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Cyber Bullying Among Chinese University Students: Prevalence and Countermeasures

LV Le-yi, CAO Jing-jing, WANG Qi-ran*
Zhejiang International Studies University, Hangzhou, China

This study investigates cyber bullying within contemporary online environments through a questionnaire-based survey of university students. It assesses the prevalence of victimization, characterizes self-reported consequences, and evaluates coping capacity alongside putative determinants such as digital skills and the availability of institutional support. In parallel, a brief appraisal of the existing scholarship highlights the relative immaturity of the literature focused specifically on university populations. Analyses indicate that students are generally ill-prepared to confront online aggression, underutilize technology-enabled safeguards and reporting channels, and exhibit limited help-seeking efficacy, revealing a gap between exposure and protective competencies. The paper recommends strengthening credit-bearing digital-literacy curricula, clarifying campus governance and reporting procedures, and integrating psychosocial and technical resources. By coupling descriptive evidence with policy-oriented recommendations, the study offers an empirically grounded overview of risks, mechanisms, and levers for intervention, providing universities with actionable guidance for prevention, early detection, and response.

Keywords: cyber bullying, digital literacy, countermeasures

Introduction

The age of big data has engendered a novel social phenomenon—cyber bullying. The ongoing advancement of the Internet has rendered this phenomenon increasingly apparent. The Internet offers numerous conveniences; nevertheless, it also presents certain disadvantages, with cyber bullying being a prominent one. In China, cyber bullying is characterized as a novel form of detrimental conduct facilitated by the Internet, specifically, aggressive and deliberate actions perpetrated against the victim via electronic channels. In certain English-speaking nations, the concept of cyber bullying is more comprehensive. Researchers, including Heidi Vanderbosch and Katrien Van Cleemput (2008), assert that genuine cyber bullying must meet the following criteria: The perpetrator intends to inflict harm; the victim experiences actual suffering; the behavior is recurrent; and there exists a power disparity between the perpetrator and the victim. Currently, adolescents are intricately linked to the new media landscape in all facets of life, education, and recreation. Adolescents are utilizing increasingly sophisticated online media channels; nonetheless, their media literacy remains underdeveloped. Consequently, individuals can

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LV Le-yi, School of Education, Zhejiang International Studies University, Hangzhou, China.
CAO Jing-jing, School of Education, Zhejiang International Studies University, Hangzhou, China.
*WANG Qi-ran (corresponding author), Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Education, Zhejiang International Studies University, Hangzhou, China.

readily become entangled in egregious instances of online bullying, whether intentionally, passively, or inadvertently. Simultaneously, young individuals, as victims, are readily provoked by internet discourse. Smith et al. (2010) believe that as networked computers and mobile phones become increasingly popular among young people, the possibility of cyber bullying also increases. The issue of cyber bullying is becoming increasingly severe among a specific demographic on university, particularly where Internet usage is prevalent. The recurrent exposure to egregious instances has significantly affected the standard instructional operations at universities.

Hamm et al. (2015) point out cyber bullying as a potential hazard has triggered a series of concerns regarding its impact on the mental health of adolescents. Cyber bullying has emerged as a significant issue that threatens social stability and individual physical and emotional well-being, particularly affecting youth populations. Adolescents constitute a susceptible demographic, exhibiting diminished psychological resilience and social flexibility, rendering them highly vulnerable to cyber bullying, while also being predisposed to perpetrate such bullying. Some teenagers on the Internet have inadequate cognitive and emotional regulation development. They may be influenced by aggressive comments online. This could result in psychological distress or even suicide. This is a significant issue for preserving societal peace and stability. The following are strategies for efficiently managing children' online aggression: Enhance network education and mental health education for minors; Augment their capacity to withstand network aggression; Enhance the governance of the Internet; Regulate online discourse and cleanse the digital realm; Effectively address the issue of cyber bullying among adolescents and safeguard their physical and emotional well-being. This study evaluated the Chinese version of the measuring scale for online bullying among university students. It enhances the implications of essential concepts pertaining to cyber bullying, cyber literacy, and digital literacy. It facilitates the advancement of the legal regulatory framework for cyber bullying. It investigates the fundamental reasons of cyber bullying among university students. It can also offer novel insights and concepts for advancing cyber ethics studies. Examining the preventive and governance techniques regarding cyber bullying among university students, this will enhance the theoretical research on the ideological and political education of university students and their moral development.

Method

Data Collection

The questionnaire data show the entire coverage of the survey sample. A total of 308 university students participated in this study. Gender distribution was evenly split, with 50% male and 50% female participants. The ratio of males to girls was nearly equal at 50% for each gender. This indicates that the questionnaire exhibited a rather equitable gender representation. Regarding age distribution, 84.11% of the respondents were aged between 18 and 23 years. The predominant age group among respondents was 21 to 23 years, with 54.87% of the total respondents. This aligns with the primary age attributes of university students. Humanities majors constitute the largest proportion, accounting for 47.73%. Natural science majors constitute 27.27% of the total. Social science majors constitute 25%. The distribution of major kinds among the questionnaire respondents is pretty equitable and adequately reflects the distribution of majors among university students.

Variable Settings

The topic of this survey is the survey on the current situation of digital literacy and cyber bullying among university students. The questionnaire structure is a basic information survey and a specific content survey. The basic information survey includes gender, age, specialty, place of birth, and daily use of cell phone and computer

hours. The specific content survey includes the network digital literacy ability survey, the network bullying experience survey, and the network bullying response ability survey. Among them, the survey focuses on the three dimensions of university students' cognitive status of cyber bullying, coping measures, and self- and externally provided solutions around cyber bullying coping ability.

Results

The Current Situation of Cyber Bullying Among University Students

The results of the survey show that out of the 308 valid samples, they were categorized according to the different types of online bullying. "Technological harassment" had the highest mean score of 2.41, followed by "cyber-shaming" with a mean score of 2.31, "hate speech" with 2.29, "information dissemination" with 2.15, and "information manipulation bullying" with 1.63. "Information dissemination" was 2.15, and "information manipulation" was 1.63, indicating that university students are exposed to different types of online bullying. The two most common types of bullying among university students are "technological harassment bullying" and "online humiliation bullying". These two types need attention. "Information dissemination" is more common than "hate speech bullying". Comparatively speaking, "information dissemination" and "information manipulation" occur less frequently and to a lesser extent.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Exposure to Cyber Bullying

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Cyber shaming	308	1	5	2.311	1.221
Information manipulation	308	1	3	1.633	0.823
Hate speech	308	1	5	2.291	1.238
Technical harassment	308	1	5	2.412	1.185
Information dissemination	308	1	5	2.157	1.245
n	308				

The survey results indicate that university students commonly face various types of cyber bullying in the online environment. Among these, a significant proportion of students reported experiencing cyber bullying involving verbal abuse. A total of 69 students indicated that they "always" or "often" experience such situations, while another 29 reported experiencing it "sometimes", indicating that this type of cyber bullying is relatively common among university students and reflects that some students are more susceptible to negative verbal attacks in interpersonal interactions. Hate speech violence is also a significant concern, with 108 students reporting that they "always", "often", or "sometimes" experience such incidents, indicating that some university students are subjected to discriminatory or hostile language online. Such violent behavior may have adverse effects on students' self-esteem, self-identity, and mental health, further exacerbating their social anxiety or feelings of isolation. The overall incidence of information manipulation violence is relatively low, with 171 respondents indicating they have "never" experienced it. However, approximately one-third of students reported experiencing it "sometimes" or "rarely", indicating that phenomena such as misquoting, distorting, or misleading information still exist in online communication, potentially causing potential interference with victims' judgment and emotions. The occurrence of technical manipulation violence is slightly more severe, with 70 people reporting "always" or "often" experiencing it, and another 160 indicating "sometimes" or "rarely" experiencing it. This

suggests that the use of online technical means for harassment, malicious dissemination, or interference is relatively common among university students, necessitating high priority attention from universities and platforms.

The Current Situation of Responding to Cyber Bullying Among University Students

According to the survey results, among the 308 valid samples, the average score for "technical coping" was the highest at 4.09, followed by "close support" at 3.90, then "external assistance" at 3.58, followed by "online counterattack capability" at 3.48, then "self-support" at 3.52, with the lowest being "active ignoring" at an average of 3.40. This indicates that university students currently exhibit varying levels of ability to cope with cyber bullying. Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of their coping abilities, university students generally demonstrate a certain degree of ability to seek external help, receive close support, and provide self-support when facing cyber bullying. However, there is room for improvement in their ability to retaliate, actively ignore, and employ technical coping strategies. Therefore, in terms of enhancing university students' ability to prevent cyber bullying, efforts should focus on improving their cyber retaliation and technical coping abilities to strengthen their resilience against cyber bullying.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Ability to Cope With Cyber Bullying

Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
External assistance	308	1	5	3.582	1.020
Close support	308	1	5	3.901	0.947
Network counterattack	308	1	5	3.484	1.039
Self-support	308	1	5	3.525	1.149
Active ignoring	308	1	5	3.407	0.910
Technical response	308	1	5	4.091	0.917
n	308				

The results of the survey (Table 2) show that university students in general have a strong ability to seek external support when facing cyber bullying. Among them, respondents "always" sought external help 56 times and "often" 127 times. These cases account for a clear majority. This means that the majority of university students have the awareness of actively seeking help. In terms of intimate support, respondents indicated that they "always" received support 91 times and "often" received support 150 times. This further indicates that they have stable social relationships and emotional support networks. At the individual coping level, university students' ability to fight back online is relatively weak. Although they "always" counter attacked 39 times, they "often" counter attacked 141 times. More than 100 said they counterattacked "sometimes" or less often. This means that some students still lack effective coping strategies. Similarly, self-regulation was moderate. Seventy-one indicated that they were able to self-regulate "always", and 113 indicated that they were able to self-regulate "often". However, 71 times they indicated that they were able to self-regulate "rarely" or "never". This suggests that some people need to improve their psychological resilience. There were 127 mentions of "always" using technology to deal with cyber bullying and 121 mentions of "often" doing so. This shows that they are highly information literate. In the case of active ignorance, the expressions "always" and "often" do not appear less frequently (31 and 116 times, respectively). However, a larger group (114) only "sometimes" had this ability. This suggests that this aspect still needs to be further strengthened.

Discussion

Most authoritative institutions believe that schools need to develop specific policies targeting bullying and cyberbullying in order to fully recognize the seriousness of the problem (Beale & Hall, 2007). Universities should carry out network literacy education in a planned way. It is necessary to enhance university students' knowledge of network morality, information security, and awareness of behavioral norms and utilize the form of courses, lectures, and training, to improve students' understanding of network security and their self-protection ability. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the education of network morality in the family and school and optimize the social environment of network morality. However, the government needs to establish a sound mechanism. This mechanism is used to monitor and report cyber bullying. Snakenborgsupa, Acker, and Gable (2011) illustrate three types of laws to prevent or minimize the potential for cyber bullying. It is necessary to punish illegal behavior according to the law, to form an effective deterrent, to maintain order and justice in cyberspace for university students.

Improve the reporting mechanism and psychological counseling system. To establish a clear reporting system for cyber bullying and relevant legal norms. Ensure that victims can obtain legal protection in a timely manner. At the same time, strengthen the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of those who report. Kowalski and Agatston (2008) point out that it is necessary to set up prevention courses to help students acquire knowledge about cyber bullying and popularize the knowledge about recognizing and preventing network bullying to improve university students' ability to recognize and cope with network bullying. Universities should establish a perfect mental health support system, provide timely and professional psychological intervention for students who suffer from cyber bullying, promote their psychological recovery, and improve their learning and life quality.

Establish a network governance system. Promote multi-party collaborative governance. At the same time, it is necessary to strengthen the connection with universities. Universities should develop and improve the network security management system, clarify the process of dealing with cyber bullying, strengthen the supervision of the campus network environment, establish a specialized supervisory body, and promote the standardization of campus network bullying management. At the same time, online platforms should be encouraged to strengthen content review and user management in order to prevent the spread of online bullying information, promote information sharing and collaborative governance among governments, schools, platforms, and social organizations, and build a benign, safe, and clear online ecological environment.

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