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Cyberbullying Practices and Experiences of the Filipino College Students' Social Media Users

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Abstract – The low cost of internet connectivity and smart phones have pave the way for the wide use of social media especially among college students. Social media tools however have become an easy tool for others to harm other, among which, is cyberbullying. The study determined the practices, experiences, and responses of the college students' social media users on cyberbullying. The descriptive method of research was employed with a total of 500 college students enrolled during the S.Y. 2018 – 2018 who were randomly selected served as respondents of the study. Results of the study revealed that sending and receiving mean messages was the number one act of cyberbullying practiced and experienced by the college students' social media users. Praying, avoiding the person involved, and disregarding the issues were the common responses of the students on their cyberbullying experiences.

Keywords – Cyberbullying, social media users

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement, and the low cost of the internet connectivity and smart phones have brought about significant change in the past years. Physical boundaries have been broken, leading to the realization of global village. This technological advancement has also lead significant changes in the social behavior of people.

Participatory technologies have expanded the boundaries of our communities by bridging the local with the global. However, involvement in these online communities are not without risk (Nagle, 2018). The technology encompasses a range of technologies including e-mails, mobile phones, personal websites and more popularly social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Balakrishnan & Fernandez, 2018). Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube offer opportunities for users to interact and share information not only with their friends and family but also with people who have similar interests (Beverley & Covey, 2018). Social media have been transforming how individuals, communities, and organizations create, share, and consume information from each other and from firm (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & Mccarthy, 2018).

Despite the identified benefits of using social media, users are prone to anti-social behaviors and psychological and emotional violence such as sexting, posting embarrassing videos, photos, messages, and opinions that are publicly shared and viewed worldwide. As the accessibility to the Internet and continued online communication grow, individuals will likely use these tools to harm others (Barlett, 2017) which is known as cyber bullying, also known as social bullying. Self-presentation on Facebook can increase the likelihood of eliciting negative attention from potential perpetrators (Dredge, Gleeson, De, & Garcia, 2014).

Cyberbullying has been identified as an important problem amongst youth in the last decade (Slonje, Smith, & Frisén, 2013). It is often a systemic attempt to get another child or teen to feel bad about him or herself through electronic communication (devices and equipment such as cell phones, computers, and tablets, as well as social media sites and text messages). This is not limited to the Internet; cyber bullying also encompasses bullying done through such things as text messages using mobile devices. It is important to note that cyber bulling can only happen between minors. When an adult is harassing children or teenagers, it is known as cyber harassment or cyber stalking.

Cyber bullying is when a child or teenager is harassed, humiliated, embarrassed, threatened or tormented (bullied) using digital technology. There are a number of ways to humiliate and threaten children online. It usually happens more than once, and includes leaving demeaning messages on someone's Facebook page (social bullying), uploading embarrassing photos,

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or spreading gossip or rumors through instant messaging and text messaging. Uploading mean videos, use of websites, or fake profiles are also examples of cyberbullying (Chapin & Coleman, 2017). Public comment, hacked account, and identity theft strategies reveal the various ways the structure of online environments can shape harassment and bullying (Brody & Vangelisti, 2017). Once things are circulated on the Internet, they may never disappear, resurfacing at later times to renew the pain of cyber bullying. The damage is often psychological, and carries over into the real world, the threats posed by cyber bullying can be very real. It can lead to anxiety, depression, self-harm, and even suicide.

Many cyber bullies think that bullying others online is funny. Cyber bullies may not realize the consequences for themselves of cyberbullying. Despite the potential damage of cyber bullying, it is alarmingly common among adolescents and teens. The things teens post online now may reflect badly on them later when they apply for college or a job. Cyber bullies can lose their cell phone or online accounts for cyber bullying. Also, cyber bullies and their parents may face legal charges for cyber bullying, and if the cyber bullying was sexual in nature or involved sexting, the results can include being registered as a sex offender. Youth are knowingly engaging in harmful behavior on the internet that they believe is unlikely to receive consequences (Pettalia, Levin, & Dickinson, 2013). Teens may think that if they use a fake name they won't get caught, but there are many ways to track someone who is cyber bullying.

Even with the heavy use of social media, adolescents believe they are less likely than peers to be victims of cyberbullying and less likely to bully others. While the self-reported incidence rates of experience with bullying (bystanding, victimization, and perpetration) are likely under-reported, most (65%) say they have witnessed some form of bullying; nearly half (46%) say they been victimized in some form, and some (18%) acknowledge bullying others (Chapin & Coleman, 2017).

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According to Cyber bullying statistics from the -SAFE foundation, over half of adolescents and teens have been bullied online, and about the same number have engaged in cyber bullying. More than 1 in 3 young people have experienced cyber threats online., over 25 percent of adolescents and teens have been bullied repeatedly through their cell phones or the Internet. Further, over half of young people do not tell their parents when cyber bullying occurs.

The Harford County Examiner reported similarly concerning cyber bullying statistics wherein, around half of teens have been the victims of cyber bullying. Only 1 in 10 teens tells a parent if they have been a cyber bully victim. Fewer than 1 in 5 cyber bullying incidents are reported to law enforcement. 1 in 10 adolescents or teens have had embarrassing or damaging pictures taken of themselves without their permission, often using cell phone cameras. About 1 in 5 teens have posted or sent sexually suggestive or nude pictures of themselves to others. Girls are somewhat more likely than boys to be involved in cyber bullying.

The Cyberbullying Research Center also did a series of surveys that found these cyber bullying statistics: Over 80 percent of teens use a cell phone regularly, making it the most popular form of technology and a common medium for cyber bullying; About half of young people have experienced some form of cyber bullying, and 10 to 20 percent experience it regularly; Mean, hurtful comments and spreading rumors are the most common type of cyber bullying; Girls are at least as likely as boys to be cyber bullies or their victims; Boys are more likely to be threatened by cyber bullies than girls; Cyber bullying affects all races; Cyber bullying victims are more likely to have low self esteem and to consider suicide

Cyberbullying continues to be a disturbing trend not only among adolescents but also undergraduate students (Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, & Behrens, 2017). However, college students underrated their involvement in acts of cyberbullying, which indicates that one's involvement in acts of cyberbullying is in fact, a hidden side of college students (Mateus, Margarida, Simão, Costa, & José, 2015). Young adults who spent between $2-5$ h daily on the Internet significantly engaged in more cyberbullying activities than those who spent less than an hour daily. The more users get onto the Internet, the more exposed they are to being cyberbullied (Balakrishnan, 2015).

Teenagers who had been victims of cyberbullying reported more antisocial reaction strategies than non-victims. Meanwhile, girls were more likely to perform prosocial bystander behaviors, whereas boys tended to behave more antisocially. Girls who had been cyberbullied claimed to adopt more prosocial bystander behaviors than male victims. Teenagers who had more online social interactions had more prosocial bystander reactions, compared to those who interacted less online. Empathy and reciprocity were discussed as the mechanisms for teenagers' prosocial and antisocial reaction strategies (Cao & Lin, 2015).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study determined the awareness and practices on cyber bullying of college students using the social media. The device, platforms used, and the social networking activities performed by the college students were determined. The cyberbullying practices, experiences, and responses and of the college students' social media users were identified.

METHODS

The research employed the descriptive design since the purpose of the study was to determine the cyberbullying practices and experiences of social media users. Their knowledge on cyberbullying was also be determined. The study was conducted in the Pangsinan State University - Alaminos City Campus during the F.Y 2017. A total of 500 college students served as respondents of the study. Prior to the selection of samples, the researcher explained that a research is being conducted; the students were asked if they are willing to be part of the study. Only those who have signified their willingness were included in the study. Further, the researcher ensured that all information given by the respondents were treated with strict confidentiality.

The knowledge, practices, and experiences of the respondents on cyberbullying were determined using a questionnaire checklist. The respondents were asked to identify their practices and experiences relating to cyberbullying. They were also asked if they are knowledgeable that the different acts are forms of cyberbullying. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency count and percentages were utilized in the analysis of the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Device and Flat Forms Used by College Students in Social Networking

As presented in Table 1, 87.20% of the social media users were using cellular phones in their social networking activities. Other gadgets that can be connected to the internet such as tablet, laptop, desktop, and netbook were also utilized by the college students in their social networking activities.

Table 1. Device Used by the College Students Social Media Users in Social Networking

Device	F	%
CP	436	87.20
Tablet	97	19.40
Laptop	194	38.80
netbook	35	7.00
desktop	41	8.20

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

The availability of low-cost smartphones propelled smartphones to register 15% retail volume growth to reach 16.8 million units in 2016. Mobile internet penetration also continued to outpace fixed broadband penetration, leading smartphones to become a key digital device in the Philippines (Euromonitor International, 2017). Smart phones can easily connect to the internet and can be used anywhere as long as there is signal. Likewise, telecommunication companies in the Philippines offer free internet data where the subscribers can log-in to their Facebook accounts.

As shown in Table 2, 100% of the respondents were using Facebook, and messenger in their social

networking activities. Again, this is attributed to the free Facebook and messenger data given by the telecommunication companies in the Philippines to their subscribers.

Table 2. Platform Used by the College Students Social Media Users in Social Networking

Flat Form	F	%
Facebook	500	100
Twitter	132	26.40
e-mail	262	52.40
Messenger	500	100.00
Text Message	416	83.20
Instagram	214	42.80
Phone Calls	376	75.20

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

Twitters and Instagram are not popular to the college students as shown by the fact that only 26.40% have their twitter accounts and 42.80% have Instagram accounts. Social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are being used by users to interact and share information not only with their friends and family but also with people who have similar interests (Beverley & Covey, 2018).

Table 3. Activities Performed by the College Students Social Media Users

Activity	F	%
Post my stories, shout outs, thoughts.	176	35.20
Upload pictures/videos.	240	48.00
View/Read others' stories, shout outs, and videos posted in their timeline.	315	63.00
Communicate with family members, friends, classmates, and others.	400	80.00

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

Communicating with family members, friends, classmates, and other people was the primary activity performed by the college students in using social media. The activity was performed by 80% of the users. Social media has become an avenue for the college students to express their feelings, thoughts, desires, and emotions. As reflected in Table 3, 32.50% of the college students were posting their pictures, shout outs, and thoughts in their social media account. Further, 48% were uploading pictures and videos while 68% were reading others' stories, shout outs, or watching videos posted in their newsfeeds. Social media have been transforming how individuals, communities, and organizations create, share, and consume information from each other and from firm (Baccarella, Wagner, Kietzmann, & Mccarthy, 2018).

Table 4. Activities Performed by the College Students Social Media Users on Others' Post

Activity	F	%
1. Liked the post	289	57.80
2. Share the post when I found it interesting or relevant	255	51.00
3. Put emoticons (e.g. heart, smiley, etc.)	226	45.20
4. Nothing, just read it or browse it.	167	33.40

	F	%
5. Give my comments.	155	31.00
6. Share the post if it is requested by the person who made the post.	46	9.20

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

As presented in Table 4, 57.80% those who are reading others' post send like gestures on the post while 51% shares the post whenever they found it interesting or relevant. It is important to note that 31% of the respondents were giving their comments about the post. These comments were written on the comments portion especially for Facebook. Social media is an avenue where people express their opinions, thoughts, feelings, and emotions.

Cyberbullying Activities and Experiences of the College Students Social Media Users

Technological advancement, specifically the internet and smart-phones, has brought about significant change in the past years. Physical boundaries have been broken, leading to the realization of global village. This technological advancement has also lead significant changes in the social behaviour of people. One of which is the increasing cases of cyber bullying. Presented in Table 5 are the cybercrime activities performed by the college students social media users.

Table 5. Cyberbullying Activities Performed by the College Students Social Media Users

Activity	F	%
1. Sent mean message(s) to anyone whom you are angry, annoyed or disappointed with.	103	20.60
2. Shared or liked mean message(s) posted by your friends in their Facebook or others social media account's Timeline.	92	18.40
3. Reacted negatively/violently through emoticons on other's post on their timeline.	67	13.40
4. Spread gossips/rumors online or through text	35	7.00
5. Reacted negatively/violently through comment on other's post on their timeline.	29	5.80
6. Posted hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages	7	1.40
7. Stole other's account information to break into their account and send damaging messages	5	1.00
8. Pretended to be someone else online to hurt another person	3	0.60
9. Sent threat message(s) to anyone whom you are angry, annoyed or disappointed with.	2	0.40
10. Posted unflattering pictures or videos of a person on social media sites (Facebook, etc)	1	0.20
11. Sexting, or circulating sexually suggestive pictures or messages about a person online or through cellphone.	1	0.20

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

There are a number of ways to humiliate and threaten children online. It usually happens more than once, and includes leaving demeaning messages on someone's Facebook page (social bullying), uploading embarrassing photos, or spreading gossip or rumors through instant messaging and text messaging. Uploading mean videos, use of websites, or fake profiles are also examples of cyberbullying (Chapin & Coleman, 2017). Public comment, hacked account, and identity theft strategies reveal the various ways the structure of online environments can shape harassment and bullying (Brody & Vangelisti, 2017).

The most common cybercrime activity performed by 20.60% college students' social media users was sending message(s) to anyone whom they are angry, annoyed or disappointed with. Further, sharing or liking mean message(s) posted by their friends in their Facebook or others social media account's Timeline was done by 18.40% of the users. Posting unflattering pictures or videos of a person on social media sites (Facebook, etc) or sexting, or circulating sexually suggestive pictures or messages about a person online or through cellphone were done by only 0.20% of the college students' social media users.

Table 6. Cyber Crime Experienced by the College Students Social Media Users

	Activity	F	%
1	Received mean message(s) from anyone who is angry, annoyed or disappointed with you.	242	48.40
2	Somebody reacted negatively/violently through emoticons on your post in your timeline.	105	21.00
3	Somebody reacted negatively/violently through comment on your post in your timeline.	103	20.60
4	Received sexually suggestive pictures or messages online or through cellphone.	70	14.00
5	Gossips/rumors about you were spread online or through text	67	13.40
6	Received threat message(s) from anyone who is angry, annoyed or disappointed with you.	60	12.00
7	Received hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages	54	10.80
8	Somebody shared or liked mean message(s) about you that were posted by others in their Facebook or other social media account's Timeline.	47	9.40
9	Someone pretended to be you to hurt another person online or through text messaging.	40	8.00
10	Your account's information has been stolen to break into your account and send damaging messages to others.	34	6.80
11	Your unflattering pictures or videos were posted by other person on social media sites (Facebook, etc)	28	5.60

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

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On the other hand, 48.40% of the users disclosed that they have experienced receiving mean message(s) from anyone who is angry, annoyed or disappointed with them. Further, 21% have received negative/violent reactions and 20.60% have received negative comments from other people about their posts on their social media accounts.

Although small in percentage, 8% have experienced that other people have pretended to be them to hurt another person online or through text messages while 6.80% have experienced that their account's information has been stolen to break into their accounts and send damaging messages to others. Teens may think that if they use a fake name they won't get caught, but there are many ways to track someone who is cyber bullying.

When asked if the college students' social media users are aware that the identified practices are forms of cyberbullying and cybercrime, 90% said that they are aware. Despite the awareness of the college students on the different forms and acts of cybercrime and cyberbullying, a lot of them are practicing and experiencing the different acts. Youth are knowingly engaging in harmful behavior on the internet that they believe is unlikely to receive consequences (Pettalia, Levin, & Dickinson, 2013). College students underrated their involvement in acts of cyberbullying, which indicates that one's involvement in acts of cyberbullying is in fact, a hidden side of college students (Mateus, Margarida, Simão, Costa, & José, 2015).

Responses of the College Students Social Media Users on Their Cyber Crime Experience

In response to the experiences of the college students' social media users on cyberbullying and cybercrime, 35.20% have prayed to God for His guidance and divine intervention. Seeking divine intervention is a common and positive response of people whenever in trouble. People pray to seek God's help for to overcome whatever problem, issue or concern they encounter.

Table 6. Responses of the College Students Social Media Users on Their Cyber Crime Experience

	Response	F	%
1	I prayed to God for His guidance and divine intervention.	176	35.20
2	Avoided the person.	127	25.40
3	I just disregarded the issue.	113	22.60
4	Confronted the other person who did the act.	99	19.80
5	Informed my parents, friends, or relatives regarding the acts.	91	18.20
6	I get myself busy.	70	14.00
7	I ate a lot.	50	10.00
8	I undergo self-reflection.	50	10.00
9	Got myself drunk.	12	2.40
10	Sought the help of persons of authority to properly address the issue.	8	1.60
11	Attacked the other person as well by posting mean, harsh, and negative messages.	5	1.00
12	I attempted suicide.	2	0.40
13	I secluded myself from others.	2	0.40

Note: Respondents have multiple responses

Another response of the users on the different cyber bullying/cybercrimes experiences that they have is evasion. They tend to avoid the person involved or just disregarded the issue hoping that it will die a natural

death in due time. The responses were done by 25.40% and 22.60% of the users respectively.

Results also show that the college students' social media users have resorted to violence with their cyber bullying/cybercrimes experiences, wherein, 1.0% has attacked the other person and posted mean, harsh, and negative messages. Although at a very small percentage, 0.4% of those who have experienced cyber bullying/cybercrimes have attempted suicide or have secluded themselves. The threats posted by cyberbullying is real, the damage can be psychological that leads to low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, self-harm, and even suicide.

Conclusions ad Implications

College students are vulnerable to cyberbullying as a result of their wide use of social media. Although the college students are aware of the different acts of cyberbullying, they still practice and are victims of the different acts. Sending and receiving mean messages is the number one act of cyberbullying practiced and experienced by the college students' social media users. In response, the college students who experienced cyberbullying either pray, avoided the person involved, and disregarded the issues. However, there were those who have attempted suicide due to their cyberbullying experiences.

Cyberbullying is a serious issue that needs to be addressed. School authorities should conduct seminars on cyberbullying among their students to properly address the issue. Making the students aware of the different forms of cyberbullying is not enough. What is more important is to make them realize the effects or consequences of doing and experiencing the different acts of cyberbullying.

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