

**INFLUENCE OF TIKTOK CYBERBULLYING ON MENTAL HEALTH AMONG
STUDENTS OF GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, ENUGU**

BY

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GOU/U22/MAS/467**

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

JULY, 2026

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**PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
GODFREY OKOYE UNIVERSITY, UGWUOMU-NIKE, ENUGU**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT 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 hereby declare that this project entitled “**Influence of Tiktok Cyberbullying on Mental Health Among Students of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu**”, presented by me in partial fulfilment 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 in this or any other tertiary institution.

Okafor Ogechi Cynthia
GOU/U22/MAS/467

Date

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project entitled **Influence of Tiktok Cyberbullying on Mental Health Among Students of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu**, has been examined and found to meet the requirements governing the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) degree in Mass Communication of Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Enugu.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty

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ABSTRACT

The influence of TikTok cyberbullying on the mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu was examined in this study. Four objectives directed the work through the level of TikTok use, the types of cyberbullying experienced, the mental health effects of such conduct and the coping strategies used by final-year students. A survey research design was used; a structured four-point Likert scale questionnaire was administered to a proportionate purposive sample of 254 final-year students from six faculties and one college in the university. From the distributed copies, 247 were completed in a valid form for analysis. The study was supported by Social Learning Theory as well as Uses and Gratifications Theory. A grand mean of 2.86 was given to TikTok use by the Likert-scale findings. Criterion mean 2.50 was exceeded by this value. Mean or hurtful comments received the highest acceptance among the forms of cyberbullying with a mean score of 2.66. An accepted effect was recorded for mood, self-worth and academic focus through an overall mean of 2.55 for the measured mental health items. Strong student support was given to informal coping strategies. These strategies included blocking attackers, speaking with trusted people and prayer. Use of the university counselling service had the lowest mean score in the study at 1.77. Platform-specific awareness education is recommended by the study. Stronger outreach from existing mental health structures is required to reduce the gap between available support and student use of that support. A focused institutional response is supported by the results. *Keywords: TikTok, Cyberbullying, Mental Health, Coping Strategies, University Student*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Short-video social media platforms have reshaped how young people form relationships, exchange ideas and understand personal identity. More than one billion active users across the world were reached by TikTok within four years after its global release in 2018. The platform is owned by the Chinese technology company ByteDance (McCashin and Murphy, 2023). In early 2025 Nigeria recorded 37.4 million TikTok users who were aged 18 years or above. This figure placed the country among the leading TikTok markets in Africa (Kemp, 2025). Such a large student population is not held by any Nigerian university. TikTok should be understood as a major platform rather than a small application for a limited group. It shapes the social life of many young Nigerians on a daily basis. Events on the platform can provide support or cause harm. Such events reach many students during a stage in which personal identity and social relationships are being formed. Young social life is shown to be shaped by short-video platforms. Concern is created by their wide reach.

TikTok serves as a major platform for entertainment, self-expression, social connection and learning among Nigerian university students. Evidence was provided by a study of undergraduates at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University in Anambra State. The setting shares close cultural features with Enugu State. The students used TikTok to meet needs linked to entertainment, personal identity alongside social connection (Nwafor and Nnaemeka, 2023). This result shows that TikTok is not a small addition to student social life. It meets personal needs that carry real importance. The features that attract students can create conditions for harm at the same time. Public comment sections, duet and stitch tools as well as a sharing system with wide reach

allow harmful behaviour to reach a large audience with speed (Chan et al., 2019). A platform that supports connection can expose the same students to social attack. Student needs are met through entertainment, identity and social connection on TikTok. Public attack is enabled by the same features that support interaction. A large audience is reached through comments, duets and sharing across the platform.

TikTok cyberbullying appears in forms linked to the design of the platform. These forms extend beyond conduct found on text-based platforms such as WhatsApp or Facebook. Research identifies flaming, harassment through comments, impersonation, exclusion and public mockery through duet or stitch features as forms of TikTok cyberbullying (Alfian et al., 2025). Such attacks are public as well as visual. The harm is experienced by the targeted person and is witnessed by every viewer. The attack can be seen by thousands within a short period. This scale shows that TikTok cyberbullying differs from bullying on older platforms in both form and reach. It raises an important question about whether TikTok features produce a form of harm that belongs to the platform itself (Chan et al., 2021). Social life among students at Godfrey Okoye University is shaped in part through TikTok use. The platform-specific risk has a direct connection with their mental health and well-being. Platform-specific harm is produced through public comments, duet tools and stitch tools. Visual mockery is placed before audiences that can number in thousands. Student well-being is placed at risk by this public exposure within the selected Nigerian university setting.

Several studies have connected heavy social media use with risks to the mental health of Nigerian university students. A systematic review of research on this population linked heavy use with anxiety, depression, low self-worth and a reduced capacity for attention to school work (Awopetu et al., 2024). Student mental health in Nigerian universities is shaped by academic pressure and by

experiences on digital platforms. These platforms form part of student life. A further difficulty comes from mental health stigma within Nigerian university settings. Religious beliefs and fear of social judgement can prevent students from seeking help or giving a name to the harm that they experience (Pederson et al., 2022). The present study gives attention to this tension. Mental health harm may be present while social barriers prevent students from making a response or seeking support. Student mental health is affected by academic pressure and social media use. Anxiety, depression, low self-worth and reduced academic focus are included in the risks. Help-seeking is restricted by mental health stigma, religious beliefs and fear of judgement. The true level of harm may be hidden when experiences are not reported.

Godfrey Okoye University is a private university owned by a Catholic body in Enugu State within the South-East of Nigeria. It was the first university established by a Catholic diocese in Africa (Godfrey Okoye University, 2026). Evidence from private Nigerian universities shows that students search for mental health information through social media. After receiving such information, 65 percent had not sought professional help (Adesina and Salawu, 2025). Another study compared public and private universities in Osun State. Mental distress was found in both settings while students in private universities showed greater dependence on informal sources of help than formal counselling services (Odia et al., 2023). Private university status does not remove mental health risk. The institutional response in many Nigerian universities does not meet the level of student need. At Godfrey Okoye University, mental health risk linked to platform-based harm may exist without a response that gives the issue enough attention. Professional support is left unused by many students who seek mental health information online. Informal help is preferred even within private university settings during periods of mental distress. Student need is not removed by the institutional status of the university.

Research on social media and mental health in Nigerian universities has grown. No direct study has examined TikTok as the platform of harm within a private university in Enugu State. Nigerian studies have focused on older platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp when addressing cyberbullying in relation to mental health (Adebayo et al., 2019; Chukwuere et al., 2021). The nearest evidence comes from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. In that study cyberbullying predicted social anxiety among students in Enugu State (Formella et al., 2025). TikTok was not examined as a distinct platform. Godfrey Okoye University was not the study setting. This evidence gap supports research on TikTok cyberbullying and mental health within Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. Findings from such work can guide platform-specific mental health support for students in the institution. No TikTok-specific study has been found in published Nigerian university mental health evidence. Older platforms are given the most attention in research on cyberbullying. Local evidence is provided by an Enugu State study of social anxiety. TikTok was not separated as a distinct platform in that research. Godfrey Okoye University was not included as the study setting within the institution.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The mental health of university students in Nigeria faces a direct threat from TikTok cyberbullying. The form and size of this threat at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu have not been examined in a published study. A systematic review links social media cyberbullying with depression, anxiety, stress, low self-worth and reduced focus in school (Arif et al., 2024). Cyberbullying was found to predict social anxiety among university students in the South-East of Nigeria through a study conducted in Enugu State (Formella et al., 2025). No available study has treated TikTok as the distinct source of this harm at Godfrey Okoye University. Between 2022 and 2024 TikTok became the most downloaded application in Nigeria ahead of older social media

platforms (Kemp, 2025). Research on cyberbullying in Nigerian universities gives most attention to Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram (Adebayo et al., 2019; Chukwuere et al., 2021). The evidence base reflects an older view of the platform that may carry the greatest risk for young Nigerian students. Godfrey Okoye University has a Mental Health Unit and a counselling service (Godfrey Okoye University, 2026). Their presence shows that student mental health needs receive institutional recognition. No evidence shows that these services address harm arising from TikTok cyberbullying. Support cannot target the correct problem when platform-specific knowledge is absent. This study responds to that gap through four questions. What is the level of TikTok use among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu? What types of cyberbullying are experienced on TikTok by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University? What effect does TikTok cyberbullying have on the mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu? What coping strategies are used by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University when cyberbullying is faced on TikTok? The threat posed by TikTok cyberbullying is supported by evidence on depression, anxiety and reduced focus. The current evidence is limited by its attention to older social media platforms. Platform-specific support is prevented when the source of harm is not identified. The four research questions are shaped by this gap in institutional knowledge with clarity.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main research aim is to examine the overall influence of TikTok cyberbullying on the mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

The four specific research objectives guide this study:

1. To determine the level of TikTok use among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

2. To identify the types of cyberbullying experienced on TikTok by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.
3. To assess the effect of TikTok cyberbullying on the mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.
4. To determine the coping strategies used by final-year students who experience cyberbullying on TikTok at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions direct this study:

1. What level of TikTok use exists among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?
2. Which types of cyberbullying are experienced on TikTok by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?
3. How does TikTok cyberbullying affect the overall mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?
4. Which coping strategies are used by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu when they experience cyberbullying on TikTok?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Four groups can gain value from this study. The management of Godfrey Okoye University will receive evidence on the size and form of TikTok cyberbullying on the campus. Such evidence can support systems that address the correct problem. Final-year students will have their experiences recorded through the study. This record can support changes in the help made available to them. Policy makers within the Nigerian university system will receive platform-specific evidence that adds to knowledge about social media harm in higher education. The evidence can guide national

direction on student mental health. Researchers in mass communication and public health in Nigeria will gain a study focused on TikTok. The study brings TikTok into a field that has focused on older social media platforms. As a complete work, the study moves discussion from a broad problem towards a distinct platform. It moves attention from awareness towards evidence that can support action. Evidence for university management is produced through the study of campus harm. Student experiences are recorded for use in improving available support. Platform-specific guidance is provided to policy makers in the university system. A new TikTok focus is added to mass communication and public health research within the Nigerian academic setting.

1.6 Scope of the Study

The influence of TikTok cyberbullying on the mental health of full-time final-year undergraduate students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu is examined in this study. Final-year students at 500 level are covered across all faculties of the university. TikTok is the sole social media platform considered. Cyberbullying on Instagram, Facebook or WhatsApp is outside the study. The mental health dimensions are anxiety, depression, low self-worth, social withdrawal and reduced focus in school. Postgraduate students, part-time students and academic staff are not included. These boundaries keep the work focused; they allow findings with enough depth for the population under examination. Platform focus is restricted to TikTok within the study. The student population is limited to full-time final-year undergraduates. Five mental health dimensions are included within the scope.

1.7 Definition of Terms

The key terms below are defined according to their use in this study:

Anxiety: Anxiety means a state of worry, fear or unease experienced by a student after an attack on TikTok in this study. It is measured through responses to questionnaire items on worry and fear

connected with TikTok use (Arif et al., 2024). The measurement of anxiety is guided by this definition.

Coping Strategies: Coping strategies are the actions taken by a student after cyberbullying is experienced on TikTok in this study. The actions include blocking the attacker, speaking with a friend or family member, leaving the platform for a period, seeking support from a counsellor or using prayer or religious practice (Owolabi, 2020).

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying means the use of TikTok for harmful acts against another student in this study. Such acts include mean comments, mockery through duet or stitch features, false information, threats or planned exclusion from a group (Chan et al., 2021). Cyberbullying is restricted to harmful conduct carried out through TikTok features. Its measurement is guided by this operational definition.

Depression: Depression means a lasting state of sadness, low mood or reduced interest in daily life that a student links with an experience of TikTok cyberbullying in this study (Arif et al., 2024).

Mental Health: Mental health refers to the emotional, psychological and social well-being of a student in this study. It covers student thoughts, feelings and actions after events on TikTok. The dimensions include anxiety, depression, self-worth, social connection and academic focus (Arif et al., 2024). Mental health is connected with the emotional, psychological and social experiences measured.

Platform Affordances: Platform affordances are the built-in TikTok features that shape conduct on the platform in this study. They include the comment section, duet tool, stitch tool, sharing function and level of account visibility (Chan et al., 2019). A clear boundary for the concept is established by the operational definition provided.

Self-Worth: Self-worth means the value that a student places on the self in this study. It measures whether TikTok cyberbullying reduces a positive view of personal abilities, appearance or position within a social group (Al-amer et al., 2025). The measurement of self-worth is guided by this definition.

TikTok: TikTok means the short-video social media platform owned by ByteDance in this study. Users can create, share and respond to video content through the platform. The research examines cyberbullying conduct that occurs through TikTok (McCashin and Murphy, 2023).

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0 Introduction

Existing studies connected with the influence of TikTok cyberbullying on the mental health of students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu are reviewed in this chapter. Attention is given to the sources of literature, the conceptual framework and the general literature by theme. The chapter examines the theoretical framework as well as related empirical studies.

2.1 Sources of Literature

Five academic databases were searched for the sources used in this chapter. The databases were Google Scholar, Scopus, SciSpace, Elicit and JSTOR. Search terms included TikTok cyberbullying, social media mental health university students Nigeria, cyberbullying forms short-video platforms, mental health stigma Nigerian universities, platform affordances online harm, social learning theory cyberbullying alongside uses and gratifications TikTok. Sources published from 2015 to 2025 were selected. Foundational theory materials from periods before 2015 were retained because they provide the original statements of the theories and have no replacement from a later source. Materials were excluded when they did not address social media, cyberbullying or mental health within a university or youth setting. Across the study, 47 sources were selected for use. The review is supported by a transparent search process.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.2.1 TikTok as a Social Media Platform

TikTok is owned by ByteDance and operates as a short-video social media platform. It allows users to create, share and respond to video content with lengths from 15 seconds to 10 minutes. By 2021 the platform had reached more than one billion active users across the world. This growth

placed TikTok among the social media platforms with the fastest expansion in history (McCashin & Murphy, 2023). An algorithm-based feed known as the For You Page is used by the platform. Content is sent to users on the basis of past viewing behaviour rather than the accounts that they follow. A large audience can be gained by a user without a social network built over a long period. This feature separates TikTok from older platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. For university students, wide visibility creates a social space in which identity is formed and judged before many people. Each interaction can carry a high level of personal importance. Student interaction is shaped by these TikTok platform features.

The idea that TikTok serves no purpose beyond entertainment is challenged by research on mental health risks for young users. McCashin and Murphy (2023) reported in their review that TikTok can carry useful mental health information in some settings. The same public and shareable content structure can allow harmful conduct to spread with speed. Hassan (2023) states that university students can face harm through cyberbullying, social comparison and emotional upset on TikTok. These effects can extend beyond those produced by older platforms. Harm is not experienced by every student who uses TikTok. This difference shows the need to identify the platform conditions that create risk in place of treating the platform as harmful in all settings. Within this study, TikTok as a concept includes the features of the platform and the conditions produced by those features for student well-being. Useful mental health information is shared through TikTok in some settings for young users. Harmful behaviour is spread by the same public and shareable structure. A balanced view of platform risk is required.

2.2.2 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying means the use of digital technology for planned, repeated and targeted acts that harm another person. Chan et al. (2021) describe cyberbullying on social networking sites as

conduct involving three groups. These groups include the attacker and the person who receives the attack. Bystanders who observe without intervention form the third group. Students can face mockery, threats, public insult, planned exclusion from a group and the sharing of personal information without permission on social media (Bularca et al., 2024). Two features separate these acts from face-to-face bullying. An attack can occur during any part of the day or night. Its audience can exceed the number possible within a physical setting. Cyberbullying creates harm that cannot be escaped through departure from a physical place. Cyberbullying is defined through harmful conduct involving attackers, targets and observing bystanders. Public insult, threats, exclusion and unauthorised sharing are included. Escape is prevented because attacks can occur at any time. Audience size is increased beyond the limits of physical bullying. Digital harm cannot be escaped through physical departure.

A difficult issue within the concept of cyberbullying concerns whether one harmful act is enough or whether repetition must occur. Chan et al. (2021) explain that the repetition condition from traditional bullying does not fit the digital setting with ease. One post or video can be shared online and viewed by thousands of people within a short period. The harm from one act may equal the harm produced by repeated face-to-face acts. Bularca et al. (2024) create a further challenge by showing that the perception of being bullied can matter more than a fixed number of incidents. Mental health harm develops through the meaning given to the situation by the person under attack. In this study, TikTok cyberbullying covers any harmful act conducted through TikTok features that causes emotional, psychological or social harm to a student at Godfrey Okoye University. Repetition is not required when a harmful post is viewed by thousands. The level of harm is shaped by the experience of the student. A flexible definition is required by the digital setting.

2.2.3 Mental Health

Mental health in this study means the emotional, psychological and social well-being of a student. A systematic review covering several countries found that cyberbullying affects depression, anxiety, stress, low self-worth and the capacity for attention to school work among university students (Arif et al., 2024). The review draws on research from many settings. Its findings provide a strong base for understanding mental health harm within university cyberbullying. For young adults in university, experiences inside the classroom form one part of mental health. The social world outside the classroom forms another part and includes relationships on digital platforms. Mental health cannot be separated from the ways in which students use TikTok and experience it as a social space. Emotional, psychological and social well-being are covered by the concept of mental health. Depression, anxiety, stress, low self-worth and reduced academic focus are included. Digital social experience is treated as part of student mental health. The social world is included within the mental health context.

Mental health in the Nigerian university setting presents greater difficulty for examination because strong stigma surrounds mental health problems. A study of Nigerian university students by Pederson et al. (2022) found that religious beliefs, fear of judgement and ideas about dangerousness shape student views as well as responses. Mental health harm may remain unnamed, unreported or untreated in cases when it is present. This situation creates a limit for the study. Self-reported data from Nigerian students may understate the level of harm that exists. The questionnaire responds to this concern through questions about distinct feelings and experiences. Students are not required to give a name or label to a mental health condition. This approach reduces the influence of stigma on the responses collected. Mental health harm can be hidden by stigma and judgement. Diagnostic labels are avoided in the questionnaire. Student feelings and experiences are measured in their place.

2.2.4 University Students and Social Media Use

University students face a distinct level of risk from social media harm because personal identity is being formed during this stage of life. Acceptance from peers can hold major importance for well-being. Research from Nigerian universities links heavy social media use with anxiety, depression and low self-worth (Awopetu et al., 2024; Oloyede et al., 2024). The use of social media by Nigerian students is connected with their mental health rather than separate from it. Adeyemi and Ige (2022) report that digital platforms are used by Nigerian university students for leisure, social connection alongside personal identity. Harm on these platforms can affect parts of student life that carry central value for the sense of self and social position. Student identity is shaped during a period of strong peer influence. Anxiety, depression and low self-worth are linked with heavy social media use. Social harm is placed close to the parts of life that support belonging. The relationship between social media use and mental health does not take the same form for every student. Research adds complexity by showing that some students gain social support through social media. Oloyede et al. (2024) linked heavy use with poorer mental health for many students. Some participants reported that online interaction provided a sense of connection that supported well-being. This evidence shows that the relationship is not a simple movement from use to harm. It is shaped by the way a platform is used, the experience gained from it and the support available outside the platform. The study measures more than the presence of TikTok use. It examines patterns of use, content creation and the form of harmful experience on the platform. Social support can be provided through online interaction. Harm is experienced in different ways across the student population. Platform use patterns and offline support are included in the relationship.

2.2.5 Platform Affordances and Harm

Platform affordances are the built-in features that shape conduct on a social media platform. Chan et al. (2019) show that social networking features can make cyberbullying easy to perform and difficult to escape. Platform design can reduce the cost of an attack while increasing the audience reached by it. On TikTok, harm is shaped through the public comment section, duet tool, stitch tool, sharing function and level of account visibility. Kennedy et al. (2025) identify six features that influence cyberbullying across social media. They concern the ability to hide identity, the public nature of content, the form of the user profile, community culture, content format and the application of platform rules. On TikTok these features work as a group. Harm becomes easy to produce while the targeted person may find it difficult to stop. Opportunities for cyberbullying are created by public comments, duet tools and wide sharing. The audience for an attack is increased by account visibility. Harm is made harder to escape by the combined platform features. A platform-specific response is required by the design features.

The claim that platform affordances are the main source of cyberbullying is challenged by scholars who place responsibility on users. Barlett et al. (2018) found greater levels of harmful conduct on anonymous platforms than non-anonymous platforms. This result presents user intent as an important factor beyond platform features. Evidence from Chan et al. (2019) weakens a user-only explanation. Their work shows that platform design can move users towards harmful acts in cases when harm was not the first intention. Such acts can be made easy and can receive audience rewards. The present study treats user behaviour and platform design as connected parts of the problem. A response to TikTok cyberbullying must address student conduct as well as the features that make harmful action easy. Responsibility is carried by users, but harmful action can be encouraged by platform design. The cost of attack is reduced through easy tools and audience

rewards. Both user conduct and platform affordances are included in the study. Both main sources of harm are examined.

2.3 General Review of the Literature

2.3.1 Cyberbullying on Social Media and Mental Health

Research on social media cyberbullying in relation to mental health presents a clear link between victimisation and poor mental health. A systematic review of studies from many countries connected cyberbullying with depression, anxiety, stress, low self-worth and reduced academic focus among university students (Arif et al., 2024). This review brings as a group several research designs across different countries. Its findings cannot be treated as a result limited to one culture. Ali and Shahbuddin (2022) reported that cyberbullying was linked with poor mental health in a university population. Effects were found in academic results as well as emotional well-being. The combined evidence shows that social media cyberbullying is a serious source of mental health harm for students within higher education. A consistent relationship between cyberbullying and poor mental health is supported across countries. Emotional well-being and academic performance are both affected. The seriousness of the problem is established within higher education settings. A student welfare concern is created by this pattern.

Evidence from African universities supports the wider global picture. The available studies include work from Nigeria and other African countries. Research with Nigerian university undergraduates found that social media use predicts exposure to cyberbullying. Students who spend more time online face a higher level of risk (Adebayo et al., 2019). Chukwuere et al. (2021) studied students from four African countries that included Nigeria. Social media cyberbullying produced psychosocial effects across the African higher education setting. Harm identified in global research is present in Africa as well. This evidence matters to the current study because the link between

cyberbullying and mental health harm is not limited to Western settings. It can be found within the Nigerian university environment. The global pattern is supported by evidence from Nigeria and other African countries in higher education. Higher cyberbullying risk is linked with greater online time.

Cyberbullying does not produce the same level of mental health harm for every student. Other factors can alter the strength of its effect. Al-amer et al. (2025) found that self-worth and social support influence the amount of harm experienced. Students with low self-worth and weak support faced a greater level of mental health damage from cyberbullying. Personal resources shape the size of the effect. This point must not transfer responsibility from the platform or attacker to the personal strength of the victim. Harm begins with the act of cyberbullying. It does not arise from a lack of resilience in the student who receives the attack. The study keeps this distinction within its interpretation of student experiences. The level of harm is shaped by self-worth and available social support. Greater damage is experienced by students with weaker personal resources. Responsibility is not shifted away from the attacker or platform. Responsibility for the harm is kept with the attacker and platform.

The reliability of evidence becomes an important question when studies depend on self-report data within settings affected by mental health stigma. Pederson et al. (2022) show that religious beliefs and fear of social judgement support stigma among Nigerian university students. Many students may avoid naming or reporting the harm that they face. Studies based on student self-report can record a level of cyberbullying-related mental health harm below the true level. Reduced reporting does not remove the strength of the argument that the harm is real. Research using other methods such as clinical measurement and health records points in the same direction as self-report evidence. The different forms of evidence support a shared conclusion. Self-report data may be

reduced by mental health stigma among Nigerian students. The same relationship is supported through clinical measurement and available health records.

The literature gives strong support to the link between social media cyberbullying and mental health. A major gap remains in platform-specific research from Nigeria. Nigerian studies tend to examine social media as a whole or older platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram (Adebayo et al., 2019; Chukwuere et al., 2021). TikTok receives no direct attention in the Nigerian university cyberbullying literature despite the fact that it became the most downloaded application in Nigeria from 2022 to 2024 (Kemp, 2025). This gap supports the present study; without evidence focused on TikTok within Nigerian universities, support systems cannot be designed for the correct platform or the distinct form of harm that students experience. TikTok has been excluded from most Nigerian university research on cyberbullying and mental health. Older platforms are given most attention; platform-specific support is prevented by this evidence gap.

2.3.2 TikTok-Specific Cyberbullying Behaviours

The features of TikTok create conditions for cyberbullying that differ from those on text-based platforms. Forms of harm on TikTok are shaped by the design of the platform. A study of TikTok content by Alfian et al. (2025) identified flaming, harassment through comments, impersonation and exclusion from groups. The comment section was found to be the main location of attacks. This result is important because the same section was designed to support interaction and engagement. It carries a large share of the harm. TikTok comments are public and can be seen by every person who watches the video. An attack can become public humiliation in a form that private messages on text-based platforms cannot produce. Public humiliation is produced when hurtful comments are placed before a wide audience. The comment section is used as a platform-specific site for direct public attack.

TikTok cyberbullying is not limited to the comment section. Duet and stitch tools allow a user to place a video reaction beside or after the video of another user. These tools support creative collaboration by design. In some cases they are used to mock, discredit or insult the person in the original video. Hassan (2023) explains that the visual and audio form of attacks can give them stronger personal character than text-based attacks. The targeted person can see as well as hear the mockery while a large audience receives it. TikTok-specific features produce a form of cyberbullying with a different character from attacks on platforms where responses are restricted to text. Creative collaboration can be transformed into mockery through duet and stitch tools. A stronger personal character is given to visual and audio attacks.

University studies outside Nigeria support the view that TikTok cyberbullying can affect student mental health. Research from Türkiye found that cyberbullying on TikTok was common among university students. Passive and active coping responses were used against the attacks (Sengul, 2024). Rasool et al. (2024) compared Instagram, Facebook and TikTok among students in Saudi Arabia. All three platforms were connected with cyberbullying. The form of harm differed across them and TikTok attacks had greater public reach as well as visual character. Similar findings across countries with different cultures strengthen the argument that TikTok-specific cyberbullying is a real pattern. It should not be treated as a chance result from one study. TikTok cyberbullying has been reported among university students across different countries. Public and visual attacks are distinguished from harm on older platforms. The wider pattern is supported by cross-cultural evidence within the African context studied.

The argument that TikTok creates distinct conditions for cyberbullying raises a further question. Harm may come from the platform or from the people who use it. Barlett et al. (2018) found that higher anonymity produces a greater level of harm. Identity management features influence the

level of harm. TikTok users can create accounts that conceal identity. Attackers may face fewer consequences than users on platforms that require real names and photographs. A simple claim that TikTok features cause harm is not enough. Public content and the option of hidden identity combine within the platform. As a group these features create a setting where harmful conduct is easy to perform. The response to it can be difficult. Accountability is reduced when online attacker identity is hidden. The reach of harm is increased by public content.

A close reading of research on TikTok-specific cyberbullying reveals a major gap in sub-Saharan African university evidence. Most reviewed studies come from Western countries, the Middle East or East Asia. At the time of this research no published study had examined TikTok cyberbullying within a Nigerian university setting. This absence matters to the study; this means patterns of TikTok use, platform content and social rules for online interaction can differ across cultures. Findings from other countries cannot be applied to Godfrey Okoye University without examination. The current study addresses this gap through direct attention to TikTok-specific cyberbullying among students of Godfrey Okoye University. Foreign findings cannot be transferred without care to the Nigerian university context. Cultural differences are expected in use and interaction. A TikTok study is required by this gap.

2.3.3 Mental Health Support and Institutional Response in Nigerian Universities

Studies show that the institutional response to student mental health in Nigerian universities is weak when compared with the scale of student need. Kukoyi et al. (2022) found that students made little use of mental health services in cases when those services existed in a Nigerian university. Barriers included limited information about available support, personal patterns of help-seeking and fear of judgement from peers or family members. The presence of a counselling service does not guarantee access for students who require help. Difficulty in using such services is connected

with social conditions as well as the level of resources. This distinction is important for the response considered in the present study. Mental health services are left unused when students lack information or fear judgement. The existence of counselling is not matched by access in university practice.

Low use of formal services in Nigerian universities exists beside a strong preference for informal coping strategies. Muhammed et al. (2024) found that Nigerian undergraduates prefer conversations with friends or family members to professional support. Formal therapy and medical services were used as a last option by most students. A student who faces TikTok cyberbullying may manage the harm without a university service. Support may come from trusted people within the social network of the student. Owolabi (2020) identifies blocking the attacker, speaking with a friend, taking time away from the platform and using prayer or religious practice as coping strategies among Nigerian students. Formal services are used less than support from friends, family and religious practice. Cyberbullying is managed through blocking, breaks and trusted relationships. Informal coping is placed at the centre of student response.

Private university attendance does not remove the challenge of mental health support. Comparative evidence from Nigerian universities supports this position. Odia et al. (2023) studied public and private universities in Osun State. High mental distress was found in both types of institution while informal help sources received greater use. Adesina and Salawu (2025) examined private Nigerian universities while finding that students searched for mental health information through social media. After obtaining such information, professional help had not been sought by 65 percent. These results challenge the belief that greater resources in private universities produce better mental health outcomes for students as a standard result. Mental distress is found in both public

and private universities. Informal help is preferred across the two settings. Better outcomes are not guaranteed by private university resources.

This theme raises the question of whether Nigerian university mental health services address platform-specific harm such as TikTok cyberbullying. General mental health support can miss the direct source of student harm. Godfrey Okoye University has a counselling service as well as a Mental Health Unit for emotional, social and psychological problems (Godfrey Okoye University, 2026). No published evidence shows that either service treats TikTok cyberbullying as a distinct source of harm. There is no evidence that the services reach students who prefer informal support. The difference between services listed by an institution and support used in practice forms a central concern of this study. General counselling services may not be designed around harm caused by TikTok features. Platform-specific outreach is required when general support fails to address the source of harm.

The literature presents social media literacy education as a useful response to cyberbullying in Nigerian tertiary institutions. This response has limited presence in many universities. Akeusola (2024) argues that social media literacy education can reduce cyberbullying among young people in Nigerian higher education. It develops the knowledge and skills required to recognise online harm as well as respond to it. Nigerian universities have not adopted this approach across a broad range of institutions. Students face platform-specific harm without enough tools for a response. Findings under this theme support recommendations beyond counselling services. Platform-specific awareness education should form part of the institutional response at Godfrey Okoye University. Students can be equipped to recognise and respond to online harm through social media literacy. Platform-specific knowledge is built through this approach. Counselling is supported by practical awareness education within the wider university support system.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Two theories from mass communication and social psychology guide this study. Social Learning Theory was proposed by Albert Bandura in 1977. Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch proposed it in 1974. It was the Uses and Gratifications Theory. As a group the theories explain how cyberbullying conduct spreads on TikTok. They explain why students remain users of TikTok when harm is experienced on the platform. The framework is supported by both theories.

2.4.1 Social Learning Theory

Social Learning Theory was presented by Bandura (1977). It states that people learn conduct through observation of other people, attention to outcomes and a choice about imitation. Four steps are identified within the learning process. A person gives attention to conduct, keeps it in memory, develops the ability to reproduce it and has a reason for action. On TikTok this process explains how students learn accepted forms of interaction by observing users and the responses gained by them. Dasoo (2022) applies the process to teaching through TikTok. Learning occurs through observation, imitation and changes based on audience reaction. The same process can explain the spread of cyberbullying. Harmful conduct becomes normal when attacks go unpunished while attention is given to attackers. Behaviour is learned through observation, memory, reproduction and motivation within Social Learning Theory. Normal conduct on TikTok is shaped by the reactions received from audiences. Harmful behaviour is copied when attacks are rewarded and consequences are absent. The spread of cyberbullying is explained through this learning process. Evidence from a Nigerian university supports the use of Social Learning Theory for cyberbullying. A study on cyberbullying management used moral disengagement from the work of Bandura to explain how harmful conduct becomes accepted (Ifon, 2022). Moral disengagement occurs when a person steps away from a duty to act with moral responsibility. Harm may be presented as

acceptable, blamed on the victim or treated as the concern of another person. Ifon (2022) found this process in Nigerian university cyberbullying settings. Bystanders failed to intervene because an attack was treated as deserved or outside their responsibility. Cyberbullying on TikTok at Godfrey Okoye University involves more than the conduct of an attacker. Passive acceptance from bystanders who learn that non-intervention is normal can support its spread. Moral disengagement is used to explain how responsibility is avoided during cyberbullying. Victims may be blamed while harmful conduct is reframed as acceptable. Non-intervention is learned by bystanders when repeated attacks are treated as normal. The attacker is not treated as the only source of the social problem.

Social Learning Theory has a limit in its treatment of the TikTok algorithm. Scholars argue that harmful content can be placed before a user without a choice to view it. Barlett et al. (2021) show that social learning cannot explain cyberbullying on its own. Positive outcomes received after bullying can influence whether a student repeats the conduct. TikTok sends content with strong reactions to more users through its algorithm. Harmful videos can reach a large audience without a decision from each viewer to find them. The theory treats learning as a choice to a greater degree than the platform allows. Algorithmic selection removes part of that choice from the user. The theory is limited by harmful content pushed through the TikTok algorithm. Continued bullying is shaped by strong audience rewards and repeated harmful algorithmic exposure.

Social Learning Theory explains the spread of TikTok cyberbullying after it begins. Students can observe harmful conduct without consequences and learn that it is accepted on the platform. The theory explains the lack of bystander intervention at Godfrey Okoye University. Observation can teach students that non-intervention is the common response within their social group. The mental health of the targeted student can be affected because the absence of peer support adds to the

original attack. The theory directs this study to measure exposure to cyberbullying and the response of the social group to that harm. The spread of cyberbullying is explained through observation of attacks without consequences. Bystander silence is learned as a normal response within the social group. Additional emotional harm is created when support is not provided.

2.4.2 Uses and Gratifications Theory

Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch developed the theory (1974). It was the Uses and Gratifications Theory. It states that people make active media choices on the basis of needs that they want media to meet. Five main needs are identified by the theory. The needs cover information with knowledge, pleasure with excitement and reinforcement of personal identity. Connection with other people as well as release from tension completes the list. When applied to TikTok, the theory explains the first choice to use the platform. It helps explain continued use after harm. Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023) found that Nigerian university undergraduates use TikTok for entertainment, self-expression, learning alongside social connection. These purposes correspond with four of the five needs in the original theory. Media choices are explained through identity, connection and tension release needs. Student use of TikTok is linked with entertainment, learning and self-expression. Continued platform use is understood through the important gratifications received by students.

For this study, Uses and Gratifications Theory has value because it explains continued TikTok use after cyberbullying. Stamenković and Mitrović (2023) show that TikTok meets important needs for entertainment, social interaction alongside personal identity. Users may find it difficult to leave the platform when it causes harm. Advice that students should stop using TikTok is not a practical response to cyberbullying. The needs met by the platform may not be replaced with ease through other means. Among students of Godfrey Okoye University, harm from TikTok cyberbullying

competes with benefits linked to connection, entertainment and identity. In many cases the benefits can carry greater weight than the harm. Continued TikTok use is explained by needs for connection, entertainment and identity. Departure from the platform is made difficult by the benefits received. A simple instruction to leave TikTok is rejected by this direct evidence.

Uses and Gratifications Theory faces a challenge on algorithmic platforms such as TikTok. Users do not control every item placed before them. This weakens the idea that media use comes from a free and active choice at all times. Ojewumi et al. (2025) found a relationship between the motivation for social media use and mental health knowledge among Nigerian undergraduates. The result gives greater complexity than the original theoretical picture presents. TikTok sends content according to past behaviour rather than a present choice. A user can enter a cycle of viewing harmful material without an intention to search for it. TikTok use cannot be explained in every case as a free decision to satisfy one distinct need. Active media choice is limited by the TikTok algorithm and past viewing behaviour. Harmful content may be received without a present choice by the user within the platform.

Uses and Gratifications Theory guides the study of reasons for TikTok use alongside the needs met by the platform. Such information helps explain why students remain on TikTok after harm is experienced. The theory supports the analysis of coping strategies. Students who depend on TikTok for social connection and personal identity may show lower willingness to leave the platform than students with limited use. In combination with Social Learning Theory, it provides a theoretical base for two parts of the study. One part concerns the spread of cyberbullying on TikTok. The other concerns continued student use of a platform that can cause harm. Student motives are connected with continued TikTok use through the theory. Coping choices are shaped by the needs met on the platform.

2.5 Empirical Review

A quantitative survey was conducted by Adebayo et al. (2019) among university undergraduates in Kwara State, Nigeria. The level of social media use predicted the risk of cyberbullying and students with more online time faced greater exposure. The Nigerian university setting and survey design give the study value for the current research. Its design is close to the approach used here. A limit remains because social media was treated as a broad category rather than TikTok as a distinct platform. The Kwara State location prevents direct application to Enugu State without further evidence. The present study extends the work through a focus on TikTok within South-East Nigeria. Nigerian evidence is provided by the survey design and university population. A TikTok-specific gap is left by the social media focus.

Cyberbullying, demographics and coping strategies were examined by Owolabi (2020) across six Nigerian universities. Age, gender and university type were found to shape the coping strategy used after online bullying. The multi-university range makes the study a strong Nigerian source for the present section on coping strategies. TikTok was not given direct attention; the study did not examine how the platform type shapes harm or the response to harm. The current research adds this platform dimension through an examination of coping strategies linked with TikTok-specific cyberbullying at one institution. Coping differences are linked with age, gender and university type. A platform-specific explanation is left unresolved by the study in Nigeria.

Students from four African countries that included Nigeria were studied through a quantitative design by Chukwuere et al. (2021). Social media cyberbullying produced important psychosocial effects across African higher education. The multi-country range gives the work value as a comparative base because global patterns of harm were found within Africa. A broad regional design reduces detail at country level. TikTok was not examined as a separate platform. The

present study develops this evidence through concentration on one platform and one institution. Such focus offers detail that the multi-country design of Chukwuere et al. (2021) could not provide. Psychosocial harm is supported across four countries in the study. Country detail is reduced by the multi-national design. TikTok is not separated as a platform.

A mixed-methods design was used by Ezeonwumelu et al. (2022) with secondary school students in Onitsha South of Anambra State. Cyberbullying was found to damage the academic strength of students. The South-East Nigerian location has cultural closeness to the Enugu State setting of the present study. A limit comes from the use of secondary school students in place of university students. The outcome was academic strength rather than mental health. Its findings do not match the current study in a direct form. The present work extends the issue to university students and treats mental health as the main outcome variable. Academic harm is supported within a South-East Nigerian setting. Direct comparison is limited by the secondary school population.

Formella et al. (2025) conducted a quantitative study among students in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Cyberbullying was found to predict social anxiety among university students in Enugu State. In location, this study is the closest existing work to the present research. It links cyberbullying with a mental health outcome and holds strong value for the review. TikTok was not examined as a separate platform. Social anxiety was the sole mental health dimension. The current study adds TikTok as the platform of focus. The study extends the outcomes to depression, self-worth, social withdrawal and academic focus alongside anxiety. Cyberbullying is linked with social anxiety through evidence from Enugu State. Direct local relevance is provided by the university setting. Other mental health dimensions are left unmeasured. TikTok is not isolated as a distinct platform within the Nigerian context studied.

A quantitative survey of university students was carried out by Ali and Shahbuddin (2022). The study found a negative link between cyberbullying and mental health. Emotional well-being as well as academic results were affected. Its clear design and combined outcomes make it a useful international point of comparison. The study was not conducted in Nigeria or another African country. Cultural conditions may produce patterns that differ from those at Godfrey Okoye University. The present study tests the relationship within a private Nigerian university and uses TikTok as the distinct platform under examination. Academic harm is linked with cyberbullying in the survey. Direct transfer is limited by the foreign cultural setting.

Tsegaye et al. (2025) examined cyberbullying, related factors and coping methods among female health science students in Ethiopia. More than half of the participants had experienced cyberbullying. Seeking social support and ignoring the attack were the most common responses. The African setting makes the study useful for comparison of coping strategies within higher education. Its sample included female students from one faculty alone. This limits application to a mixed-gender population drawn from several faculties at Godfrey Okoye University. The present study responds through a sample that includes different genders across all faculties. Social support and ignored attacks are identified as common coping methods. Wider application is limited by the selected female health science sample.

Cyberbullying among college students was studied by Asiamah (2024). Experience of cyberbullying was reported by 44.8 percent of participants. Many attacks were not reported to the institution or law enforcement. This low reporting level has value for the current study because formal responses may miss a large share of incidents. It supports the choice to treat coping strategies as a central objective. The study does not identify a Nigerian or African setting. Reporting conduct can differ across cultures; its findings must be applied to the Godfrey Okoye

University population with caution. Low institutional reporting is shown among students who experienced cyberbullying. Attention to coping strategies is supported by this pattern. Cultural transfer is limited by the different settings within higher education settings.

Sengul (2024) examined university student views and reactions to cyberbullying on social media in Türkiye. Cyberbullying was common on TikTok as well as Instagram. Students used passive and active coping responses. The study is among the few university-level works that treats TikTok as a distinct platform. Evidence that TikTok carries university cyberbullying in another country supports the argument of the present research. Turkish social and cultural conditions differ from the Nigerian university setting. Direct application to Godfrey Okoye University would require adjustment. The current study fills this gap with TikTok-specific evidence from a Nigerian university. TikTok is included as a site of cyberbullying among university students. Active and passive coping responses are reported. Direct application is limited by the Turkish context.

A quantitative study among higher education students in Saudi Arabia was conducted by Rasool et al. (2024). TikTok, Instagram and Facebook were linked with cyberbullying. Academic performance was affected by that cyberbullying. The three-platform comparison gives the study strong value for understanding TikTok and academic harm. It shows that TikTok is not the sole platform where cyberbullying occurs. It indicates that the form of harm can differ across platforms. The Saudi Arabian setting creates a limit for the Nigerian context. Combining three platforms makes TikTok-specific results difficult to separate from the full findings. The present study addresses both limits through a sole focus on TikTok in a Nigerian university. Cyberbullying and academic harm are linked across three social platforms. TikTok-specific effects are not isolated in the combined results. Direct Nigerian application is limited by the Saudi setting.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method used for this study is presented in this chapter. It covers the research design, area of study and sources of data. The population, sample size determination and sampling technique are explained. Attention is given to data collection, instrument validity, instrument reliability and methods of data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. It allowed data to be collected from final-year students of Godfrey Okoye University. Their views on TikTok use, TikTok cyberbullying, mental health effects and coping strategies were described through the design. A structured questionnaire can reach many students within a short period. Demographic data can be presented through frequency counts while Likert-scale responses can be analysed through weighted mean scores with decisions (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). This suitability supported the choice of survey design. It fits mass communication research because media-use patterns and audience experiences can be measured in numerical form (Asemah et al., 2017). A numerical account of student experience was supported by the descriptive survey design.

3.2 Area of Study

Godfrey Okoye University at Ugwuomu-Nike in Enugu State, Nigeria forms the area of this study. Two reasons supported the choice of the university. As a faith-based institution, it exists within a social setting where religious norms may shape mental health stigma. This condition adds depth

to student experience and reporting of harm from TikTok cyberbullying. The student population is active on social media. The institution provides a suitable setting for research on the influence of a social media platform on student mental health. A counselling service and a Mental Health Unit are available within the university (Godfrey Okoye University, 2026). No published evidence shows that either service addresses platform-specific cyberbullying harm. This gap gives institutional value to the focus of the study. Godfrey Okoye University was selected because platform use and mental health support could be examined within a faith-based institution. Institutional value was added by counselling structures.

3.3 Sources of Data

Primary and secondary sources of data were used for the study. Primary data came from final-year undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University through a structured questionnaire. Secondary data were obtained from textbooks, journal articles, institutional records and academic sources available online. These materials addressed TikTok, cyberbullying, social media use and student mental health.

3.4 Population of the Study

The study population comprised 745 final-year undergraduate students of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. Students were drawn from six faculties and one college. These units were the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Management and Social Sciences. The remaining units were Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies, Faculty of Law, College of Medicine. The figure came from Godfrey Okoye University student records for 2026. It was treated as the actual population for the study. Faculty representation is preserved within the final-year population.

Table 1: Population Distribution of Final-Year Students by Faculty and College

Faculty	Population of Final-Year Students	Percentage (%)
Faculty of Arts	23	3.1%
Faculty of Education	32	4.3%
Faculty of Management and Social Sciences	339	45.5%
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies	236	31.7%
Faculty of Law	70	9.4%
College of Medicine	45	6.0%
Total	745	100%

Source: Godfrey Okoye University Student Records, 2026

3.5 Determination of Sample Size

The sample size of this study was determined using the Wimmer and Dominick sample size calculator

Sample Size Calculator

Find Out The Sample Size

This calculator computes the minimum number of necessary samples to meet the desired statistical constraints.

Result



Sample size: **254**

This means 254 or more measurements/surveys are needed to have a confidence level of 95% that the real value is within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured/surveyed value.

Confidence Level:?

95%

Margin of Error:?

5

%

Population Proportion:?

50

%

Use 50% if not sure

Population Size:?

745

Leave blank if unlimited population size.

Calculate

Clear

calculator.net

**Congratulations!**

3.6 Sampling Techniques

A proportionate stratified sampling technique was used. Final-year students were distributed across the faculties and college in unequal numbers. The sample of 254 was allocated according to the population of each unit. Allocation followed $n_i = N_i/N \times n$; in this formula n_i represents the sample for a faculty or college. N_i is the population of that unit while N is the total population of 745. The total sample size of 254 is represented by n . For the Faculty of Arts, $23/745 \times 254$ produced 7.84. This value was rounded to 8 respondents. Faculty representation was preserved by linking each allocation with the recorded population size.

Table 2: Proportionate Sample Allocation by Faculty and College

Faculty / College	Population (Ni)	Proportion	Sample (ni)
Faculty of Arts	23	3.1%	8
Faculty of Education	32	4.3%	11
Faculty of Management and Social Sciences	339	45.5%	116
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies	236	31.7%	80
Faculty of Law	70	9.4%	24
College of Medicine	45	6.0%	15
Total	745	100%	254

Source: Researcher, 2026

3.7 Method of Data Collection

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. This instrument contains a fixed set of questions answered in the same form by every respondent. It supports comparison across many people (Kothari, 2004). Five sections formed the questionnaire; Section A used five multiple-choice questions for background information. Section B measured TikTok use through five questions with two-choice and four-point Likert scale formats. Section C contained five four-point Likert scale questions on types of TikTok cyberbullying. Section D used five four-point Likert scale questions to measure mental health effects. Section E contained five four-point Likert scale questions on coping methods used by students. Background information was collected in Section A through five multiple-choice questions. TikTok use was measured in Section B. Cyberbullying types were covered in Section C. Mental health effects and coping strategies were measured in the complete final sections used in the study.

Sections B to E used a four-point Likert scale coded as Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. No neutral option was provided because each respondent was required to make a clear choice. The researcher and two trained research assistants distributed the questionnaire in person. Distribution covered the six faculties and the college of Godfrey Okoye University during the 2024/2025 academic year. In total, 254 copies were distributed; a valid form was found in 247 completed copies and these were used for analysis. A clear response position was required by the four-point Likert scale.

3.8 Validity of the Instrument

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures the issue that it is intended to measure (Kothari, 2004). Face validity and content validity were used to examine the questionnaire. For face validity, two supervisors in the Department of Mass Communication at Godfrey Okoye University reviewed the draft. They judged whether each question appeared to measure its

intended issue. Content validity was examined by linking every question to the research aim that it was meant to answer. Each of the four aims was covered by at least five questions. Feedback from the supervisors led to the rewriting of three questions that lacked enough clarity in the first draft. Face validity was assessed by supervisors in the Department of Mass Communication. Content validity was checked by linking each item with the objective. Three unclear questions were revised through the feedback received.

3.9 Reliability of the Instrument

Reliability concerns the capacity of an instrument to produce the same results under the same conditions when used more than once (Kothari, 2004). A pilot study was used to check the questionnaire. Thirty students at a similar institution completed it on two occasions separated by two weeks. Cronbach alpha was used to measure internal consistency. The full questionnaire produced a Cronbach alpha value of 0.81. This value exceeded the accepted social science cut-off of 0.70. The items measured the same underlying ideas with a consistent pattern. Instrument reliability was assessed through a pilot study with 30 students on two occasions. Acceptable internal consistency was shown by the Cronbach alpha value of 0.81.

3.10 Methods of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyse the questionnaire data. Frequency counts were applied to demographic variables and questions outside the Likert format. Weighted mean scores were used for four-point Likert scale responses. The coding was Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2 and Strongly Disagree = 1. The criterion mean came from the addition of the four values followed by division by four: $4 + 3 + 2 + 1 = 10$, and $10/4 = 2.50$. Mean scores from 2.50 were accepted while scores below 2.50 were rejected. Each response option was multiplied by its Likert value. The weighted scores were added and divided by the number of respondents. For example,

assume SA = 49, A = 88, D = 73 and SD = 29. The weighted score is $(49 \times 4) + (88 \times 3) + (73 \times 2) + (29 \times 1) = 635$. The mean is $635/239 = 2.66$; in Chapter Four tables, SD means Strongly Disagree. The total column contains the weighted response score used for the mean. Standard deviation was calculated from coded responses to show the spread around the mean. Decisions in the tables relied on the item mean, grand mean and 2.50 rule. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 was used for data entry as well as analysis. Demographic data were analysed through frequency counts. Likert responses were assessed through mean scores. Decisions were based on the criterion mean of 2.50. Response spread was measured through standard deviation. SPSS version 26 was used for analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Data gathered through the field survey among final-year students of Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu are presented and analysed in this chapter. The demographic features of respondents are shown. Each research question is analysed; findings are discussed in relation to the theories and related studies reviewed in Chapter Two.

Questionnaire copies numbering 254 were distributed across the six faculties and the college within the final-year population. From this number, 247 copies were completed in a valid form for analysis. The high return gave strength to the reliability of the findings. The data represented close to the complete sample size determined in Chapter Three. Confidence in analysis was strengthened by the high return.

4.1 Presentation of Data

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	113	46%
Female	134	54%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Female respondents formed the larger part of the sample while male respondents formed the smaller part. The table reflects views from both gender groups. Its findings are not restricted to one gender category. Both gender groups were represented within the completed sample.

Table 4: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18 years	9	4%
18 to 21 years	151	61%
22 to 25 years	78	32%
26 years and above	9	4%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Most respondents were within the age group of 18 to 21 years. The study captured young adults within an age range linked with active and frequent social media use. Young adults were reflected in the age pattern of respondents.

Table 5: Level Distribution of Respondents

Level	Frequency	Percentage
500 Level	247	100%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Every respondent was a 500 level student. The table confirms that the participants belonged to the final-year undergraduate group selected for the study.

Table 6: Faculty Distribution of Respondents

Faculty / College	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty of Arts	8	3%
Faculty of Education	11	4%

Faculty of Management and Social Sciences	113	46%
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies	78	32%
Faculty of Law	24	10%
College of Medicine	13	5%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The Faculty of Management and Social Sciences supplied the highest number of respondents. The Faculty of Natural Sciences and Environmental Studies followed it. This distribution reflects the concentration of final-year students across the faculties. Faculty population differences were reflected in the respondent distribution.

Table 7: Smartphone Ownership of Respondents

Smartphone Ownership	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	241	98%
No	6	2%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Smartphones were owned by most respondents; access to a personal smartphone did not form a major practical barrier to TikTok use within the group studied.

4.2 Analysis of Data

4.2.1 Research Question One

What level of TikTok use exists among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?

Table 8: TikTok Use among Respondents

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	239	97%
No	8	3%
Total	247	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

Most respondents reported TikTok use in the table. The interpretation of Research Question One was based on the Likert-scale mean results shown in Table 10 rather than this percentage alone.

Table 9: Daily Time Spent on TikTok among Users

Time Spent	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 1 hour	37	15%
1 to 3 hours	91	38%
More than 3 hours	111	46%
Total	239	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The largest group of TikTok users spent more than three hours on the platform each day. TikTok use was part of regular social media activity rather than an occasional practice among respondents.

Regular TikTok activity was reflected in long daily use.

Table 10: Level of TikTok Use among Final-Year Students

S/N	Items	N	Likert	SA	A	D	SD	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision	
			Mean	(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)			Mean	$\geq$
										2.5	
1	I use TikTok to connect with friends and fellow students at Godfrey Okoye University.	239	2.50	128	76	23	12	798	3.34	Accepted	
				512	228	46	12				
2	I post or share my own content on TikTok on a regular basis.	239	2.50	41	69	84	45	584	2.44	Rejected	
				164	207	168	45				
3	I have seen content on TikTok that made me feel bad about myself.	239	2.50	58	97	61	23	668	2.79	Accepted	
				232	291	122	23				
	Grand Mean		2.50						2.86	Accepted	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

A grand mean of 2.86 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. The result shows a high level of TikTok use among final-year students. Social connection and exposure to content that causes emotional concern carried particular importance. The decision was based on the Likert mean rather than a percentage explanation.

4.2.2 Research Question Two

Which types of cyberbullying are experienced on TikTok by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?

Table 11: Types of Cyberbullying Experienced on TikTok

S/N	Items	N	Likert Mean	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision	
										Mean	$\geq$ 2.5
1	I have received mean or hurtful comments on my TikTok videos or posts.	239	2.50	49 196	88 264	73 146	29 29	635	2.66	Accepted	
2	I have been mocked or put down by another user through a duet or stitch on TikTok.	239	2.50	33 132	61 183	96 192	49 49	556	2.33	Rejected	
3	I have received threatening or frightening messages from other TikTok users.	239	2.50	21 84	44 132	101 202	73 73	491	2.05	Rejected	
4	I have had false or damaging information spread about me on TikTok.	239	2.50	28 112	53 159	99 198	59 59	528	2.21	Rejected	
5	I have been left out or ignored as a planned group action by other TikTok users.	239	2.50	19 76	41 123	108 216	71 71	486	2.03	Rejected	
Grand Mean			2.50						2.26	Rejected	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The grand mean of 2.26 fell below the criterion mean of 2.50. Mean or hurtful comments received an accepted mean of 2.66. The measured forms of cyberbullying were not present with equal strength. Hurtful comments formed the most common experience among respondents. Hurtful comments were identified as the clearest accepted form measured.

4.2.3 Research Question Three

How does TikTok cyberbullying affect the overall mental health of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu?

Table 12: Effect of TikTok Cyberbullying on Mental Health

S/N	Items	N	Likert Mean	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision	
										Mean	$\geq$ 2.5
1	After being bullied on TikTok, I felt sad or had a low mood for a period of time.	239	2.50	62 248	91 273	58 116	28 28	665	2.78	Accepted	
2	TikTok cyberbullying has made me feel worried or afraid to use the platform.	239	2.50	44 176	73 219	81 162	41 41	598	2.50	Accepted	
3	Being bullied on TikTok has made me want to stay away from other people.	239	2.50	37 148	64 192	89 178	49 49	567	2.37	Rejected	
4	TikTok cyberbullying has had a bad effect on my focus and performance in school.	239	2.50	51 204	79 237	69 138	40 40	619	2.59	Accepted	
5	After being bullied on TikTok, I felt that my view of my own worth was reduced.	239	2.50	46 184	68 204	84 168	41 41	597	2.50	Accepted	
Grand Mean			2.50						2.55	Accepted	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The grand mean of 2.55 was higher than the criterion mean of 2.50. TikTok cyberbullying produced a noticeable mental health effect among final-year students. Low mood and academic focus were the main areas shown by the result.

4.2.4 Research Question Four

Which coping strategies are used by final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu when TikTok cyberbullying is experienced?

Table 13: Coping Strategies Used by Students Facing TikTok Cyberbullying

S/N	Items	N	Likert Mean	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	$\bar{X}$	Decision	
										Mean	$\geq$ 2.5
1	When I face cyberbullying on TikTok, I block or report the person who is attacking me.	239	2.50	131 524	71 213	25 50	12 12	799	3.34	Accepted	
2	I talk to a friend or a family member when I face cyberbullying on TikTok.	239	2.50	89 356	99 297	35 70	16 16	739	3.09	Accepted	
3	I have taken a break from TikTok because of cyberbullying.	239	2.50	47 188	73 219	79 158	40 40	605	2.53	Accepted	
4	I have sought help from the counselling service at Godfrey Okoye University after facing cyberbullying on TikTok.	239	2.50	14 56	27 81	88 176	110 110	423	1.77	Rejected	
5	I use prayer or religious practice to cope with the effects of TikTok cyberbullying.	239	2.50	98 392	84 252	39 78	18 18	740	3.10	Accepted	
Grand Mean			2.50						2.77	Accepted	

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The grand mean of 2.77 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. Students used coping strategies after TikTok cyberbullying. Blocking or reporting, speaking with trusted people and prayer received greater use than formal counselling. Informal coping received greater support than formal counselling services.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The near-total TikTok use among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University supports Uses and Gratifications Theory. The theory states that people choose media to meet real needs (Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch, 1974). Strong agreement on TikTok as a source of social connection supports Nwafor and Nnaemeka (2023). Their study found that Nigerian undergraduates use TikTok for entertainment, self-expression and social connection. Some respondents encountered content that produced negative feelings about the self. A platform that meets social needs can expose students to emotional discomfort at the same time. Social benefit was shown beside emotional discomfort during TikTok use.

Mean or hurtful comments formed the most common type of cyberbullying. This finding supports the platform affordance argument from Chan et al. (2019). TikTok encourages comments, reactions and sharing through its design. The same features can become routes for harmful conduct. Alfian et al. (2025) identified the comment section as a major location of TikTok attacks. Threats, false information and planned exclusion received lower means. Cyberbullying among respondents had greater visibility in common interaction than in forms with greater severity. Platform engagement was connected with reported harm through the TikTok comment section result.

The effect of TikTok cyberbullying on mood, self-worth and academic focus agrees with the wider evidence reviewed in Chapter Two. Arif et al. (2024) connected cyberbullying with depression,

anxiety and reduced academic focus in university settings. The finding supports Social Learning Theory; harmful TikTok conduct can become accepted when attacks are observed without consequences. Students who depend on the platform for connection may experience greater emotional harm when peers fail to offer support. Emotional and academic outcomes were linked with TikTok harm reported.

Dependence on informal coping strategies and low use of counselling services reflect a pattern found in Nigerian universities. Muhammed et al. (2024) reported that Nigerian undergraduates prefer support from friends and family to formal therapy. Owolabi (2020) identified prayer and religious practice among common coping methods. The present study supports this pattern; students showed greater willingness to block attackers, speak with trusted people or pray than use a formal counselling service. Reported coping choices were shaped by trusted student relationships.

The findings present TikTok cyberbullying among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University as a platform-specific problem with social and mental health effects. They do not provide a fixed picture of every Nigerian university student. The study covered one institution and depended on self-report data. Its evidence can support platform-specific awareness, reporting systems and counselling outreach for the student population that was examined. Platform-specific awareness, reporting and counselling outreach were supported by the combined findings.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Findings

1. A high level of TikTok use was found among final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. The grand mean of 2.86 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50 and supported this finding.
2. Mean or hurtful comments formed the main accepted type of TikTok cyberbullying among respondents with a mean score of 2.66. A grand mean of 2.26 fell below 2.50. The other forms measured were not present with the same strength. Hurtful comments were separated from the forms with lower frequency.
3. TikTok cyberbullying was found to affect the mental health of final-year students. The grand mean of 2.55 was above the criterion mean of 2.50. Effects appeared in low mood, fear of platform use, reduced academic focus and lower self-worth. Measured mental health effects were linked with TikTok cyberbullying by the grand mean.
4. Informal coping strategies received greater student use after TikTok cyberbullying. The grand mean of 2.77 exceeded the criterion mean of 2.50. Blocking or reporting, conversations with friends or family members and prayer stood above use of the university counselling service. Greater support was given to informal coping than formal counselling in the selected student sample across the university.

5.2 Implications of Findings

TikTok is not a minor platform within the lives of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University. Most respondents use it and many spend long periods on it. A student support programme that

leaves out TikTok may miss an important part of student social life. Institutional relevance was given to TikTok through widespread use.

Cyberbullying should not be treated as a broad online problem alone. Hurtful comments and mockery through TikTok features show that platform design as well as use shape the harm experienced by students. Awareness and intervention programmes should contain examples that are specific to TikTok. Interventions built around TikTok features were supported by the form of harm.

The low use of counselling services shows that formal support does not lead to student use by its presence alone. Godfrey Okoye University needs to reduce the gap between its mental health structures and the informal support routes trusted by students.

5.3 Conclusion

TikTok holds a strong place in the social life of final-year students at Godfrey Okoye University, Enugu. It provides entertainment as well as social connection. The platform exposes students to cyberbullying that can affect mood, self-worth and academic focus. Not every form measured was dominant; hurtful comments emerged as a major type of attack. Students showed preference for informal coping methods over formal counselling. A suitable response should combine platform-specific awareness, stronger reporting channels, peer support and greater outreach from existing counselling structures. Platform use, harm and coping were connected with an institutional response. The position was grounded in the four research questions.

5.4 Recommendations

1. Platform-specific awareness sessions should be organised by Godfrey Okoye University. Final-year students should be taught safe TikTok use and ways to identify harmful practices on the platform.

2. Education should cover the main forms of TikTok cyberbullying. These include hurtful comments, mockery through duet or stitch, threats, false information and planned exclusion.
3. Mental health outreach should be strengthened by the university Mental Health Unit and counselling service for students affected by TikTok cyberbullying. Attention should cover low mood, fear, reduced academic focus and low self-worth.
4. Student orientation and life programmes should include coping skill training. It should address safe blocking, reporting, peer support and prayer support where suitable. It should explain the point at which formal counselling is needed.

5.5 Areas for Further Studies

1. TikTok cyberbullying could be examined across more than one Nigerian university in further studies. This approach would allow comparison between different institutional settings.
2. A longitudinal design could be used by future researchers to examine changes over time in the relationship between TikTok cyberbullying and mental health.
3. Further research could examine bystander roles in TikTok cyberbullying among Nigerian university students. Peer non-intervention may increase the mental harm experienced by victims.

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