

**GENDER, SOCIAL STATUS AND CYBER ABUSE AMONGST
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS**

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Abstract

Cyber abuse is a growing global phenomenon. It is a crime which is easily perpetuated and often without detection. It involves the use of modern IT to harass people or do illegal businesses. Most parents are worried about the negative influence on children. Some of the negative influences are violence, immorality (pornography) and illegal business on the net. All these contribute to the moral decadence in the society. This study investigated the influence of gender, age, social status and incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students of Ibadan North Local Government Area in Oyo State of Nigeria. The correlational

survey research design was used to select a sample of 1,000 students from four out of the twenty-two Senior Secondary Schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria in 2007/2008 school year. The instrument used was a questionnaire which had four sections. Section A had five questions which gathered general information about the students. Section B had ten questions on social status of the students and their parents. Section C concentrated on questions relating to the students' use of computers and GSM phones; while Section D had questions on cyber abuse. The Pearson Product Moment Multiple Correlation, ANOVA and Multiple Regression Analysis were used for data analysis, using 0.05 as a decision point. The study revealed that social status, having access to computer or GSM and being engaged in business online had significant influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst the respondents. Those predictors that showed direct significant influence on cyber use and abuse were age, having access to computer or GSM and being engaged in business online. These results imply that students from any age, gender, social status or home background (parents' marital status) are vulnerable. Peer pressure and exposure to the ills in the society can have negative influence on any child/ward. These independent variables also had positive significant relationship with cyber use and abuse; while age, gender and parents' marital status did not. All the predictors studied (age, gender, social status, parents' marital status, having access to computer or GSM, doing business online) had joint significant effect on cyber abuse. The conclusion and recommendation among others was that parents/guardians need to do more to spend quality time with their children/wards to counsel, guide, instruct them and keep up with what interests them or what they are getting into. Children need adults to keep them on right track as they are growing up.

Key Words: Gender, Social status, Cyber abuse, Cyber bullying

Introduction

Information technology (IT) in general has transformed lives of people all over the world. According to Brown, Jackson and Cassidy (2006), internet technology is transforming society by facilitating and advancing interpersonal communications as the telegram and telephone did in previous decades, as well as operating as a "mass

medium”, similar to older technologies such as the radio and television. The effects of IT are both positive and negative. The positive effects include people being able to communicate with ease, execute business transactions globally through the internet facility, being informed of global issues affecting economy, finances, travels, and education, and so on. People of various ages can learn and be empowered through the internet. In spite of these advantages, the negative effects are so glaring, especially in societal changes resulting in corrosion of some societal and cultural values. There have been changes in culture, business, economies, and education in many countries of the world due to globalization. IT has positive influence on every segment of the society.

There is a lot of information available on the internet. According to Government of Alberta in Bully Free Alberta.htm (2006), there are tremendous benefits to the internet; however, quick and easy access to all kinds of information and information exchange also brings risks to everyone, especially the youth. The young ones are very vulnerable at their youthful and impressionable ages. For example, on October 9, 2008, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) released startling data indicating the extent to which Internet sites – particularly social networking sites – can facilitate dangerous behaviours among teens, tweens, and young children. These behaviours can include drug, alcohol use, self-mutilation, extreme violence, and anorexia and other eating disorders. A new Nielsen Online study, conducted on behalf of ONDCP during the month of June, measured the online viewing habits of teens and tracked their exposure to drug-related content. The findings reveal that one in 20 teens who are viewing online videos watched one or more drug-related videos during a one-month period. The analysis found that more than a third of those viewing drug-related content are under the age of 16. Also, Director of ONDCP, John Walters, states that:

Parents read news stories about Internet pedophiles, and they understandably worry about their children being exposed to online pornography, and research shows parents aren't worrying about drug, alcohol, and other dangerous content online and how it impacts their child's behavior. Teens, tweens, and even younger children are barraged by risky material on the Internet. Parents need to get online and see for themselves

what their child has access to. It's time for them to upgrade their parenting skills (ONDCP, 2008).

There is a lot of concern among parents in Nigeria of the negative influences IT, particularly the internet is bringing to young ones. There is a lot of negative influences which the youth are exposed to on the internet. Examples of such are: violence, immorality (adult pornography and child porno-pedophilia), illegal business on the net (internet fraud). There are other societal ills such as hate culture, gambling, sexual solicitation, online games addiction, impersonation (Alabede, 2009). Many parents and the older generation in Nigeria are concerned about the degeneration of moral and societal values and the increasing social decadence. Something needs to be done to arrest the situation. Alabede (2009) also reports that Mr. Awe (the convener of the Children & Young People Online Protection Forum), while emphasizing the great potential of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to transform lives and the attendant promotion of digital inclusion, warned of the inherent threat that technology poses if used wrongly. The great dangers which children and young people are exposed to as a result of the abuse of the Internet were emphasized and all stakeholders were urged to stop pretending about the ever evident online dangers that confront us all and do something towards stemming the ugly trend.

“Cyber bullying” in particular is a growing social problem that needs urgent attention. In most western countries, cyber bullying has been identified as a new worrisome social phenomenon according to the Encyclopedia of Juvenile Violence cited in Cyber Bullying Research News Events Anecdotes Resources Services (n.d. – a). This cyber bullying phenomenon is spreading easily globally through internet. A lot of youth are being exposed to a lot of material on the internet which they may not be able to sieve out as unacceptable material and should not be copied. For example, BBC cited by Wikipedia (n.d.) has suggested that cyber bullying may be influenced by videos that are uploaded to video sharing websites online which contain offensive content or examples of acts of bullying. Steps are being taken to stop these offensive videos from being uploaded to internet.

Types of Cyber Abuse

Mishna, McLuckie and Saini (2008) identify four main types of cyber

abuse, namely; bullying, stalking, exposure to pornography and solicitation to engage in online sexual acts. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, quotes StopCyberbullying.org, an expert organization dedicated to internet safety, security and privacy, in defining cyber bullying as:

a situation when a child, tween or teen is repeatedly 'tormented, threatened, harassed, humiliated, embarrassed or otherwise targeted' by another child, tween or teen using text messaging, email, instant messaging or any other type of digital technology.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, further states that the practice of cyber bullying is not limited to children that while the behaviour is identified by the same definition in adults, the distinction in age groups is referred to as "cyber stalking" or "cyber harassment" when perpetuated by adults towards adults. Common tactics used by cyber stalkers are to vandalize a search engine or encyclopedia, to threaten a victim's earnings, employment, reputation or safety. A pattern of repeated such actions against a target by and between adults constitutes "cyber stalking". It is also called "cyber harassment". It is abusive internet behaviour by adults with repeated clear intent to harm, ridicule or damage a person or business (Wired Safety's International Stop Cyber Bullying 2-day Conference in White Plains, New York and New York City, June, 2008, cited by Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

There is also a new worrisome phenomenon of youth engaging in illegal business transactions which is a form of cyber abuse. It is a common practice that business transactions can now be done legally through the Internet; but some teens, tweens or youths are exposed to illegal business practices on the Internet. Some of them get engaged in this in a bid to make quick money. In Nigeria, such illegal business transactions are referred to as "yahoo yahoo boys" business or "419". These activities are criminal and need to be checked.

Definition of Cyber Bullying

According to Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the National Crime Prevention Council (NPC) defines cyber bullying as "when the Internet cell phone or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. Cyber bullying is a term

used to refer to bullying and harassment by use of electronic devices. It is wilful and repeated harm inflicted through the medium of electronic texts. Cyber bullying is also when teens or children bully each other using the internet, mobile phones or other cyber technology to send mean texts, threats, messages or pictures, sexual remarks, pejorative labels (i.e. hate speech), and posting false statements as fact aimed at humiliation. There are two types of cyber bullying; that is, sending direct attacks or messages by the bully and sending these attacks or messages by proxy. The bully uses other people to help cyber bully the victim with or without the accomplice's knowledge, (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Cyber bullying – National Crime Prevention Council, n.d. – b; Sony Creative Software, n.d.; Cyberbullying Research News Events Anecdotes Resources Services..., n.d. – a). Cyber bullying is also called electronic bullying, electronic harassment, e-bullying, SMS bullying, mobile bullying, online bullying, digital bullying or internet bullying (Wikipedia, n.d.).

According to Brown, et al. (2006), cyber bullying seems to be expanding rapidly partly because the bullies can remain anonymous while online. Wikipedia (n.d.) also supports this and adds that electronic forums often lack supervision. Youths or students who would not normally bully on face-to-face encounter, take to on online bullying. Another factor why online bullying may be spreading is the availability of the internet to any user to communicate. The victims can be accessed anywhere and anytime. People use internet for both positive and negative things. Some crimes have been transferred from the streets or face-to-face to the internet, and the youth being impressionable may copy online misbehaviour, anti - social conduct and abuse.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, refers to the National Crime Prevention Council (NPC) which reports that cyber bullying is a problem that affects almost half of all American teens. The 2004 survey of 1,500 students between grades 4 and 8 by I-Safe.org as reported by ABC News, states that:

- *42% of kids have been bullied while online. One out of four has had it happen more than once.*
- *35% of kids have been threatened online. Nearly one in five has had it happen more than once.*

- *21% of kids have received mean or threatening e-mails or other messages.*
- *58% of kids admit someone has said mean or hurtful things to them online. More than four out of ten say it has happened more than once.*
- *58% have not told their parents or an adult about something mean or hurtful that happened to them online.*

Similarly, a Canadian study found:

- *23% of middle-schoolers surveyed had been bullied by e-mail.*
- *35% had been bullied in chat rooms.*
- *41% by text messages on their cell phones.*
- *Fully 41% did not know the identity of the perpetrators.*

In Nigeria, this study is to find out to what extent cyber bullying exists among some secondary school students in one local government in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Antecedents to Cyber Bullying

Bullying in general is the bully trying to exercise power and establish dominance over the victim for various reasons. Bully Free Albetta.htm (2006) states some reasons why people bully. They are:

- *Children who witness abuse among family members may repeat these forms of aggression among their peers.*
- *People who bully may see it as “fun” or, they may use it as a way of “teaching someone a lesson”, or “getting even”.*
- *People who bully may have low self esteem, but not always.*
- *They think it will make them accepted or popular. Most people gain popularity and respect by earning it. People who bully are trying to become leaders through control and domination. What they end up receiving is pseudo-respect and fear instead.*
- *People who wouldn’t normally bully may go along with it, perhaps because they’re afraid they could be targeted next if they don’t submit to it.*

Cyber bullying is an extension of schoolyard bullying or conventional

bullying. Schoolyard bullying exist in many schools in Nigeria. It is a phenomenon found in schools all over the world but may be in varying degrees. In Nigeria, schoolyard bullying is a situation where students of senior classes impose different kinds of punishment, harassment and intimidation on junior class students. The freshers (usually transferred or first year students) are usually the most vulnerable victims. The cycle is endless because as the freshers become seniors they too would like to inflict the same experiences on the new students. There are various reasons why students seem to keep up this practice in schools, for example: for revenge, to show superiority, to enforce fear and respect of the seniors, to intimidate others, to harass others to submission etc.

Despite efforts by school authorities to rid the schools of this social ill, the practice still thrives, and more importantly, it seems to have taken on a new form with the advancement of technology. Students seem to have diverted physical bullying to mental or psychological bullying using internet. Students are known to send harassing texts, e-mail messages or anonymous phone calls to victims. Conventional bullying may be affected by many factors such as racism, poverty, health and class and may have impact on various students differently (Brown, et al., 2006).

Electronic bullying may become popular with the bullies than conventional or traditional bullying because the bullies can remain anonymous which may make them more bold than in traditional bullying. Furthermore, the bullies can be targeted at any time since the GSM handsets are always with them or they can always have access to a computer system (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, n.d.)

Characteristics of Cyber Bullies

Conventional bullying may be due to factors like racism, poverty, health, upbringing and class (Brown, et al., 2006). Brown, et al. (2006) also reported a survey conducted by Ybarra and Mitchell (2004) on the characteristics of male and female youths who engage in online harassment. The findings reveal that online abusers or bullies suffer poor-parent-child relationships, use legal and illegal drugs and usually exhibit high level of delinquency. The bullies were also victims of traditional face-to-face bullying, frequent substance use and/have suffered physical and/or sexual mistreatment. They have also been

targets of internet harassment earlier. The internet bullies also frequently engage in drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco and fighting, and show indications of academic under-achievements which may lead to early school drop-out. Lastly, the internet bullies frequently use the internet. It was found out that 64% of harassers use internet four or more days each week, which suggests that frequent use of internet exposes the youth to internet abuse.

These findings suggest that a lot is still demanded of parents to do more monitoring, guiding their wards and having more close family relationships. Children and youths should be taught and educated to respect each other. Parents should be more active in disciplining their children. Disciplining of children should not be left to schools alone. Cyber bullies are problem children at home and also are those who break school rules. Crimes Against Children Research Centre (2005), as reported by Wikipedia (n.d.), also state, that youth who harass others are likely to have problems with rule breaking and aggression. Those who are harassed are likely to harass others also. Teachers in schools too will need to do more in guiding, counseling and supervising the children/youth in addition to academic work. It should be emphasized that more of guidance and counseling should be done because direct supervision may not yield much result since neither parents nor teachers would be present with the bullies all the time to stop them from their negative practices.

The bullies may even know more of electronic technology than parents or teachers, and this makes supervision more difficult. Smith (2008) also agrees with this in a survey that simply monitoring a child's use of internet does not provide enough protection in today's world. Cyber bullying takes place within students' social networks – by friends and students at their school or at another school. Electronic forums often lack supervision, even though service providers or chat hosts may also join too to regularly observe the dialogues in some chat rooms to police conversations and evict offensive individuals. Those children/wards who are bullied should be encouraged to speak up to adults concerning their experiences so that they can be helped. Some researchers find that few youths tell their parents that they have been cyber bullied out of shame and fear of losing access to technology they use to communicate with friends (Bully Free Alberta.htm, 2006).

Wikipedia (n.d.) suggests that there should be a national

proactive educational initiative to make people aware of cyber bullying and how to prevent it. For example, students should be told not to give out sensitive information such as phone numbers, e-mail address and password. The BBC running a story on UK Schools mentioned of the Education Minister telling schools to fight cyber bullying. It should be part of the school duty (Cyberbullying Research News Events Anecdotes Resources Services..., n.d. – a).

Effects of Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying has far reaching effects on the victims psychologically, emotionally, physically and academically. Cyber bullying is something that can take place anytime anywhere as long as a person is connected to internet. This wrong kind of communication (harassment, abuse, belittling, nasty messages, etc.) can damage a person's self-esteem. It can produce such emotional consequences as anxiety, frustration, being scared, anger and depression. It can lead someone to skip school (school absenteeism) which can lead to poor grades or using alcohol or marijuana (Brown et al., 2006; Ybarra and Mitchell, 2007; and Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, n.d.). The Youth Safety Survey-2 carried out by Crimes Against Children Research Centre, University of New Hampshire, USA in 2005, found out that 9% of the young people in the survey had experienced some form of harassment... Out of the 1,500 youth between the ages of 10 - 17 who participated, a third reported feeling depressed by the incident (Wikipedia, n.d.). Cyber bullying, according to Ministry of Education in UK, encourages violence in schools, murder, dangerous weapons, knives, etc. (Cyberbullying Research News Events Anecdotes Resources Services..., n.d. – b). Brown, et al. (2006) also states that there is increased tendency to violate against others and youth suicide. For example, in June 2004, the New Zealand Catholic News reported one student committed suicide following incidences of text bullying; while in Hungary, a sixteen-year-old female developed anorexia nervosa after online sexual harassment and a young girl in Japan resorted to murdering her classmate over a contentious website. There are at least four examples in the United States where cyber bullying has been linked to the suicide of a teenager (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). In the UK, a student who was a victim of bullying changed schools in order to escape the bullying. The bullying continued in his new school until he broke the

bully's nose, then the bullying stopped (Cyberbullying Research News Events Anecdotes Resources Services..., n.d. – b).

Extent of Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying is a phenomenon that is rapidly spreading in and outside schools, at home environment, nationally and internationally because of the accessibility of the internet. The principal of a school in Australia stated that “children once used to graffiti or write on desks, books about their teachers, now they throw it on the internet for the whole world to see” (Owen, 2006). Teachers in the case of Adelaide schools in Australia have sought the assistance of the Attorney General to see to it that teachers are not defamed. The situation is that it is not only students who suffer bullying; now even teachers are being cyber bullied. A website was created in USA and launched in Australia where pupils from any school are allowed to anonymously grade their teachers, attack or praise them. Some comments on the website about teachers at one Southern Suburb Government High School included: “Bad, boring and useless”. “He made me sit outside in freezing weather, u should fire him!!!” (Owen, 2006). A teacher in one of the Nigerian schools was sent threatening texts on GSM phone by some anonymous disgruntled students who were displeased with the strict discipline of the teacher. Cyber bullying is spreading everyday. Cyber bullying between and by children, teens or adolescents is worrisome enough, let alone now that some adults choose to do “cyber stalking”. Cyber stalking or cyber harassment is an activity by adults against adults especially in the workplace, company web sites or blogs with intent to harm, ridicule or damage a person or business (Stop Cyberbullying.org, and Wired Safety's International Stop Cyber Bullying 2-day Conference in White Plains, New York, and New York City, June 2008, cited in Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia). Cyber bullying is a social ill that must be addressed because of the future of our youths and our society.

Statement of the Problem

Cyber abuse is an anti - social behaviour that is fast spreading globally through the internet. Youths in Nigeria equally have access to internet. Some of them are involved in cyber abuse. Many parents and teachers in schools are already worried about other anti-social tendencies or

behavior of the youth that show evidence of erosion of cultural values. Conventional or traditional bullying exists in schools in Nigeria. This study investigated the extent to which cyber abuse exists in schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, and what are the predictors of cyber use and abuse amongst these youths. Cyber bullying is an antisocial behaviour that has far reaching effects, and it should be recognized early in order to check it before it degenerates to unpalatable consequences either to the individuals or the society at large.

Research Question: *To what extent does cyber abuse or bullying exist among secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government?*

Research Hypotheses

- H₀₁ Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in business online, age and gender) have no significant relationship with the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.*
- H₀₂ Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in business online, age and gender) have no significant relative influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.*
- H₀₃ Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in business online, age and gender) have no significant composite influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.*

Methodology

The correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. This design was preferred and used because it is an appropriate and efficient way of studying large populations as only a sample was used. The study population comprised all the students of the twenty-two Senior Secondary Schools in Ibadan North Local Government Area, Oyo State, Nigeria. The multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the 1,000 students from four out of the twenty-two Senior Secondary Schools in the study area in 2007/2008 school year.

An instrument tagged *Cyber Abuse Questionnaire (CAQ)* was designed to gather relevant information for the study. The instrument comprises four sections. Section A sought for respondents' background information, such as male-female gender classification, age in years, name of school, parents' occupation and marital status. Section B elicited information on respondents' social status. Section C gathered information on use of computers and GSM phones. Section D sought for information on the incidence of cyber-abuse. The test-retest technique was used to validate the instrument, an exercise which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.84.

The researchers were able to retrieve 936 out of the 1,000 copies of the questionnaire that were administered. Completed copies of the questionnaire retrieved were assigned serial numbers from 001 to 936. The information obtained was coded and entered into the computer via SPSS program as data to be analyzed. The data entered into the computer was re-validated to ensure correctness or accuracy. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyze data for the research question. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test for relationship and to construct a correlation matrix, while the Multiple Regression statistics were used to test for the relative contribution of the gender and social status on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst the secondary school students in the study area. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for their joint contribution of the independent variables to the dependent variable. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

Results

The results are presented in tables one to seven, and are discussed hereafter. Tables one to three contain data on demographic characteristics of the respondents, while Table 4 provides data that were used to answer the only research question. Tables 5-7 provide answers to the research hypotheses.

Table 1: Analysis of Age Distribution of Respondents

Age category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 9-12	23	2.5	2.5	2.5
13-16	632	67.5	68.6	71.1
17-19	246	26.3	26.7	97.8
20-21	14	1.5	1.5	99.3
Above 21	6	.6	.7	100.0
Total	921	98.4	100.0	
Missing System	15	1.6		
Total	936	100.0		

The above table indicates that majority of the students were between ages 13 and 16 (68.6%), while 26.7% were between ages 17 and 19. Very few were either below or above these ages.

Table 2: Analysis of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	458	48.9	49.8	49.8
Female	461	49.3	50.2	100.0
Total	919	98.2	100.0	
Missing System	17	1.8		
Total	936	100.0		

Table 2 shows that there were about the same number of male and female that participated in the study.

Table 3: Analysis of Parents Status of Respondents

Parental status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Staying together	837	89.4	92.2	92.2
Divorce	23	2.5	2.5	94.7
Separated	37	4.0	4.1	98.8
Others	11	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	908	97.0	100.0	
Missing System	28	3.0		
Total	936	100.0		

In Table 3 the majority of the students had their parents staying together (92.2%) and just a few of them were from parents who had

divorced, separated or otherwise.

Research Question: *To what extent does cyber abuse exist among secondary school students in Ibadan North Local Government?*

Table 4: Survey on Cyber Abuse amongst Secondary School Students

S/N	Variable	Agree	Disagree
1	Cyber abuse is something that occurs frequently among my school mates	61	39
	The harassing messages can be:		
2	Sexual harassment	64	36
3	Character assassination	57	43
3	Abuse	59	41
4	Intimidation by words or pictures	63	37
	I have been a victim of harassment by:		
5	Text message	40	60
6	E-mail	37	63
7	Chat Room	36	64
	I know someone who has received harassing/intimidating message by:		
8	Text message	51	49
9	E-mail	47	53
10	Chat Room	43	57
	I send harassing messages to some people to intimidate or bully them through the:		
11	GSM	39	61
12	E-mail	35	65
13	Chat Room	35	65
14	Students watch morally bad movies such as pornography on the internet.	70	30
15	Students talk in/outside the school about these movies they watched.	76	24
16	Students copy some of the bad behaviours seen in these movies.	79	21
17	Students engage in legal or proper online businesses.	73	27
18	Students also engage in dubious businesses on the internet.	73	27

Table 4 reveals that 61% of the students agree that cyber abuse occurs frequently among students and it takes different forms, such as sexual harassment (64%), intimidation by words or pictures (63%), character assassination (57%) or just abuse (59%). Forty percent (40%) agree that

they have been a victim of harassment by text message, 37% by e-mail and 36% through the chat room. Students also acknowledged having used GSM (39%), e-mail (35%) or chat room (35%) to send harassing messages to bully or intimidate someone. Furthermore, they agreed that they know someone who has received harassing or intimidating message through text message (51%), e-mail (47%) or chat room (43%).

The statistics on the Table above show that a large percentage of students (70%) watch morally bad movies such as pornography on the internet. Seventy-six (76%) agreed that students talk within and outside the school about these movies, and 79% said students actually copy the bad behaviours watched in movies. Concerning online business, 73% of the students agreed for each of the questions that students engage in both legal and dubious online.

Ho1 Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in online business, age and gender) have no significant relationship with the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.

Table 5: Matrix of Pearson Product Moment Multiple (Partial) Correlation Coefficient for Socio- Economic Factors and Incidence of Cyber Abuse Amongst Secondary School Students

Variables	Cyber Abuse	Parents' Marital Status	Social Status	Access to Computer/ GSM	Business Online	Age	Gender
Cyber Abuse							
Parents' Marital Status	0.030 0.378						
Social Status	0.122* 0.000	-0.086 0.009					
Access to Computer/G SM	0.302* 0.000	0.045 0.172	0.447 0.000				
Business Online	0.081* 0.020	-0.019 0.592	0.051 0.139	0.095 0.006			
Age	0.046 0.167	0.164 0.000	0.084	-0.048 0.143	-0.003 0.937		

			0.010				
Gender	-0.017 0.612	0.029 0.384	0.002	-0.025 0.450	-0.023 0.505	-0.104 0.002	
			0.955				

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

The table above indicates that a significant partial relationship exists between cyber abuse and social status ($r = 0.122$, $p < 0.05$); cyber abuse and access to computers/GSM phones ($r = 0.302$, $p < 0.05$); cyber abuse and being involved in business online ($r = 0.081$, $p < 0.05$). However, no significant relationship was found between cyber abuse and parents' marital status, age and gender variables.

Ho2: Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in online business, age and gender) have no significant relative influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.

Table 6: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test for Relative Influence of Socio-economic Factors on the Incidence of Cyber Abuse

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Significance
	B	Std. Error	Betta		
(Constant)	28.586	3.635		7.863	0.000
Age	1.847	0.920	0.070		0.045
Sex	0.024	0.421	0.002	2.008*	0.954
Parents Marital Status	0.656	0.923	0.025	0.058	0.478
Social Status	-0.108	0.090	-0.047	0.710	0.230
Access to Computer/GSM	0.448	0.058	0.302	-1.200	0.000
Business Online	0.740	0.367	0.069	7.789*	0.044
				2.018*	

Correlation is significant at $p < 0.05$

The statistics on Table 6 establish that age has a significant relative impact on cyber abuse ($t = 2.008$, $p < 0.05$), access to computer/GSM

has significant relative effect on cyber abuse ($t = 7.789, p < 0.05$), involvement in business online and cyber abuse ($t = 2.018, p < 0.05$). Parents' marital status, gender and social status were found to have no significant relative influence on cyber abuse.

Ho3 Socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computers, involvement in business online, age and gender) have no significant composite influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students.

Table 7a: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Composite Influence of Socio-economic Factors on Incidence of Cyber Abuse

Statistics	Values
Multiple R	0.298
R Square	0.089
Adjusted R Square	0.082
F Value	12.735
Standard Error	13.466

Table 7b: Analysis of Variance (ANOVA b) of the Regression of Socio-economic Factors on Incidence of Cyber Abuse

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance
Regression	13855.343	6	2309.224	12.735	0.000*
Residual	142160.2	784	181.327		
Total	156015.6	790			

* Significant at $p < 0.05$

Table 7a indicates that socio-economic variables have a composite influence of 0.89 on incidence of cyber abuse (R Square = 0.89). This implies that as much as 89% of incidences of cyber abuse is influenced by socio-economic factors. The Analysis of Variance in Table 7b shows that the variables were jointly significant at 0.05 level of significance ($F = 12.735; p = 0.000$). These results establish the fact that the socio-economic variables tested exercise significant composite influence on the incidence of cyber abuse.

Discussion

Many factors may be responsible for cyber abuse, just as conventional

bullying, as stated by Brown, et al. (2006), may be affected by many factors such as racism, poverty, health, upbringing and class. This study specifically tested the extent to which socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computer/GSM, involvement in business online, age and gender) have a relationship and influence cyber abuse.

The results of the first hypothesis, which tested for relationship amongst these variables and cyber abuse, showed that social status, access to computer/GSM and involvement in business online all had significant positive relationships with cyber abuse ($r = 0.122$, $r = 0.302$, $r = 0.081$ respectively) at $p < 0.05$ level of significance. Parental marital status, age and gender did not have any significant positive relationship with cyber abuse. It can be deduced from these results that parental marital status, age or gender do not really matter that much before a student gets involved in cyber abuse. What is important is a student having access to a computer/GSM phone. Having access to computer system or a GSM phone, and being involved in business online exposes a student to what goes on in the internet. All this is backed up by social status whereby the users of computers and GSM phones are able to afford the services or even be involved in business online.

The second hypothesis investigated the relative contributory influence of each of these socio-economic factors on cyber abuse. It was established that having access to computer/GSM had the highest contributory influence ($r = 7.789$, $p < 0.05$), followed by doing business online ($r = 2.018$, $p < 0.05$), and age ($r = 2.008$, $p < 0.05$). Parents' status, gender and social status did not show significant positive contributory influence. These results imply that having access to a computer or GSM is the most contributory factor to predisposing students to cyber abuse or being involved in it. A survey conducted by Ybarra and Mitchell and reported by Brown, et al. (2006) buttress this by stating that the internet bullies frequently use the internet. It was found out that 64% of harassers use internet four or more days each week, which suggests that frequent use of internet exposes the youth to internet abuse.

Age and doing business online are next in importance. It can be deduced that as a student increases in age he gains mastery of the use of computer. About 69% of the students surveyed were between ages 13 and 16, 26.7% were between ages 17 and 19, only 2.5% were

between ages 9 and 12, and 2.3% were 20 and above (Table 2). The ages of 13-19 are when the students are very impressionable and would like to experiment with many things. Moreover, this is the age when they are under much peer pressure.

The third hypothesis analyzed the composite influence of the socio-economic factors on cyber abuse. The result showed that all these socio-economic factors (parents' marital status, social status, access to computer/GSM, involvement in business online, age and gender) when taken together contributed significantly to the incidence of cyber abuse. These findings imply that although access to a computer/GSM and involvement in business online are the key factors that predispose students to cyber abuse, other factors are equally important. Social status of a family makes it possible or easier for a student to have access to a computer/GSM and to do whatever they want to do on the internet. A student of any age or gender can be exposed to ills in the internet. There were about the same number of students by gender sampled, that is male were 49.8% while female were 50.2% (Table 3).

The parents' marital status was observed to have no significant partial positive relationship with cyber abuse in the first and second hypotheses. However, in the third hypothesis testing for composite influence, it is part of the factors that brought about a significant positive composite contribution to cyber abuse. Table 4 on parents' marital status showed that 92.2% of the parents of the students sampled stayed together. They were not divorced or separated. It can be deduced that parents need to do more monitoring of their children/wards as to their activities on the internet. In Nigeria, today it is a common phenomenon that both parents have busy working schedules. Children are left with house helps and nannies. Many a time they keep themselves busy with TV, videos and computer games and such gadgets. Parents are not fully aware of what their children/wards are being exposed to. Brown et al. (2006) reported that in both the USA and New Zealand less than 4% of adults monitor their children's internet use, which may be a possible contributor to online misbehaviour. The findings reveal that online abusers or bullies suffer poor-child relationships, use legal and illegal drugs and usually exhibit high level of delinquency.

All these findings suggest that there is still more demanded of

parents to do more monitoring, guiding, counseling, disciplining their children/wards and having more close family relationships. Children/Wards should be taught acceptable social behaviour both at home and in school. Business Day newspaper (2009), while writing on making out time for children, reported that a recent study reveals that more and more children are growing up without a father figure while the mother is always at work. Parents need to adjust their working schedules in order to perform adequately their parental obligation of proper child-upbringing. Children/Wards cannot be left to the mercy of the societal ills and electronic gadgets. There should be parental touch and impact on every child's character and behaviour. Crimes against Children Research Centre (2005) cited in Wikipedia (n.d.) advocates in addition that teachers in schools too need to do more in guiding, counselling and supervising the children/youth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has established that gender and social status had significant influence on the incidence of cyber abuse amongst secondary school students in the study area. Cyber abuse is not something that is foreign to the students and this is likely to be so among students in other schools in the country. Students are not only aware of it but they also practice it. The internet and the modern communication technologies have made information (good and bad) available for everyone just a mouse click away. Parents/Guardians in Nigeria cannot just leave children to the powerful negative influence of internet. Parents need to be aware of what their children do on the internet and have time to counsel and guide them. It is in the home that the nucleus of the society is built. Cyber abuse is indeed a growing global phenomenon that is easily perpetuated because of her ease of access to modern IT gadgets and the internet. Cyber abuse is very much present among the youth in Nigeria because the youth have access to computers and GSM phones. Children of any gender or age are vulnerable. Over 90% of parents of the students surveyed were staying together. Majority of the children were not from broken homes, a factor which one could say would predispose the children/wards to lack of proper parental monitoring.

In summary, parents need to rise up to their parental responsibility.

Parents need to be much aware of what their children/wards are being exposed to, and then spend quality time to counsel, guide and instruct them. These children are the future of our society. They are worth investment of our quality time. Quality time with our children cannot be substituted with money, electronic gadgets, wealth or house helps /nannies. Parents and guardians need to understand that cyber world is today's children's social world. Parents therefore need to become computer literate in order to guide and counsel their children appropriately. They need to be able to solve cyber problems as they emerge. Children therefore should be encouraged to talk to adults for counsel and guidance. Parents/Guardians need to spend more quality time with their children/wards in order to counsel, guide, instruct them and impact their lives. Parents/Guardians should take interest in what their children/wards are being exposed to or involved in, in order to give counsel at the right time before they develop anti-social behaviours.

Schools should work in collaboration with parents in counselling, guiding, disciplining and instructing the students for them to imbibe good social behaviour and shun bad conduct. School authorities should put in place rules to check anti-social behaviour such as cyber abuse while in school. Government should as well formulate laws on how to handle juvenile delinquent behaviour such as various forms of cyber abuse. Religious organizations should also have input in curbing anti-social behaviour of youths in their communities. There should be massive mass media campaign by the Government, schools and other stakeholders to create and promote proper internet culture among children and youth while discouraging bad internet culture. IT Professionals, ISP Providers should collaborate to work out cybercafé social responsibilities in promoting proper and internet use. For example, illegal business and pornography should be banned.

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