

Cyberbullying Experiences and Coping Strategies in Ibadan Metropolis, Ibadan, Nigeria

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[Doi:10.19044/esj.2023.v19n32p89](https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2023.v19n32p89)

Submitted: 16 May 2023

Accepted: 22 November 2023

Published: 30 November 2023

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Cite As:

Kehinde A.M. & Dipeolu I.O. (2023). *Cyberbullying Experiences and Coping Strategies in Ibadan Metropolis, Ibadan, Nigeria*. European Scientific Journal, ESJ, 19 (32), 89.

<https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2023.v19n32p89>

Abstract

Introduction/Aim: Cyberbullying of influential personalities or celebrities is a media menace. Psychological, depression, and emotional suicidal ideation effects are some of the impacts on celebrities. A few studies have investigated celebrities' coping mechanisms against this, with the majority from developed countries. There is a dearth of information on this among celebrities in Nigeria. This study investigated the experience, effects, and coping mechanisms of cyberbullying among celebrities in the Ibadan metropolis, Oyo State, Nigeria. **Material and method:** A descriptive cross-sectional purposive sampling method was adopted. An in-depth interview guide was used for data collection among 14 consented celebrities. Data were manually analysed thematically. **Results:** Most participants were 25-35 years old and were comedians. All have experienced cyberbullies, such as popularity attacks and defamation of character. The effects of cyberbullying on the victims include low self-esteem, mental stress, depression, substance abuse, and financial crisis. Jealousy, hatred, envy, and quest for popularity among the perpetrators fuelled this menace. However, some celebrities have overcome these effects through technical, preventive, corrective, social support, and spiritual approaches. **Conclusion:** Cyberbullying is prevalent among celebrities and many experienced psychological effects. Awareness, interventions aimed at its prevention, and adequate coping strategies are

needed to solve this menace.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Celebrities, Online harassment, Social media platforms, Coping mechanism

Introduction

Cyberbullying is coercing or harassing an individual to do something or to stop doing something with repeated coercion, such as verbal, relational, physical (social exclusion) and indirect rumour spreading¹ through electronic or digital means, such as mobile phones or the Internet.² It is an aggressive, intentional act or behaviour carried out by a group or an individual repeatedly against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself². The likelihood of individuals being cyberbullied has increased tremendously with the growing accessibility to enabled internet computers and smartphones.³ This can happen to anyone irrespective of profession, age, race, sexual orientation, gender, status or religious affiliation. Online harassment and hatred are personally and societally harmful phenomena many social media users experience daily.⁴ With social media, millions can be reached by cyberbullies such as hate, derogatory comments or messages,^{5,6}; hence, it is more prevalent via this channel.⁷ Celebrities with a high degree of recognition by the general public through their success in their line of work and social media visibility are more likely to experience cyberbullying in a worse form than unpopular individuals^{8,9}. These include comedians, musicians, actors, bloggers etc. Disclosure of information about or by celebrities always increases online curiosity among internet users, thereby increasing the spread of information.¹⁰ Fans and followers often cause these; sometimes, artists or entertainers take on one another on social media whenever they have issues.

Given this, entertainment plays a pivotal role in the lives of Nigerians, and it is challenging to imagine life without an ounce of entertainment. Nigeria is on the right track with diverse, entertaining strategies, giving room for the sporadic development of these industries. With the surge in the growth of the Nigerian entertainment industry, there has been a tremendous increase in the influx of new and upcoming entertainers and media practitioners. Unfortunately, entertainers and/celebrities are experiencing the opposites of what they portray or play out: many are victims of cyberbullies who are being consistently victimised online; these they experience from the moment they wake up, check their various smartphone or even their electronic mail, till they go to bed and turn off their computer or smartphone. An example of the effect of cyberbullying is the aftermath of the dispute between a famous Nigerian musician, Ayodeji Balogun, also known as 'Wizkid', and a famous Nigerian blogger, Linda Ikeji, in January 2016. This incident made Linda Ikeji feel threatened about her safety and plunged her into an emotional state. According

to a trendy Nigerian entertainment news website, *bellanaija.com.com*,¹¹, the famous blogger published a story about Wizkid's alleged eviction notice from his rented apartment. In response, Wizkid showed off his new place of abode, and many people assumed he had bought the house. But the blogger revealed to the public that Wizkid only rented the place. This public revelation did not go well with Wizkid, as he took to social media and lashed out at the blogger.¹² The famous musician further went ahead in uttering more derogatory words in showing his anger at the popular blogger, which sparked more outrageous comments from her fans.

Cyberbullying, especially among entertainers, is a menace that warrants urgent attention¹³. The prevalence of this menace ranged between 25.0%¹⁴ to as high as 72%¹⁵. Cyberbullying experiences hinge on socio-demographic characteristics and psychosocial and socio-ecological factors emanating from social interactions.¹⁶ Victims suffer negative emotions such as frustration, anger, hopelessness, and even feelings of sadness.^{15,17} Depression, anxiety and low self-esteem levels are higher among cyberbullied.^{18,15,19} More direct attacks or celebrity 'bashing' are targeted at famous personalities,²⁰ causing them undesirable, negative and uncomfortable feelings and experiences.²¹ It is often difficult for victims to escape independently, but with the right coping strategies coupled with social support as part of their coping strategy guide,²² many escape from this trauma.

Cyberbullies are members of society; hence, awareness of and identifying forms and factors influencing cyberbullying and taking necessary actions to discourage the act is one of this study's motivating factors. Stakeholders in the entertainment industry will be informed on why this action should be combatted more aggressively. This research's findings will foster the eradication of this deviant act expressed as cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. This study revealed issues and the psychological effects of cyberbullying on celebrities in Ibadan, Nigeria. As such, it will create awareness about the negative impact of chastisement and criticisms of practitioners in the Nigerian entertainment industry on the Internet.

Aim: This study was designed to investigate the experience, effects, and coping mechanism of cyberbullying among celebrities in the Ibadan metropolis, Oyo state, Nigeria.

Materials and Methods:

A descriptive cross-sectional qualitative study was conducted among 14 celebrities in the Ibadan metropolis. The metropolis comprises five Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. This allowed the researcher the opportunity to get enough participants for the study. Ibadan had been a Nigerian divisional capital city in the past and was once the capital of Western Nigeria. Over the years, it has grown to become Nigeria's largest

urban centre, especially with its proximity to Lagos, Nigeria's economic centre. The city is one of Nigeria's largest metropolis by geographical area, situated in the South Western part of Nigeria, 128 km inland North of Lagos State and 530 km South West of Abuja, Nigeria's capital. It is a popular and prominent transit point between the coastal region and the areas in the country's hinterland. Ibadan city, established in 1829, has a population with a growth rate of 3% per year, as seen in the increase from 2,118,391 as recorded in 1996 to 3,598,475 in 2005 (Nigerian Population Commission, 2006). Ibadan is home to some federal establishments, institutions, and research institutes. Nigeria's Premier University (established in 1948), University College Hospital (established in 1957) and Africa's first television broadcast station, Nigeria Television Authority (established in 1959), are all situated in the city of Ibadan.

The study population comprised celebrities in the Nigerian entertainment industry in Ibadan, mostly comedians, perfumers, music producers, brand influencers, bloggers, on-air personalities and models. Those who consented to participate in this study were recruited. However, participants who are celebrities in Ibadan but unwilling to participate in this study were exempted from the study. Individuals who were not celebrities or were indisposed when conducting the study were also excluded.

Sample Size Determination: A priori 13 interviews were set from a previous qualitative study on cyberbullying among celebrities.²³ Data saturation criterion was used to determine the sample size. Data saturation was achieved and applied after conducting ten interviews when three additional interviews yielded no discovery. For this study, saturation was reached before the end of the 14th interview, and the interview was concluded at that point.

Sampling technique: Participants were hard to reach due to the nature of their jobs; hence, a purposive (snowballing/networking) sampling technique was used. A multistage sampling technique was adopted for the selection: 1. The entertainment sectors in Ibadan were categorised into TV/radio hosts, musicians, actors, comedians, social media influencers, Disc Jockeys, and makeup artists. 2. The number of members in each entertainment sector was determined by conducting a record review through the Association of Entertainment Stakeholders (AESOS) Oyo State, Nigeria officials. The records showed only 262 registered members. *Stage 3:* The random sampling technique was used to select the eligible celebrities.

Data Collection Instrument: The qualitative data were collected using an in-depth interview (IDI) guide harnessed on information on the views, experiences, effects and perceptions of cyberbullying. To ensure the instrument's validity, literature was reviewed to acquire the knowledge and ideas needed to develop the IDI guide. The researcher's supervisor also reviewed the guide, making necessary corrections and adjustments. To

establish the instrument's reliability, a pre-test was conducted among 10% of the total study population in Lagos state, a similar population group. Prospective participants were contacted before the study's commencement to explain its purpose in detail before obtaining it. Participants were also informed about the chance to revoke their consent freely at any point in the course of the interview. The confidentiality of each participant was maintained during and after collecting their information. Information collected from the participants was kept in the computer for analysis by the primary researcher with no access to unauthorised persons. Translation and back translation of the instrument and interviews conducted in Languages other than English were done. This ensures that the study participants understand the questions in the instruments. Once consent was obtained, interviews were scheduled.

Data Management and Analysis: The responses from the IDI were tape-recorded after due permissions were taken. The recorded responses were transcribed word for word and typed accordingly. Significant statements were underlined, extracted and labelled accordingly. The transcript fragments with significant statements were marked and labelled for additional analysis. The manual qualitative thematic analysis method was used to summarise the informational contents of the data²⁴. Themes and categories were generated after the first few numbers of interviews. At the same time, information was subsequently grouped, and new groups were formed when new theme(s) emerged (s). The themes were used for data interpretation and narration.

Results:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics of participants

The majority, 78.6%, of the participants fall within the age of 25-35 years, with a mean age of 31. A total of 57.1% were male. Most (64.3%) were Christians, and 71.4% of the participants were Yoruba. Comedians had the most percentage of the group (21.4%). The majority (78.6%) have been in the industry for more than three years, with 50.0% being more active on Twitter (Details in Table 1).

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of participants (N=14)

Demographic characteristics	N_o	%
Sex		
Male	8	57.1
Female	6	42.9
Ethnicity		
Yoruba	10	71.4
Edo	2	14.3
Igbo	1	7.1
Fulani	1	7.1
Age (in years)		
25-30	9	64.3
31-35	2	14.3
36-40	2	14.3
41-45	1	7.1
Religion		
Christian	9	64.3
Muslim	5	35.7
Social media Platforms most used		
Twitter	7	50
Instagram	5	35.7
Facebook	2	14.3
Occupation		
Comedian	3	21.4
Blogger/Online reporter	2	14.3
Brand influencer	2	14.3
Actor	2	14.3
On-Air Personality	1	7.1
Actress	1	7.1
Perfumer	1	7.1
Model	1	7.1
Music Producer	1	7.1
Number of years in the industry		
≤ 3	3	21.4
> 3	11	78.6

2. Experience of Cyberbullying among Celebrities

Celebrities experience a lot of cyberbullies via social media, blog post or reposts; the majority have been antagonised, harassed, criticised or defamed through offensive comments and content: many may be appraising, others defamatory. Perpetrators could use any derogatory or comparison to describe their victims. When asked, all participants agreed to have been cyberbullied; as such, it is a daily occurrence,

“This could be done by leaving comments or even by publishing a negative post about the celebrity.” (40-year-old; Male On-Air Personality).

“Celebrities get a lot of positive comments, so some people leave negative comments just to get their attention since...they do that to stand out and as such, the celebrity can reply or do something to them.” (25-year-old Male Skit maker).

Another supported,

“They are also called internet trolls. There was a time when I put my product on the Internet for sale. I mostly got positive reviews until someone called my product ‘sub par’ and the person tried to convince people not to patronise me...” (44-year-old Female Perfumer).

Trolls hope to leverage the emotions of others in the comment sections of social media platforms to make or get more attention. Depending on the issue, this act usually starts on the comment page, which eventually gets publicised by blogs, television channels and radio. The ripple effect of the activities of trolls makes the severity of cyberbullying on celebrities overwhelming as more people join in attacking the victims. As described by one of the celebrities,

“...someone commented that I was gay the way I was standing in the comment section, and then after he said it, others joined in and started supporting the guy.” (37 years-old; Male Comedian).

There are several reasons why celebrities get bullied online: these are done by attacking entertainers’ popularity, taking controversial offline issues online, cyberbullying through dressing, body shaming, and defamation of character.

a. Popularity attacks: Entertainers’ popularity is the major reason why many were being targeted. This is because their work overexposes them to public scrutiny. Hence, it is a demand of the profession. As narrated by one of the participants,

“I am of the opinion that people like us who have a lot of attention from fans and the media are always victims of cyberbullying. It is the price one has to pay for fame...” (29 year old, Female Blogger).

“The price to pay for being famous is the constant attacks we get from our so-called fans, and there is little or nothing we can do about it. People

can say whatever they want on the internet...” (44-year-old Female Perfumer).

b. Taking controversial offline issues online: Cyberbullying has its roots in controversial offline issues, which may be personal rifts between celebrities and individuals, who, in turn, may take this to the Internet. For example, one participant said,

“I was once engaged in a misunderstanding with a client, and this guy went on Twitter to pay some people to attack me. How can you take a physical battle online? Something that completely happened offline, how can you then take that online to people that completely were unaware of the situation in the first place?” (34-year-old Male Actor).

c. Cyberbullying through dressing pattern: Most participants experienced bully due to what they do and how they dress online. One celebrity posit,

“Like there was a time I wore blue pants and a black shirt, and someone commented that I was gay (due) to the way I was standing in the comment section, and then after he said it, others joined in and started supporting the guy” (37-year-old Male Comedian).

Another participant said,

“I wore a nice shirt and made a video of me walking in the streets, and then the person had put a nasty comment on that post. He called me a faggot. I didn’t even see the comment but noticed more comments of others bashing this person in my comment section on my behalf, so I checked. I ended up deleting that post and blocking the person” (29-year-old Male Actor).

Yet another participant said:

“Well, I was out of the country with a few of my girls, so we went to the pool in bikinis and posted these videos on our social media pages. I started seeing awful comments that the trip was sponsored by a sugar daddy and that I was involved in prostitution. They called me and my girls names like ‘opo’, ‘olosho’ (prostitute)” (28-year-old Female Actor).

These names, however, are quite offensive to these celebrities, and it is one of the major ways they are being bullied online by the perpetrators.

D. Body Shaming: Female celebrities usually experience body shaming more; nevertheless, this has become the major aspect through which bullies attack celebrities. Regardless, perpetrators would make unpleasant comments. To some, a thin-shaped body is the benchmark of beauty; hence, individuals with different body shapes are cyberbullied through name-calling. A few participants said,

“...I went shopping and got myself some nice outfits. I loved those clothes and posted some videos on my Instagram stories. (Within a short while) I started seeing responses of people pointing out how big my tummy is, and some even asked if I was pregnant....” (29-year-old Male Brand Influencer).

“The way I look now wasn’t me in the past; I got so many body-shaming comments on my posts in the past eh, people will pointed out that my legs are big. I had to hit the gym: those things were becoming quite unpleasant” (34-year-old Male Actor).

Another interviewed participant said,

“For the fact that I walk like a girl and talk like a girl, this has been a major reason why I have been bullied because apparently, that I look gay...” (29-year-old Male Actor).

Society views beauty from different perspectives, and when celebrities deviate from the ‘cultural standard’, this becomes a reason for celebrities to get bullied. Therefore, the way and manners through which they talk, look, walk, and post pictures are often used against them.

3. Effects of cyberbullying on celebrities

All participants reported varying effects of cyberbullying. Psychological trauma has been the prevailing outcome of bullies; this has caused ‘excruciating’ and ‘painful’ experiences on the health and lives of victims:

“Well, due to the fact I was cyberbullied, I was affected psychologically for a short moment...bullies need to know, people get...psychologically down due to bullying...” (29-year-old Male actor).

And a similar experience was shared by another participant,

“I couldn’t sleep that night because I was so worried... I thought about stopping my job since people could not handle the truth about what I had posted...the fans wouldn’t stop insulting me online...” (27-year-old Female blogger).

Through this, many reported stopped posting content, closed up social media for a while, lost jobs and left the industries; others, on the other hand, have run into debt or lived a ‘fake’ life to satisfy fans or avoid internet bullies. A participant pointed out that,

“Once beaten, twice shy. I stay safe these days: no more videos of me walking or talking on my feeds. I can’t stand being constantly called gay because of how I walk and talk. It’s not my fault I was created that way.” (29-year-old Male Actor).

Therefore, low self-esteem, mental stress, depression, loss of professional interest, social neglect, substance abuse and financial crisis emerged as the sub-themes reported.

a. Development of low self-esteem: Bullies have made respondents develop self-esteem; therefore, many reported feeling sad most of the time when these trollies are made. According to some participants,

“For a while, every time I share links to my blog releases, I get bashed because it is probably annoying to some fans of other celebrities; it made me question the kind of content I put out” (29-year-old Male Blogger).

“I simply posted a joke about a viral issue to ease tension...I was attacked, called talentless, ‘boring’ comedian...and so many other annoying names. Yeah, I felt bad: I started questioning myself... I had to keep questioning myself. And then it almost ruined my day” (30-year-old Male Comedian).

“...since someone called me a Turtle, now when people tweet at me out of excitement that they saw me on TV or whatever, I get sceptical because they might be messing with me again, and now, I don’t think of myself as a fine boy ...” (26-year-old Brand influencer).

b. Mental stress crisis: Cyberbullying has caused some celebrities a lot of mental stress; this is prevalent to the extent of attempting suicidal; hence, some considered taking/ending their own lives to end the shame:

“Everyone was so sure I did something wrong and took turns attacking me, calling me names, names ‘wey my mama and papa no call me’(pidgin English)... after a while, I just wanted to die, I thought if I maybe drink Sniper... they will see how crazy their acts are...”(30-years-old; Comedian). Another celeb expressed his opinion in pidgin English,

“...thank God for the phone call from my mum, ‘I for don dey under 6 feet by now’ (I would have died now). ‘I don already plan to go Eleyele River to drown’ (I have decided to commit suicide at Eleyele River)...those words were harsh from my online haters: how can someone say a whole me is a fag...That they could have gotten me killed or even arrested by the police. Being gay is a crime here o...” (27-year-old Male Model).

c. Depression: Depression was another aftermath of bullies recorded among celebrities; all reported to have experienced this:

“The ‘gbas gbos’ (confusion) was quite a lot for me to handle: I was depressed at some point. I just wanted to be all by myself, I didn’t want to talk to anyone, my friends, family, no one...I felt really low...” (28-year-old Female Actor).

Another reported that,

“I went through quite a lot in the hands of the cyberbullies who came after my product then. I was always buried in thoughts, always thinking, and I won’t be able to sleep because of this constant thinking; drugs were even working...it was that bad...” (44-year-old; Female Perfumer).

d. Loss of interest and low service outcomes: Depression, if not managed, may result in loss of control in the acts or a chosen profession. Many were almost plunged into this,

“While anchoring my radio show, I was so shocked when people dragged me on the station’s Facebook page that I was trying hard to shrug

it off, but it was quite a difficult task... I just couldn't continue because of all the negativities...how do you concentrate on dishing out content to people while you fight online?" (40-year-old Male On-Air-Personality).

This was corroborated thus:

"Having one's mind fixated on negative thoughts actually brings bad vibes; it was so hard to concentrate on set and remember my lines for a sequel I was shooting after my incident, I just took permission to leave that set because I couldn't stop thinking about all what the internet people were saying about me....." (28-years- old Female Actor).

e. Resulted in substance abuse: Some participants used substance abuse to escape the bullying experiences. According to a few participants,

"... anytime my guys left me after they have spent the whole day trying to cheer me up, I somehow pick up my phone and see nasty comments all over again, I just drink myself to sleep...." (25-year-old Male Comedian).

Another narrated how he prevented the effect of bullying through substance use,

"'Weed' (Marijuana) was of great help when I was being called horrible names on the Internet, and cybercriminals were castigating my skills. Then, 'once you hit a blunt' (the moment you smoke marijuana), you'd be too happy to be bothered about what anyone had to say...." (31-year-old Male Music Producer).

f. Financial crisis ensued celebrities through bullies

Some other effects of cyberbullying cost celebrities a lot of financial crises due to loss of jobs, endorsements, customers, patronage, referrals, etc. A bad review, false allegations, derogatory comments, etc, on a product, service or personality could destroy a reputation built with much effort, creating a financial crisis. Some participants reported that,

"...I lost quite a number of readers that visit my blog after they endlessly made my blog not credible with their harsh words, this traffic loss reduced my revenue..." (27-year-old Female Blogger).

In addition, a comedian put it thus,

"...My agents couldn't get me shoots any more, no money, all this because someone decided to accuse me of impregnating her. I was eventually exonerated, but before then, the cyberbullying tore a big hole in my pocket..." (25-year-old Male Comedian).

A blogger also added to the assertions thus,

"A lady once said my products were too expensive and went ahead to call them sub- standard. This somehow managed to get my attention, which had a negative effect on my sales.... (27-year-old Female Blogger).

These acts sabotage celebrities' businesses.

g. Social and societal neglect: Some celebs were abandoned during travails with online trolls. Society has no structure to rescue victims of cyberbullying, and this has caused them more emotional harm, loneliness, social and societal neglect and disconnections and opportunities.

“When I was being bullied, my colleagues just did like they didn’t see anything happening, they just stayed quiet and acted blind. None of them came helping....” (28-year-old Female Actor).

Another celeb said,

“The society we are in doesn’t really protect celebrities because abroad, just a false message can get you in trouble or jail, or even to pay a lot of money you are attacking online. But down here, they don’t care; there are more important things to care about. It’s free publicity for bullies . . .” (25-year-old Male Comedian).

4. Factors responsible for cyberbullying among celebrities

All participants mentioned several reasons for cyberbullying, including clout chasing, fun-play, punishment, discrimination, jealousy, revenge, hatred and envy. Others are conspicuous lifestyles, the quest visibility, sponsorship, endorsement, connections and media influence. All these may emanate from both the co-celebs and their fans. As pointed out below,

“ . . . the fact that I am posting my lifestyle on the internet makes some disgruntled people come after me, like when I change my car or buy new shoes and I post it, some haters start saying is it this same music production he is doing that he is always lavish . . . ” (40-year-old Male On-Air Personality).

A few participants also shared similar thoughts,

“Hatred causes this thing mostly. Again, gender causes it; you can wonder why someone of the same gender is doing better, especially females, and they link it with prostitution....” (26 year old Male Brand influencer).

“Well, one can also say the way I flaunt my lifestyle on social media, especially when I travel, makes me a target. Remember my Dubai trip story I told you earlier...” (29-year-old Male Actor).

5. Coping mechanisms employed by the participants in overcoming cyberbullying

All participants narrated a series of coping mechanisms employed in overcoming their cyberbullies, presented in theme and sub-themes shown below.

a. Solace from friends/family: Findings revealed that friends, family and colleagues were of help during their travails.

“I got a lot of support, people reported the pages that kept victimising me, and thankfully Instagram deleted them, and I had my peace...” (25-year-old Male Comedian).

“I got calls, suggestions, sometimes friends even scold the person, like the look, you shouldn’t be doing this. My colleagues on the radio call me up and offer suggestions and what and what they feel I should do. My GM even called to calm me down and asked me to be strong...” (A 40 year old male OAP).

b. Some, on the other hand, have adopted avoidance/ignoring offensive messages or chats by deleting personal social media handles. For instance,

“I deleted my social media accounts o... Basically, that was what I did...” (27-year-old Male Model).

c. The tech-savvy also adopted a technical coping system: this involves taking advantage of social media tools such as report/complaints forms, privacy settings, blocking, comments filtration, etc, to help curb communication from assailants. In their words,

“There is the option to delete comments, there is the option to filter comments, and also you can block and report internet bullies...” (44 year old; Female Perfumer).

An actor described this thus:

“I know you can report certain tweets on Twitter, and they (Twitter authorities) look into it and take steps to curtail it. That way, I end the nonsense before it even starts...” (29-year-old Male Actor).

Privacy settings and blocking of unwanted fans were also adopted as an approach.

“I’ve learnt to start blocking people; it’s good for my mental health...” (29-year-old Female Blogger).

d. Preventive and corrective coping methods: To avoid being a victim, celebs put preventive measures in place.

“You just have to watch what you let these people see, and due to that, I post only what I think won’t trigger negative vibes on my page. It’s been safe for me that way, no negative vibes around my page...” (26-year-old Male Brand influencer).

Those who were once a victim tends to ‘ignore’ bullies or seek help through counselling to help remediate and overcome subsequent occurrence, using a corrective coping method. A male actor narrated his corrective strategy thus,

“I have just learnt to overlook things and ignore negative comments since I know some just need to ride on my wave to get viral. I won’t allow anyone to use me for cheap publicity again, once beaten twice shy...” (29-year-old Male Actor).

Other celebrities shared a similar view,

“I did some counselling, yes, after my cyberbullying experience that lasted a week. That one was hell, and there are two people I go to, I go there to tap some ideas and get counsel; I got motivated after my sessions and somehow, bounce back on my feet...” (37-year-old Male Actor).

“...I had to find a way to be proud of my body again: my therapist really did a good job in restoring my self-confidence after those jobless idiots succeeded in ruining my self-confidence...” (29-year-old Male Brand influencer).

e. Spiritual supports: Nigeria is a country where people resort to spiritual support for solutions. Some participants have to adopt this method, and according to a few,

“So after someone castigated me for my music production skills on the Internet, and it affected my business, I went to seek the face of God, in church, and mountains...I felt I had to report them to God, and I did; somehow, it stopped the bullies’ effects from getting to me. I became empowered, more at peace, and mostly unbothered...” (31-year-old Male Music Producer).

“The fact that my family and I, including my daughter, prayed about it at the mosque and in the house, I simply asked God to direct me and end the bullying cycle. Somehow, I felt relieved and great that my family members joined me in praying: it made me and my family stronger....” (27-year-old Female Blogger).

In addition, a perfumer added her experience thus:

“After my ordeal with my online hater who criticised my products, I was sure some evil forces wanted to end my business.... I had no choice but to say some silent prayers now and then; this made me feel at peace, and I had a sense of calmness...” (44-year-old Female Perfumer).

Almost all prayed to end their bullying cycle; unfortunately, no one sought legal redress against the bullies because of the lack of structures to arrest or prosecute cyberbullies or offenders in Nigeria.

Discussion

Participants’ socio-demographic characteristics

The major age group (25-30 years) is a characteristic of the tech-savvy population who uses social media for adventures. This is similar to the characteristics of the study populations by Anderson and Jiang²⁵ and Derbyshire, Lust, Schreiber, Odlaug, Christenson et al.²⁶, were young adults spend more time on the Internet due to their age.

Cyberbullying Experiences among Celebrities

Celebrities in this study revealed a lot about becoming the target of cyberbullying. A few celebrities wondered why they had been targeted and concluded that it was primarily due to their fame and being out there in the

public eye²⁰. Being in public gives rise to thorough scrutiny by fans, friends, and assailants. As such, it has exposed them to many negative comments about their work, body, sexual orientation, how they go about their day-to-day activities and many other things. Popularity and a large friendship base increase the risk for cyberbullying; this idea of being a target due to fame posited in this study was supported by Straksud.²⁷ As such, cyberbullies used means such as name-calling, body shaming, clout chasing, and even trolling to bully celebrities.²⁸ An increase in the number of online friends such as Facebook, which do not have any connection to the participants in real life, can further increase the chance of being a victim of cyberbullying.²⁹

Factors responsible for cyberbullying among celebrities

A study by Schacter, Greenberg and Juvonen³⁰ revealed that more personal disclosures on social networking sites increased the risk of cyber victimisation. This assertion is very similar to the factors cited by the participants in this study. People have unprecedented access to a wealth of information and millions of people online. This is dangerous because this, in turn, gives everyone access to individuals on social media platforms. As such, they can do or say whatever they want under the guise of anonymity. As observed, one of the factors responsible for cyberbullying included media influence: people (celebrities and non-celebrities) engage in cyberbullying for media buzz or frenzy. Cyberbullying a celebrity often, is hidden under the guise of making jokes. This is usually done to get a lot of attention from the media, generating a tone of buzz.

Effects of Cyberbullying on Celebrities

Cyberbullying affects people from any age or walk of life, including celebrities, who all feel distressed and alone when bullied online. Cyberbullying can overwhelm someone, resulting in many celebrities feeling embarrassed, devastated and helpless. Effects described here are in tandem with those of Hoff and Mitchell³¹, which include physical, emotional and psychological, in addition to increased levels of depression, anxiety and psychosomatic symptoms. Our study found out that many have ideated suicidal attempts; this is in agreement with the study of Coelho, Marchante and Romão³², Wright, Wachs and Gamez-Guadix³³ and Lee³⁴ where anxiety, social anxiety, and suicidal ideation were on the increase. This is, therefore, an area of interest for further investigations.

Coping Mechanisms Employed by Celebrities in Overcoming Cyberbullying

In this study, one important question the researcher asked the participants was how they managed or coped during and after these cases of

cyberbullying. Their coping mechanisms include technical coping, spiritual support, preventive and corrective coping and solid social support: participants interviewed revealed that friends, family and colleagues were immensely helpful during their ordeal with cyberbullying. They could find comfort in their friends, family and colleagues and, as such, could deal with and move past the ordeal. Kochenderfer-Ladd and Skinner³⁵ affirmed that while dealing with cyberbullying, celebrities could either try avoidance techniques of coping or approach the problem. Approach coping strategies are attempts to change the stressful situation, including problem-solving and seeking social support. The problem-solving strategy encompasses the victim's coping through independent action, the seeking social support strategy involves the victim's inclusion of others in the coping process, and the seeking social support strategy consists of the victim's inclusion of others in the coping process.

Conclusion

Cyberbullying among celebrities has become a norm perpetrated by bullies on notable personalities, celebrities, etc. Many have and are still experiencing this menace, which has various interwoven factors. There was a high prevalence of cyberbullying among celebrities, with many undergoing high psychological effects. Prompt awareness, effective policy, legislation and adequate coping strategies are urgently needed from policymakers to help address the prevailing menace among celebrities in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Conflict of Interest: The authors reported no conflict of interest.

Data Availability: All of the data are included in the content of the paper.

Funding Statement: The authors did not obtain any funding for this research.

Declaration for Human Participants: This study was approved by the Oyo State Research Ethical Review Committee, Ministry of Health, Secretariat, Ibadan, Nigeria (Ref № AD 13/479/1459) and the principles of the Helsinki Declaration on research involving human subjects were followed.

Author Contributions

AMK conceptualised the idea, collected and analysed the data, wrote the first project report, corrected the revised report, and reviewed the manuscript. IOD reviewed the proposal, supervised data collection and report writing, reviewed the project report, and developed the manuscript.

Acknowledgments

Special appreciation to the study participants who provided the information for the research work and the qualitative data analyst, Sam Akande. The authors acknowledge everyone who provided intellectual and technical assistance in developing the manuscript.

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