



Appraising the influence of cyber bullying on the lifestyle of social media users in two selected universities in the south east (UNN & IMSU)

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Abstract

Cyberbullying, an advanced form of bullying on the internet space has awakened the interest and concern of researchers as well as social media users in Nigeria. It is assumed to pose a threat to the lifestyle of social media users which prompts the study towards appraising the influence of cyber bullying on the lifestyle of social media users in University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State University. The study is to ascertain the existence of cyberbullying, its extent of influence and other factors responsible for a change in the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU. In conducting this study, the Media System Dependence theory was adopted which posits that the dependence of users on social media sites makes them prey to cyberbullying activities. The sample size of 331 was derived using the Taro Yamane formula from the population of post graduate students used to represent social media users in the selected institutions. A random sampling technique was adopted with structured questionnaires as the research instrument. The results were analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. 75% of respondents affirmed the existence and prevalence of cyberbullying which affects user's lifestyle to a large extent and further prompts them towards taking actions as far as withdrawal from social media platforms, low self-esteem and exchange of ill intended messages to others as against the 25% of respondents who affirmed otherwise. The study recommends that the federal government as well as management of the diverse social media sites have a role to play in limiting if not entirely curbing the menace of cyberbullying.

Keywords: influence, social media, cyber bullying, lifestyle

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed the lifestyle of individuals across the world owing to its increased usage. One of the concerns raised over the effects of ICT is on how it changes users' perception of the world (Haddon & Silverstone, 2016). A major disadvantage of this is the increase of bullying activities via electronic devices termed as 'cyberbullying'. Bullying is an act that involves repeated aggressive behavior with an imbalance of power and this has remained one of the social vices that affects the mental and physical well-being of individuals in the society (Garett *et al*, 2016) [14]. However, increased usage of the internet and social media can be credited as a major factor responsible for the shift from traditional bullying to online bullying, also known as cyber bullying which allows victims to be attacked at any time and in any location (Olasanmi *et al*, 2020; Abaido, 2020) [22, 1].

Categorically, cyberbullying is defined as the electronic posting of mean-spirited messages about a person and is often done anonymously (Merriam-Webster, 2017) [18]. The most prominent forms in which it manifests on social media sites includes name calling, trolling, posting rumors, threats, sexual remarks, revelation of a victims' personal information among others. Although, cyber bullying occurs in different online channels and platforms, social media is said to be a fertile ground for online bullying to thrive because it allows for ease in communication process (Chan, Cheung & Lee, 2021).

Kaplan and Haenlein in Kaplan (2018) [16], defines social media as "a group of internet-based applications... that

allows the creation and exchange of user generated content". Thus, the freedom to post an enormous amount of personal data on social media sites as well as unlimited personal interactions shared among users is categorized as one of the predominant factors responsible for the ease in cyberbullying activities on such platforms (Alim, 2016) [4]. Such social media sites where cyberbullying is prevalent include WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn amongst others (Alim, 2016) [4].

Cyberbullying is a serious issue which if left unchecked can constitute a nuisance in the society by throwing a vast number of persons off balance as it causes victims to feel inadequate and overly self-conscious, along with the possibility of committing suicide as observed in social media users in the selected areas of study. Abaido (2019), specifically notes that cyberbullying leads to considerable problems for users of social media with youths forming a higher percentage of this users.

Globally, there are increasing cases of cyberbullying, which has gained normalcy and awareness in developed countries, however in developing countries such as Nigeria, cyberbullying is endemic and the awareness is less without any laid down measures for checking the activities of cyber bullies on social media platforms, which has deleterious effects on victims (Balogun *et al*, 2017; Adediran, 2020) [6, 2]. This effect is most evident in the changes in pattern and lifestyle of social media users who have fallen victim and are sometimes compelled to take dangerous steps. Therefore, due to the nature of cyberbullying and scarcity of research in the area, it became imperative to understand the influence between changes in lifestyle of social media users

and the prevalent cyberbullying activities on the social media users in two selected universities in the south east: University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Imo State University (IMSU).

Statement of the Problem

Cyberbullying has no doubt become prevalent on social media platforms with an ever-increasing number of cases daily and almost every user falling victim. Even so, many users are unaware that they fall victim to cyberbullying which persists in different ways. Since there are no laid down measure of checking the activities of cyber bullies, many social media users are made to suffer the consequence of the quest of nonchalant individuals who seek prey on others. This they do by either exposing victims to ridicule by way of insulting words, or uploading private information of a user without consent so as to cause harm or shame amongst many other harming actions.

However, the federal government through its purposed hate speech bill intends to outlaw unfair comments, discrimination, and contempt which are the some of the basis of cyberbullying on social media sites. Cyberbullying would still remain an issue pending the acceptance of the bill. Also, the management of social media sites have made provisions for users to report certain actions and comment of users found wanting, even so cyberbullying continues to persist daily.

On the other hand, observation of trends has become more prominent where users are seen to adopt lifestyle changes both online and offline to suit their adaptability to the social media platform they make use of. Therefore, it became imperative to understand the relationship between this new trend and the prevalent cyberbullying activities on the social media, if the former is responsible for the later and how it influences the changes in lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU.

Objectives of the Study

Generally, this study seeks to appraise the influence of cyber bullying on the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Ascertain the existence of cyberbullying among social media users in UNN and IMSU.
2. Ascertain the extent to which cyberbullying influences the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU.
3. Ascertain other factors responsible for the changes in the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU.

Research Questions

In line with the research objectives stated above, the following constitute the research questions attached to this study.

1. What is the influence of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU?
2. To what extent does cyberbullying influence the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU?
3. What other factors are responsible for the changes in the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU?

Significance of the Study

The study is aimed at sampling polls from respondents in appraising the influence of cyber bullying on the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU. Notwithstanding, the study would be of relevance to future researchers who

intend to delve into the subject of discourse. Also, the findings attained would arm the government and other well-meaning bodies or organizations with necessary information needed to curb the menace of cyberbullying in Nigeria. Social media users would also learn to be wary of cyber bullies thus aiding them to avoid falling unsuspecting victims to cyberbullying.

Definition of Terms

- a. **Bullying:** It can be identified by repeated behavior and an intent to harm
- b. **Cyberbullying:** Any attempt to ridicule a user on social media.
- c. **Influence:** The long and short term effects of cyberbullying on lifestyle of social media users.
- d. **Lifestyle:** The behavior and patterns in action of individuals
- e. **Social media:** Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp amongst others which enables communication over the internet.
- f. **Users:** Users of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter etc.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

The emergence and advancement of modern technology has led to changes in the way we live our lives with the availability of these technologies redirecting human social interactions especially among youths (Nwufu & Nwoke, 2018; Noll, 2016) ^[21, 19]. Its side effect has continued to manifest in the form of cyber bullying and other social vices. (Umeh, 2019). The term cyberbullying is relatively a new term that takes on a whole new form of bullying as it is an extension of traditional forms of bullying that makes its way to the cyberspace (Noll, 2016) ^[19]. According to Bergman & Baier (2018) cyber bullying is being cruel to others by sending or posting harmful material or engaging in other forms of social aggression using the internet or digital technologies such as social media sites.

McCay-Peet and Quan-Haase (2017) ^[17] defines these social media sites as “web-based services that allow individuals, communities and organizations to collaborate, connect, interact and build community by enabling them to create, co-create, modify, share and engage with user-generated content that is easily assessible.” It has been reported that social media is a common platform for youth to perpetuate violent acts, including bullying and harassment against their peers (Patton *et al*, 2014) ^[24]. Alim (2016) ^[4] suggests that one of the reasons social media has provided a platform for cyberbullying, is due to the amount of personal data posted and interactions between users.

Social media users are known to have a lifestyle which the Merriam-Webster (2017) ^[18] dictionary sees as “a particular way of living: the way a person lives”. It is worthy to note that social media users adopt these platforms for the purpose of content sharing, public communication and interpersonal connection so as to build a community, interact and share their thoughts (Burgess & Poell, 2017: McCay-Peet & Quan-Haase, 2017) ^[17]. Thus, in utilizing the social media platforms available, users tend to express themselves better, interact with their loved ones, acquaintances, business partners, amongst other diverse uses. But all these are hampered or threatened when cyberbullying comes knocking.

The most prominent forms in which cyberbullying manifests on social media sites includes, name calling by categorically calling them unpleasant names or identifying them with negative words or ideas, posting rumors, threats, sexual remarks, revelation of a victims' personal information, pejorative labels (i.e. hate speech) and trolling where cyberbullies drag and throw shades on other users.

Empirical Review

It is pertinent to note that in reviewing the influence of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users, the existence of cyberbullying in Nigeria must be established. Nwufu and Nwoke (2018) ^[21] in their study affirms that cyberbullying is prevalent in Nigeria narrowing its effects to the psychological wellbeing of individuals while this study focuses on its impact on the general lifestyle of social media users. According to these scholars, many victims of cyberbullying may experience a technical knockout effect throughout their lifespan just as Akcil (2018) ^[3] suggests that youths who fall victim finds it difficult to concentrate on their studies which adversely affects their academic performance.

Olumide, Adams and Amodu (2015) ^[23] in a research which focused on "prevalence and correlates of perpetration of cyberbullying among in-school adolescents in Oyo state" using a total number of 653 students via multistage sampling showed that 39.8% of the respondents have been bullied electronically and 21.0% were both victims and perpetrators of cyberbullying. This points out the existence of cyberbullying in Nigeria meanwhile the focus of this current study is on social media users in University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN) and Imo State University (IMSU).

Another study carried out in Pakistan by Batool *et al* (2017) which focused on the trends of cyber bullying and its effects generally on youths stated that the bullying on social media affects users emotionally, academically and socially. A replication of this study was deemed needful which necessitated a different approach with focus on the effect of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users in two selected universities in Enugu. The study revealed that youngsters in Pakistan, both girls and boys, in Pakistan get involved as well as becomes target to cyber bullying attacks concluded that bullying had bad consequences on the social relation and result in isolation of the individuals.

Nwufu and Nwoke (2018) ^[21] opines that cyberbullying victimization can be a potent source of emotional and psychological strain among youths that can in turn lead to deviant coping responses that has implications on their psychological wellbeing. This applies to public position holders and celebrities such as footballers, actors and actresses, artistes etc. who have been bullied over time on common social media platforms such as Instagram and twitter where they are dragged for their actions, inactions. Victims of cyber bullying often experience symptoms such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, social exclusion, poor academic performance and some in extreme cases experience suicidal thoughts and attempts (Hindiya & Patchin, 2014; Tracy, 2017; Bauman, Toomey & Walker, 2013; Dredge, Gleeson, & Garcia, 2014). In Nigeria, there has been several cases of students who were harassed online and blackmailed even though the culture here does not necessarily give the females (who are often victims) the opportunity to open up on some harassment they receive more especially as their naked pictures are shared online

without their consent. Walrave and Heriman (2011) found that the three most common motives behind cyberbullying, reported by teens who cyberbully are; that it was revenge to the victim, that the victim deserved it, or just because it was fun.

According to Livingstone and Helsper in Olasanmi, Agbaje & Adeyemi (2020) ^[22], "the internet is not only a source of new opportunities but an escape from offline constraints". Thus, with access to the internet, the social media provides a platform for users to escape certain realities of life and restrictions presented in the real world. Users who have been bullied may decide to quit the usage of social media sites by permanently deleting their accounts, taking long breaks from the social media or even go to the extent of being extremely cautious of what they share on social media so as to limit exposure. It is said to induces serious psychosocial and physical harm to victims, self-esteem problems.

Theoretical Framework

This research work is hinged on the Media System Dependence theory first propounded by Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin Defleur in 1976. It posits that the more a person depends on having his needs met by media usage, the more important will be the role that such media would have on such person's life (Baran & Davis, 2009) ^[7]. This is because people mostly turn to the media to make sense of what is happening around them. Dependency theory conceives of dependency as a relationship in which the fulfillment of one party's needs and goals is reliant on the resources of another party. A main focus of the theory is the relationship between media and audiences, in this case social media and the users.

In general, the extent of the media's influence is related to the degree of dependence of individuals on the media. Two of the basic propositions put forward by Ball-Rokeach and DeFleur are:

1. The greater the number of social functions performed for an audience by a medium, the greater the audience's dependency on that medium, and;
2. The greater the instability of a society (e.g., in situations of social change and conflict), the greater the audience's dependency on the media and, therefore, the greater the potential effects of the media on the audience.

This is to say with the declining morals in the society as a major social change and menace to the society, there are higher chances of individuals particularly youths to depend on social media in most cases where they become venomous bullies or victims of bullying themselves.

Research Methodology

This chapter provides the methodological choices used in the study. It covers the research design, sample size, population of study, sampling procedure, instruments for data collection and method of data collection. This study collected data using quantitative methodologies to gain a clearer insight into the incidents of cyberbullying as it affects the lifestyle of social media users.

Research Design

This quantitative study utilized the descriptive survey research design which enables the researcher to collect data drawn from a given population by describing features of the

samples as they are during the time of the study which are of interest to the researcher without manipulating any independent variables (Nwankwo, 2016) [20]. This research design becomes suitable for this study considering that it aims at collecting data on the influence of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users in University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State University of Science and Technology.

Population of Study

The population under study comprise of social media users (post graduate students) from the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State University of Science and Technology. Since there is no exact statistics for social media users in the institutions under study, post graduates students from the institution becomes a good fit to represent the population. Thus, post graduate students from the 2020/21 academic session who are also key social media users in the university community with much experience on social media usage and cyberbullying activities forms the population under study. The total number of postgraduate students in the University of Nigeria Nsukka amounts to one thousand three hundred and fifty (1,350) while the number of postgraduate students in IMSU totals to five hundred and seventy (570). The total number amounts to one thousand nine hundred and twenty (1920).

Sample Size

However, since an accurate figure of social media users in UNN and IMSU could not be ascertained, the researcher deemed it fit to use a subset of postgraduate students within the institutions to form the population under study which amounts to one thousand nine hundred and twenty (1920). The Taro Yamane formula of 1967 came in handy in calculating the appropriate sample size needed. In solving the formula below a 95% confidence level is adopted alongside a 5% error level represented by ‘e’. Where ‘n’ is the sample size sort after, ‘N’ is the total population under study already fixed at 1920.

$$\text{Step 1: } n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

$$\text{Step 2: } n = \frac{1920}{1+1920(0.05)^2}$$

$$\text{Step 3: } n = \frac{1920}{1+1920(0.0025)}$$

$$\text{Step 4: } n = \frac{1920}{1+4.8}$$

$$\text{Step 5: } n = \frac{1920}{5.8}$$

$$\text{Step 6: } n = 331$$

Thus, the sample size for this study is fixed at three hundred and thirty one (331).

Research instrument

The research instrument adopted is the questionnaire which was used to explore students’ experiences and understanding of cyberbullying and its influence on the life of social media users. Questions embedded in the questionnaire are close ended in nature which would guide the researcher in accurate analysis of data retrieved. The study employed the use of research assistants who were

already knowledgeable in research and process of administering questionnaires. A total of 331 questionnaires was administered and only 328 retrieved and dully answered by the respondents.

Sampling Technique

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2011) suggest that the quality of research depends on “the suitability of the sampling strategy that has been adopted”. For this study, random sampling was adopted because the objective was to get a sample representative of the youth in this context. A random sample of postgraduate students studying in the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State University was adopted for this research.

Data Findings and Presentation

This study sought to ascertain the influence of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users in selected universities particularly, University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State University. This chapter deals with the analysis of data collected from the respondents. A total of 331 questionnaires were administered but only 328 questionnaires were dully filled and returned. Tables, text and percentages were used to illustrate the responses of each respondent. These are the presentation below.

Table 1: Gender distribution of respondents

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Male	151	46%
Female	177	54%
Total	328	100%

Source: Field Survey: September 2021

The Table above reveals that respondents who are of the male gender are only 151 in number representing 46% of the respondents while the respondents who are of the female gender are only 177 in number representing 54% of the entire sampled population. It can be deduced from the table that the female gender formed the highest number of respondents in this study.

Table 2: Age distribution of respondents

Items	Number of respondents	Percentage
21 – 25	125	38%
26 – 30	171	52%
31 – 40	32	10%
Total	328	100%

Source: Field Survey: September 2021

In table above respondents who are between the age of 21 and 25 are only 125 in number representing 38% of the entire respondents while 171 respondents representing the 52% of the respondents are within the age bracket of 26 and 30. Those who are within 31 to 40 years of age are 32 in number representing 10%. Therefore, the table clearly indicates that majority of respondents are within the ages of 26 and 30 years of age.

Table 3: Academic level of respondents

Items	Number of respondents	Percentage
PGD	81	25%
MASTERS	214	65%
PHD	33	10%
TOTAL	328	100%

Source: Field Survey: September 2021

In the table above, 81 respondents representing 25% of the respondents were post graduate diploma students while 214 respondents representing 65% are Masters students. Respondents who are PHD students are 33 in number representing 10% of the respondents.

Table 4: Frequency of user’s online presence

Items	Number of respondents	Percentage
Very Often	167	51%
Often	128	39%
Seldomly	33	10%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

The Table 4.4 above indicates that respondents who are online very often are 167 in number representing 51% of the respondents while the respondents who are online often are 128 in number representing 39% of the entire sampled population just as only 33 respondents representing 10% affirm that they are seldomly online.

Table 5: Usage of social media

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. To express myself	105	32%
b. To connect with friends and family	82	25%
c. To connect with my colleagues	46 95	14% 29%
d. To entertain myself		
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

In Table above which addresses what respondents mostly use social media platform for, 105 respondents representing 32% of the population use social media platforms mostly to express themselves while 82 representing 25% of the population use social media to connect with their friends and family. Also, 46 respondents representing 14% of the population majorly use social media to connect with classmates just as 95 respondents representing 29% of the respondents use it to majorly entertain themselves.

Table 6: Cyberbullying activity witnessed by respondents

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. Name calling, insults and offensive comment	94	29%
b. Unauthorized posting of private information	38	11%
c. Threats	59	18%
d. Sexual remarks	45	14%
e. Social exclusion from groups and pages	23	7%
f. Other forms (use of stickers to ridicule)	59	18%
g. None of the above	10	3%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

Table above indicates that 94 representing 29% of respondents have been cyberbullied via name calling, insults and offensive comments while 38 representing 11% of the respondents have had people post unauthorized posting of

their private information. Also, 59 representing 18% of the respondents have experienced cyberbullying via threats and 45 representing 14% of the respondents have received negative sexual remark. 23 respondents representing 7% of the respondents have been excluded from groups and pages while 59 respondents representing 18% of the respondents have experienced other forms of cyberbullying inclusive of the use of stickers to ridicule the respondent. Just 10 respondents representing 3% of the sample size have not experienced cyberbullying in any form stated.

Table 7: Reaction to prevalence of cyberbullying in Nigeria

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	246	75%
No	82	25%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

Table above indicates the reaction of respondents to the prevalence of cyberbullying in Nigeria. 246 respondents representing 75% of the respondents agree that cyberbullying attacks are prevalent in Nigeria while 82 indicating 25% of the respondents disagree. This finding concurs with other findings by other scholars, that cyberbullying is prevalent in Nigeria.

Table 8: Immediate effect of cyberbullying on respondents

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. I felt emotional	95	29%
b. I felt nothing	59	18%
c. I attacked back	82	25%
d. I left the platform	59	18%
e. I reported the incident	33	10%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

From table 4.5 above which outlines the responses of respondents on the immediate impact of cyberbullying, 95 respondents representing 29% of the total respondent felt emotional when cyberbullied, 59 of the respondents representing 18% of the respondents felt nothing, while 82 representing 25% of the respondents attacked back. 59 respondents representing 18% of the total respondents left the social media platform where they were bullied and just 33 respondents 10% of the respondents reported the incident.

Table 9: Long term effect of cyberbullying on lifestyle on respondents

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. Low self esteem	82	25%
b. Withdraw from social media platforms	46	14%
c. Restriction of posts and unstable social media usage	104	32%
d. Personal insecurity	23	7%
e. Depression	73	22%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

Table above while highlighting the long-term effect of cyberbullying on respondent displays that 82 respondents forming 25% of the respondents have developed low self-

esteem on the long run after been cyberbullied while 46 representing 14 % of the respondents have withdrawn from social media platforms so as to protect themselves. 104 representing 32% of the respondents did restrict their posts and became unstable on social media. 23 respondents representing 7% of the entire respondents developed personal insecurities while 73 representing 22% the respondents became depressed.

Table 10: Why users are prompted to adopt lifestyle changes on social media

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. To limit exposure to anything which could cause me harm	103	31%
b. To avoid of swindlers, hackers and fraudsters	106	32%
c. To maintain a private online lifestyle	51	16%
d. To ensure proper time management	68	21%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

From the table above, in analyzing why users are prompted into making online lifestyle changes 103 respondents representing 31% of the total respondents affirms that it is to limit their exposure to anything which could cause them harm while 32% of respondents are prompted by the actions on cybercriminals who constantly hack accounts and swindles users. 51 respondents representing 16% of the entire respondents affirm it is to maintain a private online lifestyle while 68 representing 21% of respondents are prompted to make lifestyle changes to ensure time management so as to avoid productive hours of the day just on social media alone.

Table 11: Other factors that affects my social media lifestyle include

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
a. Financial capacity to fund data expenses	89	27%
b. Physical bullying	3	1%
c. Health condition and other offline activities	54	16%
d. Academic workload	94	29%
e. Disinterest in social media platform	88	27%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

From the table above, in analyzing the other factors responsible for the lifestyle changes in users, 89 respondents of the 27% agree that financial capacity to fund their social media lifestyle has one role to play. 3 respondents affirm that physical bullying in real life plays a role in affecting the lifestyle of a user. This only points out that physical bullying is on the minimum with virtually every person and all conversations on social media. 54 respondents representing 16% of the total respondents affirms that the current health condition and offline activities of the user could play a role in affecting the lifestyle of social media users. 94 respondent affirms that the academic workload is

another barrier while for 88 respondents it is just pure disinterest in social media which has nothing to do with cyberbullying activities. While the former is from a 29% representative of respondents, the latter is the option picked by 27% of respondents.

Table 12: Respondents on if social media violence can be curtailed

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	223	68%
No	105	32%
Total	328	100%

Field Survey: September 2021

According to Table 4.8, 223 respondents forming 68% of the total respondents agree that cyberbullying on social media can be curtailed if not totally stopped while 105 respondents representing 32% of the respondents disagree. This proves that there is hope for cyberbullying to be curtailed so as to ensure that lifestyle of social media users is not affected.

Discussion of Findings

Research question one sought to ascertain the existence of cyberbullying among social media users in UNN and IMSU of which 75% of respondents affirmed its prevalence in Nigeria. According to the findings retrieved, name calling, insults and offensive comments are the most likely cyberbullying activities closely followed by unauthorized posting of private information, and threats as well as sexual remarks usually found derogatory. A less obvious form is exemplified via social exclusion from groups and pages as well as other forms which could utilize stickers in sending demeaning and harmful messages to users who fall victim. The above-mentioned cyberbullying forms that persists usually result from user’s intention to meet a particular need. Findings show that 32% of respondents who are on social media are there to express themselves and this on some occasion ends up against them with ridicule and rejection as the order of the day.

Research question two sought to understand the extent at which cyberbullying influences the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU. Thus, findings of the study depict that the influence of cyberbullying on lifestyle of social media users can be immediate or long term in nature. The immediate or short-term effect according to the research carried out signifies that victims (29% of the respondents) are prompted to feel emotional instantly after they have been cyberbullied. Another 25% of respondents are known to attack back after they have been bullied on any social media platform thereby promoting the menace of cyberbullying on the different platforms they belong to. Also, another 18% of respondents take drastic steps of leaving the social media platform while some others are known to disregard whatever form of cyberbullying meted out on them. On the long-term base, 32% of respondents take steps of restricting their posts thereby hampering their self-expression. This category of users eventually become unstable on social media platforms with limited time spent and content posted. Another group of respondents who make up 25% of the sampled population overtime develop low self esteem while 22% fall into severe depression which could develop in stages. Some others who make up 14% of the respondents withdraw totally from these social media sites. It is safe to note that cyberbullying more than it seems

to appear takes its toll of effect on users who fall victim, and such effect goes to a very large extent given the extreme measures users take to deal with the situation.

In research question three, where emphasis was placed on the other factors responsible for the changes in the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU, findings revealed from the research shows that besides from cyberbullying which threatens the lifestyle and activities of social media users there are other underlying factors. These factors are inclusive of other cybercrimes that persists on social media (hacking, swindling, phishing etc), personal decision of users to maintain a private lifestyle, decision to ensure time management, underlying health condition that could hold users back from being active, financial conditions which could affect the ability of users to spend as much time as they would want online among other reasons.

Summary

Cyberbullying as an advanced form of bullying only made possible due to the vast technological changes made available to internet users is a trending menace capable of causing a wholesome negative effect. With little research on the effect it poses to the lifestyle of social media users, the study sought towards “appraising the influence of cyber bullying on the lifestyle of social media users in two selected universities in the south east”. The objectives of the study involves ascertaining the existence of cyberbullying among social media users in UNN and IMSU, the extent to which cyberbullying influences the lifestyle of social media users in UNN and IMSU and other factors responsible for a change in the lifestyle of social media users.

Various researchers have agreed that cyberbullying has become prevalent online and should be curbed. Another area where researchers seem to agree is on the fact that cyberbullying leaves deleterious effects on the users who have fallen victim to the menace, also that its major effects are on youths. Youths are within teenage years to 40 years. While this study focuses on the impact of cyberbullying on the lifestyle of social media users, others studies have been restricted to the effects on the psychological of individuals and some others on the prevalence and correlates of perpetration of cyberbullying among in-school adolescents. The quantitative study utilized the descriptive survey research design and a simple random sampling technique. The population under study which involved social media users from the University of Nigeria Nsukka and Imo State was further broken down to 2020/21 session post graduate students since there is no accurate account of social media users in both selected institutions. A total of 1920 was arrived at with a sample size of 331 calculated using the taro Yamane formula. The research instrument employed is a structured close ended questionnaire.

The 331 questionnaires were distributed and only 328 dully filled and returned. 75% of respondents affirmed the existence and prevalence of cyberbullying in Nigeria. Findings of the study depict that the influence of cyberbullying on lifestyle of social media users can be immediate or long term in nature, although it goes a long way in affecting users who have been victimized. This prompts them towards taking drastic actions as far as withdrawal from social media platforms, low self-esteem and exchange of ill intended messages to others. Findings retrieved also shows that there are other factors responsible for the changes in lifestyle of social media users.

Conclusion

The use of social media has led to an increased number of cyberbullying incidents all over the world. Many actors are involved in cyberbullying, such as the perpetrators, victims, SNS platforms and internet providers. Although, social media provides a whole lot of ease in the communication process, users must do all to abstain from cyberbullying acts as well as avoid cyberbullies who try to victimize others. If left unchecked cyberbullying would become a major threat to the growth of the society with cyberbullies parading to unleash arsenals upon unsuspecting victims who would be left demoralized and incapacitated at performing their social role in the society. This ultimately affects the usage of social media platforms as without the presence of users’ social media platforms would remain dormant.

Recommendations

In view of this study, cyberbullying has become an obvious menace on social media that needs to be addressed so as to bring a sense of decency in online conversations and security of users who constantly would need social media platforms given the persisting need for it in the 21st century. Thus, it is recommended that:

1. Every social media platform considers, develop and reform measures towards checking the activities of cyberbullies on social media sites as well as mapping out punitive measures towards ensuring a decline in the act. This would help such social media site to continuously maintain users if not gain more.
2. The federal government, despite not entirely having the ability to control everything that happens in the internet sphere could put it policies discouraging cyberbullying activities just as they have in the past campaigned against hate speech on social media platforms.
3. Social media users find better coping mechanisms towards cyberbullying once they fall victim so as to preserve their offline lifestyle.

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