

Perceptions of Cyberbullying in Harare Youths. A Case of Eastlea Suburb

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Abstract : Cyberspace was identified as a form of communication, whereby people could interact effectively and work as the new norm due to the covid-19 pandemic. However, this came about with the problem of cyberbullying which was defined as the intentional use of gadgets of sociation to inflict harm at an individual. The paper sought to establish the perception of cyberbullying among youths in a Harare suburb of Eastlea. A qualitative approach was taken for the study. Three participants with average ages of 22 were identified using the snowballing technique and interviewed. The results from the research revealed that the participants' understanding of cyberbullying was the intentional harm of individual using gadgets of sociation, with the perpetrators and the social media platforms to blame for this. Intervention strategies included education on the concept of cyberbullying and its effects, awareness on policies regarding cyber victims and cyberbullies, maintaining and securing personal information. The research also emphasized how cyberbullying was difficult to avoid completely but individuals could manage their data and reduce their risk of being victims.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Gadgets of sociation, Perception, Youth

I. INTRODUCTION

Cyberspace: A form of communication

Cyberspace, influenced by the internet is fast changing the environment, allowing an improvement in which people connect with each other. This has led to an increase in the use of social media as a form of interaction. Following the covid 19 pandemic, social media platforms have become the new norm of communication among youths, students, employees and employers due to social distance. This has also become a preferred form of communication as youths keep in touch via common platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Tik-tok, YouTube and Instagram, with the youths' efforts towards gaining more followers and people liking, sharing and retweeting the content they post.

Cyberspace has positive attributes, it is a fast, beneficial and convenient mode of interaction. However, because individuals post pictures and discuss personal information, this has allowed for cyberbullying. Some details are not posted but targeted individuals are hacked by cyberbullies, using the information to harass and threaten their victims. Cyberspace has normalized cyberbullying among social media platforms with negative comments being labeled as 'violent' circulating and demeaning victims. It is therefore the aim of this paper to

understand the perception of cyberbullying among the youths in Eastlea, Harare.

Cyberbullying

Technological advancements have seen a shift from the traditional form of bullying to cyberbullying. Although there is no universally accepted definition of cyberbullying, most definitions include the use of electronic devices such as computers, e-mail, and cell phones to repeatedly and intentionally inflict damage onto another (Cho et al. 2019).

Cyberbullying is characterized by the following elements: voluntary and intentional, repeated behaviour, need to inflict harm through the use of electronic devices (Ferrara et al., 2018). There is also imbalance of power, with the cyber bully having more dominance over their victims (Durak and Saritepeci, (2020). Cyberspace allows for anonymity for the cyber bully, which provokes a perception of weakness and loneliness in the victims (Cao et al., 2020).

Types of cyberbullying

Youth's experience different forms of cyberbullying. These include: Harassment-this occurs when the bully sends offensive messages to their victims intended to cause psychological and emotional harm. Harassment occurs through email, messages, forums, chats, and discussion groups (Wells et al., 2019). As in traditional bullying, the victim is always in a "one down" position and suffers passively from aggression (Choi and Kruis, 2020; Moneva et al., 2020).

Cyberstalking: the cyberbully virtually follows their victims in order to isolate, threaten and cause fear. The bully uses their victim's personal information to gain control of them. The persecutor can systematically try to contact the victim, sending offensive and intrusive messages (Reyns and Fissel, 2020). This contributes to increasing the level of disinhibition (disinhibition effect) and aggression toward the victim (Algeri et al., 2019; Dhillon and Smith, 2019; Saladino et al., 2020).

Impersonation: the cyberbully takes control of the victim's personal accounts such as social media accounts and uses this to share personal information, pictures and other negative content such as explicit videos. This tarnishes their victims' image, directs negative comments towards them and in most cases where business is done online, they lose their customers who are their followers on social media. Although several studies have been conducted on the perceptions of cyberbullying among youths, this paper will focus on those in

Eastlea during covid-19 where there is limited physical interaction and more online communication

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2014), the definition of cyberbullying involves the following: unwanted, aggressive behavior that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. Behaviors such as making threats, spreading rumors are repeated over time with the bully maintaining anonymity.

Cyberbullying and the youths

Cyberbullying is a universal phenomenon. Studies done in the United States of America have indicated that since 2007, approximately 28% of youth have been a victim of cyberbullying at some point in their lives, and 16% have admitted that they have cyberbullied others (Patchin, 2019d). A sample of 312 older Chinese students ages 18-25 in Hong Kong, a study by Leung, Wong, and Farver (2018) revealed that 68% have been a victim of online bullying in their lifetime. Research conducted in Japan, with a sample of 899 high school students ages 15-19, found that 22% of youth have experienced cyberbullying victimization since they entered elementary school (Udris, 2015). According to a 2015 Swedish survey on 800 children, 9% of 9–12-year-olds, 18% of 13–16-year-old and 19% of 17–18-year-olds had been victims of cyberbullying.

In Africa, a nationally representative survey in Ghana of approximately 2,000 young people ages 9-17 indicated that about three in 10 youth have experienced something that has upset them when online (during their lifetime), with about two in 10 reporting they have been treated in a harmful way or in a manner they didn't like over the last year (IPSOS Ltd Ghana, 2017). In South Africa, a study of roughly 900 young people ages 9-17 found that 27.1% have "personally been bothered by something on the internet in the past year" (Phyfer, Burton, & Leoschut, 2016, p. 39). Additionally, in a study of 653 adolescent students in Nigeria, 39.8% reported that they have been a victim of cyberbullying in the last three months (Olumide, Adams, & Amodu, 2016). In the Middle East, Tarabulus, Heiman, and Olenik-Shemesh (2015) found that in Israel, 8.9% of 458 youth ages 11-13 have been a victim of online bullying. In other parts of the Middle East, a Microsoft survey of cyberbullying prevalence among youth ages 8-17 in 25 countries or regions around the world (sampling at least 300 youth per country or region) revealed that 28%, 27%, and 26% of young people in Qatar, Egypt, and Pakistan, respectively, have been bullied online (Microsoft, 2012d, 2012b, 2012c). Another study compared cyberbullying prevalence rates between youth (ages 10, 13, and 15) in Finland and Iran (sampling 620 and 630 youth, respectively) (Jaghoory, Björkqvist, & Österman, 2015). The study demonstrated that young people in Iran were significantly more likely to be a victim of cyberbullying than youth in Finland. This result held for all six forms of cyberbullying the study measured, which ranged from being the recipient of offensive emails to being filmed offline while being bullied.

Traditional bullying and cyberbullying

Traditional bullying has a longer history of research and studies than cyberbullying. Dating back to the early 1970's, Dan Olweus (1987) was credited as the first to research on traditional bullying. 30 years following Olweus's studies, Action for Children (formerly National Children's Home) became the first organization to be credited with investigating cyberbullying.

Research has suggested a link between traditional bullying and cyberbullying as an overlapping phenomenon (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2015). Both forms of bullying are meant to inflict pain on their victims resulting in psychological, physiological and emotional harm (Kowalski, Limber, Zane, & Hassenfeldt, 2008). Cyberbullies and traditional bullies have several comparable reasons including the need to create a power imbalance between them and their victims, better status, for fun and as a way of getting rid of their boredom. Cyberbullying and traditional bullying are repeated behaviors (Kowalski et al., 2008), with the online bullying characterized by messages constantly being sent by the bully or is shared many times on social media; traditional bullying often involves by standers who are aware of the act.

However, traditional bullying and cyberbullying are considered as independent from each other. Except for social bullying, cyberbullies are capable of tormenting their victims anonymously (Kowalski, 2008), which differs from traditional bullying where the perpetrators have physical contact with their victims. This also result in different impact that the forms of bullying have, whereby cyberbullying can have adverse effects on their victims because the intimidation will be extreme as there will be an elimination of them experiencing their victims' reactions disregarding their self-regulatory process (Schneider, et al, 2012). Most cases of cyberbullying are underreported as compared to traditional bullying as the victims are embarrassed or afraid of the punishment related to the information used by the perpetrators (Aboujaoude, 2015).

Cyberbullying and traditional bullying have overlapping and diverging concepts. Considering the studies exploring the two phenomena, the paper seeks to understand how the youths perceive cyberbullying.

Role exchange between victims and perpetrators

Studies reviewed show that it is common for victims and perpetrators to exchange roles in traditional and cyber bullying. Researches by Ortega-Barón et al. (2017), Beran and Li (2008) and Cuadrado-Gordillo et al. (2019) indicated that traditional bullying victims are likely to change to cyber bullies as a way to shift the balance of power in a safer space. Slonje and Smith (2008) and Caudrado-Gordillo et al. (2019), concluded that approximately 10% of traditional victims commit aggression in cyberspace. There is also an exchange of roles in the opposite context whereby the bully-victims who act in combined bullying were more numerous (17.1%) than

those who were only involved only in traditional (12.1%) or cybernetic (5.4%) contexts. Del Rey et al. (2012) found out that it is more likely that a victim becomes a bully than a bully to be a victim. The phenomenon can also occur simultaneously whereby the victim-bully will act to relief themselves of the pain inflicted on them.

Perception

Perception is defined by Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English as the way you think about something and your idea of what it is like. It is the process of understanding and interpreting sensory stimulations such as hearing, sight and taste.

Youth

Youth is described as the period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. The United Nations for statistical purposes define youth as those persons between the ages of 15 and 24 years, which was used for the purposes of this research.

II. METHODOLOGY

The Qualitative Research approach was adopted in this study in line with the objectives of the study which included: the identification of men who marry girl children in the Mbare Suburb of Harare. It was also exploration of factors that contribute to girl child marriages, describing the effects of child marriages on the girl child as well as to suggest strategies for reducing child marriages in the Mbare suburb of Harare. It is an exploration of what is assumed to be a dynamic reality and it does not claim that what is discovered in the process is universal, and thus replicable. Purposive sampling was used in this study. It involves identification and selection of individuals or groups that are proficient and well-informed with a phenomenon of interest (Cresswell, et.al 2011). Eighteen women were identified as the sample to be used. These women were drawn from the Mbare community only. The phenomenological approach was adopted in this study because it captures lived experiences of people in textual expression. It examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved, in this case the girl children who are already in marriages or those who have been in the marriages in the Mbare suburb of Harare. After the selection of the sample, the researcher decided to use semi-structured interviews as the data collection tool. This is mainly because they allowed the researcher to use open ended questions which provided a wider depth into the responses given by the respondents.

III. FINDINGS

The data gathered from the participants, two females ages 22 and one male aged 23 was organized and coded into themes. Internet was used daily by all three participants with two participants using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, YouTube and one used only WhatsApp on a daily basis.

Definitions and views on cyberbullying

Cyberbullying was viewed as use of gadgets of sociation to send content on social media platforms which the other person is not comfortable with so that one induces discomfort.

Respondent 1: "The persecutor can systematically try to contact the victim, sending offensive and intrusive messages "

Respondent 2: "In a way, it is normal and expected to be bullied on Twitter. You only post if you are sure of what you are saying".

Respondent 3: "when people are bullied online for example, extortion is done so that someone doesn't post an embarrassing pic, also making funny comments that are offensive to the people".

Respondent 2: "spreading confidential information without consent"

Characteristics of cyberbullying and how they differ from traditional bullying

It is different from the orthodox way of bullying, cyberbullying is online and the content can get many viewers inflicting more psychological harm which can be long lasting in its content and effects.

Respondent 3: "with traditional bullying it's physical whereas cyberbullying is different and is done virtually. There are a lot of bystanders in victims involved in traditional bullying whereas cyberbullying is done online".

Respondent 2: "cyberbullying has more emotional damage than traditional bullying which is more of physical bullying".

Respondent 1: "intense psychological trauma"

Respondent 2: "one frightening health problem is the pressure and emotional abuse caused by cyberbullying".

Respondent 1: "a lasting effect compared to traditional bullying."

Reasons for cyberbullying

The reasons people engage in cyberbullying. The first was the issue of revenge where people in conflict would take it to social media, show of power, sense of belonging, bolster self-esteem among other reasons.

Respondent 1 "Some people engage in cyberbullying to embarrass or bring someone down in front of a large group of people and with cyberbullying it spreads a lot quicker online".

Respondent 2 "show off power towards people they think are weaker than them or they have been bullied, abused at home so they want to bully others".

Respondent 3 "cyberbullying, like conventional bullying, is based on an asymmetrical power relationship exercised by the cyber-bully toward the victim"

Respondent 2 “when people fail to gain a sense of belonging in social or peer groups, they hide online and try to make others feel that way”.

Respondent 3 “bullied children also behaved in a way that was, namely to raise their social status, to bolster self-esteem, because of anger and frustration, because they are struggling socially, or because they have been bullied”

Respondent 1 “some people do it to feel better about themselves, some people feed on the pain of others. Some are just hurt, so hurt people hurt people”

Respondent 3 “I think people engage in cyberbullying to gain popularity, for entertainment and to gain followers on social media”.

Respondent 2 “if you post a post a revealing picture, you can expect both positive and negative comments especially when you are popular”.

Respondent 1 “nowadays some bullies take pride in their work to gain popularity and remain unknown. When people don’t know the person behind the information, they are likely to be famous”.

Views on cyber victims and cyberbullies

Participants agreed that the perpetrators were to blame for the cyberbullying and also social media platforms which do not punish individuals who bully others.

Respondent 1: “the people to blame are obviously the people that partake in the cyberbullying trying to being someone down or embarrass other people”

Respondent 3: “those who bully others and those who fail to reprimand the bullies”

Respondent 2: “the moment one shares a picture that is harmful to the victim, you are also a cyberbully”.

Respondent 1: “social media platforms which allowed perpetrators to bully others without punishment on WhatsApp application one could report a cyberbully and the punishment is not immediate or intense”.

Intervention strategies

The following intervention strategies were suggested in curbing cyberbullying.

Education on cyberbullying

The participants highlighted that lack of knowledge resulted in people engaging in cyberbullying unknowingly or unintentionally especially on social media hence educating people was very necessary.

Respondent 2: “showing people the effects that cyberbullying can have on an individual. We have seen many instances where people have committed suicide because of cyberbullying.”

Respondent 3: “Educating people on not posting personal information on the internet”.

Education on cybercrime policies

An intervention strategy suggested by all participants was for the government to come up with policies against cyberbullies.

Respondent 1: “looking at the Zimbabwean context, I am not sure if there are policies that cater for cyberbullying or I haven’t heard of them”.

Respondent 2: “it can be stopped by making it a criminal offence and the bullies must be arrested and published for other offender to know its consequences”.

Support for cyber victims

This included their personal copying mechanisms to the psychological harm as well as social support from family.

Respondent 1: “Sometimes our parents don’t understand why we have pictures or why girls will send them to their boyfriends but in that moment, you feel safe doing that with someone”

Respondent 3: “I think people are changing now and accepting that counselling helps, so since cyberbullying causes more psychological harm, the people affected will need counselling to get back to who they were before”.

Securing and managing personal data

A way of dealing with cyberbullying was securing personal information such as using passwords and encryption on important documents, however they can be accessed by other persons.

Respondent 2: “it’s not everyone who is capable of doing that, but sometimes passwords can be predictable so making it easy to access”.

Respondent 3: “I believe cyberbullying can be avoided although very difficult as once something is put online it stays online for a very long time”.

Intervention strategies by the victims

Reporting incidences of cyberbullying to the police has been viewed as a way effective to deal with cyberbullying.

Respondent 1: “Victims can report cyberbullying, it’s the best way to stop it so action can be taken quickly”.

Respondent 3: “I don’t know how the police will handle it but reporting will be the best”.

Ignoring the threats, one participant suggested ignoring threats and blocking as a way victims could manage cyberbullying.

Respondent 1: “if you text back to someone provoking you, they will continue

IV. DISCUSSIONS

Definitions and views on cyberbullying

A participant defined cyberbullying as “bullying with the use of digital technologies, which takes place on social media, messaging platforms and mobile phones”. The persecutor can systematically try to contact the victim, sending offensive and intrusive messages (Reyns and Fissel, 2020). They indicated that this sort of bullying was a way for people to gain entertainment with other social media platforms normalizing it such as Twitter where one could post their content and people respond with hurtful and negative comments without considering it as cyberbullying. They cited “in a way, it is normal and expected to be bullied on Twitter. You only post if you are sure of what you are saying”. Also, during the covid-19 lockdown, with the rise of the internet use, cyberbullying increased as people spent more time online as a new way of interaction.

Another interviewee highlighted the issues of threats made using online data, extortion and hackers as cyberbullying. Examples of cyberbullying were posting embarrassing pictures of someone or personal videos by hackers or people who gain access to this information and are not supposed to. They highlighted that cyberbullying is “when people are bullied online for example extortion so that someone doesn’t post an embarrassing pic, also making funny comments that are offensive to the people”. A participant emphasized on how the cyberbullies can be people known by the victims, or people they were once close with. The respondent gave an example of how people share pictures or make explicit videos together whilst they are still in relationships and once they are not together, this information is uploaded online. The participant indicated how women fall victim to this and this could be repeated by different people as she defined cyberbullying as “spreading confidential information without consent”. Agreeing to the fact that men could have personal information uploaded without their consent, participants maintained that men could still take pride in having these sexual encounters and women were affected more in a negative way.

Characteristics of cyberbullying and differences from orthodox bullying

Participants described the characteristics that differentiated traditional bullying from cyberbullying. Raised from the interview was how cyberbullies could remain anonymous to their victims whereas in traditional bullying the bully could be identified. The principal characteristic of cyberbullying is the anonymity guaranteed by the web, which provokes a perception of weakness and loneliness in the victims (Cao et al., 2020). The participant said “with traditional bullying it’s physical whereas cyberbullying is different and is done virtually. There are a lot of bystanders in victims involved in traditional bullying whereas cyberbullying is done online”. The fact that traditional bullying was a physical phenomenon, victims were more likely to receive help unlike cyberbullying

where most victims suffered in silence and as a way of coping would distance themselves from the internet until the bullying had stopped.

A participant said “cyberbullying has more emotional damage than traditional bullying which is more of physical bullying”. When asked whether victims of traditional bullying did not go through the same emotional damage, the participant responded saying that in traditional bullying they could go through both the emotional and physical effects but in cyberbullying it was only the “intense psychological trauma” they experienced. The American Adolescent Psychiatric Association (2020) notes, “one frightening health problem is the pressure and emotional abuse caused by cyberbullying”. Also, this did not only affect the victim but also the people related to them such as their children, partners or family members who are exposed to the information released or accessed. Cyberbullying was characterized as having “a lasting effect compared to traditional bullying”. To explain this, a participant highlighted that it was impossible to completely erase data from the internet and could have an effect on an individual later on in life. For example, some employers and recruitment agencies go through their candidate’s social media accounts to assess the material they upload. Therefore, one might have been a victim of cyberbullying and had their personal information shared which will affect them in a negative way. Although traditional bullying could cause lifelong damage on an individual such as self-esteem, if one decided to work on it in order to recover without the knowledge of other people.

Reasons for cyberbullying

Three major categories were identified as the reasons people engage in cyberbullying. The first was the issue of revenge where people in conflict would take it to social media. “Some people engage in cyberbullying to embarrass or bring someone down in front of a large group of people and with cyberbullying it spreads a lot quicker online”. The cyberbully does this to expose their victim’s information to a lot of people. All three participants gave this as one of the reasons people engaged in cyberbullying. They also included that the perpetrators are people the victims used to trust with their information and they are likely to be affected more because they would feel betrayed. People engage in cyberbullying to “show off power towards people they think are weaker than them or they have been bullied, abused at home so they want to bully others”. This response by one participant indicated the need for power by the bully and also role exchange between victims of the two phenomenon of bullying and the perpetrators. To support this notion, “cyberbullying, like conventional bullying, is based on an asymmetrical power relationship exercised by the cyber-bully toward the victim” (Durak and Saritepeci, 2020). This was also in line with social support whereby the participant said “when people fail to gain a sense of belonging in social or peer groups, they hide online and try to make others feel that way”. Thereby the use of the internet being a platform for the bully to unleash their anger

and frustration towards their victims. A similar relationship between traditional and cyberbullying was identified here, “bullied children also behaved in a way that was, namely to raise their social status, to bolster self-esteem, because of anger and frustration, because they are struggling socially, or because they have been bullied” (Health Direct, 2020). Also highlighted was how cyberbullies targeted the individuals who bullied them physically. They added, “some people do it to feel better about themselves, some people feed on the pain of others. Some are just hurt, so hurt people hurt people”

Cyberbullies do it so as to gain popularity on social media, one participant stated that “I think people engage in cyberbullying to gain popularity, for entertainment and to gain followers on social media”. The participant considered this behavior as attention seeking without considering the consequences it had on their victims. Examples given were of local celebrities who would seek out information on other individuals, use this to make the trending stories online. They could make videos or comment on the uploaded information, making it go viral and constantly doing this, they gain followers on the internet. However, two participants indicated how some victims purposefully posted personal information on the internet such as explicit pictures or videos for fame by saying “if you post a post a revealing picture, you can expect both positive and negative comments especially when you are popular”. They also noted that the cyberbullies did not always get positive feedback from their audience, as sometimes people would discourage the bullying. One participant differentiated between cyberbullies who wanted their identity known and those who did not. They said “nowadays some bullies take pride in their work to gain popularity and remain unknown. When people don’t know the person behind the information, they are likely to be famous”. They gave examples of fake social media account holders and some hackers who are capable of accessing classified data that is personal or belonging to companies as perpetrators of cyberbullying.

Perceptions on cyber victims and cyberbullies

The views on cyber victims and cyberbullies were inquired by asking the participants who they thought was to blame for the cyberbullying. All three participants agreed that the perpetrators were to blame for the cyberbullying. One participant said “the people to blame are obviously the people that partake in the cyberbullying trying to being someone down or embarrass other people” with another saying that “those who bully others and those who fail to reprimand the bullies” were to blame for cyberbullying. They identified those who reposted information, continued with negative comments or failed to stop the cyberbullies as people to blame on cyberbullying by saying “the moment one shares a picture that is harmful to the victim, you are also a cyberbully”. One participant added the social media platforms which allowed perpetrators to bully others without punishment giving an example of the WhatsApp application where one could report

a cyberbully and the punishment was not immediate or intense.

Intervention strategies

Education on cyberbullying

The participants highlighted that lack of knowledge resulted in people engaging in cyberbullying unknowingly or unintentionally especially on social media. Therefore, “showing people the effects that cyberbullying can have on an individual. We have seen many instances where people have committed suicide because of cyberbullying. Cyberbullying could present symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder, which can lead to suicide (Liu et al., 2020). Educating people on not posting personal information on the internet”. The education would show the characteristics of cyberbullying, and effects and how to avoid being victims to the perpetrators.

Education on cybercrime policies

An intervention strategy suggested by all participants was for the government to come up with policies against cyberbullies. Although these exist, one participant said “looking at the Zimbabwean context, I am not sure if there are policies that cater for cyberbullying or I haven’t heard of them” showing that education on these policies to the public was key. As part of the education against cyberbullying, one interviewee said “it can be stopped by making it a criminal offence and the bullies must be arrested and published for other offender to know its consequences”. Acting on the established policies was a way which people could get an understanding of cyberbullying.

Support for cyber victims

Support of victims included their personal coping mechanisms to the psychological harm as well as social support from family. “Sometimes our parents don’t understand why we have pictures or why girls will send them to their boyfriends but in that moment, you feel safe doing that with someone” explained a participant. This makes it difficult for young people to approach their family members or anyone when they are being bullied online. Also, their response when they find out about the uploaded information was likely to scare them more than the bully. If the victims had the support, they could cope better as mentioned by Marín-López et al (2020) that social and emotional skills represent protective factors in cyberbullying. Hence, it is fundamental to structure intervention based on affective empathy and emotional contagion theory. Here they also included professional help for the cyber victims such as counselling to help them deal with the negative emotions by saying “think people are changing now and accepting that counselling helps, so since cyberbullying causes more psychological harm, the people affected will need counselling to get back to who they were before”. As more people received professional psychological and social support; a few victims suffer in silence.

Securing and managing personal data

A way of dealing with cyberbullying was securing personal information such as using passwords and encryption on important documents. When discussing this point, we asked the participant how they viewed hackers who could bypass the passwords and they said “it’s not everyone who is capable of doing that, but sometimes passwords can be predictable so making it easy to access”. Also, they added how people could avoid important information via text messages which made them vulnerable to having it shared with many people. People can avoid cyberbullying by keeping confidential information from social media, “I believe cyberbullying can be avoided although very difficult as once something is put online it stays online for a very long time”.

Intervention strategies by the victims

The participants gave their thoughts on how victims could cope when then are being cyberbullied. This was intended to bring out ways in which victims could avoid long lasting cyberbullying.

Reporting

“Victims can report cyberbullying, it’s the best way to stop it so action can be taken quickly”. This way was suggested for people going through cyberbullying as the best way to stop the act. However, they also raised the issue of how the victims would be ashamed of the information they are being threatened with, also the lack of knowledge on how or whom to report to. One participant said “I don’t know how the police will handle it but reporting will be the best”.

Ignoring the threats

One participant suggested ignoring threats and blocking as a way victims could manage cyberbullying. They highlighted how responding to these threats could excite the bully to continue by saying “if you text back to someone provoking you, they will continue”. We discussed the implications of this coping strategy and they added how the cyberbully could act on their threats such as posting the personal information online.

V. LIMITATION

The study had a limited number of participants, only three participants were involved and gave responses to the research. The research though it gives in-depth inductive information it cannot be extrapolated to explain behavior in a larger grouping.

VI. CONCLUSION

The paper established Eastlea youths’ perception of cyberbullying. Their definition and understanding of the term cyberbullying were similar to that used by researchers. The characteristics of cyberbullying were related to psychological or emotional harm and well differentiated from that of traditional bullying which were explained as intended physical harm towards victims. The reasons which people engaged in

cyberbullying were identified to be a result of conflict between individuals and also for entertainment purposes. The results gathered from the interviews conducted indicated that there was need to raise awareness on what cyberbullying was and its effects. Also, education on policies concerning cyberbullying, as most of the people were not aware on who to approach if facing cyberbullying and the consequences of such actions for the perpetrators. The participants also suggested individuals to secure their personal data and managed what content to upload online.

Recommendations

- Public awareness on identifying cyberbullying, ways of managing and education on the available policies regarding cybercrime.
- Social and psychological support for cyber victims

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