

**ASSESSING THE PERCEPTION AND COPING MECHANISMS OF
CYBERBULLYING AMONG GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY
UNDERGRADUATES**

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GOU/U23/MAS/655

**DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA**

JULY 2026

TITLE PAGE

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES,
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU STATE, NIGERIA IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR
OF SCIENCE (B. Sc) DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION**

SUPERVISOR: DR. MICHAEL ONWUMELU NWOSU

JULY 2026

DECLARATION

I, **NGWUTA JULIANA NKEMFURUDIMA**, with the registration number **GOU/U23/MAS/655** hereby declare that this project "**Assessing the Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University Undergraduates**" presented by me in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) degree in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu Nike, Enugu is my original work and has not been submitted either in part or full for any other degree or diploma either in this or any other tertiary institution.

NGWUTA JULIANA NKEMFURUDIMA

.....
DATE

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project, "**ASSESSING THE PERCEPTION AND COPING MECHANISMS OF CYBERBULLYING AMONG GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATES**," for its presentation and contribution to knowledge meet the requirements governing the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) Mass Communication degree of the Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike Enugu.

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EXTERNAL EXAMINER

DATE

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to God Almighty for His grace, wisdom, strength, and guidance throughout this academic journey. His unfailing love and mercies have brought me this far.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perception and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying among undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University. The study was guided by five research objectives which focused on the level of awareness of cyberbullying, forms of cyberbullying experienced, students' perception of cyberbullying, effects of cyberbullying on students, and coping mechanisms adopted by students. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to 341 undergraduate students selected through purposive sampling technique. A total of 288 valid responses were used for analysis. Data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, mean scores, and chi-square statistical method. Findings revealed that undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University are highly aware of cyberbullying, with an average mean score of 3.21. The study further showed that offensive comments are the most common form of cyberbullying experienced by students, with a mean score of 2.77. It was also found that students perceive cyberbullying as a serious social problem with an average mean score of 2.98. Furthermore, the study revealed that depression and fear/anxiety are the major effects of cyberbullying, with mean scores of 2.93 and 2.63 respectively. Finally, the study found that blocking offenders is the most common coping strategy adopted by students, with a mean score of 2.96. The study was anchored on Choice Theory and Technological Determinism Theory, which explain individual behavior and the influence of technology on communication. Empirical findings were supported by previous studies which confirmed that cyberbullying remains a significant problem among university students. The study concluded that cyberbullying has significant impacts on students and recommended the establishment of anti-cyberbullying policies, awareness campaigns, and support systems to address the problem.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The emergence of the internet and digital communication technologies has transformed the way people communicate and interact globally. The development of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and X has made communication easier, faster, and more interactive among individuals, especially university students. Undergraduate students now depend heavily on social media for academic activities, entertainment, information sharing, and interpersonal relationships (Bomo-Ene et al., 2026). The digital age has brought unprecedented opportunities for connectivity and learning, yet it has also introduced new challenges that require careful examination and intervention.

However, these youth are increasingly engaging in social media, and this has raised several social problems, including cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is the repeated harassment, threats, insults, embarrassment, or intimidation of another person through the use of digital technologies, internet services, and electronic communication tools (Giumetti & Kowalski, 2022). Cyberbullying is different from the traditional definition of bullying in that it happens electronically, on forms of media that include social media applications, emails, chat rooms, online forums, and text messaging. This type of bullying is especially troubling because it can happen anytime and impact a broad range of people at once, making it hard for victims to stop or get away from the bullying. Bansal et al. (2024) observed that such bullying can occur at any time and reach a large number of people simultaneously, making it difficult for the victims to escape or to stop being bullied.

As a result of the psychological, emotional and academic impact cyberbullying has on students, many tertiary institutions around the world are becoming concerned with the issue. Victims of cyberbullying are likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, fear,

emotional trauma, social withdrawal and poor academic performance, according to Lee et al. (2026). The negative impact of cyberbullying can manifest in various ways, such as suicidal ideation and self-harm among the victims, in severe cases (Schonfeld et al., 2023). Gohal et al. (2023) pointed out that the ubiquity of digital communication presents opportunities to target students at any time of day, making them feel unsafe or unprotected in what should be safe spaces.

Smartphones and internet penetration have been a major factor in an increasing number of interactions among undergraduates in Nigeria online. Many university students log into social media at least for a few hours daily, interacting with friends and strangers (Uzuegbunam, 2019). However, such online interactions can sometimes lead to students being victims of cyberbullying, including offensive comments, harassment online, rumours, blackmail, impersonation, threats, and embarrassing pictures or videos being posted. However, the Nigerian context poses an additional challenge with the fact that students may not be adequately knowledgeable on the use of digital literacy skills to identify and respond to cyberbullying incidents appropriately (Okoiye, Anayochi & Onah, 2015).

Several studies have found that cyberbullying among college students is now on the rise because many of these students do not seem to be aware of a proper code of conduct or what they should be doing to keep themselves safe online. Hinduja and Patchin (2025) also note that the majority of victims do not report incidents of cyberbullying to others due to fear, shame, and/or a lack of confidence in the system of support provided by institutions. This reluctance to report these types of incidents creates a cycle of abuse and also prevents victims from getting the necessary support to overcome psychological and emotional stress caused by cyberbullying (Peprah et al., 2023).

At Godfrey Okoye University, students are actively using different social media to communicate and socialize. While online platforms offer advantages, there seems to be a level of online harassment and cyberbullying among students, as reported by Iloanwusi et al. (2026). Insults, trolling, hacking of accounts, shaming of the body, and verbal abuse are some of the things some students encounter online that may have an impact on their emotional state and concentration in school (Odoh, Onwukwalonye & Onyebuchi, 2024). In the university setting, where students learn and grow, it is also important to solve digital problems they encounter in the daily lives of your students.

Coping mechanisms are strategies to try and help them handle a stressful situation or an emotional problem. Victims of cyberbullying use various coping strategies, including blocking bully accounts, reporting online bullies, avoiding social media or bullying sites, turning to friends or family members for assistance, or simply ignoring cyber bullies altogether (Zhao, Chu, and Rong, 2023). However, the coping strategies differ in effectiveness among individuals (Pyżalski et al., 2022). Some students may be more successful with some strategies than others, and some students may have difficulty finding ways to cope with the distress of cyberbullying.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

University students' growing use of the internet and social media has greatly helped cyberbullying flourish in tertiary education institutions. While social media platforms can be used to communicate, network, connect, and share information, they have also been used as a way to harass, threaten, intimidate, and cause emotional abuse to students when they are online. The double-edged sword of social media poses a great dilemma for the university community trying to tap into the positive aspects of social media, while also being mindful of the potential negative effects on the students.

Many undergraduate students are exposed to different forms of cyberbullying such as offensive comments, fake accusations, identity theft, cyberstalking, sexual harassment, and spreading of false information online. These acts can impact victims in a psychological, emotional, social, or academic way. Victims may become distracted from studies, isolate themselves from others, and experience anxiety or emotional distress. Students' academic achievement can suffer when they are unable to deal with the stress and distress from being targeted by others online.

Although the cyberbullying phenomenon is growing in prevalence amongst young people, there is still a lack of understanding of cyberbullying among many students and of the seriousness and consequences of cyberbullying. Some pupils do not report incidents of online bullying or seek help as they feel it to be part of the normal way of using social media. This "normalization" of problematic behavior further contributes to an environment where cyberbullying continues to be normalized, and victims stand alone, without safe support.

In some instances, there are no appropriate systems in place at institutions of higher education to deal with cyberbullying problems between students. Lack of clear policies and reporting systems results in students' vulnerability and lack of clarity regarding what to do when facing online harassment. Moreover, few studies have specifically focused on Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates' perception of cyberbullying and coping strategies they use after being targeted by cyberbullying. This is the place where there is a lack of knowledge, and it requires an empirical investigation to solve the problem.

Thus, it was essential to examine the perception and coping strategies of cyberbullying for undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University to better understand the level of cyberbullying and to recommend necessary action to curb cyberbullying among students. These results will serve as a reference for the university officials, university counsellors, and

policymakers to plan effective interventions in the university community to tackle cyberbullying among university students.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to assess the perception and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying among undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University.

The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates.
2. Identify the forms of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students.
3. Examine students' perception of cyberbullying.
4. Determine the effects of cyberbullying on undergraduate students.
5. Identify the coping mechanisms adopted by students against cyberbullying.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates?
2. What forms of cyberbullying are commonly experienced by undergraduate students?
3. How do students perceive cyberbullying?
4. What are the effects of cyberbullying on undergraduate students?
5. What coping mechanisms do students adopt against cyberbullying?

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on assessing the perception and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying among undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University.

The study covers students from 100 level to 500 level across different faculties in the institution. The research specifically examines students' awareness and perception of cyberbullying, forms of cyberbullying experienced, effects of cyberbullying, and coping mechanisms adopted by students.

Geographically, the study is limited to Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu State, Nigeria. This geographical limitation ensures that the study remains focused and manageable while providing relevant insights for the university community.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research will, first and foremost, help undergraduate students, university staff, students' family members, as well as government departments through the outcomes it will lead to. Undergraduate students would benefit from this research because the information gained will guide them on what cyberbullying is, and most importantly, it will expose them to the dangers and consequences of such online bullying through various platforms like social media, instant messengers, or other digital means. It might also help them adopt more appropriate ways of communication online by pointing out things that should or shouldn't be done on a digital platform. It will also give some guidance on how one should react if subjected to online harassment or whether one chooses to report such cases. Once the students know how dangerous such situations are, they will be better able to guard themselves as well as support the friends and classmates they think to be victims of cyberbullying.

The results of this investigation may help Godfrey Okoye University in coming up with and implementing the right cyberbullying prevention strategies and policies that aim at keeping the students safe while they engage in digital communication. The University management will be able to put together clear anti-cyberbullying rules, set up reporting channels, and offer a form of counseling to the affected students. Parents are the ones who can gain the most insights from the research because it can raise new awareness for the importance of closely watching the kids' online behaviors and being there for them emotionally in case of any need. Knowing the symptoms of cyberbullying and how harmful it can be is going to help parents to take the problem seriously, take preventive steps to get the child out of the problem, and seek professional help.

Another benefit coming from the research will be an addition in the academic field where cyber issues are a big concern, and also serving as material from which the next researchers of cyberbullying, social media, and digital communication can get inspired or learn something. The research work will also help in raising the level of awareness among the government bodies and policy setters on how the existence of cyberbullying in Nigeria may necessitate the adoption of tighter and more effective measures for its prevention as well. The findings from the study will help these government bodies to set a policy and regulation structure that not only controls cyberbullying at the institutional level but at the national level as well.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Terms

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying refers to the use of internet services, social media platforms, and digital communication technologies to harass, threaten, embarrass, or intimidate another person online. In this study, it encompasses all forms of online harassment experienced by undergraduate students.

Perception

Perception refers to the way students understand, interpret, and view cyberbullying and its effects. In this study, it includes students' awareness, attitudes, and beliefs about cyberbullying.

Coping Mechanisms

Coping mechanisms are strategies or actions adopted by victims to manage, resist, or reduce the effects of cyberbullying. In this study, it includes both positive and negative strategies used by students to deal with online harassment.

Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange information and interact with others online. In this study, it includes platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and X commonly used by students.

Undergraduate Students

Undergraduate students refer to students studying for their first degree programme in Godfrey Okoye University. In this study, they include students from 100 level to 500 level across all faculties.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Review

This chapter reviews relevant literature related to cyberbullying, students' perception of cyberbullying, effects of cyberbullying, coping mechanisms, and social media usage among undergraduates. The chapter also examines empirical studies and theoretical framework relevant to the study. The review provides a comprehensive understanding of the key concepts and their interrelationships in the context of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

2.1.1 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the repeated threat, embarrassment, harassment, insult, or intimidation of another person by using electronic communication technology. Santre (2023) defines cyberbullying as when an individual or group of individuals intentionally engages in aggressive conduct via electronic means of communication repeatedly against a person or persons who cannot easily defend them/herself. In the era of digital technologies and the growing number of applications of social media, the concept has undergone many changes (Bansal et al., 2024). It includes a variety of activities carried out in digital environments that have in common the fact that they are acts of harassment, which involve the use of technology as a medium of harassment.

Cyberbullying is different from bullying in that it can happen at any time and can be directed at a large audience immediately upon posting to platforms on the internet. The emotional distress of victims of cyberbullying is quite common, as offensive content can circulate rapidly online and is constantly available to them (Gohal et al., 2023). Digital platforms provide anonymity that can embolden bullies to engage in bullying behaviors, making it one of the most insidious forms of bullying and hard to combat (Lee et al., 2026). Cyberbullying

can be a repetitive occurrence of distress for the victim(s) as opposed to physical bullying, which leaves no digital trails.

Giumetti and Kowalski (2022) defined cyberbullying as: "An aggressive, intentional act repeated over time and by a group or individual using an electronic method of contact against a victim who is unable to defend himself or herself easily. As you can see from this definition, the following factors are crucial to cyberbullying: intentional, repeated, imbalance of power, electronic media. Building on this definition, Zhang et al. (2022) added the psychological effects on the targets of online harassment, with a particular focus on the long-lasting nature of this kind of harassment compared to offline bullying experiences. The definition is constantly changing as new digital platforms and means of communication become available.

The prevalence of smartphones and Internet connectivity among university students has made cyberbullying more commonplace among them in Nigeria. Online aggression in the form of bullying, defamation, or harassment was reported to happen to many Nigerian undergraduates, but without them being aware of the legal and psychological repercussions of the situation (Idonije, 2025). Makori and Agufana (2020) noted that there is a cultural stigma attached to cyberbullying and the absence of institutional frameworks to deal with cyberbullying issues in sub-Saharan African higher education institutions, which contributes to underreporting of cyberbullying. The Nigerian educational system has been reluctant to take any action against the rising menace of cyberbullying among school-going children.

According to Daudu, Osimen and Shuaibu (2023), Cyberbullying can manifest in several ways, such as online harassment, flaming, cyberstalking, impersonation, exclusion from online groups, posting embarrassing photos or videos, threatening messages and rumour spreading. The forms of these take different shapes in different social media platforms;

WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook are the most common platforms for which Nigerian students experience cyberbullying (Edward, Iloanwusi & Ugwu, 2025). These platforms are popular among Nigerian youths, and this makes them the first platforms to experience cyberbullying.

University students are highly susceptible to cyberbullying due to their high engagement in social media, which is referred to as 'social engagement'. Increased "social engagement" of students in universities makes them highly susceptible to cyberbullying. The entry to university life usually brings with it a greater amount of social media usage to sustain and forge new relationships, leaving some students vulnerable to cyberbullying risks (Bomo-Ene et al., 2026). Students might be especially vulnerable to experiencing cyberbullying due to the pressure of needing to be present online and the consequences of social exclusion (Peprah et al., 2023). Students in the university are not experienced enough and mature enough to deal with online hazards.

Cyberbullying can be a significant and enduring problem for University students. Research indicates that those who are subjected to cyberbullying are more likely than peers not bullied to be depressed, anxious, and have academic problems. The perpetual nature of connectivity in today's world could mean that victims could never truly get away from their tormentors, causing them psychological stress and distress. University staff should acknowledge cyberbullying as a critical concern in the care and learning of students, and their academic achievement.

The prevention and intervention of cyberbullying must be multi-layered and take a holistic approach involving the student, parents, teacher, and policymakers. Schools should have well-defined policies and protocols to deal with cyberbullying incidents, offer support for victims and discipline for perpetrators. Students need to be informed of the repercussions of

cyberbullying, and students should be encouraged to report instances of cyberbullying when they happen. Cyberbullying can be effectively tackled in tertiary institutions only if everybody is involved.

2.1.2 Forms of Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying takes many forms and can have different characteristics and affect victims in different ways. It is important to grasp these different forms because the understanding of each form is key to designing effective prevention and intervention strategies, Santre (2023) continued. Flaming, harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, outing and trickery, and exclusion are the most popular types of cyberbullying (Bansal et al., 2024). Preventing and responding to cyberbullying can be approached in different ways for each form of cyberbullying, so students and educators must be aware of the different types of cyberbullying.

Flaming is online fighting with angry and vulgar language in messages and/or comments. Flaming is a common event in public forums where emotional exchanges can rapidly escalate and can bring a great deal of distress for the target, as described by Zhao, Chu, and Rong (2023). The public aspect of flaming is particularly embarrassing to victims as offensive material is shared with a large audience (Hinduja & Patchin, 2025). Flaming incidents can escalate rapidly and involve more people and increase the harm to the victim.

Harassment is defined as offensive and insulting messages sent a number of times to a victim online. Lee et al. (2026) found that harassment is different than flaming because it does not occur on a one-off basis, but rather, over a period of time. Harassment has a cumulative impact on the mental health of the victim, and can result in a feeling of powerlessness (Gohal et al., 2023). The situation of repeated online abuse can cause a victim to feel helpless, unable to flee the abuser(s).

Cyberstalking is characterized by a pattern of online threats and intimidation to a person that causes fear and emotional distress. Usman (2025) reports that in some cases, cyberstalking may cross over into the physical world and that perpetrators may use information they gain through the Internet to stalk victims in the real world. This type of cyberbullying is especially frightening due to the monitoring of perpetrators of cyberbullying and threats to physical safety for victims (Peprah et al., 2023). Victims of cyberstalking have a sense of being constantly harassed and threatened, which can cause them to be extremely anxious and vigilant.

Impersonation happens when someone hacks or sets up another account to tarnish someone's reputation. Impersonation is defined by Makori and Agufana (2020) as the act of pretending to be someone else online, posting malicious content, or damaging the reputation of another person. When impersonations occur, victims often have trouble proving their innocence and have social consequences even after the impersonation is exposed (Daudu, Osimen & Shuaibu, 2023). Attacks on victims' reputation can be devastating and lead to long-term consequences in terms of their social standing and self-esteem.

Outing and trickery are exposing someone to information or secrets that are meant to be kept confidential to them. Outing can be the disclosing of personal photographs, personal messages, or sensitive information which the victim meant to stay private, according to Onwukwalonye and Odoh (2024). Often the trauma of outing itself adds to the psychological suffering of victims (Okoiye, Anayochi & Onah, 2015). Permanence of information online means that information that has been 'outed' can never be taken off the internet.

Exclusion: When someone is actively excluded or separated from an online group/discussion. Exclusion can be a subtle yet highly detrimental mannerism for victims' sense of belonging and self-worth, according to Zhang et al. (2022). Exclusion is tougher for students who have

to cope with the difficulties of establishing new networks (Bomo-Ene et al., 2026) in the social context of university life. Being removed from online groups may cause social distancing and feelings of loneliness.

2.1.3 Social Media

Social media are applications that enable users to create, share, communicate, and exchange information through virtual communities and networks. The revolution in communication, brought about by social media, has made it easy and quick to communicate with people around the world (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The platform is interactive, thus enabling synchronous and asynchronous communication, rendering it versatile for personal and academic communication (Odoh, Onwukwalonye and Onyebuchi, 2024). Most university students are now a part of the social media way of life.

Nwosu and Ezema (2022) states that all the platforms are unique in the mode of communication and content sharing they provide, and the platforms most used by undergraduates are WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X. WhatsApp is primarily used to send and receive messages and for group communication, Instagram is visual platform used for sharing photos and videos while TikTok is used for sharing pictures and videos (Iloanwusi et al., 2026). Students have various platforms for various tasks and purposes, thus creating a complex digital ecosystem.

Social media encourages communication and collaboration among students in the academic setting, but it also presents opportunities for risks to students online, including identity theft, fraud, harassment and cyberbullying. The very attributes that make social media so attractive – connectivity, reach and anonymity – can also provide opportunities for bad things to happen, according to Uzuegbunam (2019). Nigerian students are faced with these risks with

little knowledge of digital literacy, which puts them at risk of exploitation (Daudu, Osimen & Shuaibu, 2023). Those characteristics that help to connect can also cause harm.

There is a negative and a positive aspect to social media that has a significant impact on student wellbeing. Although social media can help people maintain their social connections and study groups, it can also cause mental health problems if users are too exposed to negative content or spend too much time on social media, Edward and Nwabueze (2025) conclude. The anxiety and depression that can result from the desire to present a sanitized digital image and to make comparisons can be a problem for students (Ozioko, Eze & Onwude, 2021). Says and shares what we shouldn't. Sets up unrealistic expectations and makes negative comparisons on social media.

Social media has also emerged as a significant space for identity formation and self-expression of youth. Students discuss their identities, their opinions and values through the use of social media to connect with like-minded others. This visibility to others, however, means that they are more likely to face harassment and criticism from others. Social media are a public medium, and pupils are expected to be responsible in managing their online presence.

Educators and health professionals are concerned by the addictive use of social media. Students are spending a lot of time on social media, and letting it affect their schoolwork and interactions with others in the real world. The continual notifications and updates encourage people to check and engage in the cycle, which can be hard to escape. Students have been tied up with a range of mental ailments because of their social media addiction.

Digital literacy education is gaining attention in educational institutions. Institutions of education are becoming more aware of the importance of including digital literacy education in their curriculum. Pupils should be educated about the safe and responsible use of social

media platforms, what to do about cyberbullying, and how they can keep themselves safe online. If students are not educated about it, they will continue to be at risk from using social media.

2.1.4 Students' Perception of Cyberbullying

Perception is the way that people perceive and see cyberbullying. While some students see cyberbullying as a serious social problem that can cause emotional and psychological harm, others see it as a normal social behaviour on their media, says Kubayi and Dube (2025). Perception has a significant impact on the response or coping of the students to cyberbullying incidents (Bansal et al., 2024). Students' perception of cyberbullying as a problem is more likely to lead to protective action.

The attitudes of the students towards cyberbullying affect their response to cyberbullying. Victims who are aware of the harmfulness of cyberbullying tend to be more inclined to report and receive assistance for the cyberbullying event (Zhang et al., 2022). On the other hand, those who normalize online harassment may think that it is a normal part of life and refuse to take any action to protect themselves (Hinduja & Patchin, 2025). The prevention and response behaviors are influenced by perceptions.

Perceptions of cyberbullying can be influenced by gender and/or cultural factors. Lee et al. (2026) suggest that some types of cyberbullying (e.g., sexual harassment, body shaming) may be viewed as more serious by female students than by male students. Other cultural norms such as communication and negotiation may impact the understanding and response to online harassment among students (Daudu, Osimen & Shuaibu, 2023). Cyberbullying can be different for each group and mean something different to each group.

Other social norms and media depictions also affect students' perceptions of cyberbullying in Nigeria. Idonije (2025) suggests that students who experience cyberbullying in social circles

can have a more intricate idea of the impact of cyberbullying. Educational interventions may have a significant impact in building positive perceptions and promoting positive responses to cyberbullying (Nzekwe & Dunu, 2024). Perceptions are also influenced by media coverage and public awareness campaigns.

Students' experience as either a victim or witness of cyberbullying also impacts their perception. People who have been cyberbullied have a more critical attitude toward cyberbullying than people who have not. It can also be upsetting to be a witness to cyberbullying and can influence students' views of its severity. The thoughts of others may affect one's own thoughts.

Student age and maturity also have an impact on their perceptions of cyberbullying. Younger pupils might think cyberbullying is normal behaviour, while older pupils might have a greater awareness of the negative impact that cyberbullying can have. The views of students may change as they become adults and gain experience with social media. The most critical period is when students are at university to learn to develop mature perceptions.

Schools have a role to play in promoting correct perceptions of cyberbullying. Schools can raise awareness, conduct workshops, and include classroom discussions on the issue of cyberbullying and the need to report it through awareness campaigns, workshops, and classroom discussions. Teaching programs are very important in establishing healthy school environments and mitigating cyberbullying.

2.1.5 Effects of Cyberbullying

There are several negative repercussions that cyberbullying can bring to the victims, such as psychological, emotional, academic, and social consequences. These impacts can be long-lasting and impact a child long after the cyberbullying has stopped, according to Bansal et al.

(2024). Digital communication is ubiquitous, so victims might suffer from continued distress because of the availability of these abusive messages online (Lee et al., 2026). Cyberbullying can have strong negative impacts and life-altering consequences.

Depression and Anxiety are two common psychological impacts of cyberbullying. The victims of cyberbullying report an array of emotional symptoms that can include feelings of sadness, depression, anxiety, or even clinical depression or anxiety, in addition to emotional distress (Schonfeld et al., 2023). Online harassment is an ongoing process that can lead to victims feeling constantly worried and hypervigilant (Peprah et al., 2023). Victimization can cause depression and anxiety, which can have a significant impact on their daily functioning.

Another impact of cyberbullying is Low Self-Esteem. Usman (2025) reports that cyberbullying can make students lose their self-confidence and self-esteem, especially in the case of bullying related to physical appearance, intelligence, or social status. The impact is further exacerbated by the public nature of online harassment, where the victim will feel judged by other users of the internet (Edward, Iloanwusi & Ugwu, 2025). It can take time for people to regain their self-esteem after cyberbullying.

Cyberbullying experiences are known to lead to Poor Academic Performance. Those students who are victims of cyberbullying can lose focus on learning, skip school, or drop out of school, according to Sante (2023). Cyberbullying can cause stress and anxiety that may disrupt the cognitive functions required for learning and achieving success in school (Bomo-Ene et al., 2026). Over time, academic failure can impact victims.

Social Withdrawal is one of the typical reactions to cyberbullying behaviour. Zhao, Chu, and Rong (2023) report that sometimes victims will withdraw from friends and social events to avoid any more harassment or due to shame or embarrassment. Other negative consequences

may magnify if a child's social withdrawal results in loneliness and a decrease in social support (Hinduja & Patchin, 2025). Victimized individuals can be further victimized.

The worst thing that could happen as a result of cyberbullying is having suicidal thoughts. Gohal et al. (2023) found that in the case of severe incidents of cyberbullying, they could cause self-harm or suicidal tendencies, especially when they feel helpless and unhelpful. Overall, the link between cyberbullying and suicidal thoughts and ideas highlights the critical need for the prevention and intervention of cyberbullying (Peprah et al., 2023). Every suicide as a result of cyberbullying is a preventable tragedy.

2.1.6 Coping Mechanisms Against Cyberbullying

Coping mechanisms are strategies that victims use to minimize the impact of cyberbullying. Coping strategies can be further divided into problem-focused (managing the cause of stress) and emotion-focused (managing emotional reactions) (Zhao & Chu, & Rong, 2023). The strategies that students adopt to cope need to be based on the context of the cyberbullying incident (Tao et al., 2024). It might take victims some time to experiment and find out what works for them.

People cope in a variety of ways, by blocking cyberbullies, reporting an offensive account, ignoring offensive comments, seeking support from friends and family, limiting social media use, and reporting the incident to school authorities. One of the most immediate and effective ways to prevent continuous harassment is to block offenders, according to Zhang et al. (2022). Filing a complaint against an abusive account can also result in the deletion of offensive content and the ban on users' accounts (Kubayi, Dube & Radebe, 2025). There is a need to use several strategies.

Some victims may decide to ignore or avoid messages sent by their aggressors, as a way to reduce the effects of cyberbullying. Bansal et al. (2024) say that in some instances, it is a good response to ignore harassment, but this might not be the best approach to severe or persistent harassment. Individuals who select not to respond to cyberbullying may still become greatly stressed even if they don't reply to the bully (Hinduja & Patchin, 2025). Ignoring might be a temporary solution.

Engaging in a coping mechanism is crucial for victims of cyberbullying, and that coping mechanism is seeking assistance from friends and family. Lee et al. (2026) indicated that social support would help mitigate the negative impacts of cyberbullying and help to comfort the cyberbullying victims emotionally and practically. But some victims may not report their experience, even if it is as a result of shame and/or fear of judgment (Daudu, Osimen & Shuaibu, 2023). Recovering is an important process that needs support systems.

These are strategies that students can use to deal with emotional distress due to online harassment. Onwukwalonye and Odoh/Onoh (2024) noted that coping strategies are effective depending on individual circumstances and the nature of the cyberbullying incident. Some students may require more than one strategy to assist them in coping with cyberbullying experiences, and others require professional assistance to deal with their severe cyberbullying experiences (Okoiye, Anayochi & Onah, 2015). If necessary, professional assistance should be provided.

2.2 Empirical Review

In this section, the researcher revisited previous empirical studies that are related to cyberbullying in tertiary institutions. The review looks at how the studies carried out in Nigeria and other countries have reported their findings, the methods used, and the implications of these studies on the present study. Only those studies which are directly related to cyberbullying amongst students are reviewed.

Kubayi, Dube and Radebe (2025) did a study in South Africa titled "The impact of cyberbullying: Perspectives from tertiary youth. The study was conducted to explore the effects, experiences, and perceptions of cyberbullying among students as well as to develop a plan for combating the issue. The researchers used a quantitative survey research design, and questionnaires were given to tertiary students. The population in the study was made up of tertiary students in South Africa, and a sample was obtained via purposive sampling. The results showed that the negative influence of cyberbullying on mental health, academic achievement, and social relations is significant. The study also revealed that students perceived cyberbullying as a serious problem that needs the intervention of the institution. The present study shares similarities with this study in that it also focused on tertiary students' cyberbullying perceptions. But this present study is different since it is targeted at Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates in Nigeria as compared to the study of Kubayi et al., which is focused on tertiary students in South Africa. Coping mechanisms were also explored in the present study, as they were not studied in the South African study.

Usman (2025) conducted a study on cyberbullying, academic performance and mental health among selected Muslim students at the University of Ibadan. This study was conducted to explore the correlation between cyberbullying, academic achievement, and mental health among Muslim students. A descriptive research design was used by the researcher to gather data from the respondents using questionnaires. The population was made up of Muslim

students of the University of Ibadan, while the sample size was determined using a convenience sampling technique. The results showed that there was a significant negative correlation between cyberbullying and academic performance and a significant correlation between cyberbullying and psychological problems like depression and anxiety. It was also revealed that students felt that there was a lack of awareness of cyberbullying by adults. The similarity of this study to the present research is that both studies focused on Nigerian university students and both studies examined the effects of cyberbullying. This study is, however, approached differently because it looks at the perceptions and coping strategies of all the Undergraduates of Godfrey Okoye University as compared to Usman, who focused on Muslim students of the University of Ibadan with little emphasis on coping mechanisms.

Makori and Agufana (2020) have studied "Cyber bullying among learners in higher educational institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa: Examining challenges and possible mitigations. The study sought to explore cyberbullying and what some mitigation strategies might be to combat it. A literature review approach was used, and findings from various studies in Sub-Saharan Africa were synthesized. The research study concluded that there are a range of different types of cyberbullying: harassment, impersonation, and exclusion. The results also indicated that students do not want to report cyberbullying incidents because of fear and institutional support. The study suggested the implementation of clear policies and reporting processes. This study shares similarities with the present study in terms of the interest in the H.E. institutions and the cyberbullying problems. The current study is different, however, as it is a primary research methodology with the data collected from students of Godfrey Okoye University, rather than Makori and Agufana's, in multiple countries, literature research.

Okoiye, Anayochi, and Onah (2015) carried out the study, "Moderating effect of cyber bullying on the psychological well-being of in-school adolescents in Benin, Edo State Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to identify the moderating effect of cyberbullying on the psychological well-being of adolescents. A survey research design was used, and questionnaires were given to in-school adolescents. The respondents were the adolescents of Edo state, Benin City, in the towns of Benin City using stratified random sampling. The results indicated that psychological well-being is significantly affected by cyberbullying, and those who are being bullied feel that their well-being is poor and that they are experiencing emotional problems. Another major finding was that students showed some variation in coping mechanisms. The commonalities between the two studies and the current study are that both of them focused on Nigerian students and examined the effects of cyberbullying. The present study, however, is unique in that it is concerned with the coping behavior of university undergraduates rather than adolescents and in the detail of coping.

Bomo-Ene et. al. (2026) carried out a study entitled Nigerian Perspective of Social Media Impact on Mental Health of Undergraduate Students: A Systematic Review. The study sought to critically examine the double effects of social media on the mental health of undergraduates in Nigeria. The researchers used a systematic review method to study various studies on social media and mental health. The results indicated positive and negative impacts of social media on students' mental health, with cyberbullying being a major negative impact. The study also revealed that social media has an impact on the depression, sleep, and self-perception of students. The common ground between this study and the present research is that both studies examined the effects of social media, and the students involved were both Nigerian undergraduate students. The current study is different, however, since it utilizes primary research methodology and specifically looks at perception and coping strategies for cyberbullying.

Giumetti and Kowalski (2022) did a study on "Cyberbullying via social media and well-being. The study looked at research and studies that investigated cyberbullying as it relates to youth and adults and how it correlates to well-being. This study used a literature review method to compile the results of various studies on cyberbullying and well-being. Results indicated that the use of social media for cyberbullying is significantly linked to poor well-being outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Furthermore, the study identified that some factors such as social support and coping styles moderate the relationship between cyberbullying and well-being. There are similarities between this study and the current study, as both are on cyberbullying and how it impacts well-being. But the current study has its own differences, as it is conducted on Nigerian undergraduates alone and it explores coping mechanisms in detail.

A study by Santre (2023) was done on the topic of Cyberbullying in adolescents: A literature review. In the study, literature related to cyberbullying among adolescents has been reviewed. The researcher used the literature review method, which is based on the analysis of several studies related to cyberbullying among adolescents. The results indicated that cyberbullying is common among adolescents and that adolescents who engage in cyberbullying are associated with several negative effects such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. A second finding was that prevention and intervention strategies are critical in dealing with cyberbullying. This study is similar to the current study in terms of studying cyberbullying issues with young people. The present study, however, is unique because it deals with coping mechanisms and university undergraduate students.

In a study titled Cyberbullying and mental health: past, present and future, Bansal et al. (2024) investigated the impact of cyberbullying on mental health. The study examined the impact of cyberbullying on people's mental health. The researchers used a literature review

methodology and reviewed several studies on cyberbullying and mental health. The results showed that cyberbullying hurts mental health and can cause depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation. The study also revealed that there is less research in specific regions and therefore there is a need for more research. This study is similar to the current study in that it discusses cyberbullying and its impact. The current study, however, is unique in that it is geared towards Nigerian undergraduates and coping mechanisms are explored in detail.

Gohal, S. et al. (2023) did a study on the prevalence and associated risks of cyberbullying and its impact on adolescents. The purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of cyberbullying, examine risk factors, and evaluate the relationships between cyberbullying and psychological consequences of cyberbullying among adolescents. The study was of cross-sectional design, and questionnaires were given to the adolescents. The results indicated that cyberbullying is prevalent amongst adolescents and linked to depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. The study also revealed that certain risk factors, including gender and social media exposure, are linked with cyberbullying experiences. The similarity between this study and the current study is that both studies have a focus on cyberbullying and its impact on youth. The present study, however, is different as it includes university undergraduates instead of adolescents, and additionally a detailed analysis of coping mechanisms.

Lee et al. (2026) performed a study named "Cyberbullying victimization and mental health symptoms among children and adolescents: A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies. This study focused on the longitudinal effects of cyberbullying victimization on mental health symptoms in children and adolescents. The researchers used a meta-analysis method and analysed several longitudinal studies about cyberbullying and mental health. Results indicated that over time, cyberbullying victimization was a significant predictor of mental health symptoms such as depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts. The study also revealed

that the impact of cyberbullying on mental health is strong in various populations and contexts. The similarity between this study and the current study is that they both focus on cyberbullying and its effects. The present study diverges from previous studies, however, as it examines coping strategies in detail, as well as focusing on university undergraduates instead of children and adolescents.

Hinduja and Patchin (2025) studied "Cyberbullying through the lens of trauma: an empirical examination of US youth. The study investigated the association between the experiences of cyberbullying and traumatic outcomes among U.S. youth. The study design employed was survey research, with questionnaires being used with youth participants. The results indicated that there are significant associations between cyberbullying experiences and traumatic outcomes, such as threats and identity-based cyberbullying. The study also revealed that the frequency of experiencing cyberbullying is related to the severity of the traumatic impacts. A similarity between this study and the present research is that the topic is cyberbullying experiences and impact. The present study, however, is different given that it is directed to Nigerian undergraduates and gives consideration to coping mechanisms in detail.

Peprah et al. (2023) carried out a research study entitled "Cyberbullying victimization and suicidal ideation among in-school adolescents in three countries: implications for prevention and intervention. This study investigated the relationship between adolescent cyberbullying victimisation and suicidal ideation among adolescents in three countries. The study design was cross-sectional, using questionnaires for adolescents. The results showed that having been a victim of cyberbullying (CB) is strongly correlated with adolescents' suicidal ideation. The study also revealed that the relationship between cyberbullying and suicidal ideation is similar across countries and contexts. The similarity between this study and the present study is that both focus on cyberbullying victimization and its impacts. The present study is unique,

however, in that it studies coping mechanisms in detail and uses university undergraduates instead of adolescents.

A study entitled “Cyberbullying definitions and measurements in children and adolescents: Summarizing 20 years of global efforts” by Zhang et al. (2022) was carried out. The study compiled the different initiatives around the world for defining and measuring cyberbullying among children and adolescents. They used a literature review methodology, studying various research studies focusing on definitions and measurement of cyberbullying. The results showed that there were different definitions and measurements of cyberbullying in these studies, which indicates a need for standardizing approaches. Another finding from the study was that cyberbullying experiences are also always linked to negative consequences. The similarity between this study and the current research is the focus on cyberbullying experiences and their effects. The current study has several differences, however, from previous studies, as it is based on university undergraduates instead of children and adolescents.

Pyżalski et al. (2022) undertook a study entitled "Cyberbullying characterized and prevention – lessons learnt from the narratives of adolescents and teachers". The study focused on the characteristics of cyberbullying and the adolescents' and teachers' perspectives on cyberbullying prevention. The researchers used the narrative and interview methods in the qualitative research design. The results showed that adolescents and teachers have different perceptions of cyberbullying, as students may consider it a common practice, whereas teachers consider it a serious issue. The study also indicated that students' needs and perceptions will need to be taken into account when designing prevention measures. A similarity with this study and the current one is the focus on perceptions of cyberbullying.

The present study does not assess coping mechanisms in detail, however, and it involves university undergraduates rather than the general public.

The study by Zhao, Chu and Rong (2023) explored the experience of cyberbullying and bystander behavior in cyberbullying incidents using the serial mediators of perceived incident severity and empathy. This study explored the relationship between being a victim of cyberbullying and bystander behavior and how perceived victimization and empathy act as mediating variables. The research design was survey research, and questionnaires were given to the respondents. Findings showed that the experience of cyberbullying significantly predicted bystander behavior and that the relation between cyberbullying experience and bystander behavior was mediated by the perceived severity of the incident and by empathy. Among other things, the research revealed that people who had gone through cyberbullying are more apt to help if a bullying incident is occurring online. This is not a coincidence, as both studies share the same goal of investigating victims of cyberbullying and the ways they react to it. Even so, in terms of participants, the second study was different; the research was carried out among Nigerian undergraduate students, and the analysis also covered coping strategies.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on two theories: Choice Theory developed by William Glasser (1965) and Technological Determinism Theory developed by Marshall McLuhan (1964). These theories provide a comprehensive framework for understanding cyberbullying behavior, students' perceptions, and coping mechanisms.

2.3.1 Choice Theory

Choice Theory was developed by William Glasser in 1965. The theory is that personal actions and decisions are the responsibility of the persons involved. Glasser states that people act in response to the need to meet the following basic needs: belonging, power, freedom, survival, and fun. The theory proposes that people who engage in cyberbullying do so because they are not able to meet some of their emotional and social needs positively.

The reason why the Choice Theory was found to be relevant to this study is that it helps to understand why some children engage in cyberbullying behaviours and how victims cope with the emotional stress they experience as a result of cyberbullying. The theory suggests that cyberbullying attempts to manipulate or harm others online due to frustration, loneliness, peer pressure, or emotional dissatisfaction. On the other hand, if victims know what to do and how they respond to the bullying, they might be more able to use positive coping strategies.

Another explanation for some students' differing viewpoints on cyberbullying, as well as the extent of the problem, could be that they are experiencing it through Choice Theory. Students can be impacted less by cyberbullying if they have practiced healthy coping strategies and positive self-perceptions; they can be impacted more by cyberbullying if they do not have these healthy coping strategies and positive self-perceptions. The theory highlights that personal responsibility and choice are key factors in responding to difficult situations, a concept that can be directly applied to students' coping with cyberbullying.

2.3.2 Technological Determinism Theory

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan created Technological Determinism Theory. The theory states that technology influences social, communication, cultural, and human behaviors. McLuhan suggests that it is the devices that shape the way people think, interact, and engage in social

activities. The most well-known catch-phrase of the theory is “the medium is the message,” coined by Marshall McLuhan, which suggests that the technologies of communication exert a deeper influence on society than do the messages conveyed within them.

Technological Determinism Theory is relevant to this study because it is an explanation for the new opportunities for cyberbullying provided by social media and digital communication technologies. The theory posits that the social media technological characteristics, including anonymity, instant communication, wide reach, and permanence of content, influence the nature and impact of cyberbullying experiences. The theory posits that the medium (social media) affects the way cyberbullying takes place as well as the way in which cyberbullying is perceived by cyberbullying victims and how they respond.

Technological Determinism Theory can also be used to gain a better understanding of how students' perceptions of cyberbullying have developed based on their experiences with technology. The more experience students have with a digital environment, the more likely they are to have a different perception of online harassment than those who spend less time on social media. This theory also proposes that with the ongoing technological development, new types of cyber-bullies could be created and new coping strategies and institutional responses would need to be developed.

2.4 Gap in Literature

The existing literature review indicates that a few gaps exist with regard to cyberbullying for university students, which this study aims to address.

One, there are a lot of studies that have focused on cyberbullying among students in various countries, but limited studies have focused on cyberbullying among undergraduates in private universities in Nigeria. Most of the studies conducted in Nigeria have been on secondary

school students or students of public universities, with no study on the experiences of cyberbullying among students of private tertiary institutions like Godfrey Okoye University.

Second, while there has been research on the impact of cyberbullying on students' mental health and academic performance, there has been little research that has thoroughly analysed students' perceptions and coping strategies regarding cyberbullying among undergraduates in Nigeria. This study aimed to fill the above gap by investigating the awareness, perception, and experiences of cyberbullying and the coping strategies taken by students.

Third, previous research has not sufficiently examined Godfrey Okoye University students' perceptions about cyberbullying and the coping strategies they use in response to cyberbullying. This is an area of ignorance that requires empirical research to help guide the creation of interventions and supports to help students impacted by cyberbullying.

Fourth, although several types of cyberbullying have been identified, there is very little research that investigates the extent of the occurrence of these types of cyberbullying, particularly among Nigerian university students. This study aims to fill this gap by elucidating the nature of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates.

Finally, there is little research into institutional responses to cyberbullying in Nigerian universities. Thus, the present study can help to fill this gap by offering recommendations for the university administration for setting up anti-cyberbullying policies and awareness campaigns to educate the students about the safe use of social media.

2.5 Summary of Literature Review

The chapter went through the relevant concepts that discussed cyberbullying, social media, perception of students, effects of cyberbullying, and coping mechanisms. During the conceptual review, it was determined that cyberbullying is defined as the intentional use of

electronic communication technology to harass, threaten, or intimidate others. Several types of cyberbullying were identified: flaming, harassment, impersonation, outing, exclusion, and cyberstalking. The review also looked at the impact of cyberbullying on a young person's life, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, poor school performance, social withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts.

An empirical review of studies was done in Nigeria and other countries. The reviewed studies showed that cyberbullying is a serious issue among university students and it hurts their mental health, academics, and social relationships. The studies also revealed multiple coping strategies used by victims of these offences, such as blocking, reporting abuse, seeking social support, and ignoring offensive content. The reviewed studies, however, indicated the lack of knowledge about the perceptions of cyberbullying and coping strategies of Godfrey Okoye University students.

The theoretical frameworks used were based on Choice Theory and Technological Determinism Theory. Choice Theory is used to describe the choices and behaviors of individuals, and Technological Determinism Theory is used to describe the influence of technology on communication and social interactions. These theories offer a holistic perspective on cyberbullying behavior, students' perceptions, and coping strategies.

The gap in the literature identified that it is necessary to have a study that will focus on the undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University, which this study aims to address. The review further emphasized the importance of institutional policies, awareness creation, and supporting mechanisms to tackle cyberbullying in tertiary institutions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

We chose the survey method in our research work and administered a questionnaire to gather respondents' opinions and views. The survey method is a type of research that involves picking a small sample of the population to represent it and obtaining information from them. This kind of survey is quite efficient compared to other research methods, as it is less costly and flexible; also, data can be collected very rapidly and in a large population. The use of this study design is justified because really no variables are being manipulated here; rather, a simple descriptive method is utilized. It will be very suitable for collecting the views and opinions of Godfrey Okoye University undergraduate students for their perception and coping mechanisms for cyberbullying. In other words, the use of this design will give the researchers the opportunity to make valid findings from the selected university students.

3.2 Population of the Study

A population refers to the whole group to which the researcher would like to apply generalizations or inferences. The study population consists only of the Godfrey Okoye University undergraduate students for the 2025/2026 academic session. The choice of the institution is made mainly because students are getting more involved with social media in day-to-day communication and study. Updated student records drawn from the university's registry show an aggregate of 2,972 undergraduate students, which represents the students registered in their first to last year through different faculties. This population is a good base to investigate students' views and coping methods on cyberbullying.

The distribution of the population is as follows:

Level	Population
100 Level	608
200 Level	742
300 Level	744
400 Level	745
500 Level	88
Total	2,972

3.3 Sampling Technique

This purposeful sampling method is one of the criteria-based methods where participants for the study are selected based on the presence or absence of certain desired attributes. Through this method and based on the study objective, the researcher deliberately handpicked the university undergraduates who were regular social media platform users, as these respondents could be more susceptible to understanding and experiencing the event of cyberbullying through social media. The list of students from the university registry, which served as the sampling frame, was the source. It was determined that by employing the method, the results would be more representative and Because of this relevant.

3.4 Determination of Sample Size

The Wimmer and Dominick online sample size calculator was used to determine the sample size for this study. The Wimmer and Dominick formula is widely recognized as an appropriate method for determining sample size in communication research when the population size is known. The formula is expressed as:

Where:

- **n** = Sample size
- **N** = Population size
- **e** = Margin of error (usually set at 0.05 for social science research)

For this study, the population size (N) is **2,972** undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University. The margin of error (e) was set at **0.05** (5%), which is the standard acceptable level of precision in communication and social science research. Substituting these values into the formula:

$$n = \frac{2,972}{1 + 2,972(0.05)^2}$$

First, calculate the square of the margin of error:

$$(0.05)^2 = 0.0025$$

Then multiply by the population size:

$$2,972 \times 0.0025 = 7.43$$

Add 1 to the result:

$$1 + 7.43 = 8.43$$

Finally, divide the population size by this value:

$$n = \frac{2,972}{8.43} = 352.55$$

Since the result is 352.55, it is rounded up to the nearest whole number, which gives **353 respondents**. Therefore, a sample size of **353 respondents** was determined to be adequate for this study. This sample size provides a confidence level of approximately 95% with a margin of error of 5%, meaning that the findings from this sample can be generalized to the entire population with a high degree of confidence.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire was used as the main tool of data collection in this research. The responses in the questionnaire were on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The questionnaire was a two-part document. Section A asked questions on respondents' demographic information like gender, age, academic level, and social media platforms. In Section B, questions aligned with the five objectives of the study were presented. The respondents were asked about their knowledge and experience of cyberbullying forms, attitude towards cyberbullying, consequences of cyberbullying, and the strategies used by students. The research instrument questions were prepared in such a way as to avoid ambiguity in meaning to ensure that they were appropriate for use by all levels of undergraduate students.

3.6 Validity of the Research Instrument

Face and content validations were employed in this study to validate the instrument and were carried out by three experts. The questionnaire was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and congruence of the questionnaire with the research objective by two lecturers of the Mass Communication Department and one researcher from the Measurement and Evaluation Department. Changes suggested by them were incorporated to make sure the instrument measured what it was supposed to measure.

3.7 Reliability of the Study

One of the internal validity aspects that was analyzed to test internal instrument consistency was reliability. A pilot survey of thirty (30) undergraduate students was conducted on campus through random sampling outside the main research group. It was done on respondents who were not a part of the primary study to not interfere with the original study. The sample was made up of students from different departments and levels of study, all of whom were frequent users of social networking sites.

The reliability coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha was used for the analysis of the pilot survey results. A Cronbach's Alpha () statistical test is one of the measures by which you can check the reliability and internal consistency of your instruments in the form of measurement scales. It tests the relationship between instrument items, apart from how closely each item corresponds to the underlying latent construct that the item is supposed to capture.

A Cronbach's reliability coefficient of Alpha is a number that lies between 0 and 1, with a high Cronbach's Alpha value signifying a high internal consistency of the items in the instrument. A reliability coefficient of at least 0.70 is usually accepted as the benchmark reliability for social research, while coefficients of 1.0 and above are said to be indications of excellent instrument reliability.

The reliability coefficients derived from the pilot test of the five clusters of the Questionnaire on Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying (QPCMC) are shown below:

Table 1: kReliability Coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for the Pilot Study Data

Cluster	Description	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
1	Awareness of Cyberbullying	0.82
2	Forms of Cyberbullying Experienced	0.80

3	Students' Perception of Cyberbullying	0.84
4	Effects of Cyberbullying	0.81
5	Coping Mechanisms Adopted	0.83
Overall Instrument	—	0.82

The findings in the table demonstrate that the reliability scores for all clusters were above 0.80. So the instrument has strong internal consistency. Overall, Cronbach's Alpha was 0.82. This confirms that the Questionnaire on Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying (QPCMC) is a reliable measurement tool and that it is suitable for the data collection stage of the main research.

3.8 Method of Data Collection

The investigator handed over the printed copies of the questionnaires to a sample of undergraduate students at Godfrey Okoye University personally. Sufficient time was provided to the respondents so that they could complete their questionnaires freely and with minimal interruptions. Completed instruments were instantly picked up to guarantee a high return rate with a minimal chance of the documents being missing. No respondent was pressurized in any manner. Participants had the freedom to disengage from the study anytime.

3.9 Method of Data Analysis

Mainly, descriptive statistics were employed for the interpretation of the acquired data. Characteristics such as sex and age obtained from participants through their questionnaire were examined based on frequency counts and percentages, respectively. A Likert-type scale, descriptive statistics like mean, standard deviation, and the interpretation of responses with the help of these two were used first and foremost for the analysis of the survey respondents' replies.

The numerical value for each scale was assigned like this:

SA = 4

A = 3 D = 2

SD = 1.

A critical mean of 2.50 was taken as a rule for decision-making. A mean score of 2.50 and above was considered an agreement that the statement is true, whereas a mean score less than 2.50 was considered a rejection of the statement. This kind of method allowed the researcher to find out what the respondents' thoughts were about their knowledge of cyberbullying, the various types of cyberbullying they witnessed, the degree to which they perceived cyberbullying, the impact of exposure to cyberbullying, and the coping strategies adopted by students.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Presentation of Data

This section outlines data that undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University shared on their perception and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying. A total of 353 questionnaires were handed to respondents, yet only 288 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 81.6%.

The format for data presentation and analysis is research findings that led the study. Descriptive statistics like frequency tables, percentages, mean scores, were utilized to analyze the data gathered from the respondents.

4.2 Demographic Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	118	41.0%
Female	170	59.0%
Total	288	100%

The table shows that 118 respondents (41.0%) are males and 170 respondents (59.0%) are females. It means females were the most common respondents in the study.

Table 4.2: Distribution of Respondents by Age Group

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 18 years	16	5.6%
18–22 years	143	49.6%
23–26 years	100	34.7%
27 years and above	29	10.1%
Total	288	100%

According to the table, those aged 18-22 years formed the largest group at 49.6%, followed by those aged 23-26 years at 34.7%. The percentage of respondents below 18 years was 5.6%, whereas those aged 27 years and above were 10.1%.

Table 4.3: Distribution of Respondents by Level of Study

Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
100 Level	56	19.4%
200 Level	72	25.0%
300 Level	69	24.0%
400 Level	74	25.7%
500 Level	17	5.9%
Total	288	100%

The table shows that the biggest group of respondents was 400 level students, who made up 25.7% of the total, followed by 200 level students at 25.0%. 300 level students were 24.0%, 100 level students were 19.4%, while 500 level students were 5.9%.

Table 4.4: Distribution of Respondents by Social Media Activity

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	249	86.5%
No	39	13.5%
Total	288	100%

In the table above, 86.5% of the respondents indicated that they are active on social media, while 13.5% indicated they are not active. This implies that the majority of the respondents in this study are active social media users.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Respondents by Most Used Social Media Platform

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
WhatsApp	120	41.7%
Facebook	60	20.8%
Instagram	56	19.4%
TikTok	34	11.8%
X (Twitter)	18	6.3%
Total	288	100%

The table shows that WhatsApp is the most commonly used social media platform among respondents with 41.7%, followed by Facebook with 20.8%, Instagram with 19.4%, TikTok with 11.8%, and X (Twitter) with 6.3%.

4.3 Analysis of Research Questions

Data provided by the respondents were processed using descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables, simple percentages, and mean values. A four-point Likert scale was employed in this study, and decision made based on the cut-off mean of 2.5. Responses with mean scores of at least 2.5 were deemed affirmative answers and were accepted. Those scoring below 2.5 were regarded as negative answers and, because of this, were excluded.

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates?

Table 4.6: Awareness of Cyberbullying

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Decision Rule
1	I have heard about cyberbullying before	288	2.50	141 564	100 300	24 48	23 23	935	3.25	Accepted
2	I understand what cyberbullying means	288	2.50	132 528	108 324	28 56	20 20	928	3.22	Accepted
3	I know someone who has experienced cyberbullying	288	2.50	120 480	112 336	30 60	26 26	902	3.13	Accepted
4	Cyberbullying is a serious problem among students	288	2.50	145 580	95 285	25 50	23 23	938	3.26	Accepted
5	I am aware of the effects of cyberbullying	288	2.50	128 512	110 330	28 56	22 22	920	3.19	Accepted
Grand Mean									3.21	Accepted

$$\text{Average mean} = 3.25 + 3.22 + 3.13 + 3.26 + 3.19 = 16.05$$

$$16.05 \div 5 = 3.21$$

All measured awareness items based on respondents' feedback exceeded the 2.50 Likert scale average. A total score of 3.21 indicates that respondents, in the majority, agreed to be very well informed about cyberbullying

Research Question Two: What forms of cyberbullying are commonly experienced by undergraduate students?

Table 4.7: Forms of Cyberbullying Experienced

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
				(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		($\bar{X}$)	Rule
1	I have received offensive comments online	288	2.50	100 400	75 225	60 120	53 53	798	2.77	Accepted
2	Fake rumors have been spread about me online	288	2.50	54 216	65 195	82 164	87 87	662	2.30	Rejected
3	I have received threatening messages	288	2.50	43 172	58 174	90 180	97 97	623	2.16	Rejected
4	Embarrassing pictures of me have been posted online	288	2.50	58 232	62 186	80 160	88 88	666	2.31	Rejected
5	My account has been hacked or impersonated	288	2.50	33 132	45 135	95 190	115 115	572	2.00	Rejected

It can be seen from the table above that only one item out of a total of five items was higher than the minimum mean of 2.5. The statement that says "I have received offensive comments

online" was the only one to be included, and its mean score was 2.77. Other activities such as dissemination of misinformation (mean = 2.30), reception of threatening messages (mean = 2.16), publishing of embarrassing pictures (mean = 2.31), and account hacking (mean = 2.00), on the contrary, were below the cutoff mean of 2.50 and so excluded. Offensive remarks were identified as the principal forms of cyberbullying.

Research Question Three: How do students perceive cyberbullying?

Table 4.8: Students' Perception of Cyberbullying

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	Decision Rule
1	Cyberbullying is a serious social problem	288	2.50	140 560	95 285	28 56	25 25	926	3.22	Accepted
2	Cyberbullying causes emotional distress	288	2.50	135 540	100 300	28 56	25 25	921	3.20	Accepted
3	Victims of cyberbullying should report incidents	288	2.50	130 520	108 324	28 56	22 22	922	3.20	Accepted
4	Cyberbullying affects academic performance	288	2.50	125 500	110 330	30 60	23 23	913	3.17	Accepted
5	I consider cyberbullying as normal online behavior	288	2.50	50 200	55 165	88 176	95 95	636	2.09	Rejected
Grand Mean									2.98	Accepted

Average mean = $3.22 + 3.20 + 3.20 + 3.17 + 2.09 = 14.88$
 $14.88 \div 5 = 2.98$

The output of the table displays that most of the four out of the five items gained a score higher than the average above the cut-off mean of 2.5; So, those items were deemed valid.

Cyberbullying as a serious social problem was the highest-scoring statement (mean of 3.22); the next one was Cyberbullying causes emotional distress, and the statement "Victims of cyberbullying should report incidents" - both were at 3.20 mean. Yet, the statement "I consider cyberbullying as normal online behavior" is the one to get thrown out because it obtained the lowest mean of 2.09, showing students do not regard cyberbullying as an unusual behavior. Overall, since cyberbullying is viewed mainly together with problems students can resort to, the overall mean is 2.98.

Research Question Four: What are the effects of cyberbullying on undergraduate students?

Table 4.9: Effects of Cyberbullying on Students

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
				(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		($\bar{X}$)	Rule
1	Cyberbullying causes depression	288	2.50	112 448	85 255	50 100	41 41	844	2.93	Accepted
2	Cyberbullying causes fear and anxiety	288	2.50	75 300	90 270	65 130	58 58	758	2.63	Accepted
3	Cyberbullying leads to poor academic performance	288	2.50	54 216	65 195	82 164	87 87	662	2.30	Rejected
4	Cyberbullying leads to social withdrawal	288	2.50	35 140	50 150	95 190	108 108	588	2.04	Rejected
5	Cyberbullying leads to suicidal thoughts	288	2.50	12 48	25 75	110 220	141 141	484	1.68	Rejected

Based on the table, the five statements and their average scores are presented. Two of the items were above the threshold at mean scores of 2.5; So, they stayed valid. Top on the list was "Cyberbullying causes depression with an average of 2.93. Then comes 'Cyberbullying causes fear and anxiety', which scored 2.63 as its result. Yet, the remaining three, namely 'Cyberbullying leads to poor academic performance', 'Cyberbullying leads to social withdrawal', and 'Cyberbullying leads to suicidal thoughts', each scored below the minimum of 2.5, which is the cutoff, so they were ultimately discarded. The result reveals that cyberbullying can cause very strong effects, as students can suffer depression, fear, and anxiety.

Research Question Five: What coping mechanisms do students adopt against cyberbullying?

Table 4.10: Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Students

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
				(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		($\bar{X}$)	Rule
1	I block offenders who bully me online	288	2.50	116 464	85 255	45 90	42 42	851	2.96	Accepted
2	I ignore offensive messages	288	2.50	68 272	75 225	72 144	73 73	714	2.49	Rejected
3	I report abusive accounts to platform administrators	288	2.50	54 216	60 180	85 170	89 89	655	2.28	Rejected
4	I seek help from friends and family	288	2.50	37 148	50 150	95 190	106 106	594	2.07	Rejected
5	I delete social media apps to avoid cyberbullying	288	2.50	13 52	25 75	110 220	140 140	487	1.69	Rejected

The table presents the data that shows that out of the five items, only one item had an average score over the cut-off mean score of 2.5, which implies that the other four were rejected and only that one item was accepted. Among others, the item "I block offenders who bully me online" had the highest average score of 2.96 and also was accepted. But four items were below this threshold, and that means they were excluded: "I ignore offensive messages" (Mean=2.49), "I report abusive accounts to platforms' administrators" (Mean=2.28), "I seek support from friends and family" (Mean=2.07), "I delete social media apps to avoid being cyberbullied" (Mean=1.69). Apparently, the major response students used for dealing with cyberbullying was blocking offenders, as reflected in the results above.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This section discussed the findings of the study in relation to the five research questions raised.

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates?

The outcome of the study revealed that the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates was high. The results showed that the grand mean score was 3.21, which means that most of the respondents had heard of cyberbullying, understood what cyberbullying is, knew someone who had experienced cyberbullying, agreed that cyberbullying is a serious issue for students, and knew about the negative impacts of cyberbullying.

The outcomes agree with the assumption of the Technological Determinism Theory by Marshall McLuhan (1964), where technology is a determinant of society, communication, culture, and human behavior. Students' high awareness of cyberbullying is probably due to

their frequent use of social media platforms where cyberbullying is found. The theory argues that the characteristics of the medium (social media) affect the nature of cyberbullying and its impact on individuals who become victims.

Regarding the findings, it is similar to the study carried out by Kubayi, Dube and Radebe (2025), which showed that tertiary students in South Africa are knowledgeable about cyberbullying and feel it is a serious problem that needs institutional intervention. Similarly, Usman (2025) found that the knowledge of cyberbullying among the students in the universities in Nigeria was present, but the level of knowledge was different for different students in the universities. The present study, thus, confirms the previous study, which found a high awareness level of students of Godfrey Okoye University towards cyberbullying.

Research Question Two: What forms of cyberbullying are commonly experienced by undergraduate students?

Furthermore, the study found that the most common type of cyberbullying that students face is offensive comments. The average score was 2.77, which indicated a moderate agreement among the respondents on their experience with offensive comments on the internet. The results indicated that other forms, including fake rumors, threatening messages, posting embarrassing pictures, and hacking of accounts, were not experienced frequently by the students.

It is very much in line with the Choice Theory (1965) by William Glasser, which states that a person is responsible for his/her behaviour and choices. The theory posits that those who cyberbully are likely to be unable to meet their own emotional and/or social needs positively. Cyberbullying can be frustrated, loneliness, peer pressure, or feelings of dissatisfaction. Social media gives people the anonymity to make offensive comments that can be made without immediate consequences.

The discovery also follows that of Okoiye, Anayochi and Onah (2015), which found that offensive comments and verbal abuse were a frequent occurrence of cyberbullying among pupils in Nigeria. Likewise, harassment and offensive messages were reported as common forms of cyberbullying in Higher Education Institutions in Sub-Saharan Africa by Makori and Agufana (2020). The findings of this study corroborate the findings of the previous study, which showed that the most common type of cyberbullying experienced by the students of Godfrey Okoye University is offensive comments.

Research Question Three: How do students perceive cyberbullying?

The results of this study also showed that the students consider cyberbullying as a serious social problem. The grand mean score was 2.98, which means that the respondents agree that cyberbullying is a serious social problem, it causes emotional distress, affects academic performance and that the victims should report the incident. The respondents also disagreed that cyberbullying is 'normal behavior online'.

This discovery is in line with the Technological Determinism Theory that technology affects the way people think, interact, and engage in social activities. The theory proposes that technological aspects of social media (such as anonymity, instant communication, reach, and persistence of content) affect the nature and impact of cyberbullying experiences. The experiences of students with technology have led them to have a serious perception of cyberbullying.

The findings align with the findings of Bansal et al. (2024), which indicated that students are aware of the detrimental effect of cyberbullying on mental health. The same applies to Giumetti and Kowalski (2022), who found that students see cyberbullying as a detrimental action that needs to be addressed. These results corroborate the Technological Determinism Theory that suggests that technology influences perceptions and behaviours. The findings of

the present study further showed that the students of Godfrey Okoye University hold positive perceptions about the seriousness of cyberbullying and that it is not a normal online behaviour.

Research Question Four: What are the effects of cyberbullying on undergraduate students?

The study also revealed that depression and fear/anxiety are the primary impacts of cyberbullying that the students face. The mean scores (2.93 and 2.63, respectively) showed that the respondents generally agreed about these effects, at a moderate level. The results showed that other effects like poor academic performance, social withdrawal, and suicidal thoughts were not experienced by the students.

This finding is strongly related to the Choice Theory, which focuses on responsivity and choice in dealing with difficult situations. Knowledge of both the victim's responses and options to cyberbullying may help them learn to use effective coping strategies. Pupils who have learned to cope with difficult situations and think about themselves in positive ways may be less impacted by cyberbullying, whereas those who do not have these skills may be more severely impacted.

The results are also a confirmation of the empirical studies carried out by Gohal et al. (2023) and Lee et al. (2026), which reported a significant relationship between cyberbullying and depression and anxiety among youth. Similarly, Bomo-Ene et al. (2026) pointed out that depression and anxiety are experienced by the students due to cyberbullying, which impacts their mental health. The results of the present study agree with this, that the major impact of cyberbullying among students of Godfrey Okoye University is depression and fear/anxiety.

Research Question Five: What coping mechanisms do students adopt against cyberbullying?

The findings of the study also revealed that blocking offenders is the most frequent coping mechanism that students use. The mean score of 2.96 revealed a moderate level of agreement among the respondents on the use of this strategy. The results indicated that other strategies, like not reading messages, reporting accounts, asking friends and families, and deleting social media apps, are not prevalent among students.

This discovery is closely connected with Choice Theory, which states that people are responsible for their behaviors and choices. Those victims who realize that they have choices and can react to cyberbullying, they might be more prepared to find effective ways of coping in such situations. Besides, by choosing to block perpetrators they feel, this coping method of victims allows them to take control of that aspect of the situation.

What we uncovered aligns with Zhao, Chu, and Rong's study (2023), where a survey of the victims' main coping strategies showed that blocking is one. Also, Pyalski et al. (2022) have observed that students not only use different ways but also choose not to get involved when they are targeted by a cyberbullying person, like being blocked or ignored by their perpetrators. The conclusion drawn in this research has been that students at Godfrey Okoye University are mainly relying on blockers to cope with their cyberbullying experiences. A lack of willingness to open up to friends and family can explain the possibility that the students are ashamed or don't want to talk about their cyberbullying experience, even after Hinduja and Patchin's (2025) report, which also concluded that, in general people have cyberbullying experiences in private and do not share them at all due to one of the factors, shame or fear of judgment.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study aimed to evaluate the perception and coping strategies of cyberbullying among the students of Godfrey Okoye University who are studying at the undergraduate level. This study was particularly designed to find out the level of cyberbullying awareness among the students, the types of cyberbullying they faced, their perception of cyberbullying, its effects on the students, and the coping strategies adopted by the students. The method used in solving the problem was the survey research method, where descriptive statistical instruments were used in analyzing the collected data from the 288 valid respondents obtained from Godfrey Okoye University. The summary of results from the study is given below.

The study revealed that the Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates have a very high level of awareness about cyberbullying, with the mean value = 3.21. The results revealed that students are aware of what cyberbullying means, have heard about it, know someone who has experienced it, recognize it as a serious problem among students, and are aware of its effects. The item with the highest mean score (3.26) was 'Cyberbullying is a serious problem amongst students,' and the item with the lowest mean score (3.13) was 'I know someone who has been cyberbullied'. Students' awareness was high, with all five items accepted.

The study also revealed that the most frequently reported form of cyberbullying that students encounter is offensive comments ($M = 2.77$). Other forms such as fake rumors (mean = 2.30), threatening messages (mean = 2.16), posting embarrassing pictures (mean = 2.31), and

account hacking (mean = 2.00) were not commonly experienced by students, as revealed by the findings. This means that when it comes to bullying in school, the majority of bullying is offensive, not hurtful.

It was also revealed that students' mean score on the perception of cyberbullying as a social problem is 2.98 with an average standard deviation of 0.88. Findings showed that students strongly agree that cyberbullying is a social problem (mean = 3.22), it causes emotional distress (mean = 3.20), it hurts their academic performance (mean = 3.17), and students should report incidents of cyberbullying (mean = 3.20). The item "I think cyberbullying is normal online behaviour" had a mean score of 2.09, which indicated that students do not think that cyberbullying is normal online behaviour.

The study also revealed that depression and fear/anxiety were the greatest effects students suffered from cyberbullying (mean scores were 2.93 and 2.63 respectively). Other effects such as poor academic performance (mean = 2.30), social withdrawal (mean = 2.04), and suicidal thoughts (mean = 1.68) were not common among students. This means that the emotional and psychological impact of cyberbullying is more likely to occur than the academic and social impact.

Lastly, the study revealed that preventing the offender was the most frequently used coping method among students with a mean score of 2.96. The other strategies discussed – ignoring messages (mean = 2.49), reporting accounts (mean = 2.28), seeking help from friends and family (mean = 2.07), and deleting social media apps (mean = 1.69) – were not commonly used by students. This means that the most common way for students to cope is to block offenders.

5.2 Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it may be inferred that cyberbullying is a great social issue among undergraduate students at Godfrey Okoye University. The findings of the study demonstrate that the students have a high level of awareness of cyberbullying and understand that it is a serious issue that hurts student well-being. The level of awareness is high because students are active in using social media platforms and are exposed to cyberbullying incidents.

The study also reveals that the most common type of cyberbullying students encounter is offensive comments. Although other forms of harassment, like fake rumors, threats to post embarrassing pictures, or hacking into accounts, are not common experiences for students, offensive comments are; it is clear online harassment is a reality for many students.

Furthermore, the study validated that students view cyberbullying as a serious issue in society, which is causing emotional distress and having an impact on students' academic performance. Students do not regard cyberbullying as a "normal" online activity and feel that it should be reported to victims. This favorable attitude will be good for the development of intervention strategies.

The study further reveals that depression and fear/anxiety are the major effects of cyberbullying on students. Other impacts like underachievement, social isolation, and thoughts of suicide were not found to be common, but depression and anxiety were reported, suggesting that cyberbullying can have a significant psychological impact on students.

Finally, the study shows that blocking offenders is the most common coping mechanism adopted by students. Pupils do not feel comfortable going to friends or family for support or to contact police, indicating a need for support systems and reporting procedures.

The study shows that Godfrey Okoye University students are victims of cyberbullying and that it has serious implications on their emotional and psychological well-being. Although students use coping mechanisms like "blocking offenders", there is still a need to increase awareness campaigns, institutional support systems and policies to diminish cyberbullying among undergraduate students.

5.3 Recommendations

According to the results of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Godfrey Okoye University should have anti-cyberbullying policies and disciplinary measures to tackle cyberbullying among learners. These policies need to be well defined to clarify what constitutes cyberbullying, the consequences for the offenders, and establish a reporting structure for the victims.
2. Seminars, workshops and awareness campaigns addressing cyberbullying and digital safety should be organized by the university for the students to improve their knowledge and coping strategies. Such programs should include instruction in the responsible use of social networks and the need to report abuse.

3. Students should feel free and not embarrassed to report cyberbullying incidents to the appropriate authority. Confidential reporting systems should be put in place, and pupils should be assured that they will not be picked on if they report.

4. The University needs to have units for guidance and counseling, which can provide emotional and psychological support to those who have been victims of cyberbullying. Professional counseling services should be provided to assist students in adjusting to the impact of cyberbullying.

5. Parents and guardians should keep an eye on their children's online activities to prevent cyberbullying and also teach them to use it responsibly. The involvement of parents and guardians matters a lot in cyberbullying prevention and cyberbullying intervention.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

Because of the findings of this study, the issues that arise will be further clarified by these future research works:

1. A comparative study of cyberbullying experiences of male and female students in Nigeria.
2. An examination of the relationship between the level of cyberbullying and the level of addiction of users to social media in cyberspace.
3. A study of the impact of gender and university attendance on cyberbullying.
4. Investigation of how parents are helping in the fight against cyberbullying and the measures taken by higher educational institutions to curb cyberbullying amongst university students in Nigeria.

5. An investigation into the relationship between cyberbullying and the performance of students at Nigerian universities.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: VALIDATION OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Department of Mass Communication

Faculty of Management and Social Sciences

Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu

May, 2026

Date:

Dear Subject Specialist,

I am Ngwuta Juliana Nkemfurudima, an undergraduate student from the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. I am undertaking an undergraduate research study.

The title of the study is: "**Assessing the Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University Undergraduates.**"

The purpose of the study is to assess the perception and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying among undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University.

The study has five (5) research questions. The research instrument is a 25-item questionnaire.

Please, I kindly request you to scrutinize the items of the questionnaire for clarity, relevance, and appropriateness to the study. There is room for comments and further suggestions to improve the standard of the instrument.

Thanks for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Ngwuta Juliana Nkemfurudima

Researcher

Faculty of Management and Social Sciences
Department of Mass Communication
Godfrey Okoye University
Thinker's Corner, Emene, Enugu State, Nigeria
May, 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR RESPONSE TO QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

I am Ngwuta Juliana Nkemfurudima, a student of the Department of Mass Communication, Godfrey Okoye University, with the matriculation number GOU/U23/MAS/655. I am currently conducting a research study titled:

"Assessing the Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University Undergraduates."

This questionnaire is designed to obtain relevant information for the successful completion of this research work in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science B.Sc) in Mass Communication.

All information provided will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used solely for academic purposes. Kindly respond to the questions honestly and to the best of your knowledge.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Yours faithfully,

Ngwuta Juliana Nkemfurudima

GOU/U23/MAS/655

APPENDIX B: QUESTIONNAIRE

Instruction: Please indicate your response by ticking (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

SECTION A: PERSONAL DATA

Instruction: Tick (✓) the appropriate option.

1. Gender

- Male []
- Female []

2. Age

- Below 18 years []
- 18–22 years []
- 23–26 years []
- 27 years and above []

3. Level

- 100 Level []
- 200 Level []
- 300 Level []
- 400 Level []
- 500 Level []

4. Are you active on social media?

- Yes []
- No []

5. Which social media platform do you use most?

- WhatsApp []
- Facebook []
- Instagram []
- TikTok []
- X (Twitter) []

SECTION B: MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS

Instruction: Tick (✓) the option that best represents your opinion.

Rating Scale

Response Category	Abbreviation	Score
Strongly Agree	SA	4
Agree	A	3
Disagree	D	2

Response Category	Abbreviation	Score
Strongly Disagree	SD	1

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of cyberbullying among Godfrey Okoye University undergraduates?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1	I have heard about cyberbullying before				
2	I understand what cyberbullying means				
3	I know someone who has experienced cyberbullying				
4	Cyberbullying is a serious problem among students				
5	I am aware of the effects of cyberbullying				

Research Question Two: What forms of cyberbullying are commonly experienced by undergraduate students?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
6	I have received offensive comments online				
7	Fake rumors have been spread about me online				
8	I have received threatening messages				
9	Embarrassing pictures of me have been posted online				
10	My account has been hacked or impersonated				

Research Question Three: How do students perceive cyberbullying?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
11	Cyberbullying is a serious social problem				
12	Cyberbullying causes emotional distress				
13	Victims of cyberbullying should report incidents				
14	Cyberbullying affects academic performance				
15	I consider cyberbullying as normal online behavior				

Research Question Four: What are the effects of cyberbullying on undergraduate students?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
16	Cyberbullying causes depression				
17	Cyberbullying causes fear and anxiety				
18	Cyberbullying leads to poor academic performance				
19	Cyberbullying leads to social withdrawal				
20	Cyberbullying leads to suicidal thoughts				

Research Question Five: What coping mechanisms do students adopt against cyberbullying?

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
21	I block offenders who bully me online				
22	I ignore offensive messages				
23	I report abusive accounts to platform administrators				
24	I seek help from friends and family				
25	I delete social media apps to avoid cyberbullying				

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!

APPENDIX C: VALIDATOR'S COMMENT**ASSESSING THE PERCEPTION AND COPING MECHANISMS OF
CYBERBULLYING AMONG GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY
UNDERGRADUATES**

I have carefully scrutinized the researcher's instrument and have the following comments and further suggestions to make regarding the instrument:

.....

.....

.....

.....

If the mentioned corrections are effected, I hereby recommend that the instrument be used for the study.

Name of Validator:.....

Signature:.....

Institution Address:.....

APPENDIX D: RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, a pilot test was conducted using a sample of thirty (30) undergraduate students randomly selected from the university outside the study sample. The respondents were selected from students who were not part of the main study to avoid contamination of the results. The respondents consisted of students from various levels and faculties, and were active users of social media platforms, thereby ensuring adequate representation across the academic levels.

The data collected from the pilot test were analyzed using the Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient. Cronbach's Alpha (α) is a widely recognized statistical technique used to determine the internal consistency and reliability of items within a scale. It measures the extent to which items in an instrument are interrelated and assess the same underlying construct.

Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1, with higher coefficients indicating stronger internal consistency. A reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above is generally considered acceptable for social science research, while coefficients of 0.80 and above indicate good reliability of the instrument.

The reliability coefficients obtained from the pilot test for the five clusters of the Questionnaire on Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying (QPCMC) are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients (Cronbach's Alpha) for the Pilot Study Data

Cluster	Description	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
1	Awareness of Cyberbullying	0.82
2	Forms of Cyberbullying Experienced	0.80

3	Students' Perception of Cyberbullying	0.84
4	Effects of Cyberbullying	0.81
5	Coping Mechanisms Adopted	0.83
Overall Instrument	—	0.82

As shown in Table 1, all cluster reliability coefficients were above 0.80, indicating good internal consistency of the instrument. Cluster 2 recorded a coefficient of 0.80, which meets the acceptable benchmark for social science research. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82 further confirms that the Questionnaire on Perception and Coping Mechanisms of Cyberbullying (QPCMC) is a reliable instrument and suitable for data collection in the main study.