PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

PERSONALITY TRAITS, ATTACHMENT STYLES AND EMPATHY, AS PREDICTORS OF CYBER BULLYING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Bullying is the use of superior strength or influence in intimidating someone to force them into doing something. Cyberbullying is the harassment of individuals on the electronic platform, the bullying that takes place on devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. In the 21st century, cyberbullying has become one of the most significant problems (Watts et al., 2017). While it is essential to look at the factors that contribute to such an issue, an individual's traits are an ingredient in the whole process. In a world that is dictated from a visual perspective, how people especially

students depict themselves often directs how they are perceived. It is important therefore to look at how all factors contribute to cyberbullying.

For students especially since they are in the initial stages of formation, it forms a basic need for them to be acceptable. Their projections and desires are expressed through various social media forms. Personality traits form an entry point to a person's character; therefore their attachment in school or personal life will often play a big part in portraying their character. A critical look at such factors forms the basis of the paper, presented from a psychology point of view (Pabian, and Vandebosch, 2016). Personality traits, attachment styles, and empathy will be expounded, together with how they contribute to cyberbullying among university students. There will also be a conclusion at the end.

CYBERBULLYING

It is the harassment of an individual based on character, the point of reference, personality, comment, looks, sense of fashion and so on. By so doing the person is shamed, made fun of, used as a point of reference. It, therefore, injures the personal character, which can be hard to deal with psychologically for students who have a lot to deal with. The main reason that leads to any form of bullying is often the need to be accepted by the peers, lack of which is misinterpreted to mean that they do not belong (Watts et al., 2017). It is important to note that in adolescent the need to belong starts from as parents and people in authority it must be addressed early to nip it in the bud. If not addressed other personality traits will be factors in higher education and its relation to cyberbullying. Research has shown that there is a close relationship between cyberbullying and personality traits; therefore the link shows how often specific traits are prone to cyberbullying.

PERSONALITY TRAITS

The invention of the internet and online platform came with a myriad of issues; top on the list is the issue of bullying. Though bullying was common, the fact that a faceless individual can perpetrate it makes it more appealing to perpetrators. Every individual possesses a character trait that

defines them, subsequently when online a certain expectation is often portrayed. Those who are perceived to be more honest are at risk of being harassed (Drach-Zahavy, and Shilman, 2015). While at the same time the ease of opening accounts on different online platforms and the fact that one does not have to be honest on the platform makes cyberbullying thrive. A critical look at personal traits and the relation to being bullied is vital with the ultimate goal of having a cyber-bully free online community; one that is mindful of other people emotional state.

HONESTY-HUMILITY

Online platforms have thrived on the fact that they allow individuals to communicate and socialize. Consequently, those in such social platforms find it easy to post status updates that depict what or how they feel. Such updates often inform their followers, with an insight into how they are living their lives. Feedback is expressed through replies and comments where they express their opinions on the status. Honest opinions can sometimes be viewed as some form of bullying or harassment and therefore be hurtful to the person of interest. Online platforms offer a glimpse to an individual's life, their dislikes, likes, interests and so on. Having an honest and polite opinion is viewed as the right thing to do (Cushing Samuel and Kerman, 2014). For most people, a humble person is sometimes considered as a submissive character making the account holder a subject of discrimination and or even bullied, and the lack of might be viewed as a tough individual. As mentioned honest and humble character can be considered to be a submissive individual but at the same time opinions that are perceived as honest might be brutal at the same time. It is essential that a balance is established.

EMOTIONALITY

Emotions can be expressed in different forms based on the current affairs being faced. The emotional state of individuals expressed on the social platforms are many though different from person to person; it may point to an essential aspect about their lives. Electronic media has played a crucial role in how individuals form key relationships (Watts et al., 2017). The psychological

need to belong has often driven a lot of people to adopt different characters online. The same can be said of the emotional state that such individuals are forced to take. Emotions are an essential area that most bullies take advantage of, being vulnerable can expose one to a myriad of abuses.

While online a depiction of emotionally stable character forms the bulk of individuals, therefore emotionality is a vital component that contributes to cyberbullying in university students. The emotional state of students in the university can be summarized as stable but prone to certain shocks. Having a stable emotional background is essential and therefore ensuring that students have the right psychological state while learning.

EXTRAVERSION

Once established that individuals are experiencing bullying online, a coping mechanism is to ensure that those close to the victims offer support in coping with the vice. Friends, schoolmates, lecturers, and parents will form the fundamental pillars of their support. An essential aspect of the process which has no conclusive research is the degree of the support. It is believed that the victims are often receiving a backlash merely because they usually are considered to be the reason for bullying (Modecki et al., 2014). Extraversion explores that in most cases the victims are victimized based on different factors which may include, their personality, their character; information disclosed and so on. The disparity in apportioning blame goes further to show that victims of cyber bullying continue to face challenges in their quest to healing.

AGREEABILITY

Most of the times victims of cyberbullying often are forced to agree with the perpetrators of the same, it simply means that whatever they are told they tend to agree. A good percentage of those who face harassment at some point acknowledge the aggressor's point of view and tend towards being very forgiving. They are more lenient and do not judge others, do not hold grudges, are willing to compromise and cooperate. This trait makesit easy for

bullies to take advantage of, and exploit their victims. It is essential to make sure that individuals facing cyberbullying can get the psychological treatment that they deserve, to allow them to become better individuals and break the cycle.

CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

It is often believed that those who have a disciplined way of doing things are people with high conscious rates, they are well organized, accurate in their tasks, and they are resolute in making their decisions. This group is less likely to be affected or harassed or bullied (Cassidy and Shaver, 2015). On the other hand, those who are prone to harassment and bullying will often portray some characteristics, like being unconcerned with clean surroundings or even schedules, they tend to avoid challenging tasks or take on challenging goals, they seem to satisfied with work with some errors and take decisions on impulse or with little reflection. It is a characteristic that has often played into those who harass or bully others. Different ways can be explored to ensure the well-being of the emotional state of university students.

OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE:

A critical look at the factors that make some individuals prone to harassment, it will be difficult to find those who often are willing to learn, love to have new experiences and those who are outgoing. It is because such individuals see the beauty of things, is more aware of their surroundings, is speculative in nature, and is willing to use their imagination in their day to day lives. Cyberbullying it seems to target those who seem unimpressed by works of art, little or no intellectual curiosity, avoiding any creative pursuits, and little or no attraction toward ideas that may seem radical or unconventional.

These are some of the personal traits that often affect cyberbullying, while the internet is an important tool for communication and socialization, it must be used to foster good interpersonal skill and coexistence. Once these traits are mastered, it goes a long way in ensuring that cyberbullying is tamed (Cushing Samuel and Kerman, 2014). These personal traits have often been predictors to cyberbullying among university students while at the same time

provided important research information on how students often cope with such harassment. Studies have no conclusive evidence that they are the sole predictors of cyberbullying but together with a couple of other factors, they have significantly influenced the occurrence of cyberbullying.

ATTACHMENT STYLES

For most people how they communicate is influenced by events, people they relate to, surroundings, and environment. Establishing the level of influence is still research in progress. It is crucial to understand such factors and how they are related to cyberbullying. Most of the individuals that have suffered harassment and bullying will attribute their attachment styles to the frequency.

University students form the bulk of those who have the highest number of people with access to the internet. While the number is still on the rise, it is in the same breath that an increase in cyberbullying is a significant threat. Research has shown that quite many people who have experienced some form of bullying have been occasioned by the need to abide by certain societal expectation (Prasad et al., 2018).Consequently, while different individuals have different ways of expression, bullying is felicitated in certain ways which are similar. The most significant aspect of attachment styles involves individuals and how they can cope with cyberbullying. It is important to understand how individuals are forced by circumstances to avoid certain social platforms so as not deal with their pain. Below is an in-depth look at two attachment styles that are often displayed by individuals who have experienced cyberbullying.

AVOIDANCE

In psychological terms, a child may often be avoidant in case they are facing some form of rejection and bullying just because there are some foundational issues from their childhood. For those who might have experienced some when they were young, they tend to develop some form of coping ability (Modecki et al., 2014). It is depicted in the form of avoidance to

show that they are okay and disconnect from bodily needs, they are self-soothing and self-nurturing behaviors.

Therefore once such behaviors that were picked up by the individuals while young are displayed, then once bullied they emerge as a coping mechanism, they shut down the world around them and get self-absorbed. Avoidance is an important aspect when it comes to cyberbullying since it clearly shows some psychological issues that individuals might be suffering from and can inform the direction of treatment (Prasad et al., 2018). In coping with cyberbullying it is vital to look into avoidance as a means of dealing with the vice.

ANXIETY

The state of being anxious is an insecure attachment that is attributed to an uncomfortable relationship. As a coping mechanism anxiety plays attraction to someone who is avoidant, the two types of attachment are often exhibited by individuals who might be facing similar challenges. The more a person is uncomfortable, the more anxious they become anxiety; the feeling validates their long-held fear of abandonment (Cushing Samuel and Kerman, 2014). The fear of relationships and beliefs of not being able to be loved and not being good enough to be appreciated continue to haunt these individuals.

Such individuals become more to individuals with a requirement of regular assurance and dispelling of worries. An anxious individual tries to meet their psychological needs of relationships by having an attraction to an avoidantly attached individual (Prasad et al., 2018). The two have a codependent relationship. It is therefore vital to tackle cyberbullying while factoring such issues to provide the best remedy to the problem.
To establish what individuals experience cyberbullying an analytical view of avoidance and anxious attachments will ultimately be considered.

EMPATHY

It is the ability to be in a position to understand and feel the emotions of someone else; it is related to having a less bullying behavior. However, the

connection between having a bullying behavior with self-related instances of empathy is stronger than with behavioral measures of empathy. While empathy is the feeling of compassion towards someone, a commonly asked question is whether those who cyberbully are capable of having empathy (Cassidy and Shaver, 2015). It is to establish a clear understanding of empathy in relation to how it affects cyberbullying.

EMOTIONAL

Various individuals who have been bullied will attest to the fact that their self-esteem was injured when they were bullied. Research shows that there is a relationship between having high self-esteem and having empathy for oneself. The more the self-esteem, the more empathy one has towards themselves (Cushing Samuel and Kerman, 2014). Cyberbullying has been the contributing factor in the increase of more people lacking empathy, but at the same time having high self-esteem allows individuals to have better relations without feeling out of place.

From a psychological point of view creating a society that has a high number, empathic people has a direct link to the reduction to cyberbullying. It has been used to reduce instances of cyberbullying. Self-esteem is a significant individual predictor to cyberbullying the victimization and perpetration of it, such that individuals suffering from low self-esteem are most likely to report experiences of cyberbullying (Modecki et al., 2014). Empathy is another significant individual predictor of cyberbullying perpetration, to the extent that when empathy decreases, the reduction of cyberbullying. The research findings indicate that self-esteem and empathy fashioned the interventions and may successfully address cyberbullying behaviors.

COGNITIVE EMPATHY

Being able to understand different forms of empathy and how they affect the overall behavior of individuals. There two kinds of mental activities that go on outside of an individual awareness: mental activities, which include common memory, which often occurs without the influence of emotions better

known as cognitive unconscious and mental activities, such any forgetting something ordinary as a result of the emotional conflict. It is important to take note that every time something happens, there are factors outside our beings that may influence the outcome (Pabian, and Vandebosch, 2016). Having a clear outlook of the same helps individuals make sense of the emotions that we often go through. How it affects our mental capacity and most importantly how we relate to others. That will establish how we look at cyberbullying and empathy.

In conclusion,cyberbullying continues to form a significant huddle that has been occasioned by the invention of online communities. It is therefore important to establish how such activities affect the well-being of individuals from an emotional point of view. While it forms an important aspect of relationships, the online community is growing, and in the new future, it seems like the way of the future. Having an in-depth look at how personality traits, attachment styles, empathy as predators to cyberbullying among university students. While personal traits form the basis of individual behaviors in connection to relationships, a stronger and more critical aspect of the relationship with others is the ultimate goal.

In connection to psychology, it is important to be in a good state of mind to have a healthy all-around life. Cyberbullying affects our psychological well-being, and therefore it is crucial to tame such vices. For university students being able to have the right state of mind allows them to concentrate in class. By improving their general emotional and psychological needs, students will ultimately enjoy a stress-free environment and be able to enjoy life. Having a good attachment behavior where the issue of avoidance and being anxious are explicitly dealt with at the initial stages provides a basis for an emotionally stronger individual. Therefore using empathy to deal with issues of cyberbullying from a psychological point of view equips the mind to be more vibrant and resistant to low self-esteem and self-loathing.

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