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CYBERBULLYING AMONG FINAL YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

With a focus on its frequency, digital platforms, psychological and academic effects, and the influence of institutional factors on students' experiences and reporting behaviour, this study investigated cyberbullying among final-year students at the selected universities in Edo State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used to gather data from 152 respondents in a descriptive survey research design. The data was analyzed using multiple regression analysis, reliability testing, Pearson correlation, and descriptive statistics. The results showed that final-year students are victims of cyberbullying, albeit at moderate levels, according to several respondents. Cyberbullying was shown to occur more frequently on messaging apps, especially WhatsApp, than on Facebook, Instagram, and X (Twitter). The findings showed that cyberbullying nevertheless has an impact on students' academic motivation and overall university experience, even when a sizable percentage of students did not strongly perceive serious emotional or academic disruption. Digital platforms (r =.727), institutional influence on experience and reporting (r =.735), and cyberbullying impact and experience (r =.625) all had substantial positive correlations, all of which were significant at the 0.01 level, according to correlation analysis. The measuring scale's good internal consistency was confirmed by the reliability test's Cronbach's Alpha of.882.The factors together explained 66.1% of the variance in the impact of cyberbullying, according to regression results (R^2 =.661). The largest predictor was found to be institutional impact, which was followed by cyberbullying experience and digital platforms. This suggests that university regulations, reporting routes, and support systems are important factors in determining students' results. The study comes to the conclusion that institutional frameworks have a big impact on cyberbullying, which is still a major problem in higher education. In order to create a safer learning environment for students, it suggests that colleges increase policy knowledge, offer easily accessible reporting systems, improve counselling and support services, and conduct proactive digital safety education.

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KEYWORDS: - Internet platforms, cyberbullying, institutional influence, psychological impacts, and Nigerian university students.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The deliberate and persistent use of digital communication tools to intimidate, harass, or degrade people has grown to be a major social and educational issue on a global scale. University students are increasingly exposed to online interactions that could turn into dangerous behaviours due to the rapid growth of internet access, smartphone ownership, and social media participation. Cyberbullying is linked to severe psychological, emotional, and academic repercussions, such as anxiety, sadness, low self-esteem, social disengagement, and decreased academic engagement, according to studies conducted in a variety of cultural contexts (Akuneme, 2023; Mustapha et al., 2022).

Students in higher education institutions are particularly vulnerable to cyberbullying because they frequently use digital platforms for social, professional, and academic goals. Due to their increased academic workload, pressure to complete projects and theses, anxiety about their careers, and increased online visibility, final-year university students are especially vulnerable. Students' emotional health, academic performance, and future employability may all be negatively impacted by cyberbullying during this crucial transitioning period (Akuneme, 2023). Empirical data indicates that undergraduate cyberbullying is common and frequently goes unreported in Nigeria. Research from Nigerian colleges shows that a significant percentage of students have either been victims of or engaged in cyberbullying using online discussion boards, instant messaging apps, and social networking sites (Mustapha et al., 2022; Nwosu et al., 2018).

The continuation of cyberbullying practices is made worse by the anonymity provided by digital platforms, inadequate reporting procedures, and a lack of institutional policies. Nigeria's South-South geographical zone offers a distinctive setting for researching cyberbullying among college seniors. Growing urbanization, rising internet penetration, and a young population with significant social media involvement are characteristics of the area. Despite these facts, there are few region-specific empirical research on cyberbullying among South-South Nigerian final-year students. The unique experiences and vulnerabilities of students in their last academic year are typically overlooked by existing Nigerian studies that generalize across undergraduate populations without considering the year of study (Ogunkuade& Kenku, 2023). Therefore, it is crucial to comprehend cyberbullying among South-South Nigerian final-year university students in order to design evidence-based interventions, institutional policies, and student support services. The current study aims to add to the expanding body of research on digital aggression in Nigerian higher education by investigating the prevalence, manifestations,

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and consequences of cyberbullying within this cohort. It also hopes to offer useful information for university administrators, counsellors, and legislators.

Statement of the Research Problem

According to studies done at Nigerian colleges, a significant percentage of students have either been victims or perpetrators of cyberbullying, indicating that the issue is both common and enduring in higher education (Nwosu et al., 2018). Despite these results, cyberbullying is frequently underreported in Nigerian colleges and is not adequately addressed by institutional student welfare and disciplinary frameworks (Akuneme, 2023). The inability of current Nigerian cyberbullying research to sufficiently separate children by academic level is a significant drawback. The majority of research looks at cyberbullying among undergraduates as a homogeneous group, ignoring the particular experiences of students in their last year of college (Mustapha et al., 2022; Akuneme, 2023).

Final-year students inhabit a particularly vulnerable developmental and academic stage defined by increased academic workload, project and thesis completion, career uncertainty, and heightened social and digital visibility. Therefore, cyberbullying at this point may have more serious and long-lasting effects on academic performance, psychological well-being, and the transition into life after college. Nevertheless, there is still little empirical data that focuses on this particular subpopulation. There is a significant geographic and institutional gap in the literature in addition to this population disparity. While some Nigerian studies such as Nwosu et al (2018), Mustapha et al (2022), and Ogunkuade and Kenku (2023) have examined cyberbullying among undergraduates in universities located in other geopolitical zones of Nigeria, there is a paucity of empirical research focusing on universities in Edo State, particularly institutions such as the University of Benin (UNIBEN), Benson Idahosa University, Igbinedion University, and Wellspring University. This discrepancy is important because institutional context, such as ownership structure (private versus federal), disciplinary culture, ICT regulations, availability of counselling services, and reporting mechanisms, may affect the incidence and experience of cyberbullying (Ogunkuade& Kenku, 2023).The relevance of current findings to universities in the state is limited by the lack of data relevant to Edo State.

Many Nigerian colleges, particularly those in Edo State, lack thorough, well-articulated policies and preventive methods addressing online misconduct, despite the growing acknowledgment of cyberbullying as a severe threat to student wellbeing. When codes of conduct do exist, they frequently overlook digital interactions in favour of concentrating primarily on physical behaviours (Akuneme, 2023). University administrators, counsellors, and legislators are further hindered in creating successful, data-driven treatments that are adapted to students' digital realities by the dearth of empirical, context-specific research.

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In order to boost student support systems, promote safer digital environments for students at a crucial juncture in their academic and personal development, and guide targeted institutional policies, it is imperative that these gaps be addressed.

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence and common form of cyberbullying among final-year university students in selected Edo State universities?
2. Through which digital platforms does cyberbullying most frequently occur among final-year students in selected Edo State universities?
3. What psychological and academic effects does cyberbullying have on final-year university students in selected Edo State universities?
4. How do institutional factors (university type, awareness of policies, reporting channels, and support services) influence the experience and reporting of cyberbullying among final-year students in selected Edo State universities?

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the prevalence, forms, and institutional context of cyberbullying among final year university students in Edo State, Nigeria, with particular reference to selected universities.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the prevalence and common forms of cyberbullying among final-year university students in selected Edo State universities.
2. Identify the major digital platforms through which cyberbullying occurs among final-year students in selected Edo State universities.
3. Examine the psychological and academic effects of cyberbullying on final-year university students in selected Edo State universities.
4. Assess the influence of institutional factors, including university type, awareness of anti-cyberbullying policies, reporting channels, and support services, on the experience and reporting of cyberbullying among final-year students in selected Edo State universities.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Cyberbullying

With the rapid growth of digital communication technology and the use of social media by youth and college students, the idea of cyberbullying has garnered growing scholarly interest. Cyberbullying, which takes place via electronic and digital platforms like social networking sites, instant messaging apps, emails, blogs, and online forums, is typically thought of as an extension of traditional bullying. Cyberbullying, in contrast to traditional face-to-face bullying, transcends physical bounds, enabling offenders to damage victims at any time and location,

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frequently anonymously, and with a potentially infinite audience (Akdeniz & Doğan, 2024; Ndibalema, 2024).

In the literature, cyberbullying has been defined in a variety of similar ways. Cyberbullying, according to Akeusola (2024), is an aggressive, deliberate act committed repeatedly and over time by a group or a person using electronic means of contact against a victim who is unable to defend themselves. Intentionality, repetition, and power disparity are highlighted in this definition. In a similar vein, Author (2023) defines cyberbullying as intentional and persistent harm caused by computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices. This term emphasizes how bullying behaviours are carried out through the use of technology. Threatening communications, disseminating misleading information, publishing embarrassing photos or videos, impersonation, online exclusion, and public humiliation via digital platforms are all examples of cyberbullying in a university setting (Kowalski et al., 2014).According to Akuneme (2023), cyberbullying in Nigeria is defined as a pattern of harmful online behaviour that takes advantage of digital anonymity and lax institutional oversight to harass, intimidate, or mentally hurt victims, especially students and young people. This viewpoint places cyberbullying in the larger institutional and sociocultural context of underdeveloped nations, where there may be a lack of digital literacy and legal frameworks.

Core Characteristics of Cyberbullying

The research lists a number of unique traits that set cyberbullying apart from conventional bullying. One important aspect is anonymity, which enables offenders to hide their identities, boosting their sense of power and lowering their fear of punishment (Kowalski et al., 2014). The intensity and frequency of cyberbullying behaviours are frequently increased by this anonymity. Permanence and public accessibility are further distinguishing features. Harmful digital content can be kept, shared, and regularly watched by a wide audience, magnifying the victim's suffering and prolonging the impact of a single bullying act (Patchin & Hinduja, 2023). In contrast to traditional bullying, which is usually restricted to a particular place and time, cyberbullying can happen constantly, making it challenging for victims to flee. Furthermore, cyberbullying is characterized by an imbalance of power, which may be based on social influence, technological proficiency, or access to digital networks rather than physical strength (Smith et al., 2008). This disparity is frequently shaped by group dynamics, digital proficiency, and social media popularity among college students.

Forms of Cyberbullying

Numerous types of cyberbullying that are common among students have been discovered by academics. According to Kowalski et al. (2014), they include cyberstalking, online exclusion, impersonation (appearing as someone else online), harassment (sending unpleasant or

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threatening communications), denigration (spreading incorrect or damaging information), and outing and deception (sharing private information without consent). According to research done in Nigerian universities, among the most prevalent types of cyberbullying that undergraduates encounter are harassment, denigration, and impersonation. These incidents frequently take place on social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and X (formerly Twitter) (Mustapha et al., 2022; Nwosu et al., 2018). Final-year students, whose academic and social reputations are crucial at graduation, should pay special attention to these forms.

Cyberbullying among University Students

While early study on cyberbullying mostly concentrated on teenagers, more recent studies highlight that college students are just as vulnerable. Due to their widespread use of digital platforms for professional advancement, social engagement, and academic collaboration, university students are more vulnerable to online hazards (Kowalski et al., 2014). According to research, student cyberbullying is linked to mental distress, anxiety, depression, low academic engagement, and difficulty focusing (Mustapha et al., 2022). Due to academic pressure, project deadlines, and career uncertainties, final-year university students are particularly vulnerable. Cyberbullying during this phase may have long-term repercussions, such as harm to one's reputation, psychological stress, and decreased preparedness for life after college. Despite this, cyberbullying among final-year students as a separate category has received little attention in Nigerian literature to date (Akuneme, 2023).

Measurement and Conceptual Challenges

The lack of agreement on operational definitions and assessment methods is a significant obstacle in the study of cyberbullying. There are significant differences in reported prevalence rates between research because to differences in definitions, time periods, and tools (Smith et al., 2008). Many Nigerian studies, according to Akuneme (2023), rely on self-developed questionnaires without sufficient psychometric validation, which restricts the comparability and reliability of findings. This discrepancy highlights the necessity of precise conceptualization and consistent measurement, especially in studies that are region-specific as those that concentrate on colleges in Edo State. Therefore, creating reliable tools, successful institutional regulations, and focused interventions requires a solid conceptual grasp of cyberbullying.

Theoretical Review

Theoretical frameworks direct the interpretation of actual data and offer a methodical explanation of social processes. Theories from psychology and sociology have been extensively used in the research of cyberbullying among college students to explain the genesis, persistence, and effects of online violent behaviours. The Social Learning Theory and Routine Activities Theory, which are discussed below, serve as the foundation for this investigation.

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Social Learning Theory

In order to describe how human behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement in social environments, Bandura (1977) developed the Social Learning Theory. According to the hypothesis, people pick up new behaviours by watching other people, especially role models, and by noticing the benefits or drawbacks of those behaviours. According to Bandura (1977), learning can also happen vicariously through exposure to social models. Peers, relatives, celebrities, and media depictions are a few examples of these role models. If a behaviour seems rewarding, socially acceptable, or inconsequential, it is more likely to be embraced.

Social Learning Theory describes how children may pick up and replicate online aggressive behaviours in the context of cyberbullying by watching classmates on digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, X (previously Twitter), and WhatsApp. Students may emulate cyberbullying behaviours when they are accepted, disseminated, or even celebrated online. This is especially true if the perpetrators receive little to no punishment (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015). Because of the high levels of peer contact, widespread use of social media, and supposed anonymity on the internet, university settings further increase this learning process. According to Kowalski et al. (2022), students who regularly see cyberbullying without facing any negative repercussions may internalize such behaviour as acceptable, therefore sustaining the cycle of online harassment. Final year college students may be more exposed to cyberbullying content due to their considerable online presence, social competition, and academic stress. Through frequent observation and reinforcement, kids may either engage in cyberbullying or become passive spectators who tacitly encourage the activity. Therefore, Social Learning Theory offers a solid theoretical framework for comprehending how cyberbullying behaviours are learned and maintained in academic environments.

Routine Activities Theory

Cohen and Felson (1979) developed the Routine Activities Theory, which uses daily activities rather than personal pathology to explain criminal and deviant behaviour. According to the theory, deviant behaviour happens when three factors such as a suitable target, a motivated offender, and the lack of appropriate guardianship converge in both location and time. Cohen and Felson (1979) assert that alterations in daily routines, such as heightened online activity, can lead to victimization possibilities. Research on cybercrime and cyberbullying has been using Routine Activities Theory more and more. According to Holt and Bossler (2021), motivated offenders in online environments are people who are willing to engage in cyberbullying; appropriate targets are students who are active online and share personal information; and lack of guardianship refers to inadequate oversight by organizations, parents, or platform moderators.

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Due to their significant use of digital platforms for social, intellectual, and recreational objectives, university students are especially vulnerable. Cyberbullying events are more likely due to the anonymity of online, which decreases formal and informal guardianship (Navarro et al., 2020). Routine Activities Theory explains why cyberbullying flourishes in academic environments where students spend a lot of time online, there is no institutional oversight, and digital interactions are mostly uncontrolled. The theory is helpful for comprehending patterns of cyberbullying victimization among students since it emphasizes situational and environmental elements rather than personal characteristics. This study adopts Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) as its main theoretical framework because, although Routine Activities Theory offers insightful information about situational risk factors, Social Learning Theory provides a more thorough explanation of why students engage in cyberbullying behaviours, which is more in line with the study's goals.

Empirical Review

Cyberbullying is a widespread phenomenon among college students, with serious psychological and academic repercussions, according to recent empirical study. Strong evidence about the nature, correlates, and effects of cyberbullying in higher education settings can be found in international studies.

Sergeeva and Zheltukhina (2025) used a quantitative cross-sectional survey and Bayesian analytical methods to investigate cyberbullying victimization among Russian university students. Their results demonstrated the strong correlation between mental health and online harassment in academic settings by showing that psychological distress, including depression, anxiety, and stress, significantly predicted cyberbullying victimization. In a similar vein, Aparisi et al. (2023) used structural equation modelling (SEM) in an international study to find latent profiles of university students' involvement in cyberbullying. The study found that adolescents who had higher levels of social anxiety and aggression were more likely to engage in cyberbullying, either as victims or as perpetrators. This result emphasizes how personal psychological traits influence cyberbullying behaviour.

In a different international study, Noreen (2024) used inferential statistical analysis and standardized psychometric tools to examine the psychological effects of cyberbullying among college students. Further supporting the negative effects of cyberbullying on students' mental health, the study found strong correlations between cyberbullying experiences and anxiety, low self esteem, and psychological distress.Ajayi et al. (2025) evaluated the frequency and determinants of cyberbullying among adolescents in a public university in Ekiti State using a cross-sectional survey approach and multivariate statistical analysis. The study found a noteworthy incidence of cyberbullying involvement and identified internet usage habits and

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prevalent social norms as key determinants of cyberbullying activity. Similarly, Muhammad et al. (2025) used chi-square analysis and descriptive statistics to determine the prevalence of cyberbullying among students in Nasarawa State's higher education institutions. According to their findings, many students have encountered various forms of online harassment, which had negative emotional impacts, even though they were typically aware of cyberbullying.

By concentrating on prevention through social media literacy education among university students in Lagos State, Akeusola (2024) expanded Nigerian study on cyberbullying. Higher levels of digital literacy considerably decreased participation in cyberbullying, according to the study, which used a quantitative survey approach. This suggests that educational interventions can be crucial in reducing cyberbullying behaviours in higher education. There are still a number of gaps in the body of current literature despite these contributions. First, final-year university students, who may have higher levels of academic stress and increased internet participation, receive less attention in Nigerian studies than overall undergraduate populations. Second, there are few researches from Edo State and the South South geopolitical zone, and the majority of empirical data on cyberbullying is found in South West and North Central Nigeria. Third, a lot of research focuses on psychological effects and prevalence separately, without combining institutional variations and academic results into a coherent analytical framework. The current study, which examines cyberbullying among final-year students at particular federal and private colleges in Edo State, Nigeria, is justified by these gaps.

Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) is used in this study to explain cyberbullying among Edo State final-year university students. According to the hypothesis, behaviour is picked up through imitation, reinforcement, and observation. By watching their peers online, students may pick up cyberbullying behaviours like online harassment or spreading rumours, particularly if these behaviours seem to be rewarded or go unpunished (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015).According to the theory, exposure to digital media can lead to the acquisition of cyberbullying behaviours, which can have negative psychological effects like stress and anxiety as well as negative academic effects like poor focus or performance. Social Learning Theory is applicable for this study since it explains both the perpetuation of cyberbullying and provides insight for intervention measures, such as peer modelling and institutional policies.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to examine cyberbullying among final-year students at a few Edo State universities, including UNIBEN, Benson Idahosa University, Igbinedion University, and Wellspring University, this study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design. A stratified random sample of 170 individuals, proportionately selected from each institution, makes up the

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population, which consists of all final-year undergraduates. A structured self administered questionnaire that was modified from validated tools, such as the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) and the Cyberbullying Scale (Patchin & Hinduja, 2015), was used to gather data on demographics, psychological effects, academic consequences, and cyberbullying involvement. Expert review and factor analysis were used to assure content and construct validity, while Cronbach's alpha and a pilot study were used to test reliability. To investigate the impact of cyberbullying among final-year students at particular Edo State colleges, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, averages) and inferential statistics (correlation, multiple regression) using SPSS version 27. Strict adherence was maintained to ethical principles, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary involvement.

4.0 PRESENTATION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This section includes an examination of the data collected from a questionnaire given to university final-year students. The analyses were carried out using software known as the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 27). The study's sample size consisted of 170 students. However, 160 of the 170 questionnaires were returned, resulting in a response percentage of 94.1%. 152 of them were considered useful, producing an 89.4% valid answer rate. This high response rate indicates that there is sufficient data for study. In line with the objectives and study questions, the data analysis results are presented logically. The first step in data analysis and result displays is gathering demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, university, daily social media usage, awareness of the university's anti-cyberbullying policy, availability of channels for reporting cyberbullying, and availability of counselling and support services for victims of cyberbullying. After that, the findings of the descriptive statistics for each of the research variables are shown. The relationships between the dependent and independent variables were estimated using multiple regression analysis and Pearson correlation coefficients. The final parts of the section include a discussion of the findings, conclusion and recommendations.

Table 4:1 Reliability Statistics Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.882	25

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The scale's twenty-five items have a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.882, according to Table 4.1. This number shows a high degree of internal consistency, indicating that the construct's measuring items are closely linked and consistently capture the same underlying idea.

Description of respondents' demographic information

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Table 4.2: Respondents' Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	18-20 YEARS	25	16.4	16.4	48.0
	21-23YEARS	48	31.6	31.6	31.6
	24-26YEARS	37	24.3	24.3	72.4
	27YEARS AND ABOVE	42	27.6	27.6	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The age distribution of the final-year students from the chosen Edo State universities who took part in the study is displayed in Table 4.2. The results show that the majority of responders fall into the young adult age range that is commonly connected to undergraduate education. At 31.6% (n = 48), students between the ages of 21 and 23 make up the biggest percentage of the sample, indicating that the majority of responses are within the typical age range for final-year undergraduates. 27.6% (n = 42) of respondents are 27 years of age or older, indicating the existence of senior students who may have started college later or had disruptions in their academic path. 24.3% (n = 37) of the sample are between the ages of 24 and 26, while the smallest percentage of respondents are between the ages of 18 and 20 (16.4%, n = 25). According to the cumulative statistics, more than 25% of respondents are 27 years of age or older, while 72.4% of respondents are 26 years of age or younger. This age distribution points to a diverse student body with differing degrees of resilience, life experience, and digital engagement. This is important for comprehending variations in cyberbullying exposure, its psychological and academic impacts, and reporting behaviour among final-year students.

Table 4.3: Respondents' Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	MALE	85	55.9	55.9	55.9
	FEMALE	67	44.1	44.1	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The gender distribution of the final-year students from the chosen Edo State universities who took part in the study is shown in Table 4.3. The findings show that, at 55.9% (n = 85) of the sample, male respondents make up a tiny majority, while female respondents make up 44.1% (n

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= 67). Despite having a larger percentage of men, this distribution demonstrates a well balanced representation of both genders.

Table 4.4: Respondents' University

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	UNIBEN	54	35.5	35.5	35.5
	BENSON IDAHOSA	20	13.2	13.2	48.7
	IGBINADION	25	16.4	16.4	65.1
	WELLSPRING	53	34.9	34.9	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The distribution of respondents by university among Edo State final-year students polled is displayed in Table 4.4. The findings show that institutional diversity in the sample was ensured by selecting respondents from both public and private universities. At 35.5% (n = 54), students from the University of Benin (UNIBEN) make up the greatest percentage. Wellspring University students come in second at 34.9% (n = 53). This implies that these two institutions are fairly evenly represented. Igbinadion University respondents make up 16.4% (n = 25) of the sample, whereas Benson Idahosa University respondents make up the lowest percentage (13.2%, n = 20). While the entire sample is equally distributed among the four universities, the cumulative statistics show that nearly half of the respondents (48.7%) are from UNIBEN and Benson Idahosa University combined. The study's ability to evaluate the impact of institutional factors, such as university type, awareness of anti-cyberbullying policies, reporting mechanisms, and support services, on the experience and reporting of cyberbullying among final year students is improved by the inclusion of both public and private universities.

Table 4.5: Respondents' daily social media usage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	LESS THAN HOUR	112	7.9	7.9	7.9
	1-3HOURS	40	26.3	26.3	34.2
	4-6HOURS	49	32.2	32.2	66.4
	7HOURS AND ABOVE	50	32.9	32.9	99.3
	5.00	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

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Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The distribution of respondents by daily social media usage is shown in Table 4.5. The results show that final-year university students in the chosen universities have a high level of engagement with social media platforms. A very small percentage of respondents, 7.9% (12), reported spending less than one hour daily on social media, indicating limited online exposure among this group. Students who spend 1–3 hours daily on social media account for 26.3% (40) of the respondents, while a larger percentage reported heavier usage, with 32.2% (49) and 32.9% (50) reporting 7 hours or more per day on social media. Overall, 66.4% of the respondents spend at least 4 hours a day on social media.

The majority of respondents use social media frequently, indicating that they are exposed to more online interactions, which may raise the likelihood of coming across or taking part in cyberbullying. This pattern is especially pertinent to the study since extended use of digital platforms can make final-year university students more susceptible to cyberbullying and increase its negative psychological and academic repercussions.

Table 4.6: Respondents' awareness of anti-cyberbullying policy in their university

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	YES	11	7.2	7.2	7.2
	NO	55	36.2	36.2	43.4
	NOT SURE	84	55.3	55.3	98.7
	4.00	2	1.3	1.3	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

Table 4.6 shows a relatively low level of understanding among final-year university students. Only 7.2% (11) of the respondents responded that they are aware of an anti-cyberbullying policy in their institution. The majority of respondents, 55.3% (84), said they were unsure if their university had an anti-cyberbullying policy, while 36.2% (55) said they were unaware of any such policy. This indicates that institutional policies on cyberbullying are not widely disseminated and there is a great deal of uncertainty. A small percentage (1.3%, n = 2) belonged to an unidentified group, which could be the result of coding or answer problems.

Furthermore, the results indicate that the majority of final-year students are not clearly aware of their universities' official anti-cyberbullying regulations. The importance of policy visibility, communication, and student sensitization in addressing cyberbullying in university settings is

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highlighted by this low level of awareness, which may have a negative impact on reporting behaviour and students' willingness to seek institutional support when cyberbullying occurs.

Table 4.7: Availability of reporting channels for cyberbullying

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	YES	13	8.6	8.6	8.6
	NO	65	42.8	42.8	51.3
	NOT SURE	74	48.7	48.7	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

Formal reporting procedures are either mostly unavailable or inadequately explained to students, as Table 4.7 demonstrates. Just 8.6% (13) of the respondents confirmed that their institutions have channels for reporting cyberbullying. On the other hand, 42.8% (65) of the respondents said there are no reporting channels, and 48.7% (74) of the respondents said they are unsure if there are. This significant degree of ambiguity implies that institutional reporting systems pertaining to cyberbullying are not as visible or accessible.

Table 4.8: Availability of counselling/support services for cyberbullying victims

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative %
Valid	YES	56	36.8	36.8	36.8
	NO	26	17.1	17.1	53.9
	NOT SURE	70	46.1	46.1	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

According to Table 4.8, slightly more than one-third of respondents, or 36.8% (56), said that there are counselling or support services accessible for victims of cyberbullying, indicating that certain institutions have acknowledged the need for victim support. However, a sizable percentage, 46.1% (70), said they were unsure whether counselling or support services were available, while 17.1% (26) said there were none. This high degree of ambiguity is a result of inadequate awareness, communication, or availability of support systems for students who are being cyberbullied. Overall, the results show that while some colleges offer counselling and support to victims of cyberbullying, most students either do not have access to these services or are not aware of them.

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Data Analyses based on Research Question

Table 4.9: Frequency Count and Percentages of Items Measuring Cyberbullying Experience (Prevalence) (CE)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
8	I have been insulted or mocked online	14 (9.2)	18 (11.8)	43 (28.3)	52 (34.2)	25 (16.4)	152 (100%)
9	False rumours have been spread about me online	5 (3.3)	7 (4.6)	22 (14.5)	58 (38.2)	60 (39.5)	152 (100%)
10	I have received threatening or abusive messages online	20 (13.2)	21 (13.9)	41 (27.2)	44 (29.1)	25 (16.6)	151 (100%)
11	I have been deliberately excluded from online groups or chats	12 (7.9)	10 (6.6)	39 (25.7)	57 (37.5)	34 (22.4)	152 (100%)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

The frequency distribution of respondents' encounters with different types of cyberbullying among final-year students at particular Edo State universities is shown in Table 4.9. The results showed that 21.0% of respondents (9.2% strongly agree; 11.8% agree) said they have experienced cyberbullying in the form of insults or mockery. But a higher percentage, 50.6% (34.2% disagree; 16.4% strongly disagree), said they had not seen such behaviour, and 28.3% were neutral. This implies that while online insults can happen, they might not be common among most students. In a similar vein, just 7.9% of respondents agreed with the statement that false rumours have been circulated online. However, a sizable 77.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that this type of cyberbullying is comparatively rare among the demographic that was sampled. 27.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they had received threatening or abusive texts, whilst 45.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Direct online violence may be one of the more obvious types of cyberbullying that some students encounter, according to the comparatively higher agreement when compared to other items. The results also reveal that while 59.9% of respondents disagreed, 14.5% of respondents said they had been purposefully left out of online discussions or groups. This suggests that while social exclusion does occur, it is not a predominant experience for the majority of final-year students.

Table 4.10: Frequency Count and Percentages of Items Measuring Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC)

S/N	Items	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
12	Cyberbullying frequently occurs on WhatsApp*	34 (22.5)	26 (17.2)	37 (24.5)	32 (21.2)	22 (14.6)	152 (100%)
13	Cyberbullying frequently occurs on Instagram or Facebook	9 (5.9)	3 (2.0)	42 (27.6)	59 (38.8)	39 (25.7)	152 (100%)

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14	Cyberbullying frequently occurs on X (Twitter) or similar platforms	10 (6.6)	16 (10.5)	29 (19.1)	50 (32.9)	47 (30	152 (100%)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

Respondents' opinions on the main online venues where cyberbullying takes place among final-year students at particular Edo State universities are shown in Table 4.10. According to the results, WhatsApp is thought to be the most popular platform for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is common on WhatsApp, according to 39.7% of respondents (22.5% strongly agree and 17.2% agree). But 24.5% were neutral, and 35.8% opposed or strongly disagreed. This distribution reveals conflicting opinions but emphasizes WhatsApp as a comparatively frequent medium for unfavourable online interactions, probably as a result of students' extensive usage of it for social and academic communication. On the other hand, most people did not consider Facebook or Instagram to be common venues for cyberbullying. A noteworthy 64.5% of respondents disapproved or strongly disagreed with this assertion, while only 7.9% agreed. Furthermore, 27.6% had no opinion, suggesting that they had little or no exposure to cyberbullying on these sites. In a similar vein, just 17.1% of respondents said that cyberbullying frequently takes place on X (Twitter) or similar platforms. 19.1% of respondents were neutral, while the majority of 63.8% opposed or strongly disagreed. This implies that compared to more direct messaging apps, these platforms are less important to kids' encounters with cyberbullying.

Table 4.11: Frequency Count and Percentages of Items Measuring Cyberbullying Impact (CI)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
15	Cyberbullying negatively affects my emotional well-being	6 (3.9)	9 (5.9)	28 (18.4)	56 (36.8)	53 (34.9)	152 (100%)
16	Cyberbullying makes me feel anxious or stressed*	5 (3.3)	9 (6.0)	31 (20.5)	59 (39.1)	47 (31.1)	151 (100%)
17	Cyberbullying affects my concentration on academic work	5 (3.3)	5 (3.3)	34 (22.4)	57 (37.5)	51 (33.6)	152 (100%)
18	Cyberbullying negatively affects my academic performance or motivation	42 (27.6)	21 (13.8)	24 (15.8)	46 (30.3)	19 (12.5)	152 (100%)
19	Cyberbullying disrupts my focus on my final-year project or research work	19 (12.5)	29 (19.1)	43 (28.3)	42 (27.6)	19 (12.5)	152 (100%)
20	Cyberbullying affects my preparation for final examinations	13 (8.6)	23 (15.1)	47 (30.9)	44 (28.9)	25 (16.4)	152 (100%)
21	Cyberbullying reduces my	19	21	45	44	23	152

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	confidence about graduation and life after university	(12.5)	(13.8)	(29.6)	(28.9)	(15.1)	(100%)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

Respondents' opinions of the psychological and academic impacts of cyberbullying among final-year students at particular Edo State universities are shown in Table 4.11. The findings show that most respondents' mental wellbeing does not seem to be adversely impacted by cyberbullying. Negative emotional consequences were indicated by just 9.8% (3.9% strongly agree; 5.9% agree), while a significant 71.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, just 9.3% of respondents agreed that cyberbullying causes anxiety or tension, while 70.2% disagreed. This suggests that most respondents do not consider cyberbullying to be a significant psychological burden. According to the results, 6.6% of respondents thought cyberbullying interfered with their ability to focus on academic work, while 71.1% disagreed.

This also supports the concept that many students may not experience substantial academic interruption owing to cyberbullying. However, a major exception appears in regard to academic achievement or motivation. In this case, 41.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that cyberbullying had a detrimental impact on their performance, whilst 42.8% disagreed. This almost split reaction implies that while cyberbullying may not affect every student, it has serious repercussions for a sizable portion. The proportion of responses regarding the emphasis on research or final-year projects is balanced. Students' experiences differed, with 31.6% agreeing that cyberbullying interferes with their ability to concentrate, 40.1% disagreeing, and 28.3% being neutral. Similarly, 23.7% of respondents said that cyberbullying interferes with their final test preparation, compared to 45.3% who disagreed and 30.9% who were neutral. Lastly, 26.3% of respondents agreed that cyberbullying lowers their confidence regarding graduation and life after university, while 44.0% disagreed and 29.6% were neutral.

Table 4.12: Frequency Count and Percentages of Items Measuring Institutional Influence on Experience & Reporting (IIER)

S/N	Statement	SA	A	N	D	SD	Total
22	The type of university I attend influences how cyberbullying is handled	38 (25.0)	19 (12.5)	35 (23.0)	34 (22.4)	26 (17.1)	152 (100%)
23	Awareness of university policies affects whether cyberbullying is reported	23 (15.1)	21 (13.8)	39 (25.7)	50 (32.9)	19 (12.5)	152 (100%)
24	Availability of reporting channels encourages reporting	27 (17.8)	31 (20.4)	39 (25.7)	35 (23.0)	20 (13.2)	152 (100%)

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	of cyberbullying						
25	Availability of support services influences how students cope with cyberbullying	6 (3.9)	9 (5.9)	31 (20.4)	60 (39.5)	46 (30.3)	152 (100%)

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

According to Table 4.12, 37.5% of respondents (25.0% strongly agree; 12.5% agree) thought that the type of university attended affects how cyberbullying is handled, whereas 39.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed and 23.0% were neutral. This distribution points to varying opinions about the efficacy of the school, which may be due to differences in the administrative frameworks and student assistance programs at different universities. 28.9% of respondents agreed that knowledge of university policies influences whether or not cyberbullying is reported. Though 25.7% were neutral, a greater percentage, 45.4%, disagreed. This could suggest that students are not sufficiently informed about current policies or that policy awareness alone is insufficient to encourage reporting. The availability of reporting channels, on the other hand, seems to have a greater positive impact. Compared to 36.2% who disagreed and 25.7% who were neutral, a total of 38.2% of respondents agreed that easily available reporting mechanisms encourage the reporting of cyberbullying events. The study indicates that practical reporting mechanisms may have a favourable impact on students' willingness to report incidents, notwithstanding the little difference. Support services, however, were often viewed negatively. Just 9.8% of respondents agreed that students' ability to deal with cyberbullying is influenced by the availability of support services, while a sizable 69.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This suggests that a large number of students either think institutional support mechanisms are useless or lack faith in them.

Table 4.13: Pearson Correlation Matrix

	CI	**CE**	**DPC**	**IIER**
CI	1			
CE	.625**	1		
	.000			
DPC	.727**	.695**	1	
	.000	.000		
IIER	.735**	.546**	.645**	1
	.000	.000	.000	

N = 152: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

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The Pearson correlation analysis between Cyberbullying Impact (CI), Cyberbullying Experience/Prevalence (CE), Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC), and Institutional Influence on Experience and Reporting (IIER) among final-year university students in particular Edo State universities are shown in Table 4.13. Cyberbullying Experience (CE) and Cyberbullying Impact (CI) have a substantial and positive link, according to the data ($r = 0.625$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that adolescents' psychological and academic well-being is strongly correlated with increased exposure to cyberbullying situations. Essentially, students who report being exposed to more cyberbullying are more likely to suffer detrimental emotional and academic outcomes.

Additionally, there is a significant positive correlation between Cyberbullying Impact (CI) and Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC) ($r = 0.727$, $p < 0.01$). This implies that cyberbullying's detrimental effects on students' emotional health and academic engagement increase with the frequency of its occurrence across digital platforms. This result emphasizes how online settings might exacerbate the impacts of cyberbullying. Additionally, there is a significant positive link between Cyberbullying Impact (CI) and Institutional Influence on Experience and Reporting (IIER) ($r = 0.735$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that the degree to which students suffer from the effects of cyberbullying is strongly correlated with institutional characteristics including university type, policy awareness, reporting routes, and support services.

Additionally, there is a substantial and statistically significant correlation ($r = 0.695$, $p < 0.01$) between Cyberbullying Experience (CE) and Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC), suggesting a direct connection between cyberbullying experiences and the digital platforms where students engage. This implies that exposure to cyberbullying behaviours may be increased on some platforms. Similarly, there is a positive correlation between CE and IIER ($r = 0.546$, $p < 0.01$), indicating a substantial relationship between institutional variables and students' experiences of cyberbullying. Furthermore, there is a high positive correlation between DPC and IIER ($r = 0.645$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that institutional structures affect how cyberbullying appears on digital platforms and how students react to such instances. Finally, the results show that cyberbullying among college students in their last year is a complex issue impacted by personal experiences, online spaces, and institutional settings.

Table 4.14: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adj. R Square	Std. Err.
1	.813[a]	.661	.654	.41898

a. Predictors: (Constant), IIER, CE, DPC

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The multiple correlation coefficients (R) of 0.813 in Table 4.14 indicates a strong positive association between the predictors (IIER, CE, and DPC) and the impact of cyberbullying. This implies that variations in the degree of cyberbullying impact among students are closely linked to changes in these independent variables. The combined effect of institutional influence, cyberbullying experience, and digital platforms accounts for about 66.1% of the variance in cyberbullying impact, according to the R Square value of 0.661. This shows that the model fits the data well and has a significant explanatory power. Additionally, the Adjusted R Square of 0.654 indicates that approximately 65.4% of the variation in the impact of cyberbullying is still explained after accounting for the number of covariates in the model. The average departure of observed values from the regression line is measured by the standard error of estimate (0.41898). The comparatively low score suggests that the model has strong predictive accuracy.

Table 4.15: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	50.614	3	16.871	96.112	.000[b]
	Residual	25.980	148	.176		
	Total	76.594	151			

a. Dependent Variable: CI; b. Predictors: (Constant), IIER, CE, DPC

Source: Author's Compilation (2026)

Table 4.15 displays a total sum of squares of 76.594, with a regression sum of squares of 50.614 and a residual sum of squares of 25.980. This suggests that the regression model accounts for a greater percentage of the overall heterogeneity in the impact of cyberbullying than unexplained error. With a corresponding significance value of p =.000, the F-statistic is 96.112. The regression model is statistically significant since the p-value is below the traditional cutoff of 0.05. This indicates that the impact of cyberbullying among students is significantly predicted by the combination of IIER, CE, and DPC.

Table 4.16: Analysis of Coefficient of the impact of Cyberbullying among final year university students

Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.944	.163		5.788	.000
	CE	.134	.060	.151	2.228	.027
	DPC	.277	.060	.344	4.636	.000
	IIER	.335	.050	.431	6.768	.000

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Source: Author's Compilation (2026); a. Dependent Variable: CI

The regression coefficients analyzing the individual contributions of Cyberbullying Experience (CE), Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC), and Institutional Influence on Experience and Reporting (IIER) to Cyberbullying Impact (CI) among university students in their final year are shown in Table 4.16. The constant value (B = 0.944, $p < 0.05$) shows that cyberbullying impact would still have a baseline positive value when all predictor variables are held constant. This implies that the impact of cyberbullying may potentially be influenced by additional elements not included by the model. The impact of cyberbullying is positively and statistically significantly impacted by cyberbullying experience (CE) (B = 0.134, p = 0.027). This suggests that the psychological and academic effects of cyberbullying are positively correlated with kids' exposure to such events. Nevertheless, of the independent variables, CE has the lowest predictive strength, with a standardized beta value of 0.151.Additionally, there is a strong beneficial influence from Digital Platforms of Cyberbullying (DPC) (B = 0.277, p = 0.000). According to the beta coefficient (β = 0.344), students' level of effect is significantly influenced by the platforms used for cyberbullying. The best indicator of the impact of cyberbullying is Institutional Influence on Experience and Reporting (IIER) (B = 0.335, p = 0.000). This result suggests that institutional elements including reporting procedures, support services, and university rules are crucial in determining how cyberbullying impacts students. Therefore, strong institutional frameworks may be crucial for reducing the detrimental effects of cyberbullying.

5.0 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of this study offer empirical data on the frequency, platforms, effects, and institutional setting of cyberbullying among Nigerian final-year university students in Edo State. The findings of respondents' experiences with cyberbullying show a comparatively low level of direct victimization. For example, just 21.0% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had experienced online insults or mockery, compared to 50.6% who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, a sizable majority (77.7%) denied that they had been the target of false rumours, indicating that severe forms of cyberbullying might not be common in the colleges that were tested. Nonetheless, a significant minority still encounters negative online interactions, as evidenced by the 27.1% who reported receiving threatening or abusive communications and the 14.5% who claimed purposeful exclusion from online groups.

This pattern backs up Abaido's (2020) claim that, although not being experienced by everyone, cyberbullying is still a problem in higher education. According to Kowalski et al. (2016), institutional monitoring is crucial since cyberbullying victimization among young adults frequently takes many forms. Compared to 20.3% for Instagram/Facebook and 17.1% for X (Twitter), 39.7% of respondents stated that cyberbullying frequently happens on WhatsApp. On

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the other hand, 64.5% of respondents disagreed that cyberbullying frequently takes place on Facebook or Instagram, and 63.8% disagreed for X. These numbers imply that WhatsApp is thought to be the main conduit for cyberbullying, probably as a result of its extensive use in peer groups and academic settings. This is consistent with the findings of Abaido (2020), who noted that cyberbullying typically takes place on platforms with the highest interaction rates, increasing exposure to online aggressiveness.

The majority of kids did not detect significant psychological impacts, according to research on the impact of cyberbullying. For instance, 70.2% disputed that cyberbullying causes individuals to feel stressed or anxious, and 71.7% disagreed that it had a detrimental impact on their emotional well-being. In a similar vein, 71.1% said there was no impact on academic focus. However, opinions changed when academic motivation was taken into account; 41.4% of respondents felt that cyberbullying has a detrimental impact on academic motivation or performance. Furthermore, 23.7% cited effects on exam preparation, and 31.6% acknowledged disruption to their final-year project or research activity. These results imply that even if emotional distress may not be often reported, a sizable percentage of students still experience serious academic repercussions.

Cruz (2025) found that university students who were subjected to online harassment had anxiety and depression symptoms. Previous research has consistently linked cyberbullying with decreased academic functioning and psychological distress (Kowalski et al., 2016). Results on institutional influence show conflicting opinions. Institutional structures are important, as seen by the 37.5% of respondents who felt that the type of university affects how cyberbullying is handled. Additionally, 38.2% of respondents concurred that reporting channels promote reporting behaviour, underscoring the significance of easily accessible complaint procedures. However, 69.8% disagreed that coping is influenced by support services, indicating potential shortcomings in student support systems. These results align with those of Abaido (2020), who emphasize the importance of technology safeguards, reporting mechanisms, and effective regulations in promoting digital health and lowering the consequences of cyberbullying. Strong positive correlations between cyberbullying impact and digital platforms ($r = .727$), institutional influence ($r = .735$), and cyberbullying experience ($r = .625$) were found using correlation analysis, all of which were significant at the 0.01 level. The regression model also showed that digital platforms ($\beta = .344$, $p < .001$) and cyberbullying experience ($\beta = .151$, $p = .027$) were the next best predictors of cyberbullying impact, after institutional influence ($\beta = .431$, $p < .001$). Strong explanatory power was demonstrated by the model's ability to explain 66.1% of the variance in cyberbullying impact ($R2 = .661$). These numbers highlight how important it is for colleges to either lessen or worsen the effects of cyberbullying. Overall, the results indicate that although the prevalence of cyberbullying among final-year students is moderate, university

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administrators and politicians should be very concerned about it due to its academic ramifications and the strong predictive impact of institutional determinants.

6.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study comes to the conclusion that cyberbullying is still a significant problem in the university setting and is influenced by both institutional structures and student relationships. Therefore, by implementing efficient regulations, awareness campaigns, reporting systems, and support services, universities play a crucial role in reducing cyberbullying. In order to encourage responsible online behaviour and create a safer learning environment, the study advises university administration to bolster anti-cyberbullying policies, enhance counselling and support services, improve confidential reporting channels, and implement ongoing digital awareness programs.

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