

Cyberbullying Experienced by University Students: A Study Protocol

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Abstract

Background: Bullying appeared for the first time in the scientific literature in 1897¹. Access to the Internet and associated forms of digital communication open new environments for bullying, called cyberbullying. According to APA Dictionary of Psychology bullying is “persistent threatening and aggressive physical behavior or verbal abuse directed toward other people, especially those who are younger, smaller, weaker, or in some other situation of relative disadvantage” while “Cyberbullying is verbally threatening or harassing behavior conducted through such electronic technology as cell phones, e-mail, and text messaging”². Bullying is perceived differently by young people in different cultures and environments and could lead to suicide-related ideology and behavior³. The aim of the study encompasses a tripartite nature. In the primary instance, it investigates the overarching effects of cyberbullying on the psychological well-being of college students. As a secondary point, the dissimilarities pertaining to gender, age, socio-economic background, and educational affiliations are examined. Furthermore, it focuses on the extent to which the students exhibit diminished levels of concentration and reduced focus on their academic achievements. *Methods:* This population-based cross-sectional study will include respondents of both genders aged 18 or above, with diverse socioeconomic statuses, and enrolled in Romanian universities. The instruments that will be used consist of self-administered online surveys, comprising a sociodemographic questionnaire, also assessing the academic level, a cyberbullying questionnaire survey, simultaneously evaluating patterns of internet utilization, and the 21-item Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21). *Discussion:* The study delves into the intricacies surrounding cyberbullying and its potential multifaceted repercussions within college students. Given the dynamic evolution of digital communication and its profound influence on interpersonal dynamics, the study's significance resides in the promise of the findings to shed light on the challenges posed by this contemporary manifestation of aggression.

Keywords: Cyberbullying; Undergraduate students; Survey; Study protocol

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