Youth and Cyber Bulling: Overbearing On Peace and Security in Nigeria.

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Abstract

Cyber-bullying is described as the use of information and communication technology, for the harassment or mistreatment of another. Typically, it is carried out against a victim who is distant; although in some situations the perpetrator(s) may be proximate to the victim. As a means of dealing with a wide variety of technology-based threats, the National Assembly enacted an Act called The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act 2015 Cybercrimes (" Cybercrimes Act") (Maylu, 2019). Cyberbullying behaviors are discussed within the framework of choice theory in this article. It concluded that the Nigerian government has done well by providing for an Act that protects people from cyberbullying, but a lot still needs to be done in curbing cyberbullying by providing effective means of prosecuting cases of cyberbullying and by making effective awareness in respect of the Cybercrimes Act in order to encourage victims of cyberbullying to report the offenders. And also recommended that the hate speech bill should be enacted but with lesser punishments.

Keywords: Youths, Nigeria, Cyber-Bulling, Peace and Security.

Introduction

The country Nigeria is a sovereign country in West Africa bordering Niger in the North, Chad in the North East, Cameroon in the east and Benin in the west. Its southern coast is on the Gulf of Guinea in the Atlantic Ocean. Nigeria which has the largest population in Africa and the Seventh most populous country in the world with its estimated population to be 206 million (WorldMeter.info,2020). Nigeria has the third largest youth population in the world after India and China, while nearly half of its population are under the age of eighteen (The CIAWorld Fact Book 2014. Skyhorse publishing, Inc. 2013. ISBN 978-1-62636-073-0). Nigeria is often referred to as giant of Africa owing to its large population and economy and is also considered to be an emerging market by the world bank (Nigeria. World Bank. Retrieved 28 November 2013.)

The Internet has improved global interactions and made the world a global village with the free exchange of information, ideas, skills, culture and technology. However, it also raises a number of personal security risks. Some internet users (for various reasons) prey on other users and cause havoc which affect not only personal interests but also

commercial concerns. This article discusses Cyber-bullying; one of the most common and deadly risks on the internet while also exploring the Nigerian youths' involvement in the act and also check how it affect peace and security in Nigeria (Maylu, 2019).

What Is Cyber-Bulling?

Cyber-bullying is described as the use of information and communication technology, for the harassment or mistreatment of another. Typically, it is carried out against a victim who is distant; although in some situations the perpetrator(s) may be proximate to the victim. Examples of cyber-bullying include posting repetitive offensive comments or photos on social media and or creating fake online profiles to belittle another person. It sometimes involves death threats (Maylu, 2019). Because cyber-bullying does not necessarily involve physical contact between an offender and a victim, there is a tendency to downplay its effects; however, it can cause psychologically and emotionally harm to the victim (Maylu, 2019). As such, cyber-bullying, harassment, and hoaxes have been linked to teen depression, low self-esteem and tragedies of suicide. Cyberbullying is widespread, particularly amongst young people and as technology advances, it creates more avenues for cyber-bullying (Maylu, 2019).

Cyber-Bullying Under Nigeria Law

As a means of dealing with a wide variety of technology-based threats, the National Assembly enacted an Act called The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act 2015 Cybercrimes (" Cybercrimes Act") (Maylu, 2019). The purpose of the Cybercrimes Act is to provide an effective and unified legal, regulatory and institutional framework for the prohibition, prevention, detection, prosecution and punishment of cybercrimes in Nigeria. While not expressly provided for in the Cybercrimes Act, it criminalizes two specific forms of cyberbullying: (1) Cyberstalking; and (2) Racist & Xenophobic offenses (Maylu, 2019).

What Is Cyberstalking?

Cyberstalking is defined as "a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear (S58, The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015). The Cybercrimes Act recognizes five different forms of cyberstalking:

i. knowingly sending grossly offensive, pornographic, indecent, menacing or obscene messages. (S24(a) The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015).
ii. knowingly sending a false message for the purpose of causing harm. (S24(b) The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015).
iii. knowingly transmitting any communication to bully, threaten or harass another, causing fear of death violence or bodily harm; (S24(2)(a) The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015)
iv. knowingly transmitting a message with a threat to kidnap, or any ransom for the release of any kidnapped person (S24(2)(b) The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015).

v. knowingly transmitting any threat to harm the property or reputation of a person (S24(2)(c) The Cybercrime (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015).

However, the penalty for cyber-stalking varies depending on the exact form committed. If one commits Doxing (Doxing means to search for and publish private or identifying information about a particular individual on the Internet, typically with malicious intent). The Cybercrimes Act provides that a defendant who does anything, which he is prohibited from doing, commits an offense and shall be liable on conviction to a fine of not more than N10, 000,000.00 or imprisonment for a term of not more than 3 years or to both such fine and imprisonment (S24(4) Cybercrime (Prevention and Prohibition etc.) Act 2015). Finally, the court may also make an interim order for the protection of victim(s) from further exposure to the alleged offences (S24(6) Cybercrime (Prevention and Prohibition etc.) Act 2015).

What Is Racist And Xenophobic Acts Under The Cybercrime Act In Nigeria?

The Cybercrime Act of Nigeria also prohibits cyberbullying of racist and xenophobic nature. Racist or xenophobic material is defined in the Cybercrimes Act as any written or printed material, any image or any other representation of ideas or theories, which advocates, promotes or incites hatred, discrimination or violence, against any individual group of individuals, based on race, color, descent or national or ethnic origin, as well as religion if used as a pretext for any of these factors (Section 58 Cybercrime (Prevention and Prohibition etc.) Act 2015).

Section 26 of the Cybercrimes Act criminalizes the intentional distribution or making available of racist or xenophobic material to the public through a computer system. The provision also includes people who threaten or insult other people publicly through a computer system or network, for the reason that they belong to a race, color, descent, religion, national or ethnic region (Okoiye & ors, 2015).

Does the Cybercrime Act Cover all Forms of Cyberbullying?

The provisions of the Cybercrimes Act only extend to cyber-stalking and racist and xenophobic remarks which are only two forms of cyber-bullying. The wording of the Cybercrimes Act on these two provisions is not sufficient to cover the various forms of cyber-bullying existing in the world today. The law only prohibits information that is grossly offensive, pornographic, indecent, obscene, false or places another in fear of death, violence or bodily harm to another person. These offences are not broad enough to cover other forms of cyber-bullying such as mockery or trolling which need not be false, offensive or incite fear of death or violence.

Nigerian Youths and Their Involvement in Cyberbulling

The nature and prevalence of cyber bullying in Nigeria Is becoming overbearing. In Nigeria, bullying behavior has moved from physical face to face confrontation in school

yard to a more psychologically damaging experience. According to Ada et al. (2016) this kind of bullying is a great monster in the Nigeria tertiary institutions, as it takes place indirectly via electronic media (Smith, 2014). George, & Odgers (2015) noted that the use of swear words (indicating rage), insults, jokes, mobility and fake names are techniques commonly used by cyber bullies.

Cyberbullying can occur in various forms, but Wilard's (2007) differentiation of the types of cyberbullying is the most comprehensive and widely accepted. According to him the eight categories of cyber bullying includes: harassment, flaming, denigration, impersonation or identity theft, outing, exclusion, cyber stalking and trolling. In Nigerian context, cyber bullying can take many forms which includes: sending mean messages or threat to a person's email account or cell phone, spreading rumours online through texts, posting hurtful or threatening messages on social networking sites or web pages, stealing a person's account information to break into their account and send damaging messages, internet frauding (Yahoo-Yahoo), pretending to be someone else online to hurt another person, taking unflattering pictures of a person and spreading them through cell phones or the internet. Another significant point addressed in the research on cyber bullying is the gender differences in the perpetration of the act. For instance, Barlett et al. (2014), reported that female students practice cyber bullying mostly by disclosing the secrets which they have been told, gossiping about individuals in the virtual environment, attacking the personality or sexual identity of the individual or labelling people as unreliable. Keith and Martins (2005) reported that females engage in a type of cyber bullying which is more of relational than the males. The reason for this may be as a result of culture and gender role expectations. For instance, in Nigeria, girls are not expected to have an open confrontation with people. They are brought up under close supervision, and are taught to be more self-conscious and more emphatic; unlike boys who behave in an aggressive manner to gain popularity among their peers. One can easily suggest that the supremacy of masculinity in Nigerian culture may require more overt aggression in order to attain greater social acceptance and higher self-esteem among young males.

Theoretical Framework

Cyberbullying behaviors are discussed within the framework of choice theory in this article. There are undoubtedly great many theories explaining the behaviors and needs of human beings. For example, while self-determination theory approaches the human needs as competence, autonomy and relationally (Deci and Ryan, 2000), according to Maslow the human needs are ordered as a hierarchy from physiological needs to the self-realization need. These theories provide significant information to explain the needs and behaviors of human. The reason why cyber-bullying is analyzed within the perspective of choice theory in this analysis is that reality therapy (Corey, 2009) developed out of choice theory enables the analyses about cyber-bullying behaviors be used for intervention program. Another reason why cyber-bullying behaviors are analyzed within the framework of choice theory in this article is that cyber-bullying behaviors are the ones widely observed in schools and

mostly during adolescence (NCES, 2011). William Glasser, who generated choice theory and reality therapy, is also a school psychologist who has studied problems encountered in schools. The theory and therapy put forward by Glasser were used as a model in order to deal with the problems encountered in schools (Walter et al., 2008). In this regard, the choice theory and reality therapy approach can be used in the studies carried out by school counselors in order to prevent cyber bullying behaviors. This analysis discussing cyber-bullying from the perspective of choice theory is thought to be useful for such studies.

Cyberbullying and Choice Theory

In this part, cyber bullying behaviors will be associated with basic premises of choice theory. In this sense, cyberbullying behaviors will be evaluated with regard to concepts, which choice theory used to explain human behaviors (Glasser, 1998b), such as basic needs, quality world, total behavior and successful-unsuccessful identity.

Basic needs and Cyberbullying

According to choice theory, all people's behaviors aim to meet five basic needs. In this sense, cyberbullying aims to satisfy one or some of these basic needs. In a study by Raskauskas and Stoltz (2007), students doing cyberbullying displayed this behavior for these aims with the following percentages: 38% to have fun, 25% to take revenge, and 6% because of their bad mood due to the situation they were in. The rest could not answer why they behaved in this way. Moreover, other studies have shown that behaviors of anger, aggressiveness, etc. are related to cyberbullying (Schultze-Krumbholz and Scheithauer, 2009). People displaying behaviors of anger and aggressiveness display cyberbullying behaviors, too (Patchin and Hinduja, 2010b). Vandebosch and Cleembut (2008) state that victims of traditional bullying try to balance their situation by means of the power they acquire from their knowledge on the internet, computer and other cyber communication tools. In the same way, it is stated that the ones regarding themselves as inadequate in terms of physical power and age try to balance the situation with cyberbullying behaviors. In this sense, when the argument is discussed from the point of the five basic needs in choice theory, it is possible to state that cyberbullying behaviors aim to satisfy the needs of entertainment and power. Glasser (1998a) states that students having difficulty in meeting their needs are generally the ones who experience relationship problems in puberty. When the gap between what a person wants and what he has is high, he feels anger and rage. These feelings lead the adolescent to display rebellion and problematic behaviors. According to Glasser (1998b), another reason for the problems in relationships is being restrained and the inability to present individual potential. If their abilities are not believed in and they are not given the chance to cope with the obstacles they encounter, adolescents experience discipline problems. In this sense, it can be stated that cyberbullying, which can be regarded as a discipline problem in schools, is related to a person's being unsuccessful and a feeling of being restrained in satisfying their basic needs. Choice theory claims that most people have similar underlying problems. This problem is generally their inability to have a successful and satisfying relationship with

one of the people important in their life or to attach themselves to other people (Glasser, 2000). People who are alone and have a low level of acceptability by society have a high rate of cyberbullying behaviors (Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011). It has been seen that the ability to establish social relationships and the competence to struggle with the problems experienced in social relations predict cyberbullying negatively (Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011; Sourander et al., 2010). Poor parent relations also predict cyberbullying (Mason, 2008). In this sense, from the point of choice theory, cyberbullying behaviors can be explained by a person's inability to develop healthy and satisfying relationships. When the findings of this study are discussed from the point of choice theory, it can be stated that one of the reasons behind cyberbullying behaviors is the fact that the needs of belonging and establishing relationships are not met adequately and properly.

Total Behavior and Cyberbullying

According to choice theory, a behavior is total. A behavior, in addition to activity of doing, consists of thinking, feeling and physiology, which makes it total (Glasser, 1998b; Zeeman 2006). In this sense, cyberbullying behaviors are total behaviors, too. The doing element of this behavior is the person's actions that he does to another person using cyber communication technology in order to do harm. Within the scope of choice theory, elements of thinking, feeling and physiology in a cyberbullying behavior can be explained as follows. It has been found that people displaying cyberbullying behaviors do not feel safe (Sourander et al., 2010); they feel alone (Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011), have feelings of revenge (König et al., 2010; Raskauskas and Stoltz, 2007) and are hostile (Arıcak, 2009) feelings. Besides, these people stated that a reason behind their Tanrikulu 663 cyberbullying behaviors is to get rid of boredom (Yaman and Peker, 2012). When these factors related to cyberbullying are taken as a total behavior they can be regarded as feeling element of the total behavior. In a study in which the relationship between cyberbullying and cognitive distortions was investigated (Çetin et al., 2011), it was found that cyberbullying behaviors were predicted by unrealistic expectations, mind reading and approach avoidance, which are types of cognitive distortion. A relationship between cyberbullying and perceptual problems (Dilmaç and Aydoğan, 2010) was found. Besides, positive relationship between cyberbullying and invisibility delusion (Mason, 2008) and low perception of self-esteem (Eroğlu, 2011) was found. When cyberbullying is considered as a total behavior, these factors, which are related to cyberbullying, can be regarded as thinking element of the total behavior. It was found that people who cyberbully have health problems (Kowalski and Limber, 2013) and there is a positive relationship between cyberbullying and somatization (Arıcak, 2009). When cyberbullying is considered as a total behavior, these factors related to cyberbullying can be regarded as physiology element of the total behavior. Successful-unsuccessful identity and cyberbullying. The ones displaying cyberbullying behaviors state that they display these kinds of behaviors with their friends in order to maintain friendship relations (Yaman and Peker 2012). The ones who cannot be independent in their relationships and have a high sense of ego display cyberbullying behaviors more (Çetin et al., 2012). A study by Eroglu (2011) showed that

there is a negative relationship between cyberbullying and internal values. In addition, people with low self-respect display cyberbullying behaviors more (Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011). These features related to cyberbullying behaviors involve unsuccessful identity, an important concept of choice theory. Unsuccessful identity involves a person's feeling of worthlessness and low self-confidence. This characteristic is the reason behind the problems in his social relations (Palancı, 2004). Choice theory focuses on the concept of successful and unsuccessful identity (Glasser, 1998b). In the case of unsuccessful identity, the person tends to perceive the reality as he wants to, distorts or rejects it (Palancı, 2004). People who cyberbully have also been observed to have perceptional problems (Dilmaç and Aydoğan, 2010) and cognitive distortions (Çetin et al., 2011). Unsuccessful identity is the person who cannot take on the responsibilities of his behaviors, and so, who fails to satisfy his needs of self-worth, belonging, loving and being loved. Therefore, people who have unsuccessful identity use ineffective methods to meet their needs (Corey, 2008). People who cyberbully have been observed to avoid taking responsibility (Çelik et al., 2012; Dilmaç and Aydoğan, 2010), to have low self-esteem (Patchin and Hinduja, 2010a) and to experience problems making friends and being accepted (Aoyama et al., 2011; Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011). It is stated that there is a negative relation between responsibility and cyberbullying (Çelik et al., 2012) According to Glasser, behavioral problems are used in order not to accept realities and responsibilities that do not satisfy needs. When a person accepts realities and his responsibilities, he starts to display adequate and proper behaviors to satisfy his needs (Kaner, 1993). In this sense, one of the reasons for cyberbullying is the individual's inadequacy to take responsibilities. In this sense, it can be stated that characteristics of unsuccessful identity can be observed in people who cyberbully. Forcing the person to withdraw from social contexts and weakening his initiative power for change are other characteristics of unsuccessful identity (Palancı, 2014). People who are alone and who have low levels of self-esteem, peer optimism, social acceptance and the ability to make friends have been observed to have high levels of cyberbullying behaviors (Schoffstall and Cohen, 2011). Besides, a relationship between being open to change and cyberbullying was found, too (Çelik et al., 2012). Findings of this study, which are related to unsuccessful identity, indicate that people who cyberbully have characteristics of unsuccessful identity. According to Glasser, psychological problems can be explained by characteristics of unsuccessful identity (Kaner, 1993). Findings of this study also present us similar information showing that cyberbullying behaviors can be explained by having unsuccessful identity.

Implication of the Overbearing Cyberbulling Involvement of Nigerian Youths on Peace and Security in Nigeria

As there will surely be some consequences of cyberbullying on peace and security in Nigeria, these are some of the implication noted but not all encompassing.

i. End Sars Protest: As we all noticed the total disapproval of Nigeria youths on some faction of the Nigeria police force (SARS), the freedom to internet has enabled the end Sars protest to be successful, this on a sad end led to the death of some youths

at various places in Nigeria. This led to disruption of peace and order in the country which the security of lives and properties was not guaranteed during this period.

ii. It also can lead to regional war because Nigeria is a heterogeneous society. If cyberbullying is not curtailed, it can lead to another civil war in Nigeria which will definitely threatening our peace and security of lives and properties in Nigeria.

iii. Incessant suicide cases in Nigeria has been traced to the way some youths tend to use the social media to utter derogatory words, utterances to people who later ran into depression due to the words said to them which later led them to commit suicide. The way some youths rain curses on others is alarming in Nigeria and needs to be revisited or attended to so as not to affect our peace and security and unity in Nigeria.

iv. Rape case defaming: it is of rise now in Nigeria when a lady will want to be vindictive on another guy because of one reason or the other bring forth a rape case accusation just to be vindictive which will later either tarnish the image of the victim or cause him some jail term due to the vindictive nature of some people.

v. Kidnapping: kidnapping case in Nigeria is of the apex. Hardly in Nigeria will you not hear about kidnapping case in a week in Nigeria (2020). This mischievous act is usually perpetrated with cell phones call put through to the victim relatives to demand ransom.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying is a phenomenon that has threatened to eat into the fabric of our social and psychological life as a society. The effect of cyberbullying goes deeper, it does not seem to stay on the online platform used but it rather follows the person victimized home, to work, to school. It trails the victim everywhere because it has damaging psychological effects. The Nigerian government has done well by providing for an Act that protects people from cyberbullying, but a lot still needs to be done in curbing cyberbullying by providing effective means of prosecuting cases of cyberbullying and by making effective awareness in respect of the Cybercrimes Act in order to encourage victims of cyberbullying to report the offenders.

Recommendation

(1) The hate speech bill should be enacted but with lesser punishments.

(2) There should be some control over the social media on the way derogatory speeches are said on the internet or send to people in Nigeria. The government should set up agencies which will solely take the responsibility of monitoring the act and also punishing the offenders.

(3) The should be proper enforcement on all other available law we have in Nigeria that protect rights of individual and our judicial system should be reformed so that judgment will not be bias.

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