

Incidents of Cyberbullying Among Library and Information Science (LIS) Students at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to explore incidents of cyberbullying among library and information science (LIS) students at Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted in this study. This design was adopted because it would permit the researchers to investigate the current status of the incidents of cyberbullying among library and information science students at Delta State University, Abraka and did not involve manipulation of variables. The population and sample of this study consisted of year three undergraduate library and information science student of Delta State University, Abraka, Nigeria. This is made of 80 students in 2013/2014 academic session. The questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection. Frequency counts and percentage were used for data analysis. The study revealed that 80% of the students have knowledge of cyberbullying; 80% of them have been cyberbullied; the types of cyberbullying experienced include harassment, flaming, masquerade, denigration, exclusion, outing and trickery, and cyberstalking in that order; 40.6% of the students were cyberbullied via Facebook, 37.5% via cell phone, 31.3% chat room, 21.9% via instant messaging, 14.1% e-mail; 35.9% of them perceived perpetrators of the cyberbullying to be friends, 25 anonymous/don't know, 23.4% ex-lover, 15.6% course mate; the effects of cyberbullying on the students are anger (40.6%), low self-esteem (25%), depression (21.9%), low academic performance (20.3%), school phobia (15.6%). This study provided primary data on students and cyberbullying in a developing country. The findings would enable educational authorities to know the status of cyberbullying among university students, which would help them to educate the students on the issues involved and plan intervention actions that will assist the students to deal with experience of cyberbullying.

KEYWORDS

Bullying, Cyberbullying, Cyberstalking, Harassment, Nigeria, Students

INTRODUCTION

Cyberbullying refers to any harassment which occurs via the internet, cell phones or other devices. It involves using communication technology to intentionally harm others through hostile behaviour such as sending text messages and posting ugly comments on the internet (US Legal, Inc., 2014). Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person. By definition, it occurs among young people (The Nemours Foundation, 2014). Cyberbullying is the use

of technologies such as the internet, cell phones and other electronic devices to deliberately harass threaten and harm others.

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n. d.a).

Bullying, in its most basic sense, involves two people, a bully or intimidator and a victim. The bully abuses the victim through physical, verbal, or other means in order to gain a sense of superiority and power. These actions may be direct (i.e. hitting, verbally assaulting face-to-face, etc.) or indirect (i.e. rumors, gossip, etc.). Like other forms of bullying, cyberbullying is about human relationships, power and control. Those who bully others are trying to establish power and control over others whom they perceive to be “weaker” than them. Those who bully want to make victims feel that there is something wrong with them; but victims should know that nothing wrong with them. It is the bullies who have the real problems (Bullying.org Canada Incorporated, 2004).

Technology’s progression is frequently equated with the advancement of human societies. Pivotal innovations, such as the internet, have forever changed the way people interact. Though these developments have allowed the human race to make great strides in many fields, they have also allowed forms of transgression to become more rampant and widespread. This is evident when considering how traditional bullying has evolved into an issue known today as cyberbullying. While bullying and cyberbullying are often similar in terms of form and technique, they also have many differences. Unlike traditional bullying, cyberbullying allows the offender to hide his or her identity behind a technological tool. This anonymity makes it easier for the offender to strike blows against a victim without having to see the victim’s physical reaction. The distancing effect that technological devices have on today’s youth often leads them to say and do more cruel things compared to what is typical in a traditional face-to-face bullying situation. (Donegan, 2012).

While bullying is something that is often under the radar screen of adults, cyberbullying is even more so as today’s youths. The youths are increasingly communicating in ways that are often unknown by adults and away from their supervision. Cyberbullying is also different in that it is a cowardly form of bullying. Cyberbullies can more easily hide behind the anonymity which the internet provides. Cyberbullies can communicate their hurtful messages to a very wide audience with great speed. Cyberbullying does not provide any tangible feedback about the consequences of using information technologies to cyberbully others. Cyberbullies do not have to own their actions, as it is normally very difficult to identify cyberbullies, so they do not fear being punished for their actions. Cyberbullying is often outside of the legal reach of schools and school boards as this behavior often happens outside of school on home computers or via cell phones. Victims of bullying are often fearful of telling others about being bullied because of fear that the bullying may actually become worse if they tell. Victims of cyberbullying are often also afraid to report to adults about being cyberbullied, as they also fear that adults will over-react and take away their mobile phone, computer and/or internet access. Cyberbullies, in most cases, know their victims, but their victims may not know their cyberbullies, the aggressors may or may not bully their victims through physical, verbal, emotional or psychological means that are more easily identified. Communication has become more ubiquitous with the advent of mobile, wireless internet access. Consequently, cyberbullying can happen any time and any place and for many students, home is no longer a refuge from negative peer pressure such as bullying (Bullying.org Canada Incorporated, 2004). The potential for cyberbullying has thus grown with the increasing penetration of networked computers and mobile phones among young people (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russell, & Tippett, 2008).

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