

Probing Cyber-Bullying Experiences of First Year University Students at a Selected
Rural University in South Africa

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Masters in Gender Studies

Institute for Gender and Youth Studies

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University of Venda

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2017

DECLARATION

I, Tsorai Precious Pachawo, hereby declare that the dissertation for a Master's degree in Gender Studies at the University of Venda, has not been previously submitted for a degree or any academic purposes at this or any other university and the work is my own in design and execution, with all references duly acknowledged.

Signature

Date

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband Tanaka, my children Robyn Manaka and Kukunda, my father Mr J.Tsorai, my mother Mrs E.Tsorai, my sisters Phillippa, Privilege and Pauline, my nephew Micheal Junior, and my niece Nadine Magarette.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere and heartfelt gratitude goes to the Almighty God for giving me the wisdom and strength to complete this study. I thank him for his grace that is at work in my life.

A special thank you is due to my supervisor, Dr N.R Raselekoane, for encouraging me, putting up with me, always making time for me and believing in my capabilities. I really appreciate your professional and academic guidance. To my co-supervisor, Dr T.D Sikwari, I say: Thank you for supervising, encouraging and guiding me.

I would like to thank my husband, Tanaka Machingura, for his motivation, encouragement and unwavering support. Thank you for supporting me financially throughout my studies.

To my daughters, Robyn Manaka and Kukunda Carmen, thank you for understanding that mum has to study.

To my parents, Mr J. Tsorai and Mrs E.Tsorai, I am who I am because of you. Thank you so much for believing in me and taking care of Robyn while I study.

To my beautiful friend, Flora Maruva Takayindisa, you are hilarious, kind and generous. I am so happy and grateful to have you as a friend. Thank you so much for being there for me. I appreciate you.

To my sister, Rachel Chinyakata, thank you for being there for me always.

Lastly, thank you to all who took part in this study. I would not have completed it without your contributions.

Abstract

Most people view bullying as a childhood challenge which children outgrow with age. However, bullies grow up and even go to universities where they continue with their bullying tactics; harassing their fellow students. The development of technology has allowed bullying to be taken to adulthood through cyber-bullying. Technology has become a big part of young people's lives and it plays an increasingly important role in their day-to-day activities. However, it has also become a platform for young people to intimidate and harass each other. Cyber-bullying has become a huge problem for university students, which can cause long term effects to victims. It involves sending hurtful, threatening or embarrassing messages to one another. Cyber-bullying causes problems such as depression, anxiety, suicide, poor school attendance and performance for the victims of such an act. Both males and females take part in cyber-bullying. Avenues for cyber-bullying by students include emails, blogs, text messages, and social network sites such as Facebook, My Space, Whatsapp, Instagram and twitter among others. The main aim of this study was to probe cyber-bullying experiences of both male and female first year students at the University of Venda. Qualitative research approach was used. Snowball sampling, a subtype of non-probability sampling was used to select the respondents for the study. Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collecting tool. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Confidentiality, anonymity, voluntary participation and informed consent were among the ethical considerations that were followed. The study found that cyber-bullying is prevalent at the University of Venda and it socially, academically, psychologically and physically affects students. More female students were found to be victims of cyber-bullying when compared to male students. In view of the magnitude of cyber-bullying among university students; there is a need for urgent action by the University of Venda management to come up with strategies that can help detect and also contain the spread and effects of cyber-bullying.

Key words: Cyber-bullying, cyber-bullies, cyber-victims, harass,probe, students, technology, university

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

MGS	Masters in Gender studies
UNIVEN	University of Venda
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender

CHAPTER 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Fast technological advancements have allowed students' increased access to computers and advanced cell phones (Li, 2012). Many university students use electronic communication such as emailing as well as instant and text messaging. Young people also use technology for their studies and communication. There are internet sites such as blogs, social networks and other platforms through which photos are shared (Subrahmanyam and Greenfield, 2011). Students use such platforms to post their photos and stories. Electronic devices provide many opportunities for young people to meet new people, maintain friendships and to ensure that there is easy and efficient flow of communication. University students also find the internet to be a useful platform from which to acquire information for academic activities. In spite of all these positive effects, university students, both males and females, also misuse these facilities to bully others. Bullying creates multitudes of problems, especially for the victims.

Bullying refers to the harassment or use of violence against another person. Today, technological advancement has made it easier to deliberately and repeatedly bully, harass, hassle and threaten others (Goodno, 2011). University students are increasingly, using cell phones, emails and social networks such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and other networks as channels of communication. Dilimac (2012), confirms the above views and noted that students are increasingly using technology to share information with peers and many other people. According to Bauman (2013), this availability of technology also makes it easier to bully others. Cassidy, *et al.* (2011), corroborates that these facilities and electronic gadgets are used to send messages that bully others. The fact that almost everyone uses one social network or the other makes it easy for students to harass each other.

The use of social platforms to harass others is known as cyber-bullying. This has become a world-wide problem (Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, 2014). In the United States of America (USA), 9% of students in a study sample confirmed that they had received threatening messages from peers. About 4% of the students in the same study reported that they entertained suicidal thoughts after receiving hurtful messages (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, 25% of the students indicated that they

had not reported the bullying to anyone. These statistics show that cyber-bullying is a real problem and may even result in death. Furthermore, cyber-bullying can have devastating effects on students, because, it remains in their memories for a long time.

Several reports show that throughout the world, cyber-bullying is becoming more prevalent each year. For example, Bauman, Toomey & Walker (2013), reported that in the United States of America, 3, 2 million are victims of cyber-bullying annually, and 72% reported being victimised at least once in their lives. Dilimac (2012), stated that approximately 22% of the students in the United States have taken part in cyber-bullying at least once in their lives. . The study also shows that about 53% of the students had experienced cyber-bullying in the past. Some research-based evidence shows that females are more likely to be cyber victims than males (Hinduja and Patchin, 2010). These scholars also indicated that more than 32% of males, when compared to more than 36% of females have been victims of cyber-bullying. This suggests that females are more vulnerable to cyber-bullying than males. This may be attributed to the fact that women's interest on social networks is significantly higher than that of men. Women are more likely to post personal information than men.

Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalho, Fisher, Russel and Tippett (2010), indicated that 67-100% of students had been cyber-bullied in the United Kingdom. Li (2012), argues that the existence of such a high proportion of students involved in cyber-bullying implies that it may remain an extremely serious problem across the world if nothing is done about it. Presumably, the introduction of research-informed strategies at micro levels such as a university or school may effectively combat cyber-bullying.

Many scholars have examined the reasons behind cyber-bullying. For instance, Cassidy *et al.* (2011), claim that about 34% of the respondents in their study cited harassment that was mainly related to their physical appearance. This displays that a person can be bullied even for things he or she has no control over, which in turn may cause great damage to how they perceive themselves. An almost similar proportion (33%) of the respondents said they were called negative names about their academic or athletic abilities. This may result in dropping out of school or hating school. Almost a quarter of the respondents (24 %) were harassed because of the type of clothing they wore. As a result, victims may isolate themselves because they do not fit in the bounds of the popular ones, and this might feel like the end of the world to them.

As already mentioned above, cyber-bullying can happen through Facebook, WhatsApp, chat rooms and other mobile phone-based platforms. Li (2012), reveals that 20% of cyber victims are bullied through emails in India. About 33% and 13% of them are, respectively, harassed in chat rooms and through mobile phones. Yet another third of the respondents in the Li's (2012) study was victimized through other forms of technology like Instagram, My Space just to mention a few.

Li (2010), also found that while 33% had been cyber-bullied, about 20% of them were cyber-bullies. In addition, more than 50% of the students had either experienced or heard about cyber-bullying incidents. One of the worrisome factors out of the study is that almost 50% of the victims of cyber-bullying did not know who harassed them. This emanates from the fact that quite often, most students bully others using fake identities to avoid detection and possible punishment (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014). Thus, those who are cyber-bullied may have a devastating experience as a result of the anonymity of the bullies.

Cyber-bullying negatively affects young people. Kowalski *et al.* (2014), argue that the psychological effects of cyber-bullying may be more disturbing when compared to traditional bullying. Cyber-bullying can cause depression, emotional distress, low self-esteem and stress to the victims (Manson, 2008). Faryadi (2011), confirms that cyber-bullying negatively affects students' academic performance and it triggers emotional stress. This may take place in the form of failure to complete their studies; lower than normal performance levels and sometimes dropping out of university. Therefore, it would not be surprising that some cyber-bullied students take longer than normal to complete their courses. It is also possible that cyber-bullied students may lose focus on their studies, thereby falling behind in their academic activities. Faryadi (2011: 6), argues that, "victims of cyber bullies suffer from emotional and psychological stress and inevitably their grades will deteriorate".

Cyber-bullying is also a problem that young people in Africa face. According to Malakat (2013), the Zambian government is planning to create a software that monitors online media aimed at stopping cyber-bullying. This has been necessitated by the fact that cyber-bullying has become very common in Zambia. On the 7th of October 2017, former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe created a new ministry of Cyber security, Threat Detection and Mitigation that focuses on cyber-crime on

social media and other websites. This was done to monitor online activities and reduce cyber-crime.

The rate of growth of the mobile technology market place South Africa in world's top five in this regard (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). These scholars also reveal that almost everyone in the country has a cell phone which has internet capabilities. This implies that the potential for cyber-bullying is high. According to Burton and Mutongwizo (2009), about 47% of the respondents in their study conducted in South Africa, experienced some form of cyber aggression. Harassment over the phone was said to be common. Approximately, 37% of young people reported that they were victims of cyber aggression. The situation presented above is worrying, and it highlights the urgent need to combat this social problem particularly among young people. A study conducted in South Africa shows that 43% of the respondents believed that cyber-bullying could be a bigger problem than drug abuse (Gilbert, 2015). As much as drug abuse is known to be one of the biggest problems in South Africa; learners, parents and the government should take cyber-bullying serious.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Incidents of cyber-bullying are worsening among university students. This form of bullying negatively affect the students involved. Victims experience low self-esteem, increased suicidal ideation and a variety of emotional responses. This, in turn, affects their academic performance at the university. Although some incidents of cyber-bullying were reported, there is a lack of information on its magnitude and effects on university students. Therefore, parents, students and lecturers need to pay more attention towards the constant issue of cyber-bullying. It is for that reason therefore, this study explores students' experiences of cyber-bullying in order to inform the development of appropriate measures to combat this phenomenon among university students.

1.3 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study was to probe cyber-bullying experiences of first year students at a selected rural university. The specific objectives of this study were:

- To explore prevalence of cyber-bullying experiences among first year university students.

- To investigate gender differences in cyber-bullying among university students.
- To determine the effects of cyber-bullying among university students.
- To identify measures to alleviate cyber-bullying among university students.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the prevalence of cyber-bullying experiences among university students?
- What are the gender differences in cyber-bullying among university students?
- How does cyber-bullying affect university students?
- What measures can be taken to alleviate cyber-bullying among university students?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Due to the assumed enormous negative impact on the cyber-bullying victims, it is imperative to explore its impacts on University students in order to inform the development of appropriate measures to curb cyber-bullying. Parents, university staff members and law enforcement agencies may be unaware of the level of damage caused by technology in cyber-bullying. Hence, this study highlighted the dangers associated with various technologies. This study further delved into the effects of cyber-bullying and formulated possible coping strategies for cyber victims to avoid problems such as depression and other effects. The study also proposed a number of ways and means of providing support to cyber-bullying victims so that they can cope. This study will also add information to the academic body of knowledge.

1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed a qualitative research approach, using semi-structured interviews as a data collecting tool. Snowball sampling, which is a subtype of non-probability sampling, was used to select the respondents for the study. Thematic analysis was used as a method of analysing data. The details of the research methodology are discussed in chapter 3.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical considerations such as no harm to participants, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation were followed during the study. Chapter 3 provides a more detailed version of the ethical considerations for the study.

1.7 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory guiding this study is the biological theory of gender by McLeod (2014). It explains how gender plays a role in cyber-bullying. Social development model (Hemphill, Meyers and McCaw, 2011) and social learning theory (Aces, 1998) are some of the theories which were used for the study. The social development theory explains how one's surrounding can influence an individual's behaviour. The social learning (SLT) theory by Bandura explains how people learn from one another through observation, imitation and modelling. It accounts for individuals who are prone to deviant behaviours such as cyber-bullying, because it is assumed that they learn such acts from observing and imitating others. These theories are fully discussed in chapter 2.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Academic performance

This refers to the outcome of education and it is the extent to which a learner achieves academic goals (Bossaeet, Doumen, Buyse and Verschueren, 2011).

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying refers to the electronic or online social cruelty displayed through emails, instant messaging, in a chartroom on a website or text messaging (Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, 2012).

Cyber aggression

It can be identified as negative words, terms, or statements directed towards another person through the internet or cell phone (Perry, 2015).

A cyber-victim

This is a person who is targeted for electronic bullying or an internet scam (Smith, Mahdavi, Carvalh, Fisher, Russel, Tippett, 2008).

In this study, cyber victims are students who have experienced cyber-bullying.

Cyber-bully

This is a person that harasses others electronically. Cyber-bullies target a person's self-esteem (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011).

In this study, cyber-bullies are students who have harassed other students electronically or on virtual platforms.

Social media

These are websites that are created and used online to share content or to communicate (Perry, 2015)

Student

Student is any person pursuing their studies at a tertiary institution.

1.9 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1

It contains the background, statement of the research problem, objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and definition of key terms.

Chapter 2

This chapter presents a review of the literature on cyber-bullying. The chapter also explains the theoretical framework that influenced the study.

Chapter 3

Research design, sampling procedures, data collection methods and instruments used in the study are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also describes the location of study, limitations, and ethical considerations and how data was analysed.

Chapter 4

This chapter gives a description of results from the study. A discussion of the main findings of the study is also included in this chapter.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 contains an overview of the study, recommendations and conclusion of the study

1.10 Summary

This chapter has presented a background of cyber-bullying and its prevalence among students world-wide. The aim of the study was highlighted, which is to explore cyber-bullying experiences of first year students. The specific objectives and research questions have been indicated. The study identified the dangers associated with cyber-bullying, the highlight on how the university can curb cyber-bullying. Key terms are also defined in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical overview of previous studies that focused on cyber-bullying. The following main areas were used to guide the literature review in this study: traditional bullying versus cyber-bullying, gender and cyber-bullying, contributory factors unique to cyber-bullying, reasons why young people engage in cyber-bullying, effects of cyber-bullying, types of cyber violence, reporting cyber-bullying and cyber-crime. Theoretical framework is also presented in this chapter.

2.2 Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is a deliberate act of using information and communication involving electronic tools to harass or threaten individuals or group of people. This is done through sending or posting unpleasant texts or graphics (Manson, 2008). Cyber-bullying is electronic bullying or online social cruelty. It consists of bullying through emails, instant messaging, and chat rooms on a websites or through text messaging (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014). Taking part in traditional bullying influences one into cyber-bully or cyber-victim (Li, 2012). Cyber-bullying is normally regarded as covert bullying, which involves the use of electronic means to bully others (Hemphill, Meyers, J. & Mc Caw, 2011). Cyber-bullying can also be overt when bullies send hate mails deliberately (Hemphill *et al.*, 2011). The use of electronics in cyber-bullying allows the bully to do so in secret (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009).

2.3 Gender differences in cyber-bullying

Gender is extremely important in cyber-bullying (Li, 2012). Both males and females take part in cyber-bullying.

2.3.1 Female participation in cyber-bullying

Female students are more prone to be victims when compared to male students (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014). Turan *et al.*, (2011), observed that, females are more victimized online than males. Girls are usually sufferers from degrading, threatening or sexually explicit images (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014). However, Perry (2015), maintains that females take part in online actions such as sending harassing texts or online messages, purposely excluding a person from a group chat and impersonating an individual to embarrass or offend them. This shows that women are not only victims

of cyber-bullying; they also take part in the scourge. Hence, they are also perpetrators of cyber-bullying. The difference is that their bullying is subtle and less violent when compared male related cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying as carried out by females mostly involves blame, threats, gossip and blackmail (Duhue, Bolman and Vollink, 2008). Hinduja and Patchin (2010), contends that females mostly take part in cyber-bullying either as a victim or as a bully. Colby (2013), also supports this view by highlighting that internet bullies are more likely to be females. This is possibly because young women feel less inhibited and more assertive online. Females prefer indirect forms of harassment that are effective but discrete in nature (Topcu and Barker, 2012). They also socialise online more frequently than males. This in turn causes females to get involved in situations where social interactions can lead to disagreements and acts of cyber-bullying. Though bullying is thought of as boys' sport, women have also developed interest in this sport (Colby, 2013). Females prefer cyber-bullying than face to face bullying. According to Mucum, Huggins, Freiburger and Ricketts (2012), women are most likely to post gossip on the internet to hurt others no matter how true or false the rumour is. Naturally, women like talking about other people. With this mind-set, they would rather do it hidden behind screens. Females prefer participating in behaviours that do not involve physical contact (Mucum, *et al.*, 2012). They participate in bullying that involves emotional and psychological abuse like gossiping and spreading rumours. Females are also most likely to experience cyber-bullying when compared to males (Ramanathan, 2013). Females are mostly affected by fear and humiliation caused by cyber-bullying than men (Turan *et al.*, 2011). According to Baumen and Newman (2012), females report cyber-bullying as a way of standing up for themselves.

2.3.2 Male participation in cyber-bullying

Unlike females, males are more likely to be a threat on physical violence than online violence (Perry, 2015). Males, are more extreme in their cyber-bullying threats than females. Examples of these threats include challenging an individual to a fist fight, threats to cause bodily harm, theft and destruction of property (Perry, 2015). The involvement of males in video games which are normally violent increases the likelihood of executing cyber-bullying and being a victim of such acts (Lam, Cheng and Liu, 2013). According to the study conducted by Mishna *et al.*, (2009), most boys were reported bullying others more than girls, and girls reported being victimized. However, Cassidy *et al.*, (2013) found that males do not report cyber-bullying for the fear of being labelled a rat and this may lead to the constant cyber-bullying. Male

students are more likely to be cyber-bullies (Dilimac, 2012). It is difficult to identify males as victims because they have too much pride to admit being bullied.

2.4 Traditional bullying versus cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying involves sending cruel messages on the internet through emails, instant messaging, in a chatroom on a website or text messaging (Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, 2012). According to Li (2007), traditional bullying is when a person is a target of any harmful behaviour. It is characterised by imbalance of power. It can happen physically, verbally or it can be relational. Partaking in traditional bullying influences one into a cyber-bully or a cyber-victim (Li, 2007). Bullying can be covert in nature. This type of bullying is characterised by the exclusion of a person or by spreading rumours about a person. Bullying can also be overt. This often takes the form of abusing someone verbally and physically (Hemphill *et al.*, 2011). Covert bullying involves the use of electronic means to bully others whereas in overt bullying bullies use verbal and physical means to bully others (Hemphill *et al.*, 2011).

There are some similarities between traditional and cyber-bullying (Li, 2007). Both traditional and cyber-bullying affect the victim (Manson, 2008). A target of traditional bullying or online bullying is negatively affected by the bullying. However, there are many differences between cyber-bullying and traditional bullying (Manson, 2008). Traditional bullying targets weaker individuals, but with cyber-bullying anyone can be a victim (Beale & Hall, 2007). This is due to the fact that traditional bullying happens in physical spaces. In this case a person targets someone they assume weaker to fight back. Cyber-bullying does not allow physical liaison. Traditional bullies are known, while cyber-bullies are anonymous (Chibbaro, 2007). This makes cyber-bullying more upsetting when compared to traditional bullying. As a result of anonymity, youth who cyber-bully others are typically less withdrawn because they do not face the target which may cause a fight (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Cyber-bullying causes more negative effects on the victim than traditional bullying (Turan *et al.*, 2011). Cyber-bullying can follow young people where-ever they go. It happens any time of the day (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Traditional bullying only happens when the perpetrator and the bully meet. Young people find it easy to report traditional bullying. However it is difficult for young people to report cyber-bullying because they fear that their gadgets may be taken away from them (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009).

2.5 Anonymity

Electronic bullying permits the perpetrator to do so in secret (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Students who bully others online usually hide their identities to avoid consequences thereof (Li, 2007). The secrecy in cyber-bullying encourages some students to bully others (Li, 2007). Anyone can be the bully and it can be someone next door (Mishna, Souini & Solomon, 2009). The victims of cyber-bullying only report the incident if the victims are guaranteed anonymity because they are afraid of the bully involved (Cassidy, 2009). The bully always has the power to harass without any consequences (Mishna *et al.*, 2012). Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) maintain that most of the students who are bullied through text messages know their bullies. This anonymity makes the effects of cyber-bullying last long (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Anonymity allows students to experiment without fear of consequences (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). The secrecy allows students to bully each other even in their friendship circles. The unknown bully harasses the victim by sending bad images, texts or video clips (Turan *et al.*, 2011). Anonymity allows people to do things they will never do in a physical space (Kowalski & Fedina, 2011). Anonymity also gives room for identity theft. This happens when someone breaks into someone's account and impersonate the owner. The perpetrator will send bad messages to other people just to destroy the victim's image (Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009). The anonymity in cyber-bullying makes the bully understand that no matter how physically strong the victim is, they can still attack them without being recognised and get away with it. The perpetrators think that they cannot be punished for their behaviour (Barlet, Gentile & Chew, 2016). Anonymity leads individuals to carry out actions they may not be able to carry out directly.

2.6 Cyber-bullies and victims

A cyber-bully is a person that harasses others electronically. They target a person's self-esteem (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). However, It is not everyone who cyber-bullies the other person deliberately. Some young people unconsciously harass others. One may perceive a conversation as teasing but the recipient may regard it as offensive (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). Young people with aggression problems are more likely to be cyber-bullies (Mishna *et al.*, 2011). Some students resort to cyber-bullying as a way of staying in power or gain power over others (Perry, 2015). Cyber-bullying can occur as a result of social pressure, mainly from peers. Others use it to ease boredom, cope with low self-esteem and some believes that their victims deserve to be cyber-bullied (Mishna *et al.*, 2011)

A cyber-victim is a person who is a target of electronic bullying. There are several factors that make a person to be targeted for cyber-bullying. Cassidy *et al.*, (2011), report that students are more likely to be cyber-bullied because of academic abilities, physical appearance, unfashionable clothing, mental disabilities and unpopularity. Youth with special physical challenges such as obesity and transgender are at a greater risk of cyber-bullying. Kowalski (2014), confirms and contends that young people may be bullied for looking different, being homosexual or appearing to be homosexual. Most people maintain that victims are disadvantaged people. However, victims are not only the disadvantaged (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). A person can be victimized simply because they are wealthy or well-mannered. Many young people cannot go anywhere without their mobile phones since they are addicted to the internet and social media (Perry, 2015). Lack of respect students have for their private lives leads to youth becoming more vulnerable to cyber-attacks (Gibson, 2015). This can lead to exposure to cyber-bullying. Often times victims do not tell adults about it due to fear of getting into trouble (Li, 2012). This trouble may come from the bully by increasing intensity of bullying after realizing that the victim has reported. It may also come from the parents or teachers to whom the bullying has been reported to. Anyone can be a cyber-victim, therefore, some students avoid online chats for their own safety (Li, 2012). Cyber-bullying does not only come from enemies or people that a person does not know. It also happens in friendship groups (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). Passive or submissive youth are more likely to be bullied (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). These youths are usually sensitive, lack confidence, normally isolate themselves, are always alert and have a few friends (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). Cyber-bullying victims usually find spending time with grown up people easy than with their peers (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014). This means that they spend more time with older people because they feel safer in the hands of the elderly.

2.7 Cyber-bullying and sexual orientation

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) citizens are the minority group most likely to be targeted by cyber-bullies (Glensen, 2011). Other students are bullied only because they are perceived to be gay. Bullying and harassment to this group does not only lead to physical, emotional and psychological pain; it also affects victim's participation and success at school. In Blumenfeld's study, more than four times as many LGBTI students missed at least one day of school in a month because they felt unsafe or uncomfortable (Blumenfeld's, 2011). In this study, the

LGBTI who have been harassed scored low marks. According to Glensen (2011), negative outcomes of students harassed due to their sexual orientation do not end in their adolescent years. They also suffer increased depression and decreased levels of life satisfaction throughout their young adulthood. Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld and Frazer (2010) found that universities and colleges have unwelcoming environments. Their study found that they failed to provide environments that allow the LGBTI community to learn and grow. LGBTI staff members and students are more likely to experience harassment compared to heterosexuals. Most of them end up considering leaving their institutions.

2.8 Effects of cyber-bullying

People do not give too much weight on the possibility of cyber-bullying generating into long term harmful effects on youth (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Cyber-bullying places students on an island. There are no regulations or supervision. Cyber-bullying can influence suicidal thoughts in the victims when compared to those who have not been bullied, and such they may end up taking their own lives (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). Youths who are cyber-bullied may go through emotional problems that may negatively affect their wellbeing and academic work (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). The victim may suffer from psychological stress due to anonymity in cyber-bullying. Even after the bullying has ended, it may still haunt the victim later in life (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009).

Studies done by Sinclair, Bauman, Poteat, Koenlg and Russell (2011), found that youth who are cyber-harassed are prone to academic failure, mental disturbances and may end up abusing drugs. Hemphill *et al.*, (2011), agree with this perception and hold the view that cyber-harassment causes stress, poor academic performance and abuse of substances. Cyber-bullying is also associated with feelings of anger, helplessness and misery (Hemphill *et al.*, 2011).

Cyber-bullying is linked to negative effects like mental symptoms and criminal behaviour (Sinclair *et al.*, 2011). Cyber-harassment also affects young people's interpersonal lives. It may affect their dating, peer and parental relationships as well as friendships (Hemphill *et al.*, 2011). Students who have been cyber-bullied have more behaviour problems when compared to those who have never experienced cyber-bullying (Turan *et al.*, 2011). Unfortunately, cyber-victims think that it is their problem that they are being bullied (Turan *et al.*, 2011).

Online harassment is related to some dangerous behaviours and a variety of psychological behaviours (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Youth who are cyber-bullied may have psychological problems. These include depression, nervousness, suicidal thoughts, poor grades and negative physical health symptoms (Kowalski and Fedina, 2011). Victims of cyber-bullying are likely to have low self-esteem, anxiety and depression (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012). Burton and Mutongwizo (2009), confirm this view and believe that cyber-bullying causes depression, anxiety and poor self-esteem. The anonymity of the person behind the bullying makes it easier to take on acts of aggression. The negative effects are not often seen straightaway (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Cyber-bullying has a widespread effect on students' health.

Cyber-bullying damages social relationships that are healthy and positive (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). There is a possibility that youth who have problems online also face problems offline (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Cyber-bullying happens when a person is alone, hence it causes loneliness to the victim (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). Victims of cyber-bullying also experience physical problems, hence most of them end up losing weight (Kowalski *et al.*, 2012).

Cyber-bullying does not only affect the victim; the bully may also experience some consequences. They have antisocial and problematic behaviours such as fighting, vandalism and poor academic performance (Kowalski and Fedina, 2011). Both cyber-victims and cyber-bullies experience anxiety or depression (Kowalski and Fedina, 2011). Both the victim and the bully are likely to engage in cyber-bullying (Burton and Mutongwizo, 2009). A person who has been exposed to cyber-harassment normally changes his or her behaviour and is more likely to become a drug addict (Turan *et al.*, 2011).

2.9 Types of cyber-bullying

According to Burton and Mutongwizo (2009), there are a number of ways in which young people can bully each other. The most common methods are through text messages, phone calls, chat rooms, instant messaging, social networking, websites, and blogs. There are also several types of cyber-bullying. These include masquerading, flaming, harassment, posting, coercing and backstabbing.

Masquerading is when friends bully their friends. Even close and best friends bully each other (Mishna *et al.*, 2012). Some young people give each other passwords as friends but others then post bad things as imposters just to get back at them.

Flaming is a strong, short-term argument that takes place between two or more people. It basically contains offensive, rude, vulgar language and even threats (Shaheem, 2009). If the messages last longer, it is then called a flame war. Flaming happens in places where there are a lot of people like chat rooms. A flame rises between individuals or it may be a small group of people who are in conflict and are insulting each other (Shaheem, 2009).

Harassment is the sending of offensive messages to the targeted person over and over again (Shaheem, 2009). Harassing messages are usually sent through private communication. These can be instant messaging and text messaging. Harassment lives longer than a flame war. This is so because, harassing messages are repeatedly sent (Shaheem, 2009). The target suffers a lot as he or she will be receiving upsetting messages every time they go online or check their cell phone (Shaheem, 2009). These hurtful messages usually come from one person.

Posting, coercing and backstabbing is when a person asks the other person to post their naked pictures online and embarrass themselves. They will be threatening with their secrets if they do not comply. It involves doing things just to get back at each other (Mishna *et al.*, 2012).

Other forms of cyber-bullying are discussed by Chisholm (2014) as follows:

Cat fishing

This is when an individual is tricked into an emotional or romantic relationship over an extended period of time through fake identities.

Cheating

It is used in online gaming when some players prevent entry way into specific game sites.

Impersonation

This is when someone is misrepresented or falsely represented online.

Rattling

This happens when a user remotely takes control of another person's computer through a remote control without the other person's permission or knowledge.

Relational aggression

It involves individuals spreading rumours, creating fake profiles, deleting the target from group lists or posting cruel or threatening pictures.

Sexting

This occurs when sexually explicit pictures are internationally distributed through the internet.

Stalking

This is when an individual follows or exhibits violence towards the target on an online setting.

2.10 Symptoms of cyber-bullying

Being exposed to cyber-bullying may cause a young person to change his or her behaviour. Staying away from friends may be as a result of cyber-bullying (Turan *et al.*, 2011). Students who have been exposed to cyber-bullying are scared of everyone around them because they do not know who is behind it. They can also isolate themselves because they feel embarrassed to hang around with their peers. According to Turan *et al.* (2011), victims of cyber-bullying may look troubled after receiving a phone call or using the internet. Perry (2015), confirms and outlines that they appear jumpy, angry or frustrated after texting, chatting or using social media. This could be because the phone call was unpleasant or they would have been subjected to bullying when they were using the internet. Deterioration of the school performance may also be as a result of cyber-bullying (Turan *et al.*, 2011). Perry (2015), outlines that students who are victims of cyber-bullying may unexpectedly stop using their devices. Cyber-victims become abnormally withdrawn and avoid discussions about their online activities.

There are also signs which shows if a student partakes in is cyber-bullying or not. According to Perry (2015), a student might be cyber-bullying others if he/she immediately switches off their devices if someone walks in or use their devices late at night. They can be cyber-bullying if they get upset whenever they cannot use their devices. They might avoid discussions about what they will be doing online. If a student has multiple online accounts or if they use someone's account; it could be a sign that the student is experiencing cyber-bullying (Perry, 2015).

2.11 Reasons why young people engage in cyber bullying

Dilimac (2009), identifies a fifteen need scale. This scale included fifteen needs that could cause young people to engage in cyber-bullying. The needs are presented in Table 2.1. According to Dilimac (2009), endurance and affiliation negatively predicts cyber victimization. Only the need for change is positive.

Table 2.1 Reasons why students engage in cyber-bullying

Reason/Factor	Explanation
Achievement	This is trying to be socially accepted. A person may bully others so that they become outstanding and they will be recognized in life.
Dominance	This is trying to be a leader in a group, trying to rule others
Endurance	It is when a person persists in a duty that is being carried out.
Order	Giving much importance to smartness
Interception	This is when a person tries to understand himself and also understand other people's behaviours
Nurturance	Doing things that benefit others emotionally and materially
Affiliation	Upholding personal relationships
Heterosexuality	Looking for happiness from talking to people of the opposite sex
Exhibition	Acting in a way that makes a person get attention from others
Autonomy	This is when a person behaves in a way that is socially unacceptable to get attention.
Aggression	Doing actions that harm others.
Change	Having a different experience and avoiding doing the same things all the time
Succorance	Looking for compassion, care and support from others
Abasement	Showing emotions, weakness through self-

Deference	disproval Trying to find roles in relationships with others
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Source: Dilimac (2009)

2.13 Cyber-crime

Cyber-crime is a crime committed using the internet (Ritzer, 2011). The computer or a device may be the agent of the crime, the facilitator of the crime or the target of the crime. It can take place on the computer alone or in other virtual or non-virtual locations (Blumenfeld, 2013). According to Kshetri (2016), cyber-crime is defined as a criminal activity in which a computer or computer networks are the principal means of committing an offence or violating the laws, rules or regulations. Examples of cyber-crimes include denial of service attacks, cyber-theft, cyber-trespass, cyber-obscenity, critical infrastructure attacks, online fraud, online money laundering, ID fraud, cyber-terrorism, cyber-extortions and in some countries, cyber-bullying.

2.13.1 Categories of cyber-crimes

Cyber-crimes can be placed in two categories, namely, violent and non-violent cyber-crimes (Ritzer, 2011). Most of the cyber-crimes are non-violent offences since there is no physical interaction.

2.13.2 Violent cyber-crimes

These crimes pose physical danger to the victim. Ritzer (2011), further classifies them as cyber-terrorism, cyber-stalking and pornography.

2.13.2.1 Cyber-terrorism

It is the convergence between cyber-space and terrorism. The internet enables action at a distance. Terrorist groups use the internet to attack their victims. The anonymity over the internet makes it hard to trace the attack's point of origin.

2.13.2.2 Cyber-stalking

This is a type of cyber-crime which an attacker harasses a victim by using electronic communication. In some cases, cyber-stalking originates from real world stalking and is carried over to the internet. Stalking is a problem that is mostly faced by women. Cyber-stalking includes harassment, embarrassment and humiliation of the victim.

Cyber-stalkers are motivated by hate, anger, revenge, jealousy, obsession and mental illness.

2.13.2.3 Pornography

It is also a type of cyber-crime. This includes posting nude images or sex videos of another person on the internet. The danger in that is that someone somewhere could seek them for sexual gratification.

2.13.2.4 Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying involves sending hurtful messages to another person online. In some countries like Canada under the Education Act and the United Kingdom under the Malicious Communications Act cyber-bullying is considered a crime which can lead to imprisonment (Ritzer, 2011).

2.13.3 Non-violent cyber-crimes

Non-violent cyber-crimes do not cause any physical damage to people. Instead, they cause financial loss, psychological disorders and social harm. Non-violent cyber-crimes are classified by Ritzer (2011) as follows:

2.13.3.1 Cyber-theft

This is a way of using the internet to steal money or information from other people. This is the most popular cyber-crime because the ability to steal from a distance reduces the risk of detection. Cyber-theft includes:

Cyber-embezzlement which is also a type of non-violent cyber-crimes. This means misuse or alteration of data by an employee of a company who has legitimate access to the company computerized system and network.

Unlawful appropriation is whereby an individual gains access from outside the organisation to transfer funds and modify documents in such a manner that it gives him legitimate right to property he does not own.

Cooperate espionage is also a non-violent cyber-crime. In this crime, an individual from inside/outside the company uses the network to steal marketing strategies, trade secrets, financial data, and client lists. This is done in order to gain competitive advantage over competitors.

Plagiarism is stealing someone's original writing and calls it your own. This form of cyber-crime is increasing as more people have access to computers and the internet.

Piracy is an unauthorised copying of copy righted software, video, music, books, etc., which causes loss of revenue to the owner.

Identity theft is when the victim's personal information is used by a criminal to commit crimes.

2.13.3.2 Cyber-fraud

Another form of cyber-crime which is so common is cyber-fraud and online scams (Ritzer, 2011). Internet offers valuable opportunities for fraudsters to disguise themselves and their identities.

2.13.3.3 Cyber-trespassing (hacking)

In this case the computer is accessed by the offender without authorization, however, may not misuse it. He or she may trespass just to enjoy access to information.

2.13.3.5 Other non-violent crimes

According to Ritzer (2011), cyber-prostitution, internet gambling and cyber-laundering are also types of non-violent cyber-crimes. Cyber-prostitution involves carrying out prostitution online. Internet gambling includes customers who use credit cards online to place bets in virtual casinos. Cyber-laundering is using the internet to hide illegal money, and online banking offers opportunities for criminals who open accounts in an offshore bank and transfer money electronically.

2.13.3.4 Destructive cyber-crimes

Ritzer (2011), also categorises other cyber-crimes as destructive. These include, network services that are disrupted or data that is damaged or destroyed rather than stolen or misused. Destructive cyber-crimes are regarded as cyber-vandalism. Cyber-vandalism is a form of destructive cyber-attacks which includes destruction of a website. Destructive cyber-attacks are also done through the spread of new viruses. Cyber-attack is when people create viruses to destroy networks.

2.14 Theoretical framework

This study is premised on the social development model by Hemphill, Meyers and McCaw (2011). This social development model explains the key issues raised during the discussion of contributory factors to cyber-bullying and its effects. According to Hemphill *et al.* (2011), the social development model arranges the risk factors according to how they influence a person in different locations of socialization. The socialization groups that have an influence on a person are family, peer group, school, and the community. These different groups have their own kind of influence depending on the person's age. The social development model proposes that harmful behaviours including bullying are caused by unhealthy beliefs, uncertain standards, hanging around bad peers and growing up with unsociable family members and neighbours.

In a family situation, lack of parental support is related to cyber-bullying in a negative way. Students who lack an emotional connection with parents or guardians are likely to be involved in online bullying. Staying with a family that fights all the time can cause a child to engage in online bullying. Online bullying is also stimulated by the lack of rules and monitoring in a household.

Peers play a major role in young people's lives. Bad friends increase the risk of partaking in cyber-bullying. Negative peer relations can result in increased levels of cyber-bullying. This may happen through the creation of a group that rewards bullying behaviour, for example, posts on Facebook.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory (SLT), explains all deviant acts. SLT is a theory that accounts for individuals who are prone to deviant behaviours such as bullying. The theory explains that they learn such behaviours from their surroundings. Akers (1998), presents four central concepts of the social learning process. These are differential +association, differential reinforcement, imitation and definitions.

Differential association enquires that individuals make rational choices to associate and interact with deviant peers. Definitions is when people who are exposed to deviant individuals can develop the zeal to engage in unlawful behaviours by learning definitions favourable to committing law violations. In differential reinforcements, deviant peers also expose individuals to reinforcements such as social, emotional or monetary rewards that can encourage deviant behaviour. Imitation is when an individual imitate deviant behaviour from peers. For example, when someone

observes a deviant behaviour, that person may imitate the behaviour. Cyber-bullying is a behaviour that an individual can learn through the propositions discussed by Akers. Therefore, it is appropriate to use SLT to explain computer based deviance because, it provides a theoretical framework that explains the social learning process of cyber-bullying (Akers, 1998; Morris & Blackburn, 2009).

McLeod's biological theory of gender also provides a theoretical framework for this study. This theory is the one guiding this study (McLeod, 2014). It explains how gender plays a role in cyber-bullying. The biological theory of gender regards gender identity roles as emanating from biological processes. Gender differences are seen as stemming from sex differences. In other words, men and women act, think and feel differently. For example, men act more aggressively when compared to women, because of the differences in how their minds work. The notion is that, men and women's mode of operation in society is governed by their biology. This theory may help to explain why males are largely cyber-bullies and females are mostly cyber-victims. This is because men are regarded as naturally aggressive due to their biological make up.

2.15 Summary

Present literature on cyber-bullying which is cited in this chapter shows that this phenomenon is widespread throughout the globe. This literature also highlighted the serious negative effects of cyber-bullying on young people. Cyber-bullying psychologically, socially and academically affects young people. Cyber-bullying is more hurtful than traditional bullying. This is because of the anonymity associated with it. Females have been proven to be more vulnerable to cyber-bullying than males. Cyber-bullying happens anywhere and at any time of the day. Students engage in cyber-bullying for different reasons, including the need for change, seeking attention, recognition and looking for compassion. Background, growing up in a family where members are always fighting and bad influence from peers may sway youths into cyber-bullying.

CHAPTER 3

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The chapter highlights the research methods that were used in this study. It explains how the respondents were selected, ethical considerations, data collection, the interview process, the research instruments and the summary.

3.2 Research approach and design

Qualitative research approach was used for this research. Qualitative approach focuses on natural settings where interaction occurs rather than in static terms. It places great understanding on comprehending the phenomena (Maree, 2016; Babbie, 2017; Bless, Higson & Sithole, 2016). Qualitative research approach influenced the techniques that were used for sampling, data collection and data analysis. Its purpose was to explore feelings and experiences of first year male and female victims of cyber-bullying at the University of Venda.

A research design is a plan that outlines how a scientific research will be carried out (Bless, *et al.*, 2016). Laws, Harper, Jones and Marcus (2013), define research design as a strategic framework for action, which serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. Wiid and Diggines (2013), define a research design as a plan for a research project, setting out the broad structured and features of the research. Therefore, the research design for this study is exploratory in nature. Exploratory research is done in order to satisfy the researcher's desire for a better understanding (Babbie, 2017). The study explores the experiences of first year university students with cyber-bullying.

3.3 Population and location of the study

According to Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014), population refers to setting boundaries on study units taking into account the characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying. Population is the total number of objects or people who the researcher wants to conduct a study on (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). The population for this study consisted of first year students from the University of Venda who have been victims of cyber-bullying.

A study location refers to the place or venue where the researcher conducts the study (Cilliers *et al*, 2014). This study was conducted at the University of Venda (UNIVEN), which is located in Thohoyandou under Thulamela Municipality in Vhembe District, of Limpopo province South Africa. The University of Venda was established in 1982 and it comprises of eight schools, namely, Agriculture, Education, Environmental Sciences, Health Sciences, Human and Social Sciences, Law, Management Sciences as well as Mathematical and Natural Sciences.

3.4 Sampling procedures

Sampling is the process whereby a small population or subgroup of a population of interest is selected for a scientific study (Laws *et al*, 2013). A small portion of the population is selected and interviewed in order to quickly get the results of a given study. Rather than including the whole population, it saves time and money. Non-probability snowball sampling was used in the study. For the purpose of this study, non-probability snowball sampling technique was used to select the cyber-bullying victims. To get the desired respondents, the researcher identified one first year student who has been a victim of cyber-bullying from a website named toilet which was created solely to post hurtful messages about others. Once one victim of cyber-bullying was found, she/he was asked to refer the researcher to another victim of cyber-bullying. The second victim of cyber-bullying was also requested to help the researcher to identify another victim of cyber-bullying. This process was repeated until there was data saturation. Data saturation was reached after 14 respondents were interviewed. Of the 14 respondents found and interviewed, 10 respondents were female and 4 were male.

3.5 Data collection method

According to Bless *et al*, (2016), data collection method is a tool through which measurement of the data is actualized. Data collection method refers to an

instrument through which data is gathered. This gathering of data is done through social interaction, with participants in field studies, participant observation and other sources of information (Maree, 2016). Semi-structured interviews were used in the study. Semi-structured interviews are in-depth interviews which involve many open-ended questions and a few closed questions (Bless *et al*, 2016; Maree, 2016). The researcher developed an interview guide with open-ended questions which was used during interviews. The interviewer and the interviewees were equal partners. The interviewees were allowed to take different paths and express different thoughts and feelings. The interviewer also probed some questions to get more information. A tape recorder was also used to record the interview in order to ensure that the researcher captured all the information. A tape recorder also helped the researcher and the research assistant rewind and listen to the interview repeatedly to get clarity on the interview. It also helped when transcribing the data to include relevant quotes in the research report.

3.6 Data analysis method

Data analysis is the process of scrutinizing, cleansing, and modelling data in order to discover new information and make conclusions (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005). Thematic analysis was used to analyse data. Thematic analysis method was used as a means to get insight and knowledge from the data gathered (Franzel *et al.*, 2014). After data collection, it was cleaned and coded according to themes that emerged. The following steps by Bless *et al.* (2016), were followed by the researcher to analyse the data collected for this study:

Immersion of the data

The researcher listened to the recorded interview and transcribed data from the information obtained. The data was read over and over again. This helped the researcher to create a mental picture of the entire data set and also see what important information may have been missed.

Preliminary coding

This is where the text is broken into fragments which share some common characteristics. The researcher placed the data into categories by breaking up the original transcript.

Coding definition

Each code was clearly defined by putting a title and a description of what kind of data was to be categorised under that code.

Coding

Once a coding system was finalised, the researcher worked through the transcripts and broke up the text into fragments which were then allocated to particular codes.

Inter-code reliability

The researcher taught a research assistant how to code the data using coding definitions previously developed. The assistant also coded part of the data set independently, then the results were compared.

Interpretation of the data

After completing coding the data, the researcher interpreted it by assigning meaning to the collected data and determining conclusions and implications of the findings. A report was written and it is presented in chapter 4 of this study.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Ethics define what is legitimate or not, or moral procedures (De Vos *et al.*, 2011). These set of principles help prevent research abuse and assists the investigators to understand their responsibilities before they conduct a research (Bless *et al.*, 2016). It is crucial to follow ethics when carrying out a research project in order to avoid harm on the participants. It also ensures that the respondents take part in the study with full awareness of the purpose, risks and benefits associated with the study. Ethical considerations come into play when the respondents are recruited, during the intervention and in the release of the results obtained. In this study, confidentiality, voluntary participation, no harm to participants, the anonymity of participants and informed consent were considered.

3.7.1 Voluntary participation

Participation in the study should always be voluntary. Neuman (2011), states that the researcher must not coerce anyone into participating in a study. In other words, no one should be forced to take part in a project (Wiid & Diggines, 2013). In this study, respondents participated willingly, after the whole research project was explained to them. It was made clear at the outset that, those who do not feel comfortable were free to withdraw from the research at any stage.

3.7.2 Confidentiality

Everyone has the right to privacy. According to Maree (2016), each individual has the right to decide when, whom and to what extent his or her information should be revealed (Franzel *et al.*, 2014). Confidentiality was maintained by not divulging information obtained from the participants. Furthermore, the results of the study were reported in such a way that no name of any specific individual is or will be exposed.

3.7.3 Anonymity

Anonymity is the ethical protection which ensures that participants remain nameless. The researcher protected their identity by not disclosing their names. (Bless *et al.*, 2016). This way, the respondents remained anonymous. The researcher used alphabets instead of the names of the respondents. As a result, the interview was designed such that the names of the respondents were not captured. This helped to maintain anonymity, implying that even if any of the documents carrying the information from the respondents gets lost it would not be traced back to the source. Thus, the identities of the respondents were protected.

3.7.4 No harm to respondents

Research must not physically, psychologically or emotionally harm respondents (Maree, 2016). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to prevent harm towards the students. Students who participated were free to express their views and feelings without being judged.

3.7.5 Informed consent

Respondents have the right to know the purpose of the study and the procedures to be followed (Wiid & Diggins, 2013). Informed consent is an ethical principle that states that participants should be fully briefed about the nature of research in order for them to make informed decisions on their status of participation about whether to participate in it or not to (Bless *et al.*, 2016). The respondents were also informed that their information cannot be used in this study without their consent. The purpose of the study, risks and benefits were also explained, and participants were given an opportunity to ask questions before taking part in the interview.

3.10 Summary

This chapter explained the methodology that was used to probe cyber-bullying experiences of first year university students. It described the research design and sampling procedures that were used to conduct the research. The chapter also explained the ethical considerations that were followed during the research to ensure that the respondents were not harmed in any way. The methodology that was used in this study helped the researcher get in-depth information on cyber-bullying even though the methodology used does not allow the results to be generalised because of the sample which was not huge enough.

CHAPTER 4

4. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis and interpretation of the results from the fourteen first year students interviewed on their experiences of cyber-bullying. The data was presented in line with the aim of the research objectives and research questions. The biographical information of respondents is presented first. The data was analysed using themes that emerged from the study. The data was categorised into four themes. These are prevalence of cyber-bullying, gender differences in cyber-bullying, effects of cyber-bullying and measures to alleviate cyber-bullying. Alphabets were used in place of respondents' names to protect their identity.

4.2 Biographical information

Below is a discussion and analysis of the gender, nationality, place of residence and age of the respondents.

Table 4.1: gender, nationality and place of residence

Respondent	Gender	Nationality	Place of residence
A	Male	South African	On campus
B	Female	South African	On Campus
C	Female	South African	On campus
D	Male	South African	Off campus
E	Female	South African	Off campus
F	Male	South African	On campus
G	Female	South African	Off campus
H	Female	Zimbabwean	On campus
I	Female	Zimbabwean	On campus
J	Female	Nigerian	On campus
K	Male	Zimbabwean	On campus
L	Female	South African	On campus
M	Female	South African	On campus
N	Female	South African	Off campus

The personal details of the interviewed students who have experienced cyber-bullying are presented above (i.e. Table 4.1).

Fourteen first year students were interviewed and they were labelled A-N in order to protect their identity. Their gender, nationality and place of residents were presented in the table above. Ten respondents were female and four were male. This shows that female students are prone to be victims than male students. This also highlights an under-representation of males in the study. Of the fourteen respondents, ten were South African nationals, three were Zimbabweans and only one was Nigerian. The nationalities of the respondents show that cyber-bullying is also happening to foreign nationals though it is mainly prevailing among South African citizens. Of the fourteen respondents, ten were staying on campus and only four stayed off campus. This could be because a greater population of the students stay on campus and those that stay on campus were easy to access when sampling was done. Snowball sampling was used. Due to the fact that the first respondent that was identified stayed on campus and this could be the reason why most of the respondents were campus residents.

Table 4.2: Age of respondents

Age	Number of respondents
18 years - 20 years	9
21 years - 25 years	2
26 years – 30 years	2
Over 30 years	1

As indicated in table 4.2 above, majority of the respondents, sixty four per cent were between 18-20 years. Twenty one per cent were between 21-25 years. Fourteen per cent were between 26-30 years. Only seven percent were over 30 years. This shows that younger students are more prone to cyber-bullying when compared to the older students. Other reasons for the high number of young students being vulnerable to cyber-bullying are that the sample may have consisted of more younger students than older students and also that younger students spend more time on the internet than older ones.

4.3 THEME 1: PREVALENCE OF CYBER-BULLYING AMONG FIRST YEAR STUDENTS

Under this theme, the knowledge of cyber-bullying, platform for cyber-bullying, cyber-bullying experiences, the time frame of the bullying, anonymity in cyber-bullying, responding to cyber-bullying and reporting cyber-bullying are presented and discussed.

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Knowledge of cyber-bullying

All fourteen (14) respondents had an idea of what cyber-bullying was since they were victims of the scourge. This corroborates with Li's findings, which assert that almost every participant in their study were familiar with cyber-bullying (Li, 2010). Ninety three per cent of the respondents knew the definition of cyber-bullying, which is electronic or online social cruelty (Kowalski *et al*, 2014). Below is what respondents G and N said:

Cyber-bullying is being attacked electronically or having your nude picture circulating everywhere, people laughing at you like what happened to me.
(Respondent G)

Cyber-bullying is when someone attacks you on the internet on social networks. (Respondent N)

However, one respondent did not have a clear understanding of what cyber-bullying was. The respondent uttered a statement which contained the information which was partly correct about the definition of cyber-bullying. The respondent did not mention the part of information which is very crucial about cyber-bullying. The respondent defines cyber-bullying as the circulation of false information about an individual. This is wrong because, if what is said about a person is true or false, it is still cyber-bullying, as long as it hurts the other person's image. The following is the exact statement uttered by the respondent in question:

I think cyber-bullying is when people talk about you on the internet but it is only when what is being said about you is not true like in my case. If it's true we can't necessarily call it cyber-bullying.

The above response shows that the majority of the students knew and understand the meaning of cyber-bullying. This means that most of the respondents knew that cyber-bullying is a form of bullying that happens online.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Platforms used to cyber-bully others

Respondents stated that platforms used to cyber-bully others around campus include Facebook, emails, WhatsApp, Myspace, instagram and a website named toilet. Subrahamanyam and Greenfield (2010), also points out that cyber-bullying happens on social networks such as Facebook and Myspace. The respondents also stated that the website can only be accessed by the students of the University of Venda because it is only accessible to registered students. Majority of the respondents (forty

two per cent), have experienced bullying on the website named toilet in which any student can post anything about anyone. This confirms that cyber-bullying also happens through a website that may be created to harass others as postulated by Kowalski, *et al*, (2014). In this case a website called toilet is used by some of the University of Venda students to bully other students. Most of the bullies use fake identities which make it difficult for the victim to identify the perpetrator of cyber-bullying. This also makes it easy for perpetrators to continue bullying others. Those that have experienced bullying on the website named toilet also experienced bullying in other social networks. Below is what respondents A and J said to confirm this assertion:

A lot of unpleasant stuff about my sexual preference were on that toilet even on Facebook I ended up deactivating my Facebook account. (Respondent A)

Each time I touched my phone I would see that story of STI. It was circulated everywhere be it Facebook, Whatsapp, toilet everywhere. I was even scared of touching my phone. (Respondent J)

The above statements show that one person can be bullied on many social networks and platforms. It also shows how technology spreads information fast and it can reach many people from different parts of the world. This makes cyber-bullying dangerous as everyone and everywhere might end up receiving the rumours, leaving no safe space for the victim to hide.

4.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Cyber-bullying experiences and reasons for being cyber-bullied

Respondents experienced cyber-bullying differently and they were also cyber-bullied for different reasons. Sexual orientation was the main reason the respondents were cyber-bullied. Two respondents were bullied for being gay and one was bullied for being a lesbian. This supports Glensen's view which asserts that, LGBTi are the minority group likely to be targeted by cyber-bullies (Glensen, 2011). Below is what respondents A, D and N said in relation to the above argument:

They laugh at me for being gay and they send nasty messages to me. They even call me all sorts of names like 'sisy boy' meaning you are a boy/girl. (Respondent A)

People would post photo-shopped pictures of me wearing a dress or a skirt wearing lip stick. I know I am gay but it doesn't mean I am a woman. The sad

part about this is that the pictures ended up in my parents' hands and they didn't know I was gay. This did not only break me, but my parents too. I was going to tell them at my own time when I was ready but thanks to the bullies they did it for me. (Respondent D)

They were sending messages on WhatsApp that I preferred women to men because I can't find a man. If I could get a man I would stop being crazy. (Respondent N)

The above response made by respondent A indicates that gay people are called names. It shows that people have not fully accepted the gay community and gay bashing is still happening. Solin (2016), acknowledges that most people still view being gay as perverted. This further reveals the fact that most community members are still very conservative. This is the case because, gay bashing can only be done by people who have not embraced the fact that people of a different sexual orientation are still human and deserve to be accepted and respected.

Respondent D's statement shows that being cyber-bullied for sexual preferences did not only hurt the victims, but their parents as well. In an African society, it is very difficult to accept same sex relationships especially in the elderly circles. Respondent D's parents could have suffered a lot of shock since they were caught off guard. Most parents who discover that their children are gay feel that they have failed and lost their children. It is really hard for parents to accept their children's sexuality.

Children who are gay also find it extremely difficult to divulge their gay status to their parents. LGBTI people need time to prepare themselves before they tell their parents, because it is very difficult. Having bullies telling parents about their LGBTI children's sexual orientation could have been the worst thing that respondent D went through. When cyber-bullies succeed in humiliating people, they have a sense of achievement. LGBTI students are humiliated and called crazy. Generally, people think that there is something wrong with the LGBTIs. Some people cannot understand the reason behind LGBTI people's practice of same sex relationships. However, people who bully people of a different sexual orientation are in contravention with the law. In the South African constitution, section 9 (3) prohibits discrimination on race, gender and sexual orientation. It is an offense in which one could face jail time.

Dressing was also a reason why some students were cyber-bullied. Respondents B and K were cyber-bullied because of the way they dress. This is captured in the following statements:

They were saying I wear very small clothes which disclose a lot of flesh. Messages were sent to me that I do so to attract men of which I do it because that's what I like. (Respondent B)

I come from a poor background and my parents can't afford to buy me clothes every now and then. My clothes are not so fashionable clothes and this was posted on the internet. They make fun of my clothes online. (Respondent K)

Cyber-bullies can attack a person for doing something that they think is not socially acceptable like wearing mini-skirts. Wearing clothes that are not fashionable can lead one into being cyber-bullied. Cassidy *et al.* (2011), noted that a person can be bullied for unfashionable clothing. Bullies also do not care whether the victim is in that situation because of circumstances beyond their control. For instance, Respondent K wore out-dated clothes because her parents could not afford to buy her new clothes, not because it was her choice. Unfortunately, this created an opportunity for cyber-bullies to lambast and embarrass the respondent. The above supports Cassidy *et al.* (2011), perception that victims are mostly those that are disadvantaged.

Some students were cyber-bullied because of the way they looked. Two of the fourteen respondents were bullied because of their weight and one was cyber-bullied because of her skin colour. Below is what respondents C and I who were cyber-bullied for being overweight said:

They mocked me about my weight on social media. (Respondent C)

Pictures about me were posted on social media. They would take photos of me whenever I eat, post them on the internet and make funny comments. (Respondent I)

The above responses show that being overweight can attract bullies and make one a target of cyber-bullying. Kowalski *et al.*, (2014), assert that, special health care situations such as obesity can make one a cyber-victim. Response from respondent I shows that cyber-bullies also stalk their victims in real life just to get more information to make their online stories more fun; taking pictures of the victim while he/she is not aware and post them on internet. This could be more damaging to the victim since

not only their story is circulating, but their faces/images as well. This makes people recognise them everywhere they go, which could temper with their sense of safety.

Respondent L was cyber-bullied because of her dark complexion. Below is what she said:

People anonymously sent humiliating messages to me about me being dark. Others were laughing at me suggesting that I should try bleaching or bathing with a washing detergent.

The above indicate that a person can be bullied because of how they look. According to Cassidy *et al.* (2011), a person can be cyber bullied for his/her physical appearances. Cyber-bullies can make dangerous suggestions to their victims. For example, cyber-bullies suggested that Respondent L should bleach her skin for her to have a light complexion. Unfortunately, bleaching one's skin is dangerous and it can result in skin damages for the victim. It also shows how cruel cyber-bullies are. Students who are cyber-bullied because of their appearances end up not happy with the way they look. Even if family and friends regard them as beautiful, they do not believe them. All the respondents who were cyber-bullied because of their appearances were women. This is upsetting because women are targeted mostly for their appearances than men. Members of society have their own perception on how women should look. People are failing to celebrate women for who they are.

Another respondent was bullied because of religious affiliations. The bullies called him 'too religious'. Below is what respondent F experienced:

These cyber-bullies would send me messages asking me to pray for them about something senseless like can you pray for money in my account to last forever and they laugh after that. At some point I thought maybe I was being too religious.

The above statement show that being cyber-bullied because of religion makes the victim questions his or her faith. This confirms the view by Forman and Gordon (2017) that, youth can be bullied for religious beliefs. They might decide to change the way they act or it might even lead the victims to part with their religion.

Age is another reason students are cyber-bullied. Some students are bullied because they are oldest in class. Being older than classmates can lead to being cyber-bullied as evidenced by the following statement:

I have seen tweets about me being older than the rest of my classmates; they call me names like grandpa. This has affected me a lot. I am no longer comfortable around my classmates anymore. I wish I could tell you how old I am but I just can't. (Respondent E)

The above response indicates that some students suffer from age discrimination. Even though the university does not have age restrictions, some people make fun of those who attend university in their later stages of life. Respondent E could not even reveal his age showing that he was embarrassed of his age. This is because people make fun of him, hence he cannot tell anyone how old he is.

Contracting a disease, especially a sexually transmitted disease, often leads one into being cyber-bullied. Below is what respondent J said:

They were laughing at me because I had contracted syphilis from my boyfriend. I confided in my friend but she told everyone about it. People started calling me names on social media. Others said I was a prostitute, I'm rotten and I'm going to die.

The above response shows that having a disease could make one a victim of cyber-bullying, especially if it gets to the ears of other people. Willard (2008) found that people with certain diseases are at a greater risk of being cyber-bullied. This could make people hide after contracting a disease, and they might not even seek medical help because, they fear people's reactions if the news reach the public. Although the respondent shows that both the respondent and the boyfriend had syphilis, bullies targeted the woman. . This shows that people regard women as weak and easy targets of cyber-bullying when compared to men. The above response from Respondent J also indicates how cyber-bullies put ideas into victim's mind. They predict death over the victim and this might influence suicide. . Bullies do not sympathise with their targets. They do not care about the impact of their harsh words on the victims.

Academic performance is also one of the reasons behind cause cyber-bullying. One of the respondents reported being bullied because she was not doing so well in her school work: Respondent M said:

I'm really battling with my school work. I do fail sometimes, and during semester marks updates, some people have been posting on Myspace saying that if I qualify then everyone else will qualify with distinctions. Others

were saying that I should go back to primary school because even a primary school pupil is better than me. (Respondent M)

The above statement is really worrying because, it is not expected to find university students still making fun of each other's academic abilities. Instead of working together and uplifting each other as fellow students, they tease the academically challenged.

Another respondent (Respondent G) had her nude pictures circulated on social media:

I was misled by a boyfriend who is now an ex to send him my nude pictures. I had my doubts but I did it anyway. When we broke up he sent them on every social media site just to get even with me for dumping him.

The above respondent gave her pictures to her boyfriend out of trust. At times students do act in a manner that might lead to them into being victimised. Gibson (2015), argues that, the lack of regard students have for their private lives, expose them to cyber-bullying. Victims are aware of the dangers of sharing naked pictures with other people but they do it regardless of the consequences. Sending naked pictures of a person online is normally done to humiliate and get even with the victim. Goodno (2011), emphasised that the internet is now used to deliberately harass and humiliate others.

One woman (Respondent H) experienced some stalking on social media. According to Webster's New World Law dictionary (2010), stalking is a form of cyber-bullying whereby a person gives unwanted attention or obsession either through the internet or face to face. Cyber-stalking is related to harassment and monitoring the victim online. Below is what respondent H experienced.

I started by receiving love messages from an unknown account on Facebook. I blocked the person but he kept on creating new accounts and sending me the same kind of messages. The stalking got worse when the person started sending flowers to my room with messages addressing me as his girlfriend. This really got me scared.

The above response shows how dangerous cyber-bullies, especially cyber-stalkers, can be. They can move from being behind the screen to the real world. This shows that female students are not safe at UNIVEN since there are perpetrators out there waiting to victimise women.

4.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Time frame of the bullying

Respondents were asked how long did the bullying went on. The responses show that, the least that the bullying went on for was a month. Below is Respondent J's response:

I was bullied for close to a month, luckily I managed to trace who was bullying me and she stopped. I still think of the incident though.

For others like respondent E, the bullying went on as long as 5 months:

I can't remember how long exactly it went on for, but I know the whole of first semester I was going through a difficult time.

Unfortunately for respondents C and D, the bullying is still going on:

I feel like crying right now, this night mare seem to be stuck with me forever, when is this going to end. (Respondent C)

These not so funny jokes about my weight are still circulating, people are really enjoying it. (Respondent D)

Cyber-bullying can go on for longer periods. Burton and Mutongwizo (2009) argues that cyber-bullying lasts longer than traditional bullying. But even if the actual cyber-bullying ends, it often lasts a life time in the mind of the victim. It is not easy to forget the acts of cyber-bullying. This means that even a small period of being cyber-bullied leaves an indelible scar on the victim. The victims of cyber-bullying continue to suffer the effects of their cyber-bullying experiences for many years after the incident.

4.3.5 Sub-theme 5: Anonymity in cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying promotes anonymity. It is very difficult to identify the perpetrator. Bullies hide behind anonymity. They feel they can say whatever they want and get away with it. This anonymity can be used by individuals who are shy in the real world and are seeking to escape from their offline personalities. Although some of the respondents managed to know who cyber-bullied them, the majority of them did not know their bullies. In Li's findings, students who bully others usually hide their identities making it hard for victims to know their bullies (Li, 2007). When respondents were asked if they knew who cyber-bullied them, the majority of them (sixty four per cent) did not know who bullied them as compared to thirty six per cent who knew their culprits. Below is what respondent A and I said:

I wish I knew who is doing this to me, who could be this cruel? (Respondent A)

*I don't know who is bullying me, I have tried searching but it's a dead end.
(Respondent I)*

The above statements show that not knowing who is behind the bullying makes the bullying more stressing. However, not knowing the bully makes the victim suffer even more as outlined by Mishna *et al.* (2009), anonymity of cyber-bullying makes the effects last for a longer time. Knowing the bully gave the victims some closure. Their responses also show that bullies are normally people we know and trust. Mishna *et al.* (2009), confirm that cyber-bullies can be anyone.

After wondering for so long who had started with such a rumour, I realised that it was my neighbour from back home. (Respondent E)

*My very own friend whom I had confided in so that she can help me, is the very same person who spread my problems all over the internet.
(Respondent J)*

Anonymity in cyber-bullying increases feelings of fear in cyber-victims. Victims of cyber-bullying are frightened because they do not know who is harassing them. The idea of not knowing who is targeting them makes them scared. Respondent H said:

I had no idea who was stalking me, I was so much scared, and I am still scared that the person is still watching me. What if he does something to harm me?

The feelings of fear might result in the cyber-victims' staying locked and very alert even when it is not necessary. The victims will be scared that the bullies are out there watching their every move. Not knowing who is behind the bullying makes the victim feel more haunted than when one is aware of the person behind the bullying. Kowalski, (2014), highlights that the use of anonymity instil fear in cyber-victims, since they do not know their bullies. Uncertainty and confusion are terrible feelings because, there is no one to turn to when the bully could be anyone.

4.3.6 Sub-theme 6: Responding to cyber-bullies

Respondents were asked if they responded to the bullying. Forty three per cent of the respondents reacted to the bullying and forty seven per cent did not respond. Below is what respondents B, F and H said:

I had to defend myself, there is nothing wrong with the way I dress even if they call me all nasty names; I like the see through clothes and the shorts/short dresses. (Respondent B)

I thought talking to the person will make me figure out who was stalking me. (Respondent F)

I responded to the teasing because I wanted to explain to them why I choose to be religious and I was hoping they would repent. (Respondent H)

Most cyber-bullies expect a response from their targets since they are always looking for a reaction, and the above respondents gave them the satisfaction. Victims respond as a way of defending themselves. Others respond in a bid to try and find out who is cyber-bullying them. Some cyber-victims do not respond because they are scared of the bullies. They are also scared that it might make the worst out of the situation. Others do not respond because they agree with the bullies, they think the bullies are right and they deserve being bullied. Below is what respondent C and K said:

I was too scared to respond, I was worried it would make the matter worse. (Respondent C)

What was I to say to them when everything they were saying about me is true? (Respondent K)

The above statements show that victims feel vulnerable and powerless. They feel like the situation is more than they can handle. This argument is confirmed by Hemphill *et al.* (2011), who stressed that, cyber-bullying is associated with feelings of helplessness and misery. For those that responded, the bullying took longer than those that did not respond. This is highlighted by the responses below from respondent B and C:

When I responded the bullying got worse, it was now coming from all angles; it was like adding fuel to a fire if you understand what I am saying. I regret ever responding to the perpetrator. (Respondent B)

I'm glad I didn't respond because the person just stopped sending the messages sooner than I expected. (Respondent C)

Responding to cyber-bullies only makes the situation worse for the victims. This observation corroborates with Mishna *et al.* (2012). In their findings, victims who

respond to cyber-bullies influences the bully, hence the bullying last longer. Bullies look for someone who can respond. Responding appears to give the bully a supreme position over the victim.

4.3.7 Sub-theme 7: Reporting cyber- bullying

In this study, some respondents reported cyber-bullying and some did not. Those that reported, they informed either their pastor, friends or parents. They reported their ordeal in order to get advice or help from people close to them. Below are respondents B, H and N who reported cyber-bullying:

I told my mother everything, she gave me a shoulder to cry on and she would constantly tell me that everything will be over, it's just a phase. She even took me to a counsellor. (Respondent B)

I told my friends that someone was stalking me It helped me because I know that if something happens at least someone aware of the cause. (Respondent H)

When I told my other gay friends of what I was going through, it helped me a lot. They supported me all the way and they also shared their experiences with me and how they overcame the situation. It really helped me cope. (Respondent N)

The above responses show that reporting cyber-bullying really helped the victims cope. Although according to Mishna *et al.* (2012), young people think it is useless to report cyber-bullying. They managed to cope because they got support and the feeling that they were not alone. What is worrying is that, out of all the respondents who reported, none of them reported their case to the school authorities, instead, they reported to either a pastor, friend or a family member. This is disturbing because all this bullying happened on campus (UNIVEN), but they were not free to tell the authorities about it. This may also suggest that students are not aware of the services offered at the university, such as counselling services for victims.

Some did not report because they could not trust anyone. Some did not know whom to talk to. Others were scared of being judged. Others thought reporting will not help them, instead, it will only make the matter worse. Below is what respondent A and J said:

People are good at judging others, you tell them your problems, and they start judging you. So I decided to keep it to myself. (Respondent A)

I couldn't find anyone to trust and tell all of this, my friends were distancing themselves from me, my father is a non-starter. He would blame me and make me feel worse. (Respondent J)

The above statements indicate that victims either lack proper support from the university, their parents and even their friends or that they are not aware of the support service available for university students. Some just assume that they will not be supported or helped if they report their cases to the university authorities. Students who have been cyber-bullied find it hard to report their cases. Li (2012), confirms that victims of cyber-bullying find it difficult to report being bullied. Of the fourteen respondents interviewed, nine did not report as compared to five who reported the bullying. This shows that students do not report being cyber-bullied. As a result, they suffer alone. Having to go through the experience alone makes the victim lose hope and end up making drastic decisions such as committing suicide, because they feel and assume that they are alone in their ordeal.

4.4 THEME 2: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying happens to both male and female students. Both male and females can participate in cyber-bullying either as a bully or a victim. Below is the presentation of the gender differences in cyber-bullying.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Female cyber-bullying

Table 4.1 above shows that female students are more likely to fall victim of cyber-bullying when compared to male students. From the data presented in the table above (table 4.1), seventy one per cent of the victims of cyber-bullying were females; as Kowalski *et al.* (2014), cited that females are more prone to be victims of cyber-bullying than males. This could be because women experience more cyber-bullying because they spend more time online than men (Topcu & Barker, 2012). The fact that females fall victim more than men shows that the oppression of women goes beyond the physical. Women are the most targeted and bullied even on the internet. Men show their masculinity even on the internet. Most men see themselves as superior, while females are inferior, hence men can harass women anywhere and anytime. All victims who were cyber-bullied for their appearances were females. This shows that female students are targeted more than their male counterparts because of their gender. Female students also fall victim to cyber-bullying because of the way they dress unlike men who are not attacked because of the way they dress. Men can wear whatever they want and no one attacks them. This shows that the society has norms that women are expected to follow, while men are not expected to adhere to

any norms such as dressing. Females are often judged for the way they dress, while males are not. Facio, (2013) substantiates the argument in his observation that, across patriarchy's different models, women are exposed to different types of judgement and they have to live according to what society wants. When respondents were asked why they thought they were bullied, respondents B and L said that they were harassed simply because they were women:

A man can wear a short and a vest and walk around but nothing will be said about it. But because I am woman wearing a short makes me a bad person and I'm called names because of that. (Respondent B)

I know a lot of boys in my class who are even darker than me, but no one says anything to them. Bullies see me as an easy target because I'm a lady. (Respondent L)

The above statements show that women feel vulnerable simply because they are women. They feel that they are targeted by cyber bullies because they are female. This is fretting, because cyber-bullying removes self-worth in female victims. This also shows that patriarchy is at play, whereby males are regarded as supreme and women are regarded as inferior. In a patriarchal society, the male class oppresses of the female class (Facio, 2013). This has also been taken to the online community. Men oppress women because of their desire for power and it drives them to bully them, in a bid to gain as much power and control over women.

Females are also cyber-bullied through stalking. Respondent H was subjected to cyber-bullying by someone she did not know. The person sent unwanted love messages online. Females are more vulnerable than males online when it comes to stalking. Some men only go on the internet just to victimise women. Females also experience the circulation and display of their naked bodies online. This may be because females like taking nude pictures of themselves. However, it is not a safe thing to do, since they may get into the wrong hands and circulated everywhere.

Of the five victims who managed to know who cyber-bullied them, only two of the bullies were females. This shows that females also take part in cyber-bullying as bullies but the majority of the bullies are male. This observation confirms Perry's (2015) view on women. Women do take part in cyber-bullying as bullies (Perry, 2015). However, in Colby's view, internet bullies are most likely to be females (Colby, 2013). When women cyber-bully, they mostly participate in gossip. Below is what respondent J said:

I confided in my friend and she went around telling people about something that I told her in confidence.

Respondent J above confided in her friend who is also a female and the friend went around spreading the rumours on the internet. This confirms the observation made by Duhue *et al*, (2008). Women cyber-bullying mostly involve blame, threats and gossip (Duhue *et al.*, 2008).

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Male cyber-bullying

Males are less likely to fall victim to cyber-bullying than their female colleagues. As shown in table 4.1 above, only four of the fourteen interviewed victims were males. This shows that there was misrepresentation of males in the sample. This could be because, it is difficult to identify males as victims. This is because their pride do not allow them to accept being victims (Dilimac, 2012). Another reason for having few male respondents could be that male students do not report cyber-bullying for fear of being labelled a rat (Cassidy *et al*, 2013).

Of the male respondents, fifty per cent were cyber-bullied for being gay. Underneath is what respondent A and D said:

They laugh at me for being gay and they send nasty messages to me. They even call me all sorts of names like 'sisy boy' meaning you are a boy/girl. (Respondent A)

People would post photo-shopped pictures of me wearing a dress or a skirt wearing lip stick. I know I am gay but it doesn't mean I am a woman. The sad part about this is that the pictures ended up in my parents' hands who didn't know I was gay. This did not only break me, but my parents too. I was going to tell them at my own time when I was ready but thanks to the bullies they did it for me. (Respondent D)

This indicates that, mostly males are cyber-bullied because of their sexual preferences. Gay people are not only targeted in society but on the internet too. In an African society, it is very difficult to accept same sex relationships, especially the elderly people. However, the above has shown that even young people have not yet accepted gay people and universities have become unsafe places for them. Blumenfeld and Frazer (2010), contends that, universities and colleges have unwelcoming environments for gay people

Of the five respondents who knew their bullies, three of the bullies were male. This assertion is attested to by the statement uttered by respondent G below:

My ex-boyfriend is the one who sent the nude pictures around. (Respondent G)

The above observation indicates that men are mainly bullies. They feel they have power over women and other men, normally the minority group like gay people. This confirms the view by Dilimac (2012). Males are most likely to be cyber-bullies than females (Dilimac, 2012). Even those we know and trust can be perpetrators like the above where a woman was cyber-bullied by her ex-boyfriend that she trusted. The observation that male students are likely to be cyber-bullies confirms the biological theory of gender (McLeod, 2014). The study articulates that males are likely to be cyber-bullies than females because of their biological make-up. This implies that men and women are governed by their biological make-up. Men are naturally aggressive than women, that is why men are likely to act as cyber-bullies than women.

4.5 THEME 3: EFFECTS OF CYBER-BULLYING

Cyber-bullying can have severe and long term effects on the victims. Students who are cyber-bullied can feel like they are being attacked endlessly and they cannot escape. Below the psychological, health, academic and social effects of cyber-bullying are presented.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Psychological effects

Cyber-bullying can affect the mental and emotional state of the victims.

4.5.1.1 Depression

Some respondents had depression symptoms. Below is what Respondents C and I said:

I just cry, cry and cry all day and night. I can't do anything else. (Respondent C)

I was angry all the time; I couldn't do anything but eat. Sometimes I would wake up at night just to think and stare into the dark. I was very sad. (Respondent I)

Victims of cyber-bullying often suffer from depression. Kowalski & Ferdina (2011), affirm that cyber-bullied students suffer from depression. They have persistent feelings of sadness and anger. They lose interest in everything surrounding them

including their own lives. Depression causes them to resort to eating continuously. This serves as a source of comfort. However, this excessive eating may lead to obesity. They also experience sleepless nights and crying all the time. The above response from respondent C, shows that some cyber-bullying victims are still experiencing depression after a halt of their problem. This could be a long term effect which may need professional help. Being cyber-bullied cause anger in victims as shown in the case of Respondent I above. Anger can have destructive results for both the victim and the people around him/her. It can make the victim hurt people around him/her. It can even lead to self-harm. Kowalski and Fedina (2011), maintain that being cyber-bullied causes one to think of committing suicide. Responded I also experienced uncontrollable eating which shows that some cyber-victims use eating as a coping strategy. This could be dangerous since it can lead to obesity. Cyber-bullying also causes insomnia in victims; which is lack of sleep as in the case of respondent I, who experienced sleepless nights.

4.5.1.2 Anxiety

Cyber-bullying victims also experience anxiety. Respondent J below had some symptoms of anxiety as this can be traced in the following extract:

All I could think about was that experience, I was restless thinking that someone is out to get me. I felt weak, I lost appetite.

Anxiety is one of the mental disorders that victims of cyber-bullying experience. This view supports an observation by Burton & Mutongwizo (2009), who argue that cyber-bullying causes anxiety. Victims of cyber-bullying have feelings of worry. They experience fear, and that interferes with their day to day lives. Anxiety in cyber-victims can lead them into eating disorders. The above respondent lost appetite because of being bullied. Victims of cyber-bullying are worried and concerned all the time. Their mind is always dwelling on their troubles and their normal lifestyle is affected. They are nervous about future uncertainties and they believe someone could harm them.

4.5.1.3 Self-esteem

Students who have been cyber-bullied lose their self-esteem. Beneath is what Respondent I said:

This body is the reason why I'm going through this. If only I could lose weight I will be fine and no one will make fun of me. I feel worthless, such that I have

tried taking herbex, I even took an over dose but nothing changed. I'm ugly, I hate myself.

The above respondent lost self-worth because of being cyber-bullied. This observation corroborates the view that, bullies target a person's self-esteem (Cassidy *et al.*, 2011). The above response also shows that victims believe that there is something wrong with them, and they blame themselves for being cyber-bullied. The observation confirms Turan *et al.*'s opinion. Cyber-victims think that being bullied is because they have a problem. Cyber-bullies often attack victims when they are most vulnerable. They start to doubt their worth and value. They begin to feel dissatisfied with who they are. They might begin to harm themselves in certain ways like the above respondent who took an overdose of some slimming concoction to lose weight faster, which could have harmed her. The following statement made by Respondent K indicates that she also tried to change her way of dressing to curb the bullying:

I wanted to change my whole wardrobe to wear what's trending, what others are wearing these days.

The above response shows that cyber-victims feel that if they could change their way of living or their behaviours, the bullying would stop. In confirmation of the above Kowalski and Fedina (2011), argue that cyber-victims have considerations of changing themselves to stop the bullying.

4.5.1.4 Suicidal thoughts

Victims that are cyber-bullied feel hopeless. They begin to feel like the only way out of their scourge taking their own lives. Of the fourteen respondents interviewed, just slightly less than fifty percent of the cyber-bullied victims thought of taking their own lives. This is a worrying number, which shows that cyber-bullying is a serious problem and it is life threatening. Kowalski *et al.* (2012), agree that cyber-bullying causes suicidal thoughts in victims. Respondent C and G are some of the respondents who had suicidal thoughts and below is what they said:

I thought that maybe if I kill myself all these problems will disappear.
(Respondent C)

The only solution I had at that time was to just die; I thought that dying would make me rest. I wanted to rest from all the stress. (Respondent G)

One of the respondents, actually tried committing suicide:

One day I decided that I'm going to end it all. I went home for semester break, locked myself in my room and took an over dose of pills. Luckily my brother was found it in time and they rushed me to the hospital. The doctor said if I had taken a little bit more than I had I would have died. (Respondent D)

The above response shows that suicidal thoughts can sometimes turn into real suicide, as victims may actually try to kill themselves. Respondent D could have lost his life because of cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying should be taken seriously to avoid such incidences. Cyber-bullying also wears away feelings of happiness and pleasure. As a result, victims of cyber bullying are sad all the time. In most cases, they are troubled and worried hence, they end up thinking of killing themselves. Mishna *et al.* (2012), similarly noted that, cyber-bullying causes are anger in victims most of the time, hence they end up having suicidal thoughts

4.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Health effects

Being cyber-bullied also affect the health of the victims. Below is what respondents G and L experienced:

I developed stomach ulcers maybe because I was not eating well, I lost a lot of weight people even thought I was suffering from anorexia. My skin became pale I looked really sick. (Respondent G)

I suffered from headaches all the time, even if I took pain stop it wouldn't stop. (Respondent L)

The above responses indicate that cyber-bullying does not only affect the victims psychologically, but it also affects the health of the victims. Kowalski & Ferdina (2011), have the same view; cyber-bullying also causes physical health problems. The above responses also show that cyber-bullying can cause continuous headaches. Such headaches may have a long term effect which may put them on constant medication. This shows that cyber-bullying can have long term health effects on the victims. Students who are cyber-bullied can also suffer from stomach aches. The stress in bullying causes stress- related conditions like stomach ulcers and skin conditions. Cyber-bullied people also experience eating disorders like skipping meals and binge eating which might result in weight loss or excessive weight gain. Cyber-bullying victim may end up with an unhealthy weight and this might be difficult to recover from

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3: Academic effects

Twelve of the fourteen respondents reported negative effects on their school work because of their cyber-bullying experiences, below is what respondent A, I and G said:

I failed too much that semester, I'm not a bright student but I'm average. That semester I failed three modules and of the two that I passed I had fifty per cent and fifty one per cent. I was shocked that I even passed those two. (Respondent A)

I had 2 supplementary exams which is something that is not expected of me. (Respondent I)

I stopped attending lectures because I was ashamed and embarrassed of what was circulating about me on the internet. This caused me to attain low marks. (Respondent G)

The above responses indicate that, cyber-bullying negatively affects the victims' (students) academic results. Their academic performance was negatively affected. Sinclair *et al.* (2011), outlines that cyber-bullying leads to academic failure. Their grades deteriorate because they find it difficult to study because of the stress caused cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullied students lose interest in school and sometimes think of dropping out of school. For example, Respondent E said the following:

I just lost interest in school I was even considering dropping out of university. I totally lost interest in anything to do with school

The above response shows how cyber-bullying can make the victim lose interest in school work. The respondent emphasised on his loss of interest in school, he emphasised on how he had lost interest. Kowalski and Fedina (2011), also articulates that victims of cyber-bullying lose interest in school.

4.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Social effects

Cyber-bullying also affects the victim's social life. Below is what respondent F and J said in relation to the above argument:

I was advised by my pastor to stop using my phone and laptop for a while, but this completely shut me out of the world. I had no means of communication and I felt like I was in the desert all alone. (Respondent F)

No one wanted to associate with me as if they would contract it just by talking to me; I was labelled the 'sexual transmitted disease' girl. I was so alone I had no friends. (Respondent J)

The above statements show that cyber-victims suffer from isolation. They are isolated from their peers. This is a painful experience for the victims, because they generally their age group is at a stage where they want to socialise a lot. The feeling of isolation and loneliness usually generates unpleasant thoughts such as revenge or suicide. Burton and Mutongwizo (2009), highlighted that, cyber-bullying happens when a person is alone which causes the feeling of loneliness to the victim. Some people recommend staying away from cell phones or electronic gadgets if one has been cyber-bullied. However, this might mean cutting themselves away from their friends, hence they feel alone with no means of communication

4.6 THEME 4: MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE CYBER-BULLYING

The following is a presentation, analysis and interpretation of what universities, students and parents need to do in a bid to curtail cyber-bullying among university students.

4.6.1 Sub-theme 1: What the university authorities should do about cyber-bullying

Respondents were asked to state what the university should do to stop cyber-bullying. They highlighted that the university should educate the students about responsible use of the internet and the dangers of cyber-bullying. This supports the view by Hester (2012). Schools should provide awareness cyber-bullying and its dangers to students and this will help combat cyber-bullying (Hester, 2012). Some respondents said that the university is not protecting them in any way. They said university management often take cyber-bullying lightly or they do not even know that it is happening. Due to the fact that there is no law set out to protect students, they expect the university to formulate a policy that bars all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. This correlates with the findings of the study conducted by Hester (2012). School officials should add a guideline on cyber-bullying in their school policy (Hester, 2012). The policy on cyber-bullying should also be very strict, and indicate the penalty measures to be taken against those who are found guilty of subjecting others to cyber-bullying. Hester (2012), emphasised that school officials should incorporate strict guidelines for the use of technology and harsh consequences on students who choose to disobey.

Below are the responses of respondents M and H in relation to the foregoing argument:

University authorities don't care about this problem. They take cyber-bullying lightly, and they don't understand what some of us are going through or maybe they do not even know that it's happening. If they could at least put a rule to protect people from bullies, something that will clearly state that cyber-bullying is punishable. This might reduce bullying in fear of the consequences thereof. (Respondent M)

I don't think there is any law on cyber-bullying at this school. Well if such a law exists, why is it not clear or visible to everyone? They should paste it in computer labs to remind bullies that what they are doing is not allowed. If it's not there we want it, it's really necessary. (Respondent H)

The above responses show that students need a law or a policy that can protect them from cyber-bullying. There has to be awareness campaigns about such laws or policies. The information on such laws or policies should be pasted around campus so that students become aware of the penalties that comes with cyber-bullying. Making people aware of such a law or policy is not sufficient, hence it should also be enforced

Students have also suggested that the university should help them trace the perpetrators through the IT department. The university authorities must thoroughly investigate cyber-bullying. Willard (2012), also urges that any on-campus interaction between the alleged cyber-bully and the victim should be investigated. This will give victims the urge to report cyber-bullying if they know that it will be dealt with or something will be done about it. Respondent E said:

Those IT guys should be helping us trace the people harassing us, it shouldn't be that difficult.

Respondent N suggested that they install a software that detects the misuse of UNIVEN Wi-Fi in activities such as bullying others online:

It would be wise if they put something like software that detects if someone post nude pictures, have multiple online accounts without the same name. This will really protect us since the bullies would be scared to get caught. No one would really buy airtime just to harass another person; it's this free Wi-Fi that encourage these bullies.

The above statement made by one of the respondents indicate that the use of free Wi-Fi encourages students to engage in activities that are uncalled for online. The tracking of online activities might help in stopping cyber-bullying.

4.6.2 Sub-theme 2: What students should do to reduce cyber-bullying

Respondents were asked what would they encourage fellow students to do about cyber-bullying. They said they would encourage students who have experienced cyber-bullying to ignore and not respond to the bullying, since it worsens the situation. Patchin and Hinduja (2016), encourage victims of cyber-bullying not to respond to any bullying messages. This is captured in the following response. Below is what respondent B said:

If I had not responded to the bullying, it wouldn't have gone this far. I strongly encourage everyone that happens to fall into this kind of situation to ignore the bullying because, responding will only give the bully satisfaction and more power over the person.

The above response shows that responding to bullies only gives the bully more power over the victim. Ignoring the bullying may probably yield the bully's urge to continue.

Respondent L suggested that students should make use of the settings on their cell phones:

I realised that some phones have the settings; if you go to privacy settings you can choose whom you want to talk to, even on Facebook and whatsapp such an option is available

Students should be internet wise. They should use privacy settings on their computers or phones and social networks such as Facebook. They can block people whom they want to and select the people they deem worth to access their photos and posts. They can also block calls and messages from unknown and unsaved numbers on their cell phones. This will help them control their contacts. As a result, they can choose whom to interact with:

Cyber-victims should report cyber-bullying to their parents, friends or school authorities. This helps one to cope with the situation. It also helps with other effects associated with cyber-bullying, such as loneliness, suicide thoughts and depression. Hester (2012), acknowledges that talking to someone about being bullied helps the victim to cope with the situation. Using this strategy to protect oneself will help and

save one from a lot of expenses because getting professional help is expensive. Underneath is what Respondents B and F said:

When I told my mum about it, it was really helpful to me; she took me to a counsellor who helped me a lot to overcome the bullying that I was going through. Anyone going through this should really try to find someone to confide in. (Respondent B)

I encourage people to report. Telling my pastor was the best thing that I did with this situation. I was at a breaking point, but he helped me through it. I knew I wasn't alone. (Respondent F)

Another respondent, (Respondent G), was concerned about what students do when they see harmful information circulating on the internet:

Students should stop circulating things that they know that they offend the other person, instead of sympathising with you they pass it to the next person making the situation worse and viral. Students should please stop circulating harassing stuff.

The above response warns other students on campus to stop circulating hurtful information about others. This will curb the issue from going viral because the circulation makes the situation worse for the victim.

4.6.3 Sub-theme 3: What parents should do to help reduce cyber-bullying

Respondents were worried that parents were not doing enough to reduce cyber-bullying. They suggested that parents should reinforce positive morals and values. They should teach their children about the dangers associated with cyber-bullying and explain how it causes pain on the other person. Findings by the Research Centre (2010), support that parents should teach their children empathy, respect and compassion and make the consequences of cyber-bullying known to their children. They should punish their children if they are caught cyber-bullying and not condone such behaviour. To support this argument respondents E and M said:

When I reported to her mother since we are from the same place, I know her very well, her mother defended her. She blamed me; that it's my fault that she said those things to me, she didn't even ask her child about it. It really got to me that she did that. As a parent she should have punished her child, or at least show her that it is unacceptable but she didn't care, and this will

encourage her to bully other people knowing there are no consequences at home. (Respondent E)

Some students just lack 'Ubuntu', they are not raised up well, the environment they grew up in, condones such behaviours. Parents should try to teach their children to treat others well, because I am certain that this behaviour starts from home. (Respondent M)

Respondents E and M suggested that students should be taught 'Ubuntu' at home because this will instil important human values such as compassion and humanity. The social learning theory (SLT) by Bandura and the social development model, support this notion. The social learning theory (SLT), states that people learn from their surroundings (Akers, 2011). The social development model, also states that, in a family situation, students learn deviant behaviours from their parents or guardians (Hemphill *et al*, 2011). Parents should start teaching their children the dangers of bullying at home, such that when they get to school, they understand the effects of bullying others. Punishing children who bully others indicate the parents' displeasure over their children's bullying behaviour. Most importantly, this will show the children how much their bullying behaviour is not accepted or approved by their parents. These punishments may include confiscating gadgets that might have been used to cyber-bullying.

Parents should ensure that children feel safe and secure when they report bullying. They should not blame the victims of cyber-bullying, because this will scare them away from reporting any form of danger they might encounter in future. For example respondent A below:

I lied to my father that a friend of mine was being cyber-bullied so that I could see his reaction, before I tell him it was actually me. He was so mad blaming my friend; he said it's his fault that he is being cyber-bullied because he spends so much time on his phone. I ended up not telling him that I was actually going through that, because I was scared of what he would do. If he was at least sympathetic, I would have told him.

Parents also need to develop an open form of communication with their children, in order for them to open up whenever they encounter harmful experiences. This is expressed in the following response by respondent J:

Parents should make their children comfortable to talk to them about anything. I'm scared of my parents. You know the first time I went on my periods I had to steal pads from my sister because I was afraid of telling my mother.

Parents should not be too strict with their children. They should create a comfortable zone with them. As a result, they will be the first ones to know something happens to their children. Patchin and Hinduja (2016), found that only one in ten victims of cyber-bullying report their about being cyber-bullied to their parents because, they are scared of their parents. Parents should not be monsters to their children, instead they should be carry a warm character around them such that they can feel free to talk and report about anything that happens to them.

4.7 Summary

The chapter presented, analysed and interpreted the data gathered on first year university students' experiences of cyber-bullying. The chapter presented the biographical information of the respondents, their experiences with cyber-bullying, gender differences in cyber-bullying, effects of cyber-bullying and measures to alleviate cyber-bullying.

CHAPTER 5

5. FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses conclusions drawn from the study and the recommendations made. These conclusions and recommendations are made from the four main themes that came up from the discussions. The recommendations were made for the university, parents, students and for future research. The overall objectives of the study were met, and research questions have been answered based on the findings of the study discussed in chapter 4.

5.2 Overview of the study

Cyber-bullying incidents are constantly gaining negative ground among university students and victims are socially, psychologically and academically affected. The aim of the study was to provide an insight on cyber-bullying experiences of first year UNIVEN students. The objectives of the study were to explore the prevalence of cyber-bullying among first year students, to investigate gender differences in cyber bullying at UNIVEN, to explore the effects of cyber-bullying and to come up with measures to reduce cyber-bullying.

5.3 Summary of the findings of the study

The following were the major findings of the study:

- More female students are victimized online (cyber-bullied) when compared to male students at Univen, and most perpetrators of cyber-bullying at Univen are male students than female students.
- Cyber-bullying at UNIVEN is mostly taking place on the website created for UNIVEN students only such as toilet. It is also happening through Facebook, Whatsapp, Myspace, instagram, emails and other instant messaging platforms.
- Students at UNIVEN are cyber-bullied for their sexual preferences, appearance, dressing, religion, age, academic abilities and acquiring diseases. Stalking is also happening at UNIVEN.
- Effects of cyber-bullying include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and mostly, suicidal thoughts. Victims of cyber-bullying suffer from headaches and stomach aches. Cyber-bullying has a negative effect on the academic performance of victims because the grades of most victims dropped. Cyber-bullying victims are often isolated by their peers and they feel disconnected to the world.
- UNIVEN management is not doing much to curb cyber-bullying on campus. However, there are counseling services to support victims although most students are not aware of such facilities

5.4 Limitations of the study

Some respondents were not willing to participate for free, without any monetary benefits. Sampling was biased, there was no gender balance in the sample, and hence there were more females than males, and this made it difficult to compare gender differences in cyber-bullying. The study used qualitative research design which influenced the type of sampling used which was snowball sampling hence results cannot be generalized since the sample was not huge enough.

5.5 Recommendations

Below are the recommendations based on the finding of the study:

5.5.1 Recommendations for policy formulation

Since cyber-bullying has negative impacts on the victim. I recommend the formulation of laws and policies which can be used to curb cyber-bullying.

5.5.2 Recommendations for short and medium term interventions

There should be awareness campaigns about cyber-bullying on campus; to encourage those who experience cyber-bullying to report to relevant authorities, while the perpetrators are brought to book for them to face justice. These campaigns should educate students on the dangers and disadvantages of excessive use of social networking sites. By so doing the students would not expose themselves on social networks for too long.

Parents should create an environment that does not nurture future cyber-bullies. To achieve this, parents should have good relationships with their children such that they can feel free to report cyber-bullying.

Victims should report cyber-bullying to parents, teachers, pastors or any person in authority in order to get appropriate help and support. Students should also stop promoting cyber-bullying by circulating cyber-bullying content. This reduces the spread of harmful information which can constantly affect the victims.

5.5.3 Recommendation for future researchers

The current study only scratched the surface of this huge problem. The study triggered many more questions which requires answers. As a result these answers will play a pivotal role in understanding and addressing this problem (cyber-bullying). More research on cyber-bullying can interrogate and understand the cyber-bullies' mind-set, their reasons behind bullying others, the effects of cyber-bullying and appropriate intervention plans to curb the phenomenon.

5.6 Conclusion

This study has revealed that cyber-bullying is prevalent at the University of Venda. It has enormous negative effects on the victims. Female students are more vulnerable to cyber-bullying than male students. To a certain extent, the study has provided further support and information to the school of thought that regard females as the most victimised population online when compared to males. The study also acknowledged that females also partake in cyber-bullying. Due to the negative effects of cyber-bullying such as the psychological, social, health and poor academic performance, there is need for the University of Venda to take appropriate corrective measures curb the prevalence of cyber-bullying on campus and its effect on university students.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

PROJECT INFORMATION

Name of the project owner: _____

Gender: _____

Project location: _____

Date of interview: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

Gender: _____

Nationality : _____

Age : _____

Residence : _____

School : _____

PREVALENCE OF CYBER-BULLYING AMONG FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

What does cyber-bullying mean to you?

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.....
.....

Which social networks are used to cyber-bully others?

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.....

What really happened when you were cyber-bullied?

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.....
.....

How long or how many times were subjected to cyber-bullying?

.....

Did you manage to know who cyber-bullied you?

.....

Why do you think you were cyber-bullied?

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.....

How did you respond to the bullying?

.....
.....

Did you talk to anyone about the bullying?

.....
.....

If yes who and how did they respond?

.....
.....

If no why did you not seek help?

.....
.....

PART B: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CYBER-BULLYING AMONG FIRST YEAR UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Who, between males and females, do you think fall victim to cyber-bullying and why?

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.....

Are bullies mainly males or females?

.....

If you know who cyber-bullied you, was it a male or female?

.....

Do you think gender was the reason behind you being cyber-bullied?

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PART C: EFFECTS OF CYBER-BULLYING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

How did cyber-bullying affect you psychologically?

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How did cyber-bullying affect your health?

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.....

How was your academic performance affected?

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.....
.....

How did cyber-bullying affect your social life?

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.....

PART D: MEASURES TO ALLEVIATE CYBER-BULLYING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

What should the university authorities do to curb cyber-bullying?

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.....

What must students do to stop cyber-bullying?

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.....
.....

What can parents do to help with cyber-bullying?

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.....
.....

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

My name is **Precious Pachawo Tsorai**. I am a Masters student at the University of Venda registered for the Masters in Gender Studies degree. My research topic is **probing cyber-bullying experiences of first year students at a selected rural university in South Africa**. I am inviting you to participate in this study. Any information you will provide will be treated as confidential and therefore will not be disclosed to anyone without your consent. Your participation is voluntary. You are also free to pull out at any time should you feel uncomfortable during the course of the interview.

Signature of researcher.....

Date.....

I have read and understood the contents and terms of this invitation to participate in this study. I hereby declare that I am voluntarily participating in this research.

Signature of the respondent.....

Date.....