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Educational Programs on Cyberbullying and Online Ethics: Gap Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Cyberbullying has been a persistent issue since the inception of the digital age, as individuals have often exploited technology to serve their interests. This prevalence of cyberbullying has resulted in critical knowledge gaps and a widespread lack of awareness regarding the profound repercussions of these harmful actions. It is imperative to establish robust guidance on technological ethics right from the outset, through the development of comprehensive educational programs. The primary objective of this research is to undertake an exhaustive and in-depth literature review focused on existing educational programs and ethical frameworks that have been implemented to address cyberbullying. The aim is to identify effective educational interventions that can be applied to tertiary students in Malaysia. This research endeavors to gain a profound understanding by exploring the deficiencies in knowledge of cyberbullying and online ethics that contribute to the prevalence of cyberbullying within online spaces. The insights gathered will be instrumental in developing educational programs aimed at enhancing awareness, fostering empathy, and equipping students with the skills to respond appropriately to cyberbullying incidents they may encounter in the future. The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology used in this research is the Arksey and O'Malley Framework for Scoping Reviews, whereby existing material will aid in a better understanding of the current programs to develop enhanced ones. The identified gaps highlighted in this research are the need for a more profound understanding of cyberbullying, guidance on appropriate responses across different roles (bully, victim, bystander), and comprehensive knowledge of relevant laws and existing campaigns. These gaps are valuable for the application of future educational programs on cyberbullying.

Keywords:

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

1. Introduction

This project provides a comprehensive overview of educational initiatives designed to promote online ethics, combat cyberbullying, and foster greater mindfulness of online behaviour. Rooted in

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extensive research, this endeavour includes a thorough literature review, incorporating a wealth of existing studies, academic papers, and research findings about cyberbullying, online ethics, and the efficacy of educational interventions in this domain. This research will contribute to the national Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which is approved by all United Nations Member States, to provide guidelines for a better community set in the year 2030. It comprises of 17 goals varying to wellbeing, education, nature and economy to make a better world, globally where everyone should adopt a better state of living. This research covers number 3, Quality Health and Wellbeing and number 4, Quality Education through enhancing education on cyberbullying and online ethics hence fostering a more positive communal mindset, contributing to an improved overall community attitude.

The research scope focuses on cyberbullying and online ethics issues in Malaysian society specifically tertiary students ranging between 18 years old and 25 years old. Quantitative research will be conducted with participants of the case study comprising of quiz and survey. Qualitative research will be conducted by interviewing personnel from related professions to gain firm information regarding cyberbullying and online ethics in current times.

Cyberbullying is quite similar to bullying but the indecent actions are done through cyberspace. It is defined further as using devices that has the ability to connect to the Internet and cause repetitive harm to others [3]. The impact of bullying has led to several issues such as mental health problems, stress, depression, anti-social behaviour, and even suicidal intentions for some [10]. In cyberbullying situations, there are different roles of people involved in it. In a cyberbullying incident, participants can be broadly categorized into three primary roles: those initiating the incident, referred to as perpetrators; individuals facing the targeted insult, identified as victims; and onlookers present during the incident, commonly known as bystanders [12]. The strongest predictor of cyber aggression-victimization is exposure to the Internet [20]. The more an individual spends time on the Internet, the higher the chances are the individual will be involved in cyberbullying. Due to the increase in internet users, the number of cyberbullying cases has increased [8]. Moreover, individuals who engage in cyberbullying tend to experience a higher average sense of power compared to those who abstain from cyberbullying, stemming from the observed power imbalance [1].

Other research findings indicate that adolescents who have experienced cyberbullying victimization are more susceptible to engaging in suicidal behavior compared to those who have not been subjected to cyberbullying [7]. Due to the detrimental impact of online attacks, numerous university students endure their suffering in silence [6]. This shows that even if cyberbullying has stopped, it can have a long-term effect on the victims. A long period of exposure to cyberbullying will lead to a greater negative impact on the victims.

Identifying the exact topic of cyberbullying lacking in cyberspace users' knowledge is crucial in providing a suitable educational program that will guide them between right and wrong and how to manage even as bystanders. The misuse of cyberspace has breached the safe and efficient space of online services' core value making it a place for exposure to threats and danger where cyber citizens have generally failed to see it as part of the cybercrime category as resulted in the everyday use of social media nowadays. Therefore, this underscores the pressing need for a comprehensive solution to address and rectify these negative actions, emphasizing the importance of promoting awareness and ethical standards on the internet. This research aims to conduct an extensive literature review related to cyberbullying, online ethics, and effective educational interventions and to evaluate cyberspace users' education level or knowledge regarding cyberbullying and online ethics through a survey and a quiz to achieve a higher goal of lessening the act of cyberbullying, if not abolishing it as a whole.

2. Methodology

2.1 Literature Review

The Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology used in this research is the Arksey and O'Malley Framework for Scoping Reviews, whereby existing material will aid in a better understanding of the current programs to develop enhanced ones. Databases or sources used for this research are from Mendeley and Google Scholar. These will help in the systematic review according to the string search, as shown in Table 1 below, to manage keywords according to their relevancy.

Table 1
String Search

Data Source	String Search	Count (Referred)
Mendeley	("cyberbullying") OR ("cyberbullying" AND "malaysia")	14
	("effects cyberbullying" OR "effects cyberbullying malaysia")	2
	("internet ethics communication" OR "online etiquette" OR "netiquette")	5
	("cyberbullying technology")	3
Google Scholar	("cyberbullying education" AND "malaysia")	4
	("cyberbullying educational framework malaysia")	3
	("online ethics communication")	2
	("cyberbullying technology" AND "online ethics")	2
	("cyber security malaysia cyberbullying statistics")	5

2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Research

A survey is conducted to gather participants' general views and opinions on cyberbullying and if they have consciously or unconsciously encountered any cyberbullying experiences either being a victim, bully and/or bystander. It will also gather their general attitude in cyberspace if they adopt any good netiquette during online communication. The survey is conducted through Google Forms as it is a common platform for students in Malaysia to understand the format, thus making the process easier for the participants. The reporting of Google Form is also very easy and efficient as it can be exported into Google Sheets or Microsoft Excel for tabulation of data collected alongside having the responses into suitable charts such as bar chart and pie chart to analyse data properly depending on the type of questions. The survey has 40 questions consisting of 6 sections comprising of: -

1. Demographic: This section identifies the personal and university-related information to gain insight into participants' knowledge of information on further questions.
2. Awareness and General Opinion of Cyberbullying and Online Ethics: This section gathers personal opinions to identify awareness levels of cyberbullying issues and the criticalness of it from students' perspectives.
3. Personal Experiences on Cyberbullying: This section asks about personal experiences of being involved in cyberbullying incidents either directly or indirectly as a victim, bully and/or bystander.

4. Awareness of Current University's Regulations on Cyberbullying: This section asks about institutional laws on cyberbullying and participants' awareness of it.

5. Recommendations and Opinions for the University's Actions Towards Cyberbullying: This section asks for the best recommendations and opinions to counteract cyberbullying issues in the institution.

6. Netiquette: This section defines participants' level of Internet etiquette based on various online activities.

There are 16 Likert scale questions 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 forms whereby 8 of it are 'Yes' or 'No' questions.

A quiz is conducted to test the in-depth knowledge of participants on cyberbullying and online ethics. The quiz has 23 definite answers which has correct and wrong answers to each question while the remaining 12 are poll-based questions to get the overall view of all participants based on context-based scenarios and posts. It is conducted through Quizizz which is a web-based online platform to answer assigned homework in the form of a quiz whereby every question has a time limit of 1 minute except the context-based scenarios with 2 minutes period. Quizizz is a platform commonly used by lecturers in universities to conduct pop quizzes whereby Malaysian students are familiar with hence have an existing account. The platform is user-friendly along with excitement while answering questions as there can be music and sound effects. This will make the participants enjoy answering it. The quiz consists of 35 questions with 4 sections comprising of: -

1. Cyberbullying: 13 in-depth questions about cyberbullying such as types of cyberbullying, laws in Malaysia and recognition of cyberbullying campaigns or awareness programs.

2. Online Ethics: 10 questions regarding netiquette.

3. Cyberbullying Scenarios: 8 ungraded questions that are designed as a poll to get the overview of participants' opinions if it is cyberbullying in context scenarios.

4. Poster/Postings: 4 ungraded questions that are designed as a poll to analyse if participants agree on the posts of cyberbullying.

Additionally, an interview session is conducted to achieve the objective of obtaining valuable insights from a professional view regarding cyberbullying and online ethics for the qualitative data to further support the quantitative data in survey and quiz.

3. Gap Analysis and Result

3.1 Existing Educational Programs on Cyberbullying

There is a campaign in Malaysia by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) students known publicly through the name Nethics, which promotes social media etiquette. A program from Cybersecurity Malaysia (CSM) is called CyberSAFE that promotes awareness of cyber safety. DiGi Malaysia, a telecommunication company has also collaborated in this campaign to increase awareness in schools. In 2017, Nickelodean Asia has started anti-bullying campaign as public service announcement (PSAs) by screening four-part animated series to encourage children to speak out if they are experiencing bullying with the slogan "It's not OK, Say Something.". They also promote the helpline Malaysia's Talian Kasih (care hotline). However, this focuses on bullying instead of cyberbullying. There are also helplines to report cyberbullying incidents which are through Cyber999 and Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC). There is not much publicity through aforementioned campaigns hence the target audience is less due to people do not think it is an interesting topic to attend to. Additionally, there are not a lot of campaigns that talk about

cyberbullying and online ethics as there is no specific law in Malaysia to regulate these issues yet. However, in Ireland, “Speak Out” is an online and anonymous reporting platform for incidents of bullying, cyberbullying, harassment, discrimination, hate crime, coercive behaviour or control, stalking, assault, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape. Speak Out will help to find relevant supports and highlight formal reporting procedures, should you wish to use them. This is one example that Malaysia can adopt to further develop better help with cyberbullying issues and cases.

3.2 Laws in Malaysia

Unfortunately, there are still no specific laws in Malaysia to tackle this issue [9]. Thus, specific provisions addressing cyberbullying are essential in Malaysia to ensure the protection and well-being of victims, as well as to facilitate legal proceedings against perpetrators in a court of law [9]. Nevertheless, there are existing laws that address online behaviour. The laws are Computer Crimes Act 1997 (CCA), Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA) 1998, Penal Code and Defamation Act 1957. Offenders can be charged by the aforesaid laws, under cyberbullying when certain criteria are met such as harassing and offending others [9]. As for the educational framework for cyberbullying, it also has no specific laws to take action on the issue. However, there are guidelines or code of conduct according to the institutions. For example, in Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), there is a student code of conduct that mentions “Direct involvement or conspiracy in any form of ragging or bullying, or abuse or the like inside and outside the campus.”, which could be considered for cases involving cyberbullying as it mentions “any form of bullying”. As for online ethics in the environment of institutions, they have Social Media Guidelines such as at University of Technology (UTM) and International Medical University (IMU) in Malaysia. Others might be stated in their respective student code of conduct.

Table 2 below shows the laws in Malaysia that can be charged for cyberbullying. The laws in Malaysia that are related to online communication behaviours are Computer Crimes Act 1997 (CCA), Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA), Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Content (MCMC) Code, Penal Code, Personal Data Protection Act 2010 (PDPA) and National Cyber Security Policy (NCSP) 2020. However, there is still no specific cyberbullying law for it as the listed mainly consist for communication and data security.

Table 2

Law in Malaysia Related to Cybercrimes

Law	Description
CCA	computer crimes mostly involving unauthorized actions [9].
CMA	covers communication for the industry and consumer [9].
MCMC Code	multimedia content posted on the Internet [9].
Penal Code	punishments law related to online communications section 506: criminal intimidation section 507: criminal intimidation by an anonymous communication section 509: word or gesture intended to insult the modesty of a person [9].
PDPA	online personal data, especially for industry use.
NCSP	guides in cybersecurity aspect of online space and resources handling crucial data.

This shows that along with insufficient laws on cyberbullying, there is also lack of specific guidelines on online ethics in Malaysia. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)

created the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) which standards address the ethical use of the Internet for students, teachers, and administrators. Additionally, there is a module for students in NETS under 'Digital Citizen' on online behaviour where "Students engage in positive, safe, legal and ethical behaviour when using technology, including in social interactions online or when using networked devices". Therefore, this aspect of the standard might need to be reviewed in Malaysia to encourage proper online ethics. on the internet. The inclination and practice of communicating through the internet can, at times, lead netizens to overlook the ethics of communication, resulting in unrestrained remarks, verbal abuse, bullying, blasphemy, and even offensive language targeting aspects such as ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations [25]. Online users take advantage of online communication as they can act anonymously without facing the consequences face-to-face when interacting. The bad habits and lack of manners of online users in cyberspace have negative effects on the other party of communication, similar to cyberbullying. Key principles and values applicable in cyberspace include acknowledging that individuals on the internet have feelings and should be treated with the same consideration as one would expect for oneself. It is essential to adhere to the same general rules on the internet as in real life, avoiding rudeness and showing respect to those with whom communication takes place [27]. Although most online communication does not involve looking into the person such as using video, much like physical interaction, it is crucial to "formulate the thoughts carefully so as not to offend your interlocutor". These social interaction ethics are similar to speech etiquette which online users tend to forget as the communication channel is using the technological medium. Hence, having digital citizens who adopt online ethics makes a safer environment for cyberspace. This will further enhance the advantages of the Internet mainly its convenience and efficiency, in this context efficiency in communication with respect and online etiquette.

3.3 Survey

Based on Figure 1 below, participants are aware of the cyberbullying issue, as most agree it is something they talk about and most agree that it is a serious issue that is considered as cybercrime hence should be punished. However, participants tend to be more open and neutral in cyberspace, where they can freely share and express whatever they deem necessary. This portrays that even participants are aware on the issue of cyberbullying, they might still be ignorant on the initial phases of how cyberbullying can potentially occur which is through saying mean things online.

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

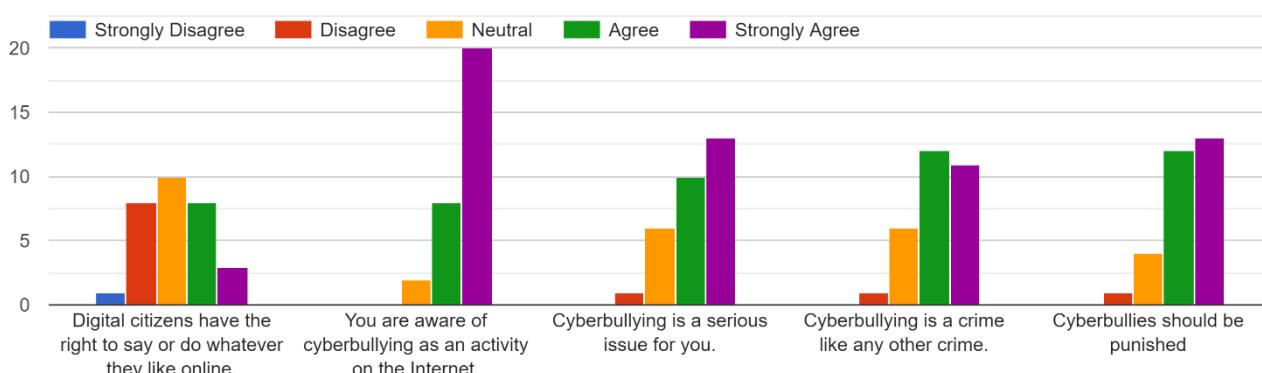


Fig. 1. Awareness Level on Cyberbullying & Online Ethics (Statements-Based)

Based on the Figure 2 below, participants who have seen others being bullied online would mostly report the incident (26.7%) or do nothing about it (23.3%), while only some will leave the platform (13.3%), join in (10%), object on the act of cyberbullying (10%) and some claimed to have never witnessed cyberbullying (10%). This might also be ignorance of the context of cyberbullying given the initial perception that cyberbullying is a serious issue for the participants. It is disconcerting that some participants choose not to get involved, feeling inadequate to approach the victim or assuming that someone else will take care of the situation. This shows a correlation of reasons on why the victim does not confide in anyone and also why bystanders will do nothing about cyberbullying incidents.

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

30 responses

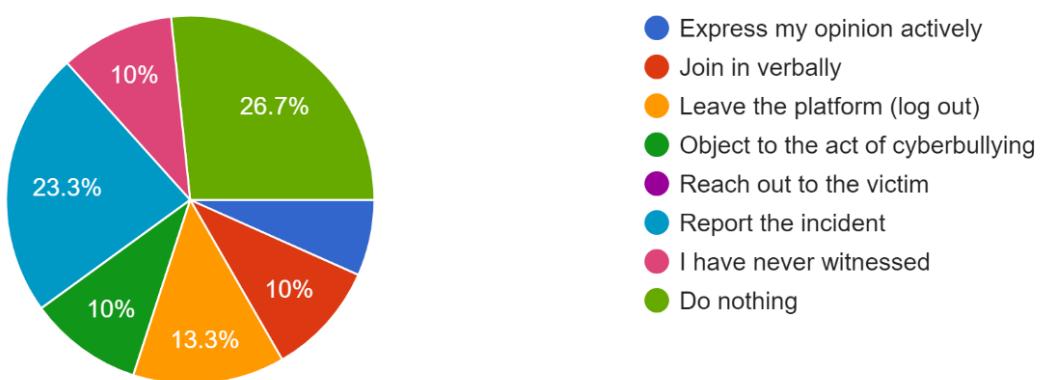


Fig. 2. Bystander Response

Participants seem to maintain a neutral stance regarding the university's ability to handle cyberbullying incidents and its proactive measures in addressing the matter. Most participants, 16 of them, also demonstrate a lack of familiarity with the rules and regulations pertaining to misconduct that may be associated with cyberbullying although most of them are in senior years. This shows the university in Malaysia is not actively promoting on how cyberbully can affect the public especially the victims and bullies. From the responses aforementioned, it could be inferred that the community is ill-prepared regarding how to mitigate cyberbullying as a society in the cyberspace.

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

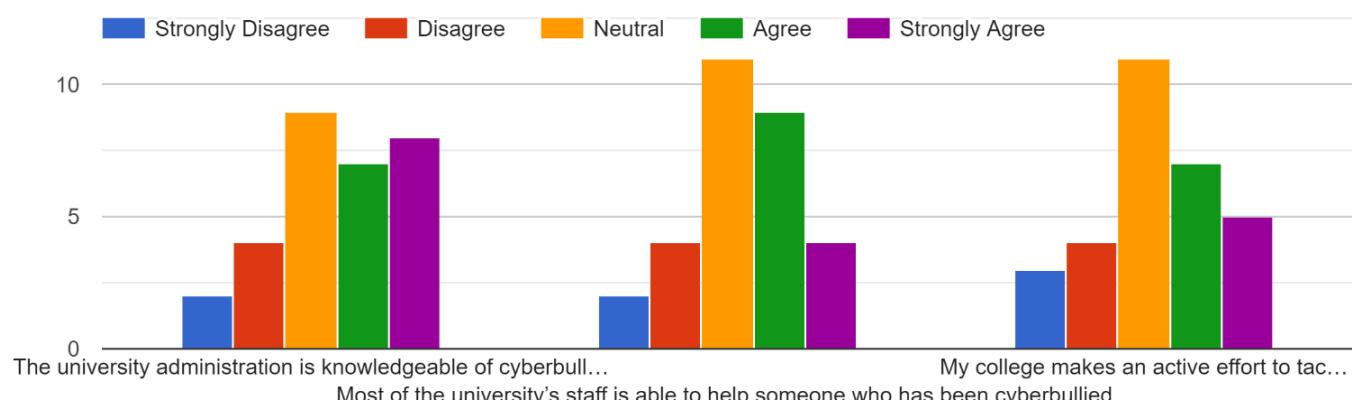


Fig. 3. Perception on University's Preparedness for Cyberbullying

3.4 Quiz

The results from the quiz showing 57% accuracy whereby it is the total points gained by class for correct and partial correct answers divided by total points for the quiz multiplied by the number of students, from Quizizz platform format. Generally, the higher the accuracy percentage, the higher the participants understood the questions. Overall, the participants show lack in advanced knowledge of cyberbullying such as uncommon terms of types of cyberbullying (23% accuracy), laws (7% accuracy) and campaign on cyberbullying (3% accuracy). This has clearly shown the lack of awareness on cyberbullying issue. 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 lack of empathy in the agreement of the post that says, "If you are being cyberbullied, just go offline" (27% accuracy).

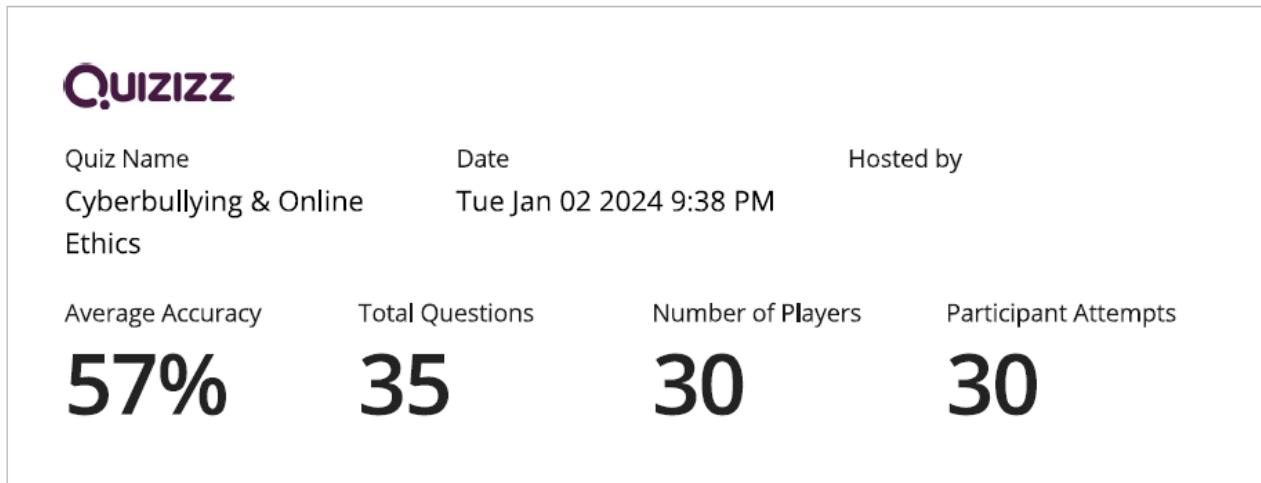


Fig. 4. Quiz Accuracy Score

3.5 Interview

An interview session was conducted on 4th January 2024, Thursday at 10am until 11am via Microsoft Teams with Dr Husni Bte. Mohd Radzi, a counselor in The Energy University or Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Malaysia. Dr Husni is under the Department of Social Science & Humanities and in charge in the Guidance and Counselling Unit (GCU) there. She has been working in UNITEN since 2007, which makes her a very experienced counsellor with exceptional background of academic qualifications on psychology and guidance and counselling. The objective of the interview is to get valuable insights from a professional view regarding cyberbullying and online ethics for the qualitative data to further support the quantitative data in survey and quiz. There are 2 sections of the questions conducted which are 'Cyberbullying and Online Ethics' and 'Education on Cyberbullying'.

Based on the insights gleaned from the interview, it can be inferred that cyberbullying is becoming a very serious issue by the time where conventional or physical bullying is considered similar to cyberbullying, psychologically and emotionally, where this supports the view from participants that consider cyberbullying has either more or the same impact as conventional bullying. However, there is a certain difference whereby the scar from the experience where physical bullying will have physical or visible effects on the victim while cyberbullying will leave digital footprint on the cyberspace that is almost impossible to disappear. This shows that both have their own negative

effects which is not easily weigh to compare which is worse. Hence, any type of bullying should be taken seriously by the society. It is advised to do all the measure to ignore and cut off any sort of communication with the perpetrator such as using the feature of 'blocking' in the platform used. Although there are available ethics related subjects being taught, supported by the pre-survey as participants claimed to have been taught proper computer and Internet use including online safety, it has been agreed that the concept and effects of cyberbullying should be taught more together with proper netiquette to develop a better online community starting from the university students. In addition, the awareness and campaigns on cyberbullying is not proactive at the aforementioned university which can be also seen at the data collected from the survey where participants from various universities are neutral regarding this matter showing uncertainty especially in the rules and regulations and how to respond to cyberbully in appropriate manner. The community need to stand up together to bring awareness on cyberbullying and not just rely on specified units to overcome them. In spite of everything, the issue is concerning everyone as in this modern era, everyone has at least a single account online that has the potential risk of being cyberbullied.

4. Conclusions

Based on the quantitative data gathered through the survey and the quiz, participants exhibit a discernible pattern, possessing foundational knowledge about cyberbullying while displaying gaps in more advanced and current understanding, particularly concerning university-specific and local Malaysian contexts. This trend is further underscored by qualitative data derived from interview sessions, revealing a notable lack of awareness within the university regarding the promotion of cyberbullying awareness. Concurrently, there persists a perception among participants that individuals have the unrestricted right to express anything online, yet there is a disconnect in recognizing this as a potential starting point for cyberbullying. The amalgamation of these findings highlights the significance of implementing a comprehensive educational program. Such a program has the potential to address the identified lack of awareness, providing students with enhanced exposure to the intricacies of cyberbullying within the framework of their daily online interactions in this contemporary era.

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