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# Educational Programs on Cyberbullying and Online Ethics: The Plan and Strategy

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### ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying encompasses various forms of bullying, harassment, and intimidation conducted through digital platforms. With the rising popularity of social media and other computer-mediated communication technologies, incidents of cyberbullying have notably surged. Social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, X, YouTube, and Facebook provide bullies with a broader and more publicly visible arena to target their victims, irrespective of time or location constraints. The features of these platforms, including the high visibility and persistence of posted content, exacerbate the challenge for victims seeking refuge from their tormentors. Additionally, the anonymity or use of pseudonyms offered by many sites further facilitates cyberbullying by allowing bullies to conceal their identities from their victims. Within the context of tertiary education programs, cyberbullying remains a pertinent issue that demands attention. Tertiary students, often navigating their academic journeys with increased independence and reliance on digital platforms, are susceptible to various forms of cyberbullying. This research paper aims to propose detailed plan and strategy in accordance to providing educational programs for tertiary students ranging between 18 years old and 25 years old focusing on cyberbullying and online ethics issues which involve timelines before the educational programs were initiated, during the educational programs were conducted and result after the educational programs took place. The accuracy meter is used to measure the effectiveness of the strategy. Tertiary education programs must prioritize initiatives aimed at promoting digital citizenship, fostering respectful online behavior, and providing support services for students affected by cyberbullying. Educating students about the ethical use of technology, encouraging empathy and respect in online interactions, and implementing clear policies and procedures to address cyberbullying incidents are crucial steps toward creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for tertiary students. By addressing cyberbullying within the framework of tertiary education programs, institutions can better equip students with the skills and resources needed to navigate digital spaces responsibly and mitigate the harmful effects of online harassment.

#### **Keywords:**

Cyberbully; Online Etiquette; Cyberbullying Education Program; Educational Program Tertiary Students

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## 1. Introduction

In today's modern technological era, cyberbullying has unfortunately become normalized, often dismissed as a mere joke by many cyber citizens. This dismissive attitude is evident in the daily scroll of social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and X, where instances of cyberbullying are frequently encountered. However, it's crucial to recognize that this normalization of cyberbullying does not diminish its harmful impact, particularly on the victims who bear the brunt of such actions. Research findings reveal that adolescents who have been victims of cyberbullying are at a heightened risk of engaging in suicidal behavior compared to those who have not experienced such victimization [7]. The detrimental effects of online attacks are profound, with many university students silently enduring their suffering [6]. This underscores the enduring impact of cyberbullying, even after the harassment has ceased. Prolonged exposure to cyberbullying exacerbates the negative repercussions experienced by victims, amplifying the severity of the impact over time.

In Malaysia, various initiatives have been launched to address the issue of cyberbullying and promote social media etiquette. Notably, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) students have initiated a campaign known as Nethics, aimed at fostering responsible online behavior. Additionally, Cybersecurity Malaysia (CSM) has introduced the CyberSAFE program to raise awareness of cyber safety. Collaborating with DiGi Malaysia, a telecommunications company, these efforts extend to schools to increase awareness among students. In 2017, Nickelodeon Asia launched an anti-bullying campaign through public service announcements (PSAs), featuring a four-part animated series encouraging children to speak out against bullying, alongside promoting Malaysia's Talian Kasih helpline. While these initiatives primarily focus on bullying, rather than cyberbullying, helplines such as Cyber999 and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) are available for reporting cyberbullying incidents. Despite these efforts, there remains a lack of widespread awareness due to limited publicity. Moreover, the absence of specific laws in Malaysia to regulate cyberbullying and online ethics further compounds the issue [9]. In contrast, Ireland's "Speak Out" platform offers an online and anonymous reporting system for various forms of harassment and abuse, providing relevant support and highlighting formal reporting procedures. This example underscores the potential for Malaysia to adopt similar initiatives to enhance its response to cyberbullying and foster a safer online environment.

The research scope is dedicated to exploring the intricate dynamics of cyberbullying and online ethics within Malaysian society, with a particular emphasis on tertiary students aged between 18 and 25 years old. Utilizing a quantitative research methodology, the study employed a multifaceted approach, including quizzes, surveys, and an educational program, to delve deep into the nuances of these prevalent issues. Through a comprehensive examination, the research aims to gather empirical data and insights regarding the prevalence, perceptions, and impacts of cyberbullying among the targeted demographic. Additionally, the study seeks to elucidate the attitudes and behaviors surrounding online ethics, shedding light on the complexities inherent in navigating digital spaces responsibly. By adopting a holistic approach encompassing various research tools, the study endeavors to provide a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by cyberbullying and the ethical dilemmas faced by tertiary students in the online realm. Ultimately, the findings of this research are poised to inform the development of effective interventions and initiatives aimed at fostering a safer and more respectful digital environment for Malaysian youth.

The gap in existing educational programs, particularly in Malaysia, specifically tailored to address cyberbullying and online ethics is concerning, especially when juxtaposed with other countries that have developed comprehensive frameworks, including specialized laws to combat cyberbullying. This disparity is particularly pronounced in the context of our increasingly technology-driven society,

where digital platforms have become an integral part of daily life. As technology continues to evolve and permeate various aspects of society, the need for robust educational initiatives to address cyberbullying and promote responsible online behavior becomes increasingly urgent. Failure to bridge this gap not only leaves individuals vulnerable to the harmful effects of cyberbullying but also undermines efforts to cultivate a safe and respectful online environment for all users. Thus, this research focuses on the development and implementation of effective educational programs engaged in cyberbullying prevention and online ethics are imperative to safeguarding the well-being of individuals in today's digital age.

## **2. Research Methodology**

### **2.1 Pre-Assessment**

A pre-survey is administered to gauge participants' perspectives and experiences regarding cyberbullying, including instances where they may have been victims, perpetrators, or bystanders, whether consciously or unconsciously. Additionally, it aims to assess participants' general attitudes toward online conduct, including adherence to good netiquette practices during digital communication. The survey is conducted using Google Forms, a familiar platform among Malaysian students, facilitating ease of participation. Furthermore, the reporting feature of Google Forms enables efficient exportation of data into Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel, facilitating data tabulation and analysis through visually informative charts such as bar and pie charts, depending on the nature of the questions.

In contrast, a pre-quiz is administered to evaluate participants' comprehensive understanding of cyberbullying and online ethics, focusing more on factual knowledge rather than personal opinions. The pre-quiz is hosted on Quizizz, a web-based platform commonly utilized by university lecturers for interactive assessments, leveraging its familiarity among Malaysian students who often possess existing accounts. With its user-friendly interface and engaging features such as music and sound effects, Quizizz enhances the participant experience, fostering a sense of enjoyment and motivation while completing the pre-quiz.

### **2.1 Educational Program**

The educational program primarily utilizes task guides distributed in the form of handouts. Information dissemination occurs through email, with participants consenting to receive communications prior to the program's commencement. Tasks within the program are efficiently communicated via email to ensure widespread dissemination and accessibility. Additionally, a multi-platform approach is adopted to enhance participant engagement and provide a variety of avenues for interaction and participation.

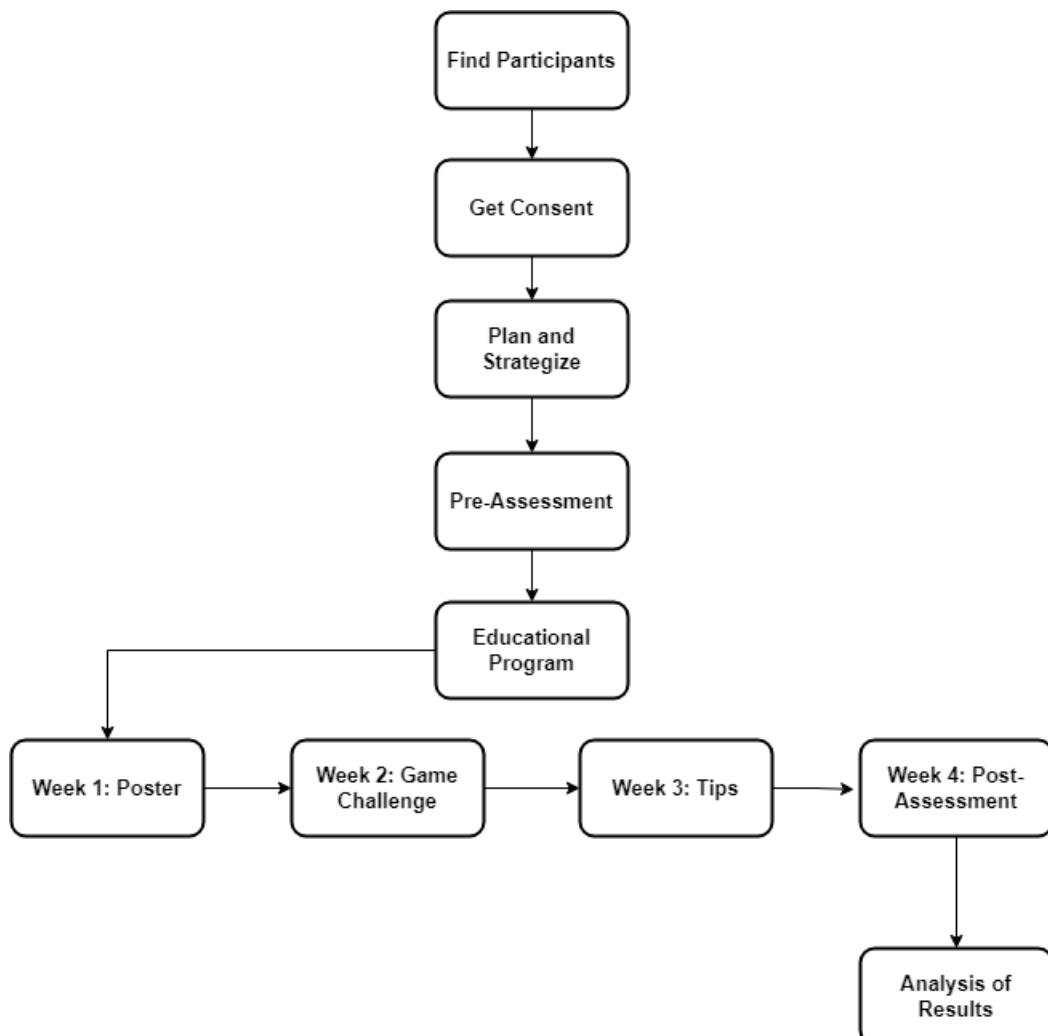
### **2.3 Post-Assessment**

The post-assessment comprising the same set of pre-assessments will be conducted using the same platforms which are Google Form and Quizizz.

## **3. Plan and Strategy**

As a proof of concept (POC), the program incorporated the same set of pre-assessment as a post-survey and a post-quiz to measure the effectiveness of the educational program intervention. This

strategic addition aims to enable a comprehensive comparison between pre-data collection and post-program outcomes, allowing for a nuanced analysis of trends and potential improvements in participants' knowledge as expectation. Anticipated outcomes of the educational program include cultivating a positive attitude in the online realm, fostering a constructive culture, and contributing to a safer and more respectful cyberspace. As outlined in Figure 1 below, the flow of activities before the program, during the program and after the program.



**Fig. 1.** Pilot Study Flowchart

### 3.1 Find Participants

The objective is to recruit a cohort of participants to engage in the case study component of the educational program. Specifically, the target demographic comprises 30 tertiary students based in Malaysia.

### 3.2 Get Consent

Each participant was required to sign a consent form indicating their willingness to participate in the program. The form aimed to collect essential information, including their name, email address, phone number, and university name. The recruitment process, including obtaining consent from participants, is completed within one week.

### 3.3 Devise A Plan and Strategy

The assessment process started with the administration of the pre-survey and pre-quiz to gauge participants' baseline knowledge and perspectives. Following this, the educational program was conducted. Upon its completion, participants undergo a post-assessment, consisting of the same pre-survey and pre-quiz, to discern any changes in their patterns or understanding subsequent to the program. The flow of this assessment process is illustrated in Figure 1 above.

The educational program extends over a month and was organized with weekly tasks tailored for participants. This flexible approach enables participants to engage at their own pace and convenience through a variety of online activities. The program offers a diverse range of activities, including exposure to multiple posters and tips aimed at preventing and addressing cyberbullying. Additionally, participants will engage in a cyberbullying game designed to raise awareness of cyberbullying issues and promote understanding of online ethics. The program is outlined in Figure 2 below as a table template to track the progress of the program.

NO	NAME	UNIVERSITY	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER	SENT	RESPONSE	CONSENT SIGNED	PRELINK SENT	presurvey	prequiz	score (%)		SENT: Week 1 - Posters	Feedback Week 1	SENT: Week 2 - Game	Feedback Week 2	SENT: Week 3 - Tips	Feedback Week 3	postsurvey	postquiz	score (%)
1																					
2																					
3																					
4																					
5																					

Fig. 2. Program Table Template

#### 3.3.1 Pre-Assessment

The survey has 40 questions consisting of 6 sections comprising of: -

1. Demographic Information: This section aims to gather personal and university-related details to provide context for subsequent questions.
2. Awareness and Perception of Cyberbullying and Online Ethics: This section aims to assess participants' awareness levels and opinions regarding cyberbullying issues and the importance of online ethics.
3. Personal Experiences with Cyberbullying: This section seeks to gather information about participants' personal encounters with cyberbullying, either as victims, perpetrators, or bystanders.
4. Awareness of University Regulations on Cyberbullying: This section focuses on participants' awareness of existing institutional regulations concerning cyberbullying.
5. Recommendations and Opinions on University Actions Against Cyberbullying: This section solicits participants' suggestions and viewpoints regarding potential measures to address cyberbullying within the university setting.
6. Netiquette Practices: This section aims to assess participants' adherence to Internet etiquette across various online activities.

There are 16 Likert scale questions scaling from 1 being Strongly Disagree to 5 being Strongly Agree. There are 8 open-ended questions whereby 4 of it is under the option of 'Others' alongside closed-ended questions. The remaining 16 questions are closed-ended form whereby 8 of it is a 'Yes' or 'No' questions.

The quiz consists of 35 questions, with 23 featuring definite answers, assessing participants' understanding through correct and incorrect responses. The remaining 12 questions are designed as polls to gather participants' collective viewpoints on context-based scenarios and posts. These poll-based questions aim to provide an overall understanding of participants' perspectives on cyberbullying-related issues. The pre-quiz encompasses four distinct sections: -

1. Cyberbullying: This section comprises 13 questions delving into various facets of cyberbullying, including different types, relevant laws in Malaysia, and the recognition of cyberbullying campaigns or awareness programs.
2. Online Ethics: With 10 questions dedicated to netiquette, this section evaluates participants' understanding of appropriate behavior and conduct in online environments.
3. Cyberbullying Scenarios: Featuring 8 ungraded questions, this section presents scenarios designed to elicit participants' opinions on whether each scenario constitutes cyberbullying.
4. Poster/Postings: Consisting of 4 ungraded questions, this section utilizes polls to gauge participants' agreement with cyberbullying-related posts or messages.

Through this comprehensive structure, the quiz aims to assess participants' knowledge, understanding, and perspectives on cyberbullying and online ethics, providing valuable insights into their awareness and attitudes towards these important issues.

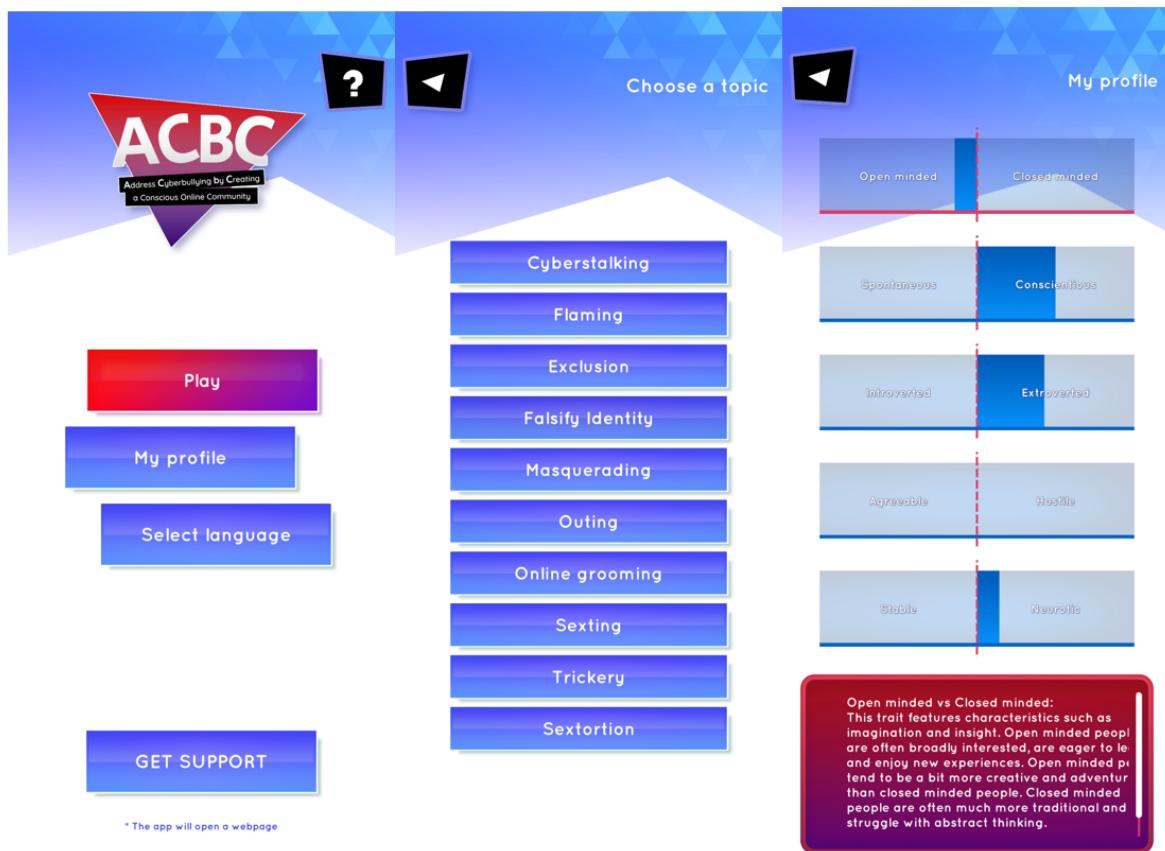
### ***3.3.2 Educational Program 1: Poster***

During Week 1 of the educational program, participants received a comprehensive set of posters via email, sourced from trusted local news platforms such as Malay Mail and Bernama and other published poster platforms. These posters, compiled into a single PDF file, cover various crucial aspects of cyberbullying, including its introduction, impacts, contributing factors, forms of cyberbullying, prevalent platforms, relevant local laws, and strategies for prevention and intervention. Participants were tasked with reviewing these materials to enhance their understanding of cyberbullying issues. Subsequently, they will provide simple feedback through a Google Form, sharing any newfound knowledge or insights gained from the posters. This activity serves as a foundational step in equipping participants with essential knowledge and awareness regarding cyberbullying.

### ***3.3.3 Educational Program 2: Game Challenge***

During Week 2 of the educational program, participants were engaged in an interactive learning experience by installing the mobile game "Address Cyberbullying by Creating a Conscious Online Community (ACBC)" on their Android or Apple devices, ensuring compatibility with participants' operating systems. Developed by 8D Games, renowned for its applications in education and healthcare within the social domain, the game was designed to address cyberbullying issues while complying with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards to safeguard user privacy.

Participants were required to select two cyberbullying topics from a range including cyberstalking, flaming, exclusion, falsifying identity, masquerading, outing, online grooming, sexting, trickery, and sextortion within the game. In the game, players will encounter various scenarios related to cyberbullying, and they will be prompted to respond by sliding their finger up, down, or sideways to indicate their agreement with statements associated with each situation. This simple interface allows for quick and intuitive engagement with the game's content, enabling players to navigate through scenarios and make choices that reflect their understanding and attitudes towards cyberbullying issues. They will then capture screenshots of their in-game profiles, depicting characteristics such as openness, conscientiousness, introversion, extroversion, agreeableness, hostility, stability, and neuroticism. These screenshots will be uploaded through a Google Form as evidence of participation, facilitating assessment and tracking of individual progress throughout the program.



**Fig. 3. ACBC Game**

#### 3.3.4 Educational Program 3: Tips

During Week 3 of the educational program, participants received a consolidated PDF containing five essential tips sourced from Cybersecurity Malaysia (CSM), covering topics such as netiquette and cyberbullying prevention. The tips include guidance on "Blog and Chat Safety," "Cyberstalking and Harassment," "Emails and Spam," "Making Friends Online," and "Safe Computing Tips." Participants are tasked with reviewing these tips to enhance their understanding of online safety and cyberbullying prevention strategies. Following their review, participants were required to complete a Google Form, providing feedback on a scale indicating their perceived level of preparedness in handling cyberbullying incidents in the future. This activity aimed to assess the effectiveness of the provided tips in equipping participants with practical knowledge and skills to navigate online environments safely and confidently.

#### 3.3.5 Educational Program 4: Post-Assessment

During the final week of the educational program, participants were undergoing a comprehensive assessment to gauge their understanding of cyberbullying and online ethics following their completion of the program. This assessment consists of the same set of surveys and quizzes administered at the beginning of the program, allowing for a comparison of participants' knowledge and attitudes before and after the educational intervention.

In the survey component, participants were evaluated based on their comprehension of the initial phases of cyberbullying, including identifying potential triggers or precursors to cyberbullying incidents. Additionally, participants were asked about their perception of online expression,

specifically exploring whether they still believe in the freedom to express oneself online, even if it involves expressing hate towards others.

The quiz component focused on assessing participants' personal scores, comparing their performance in the post-quiz with their initial scores from the pre-quiz. This evaluation determined if participants have demonstrated improvement in their understanding of cyberbullying and online ethics concepts throughout the program.

By conducting these assessments, the educational program aimed to measure the effectiveness of its interventions in enhancing participants' knowledge, attitudes, and awareness regarding cyberbullying prevention and responsible online behavior.

### ***3.4 Measurement***

The overall effectiveness of the educational program was evaluated through a combination of pre-assessment and post-assessment measurements. The pre-assessment and post-assessment focused on participants' understanding of key concepts related to cyberbullying and online ethics, as measured through survey responses. Specifically, changes in participants' views regarding the freedom of expression online and their recognition of potential triggers for cyberbullying will be assessed.

Additionally, the effectiveness of the program in facilitating in-depth understanding was evaluated through the participants' quiz scores. By comparing participants' scores in terms of overall accuracy curated from Quizizz and personal scores before and after the program, improvements in knowledge and comprehension can be measured. This comparison provide insight into the program's impact on enhancing participants' understanding of cyberbullying and online ethics.

Throughout the duration of the educational program, participants also required to provide feedback on each task through Google Forms. This feedback offered valuable insights into the effectiveness of individual program components in helping participants gain new factual information and improve their understanding of the subject matter.

Overall, the combination of pre-assessment, post-assessment, quiz scores, and participant feedback provide a comprehensive evaluation of the educational program's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and fostering greater awareness and understanding of cyberbullying and online ethics among participants.

### ***3.5 Result***

Detailed result of all activities and measurements are further discussed in the following section 4 of this paper.

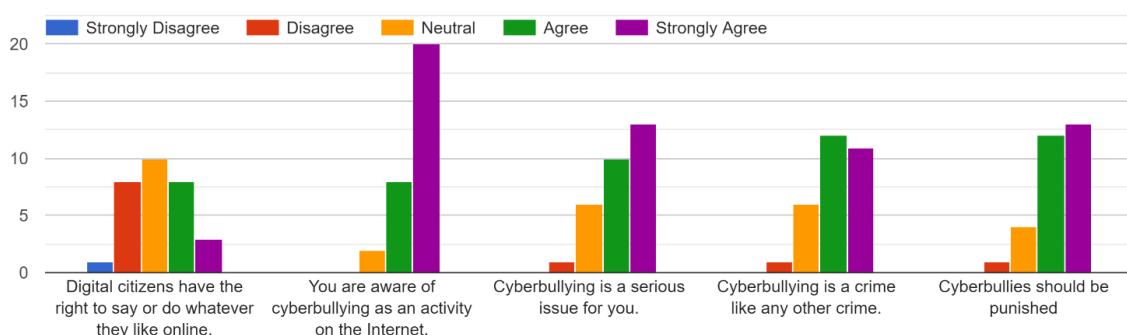
## **4. Results and Discussion**

In this section, both the pre-assessment and post-assessment data were analyzed collectively, focusing on key questions to effectively gauge any changes in participants' opinions and scores regarding cyberbullying and online ethics. Additionally, educational feedback provides a comprehensive analysis of the results. This approach allows the identification of significant shifts in participants' understanding and attitudes following the educational program, providing valuable insights into the program's effectiveness in addressing cyberbullying and promoting responsible online behavior.

#### 4.1 Survey

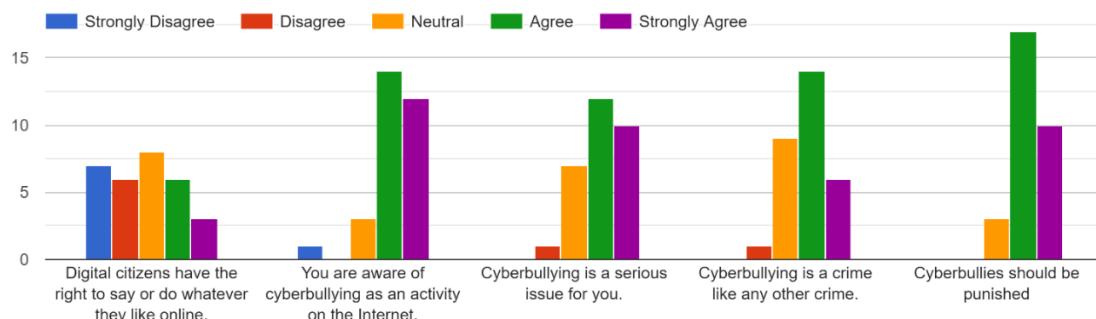
Based on the data presented in Figure 4 and Figure 5 below, there is a notable increase in the number of respondents who disagree with the statement "Digital citizens have the right to say or do whatever they like online". This trend suggests that participants are becoming increasingly cognizant of the potential consequences of negative online behavior, which could serve as an initial trigger for cyberbullying incidents. This heightened awareness is likely attributable to participants' exposure to various forms of cyberbullying throughout the educational program.

Rate your agreement for the statements below based on the likert scale



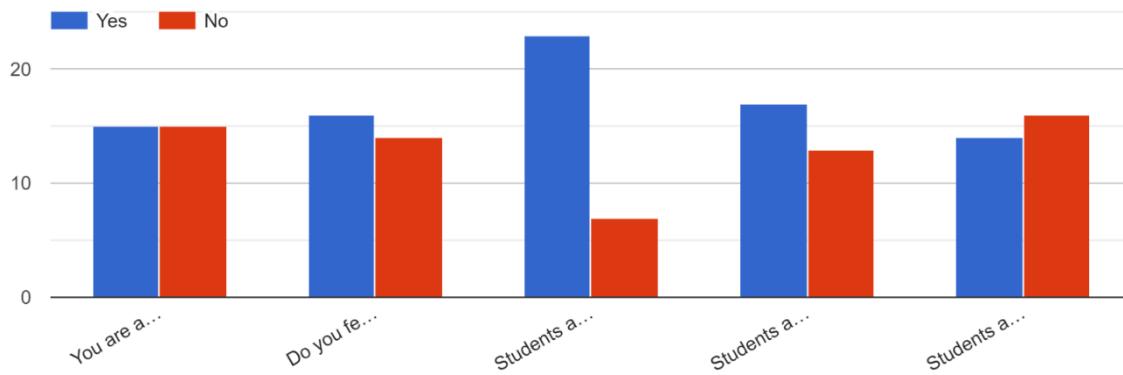
**Fig. 4. Pre-Survey Awareness Level on Cyberbullying & Online Ethics (Statements-Based)**

Rate your agreement for the statements below based on the likert scale

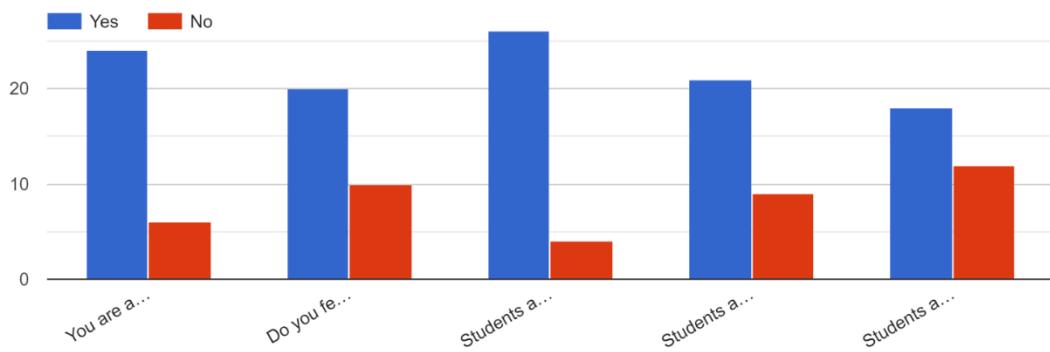


**Fig. 5. Post-Survey Awareness Level on Cyberbullying & Online Ethics (Statements-Based)**

Based on Figure 6 and Figure 7, the prominent improvement is in the first statement, "You are aware of any of the official policies of the university related to cyberbullying/bullying/misconduct", participants have agreed more on acknowledging their respective university's rules on cyberbullying after the educational program. For other consecutive statements, participants show decent improvement in awareness in their university as evidenced by responses to statements listed, "Do you feel that students on your campus are comfortable or empowered to step up and inform trusted adults about cyberbullying that is occurring to them?", "Students are taught acceptable computer and Internet use", "Students are taught how to recognize cyberbullying and threats to their online safety" and "Students are taught how to respond to cyberbullying in an appropriate manner".



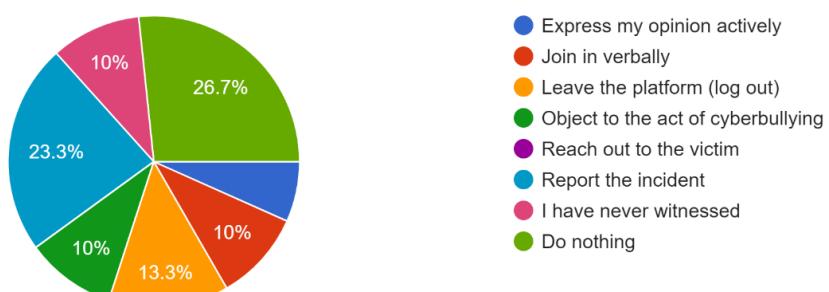
**Fig. 6.** Pre-Survey Awareness of Current University's Regulations on Cyberbullying



**Fig. 7.** Post-Survey Awareness of Current University's Regulations on Cyberbullying

Remarkably, bystander responses for “Reporting the incident” increased significantly, from 23% in the pre-survey shown in Figure 8 to 33% in the post-survey shown in Figure 9. Consequently, there was a decrease in passive behaviors, such as doing nothing, joining in verbally, or leaving the platform. This indicates that the educational program positively influenced bystander actions regarding cyberbullying. Participants are now more likely to report perpetrators of cyberbullying, demonstrating the program's effectiveness in encouraging proactive and responsible online behavior.

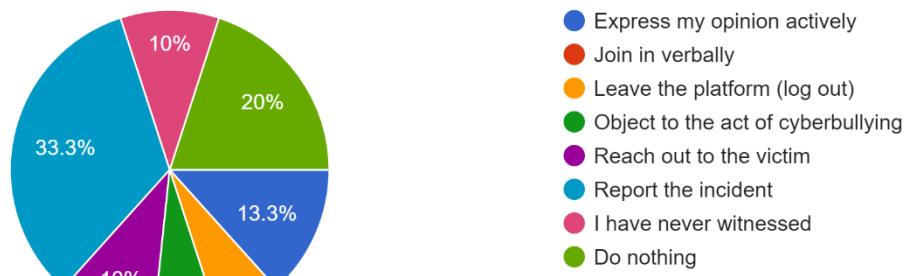
If you ever witnessed cyberbullying across social media platforms, how did you respond?  
 30 responses



**Fig. 8.** Pre-Survey Bystander Response

If you ever witnessed cyberbullying across social media platforms, how did you respond?

30 responses



**Fig. 9.** Post-Survey Bystander Response

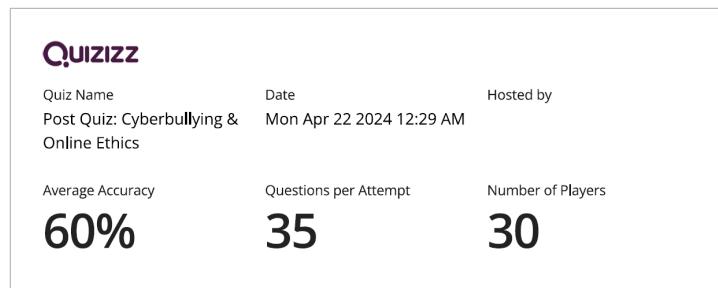
#### 4.2 Quiz

The average accuracy is calculated using the total points gained by the participants for correct and partially correct answers divided by the total points for the quiz multiplied by the number of students, from the Quizizz platform format. Generally, the higher the accuracy percentage, the higher the participants understood the questions. For the pre-quiz, the participants obtained 57%, as shown in Figure 10 below. Overall, the participants show a lack of advanced knowledge of cyberbullying such as uncommon terms of types of cyberbullying (23% accuracy), laws (7% accuracy) and campaigns on cyberbullying (3% accuracy). This has clearly shown the lack of awareness of cyberbullying issues. They also show consistency as in the pre-survey, in the opinion of cyberspace is where people can express themselves openly even if it may be mean along with a lack of empathy in the agreement of the post that says, "If you are being cyberbullied, just go offline".



**Fig. 10.** Pre-Quiz Accuracy Score

As for the post-quiz, there is a slight improvement indicating from the average accuracy score of 60%, as shown in Figure 11 below. Unfortunately, there are no significant improvements in the questions of types of cyberbullying, local laws and campaigns on cyberbullying but a slight increase in the question involving identifying doxing (form of bullying) by increased accuracy from pre-quiz (50% accuracy) to (77% accuracy). There is also a slight decrease in the agreement of the post that says, "If you are being cyberbullied, just go offline".



**Fig. 11.** Post-Quiz Accuracy Score

Notably, on participants' scores, as shown in Table 1 below, 19 of them have improved in their scores answering the post-quiz compared to the pre-quiz.

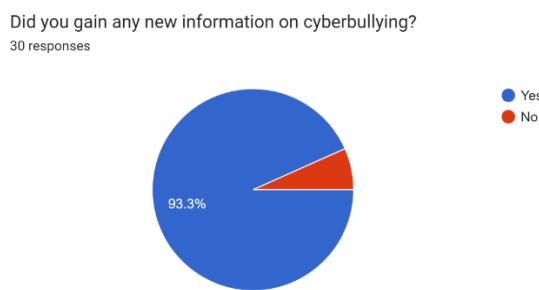
**Table 1**  
Comparison Quiz Scores

Pre-Quiz Score (%)	Post-Quiz Score (%)
52	70
17	30
52	61
48	52
48	70
57	52
57	61
61	65
61	48
74	87
65	70
70	78
48	70
48	57
57	70
65	52
70	39
30	30
48	52
57	61
74	70
70	65
61	70
65	65
65	48
65	70
57	61
57	52
70	70
35	52

#### 4.3 Educational Program

##### 4.3.1 Week 1 – Poster Feedback

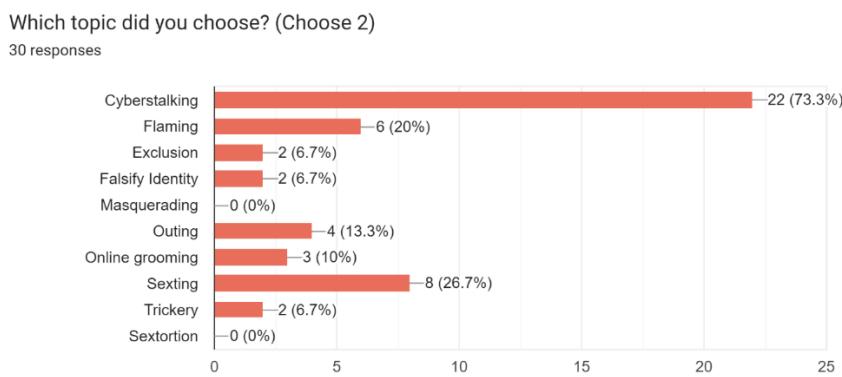
The feedback provided by participants suggests that most of them have acquired new information from the posters, as depicted in Figure 12 below. In their further responses submitted via Google Form, participants elaborated on the newfound knowledge, highlighting key insights such as the imperative need to cease cyberbullying, the staggering number of victims affected, ongoing efforts to address cyberbullying through local legislation, the severity of its impact surpassing initial expectations, various forms of cyberbullying, strategies to assist victims, and available local helplines for support.



**Fig. 12.** Poster Feedback

##### 4.3.2 Week 2 – Game Challenge

From the ACBC game application, participants have predominantly selected cyberstalking as the topic to explore, followed by sexting and flaming. This trend suggests that participants are particularly interested in gaining further knowledge about these specific forms of cyberbullying through interactive gameplay.

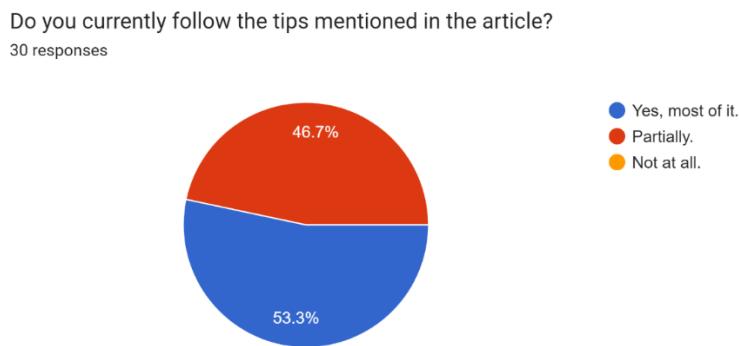


**Fig. 13.** Game Topic Chosen

##### 4.3.3 Week 3 – Tips Feedback

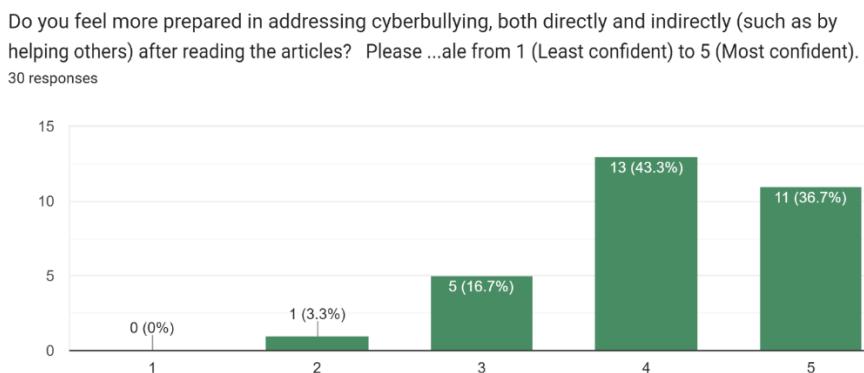
Based on participants' feedback on the tips provided in the handout, it appears that the majority of them already adhere to most of the tips, as illustrated in Figure 14. This trend could be attributed to the participants' backgrounds, with many coming from Information Technology (IT) or cybersecurity fields. Their familiarity with these subjects may have led them to adopt practices

aligned with cyberbullying prevention and online ethics, given the close relationship between their field of study and these concepts.



**Fig. 14.** Tips Followed

Once again, participants have shown promising results, indicating an improved readiness to address cyberbullying incidents directly or indirectly as bystanders after reviewing the distributed tips. This positive outcome is reflected in the scale depicted in Figure 15 below.



**Fig. 15.** Preparedness After Reading Tips

## 5. Conclusions

Based on the comprehensive research conducted throughout the various stages of the educational program, it is evident that the program has yielded positive outcomes, particularly in the post-assessment phase following its completion. Participants demonstrated heightened awareness regarding the responsible expression of oneself online and exhibited an improved understanding of the rules and regulations within their respective universities. Additionally, a majority of participants showed enhancement in their post-quiz scores, indicating a deeper comprehension of cyberbullying and online ethics concepts.

However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations within the program methodology, particularly concerning the mode of information dissemination, which was solely online. This may have led some participants to perceive the material lightly and consequently hindered their full grasp of the content provided. Despite this, the research findings remain promising, underscoring the potential efficacy of such educational initiatives, even within a small case study group.

Moving forward, there is a pressing need for Malaysia to take decisive action in implementing more comprehensive and robust programs targeting tertiary students. Alongside this, improvements in cyberbullying legislation are imperative to address the growing challenges posed by online

harassment effectively. By prioritizing these measures, Malaysia can pave the way for a safer and more responsible digital environment for its youth population.

### Acknowledgement

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