 1: Other forms of suggestions to mitigate cyberbullying (Source: Fieldwork, 2019)

9.1 Be careful with strangers

Social media platforms such as Facebook allow users to send and accept friend requests. Social media users (students) should not accept unknown or unfamiliar friends or chat to avoid cyberbullying. A participant noted that they "know the people you chat with". Also, do not accept requests from those you have no sufficient knowledge about and their background. Students using social media platforms should "unfollow any group promoting cyberbullying" and "be careful with strangers".

9.2 Prosecute offenders

Participants advise for the prosecution of cyberbullying offenders (cyberbullies). The prosecution may come in the form of punishment hardly. A participant noted that cyberbullies "should be punished severely, which they will never forget". The act can be classified as "defamation of character". Participants suggest that "people who bully others on social

media should be punished" and penalised. They should be cautioned appropriately or imprisoned, "strict penalty" or punishment.

9.3 Bully back

According to one of the participants, "the bullied should be motivated to stand up for themselves, and they will see how stringent they are", this will send a strong message to the bullies.

9.4 Expose cyberbullies

Those who bully others on social media should be exposed to caution others. The naming and shaming of a cyberbully will assist in mitigating the act as one participant noted "name and shame culprits". A participant suggests that "people who bully others should face public disgrace". The public disagreement will mitigate others from the act.

9.5 Education

Social media users should be educated about cyberbullying, its effect, and its implications ("more education on the topic"). The government, academic institutions, and agencies should create awareness about cyberbullying and its effects, which means that "orientation is necessary" and "public education". Parents and guardians can do the education in teaching their kids from home. Using psychologists and other medical officials, the general public can be educated on the impact ("educating the public of its impact"). People who bully others should be addressed ("address people who bullies others"). Education can be more engaging and impacting using "people of influence" in society to create awareness ("creating the awareness").

People of influence, such as musicians in educating "the public about the effect of cyberbullying". "Radio and television" can be used in increasing and awareness and campaigns. Public education and orientation should be designed to empower people (students) to "build a strong sense of mutual respect and tolerance to all humanity" and "be polite to everyone" on social media. There is a need for more education to promote the negative effects and implications of cyberbullying. Users should be educated to stay away from cyberbullying and "never respond to" the act (cyberbullying); also, students should reframe from "unnecessary videos and pictures" posting that will trigger cyberbullying.

9.6 Report cyberbullies online

Cyberbullies should be reported online, then "web developers should allow option of reporting bullies". The reporting can be possible using "technology protection measures". Victims should report to police and other law enforcement agencies against bullies and abusers, any reported case should be addressed speedily, and action is taken.

9.7 Warn the users

Social media applications should warn social media users. This is done by putting "a warning note" on the platforms. A participant suggests that friends can warn and educate each other. Always "keep those that are important in your list of friends or acquaintances" and users to be warned, "to stop bullying".

9.8 Regulate social media

Video and content postings should be regulated through legislation. A participant states that "not all video should be allowed to be posted on social media. There should be a way to stop them". Social media founders, designers, and programs should regulate content posting and usage. The government and social media organizations should formulate rules, policies, and regulations on anti-cyberbullying to control the platform. The regulation should provide "some laws to prosecute those who engage in cyberbullying when found guilty" as noted by a participant. The regulation "must be enforced" at all times backed by law, and social media users' suggestions or recommendations of friends to others or share other contacts should be regulated. The regulation should ensure that children are kept off of social media platforms. Any form of content that will trigger cyberbullying should be limited or eliminated. Social media platforms should be controlled and content filtering.

9.9 Seek advice

Seek professional and non-professional advice from a teacher or elders when cyberbullied. Psychological counseling is recommended to those who are victims of cyberbullying, "some people who have been bullied become psychologically affected such as being depressed."

9.10 Track, monitor, and block bullies

Tracking and monitoring of online activities using tracking devices and system "to curtail all cyberbullying" and "tracking down culprits". A participant believes that anyone who engages in cyberbullying should be excluded and his or her account withheld from social media platform/s. Also, the cyberbullies' accounts should be blocked and reported to the authorities. Participant suggests that "blocking their contacts and creating a software to trace bullies" will assist in monitoring social media platforms and shaking off cyberbullying. In addition, a policy to "track down culprits" using "caller identifiers" necessary for mitigating cyberbullying on social media. The mitigating measures to ensure "tracking those involved and dealing with them to serve as a caution to others".

Tracking and monitoring enforce measures like blocking the abusers (those bullying others) on social media. Social media platforms should track, monitor, and "checkmate strong and offensive languages", such as "racial comment" and "discriminative words" using detective programs. Also, access to the Internet should be monitored to a certain extent, and every cyberbully's account suspended. According to participants, a "system monitoring" should be built to "delete offenders account". Users' ability to close the account of those who bully will strengthen the fight against cyberbullying. Parents and guardians should be active in knowing who their children chat and associate with online.

9.11 Privacy and respect for others

Participants believed that privacy measures should be implemented. People should be private enough on social media. Therefore, a participant suggests that people should "keep your private life away from social media". Students using social media should respect "others decisions which will help in stopping cyberbullying".

9.12 Ignore cyberbullies

Ignoring bullies, according to a participant, "ignore whoever is bullying you on social media". Cyberbullies can be ignored at all costs, and people mind their business using social media platforms. No comment and liking every post and many more.

9.13 Shortcoming and future research direction

Cyberbullying continues to cause significant concern for academic scholars and society at large. As noted above, this study was limited to a few African countries, and the findings could be constricted to those countries (not generalizable). Then, in the future, researchers can consider conducting a similar study across many countries on the African continent and possibly applying mixed research methods to extract different viewpoints. Also, the study can make comparisons among countries to extract varying views on the subject matter.

10. CONCLUSION

Cyberbullying on social media is on the rise and no longer a new action against students and other users. Cyberbullying is a harmful psychological act to the body and human mental health. Students are bullied on social media continuously, and the action keeps rising. The study determined the psychosocial impact and implications of cyberbullying of students on social media, which continuously undermined their academic progress and success. In the findings, the study identified various ways and strategies in mitigating the menace of cyberbullying on social media platforms against students in the digital era. Owing to the dire need to mitigating cyberbullying and the associated devastating consequences to students and the society, future studies should look into the mental health implications of cyberbullying on social media users. Another study can consider high education or mental institutions' efforts and other stakeholders in the fight against cyberbullying.

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