

CYBERBULLYING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The study investigated cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. A correlational survey research design was adopted. The study was conducted in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The accessible population comprised 2,490 undergraduate students, consisting of 1,494 students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 996 students from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. A sample of 768 students was selected through proportionate sampling technique, comprising 461 students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 307 students from Enugu State University of Science and Technology. Data were collected using a researcher-developed Cyberbullying and Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (CPWBQ). The instrument was face-validated by three experts from the Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82. The data were collected through direct administration of the questionnaire. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used for Research Question 3, while simple linear regression was used for Research Question 4. Mean scores of 3.50–4.00 were interpreted as Very High, 2.50–3.49 as High, 1.50–2.49 as Low, and 1.00–1.49 as Very Low, while 0.05 was used as the level of significance. The findings revealed a high extent of cyberbullying and a high level of psychological well-being among the undergraduate students. The findings further revealed a significant negative relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being, and that cyberbullying significantly predicted psychological well-being. It was recommended that public universities should strengthen cyberbullying prevention, reporting, digital safety, and counselling programmes for undergraduate students. The study contributed to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on the relationship and predictive role of cyberbullying in the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, psychological well-being, undergraduate students, digital safety

Introduction

The emergence of digital technologies has revolutionized communication, social interaction, learning, and information sharing across the world. The widespread availability of smartphones, computers, and internet-enabled devices has enabled individuals to connect and interact irrespective of geographical boundaries. Among university students, digital technologies have become indispensable tools for academic activities, social networking, entertainment, and personal development. Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, X, Telegram, and Snapchat have become integral components of students' daily lives. While these technological innovations have enhanced communication and access to information, they have also introduced new social and psychological challenges. One of the most disturbing challenges associated with digital communication is cyberbullying, a phenomenon that has become increasingly prevalent among young adults and university students.

Cyberbullying has become an important concern in contemporary society because of the increasing use of information and communication technologies, social media, and other digital platforms for interpersonal interaction. The rapid expansion of online communication has created opportunities for students to learn, socialise, and maintain relationships, but it has also provided avenues for hostile and harmful behaviours to be directed at others through electronic means. Peter and Petermann (2019) explained cyberbullying as a form of aggressive behaviour that is carried out through electronic means and characterised by several defining attributes, including the use of electronic communication, aggressive action, intention, repetition, and harm. This conceptualisation indicates that cyberbullying involves more than ordinary disagreement or unpleasant online communication because it includes deliberate behaviour intended to cause harm through digital technologies. Menin, Guarini, Mameli, Skrzypiec, and Brighi (2021) examined how cyberbullying is understood from the perspectives of young people and noted that the concept involves important characteristics such as deliberate behaviour, frequency, harm, and dominance. Their study showed that the understanding of cyberbullying is closely connected with interpersonal and group processes in which harmful behaviours are expressed through online environments. This perspective is important in the university context because undergraduate students interact extensively through digital platforms where negative interpersonal behaviours can be expressed, repeated, and widely circulated. Similarly, Zhang, Huang, Lam, Evans, and Zhu (2022) described cyberbullying as behaviours expressed by individuals or groups through information and communication technologies, including social media and electronic mail, which repeatedly communicate hostile or offensive information with the intention of causing harm or discomfort to others. The authors further indicated that cyberbullying definitions commonly emphasise harmfulness, repetition, and the use of digital communication technologies.

Study conducted by Iqbal and Jami (2022) further examined cyberbullying from the perspective of young people and identified different forms through which harmful behaviours may occur in online environments. Their work demonstrated that cyberbullying can involve offensive communication and other behaviours directed at individuals through digital technologies. These perspectives show that cyberbullying is not limited to a single form of online misconduct but may occur through different digital platforms and may involve repeated actions intended to cause emotional, social, or psychological harm. Based on these perspectives, cyberbullying is operationally defined in this study as the deliberate and repeated use of digital communication technologies to engage in harmful behaviours such as insulting, ridiculing, threatening, harassing, excluding, embarrassing, or disseminating harmful information about undergraduate students. The concept covers cyberbullying experiences occurring through social media platforms, instant messaging applications, online groups, and other electronic communication channels. In this study, the extent of cyberbullying is measured through students' responses to items relating to insulting messages, online ridicule, threats, false information, and exclusion from online groups, unauthorized use of photographs, repeated harassment, and offensive online comments. The concept is therefore relevant to the present study because exposure to such harmful online experiences may affect students' emotional functioning, social adjustment, self-perception, and general psychological functioning. This provides a basis for examining the next concept, psychological well-being, which concerns the extent to which undergraduate students maintain positive functioning, effective relationships, personal competence, purpose, and a positive sense of self within the university environment.

Psychological well-being is an important component of positive human functioning and represents the extent to which individuals experience positive psychological functioning, meaningful engagement, life satisfaction, and effective adjustment to the demands of everyday life. The concept extends beyond the absence of mental illness and focuses on

positive experiences and conditions that enable individuals to function effectively and pursue meaningful lives. Martela and Sheldon (2019) explained that well-being consists of both subjective and eudaimonic dimensions, with psychological need satisfaction providing an important basis for positive functioning. From this perspective, psychological well-being involves conditions that enable individuals to experience a sense of competence, autonomy, meaningful engagement, and positive functioning in different areas of life. This view shows that psychological well-being is not limited to temporary happiness but also involves the extent to which individuals function effectively and experience their lives as meaningful. Trudel-Fitzgerald, Millstein, von Hippel, Howe, Tomasso, Wagner, and VanderWeele (2019) viewed psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct involving positive aspects of human functioning such as purpose in life, optimism, mastery, positive affect, and life satisfaction. Their perspective emphasised that psychological well-being represents important positive dimensions of human life that can contribute to healthy functioning and successful adjustment. This understanding is relevant to undergraduate students because university life requires students to manage academic responsibilities, develop social relationships, make independent decisions, and pursue meaningful educational and personal goals.

Study conducted by Dodd, Priestley, Tyrrell, Cygan, Newell, and Byrom (2021) examined the conceptualization and measurement of well-being among university students and showed that student well-being is a multidimensional concept involving different psychological, social, and personal aspects of students' experiences. Their review indicated that well-being among university students encompasses more than the absence of psychological difficulties and includes positive experiences and functioning within the university environment. This perspective is particularly relevant to the present study because undergraduate students' psychological well-being may be shaped by their academic experiences, interpersonal relationships, personal development, and experiences within both physical and digital environments. Based on these perspectives, psychological well-being is operationally defined in this study as the level of positive psychological functioning demonstrated by undergraduate students through positive relationships with other students, satisfaction with university life, and confidence in handling academic challenges, a clear sense of purpose, personal growth, independent decision-making, effective management of academic responsibilities, and a positive sense of personal worth. In this study, psychological well-being is assessed through students' responses to statements measuring these aspects of positive functioning. A high level of psychological well-being therefore indicates that undergraduate students are able to maintain positive relationships, manage academic and personal demands, experience personal growth, maintain a sense of purpose, and demonstrate a positive sense of personal worth. The concept is particularly relevant to the present study because cyberbullying represents a form of harmful digital interaction that may interfere with students' positive psychological functioning and adjustment. Understanding psychological well-being therefore provides a basis for examining the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being and determining the extent to which cyberbullying predicts the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State.

Importantly, the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being has become a major focus of contemporary psychological research. Existing literature suggests that cyberbullying may significantly undermine the psychological well-being of victims. Students who experience online victimization often report feelings of fear, sadness, shame, embarrassment, helplessness, anger, frustration, and hopelessness. Prolonged exposure to cyberbullying may result in severe psychological consequences, including depression, anxiety disorders, suicidal ideation, emotional instability, and reduced life satisfaction. As a result, cyberbullying is increasingly recognized as a significant public health and educational concern. At the international level, empirical studies have consistently documented the

negative consequences of cyberbullying on psychological well-being. Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner (2014) reported that cyberbullying victimization was significantly associated with psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and social maladjustment. Similarly, Brewer and Kerslake (2015) found that victims of cyberbullying experienced lower self-esteem and higher levels of emotional difficulties than their non-victimized peers. Patchin and Hinduja (2018) observed that cyberbullying was associated with increased levels of stress, emotional problems, and suicidal thoughts among young adults. Likewise, Peled (2019) reported that cyberbullying negatively influenced students' emotional well-being, social relationships, and academic functioning. These findings indicate that cyberbullying represents a substantial threat to the psychological health of young people across different societies.

More recently, Arif, Qadir, Martins, and Khuwaja (2024) conducted a systematic review involving 29,593 university students from different countries and found significant associations between cybervictimization and adverse mental health outcomes. The review revealed that cyberbullying was linked with depression, anxiety, stress, suicidal behaviour, fear, reduced self-esteem, substance abuse, and poor academic concentration. The authors concluded that cyberbullying constitutes a major mental health challenge among university students and emphasized the need for higher institutions to establish preventive and intervention programmes. Studies conducted in higher education institutions have further demonstrated that cyberbullying extends beyond adolescence and remains prevalent among university students. Watts, Wagner, Velasquez, and Behrens (2017) observed that cyberbullying has become a significant concern within university environments due to the increasing dependence of students on digital communication technologies. Their findings showed that cyberbullying negatively affects students' emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and academic productivity. These findings underscore the global nature of cyberbullying and its implications for students' mental health.

Within the African context, the rapid expansion of internet connectivity and smartphone ownership has contributed to the increasing prevalence of cyberbullying among young adults. Studies conducted across African universities indicate that students frequently experience online harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, and social exclusion. Such experiences have been linked with psychological distress, emotional instability, low self-esteem, and poor mental health outcomes. Notwithstanding growing awareness of cyberbullying, many African universities still lack adequate institutional frameworks for addressing online victimization and supporting affected students. In Nigeria, cyberbullying has become increasingly common among undergraduate students due to the widespread adoption of digital technologies and social media platforms. Nigerian undergraduates rely heavily on online platforms for communication, academic collaboration, and social interaction, thereby increasing their vulnerability to cyberbullying. Empirical studies conducted within Nigerian universities have documented the prevalence of cyberbullying and its adverse psychological consequences. Ezeonwumelu, Anierobi, and Ezennaka (2022) examined cyberbullying as a predictor of suicide ideation and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in Southeast Nigeria. Their findings revealed that cyberbullying significantly predicted psychological well-being and contributed to suicidal ideation among students. Similarly, Anierobi, Akuneme, and Nnaemeka (2023) found significant relationships between cyberbullying, self-esteem, social development, and mental well-being among undergraduate students in a federal university in Anambra State. Their study demonstrated that students who experienced cyberbullying reported lower levels of mental well-being than their counterparts who had not experienced such victimization.

Recent Nigerian studies have continued to provide evidence regarding the harmful effects of cyberbullying. Fasola and Adesehinwa (2026) reported that cyberbullying

negatively predicted psychological well-being among university students in Southwest Nigeria and found that increased cyberbullying exposure corresponded with lower levels of psychological well-being. Aghedo, Tijani, Akpoyovwere, Makata, and Modeme (2026) found that cyberbullying victimization among undergraduates in Edo State was associated with emotional distress, social isolation, and reduced psychological functioning. The authors further revealed that cyberbullying remains a prevalent challenge among Nigerian university students. Similarly, Ralph-Nwachukwu, Ihejirika, Benson-Eluwa, and Onu (2026) reported a strong relationship between cyberbullying and mental health challenges among university students in Southeast Nigeria. Victims of cyberbullying were found to experience panic disorders, mood disorders, social phobia, and personality-related difficulties. Egwuonwu, Umukoro, Babatunde, Tamuno-Opubo, and Ijowha (2026) further identified cyberbullying as a significant predictor of suicidal ideation among Nigerian undergraduates, emphasizing its serious psychological consequences.

Additional studies conducted in Nigeria have also highlighted the growing prevalence of cyberbullying among university students. Adaramoye, Ogundana, and Abe (2026) found that self-esteem, peer pressure, and social media literacy significantly contributed to cyberbullying behaviour among undergraduates. Likewise, Opesemowo and Taiwo (2025) observed that bullying experiences among university students negatively affected their mental health, self-esteem, and academic behaviour. These findings further demonstrate the multifaceted nature of cyberbullying and its implications for students' psychosocial adjustment. Although existing literature has substantially improved understanding of cyberbullying and its psychological consequences, several gaps remain evident. Most international studies were conducted in Europe, North America, and Asia, while empirical evidence from African countries remains comparatively limited. Within Nigeria, many studies have focused on specific universities, departments, or geographical areas, thereby restricting the generalizability of their findings. In addition, the continuous evolution of digital technologies and social media platforms suggests that the nature and patterns of cyberbullying are changing rapidly, requiring ongoing empirical investigation. Furthermore, inconsistencies in previous findings regarding the magnitude of the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being suggest the need for further studies within diverse educational and socio-cultural contexts.

More importantly, there is limited empirical evidence specifically examining cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students across public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. Public universities in Enugu State accommodate students from diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds who extensively utilize digital technologies for learning and social interaction. Regardless of the increasing use of social media among students in the state, little is known about the extent to which cyberbullying affects their psychological well-being. This paucity of empirical evidence creates a gap in knowledge that necessitates systematic investigation. Therefore, it is against this background that the present study investigates cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study is expected to contribute to the growing body of literature on cyberbullying and provide empirical evidence that may assist psychologists, counsellors, university administrators, and policymakers in developing effective intervention strategies aimed at promoting psychological well-being and creating safer digital environments within Nigerian universities.

Statement of the Problem

Cyberbullying and psychological well-being have become important concerns in contemporary university education, particularly as undergraduate students increasingly depend on digital technologies and social media for academic, social, and personal communication. Ideally, university students should be able to use these platforms to learn,

communicate, and maintain positive relationships without being exposed to harassment, intimidation, threats, humiliation, or other forms of online victimisation. They are also expected to maintain good psychological well-being to cope effectively with academic demands and other challenges of university life. However, the increasing use of smartphones, social media platforms, and instant messaging applications has created opportunities for cyberbullying among undergraduate students. Students may experience online harassment, offensive messages, cyberstalking, impersonation, social exclusion, threats, and unauthorised sharing of personal information or images. Such experiences may result in emotional distress, anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and other conditions that can undermine students' psychological well-being.

Although cyberbullying has received increasing attention, adequate empirical evidence on its association with the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State remains limited. Existing evidence has often focused on specific institutions or particular psychological outcomes, making it difficult to obtain a broader understanding of the problem within the state. This creates a need for further empirical investigation. The specific problem, therefore, is that the extent to which cyberbullying is associated with the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria, is not sufficiently established. This gap in knowledge may limit the ability of psychologists, counsellors, and university administrators to develop appropriate measures for preventing cyberbullying and promoting students' psychological well-being.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to investigate cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State;
2. determine the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State;
3. determine the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State; and
4. determine whether cyberbullying predicts the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State?
2. What is the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State?
3. What is the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State?
4. To what extent does cyberbullying predict the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State?

Methods

The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The choice of the design was guided by the four research questions, which sought to determine the extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students, the level of psychological well-being, the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being, and the extent to which cyberbullying predicts psychological well-being. The design was considered appropriate

because it enables the researcher to collect data on variables as they naturally occur without manipulating them and to determine the direction and strength of association between variables as well as their predictive contribution. Creswell and Creswell noted that correlational research is appropriate for examining the degree of association between variables and for making predictions from observed relationships. The study was carried out in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria, specifically the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) and the Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT). These universities were selected because they represent the federal and state public university sectors in Enugu State and provide undergraduate students from diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds. The University of Nigeria is a federal university with campuses in Nsukka and Enugu, while the Enugu State University of Science and Technology is a state-owned university located in Enugu State. The Enugu State Government identifies both UNN and ESUT among the major universities in the state. The universities were considered suitable for the study because of their large undergraduate populations and the extensive use of digital technologies, social media platforms, and online communication among students, which provide an appropriate context for investigating cyberbullying and psychological well-being. The accessible population for the study comprised 2,490 undergraduate students from the two selected public universities. The population was distributed as 1,494 undergraduate students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 996 undergraduate students from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology, representing 60% and 40% of the accessible population, respectively. From the accessible population, a sample size of 768 undergraduate students was adopted for the study. The sample size was considered adequate for the correlational and predictive analyses required by the study. The sample was proportionately allocated to the two universities, giving 461 students from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and 307 students from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The use of a sufficiently large sample is particularly relevant to correlational research because larger samples generally provide more stable estimates and reduce sampling error. A **proportionate** sampling technique was used to select the 768 respondents from the two universities. The technique ensured that the number of respondents selected from each university reflected its proportion of the accessible population. Thus, 461 respondents were selected from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, while 307 respondents were selected from the Enugu State University of Science and Technology. The sampling procedure was considered appropriate because the study involved respondents from two institutions with different population sizes, and proportionate allocation ensured adequate representation of students from both institutions.

The instrument used for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Cyberbullying and Psychological Well-being Questionnaire (CPWBQ). The questionnaire was developed in line with the purpose of the study, the research questions, and relevant literature on cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A contained items designed to determine the extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students, while Section B contained items designed to determine the level of psychological well-being of the students. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The instrument was considered manageable for the respondents because the items were clearly stated, directly related to the study variables, and arranged in a simple format that could be completed within a reasonable period. The instrument was face-validated by three experts from the Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The experts examined the questionnaire items with respect to clarity, relevance, appropriateness of language, adequacy of coverage, and suitability for measuring cyberbullying and

psychological well-being among undergraduate students. Their observations and suggestions were used to revise the instrument before the final administration. Expert review is an established procedure for assessing the clarity and appropriateness of items in a research instrument before its administration. The reliability of the CPWBQ was established through a pilot test conducted with undergraduate students who were not included in the main study. The responses obtained from the pilot administration were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha analysis to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded an overall reliability coefficient of 0.82.

Cronbach's Alpha was considered appropriate because the questionnaire consisted of multiple items designed to measure the constructs of cyberbullying and psychological well-being. The data were collected through the direct administration of copies of the CPWBQ to the selected undergraduate students in the two public universities. The researcher administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research assistants where necessary and retrieved the completed copies after the respondents had provided their responses. The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, and the information obtained was treated confidentially. The completed questionnaires were checked for completeness, coded, and prepared for statistical analysis. The data collected were analysed in accordance with the four research questions that guided the study. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer Research Questions 1 and 2, which sought to determine the extent of cyberbullying experienced and the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students, respectively. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to answer Research Question 3, which sought to determine the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being. Simple linear regression analysis was used to answer Research Question 4, which sought to determine the extent to which cyberbullying predicts psychological well-being. Pearson correlation is appropriate for examining the direction and strength of association between quantitative variables, while regression analysis is appropriate for examining predictive contribution. For the interpretation of the mean scores, the four-point rating scale of SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, and SD = 1 was adopted. The class interval was determined using the formula $(4 - 1) \div 4 = 0.75$. Accordingly, mean scores of 3.50–4.00 were interpreted as Very High, 2.50–3.49 as High, 1.50–2.49 as Low, and 1.00–1.49 as Very Low. For the Pearson correlation and regression analyses, the 0.05 level of significance was adopted. A probability value less than 0.05 was regarded as statistically significant, while a probability value greater than 0.05 was regarded as not statistically significant.

Results

Table 1: Mean Ratings of the Extent of Cyberbullying Experienced by Undergraduate Students

S/N	Cyberbullying Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Insulting messages are sent to students through social media platforms.	186	249	188	145	2.62	1.02	High
2	Students are ridiculed through online posts.	201	238	190	139	2.65	1.01	High
3	Threats are received through social media platforms.	158	226	213	171	2.48	1.03	Low
4	False information about students is shared online without permission.	177	247	202	142	2.60	1.01	High
5	Students are deliberately excluded from online groups.	169	231	216	152	2.54	1.02	High
6	Students' photographs are used online without permission.	151	220	225	172	2.46	1.02	Low
7	Harassing messages are repeatedly sent through digital platforms.	194	246	192	136	2.65	1.01	High
8	Offensive comments are directed at students	211	253	176	128	2.71	1.00	High

online.

	Cluster Mean	2.59	1.02	High
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Decision Rule: Mean scores of 3.50–4.00 = Very High; 2.50–3.49 = High; 1.50–2.49 = Low; 1.00–1.49 = Very Low.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate a high extent of cyberbullying experience among the undergraduate students, as evidenced by the cluster mean of 2.59. Six of the eight items recorded mean scores within the high category, ranging from 2.54 to 2.71, suggesting that several forms of cyberbullying were relatively prevalent within the study population. The highest mean score was recorded for offensive comments directed at students online (M = 2.71, SD=1.00), followed by ridicule through online posts and repeated harassing messages through digital platforms (M=2.65, SD=1.01, respectively). However, the mean scores for threats received through social media platforms (M=2.48, SD=1.03) and use of students' photographs online without permission (M=2.46, SD =1.02) fell within the low category. The relatively similar standard deviation values (SD=1.00–1.03) indicate a moderate dispersion of responses around the respective item means. Overall, the cluster mean of 2.59 demonstrates that cyberbullying constitutes a high-level experience among the undergraduate students surveyed.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of the Level of Psychological Well-being of Undergraduate Students

S/N	Psychological Well-being Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Positive relationships with other students are maintained.	218	276	174	100	2.80	0.96	High
2	Satisfaction with university life is maintained.	205	289	176	98	2.78	0.95	High
3	Confidence in handling academic challenges is demonstrated.	224	281	169	94	2.83	0.95	High
4	A clear sense of purpose in academic life is maintained.	213	278	181	96	2.79	0.96	High
5	Personal growth is experienced during university education.	226	274	178	90	2.83	0.95	High
6	Independent decisions about important matters are made.	219	269	187	93	2.80	0.96	High
7	Academic responsibilities are effectively managed.	231	276	174	87	2.84	0.95	High
8	A sense of personal worth is maintained.	220	285	171	92	2.83	0.95	High
Cluster Mean						2.81	0.96	High

Decision Rule: Mean scores of 3.50–4.00 = Very High; 2.50–3.49 = High; 1.50–2.49 = Low; 1.00–1.49 = Very Low.

The results in Table 2 indicate a high level of psychological well-being among the undergraduate students, with a cluster mean of 2.81. All eight items recorded mean scores within the high category, with values ranging from 2.78 to 2.84. The highest mean was observed for effective management of academic responsibilities (M = 2.84, SD = 0.95), while the lowest mean was recorded for satisfaction with university life (M = 2.78, SD = 0.95). The relatively narrow range of item means suggests a generally consistent pattern across the dimensions assessed. The standard deviation values, ranging from 0.95 to 0.96, indicate moderate variability in the responses. Overall, the cluster mean of 2.81 provides statistical evidence that the level of psychological well-being among the undergraduate students was high.

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Cyberbullying and Psychological Well-being among Undergraduate Students

Variables	N	Mean	SD	r	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision
Cyberbullying	768	2.59	1.02	-0.286	< .001	Significant
Psychological Well-being	768	2.81	0.96			

Note: Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The result presented in Table 3 indicates a negative and statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students. The correlation coefficient of $r = -0.286$ with $p < .001$ indicates that higher levels of cyberbullying were associated with lower levels of psychological well-being. The magnitude of the coefficient indicates a weak-to-moderate negative association between the two variables. Since the probability value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected. The finding therefore establishes that cyberbullying is significantly associated with variations in the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State.

Table 4: Regression Analysis of Cyberbullying as a Predictor of Psychological Well-being among Undergraduate Students

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	F	Sig.
1	0.286	0.082	0.081	0.918	68.50	< .001

Dependent Variable: Psychological Well-being

Predictor: Cyberbullying

Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
Constant	3.553	0.092	—	38.62	< .001
Cyberbullying	-0.287	0.035	-0.286	-8.28	< .001

The regression analysis presented in Table 4 indicates that cyberbullying significantly predicted the psychological well-being of undergraduate students. The model yielded $R = 0.286$ and $R^2 = 0.082$, indicating that cyberbullying accounted for 8.2% of the variance in psychological well-being. The adjusted R^2 of 0.081 indicates that the model retained a similar explanatory value after adjustment. The remaining 91.8% of the variance was unexplained by the regression model. The regression coefficient for cyberbullying was negative ($\beta = -0.286$), indicating an inverse predictive association between cyberbullying and psychological well-being. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 766) = 68.50$, $p < .001$. The negative beta coefficient further indicates that higher levels of cyberbullying were associated with lower levels of psychological well-being. Therefore, cyberbullying made a statistically significant negative contribution to the prediction of psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State.

Discussion

Extent of Cyberbullying Experienced by Undergraduate Students

The findings of the study revealed that the extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State was high, with a cluster mean of 2.59. The finding suggests that cyberbullying constitutes a noticeable challenge among undergraduate students, particularly through insulting messages, online ridicule, false information, exclusion from online groups, repeated harassment, and offensive comments. The finding is in consonance with the study of Fasola and Adesehinwa (2026), who reported that cyberbullying was present among Library and Information Science students in Southwest Nigeria and examined its role in predicting psychological well-being. Their study further recognised digital platforms as important avenues through which cyberbullying can occur. The finding also agrees with Anierobi, Akuneme, and Nnaemeka (2023), who examined cyberbullying among undergraduate students in a federal university in Anambra State and reported that undergraduate students experienced cyberbullying, with implications for their self-esteem, social development, and mental well-being.

The finding may be explained by the increasing dependence of undergraduate students on social networking platforms for academic communication, social interaction,

entertainment, and personal expression. Such extensive digital engagement may increase opportunities for hostile online behaviours. This position is supported by Peled (2019), who reported that cyberbullying among undergraduate students could affect academic, social, and emotional development. Similarly, Watts et al. (2017) identified cyberbullying as an emerging concern within higher education and noted that the university environment does not remain separate from online forms of bullying. Thus, the high level observed in the present study is understandable because the same digital platforms that facilitate communication and learning can also be used for harassment and social aggression. The negative implication is that persistent exposure to cyberbullying may create an unsafe digital environment for students and may interfere with healthy social and academic engagement.

Level of Psychological Well-being of Undergraduate Students

The findings of the study revealed that the level of psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State was high, with a cluster mean of 2.81. This finding indicates that, despite the reported high level of cyberbullying, the students generally demonstrated favourable psychological well-being across areas such as positive relationships, satisfaction with university life, confidence in handling academic challenges, sense of purpose, personal growth, independent decision-making, management of academic responsibilities, and personal worth. The finding is in consonance with the study of Fasola and Adesehinwa (2026), which specifically examined cyberbullying and psychological well-being among Library and Information Science students in Southwest Nigeria and recognised psychological well-being as an important outcome within the context of students' digital experiences. The finding also relates to the work of Ezeonwumelu, Anierobi, and Ezennaka (2022), who investigated cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in tertiary institutions in Southeast Nigeria, thereby confirming the relevance of psychological well-being as an important outcome in the study of cyberbullying among Nigerian undergraduates.

The high level of psychological well-being observed in the present study may suggest that undergraduate students possess certain personal and social resources that help them cope with the challenges associated with university life and digital interaction. Positive peer relationships, academic engagement, personal competence, and a sense of purpose may provide some degree of psychological resilience. However, the finding should not be interpreted to mean that cyberbullying has no psychological consequences. Arif et al. (2024), in a systematic review of studies involving university students, found substantial evidence linking cybervictimisation with adverse mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, stress, and suicidal behaviour. Therefore, the positive level of psychological well-being found in the present study may coexist with exposure to cyberbullying, particularly where students possess coping resources and supportive social environments. The positive finding is encouraging, but continued exposure to cyberbullying may threaten the psychological resources that currently support students' well-being.

Relationship between Cyberbullying and Psychological Well-being

The findings of the study revealed that there was a negative and statistically significant relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students, with a correlation coefficient of $r = -0.286$, $p < .001$. This finding indicates that higher levels of cyberbullying were associated with lower levels of psychological well-being. The finding is in consonance with the study of Arif et al. (2024), whose systematic review showed that cybervictimisation among university students was associated with several adverse mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, stress, and suicidal behaviour. Their review also reported significant negative associations between cybervictimisation and self-esteem across several studies. The finding also agrees with the

study of Ezeonwumelu et al. (2022), which examined cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in Southeast Nigeria and identified cyberbullying as a significant predictor of psychological well-being.

The finding is theoretically plausible because repeated exposure to online harassment may undermine feelings of safety, personal worth, social connectedness, and emotional stability. Negative online experiences can therefore make it more difficult for students to maintain positive psychological functioning. Fasola and Adesehinwa (2026) also investigated cyberbullying as a predictor of psychological well-being among students in Southwest Nigeria, providing further empirical support for examining the two variables together. However, the present finding differs from Anierobi et al. (2023), who found significant relationships between cyberbullying and self-esteem and social development but reported no significant relationship between cyberbullying and mental well-being among undergraduate students in a federal university in Anambra State. The difference may be associated with variations in study location, sample characteristics, measurement instruments, and the specific dimensions of psychological functioning examined. Overall, the negative relationship observed in the present study suggests that cyberbullying remains an important psychological concern among undergraduate students.

Predictive Contribution of Cyberbullying to Psychological Well-being

The findings of the study revealed that cyberbullying significantly predicted the psychological well-being of undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State. The regression analysis produced $R = 0.286$, $R^2 = 0.082$, $\beta = -0.286$, $F(1, 766) = 68.50$, $p < .001$, indicating that cyberbullying accounted for 8.2% of the variance in psychological well-being. The negative beta coefficient indicates that higher levels of cyberbullying were associated with lower psychological well-being. The finding is in consonance with Fasola and Adesehinwa (2026), who specifically examined cyberbullying as a predictor of psychological well-being among Library and Information Science students in Southwest Nigeria. Their study placed cyberbullying and psychological well-being within the same predictive framework and further considered digital literacy as a mediating factor. The finding also agrees with Ezeonwumelu et al. (2022), who investigated cyberbullying as a predictor of psychological well-being among undergraduate students in Southeast Nigeria.

The predictive contribution observed in the present study suggests that cyberbullying is not merely a form of undesirable online behaviour but has measurable relevance to students' psychological functioning. The negative direction of the beta coefficient is particularly important because it indicates that increases in cyberbullying correspond with reductions in psychological well-being. Arif et al. (2024) provided broader evidence supporting this interpretation by showing that cybervictimisation among university students was associated with several adverse mental health outcomes. Nevertheless, the R^2 value of 0.082 also indicates that cyberbullying explained only a relatively small proportion of the variance in psychological well-being. This is an important qualification because psychological well-being is multidimensional and may also be shaped by academic demands, family circumstances, peer relationships, financial conditions, personality characteristics, social support, and other environmental factors. Therefore, the finding supports the predictive relevance of cyberbullying without suggesting that cyberbullying alone determines the psychological well-being of undergraduate students.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributed to knowledge by providing empirical evidence on cyberbullying and psychological well-being among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State, Nigeria. The study established that cyberbullying was experienced to a high extent among the students, while psychological well-being was also at

a high level. It further established a significant negative relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being, indicating that increased exposure to cyberbullying was associated with poorer psychological well-being. The study also showed that cyberbullying significantly predicted psychological well-being. These findings provide useful evidence for psychologists, counsellors, university administrators, and other stakeholders in understanding the psychological implications of cyberbullying and in developing appropriate preventive, supportive, and intervention programmes for undergraduate students in public universities.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, cyberbullying was a notable experience among undergraduate students in public universities in Enugu State. Although the students demonstrated a high level of psychological well-being, cyberbullying was significantly and negatively associated with their psychological well-being. The finding that cyberbullying significantly predicted psychological well-being further indicated that exposure to cyberbullying constituted an important factor that should not be overlooked in efforts to promote students' psychological well-being. The study therefore concluded that effective measures should be taken to prevent cyberbullying and provide appropriate psychological and counselling support for undergraduate students in public universities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Public universities should strengthen cyberbullying prevention and awareness programmes because the high extent of cyberbullying experienced by undergraduate students indicates the need for continuous education on responsible digital behaviour, online safety, and the consequences of cyberbullying.
2. University counselling centres should provide accessible psychological support services for students experiencing cyberbullying because the significant negative relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being indicates that exposure to cyberbullying may undermine students' psychological well-being.
3. Public universities should establish or strengthen clear mechanisms for reporting and responding to cyberbullying incidents because effective reporting channels can encourage students to seek help and enable university authorities to respond promptly to cases of online harassment, threats, humiliation, and other forms of cyberbullying.
4. Universities should integrate digital safety and responsible social media use into student orientation and educational programmes because cyberbullying significantly predicted psychological well-being, making digital safety education an important component of efforts to protect students' psychological well-being.

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