

EFFECT OF DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS ON CONSEQUENCES OF CYBER BULLYING AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE

By

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Abstract

Cyber-bullying is the use of technologies by an individual or a group of people to deliberately harass and upset someone else. It is a form of bullying or irritation, pestering or persecution using electronic forms of contact. Its consequences include aggression, reprisal, low academic performance and suicidal intention. -When the time spent online and using social networks increases, occurrence of cyber bullying is the end result. To this end, this study investigated the effects of demographic factors on consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos state. The study employed a descriptive design to gather relevant data. The sample consisted of 120 respondents and the instrument used was named **Demographic and consequences of Cyber Bullying Inventory (DCCI)**. One research question and two hypotheses were raised and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Data collected were analyzed using percentages, t-test and ANOVA. The result showed that more students were aware of the consequences of cyber bullying and that gender and age have no effect on the consequences of cyber bullying. Counsellors, school authorities and all stakeholders in the educational sector should therefore create more awareness on the consequences of cyber bullying among learners.

Key words: Consequences of cyber-bullying, Cyber, Cyber Bullying, Demographic Factors, Undergraduates,
Word Count: 170

Introduction

One of the most important activities of children and adolescents on the Internet today is staying in contact with friends through social media. But what exactly are they doing online and what are its consequences? The EU Kids Online discovered in 2011 that 80% of the adolescents between 15 and 16-year-old, were online on a daily basis. The same age pattern is visible for the number of different activities children perform online: younger children performed on average, over five activities while teenagers performed eight or nine activities. What they do online include using the internet for homework, playing games, watching video clips, using instant messaging services, posting images, messages, sharing files or writing blogs. Nevertheless, online chatting and texting is an important activity for young people, often combined with doing homework. The time spent online and having a social network profile increases with age (Ólafsson, Livingstone, & Haddon, 2014). When the time spent online and using social networks increases, occurrence of cyberbullying is the end result.

Cyber-bullying is a technologically based form of bullying. It is the use of technologies by an individual or by a group of people to deliberately harass and upset someone else. It also means cyber-harassment which is a form of bullying or irritation, pestering or persecution using electronic forms of contact. For a clearer description, Cyber bullying can be divided into two words, namely: cyber and bullying. Cyber relates to or involves computer network (internet information technology and virtual reality) while bullying refers to using superior strength or influence to intimidate someone. Putting this two together, Cyber bullying is the act of using internet, electronic and social media platforms to intimidate other person that do not share alike views. Electronic devices broaden bullying from its traditional social context, fundamentally transforming the dynamics of the interactions that occur between aggressors and victims (Bell, Lipinski, Crothers, & Kolbert, 2015).

Cyber bullying has become increasingly common, especially among teenagers. Cyber bullying comes in different forms which include; cyber-stalking, that is continuous harassment, denigration and belittling of a person which may include threat of physical harm. Harassment involves repeatedly sending messages to intentionally annoy or bother an online user; impersonation which involves stealing someone's identity and pretending to be that person while posting derogatory or false messages online; Trickery is the use of false means to collect private information such as credit card information, bank and login details; Flaming, this involves online fight which may occur through e-mails, forums and chat rooms.

According to Hinduja & Patchin, (2010), cyberbullying often involves harassing and threatening messages that may come from an individual or a group, threats made through electronic technology, or the distribution of an

individual's private information or photos in a public forum. It can also involve exclusion (intentionally leaving a person out of online activities, group chats, etc) and masquerading, which is when a bully pretends to be somebody else online to either harass an individual anonymously or post false messages online.

Of recent, findings from studies on ICT usage suggest that the majority of University students use their computers in private. Most of them spend quite a bit of time online daily. For their university course work, few of them spend one to two hours or less online per day. During their free time, they spend three hours or more online per day. The evening hours of 6pm to midnight are the peak usage hours, but afternoon usage is also common, both during the week and on weekends. Virtually all of them use the Internet for their school work, chatting and for entertainment (Faucher, Jackson & Cassidy, 2014).

To this end, Faucher, Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Smith, A., Purcell, K., Zickuhr, K., & Rainie, L., (2011), submit that Cyber bullying is an emerging issue in the context of higher education as information and communication technologies (ICT) increasingly become part of daily life in the university. The term "cyber bullying" may have a juvenile connotation, which is at odds with assumptions about adult behaviour.

In his observation, Kowalski (2010) opined that because of the relatively recent research on cyber bullying, investigators have yet to reach a consensus on how to define cyber bullying and what time parameters to impose when assessing prevalence (within a couple of months vs lifetime prevalence). According to Fermam, (2013), social media applications provide a far-reaching medium for cyber-bullying to occur. These platforms are used to widely share everything from nasty messages to embarrassing photographs or videos. Often, compromising photos and videos are taken and shared by a victim who trusted the original recipient, only to be betrayed later when that trusted recipient shares the embarrassing content with others, all to harass or hurt the sender.

Cyber-bullying has become the way teens gang up on one another, either by sending taunting pictures and messages or using more "under the radar" spheres to spread rumors about a victim, tease or embarrass another person. The impact of the internet on this conduct is that it extends the reach of this teenage nastiness far beyond the walls of a local school or community. Cyber bullying allows a bully to spread gossip and embarrassment of a victim exponentially, maximizing the amount of damage inflicted on the victim.

According to Lenhart, A., Madden, M., Smith, A., Purcell, K., Zickuhr, K., & Rainie, L., (2011), anyone can be a victim of cyber bullying. Statistics have shown that location, meaning rural, urban or suburban, or school size do not increase or decrease the risk of bullying. It affects all races and genders. Some surveys have shown that there are some gender differences between the prevalence of cyber bullying, but both genders are still at risk. Therefore, adolescents from all races have a chance to be cyber bullied.

Gordon (2019) observed that feeling overwhelmed, vulnerable, powerless and humiliated are some of the effects of cyber bullying. Victims of cyber bullying often find it difficult to feel safe. Typically, this is because the bullying can invade their home through a computer or cell phone at any time of the day. They no longer have a place where they can escape. To a victim, it feels like bullying is everywhere. Additionally, because the bullies can remain anonymous, this can escalate feelings of fear.

Furthermore, The Pew Research Center (2007) stated that about one third of all adolescents using the Internet report being targets of a range of irritating and possibly dangerous online activities, including receiving threatening messages, having their private emails or text messages forwarded without consent, having an embarrassing picture posted without permission, or having rumors about them spread online. The following are some of the consequences of cyber bullying:

Aggression: This connotes the state of hostility, attack, anger and violent behavior. One major consequence of cyber bullying is the tendency for the bullied to be aggressive. Cyber bullies use electronic instruments as tools to insult, mock, threaten, intimidate, or spread rumors about a victim. Because acts of electronic aggression can reach a wider audience, a perpetrator may be capable of causing more harm than could be caused in face-to-face bullying. However, because the perpetrator and victim cannot see each other, the perpetrator may not believe that serious harm is being inflicted upon the victim.

Psycho-social problems: Adolescents who suffers one harm or the other could have lead to psycho-social problems. These problems could be educational, social, psychological or emotional problems. Cyber bullying often demonstrate elevated levels of social anxiety and tend to lack the social support of his or her peers. Sometimes the bullies often involved in the use of drugs and substances. Cyber bullying also appears to be correlated with justification for violence, exposure to violence and anti-social behaviors

Concealed behaviour: In most cases, a large percentage of cyber bullies choose to hide their true identities. This detracts from the common perception that a perpetrator's main reason for employing electronic media is to take advantage of the cloak of anonymity that they offer.

The choice of covert methods obviously suggests a desire to maximize the advantages of concealed aggression, a fear of being discovered, an attempt to provoke more fear in victims, or an attempt to try on different identities. Cyber bullies are usually protected by their victims, because victims frequently fear that their Internet privileges will be revoked if the victimization is discovered .

Reprisal: Cyber bullies appear to have a history of entanglements with bullying, either as a perpetrator or victim. There is high tendency that cyber victims often become cyber bullies. Studies have shown that victims of cyber bullied were nine times more likely to engage in cyber bullying. Indeed, there is evidence that a common reaction to being bullied electronically, besides ignoring it or pretending to ignore it cyber victims often retaliate within the online environment in which they were attacked.

Suicidal intent: Cyber bullying increases the risk of suicide. Young people that are constantly tormented by peers through text messages, instant messaging, social media, and other outlets, often begin to feel hopeless. They may even begin to feel like the only way to escape the pain is through suicide. As a result, they may fantasize about ending their life in order to escape their tormentors.

Illness: When young people are cyber bullied, they often experience headaches, stomachaches or other physical ailments. The stress of bullying also can cause stress-related conditions like stomach ulcers and skin conditions. Additionally, they may experience changes in eating habits like skipping meals or binge eating. They may suffer from insomnia, sleep more than usual or experience nightmares.

Anxiety and Depression: Cyber bullying could also lead to anxiety and depression in young people. Anxiety is the feeling of excessive fear while depression is a state of despair, dejection and extreme sadness. Victims of cyber bullying often succumb to anxiety, depression and other stress-related conditions. This occurs primarily because cyber bullying erodes their self-confidence and self-esteem. Also the stress of coping with cyber bullying on a regular basis could erode someone's feelings of happiness and contentment.

Statement of Problem

Over the years, bullying has generated anxiety among educational stake holders. Cyber bullying is a serious problem for young people in the society and Nigeria at large. It is a threat that no school disregards or dismisses. It can have negative consequences on the general school climate and on the right of the students to learn in a safe environment without fear. It can also have negative lifelong consequences both for the students who bully and for their victims.

Badejo A.O, Akinwumi, Korede D. and Lamidi S. (2018) in their record on cyber bullying as a social malaise in a Nigerian university concluded that there is low awareness of cyber bullying among students in Nigerian universities, hence there is need to enlighten students in the Nigerian universities on the implications of cyber bullying as a social malaise.

Also, a research on cyber bullying captioned “impacting to this youth, Noll (2016) aimed at exploring the experiences of high school students who have been victimized by cyber bullies as well as the relationship between cyber bullying victimization and suicide was conducted. The result of the research indicated that high school students who were victimized by cyber bullying experienced negative emotional impacts including feeling sad, helpless and hopeless, frustrated and low self esteem. Despite the availability of various research studies on cyber bullying, the rate of cyber bullying among Nigerian undergraduates is not abated. To this end, the researcher opined that there is need to conduct a study on the effects of demographic factors on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Research Question

1. What is the level of students’ awareness of cyber bullying in schools?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant effect of gender on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.
2. There is no significant effect of age on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design to seek information about effects of demographic factors on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State University. For this study, a sample of 120 students were drawn from the Lagos State University. The participants were randomly selected. A 20-item

questionnaire titled “Demographic and Consequences of Cyber bullying Inventory” (DCCI) which consisted of three sections: A, B & C was designed for data collection.

Section A sought information on students’ demographic data, section B sought students’ usage of the Internet , while section C sought information on the consequences of cyber bullying among the students. The instrument was validated by experts in the field of psychometrics. The reliability of the instrument was tested using Cronbach’s Alpha and its reliability coefficient stood at 0.85. The questionnaire was administered on individual basis. The collected data from the instrument was analyzed using percentage, t-test and ANOVA to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question: What is the level of students’ awareness of cyber bullying in schools?

Table 1: Awareness of cyberbullying in schools

		<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Valid Percent</i>	<i>Cumulative Percent</i>
Valid	Yes	84	70.0	70.0	70.0
	No	36	30.0	30.0	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	

From table 1, 70% of the respondents (which corresponds to 84 students) were aware of cyber bullying in their school while only 30% of respondents (which corresponds to 36 students) were not aware of cyber bullying in their school. This shows that more students are aware of incidences of cyber bullying in their school.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no significant effect of gender on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Table 2: Group Statistics for Gender

				Std.	Std.
				Deviation	Error
		N	Mean		Mean
Gender	Male	54	40.37	7.050	.959
Consequences	Female	66	39.03	5.632	.693

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the gender of the respondent. The mean and standard deviation of male respondents are 40.37 and 7.050 while that of the female respondents are 39.03 and 5.632 respectively

Table 3: Independent Samples Test for Gender										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Consequences	Equal variances assumed	.208	.649	1.158	118	.249	1.340	1.158	-.952	3.632
	Equal variances not assumed			1.132	100.462	.260	1.340	1.184	-1.008	3.688

Table 3 shows that the independent t-test conducted revealed that $df = 118$, $F = 0.208$, $p > 0.05$. This result showed that there is no statistically significant difference between the variables. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In other words, there is no significant effect of gender on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State. This implies that both male and female students experience consequences of cyber bullying in the same proportion.

Research Hypothesis 2:

There is no significant effect of age on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Table 4: ANOVA of effect of age on consequences of cyber bullying

	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	2.831	2	1.416	.035	.966
Within Groups	4715.034	116	40.647		
Total	4717.866	118			

Table 4 revealed that $F(2, 116) = 0.035$ and that $p > 0.05$. This result then showed that there is no statistically significant effect of age on the consequences of cyber bullying. Hence, the null hypothesis was not rejected. In other words, there is no significant effect of age on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State.

Discussion

This study investigated effects of demographic factors on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State. The research question for the study aimed at finding out whether the respondents were aware of instances of cyber bullying in their school. On the level of awareness, the result showed that 70% of the respondents were aware of cyber bullying in their schools while only 30% of respondents were not aware of cyber bullying in their school. This showed that more students were aware of incidences of cyber bullying in their school. This is at variance with the position of Badejo, Akinwumi, Korede and Lamidi (2018) who stated that there is low awareness of cyber bullying among students in Nigerian universities.

Analysis of the first hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of gender on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State revealed that both male and female students experienced consequences of cyber bullying in the same proportion. This findings agreed with the position of Lenhart, A.,

Madden, M., Smith, A., Purcell, K., Zickuhr, K., & Rainie, L., (2011), that anyone can be a victim of cyber bullying. Statistics have shown that location, meaning rural, urban or suburban, or school size do not increase or decrease the risk of bullying. It affects all races and genders.

The analysis of the second hypothesis which stated that there is no significant effect of age on the consequences of cyber bullying among undergraduates in Lagos State revealed that students of all age groups experienced consequences of cyber bullying in the same proportion. This findings is at variance with the position of Ólafsson, Livingstone, & Haddon, (2014) who opined that the time spent online and having a social network profile increases with age. When the time spent online and using social networks increases, occurrence of cyber bullying is the end result.

Conclusion

These conclusions were drawn from the study based on the research results. They are: That the rate of cyber bullying behavior among students in Lagos State higher institutions and its attendant consequences are increasing on the daily basis. This is a serious concern to the counseling psychologist, educational administrators and parents.

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7	Research Methodology: (a) Design (b) Instrument (c) Statistical Tools		✓		
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