



Revenge pornography and cyber-bullying in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe: Unpacking the psychosocial effects

Joanne NS Kambalata¹, Obediah Dodo²

¹ Peace & Governance Honours Student, Bindura University of Science Education, P. B. Bindura, Zimbabwe

² Bindura University, Zimbabwe

Abstract

The study unpacked the psychosocial effects caused by revenge pornography and cyber-bullying in Tertiary Education Institutions in Zimbabwe. Three institutions were used as study cases. The study was guided by Erickson's Stages of Psychosocial Development. The study used qualitative research methodology and employed the explorative research design for better analysis. Purposive sampling was used to select participants. Institutional administrators could not acknowledge the existence of revenge pornography for the sake of their institution's reputations yet students and secondary data acknowledged the existence of both revenge pornography and cyber-bullying in these Institutions. The study also revealed that revenge pornography and cyber-bullying cause psychosocial effects such as depression, humiliation, embarrassment, anxiety, stress disorders, deterioration of performance in school, social difficulties and suicidal tendencies among others. Thus victims are unable to gain closure and graduate from being victims to survivors.

Keywords: psychosocial effects; revenge pornography; cyber-bullying; students; Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Cyber-bullying and revenge pornography (revenge porn) cases in Zimbabwean Tertiary Education Institutions (ZTEIs) have been on the rise over the past years. The ways in which technology is being used as an instrument of extortion, emotional or sexual harassment has been given little to no attention. Cyber-bullying can occur to any digital user on campus but people who are usually deemed different from the others for instance those who are part of the LGBTI community, the disabled or those that do not fall under any traditional sexual labels are more prone. Revenge porn is to some extent a personal crime that people are subjected to so as to inflict pain or humiliation at a personal level and the perpetrator can gain fame or other personal benefits. However, people seem to under estimate the power of technology especially the internet as it can either cause devastating harm or bring profit and sustainable development. This study seeks to investigate the psychosocial impacts of revenge pornography and cyber bullying in ZTEIs. The following chapter concentrates on the background of the study, gives a brief statement of the problem, research questions, outlines the purpose of the study, justify why the study was conducted, raises the study assumptions, the limitations and delimitations, defines key terms and the proposed outline of the study.

2. Background to the Study

Revenge porn and cyber bullying in Zimbabwean Tertiary Education Institutions (ZTEIs) has been a common entity due to the vast and ever upgrading technology in the country as well as improvement in internet services. This issue of revenge porn in the common African societies is viewed as an initiated shameful act in which the woman will be shunned by having her behavior called inappropriate and she will be labeled promiscuous. This is because of the patriarchal norms that govern sexual behavior and

activities in Africa. Cyber-bullying on the other hand is viewed as a trivial matter or online jokes that do not have real life impacts. When it comes to the impacts of cyber-bullying and revenge porn, perceptions always try to blame the victims and call the psychosocial effects drama or the mere desperation for attention on campus. Many of the times attitudes towards victims of revenge pornography are often dominated by victim blaming of the woman. She is blamed for the in that the breach of privacy which arises from the nonconsensual sharing of the images is deemed, in some way, to be the responsibility of the women who produced, or allowed to be produced, the images in the first place, (Salter, 2016) [28]. This makes it hard for these women to be viewed as victims who need help with their psychosocial endeavors.

Despite being serious revenge porn and cyber bullying has however attracted rather very little scholarly attention neither do people know the laws that surround them. According to the Zimbabwe Censorship and Entertainment Act (1962) Chapter 10:04 Section 13 (1) (a) the production, dissemination and importation of undesirable publications, statues, records and pictures is prohibited. This echoes the societal aspect of shaming and blaming victims as active participants. The available studies of revenge porn and cyber-bullying to date have demonstrated the psychological consequences of the two and also the devastating impacts they can have on a victim's emotional and mental well-being which can seriously affect the victim's social life. The detrimental psychological impacts of revenge pornography upon victims are depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, use of maladaptive coping mechanisms and suicidal thoughts (Bates, 2017; Bond and Dogaru, 2015; Kamal & Newman, 2016) [2, 5, 18]. From this one can note that the negative effects of these atrocities especially revenge pornography are too similar to those suffered

by victims of sexual abuse thus the need for the perpetrators to not only be labelled as sex offenders but for the victims to be provided with anonymity and proper help. There has been failure to respond to the harms caused by revenge porn and cyber-bullying against adult women (Henry & Powell, 2015) ^[17]. Thus the need to break the ice and start deliberating on solutions that can assist TEIs in addressing these issues, while focusing on the outcomes.

This study is an all new and unique angle of looking at the psychosocial effects people suffer after being victimized in the cyberspace which in a way entails to be a new form of gender based violence. Amnesty International UK (2017) ^[1] state that while the majority of victims are women, it is important to remember online abuse against women is not just an experience of gender. Women with a different skin tone, religious or ethnic minorities, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender or intersex (LBTI) women, those who with disabilities, or are non-binary individuals who don't conform to traditional gender norms of male and female, will often experience online abuse that targets these different identities. TEIs in Zimbabwe are found in different places where people have varied cultures and backgrounds but mostly people from around that area will be the majority making it very easy to pick a victim. Cyber bullying and revenge porn can be done at any place and time just as long as one has internet connection and a digital device. Thus this study will open doors to new and upgraded literature of the psychosocial effects of revenge pornography and cyber-bullying.

3. Statement of the Problem

Uploading intimate material of non-consenting parties with or without captions of the victim's name, contact details and a story line to go with it leads to further cyber bullying such as stalking and unfavorable comments by internet trolls. In the Zimbabwean society sex toned subjects are considered as taboo especially on issues that involve the leaking of consensual or nonconsensual lewd footages. Society will not even consider the victim as one but as an active participant. Basically women are taught sexual morals that restrict them from being sexual beings in the way men are. Thus making it difficult to differentiate a victim from a concerting party and at times hard to identify the perpetrator. In normal circumstances the person who was wronged should report the offense but due to the African psychosocial coping mechanism of silence most victims silently suffer inner turmoil. Cyber-bullying is another case that is viewed by the society as trivial matters and jokes that exist only in the virtual world which makes them not to have real life consequences. Even though they cause feelings of inadequacy, humiliation, distortion of personality, attitude, individual thought and behavior. This study seeks to investigate the implications of these psychosocial problems in a Tertiary Education setting.

4. Research Objectives

The research sought to understand the relationship between social media, cyber bullying and revenge pornography. It also sought to investigate how cyber-bullying and revenge pornography directly affect its victims psychosocially in TEIs and to identify measures being taken by tertiary institutions in curbing the problem.

5. Theoretical Framework

The study was guided by Erikson's (1968) ^[12] Psychosocial

Theory of Development. This was used in trying to demystify the concepts of cyber-bullying, revenge pornography, their relationship with electronic gadgets as well as the negative effects of the combination. Its adequacy to foster effective social relations, with peers, and parents which also affect development from childhood through adulthood, or the achievement of identity. Benson *et al* (2013) ^[3] define identity as a life-long process which is molded by earlier life experiences and development with levels of psychosocial maturation focusing on the psychological task of establishing a stable and viable identity through the capacity to adapt to changing demands. These changing demands are experienced through a person's life as illustrated by Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development. According to McLeod (2013), these stages are Trust vs. Mistrust (0 - 1½ years), Autonomy vs. Shame (1½ - 3years), Initiative vs. Guilt Purpose (- 5 years), Industry vs. Inferiority (5 - 12years) Identity vs. Role Confusion (12 - 18years), Intimacy vs. Isolation (18 - 40years), Generativity vs. Stagnation (40 - 65years) and Integrity vs. Despair (65+years). Dambudzo (2015) ^[12] notes that a consistent, stable or reliable sense of who one is and what they stand for promotes identity formation. He continues by specifying that identity can change over time because its development is a lifelong process which involves a progressive resolution of conflicts or crises between individual needs and those for the group. These problems may include a failure to develop healthy relationships or adopting socially unacceptable ways of expressing who or what they do not want to be (Berger, 2014) ^[4].

The research focused more on the Intimacy vs. Isolation stage of early adulthood (20s through early 40s) as it is the basic age range of students in TEIs. McLeon (2018) ^[24] echoes that the theory reveals how young adults explore relationships which may lead toward longer-term commitments with someone who is not family. Erikson (1964) ^[14] indicates that every stage of development contributes to the other for instance after the development of a sense of self in adolescence (stage five Ego identity vs. Role confusion), one will be ready to share their life with others perhaps a partner without fear of losing oneself but gain identity. According to Erikson (1964) ^[14], the major primary attributes to this theory are strengths, which will help the ego resolve crises but when one does not complete a stage, there would be an unhealthy sense of self that can be determined later. Kivnick and Wells (2013) ^[20] note that if other stages of development have not been successfully resolved, it is possible that young adults will have difficulty in developing and maintaining successful relationships without them they may not be confident, members of society. Failure to master these tasks or if you do lose yourself in the process leads to feelings of inadequacy which may cause depression, emotional and anxiety disorders. Thus to fit in, feel accepted and loved students may concert to capturing their intimate encounters with a partner, even a user may also subject others to revenge porn or inflict cyber bullying to gain a much larger fan base.

6. Methodology

The research was informed by qualitative research methodologies. This is because qualitative methods deal with facts which answers questions that ask why, how, what, when and where hence it brings about a better analysis of comprehensive data. Due to the fact that it has social meaning the research used

the phenomenological approach which guaranteed understanding of the situations and consequences of revenge porn and cyber-bullying.

The research also chose qualitative research as it allows one to understand and get meaning of a targeted population and places thus by studying their social life. As the research seeks to understand the psychosocial effects, this type of research method allows the research to examine the meaning that students at TEIs attribute to their behaviour, actions and interactions with others. It also allows for dialogue and makes it easier for one to interpret the social world and even have first-hand information.

The study made use of the explorative research design. The research tools that were used to investigate the psychosocial effects of revenge porn and cyber-bullying were interviews, questionnaires, and secondary data and internet sources. The research interviewed administrators at the selected TEIs and the questionnaires were distributed to students at these higher education institutions. The interviews were conducted using open ended questions to get a better view of the answers and allowed the interviewee to elaborate more on their own thoughts whether personal or not.

The research made use of three TEIs in Zimbabwe. There are forty TEIs distributed around ten provinces of Zimbabwe. Only three of these TEIs were used: MSU, UZ and Harare Polytechnic. A sample of 30 students and three administrator participants were targeted from each institution making them 99 participants to represent the larger population. The research used purposive sampling to pick participants.

Data was collected through self-designed questionnaires answered by 88 student participants. The questionnaires had twenty-one questions in total which were designed in accordance to the research questions. The questionnaire allowed for first-hand information from possible victims or perpetrators who shared freely, independently and anonymously. The data collected were analysed qualitatively using narrative analysis and presented verbatim under the relevant question from the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were distributed and 88 students were able to answer the questionnaire which gives a total response rate of 98%. Of these participants, 42 (47%) were male and 46 (51%) were female. The research had targeted nine interviews with administrators but managed to do seven (78%). Of these, four were male and three were female.

6.1 Delimitation of the Study

The research used three ZTEIs out of the forty. That is Midlands State University (MSU) which is a government owned university, located in the Midlands Province. The main campus is in Gweru, other campuses are in a mining town called Zvishavane and the capital city of Harare. The study focused on the Harare province campuses which are school of Social Work and the Weekend School. These are located in Harare central business district (CBD). The research also looked at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) which is located in Mount Pleasant, Harare and Harare Polytechnic College which is located in Harare central business district.

7. Literature Review

7.1 Link between technology, social media presence, Cyber-bullying and Revenge Porn

Revenge porn and Cyber-bullying are carried out via some form of media such as a cell phone, email, text or IM, chat rooms, WhatsApp, social networking websites such as Facebook, My Space, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat to mention but a few. According to Chipawu (2015)^[8] these methods are due to the fact that students have smart phones making it easier for them to use social media. Laptops, tablets and smart phones are mostly used in TEIs and are owned by over 90% of students (Dahlstrom *et al*, 2015)^[11]. Zickuhr (2013) notes that young adults mainly use technological gadgets like mobile phones to exchange messages, as a personal agenda, listen to music, go online, send emails, take pictures, record videos and play games. Gikas and Grant (2013)^[16] postulate that increased use of mobile technology by university students has opened new options for students and encourages educational institutions to explore the use of social media and mobility as an instructional strategy but however, it can be abused.

Due the vast availability of these internet gadgets Linkous (2014)^[23] indicates that it makes much easier accessing and watching porn. One can note that with the adoption and free use of technology and social media in TEIs its abuse is highly likely as the need for entertainment may rise. Laas (2014)^[22] notes that cyber-bullying is usually bullying between learners as they use social media to embarrass each other or emotionally harm fellow learners. Thus it goes in line with Erickson (1968)^[14] who indicates that young adults seek to initiate and maintain romantic or peer relations may be affected by bullying experiences, which may cause a decrease in self-esteem and an increase in loneliness. These relationships can also be established via posting online content that demean others through various forms of cyber bullying and revenge porn. With the governments and Tertiary Institution's poor regulations of the internet or use of smart phones, revenge porn and cyber-bullying continues to mature and flourish in Zimbabwe.

7.2 Cyber-bullying

There are many different types of cyber-bullying that can be initiated in TEIs. According to Chipawu (2015)^[8] cyber-bullying is the aggressive harassing, humiliating, threatening or embarrassing of another person through electronic gadgets and online methods. Kuhlmann *et al* (2013)^[21] indicate that face-to-face bullying is different from cyber-bullying because cyber-bullies remove themselves from the impact of their actions by detaching themselves from their victims. These are some of the forms of cyber-bullying;

Catfishing is a form of cyber-bullying where one lies about their identity, personal life to another through a fake profile that can be used to spy on in anonymity or prey on the weaknesses of other users. According to Elkhatib *et al* (2014)^[13] when a cyber-bully steals another user's online identity, photos and re-creates profiles on social networks for deceptive purposes. One can note that this type of cyber-bullying can also be done by creating a fake profile or online account in a victim's name posting humiliating information or basically content that the victim will never normally post. This will humiliate and cause deformation of character to the victim and destroying their on-and-offline reputation.

Cyber stalking can extend to the cyber-bully spying on a person's virtual movements in the cyberspace and even making real life threats to the victim's physical wellbeing or safety

(Linkous, 2014)^[23]. Perpetrators can go to the extent of stealing photos and information of the victim. This is dangerous as social media spaces such as Facebook and Instagram can allow someone to see another's location.

Flaming is when a cyber-bully uses obscene language that is vulgar, abusive or aggressive when commenting on another user's content so as to initiate for instance a cyber-war (Primus, 2018)^[27]. It can also take the form of cyber trolling but on trolling the perpetrator's main aim is to shame and humiliate the other user.

Denigration or Dissing allows cyber-bullies to spread fabricated or true rumors to embarrass or harm their victims. The Tabby Project (2013)^[29] defines denigration as sending or posting cruel gossip or rumors about a person to damage his/her reputation and social circles. This dissing can also be seen through the spread of fake news.

Fake profiles can be created in order for a person to hide their real identity with the intention of cyber-bullying an unsuspecting victim (The Tabby Project, 2013)^[29]. The cyber-bully might also use someone else's email or mobile phone to cyber-bully them. This would make it appear as if someone else has sent the threats. In Zimbabwe having a new phone number is really not that hard due to the availability of street vendors who sell registered sim-cards for as little as one US dollar. The cyber-bully is afraid in case their identity is revealed; therefore they choose to use fake accounts. Bates (2017)^[2] indicates that hiding ones online identity has a high possibility that the victim know his other perpetrator. Examples of such profiles are Facebook pages with the names UZ Confessions and MSU confessions where every rumor is posted anonymously with captions that include the victim's name and degree program. *Musvo we Zimbabwe* is an example of a website that claims to promote sexual morality but in actual fact is instigating cyber-bullying and helping revenge pornographic material to go viral.

Doxxing is when someone researches and broadcasts private information about a person or an organization. In the context of cyber-bullying, Primus (2018)^[27] mentions that it involves finding out a person's private accounts and online activities and then making them public. This type of cyber-bullying also relates to stalking. The private information obtained may include a person's sexual orientation or private photos (leading to cyber-bullying or revenge porn). Doxxing can also lead to the cyber-bully hacking into their victim's accounts to obtain this information. One can note that revenge porn can be categorized as a type of cyber-bullying echoing the anonymity of cyber-bullying to cyber harassment.

7.3 Revenge porn

Even though revenge porn has been categorized as a form of cyber harassment it also has its own forms. Colleti (2017) defines revenge porn in a more gendered manner as she says it commonly involves a jilted male who shares intimate photos or videos online as a way to get revenge on a female ex-partner. The assumption in the sharing of these images is that they would probably have been taken consensually but then used by a partner who claims to either be wronged or is just jealous after the relationship has ended or even to end the relationship. Below are the forms of revenge porn.

People especially partners can engage in the act of Sexting, whereby there is exchange of semi-nude or nude photos or

messages that are sexually suggestive. They are sent to another individual via texting or social media (Morella *et al*, 2016). Nowadays Sexting can also be done via video chat on WhatsApp or Skype. Lewd photos of someone can also be accessed through hacking from people's private accounts (Linkous, 2014)^[23]. It is important to note that revenge porn can also happen without the nude or semi-nude images being posted online but by just physically showing them to someone when they are in the perpetrator's gadget.

A form of revenge porn that is interesting is Upskirting and it is described by Keener (2018)^[19] as a situation where someone takes and posts a picture of someone's body parts for instance in public without permission or hackers steal photos or videos from their gadget or online profiles and post them. This type of revenge porn shows the dangers of the online world as security is not always 100 percent secure and people can easily take screen shots of your online content and repost them as befitting to their aggressive intentions. Photo-shopping also highly implies as a victim's face may be pasted on another person's naked body to make it seem as if it's them.

Sextortion is another form of revenge porn which includes other cyber-bullying and exploitation scenarios and relates in some ways to upskirting. Wolak and Finkelhor (2016)^[31] define Sextortion as a threat of exposing or posting nude or intimate images publically and it involves coercion through blackmail to send money, stay in a relationship or perform sexual acts against their will so that their image won't be made public or be sent to specific people. One can note that this can actually be used by a perpetrator as a way to force the victim to grant him/her favors so as to have their image or video taken down from a website or deleted from their gadget. It is also important to note that with the advancing of today's technology footage cannot be deleted just like that as most smart phones and other electronic gadgets have private online galleries through Google photos, Outlook or Cloud syncing.

7.4 Psychosocial effects of revenge porn and cyber-bullying

The types of revenge porn and cyber-bullying enable the research to determine their psychosocial effects. Chipawu (2015)^[8] acknowledges that cyber-bullying has both academic and social effects on the life of a student. Studies have found that victims of revenge porn typically experience mental health and sociological issues as a consequence of their experience (Bates, 2016)^[2]. Brem *et al* (2015)^[6] portray cyber-bullying, its forms such as stalking and revenge porn as similar to psychological abuse because they both cause the same turmoil. Amnesty International UK (2017)^[1] acknowledges the fact that female students are mostly the victims and face slut shaming and victim blaming. Chisala-Tempelhoff and Kirya (2016)^[9] emphasize with an African perspective that even though both the woman and man might be involved in the revenge porn image, the woman will always be blamed because of the men's social power which is seemingly greater and the patriarchal societies. One can note that this social power can be linked to the men's sexual satisfaction which can be an instigator for them to have the audacity to victimize women and not be men enough to own up to it.

The initial shame and humiliation of becoming a victim may motivate the desire to manage conflict, protect oneself, avoid consequences and regulate emotions (Child *et al*, 2014)^[7]. Resulting in long-term effects such as dropping out of school,

suicidal tendencies, depression and having trust issues which likely result in the inability to find new romantic partners or even making new friends (Bates, 2016) ^[2]. Other effects include possible stalking and harassment which is clearly more cyber-bullying and the victims suffering from a variety of mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), severe feelings of inadequacy and insecurities (Bates, 2016) ^[2]. The detrimental psychological impacts of revenge pornography upon victims suffer from depression, anxiety, low self-esteem (Bates, 2017) ^[2]. Bond and Dogaru (2015) ^[5] indicate the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms so as to cope with the unending humiliation and finger pointing for instance on campus. Kamal and Newman (2016) ^[18] made it known that the incident may be too overwhelming for the victim as he/she might start having suicidal thoughts. This may be due to the emotional pressures of the victim may be feeling from the encounter and pressures of Tertiary Education. One can note that victims of cyber-bullying can end up getting labels through slut shaming and this leads to their TEIs being given a label also. MSU for instance has been called Midlands Sex University due to its plethora of sex-tapes leaking every other week.

Due to personal details and links to social media accounts being uploaded with the victims photos, it often leads to the victims isolating themselves by taking a break from all forms of social media (Bond and Dogaru, 2015) ^[5]. Although this may be done to reduce embarrassment and further harassment from other people, it can have a negative impact in which the victim needs support from friends being an important factor in overcoming such an act (Bates, 2016) ^[2]. This goes in line with Erickson (1968) ^[14] who indicates that positive relationship with others may decrease the loneliness felt by some cyber-bullying and revenge porn victims. However, in the Zimbabwean context, in accordance to the African culture, who would want to be associated with someone who has their indecent pictures spread all over the internet? One can note that the friends may even decide not to associate with the victim especially in public as they themselves may be prone to cyber-bullying or else people think they are in the same league of taking and sharing their nude pictures.

7.5 Corrective measures by Tertiary Institutions

In this part of the research, UZ, MSU and Harare Poly were used as cases that represent the bigger population. Schools in the UK according to McLeon (2015) ^[24] have an e-safety policy which is reviewed regularly and most educators received training with regard to e-safety and were able to seek advice from a designated specialty on e-safety. In Zimbabwe, there is very little literature to inform us on the measures being taken by TEIs so as to curb revenge porn and punish its perpetrators. Among the cases so far only UZ has done something to initiate change on campus regarding revenge porn and cyber-bullying. The institution had a Faculty of Arts International Conference on Social Media from the 11th to the 13th July 2018 to discuss the limitations and benefits of social media (University of Zimbabwe, 2018) ^[30]. Thus the school only managed to send awareness.

Tertiary Institutions in Zimbabwe have Sexual harassment Policies that only spell physical misconducts but say nothing about the virtual world. There has been a failure to respond to the harms caused by revenge porn and little attention has been given to the ways in which sexual violence or harassment is used as a tool to facilitate these (Henry & Powell, 2015) ^[17]. Chipawu

(2015) ^[8] also indicates the lack of enforcements to end cyber-crimes in the Zimbabwean Education Institutions. Punishment maybe hard to initiate when no one comes forward or the law of the nation suggest that there are no victims but perpetrators only in the taking and sharing of lewd images (Zimbabwe Censorship and Entertainment Act, 1962) ^[33]. The Communication privacy management theory (CPM) a systematic framework that explains how individuals decide to reveal or conceal private information and advocates that any information one feels vulnerable to disclose should be considered private information (Petronio, 2013) ^[26]. Thus there is no excuse as to why nothing is being done. According to Laas (2014) ^[22] there is great need to uphold Ubuntuism at an Institutional level as it will bring an end to cyber-crime by promoting mutual respect for everyone and their fundamental rights.

At the national level several countries including the Philippines, Israel, Canada, England, Wales, and New Zealand, and the Australian state of Victoria have criminalized nonconsensual pornography (Petronia, 2013) ^[26]. McLeon (2015) ^[24] makes it known that in March 2012 the South African cabinet approved the National Cyber Security Policy and Framework which aims to combat cyber warfare, crime and ills by building confidence and trust in the secure use of information and communication technologies. Laas (2014) ^[22] released an advocacy paper on the need for the Cyber-crime and Cyber-security bill of 2017 to be part of the Zimbabwean Law already. Other organizations such as Katswe Sistahood have actually held awareness campaigns and discussion programs that have put in place a petition for a Cyber Bill to be put in place. The creation of the Ministry of Information Communication Technology and Courier Services should also start upholding human security and protect its people from grass root level.

8. Findings

8.1 Prevalence of revenge porn and cyber-bullying

Findings from this show that there were three groups of answers those who were or knew someone who was subjected to revenge porn or cyber-bullying, those who were not sure and others who did not know if they were subject to or anyone who might have been. The data collected showed that 71 (79%) of the participants acknowledged knowing or being victims of revenge porn and cyber-bullying. 12 (13%) of the participants were not sure if they had been victims or anyone who might have been. Five (six percent) of the participants did not know if they were victims or anyone that could have been one. Two constitute unreturned questionnaires.

The answers from the seven school administrators where a mixed bag as others claimed not to know ‘anything of that sought’ happening at their institution.

One participant acknowledged the prevalence of the two but was quick to defend her institution by saying, “Offenders aren’t always students.”

8.2 Popular methods used in cyber-bullying and revenge porn

The methods that were raised were: Mobile phone call, Text message, Mobile phone camera (images taken), instant messaging (e.g. WhatsApp, Messenger), Email, Video chatting and Social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat). The study discovered that the majority of revenge porn and cyber-bullying cases were through Facebook, Instant

messaging (WhatsApp, messenger), text messages, mobile images and mobile phone calls. It is important to note that 12 (13%) students had indicated that they were not sure about being a victim and knowing one but seven (eight percent) decided to continue with the questionnaire. The data shows that emails had the lowest percentage three percent, Video chats at five percent, Text messaging at five percent and Mobile phone calls at eight percent. Taking of images had 19%, Social Networking Sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat stood at 20%. The most common is Instant Messaging which includes applications such as WhatsApp, Messenger, and Telegram to mention a few which had 27%. One student participant said this,

Disks of the footage were even made and distributed around the institution as well as my area of residence.

Another confirmed the use of WhatsApp by stating that, Social media groups such as on WhatsApp were created so as to distribute the images faster.

The research however noted that taking images and distributing them online makes more impact and enables whatever message the perpetrator wants to share more effective.

8.3 Effects of Revenge Porn and Cyber-bullying

The questionnaire asked the participants to identify the effects of revenge porn and cyber-bullying to the students. The study found out that there are a plethora of effects that can result from being cyber-bullied or from being a victim of revenge porn. The largest number of participants which was 13% shows that a lot of students suffer from depression after being victimized. Deterioration of school performance and embarrassment follow with 12% each. Isolation and social difficulties at nine percent each, low self-esteem at eight percent and stress disorders at seven percent. Anxiety recorded six percent and three percent recorded 'other' effects. These included having suicidal tendencies, being sad, scared, uncomfortable, angry, dropping out of school and feelings of betrayal. 10% marked trust and security issues.

8.4 Reaction to revenge porn and cyber-bullying

Revenge porn and cyber-bullying incidences are not reported, 63% participants. Only 20% of them have been reported. Most participants indicated that it was mostly because of fear of further humiliation that they did not report. The society always blame the female victim, they thought no one would listen or take their side. Of the 19% that indicated that they reported the incidents, 89% of these went to the police than reporting to the authorities at the institution.

8.5 The sex group that is mostly prone to Revenge Porn and Cyber-bullying

Seventy-eight percent of the participants said the females are more prone. The provided reasons are that women are blamed by the society by labeling her and that men want to exercise their sexual power over women.

One participant spoke about a gay friend who almost committed suicide when an upskirt video of him and his partner was taken and shared without their permission.

8.6 Views on who is to blame for Revenge Porn and Cyber-bullying

Data shows that 51% participants blame the patriarchal society

for the problems.

Seven participants blamed the social media and its applications that are not censored.

Seven participants blamed their Tertiary institutions for not doing anything but sweeping such issues under the rag and pretending like they do not see it.

The administrators blamed students copying from western cultures practices that they see in movies, on the internet and the social media. An administrator from one institution said,

It is hard to identify who we can put the blame on because at times you can actually see the girl holding the camera, even smiling at it and then when it's shared you say you were a victim. How?

8.7 Facilities to help cope with the psychosocial issues at the institution.

Sixty-nine percent of the participants indicated that their institutions have nothing to help one cope with the psychosocial effects. 11% confirmed some help by TEIs.

Administrators spoke about a medical nurse being the school counselor who helps with any required assistance.

8.8 Solutions that can be introduced and correctives measures already in place.

Seventeen percent of the participants spoke about the need for the government and the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education to take action as the cases are becoming more by the day. 22% spoke about jail time and serious charges to be brought on the culprits. 17% expect the Ministry of Cyber to also introduce measures to locate and persecute perpetrators and even come up with technology that enables them to hack and delete harmful content met to cyber-bully others. 17% students called upon the Victim Friendly Unit and the police to take victims serious as the effects of these crimes are also serious.

9. Conclusions

The research was unpacking these psychosocial effects of revenge porn and cyber-bullying in ZTEIs, Harare Polytechnic College, the University of Zimbabwe and Midlands State University.

The study was informed by Erick Erickson's stages of psychosocial development (Erickson, 1968) ^[14]. Through this theory the research was able form a basis of the age group of perpetrators and victims as well as discovering psychosocial effects that result from feelings of inadequacy that can emanate from one's own trials to fit in and be appreciated. Thus, this was interpreted in the context of both victims and perpetrators of cyber-bullying and revenge pornography as both groups struggle to find their identity and fit among their peers, this was discovered as one of the major reasons as to why students actually participate in either cyber-bullying and revenge porn or both. This framework actually agreed with the research findings as it provided situations to which a person can either be a victim, a participant or a perpetrator. It was also in line with the psychosocial effects that can be faced by the victim and provides possible solutions to help one cope with these effects. Major psychosocial effects that were identified by the research as to troubling a lot of victims were depression, humiliation, anxiety, low self-esteem, stress disorders, deterioration of performance in school, isolation, security and trust issues.

The institutions were aware of these problems taking place at their institutions but many of the participants were not exactly sure on what these phenomena were called hence making them unaware of their situations that they were cyber-bullied or if they know any other victims. The study revealed that no policies to deal with either cyber-bullying and revenge porn were not yet in place either at tertiary institution level or the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (MHTE).

The study also highlighted some of the obstacles surrounding the students not reporting their cyber issues with the institution's authorities. Students fear humiliation, not being taken seriously, being blamed or shamed and issues were being swept under the rag.

10. Recommendations

The study recommends that TEIs should have their own psychosocial mechanisms that assist all students with their problems whether victims or not. The research revealed that students come from different backgrounds in life; they have many problems and pressures that they encounter. There is great need for students to be taught and have awareness raising campaigns on the dangers of social media, the internet and best ways for them to protect themselves. This is due the fact that the research was conducted in a digital age whereby almost everything is found online. If students are aware of these dangers, psychosocial effects that are caused by cyber-bullying and revenge porn will be limited. Students will also be able to protect themselves in terms of generating better security for their online accounts to avoid hacking and better ways on whom to talk to when one is victimized.

Students should also be involved in workshops that teach them productive ways of using the internet and social media for development purposes or positive mobilization.

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