

## The Indispensable Role of the English Language in Combating Cyberbullying among Nigerian Youths

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### Abstract

This study examines the indispensable role of the English language in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. Cyberbullying is a growing problem in Nigeria, and it poses significant risks to the mental health and well-being of young people. While various interventions have been proposed to address the issue, there is a growing need to explore the indispensable role of language in combating cyberbullying. This paper examines the different forms of cyberbullying and its impact on Nigerian youths. It highlights the critical role of language in perpetrating cyberbullying and proposes language-based interventions as a practical approach to addressing the issue. The study draws on a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to explore the ways in which language can be used to combat cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. The findings suggest that language plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviour towards cyberbullying, and that effective communication strategies are essential for preventing and addressing cyberbullying incidents. The study also highlights the importance of education and awareness-raising programs, which can help to promote a culture of respect and tolerance among Nigerian youths. Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) serves as the theoretical framework for the present study. The paper argues that empowering Nigerian youths with the appropriate language skills can enhance their ability to confront cyberbullies, thereby promoting a safe and supportive online environment for all users. It argues that language is an essential tool in the fight against cyberbullying, and that efforts to combat this problem must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the role of language in shaping social norms and behaviours. The paper concludes by emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts by the government and language experts to develop sustainable language-based interventions for combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths.

**Key Words:** Cyberbullying, English Language, Communication Strategies, Social norms, Awareness-raising

### Introduction

Cyberbullying is a pervasive problem in Nigeria, with young people increasingly vulnerable to online harassment and abuse. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) highlighted in their 2019 report that cyberbullying is a global concern, affecting millions of young people worldwide, and emphasized the importance of preventative measures and education to address the issue. It is a growing concern among Nigerian youths, as it can have detrimental effects on their mental health and well-being. Although, there are existing researches on cyberbullying in Nigeria, there is a gap in the literature on the role of language in perpetuating and combating cyberbullying. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the indispensable role of language in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. Cyberbullying has become a pervasive problem in many societies around the world including Nigeria. According to a study by Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner (2014), cyberbullying affects individuals of all ages, but young people are particularly vulnerable due to their high levels of internet usage and reliance on digital communication. With the widespread adoption of digital communication technologies, such as social media platforms and messaging apps, young people are increasingly vulnerable to online harassment and abuse. The study will explore how Nigerian youths use language to perpetrate cyberbullying and identify effective language strategies that can be used to combat cyberbullying. The study will draw on theories of language and communication to understand how language is used in cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. It will also explore the cultural and social factors that contribute to cyberbullying in Nigeria. The findings of this study will have important implications for developing effective interventions to prevent cyberbullying and promote healthy communication practices among Nigerian youths. Ultimately, this study seeks to contribute to the understanding of cyberbullying in Nigeria and to inform efforts to combat this growing problem.

According to a study by Olusola O. Oyero and Tosin O. Adeniran (2016), ‘the prevalence of cyberbullying among Nigerian youths is on the rise, with many young people experiencing psychological distress and social isolation as a result of online harassment’. The authors argue that cyberbullying makes it easier for individuals to engage in abusive behaviors without fear of social consequences.

The negative impacts of cyberbullying on the mental health and well-being of Nigerian youths have led to growing concern about how to combat this harmful behaviour. In this context, the role of language has emerged as a critical factor in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. Understanding how language is used in the context of cyberbullying is essential to developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. As noted by Ibukun Adebayo and Isaac Oluwafemi Akintoye (2020), cyberbullies often use derogatory language, insults, and threats to intimidate and harm others. The authors argue that this behavior is often driven by underlying social and cultural factors, such as gender inequality and a lack of respect for individual differences.

To combat cyberbullying, it is essential to understand the role of language in challenging negative attitudes. As noted by Farida K. Adamu and Abubakar Sadiq Hussaini (2021), one strategy for combating cyberbullying is to promote empathy and respect in online communication, and to encourage young people to use positive and affirming language when interacting with others. Importantly, the indispensable role of language in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths underscores the need for ongoing research and intervention efforts in this area. By promoting positive communication and challenging negative attitudes, it is possible to create safer and more supportive online environments for young people in Nigeria and beyond. This paper therefore, seeks to emphasize the critical role of language in addressing the problem of cyberbullying among Nigerian youths, and to highlight the importance of developing effective strategies for promoting positive communication and combating harmful online behaviour.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cyberbullying is a social problem that needs to be curbed. The use of derogatory language is one of the common ways through which cyberbullying occurs. However, there is a lack of research on the role of language in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. This study aims to address this gap by examining the indispensable role of language in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths.

### **Aims and Objectives of the Study**

- (i) To investigate the role of English language proficiency in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths.
- (ii) To explore how the use of appropriate language can promote positive online behaviour and prevent cyberbullying.
- (iii) To examine the relationship between linguistic factors, such as tone, register, and style, and cyberbullying behaviour among Nigerian youths.
- (iv) To determine the extent to which English language education can contribute to the prevention and reduction of cyberbullying in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

This study is aimed at finding out how Nigerian youths use language to perpetrate cyberbullying and the role of the English language in combating cyberbullying. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions:

- (i) To what extent does the role of English language proficiency help in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths?
- (ii) In what ways can the use of appropriate language promote positive online behaviour and prevent cyberbullying?
- (iii) What are the factors that contribute to the use of English language in cyberbullying among Nigerian youths, and how can such factors be addressed to mitigate the issue?
- (iv) To what extent can the English language education contribute to the prevention and reduction of cyberbullying in Nigeria?

### **What is Cyberbullying?**

According to Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2015), cyberbullying refers to the act of using electronic communication technologies, such as social media platforms, instant messaging, or email, to deliberately and repeatedly harass, intimidate, or harm others. It involves the use of digital tools to spread rumors, engage in name-calling, send threatening messages, share private or embarrassing information without consent, or engage in any other form of aggressive behavior online. Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic communication technologies, such as social media, instant messaging, and email, to harass, intimidate, or harm others. It involves repeated and deliberate aggressive behavior that is intended to cause harm or distress to the victim, and it can take many forms, including spreading rumors, making threats, or posting embarrassing or damaging content online. According to a study by Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, and Lattanner (2014), cyberbullying affects individuals of all ages, but young people are particularly vulnerable due to their high levels of internet usage and reliance on digital communication. Cyberbullying is a serious issue that can have significant negative effects on the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the victim. According to Kowalski, Limber, and Agatston (2012), cyberbullying is "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices" (p. 3). Similarly, Hinduja and Patchin (2018) define cyberbullying as "intentional and repeated harm inflicted through the use of electronic text" (p. 8). These definitions highlight the intentional and repeated nature of cyberbullying and the use of electronic devices as a means of perpetuating it.

Cyberbullying therefore, is a form of bullying that involves the use of electronic technology to harass, intimidate, or threaten someone. It can take many forms, including sending mean, hurtful, or threatening messages, spreading rumors or lies online, sharing embarrassing photos or videos, and excluding someone from online groups or activities. Olatunji et al. (2021) posit that despite the fact that cyberbullying is a global problem, it is becoming more prevalent in Nigeria, especially among young people, and this is largely due to the widespread use of technology and social media platforms". Akinlade et al. (2020) affirm that 'the rise of cyberbullying among Nigerian youths is a growing concern, given the negative impact it can have on young people's mental health and well-being, as well as their academic and social outcomes.'

Ogunwale et al. (2019), see cyberbullying as:

a complex phenomenon that can take many different forms, from verbal abuse and harassment to spreading rumors and sharing embarrassing photos or videos. Nigerian youths are not immune to these forms of cyber aggression, and there is a need for more research on this issue to better understand the nature and extent of cyberbullying in Nigeria.

According to Ogunsola et al. (2020), 'the anonymity and perceived safety of the online environment can embolden cyberbullies and make it easier for them to target vulnerable individuals, including Nigerian youths. This underscores the need for more education and awareness-raising initiatives to help young people develop the skills and knowledge they need to stay safe online and prevent cyberbullying.' Adewuyi (2021) concludes that cyberbullying is a serious problem that can have far-reaching consequences for victims and perpetrators alike. Nigerian youths are not immune to these risks, and it is important that parents, educators, and other stakeholders work together to address this issue and promote a culture of respect and tolerance online.

### **Cyberbullying and Culture in Nigeria**

Odukoya (2016) opines that Nigeria has a 'collectivist culture, emphasizing group harmony and loyalty. Cyberbullying may occur when individuals use online platforms to enforce social norms or punish those who deviate from cultural expectations, resulting in the harassment of individuals who are seen as outliers'. Cyberbullying and culture are intertwined, and understanding the cultural context of Nigeria is important to comprehensively address cyberbullying in the country. Nigeria is a culturally diverse country, with over 250 ethnic groups and a wide range of languages spoken. This diversity presents unique challenges in addressing cyberbullying, as cultural norms and values can vary widely among different ethnic groups. Cyberbullying in Nigeria is influenced by cultural factors such as the emphasis on respect for elders, the collectivist nature of the society, and the patriarchal structure of Nigerian

communities. According to Ojedokun (2014), cultural values of respect and obedience to elders may prevent victims from reporting cyberbullying incidents, especially if the perpetrator is older. Additionally, the collectivist nature of Nigerian society places a strong emphasis on conformity and group cohesion, which can create a climate that is supportive of bullying behavior. The patriarchal structure of Nigerian communities also contributes to the prevalence of cyberbullying, as traditional gender roles can lead to the targeting of individuals who do not conform to gender norms (Olukoya, 2016).

Furthermore, Nigerian culture places a high value on face-to-face communication and relationships, which can lead to a lack of awareness and education about the harmful effects of cyberbullying. As noted by Ademilokun and Yusuf (2017), many Nigerians believe that online communication is less important than face-to-face communication and therefore do not take cyberbullying seriously.

Research has found that cultural values, such as collectivism and individualism, may also play a role in cyberbullying behavior. For instance, a study by Adebowale and Ojedokun (2017) found that collectivism was positively associated with cyberbullying perpetration among Nigerian university students. In contrast, individualism was negatively associated with cyberbullying perpetration. Again, cultural beliefs about gender roles and masculinity/femininity may also influence cyberbullying behavior. For example, traditional gender roles that emphasize the need for men to be dominant and aggressive may lead to a higher incidence of cyberbullying perpetration among male Nigerian youths. In addition, cultural influences on cyberbullying among Nigerian youths are complex and multi-faceted. Understanding the role of culture is important for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies for cyberbullying. Additionally, the prevalence of patriarchal attitudes in Nigerian culture may contribute to the targeting of women and girls in cyberbullying incidents (Ojo & Popoola, 2017). We can succinctly posit that cultural factors play a significant role in cyberbullying among Nigerian youths, as they influence the attitudes and behaviors of both victims and perpetrators. It is important to consider these cultural factors when developing strategies to prevent and address cyberbullying in Nigeria. To effectively address cyberbullying in Nigeria, it is important to take cultural factors into account and develop strategies that are sensitive to the diverse cultural norms and values present in the country. This may involve working with community leaders and influencers to raise awareness of the harms of cyberbullying and promoting positive online behaviors that align with cultural values of respect, community, and harmony.

### **Social Media Roles in Promoting Cyberbullying**

According to Hinduja & Patchin (2018), social media platforms often allow users to create anonymous accounts or use pseudonyms, which can embolden individuals to engage in cyberbullying without fear of immediate consequences. The sense of anonymity and reduced accountability can lead to increased aggression and harassment online. Online disinhibition effect refers to the phenomenon where individuals feel less restrained in their online interactions compared to face-to-face interactions. Social media platforms can amplify this effect by providing a perceived sense of distance and detachment from the consequences of one's actions, leading to more aggressive and hurtful behavior (Suler, 2004). The social media can contribute to the spread and normalization of cyberbullying behaviours, which can have negative consequences for the victim and society as a whole.

Furthermore, a study by Cheng and colleagues (2021) found that the use of emojis in social media communication could also contribute to cyberbullying. Specifically, they found that the use of certain negative emojis (such as the middle finger emoji) was associated with higher levels of cyberbullying perpetration. These studies highlight the role the social media play in promoting cyberbullying among youths. The use of aggressive and insulting language, as well as the use of certain negative emojis, can contribute to the perpetration of cyberbullying. However, social media platforms can also provide an environment that facilitates cyberbullying behavior.

### **Effects of Cyberbullying among Nigerian Youths**

Cyberbullying can have various negative effects on Nigerian youths. Here are some of them:

**Psychological Effects:** Cyberbullying can cause psychological trauma in victims, leading to depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even suicide ideation. A study by Olumide et al. (2018) revealed that cyberbullying is significantly associated with psychological distress among Nigerian youths.

**Academic Performance:** Research has shown that cyberbullying can also negatively affect academic performance. A study by Ofoegbu and Akubo (2018) found that students who were victims of cyberbullying had lower academic achievement and performance than those who were not. Cyberbullying has been found to have negative effects on the academic performance of Nigerian undergraduates. A study by Akintunde, Akinlade, and Lawal (2019) revealed that cyberbullying had a significant negative effect on the academic performance of Nigerian undergraduates. They also found out that students who experienced cyberbullying reported lower levels of academic engagement and satisfaction with their academic performance. A study by Adeleke, Owolabi, and Adekomi (2020) found that cyberbullying significantly affected the academic performance of undergraduate students in Nigeria. The study by Adeleke et al. reported that victims of cyberbullying experienced reduced concentration, anxiety, fear, and stress, which negatively impacted their academic performance. Similarly, a study by Ogungbamila, Adebayo, and Adebayo (2020) found that cyberbullying had a negative impact on the academic performance of Nigerian undergraduates, as it led to decreased self-esteem, reduced motivation, and poor academic performance.

**Social Isolation:** Victims of cyberbullying may experience social isolation and exclusion from their peers, leading to a lack of social support and reduced social interactions (Ofoegbu & Akubo, 2018). Social isolation is one of the effects of cyberbullying on its victims. Cyberbullying can cause the victim to feel excluded, alone, and disconnected from peers and friends. The nature of cyberbullying, which often occurs online, can make it difficult for victims to seek help or support, leading to a sense of isolation. A study conducted in Nigeria by Oluwatosin and Olaleye (2018) found that cyberbullying was significantly associated with social isolation among undergraduate students. The study revealed that victims of cyberbullying were more likely to experience social isolation, which in turn, affected their academic performance and mental health. Therefore, it is crucial to address the issue of cyberbullying and provide support and resources to victims to prevent social isolation and its negative effects.

**Physical Health:** According to Adeyemo & Akintimehin (2019), cyberbullying can also have physical health effects such as headaches, insomnia, and even physical injuries in severe cases (Adeyemo & Akintimehin, 2019). It has negative effects on the physical health of Nigerian youths. Victims of cyberbullying may experience physical symptoms such as headaches, stomach aches, and sleep disturbances. In some cases, cyberbullying has been linked to more serious physical health problems such as high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity. A study conducted in Nigeria found that cyberbullying was significantly associated with increased psychological and somatic symptoms among Nigerian adolescents (Oluwagbemiga et al., 2018).

**Aggressive Behavior:** (Olumide et al., 2018) affirm that victims of cyberbullying may become aggressive and develop a tendency to retaliate, leading to a cycle of bullying and counter-bullying behavior. Cyberbullying therefore, can have significant and long-lasting effects on the mental, physical, and social well-being of Nigerian youths. It is important to raise awareness and take measures to prevent and address cyberbullying in the country.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Cognitive Theory**

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) serves as the theoretical framework for the present study. It was developed by Albert Bandura, a psychologist from Canada, in the 1970s. Bandura's theory was influenced by earlier works in social psychology, particularly the work of behaviorist B.F. Skinner and cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget. The theory emphasizes the interaction between an individual's personal factors, environmental factors, and behavior, and posits that behavior is not solely determined by either internal or external factors, but rather by the interplay between the two. SCT has been applied to a wide range of areas, including education, health, communication, and organizational behaviour (Bandura, A. 1986). SCT explains how individuals' behavior is influenced by cognitive, environmental, and behavioral factors. It posits that people learn new behaviors through observing others, and that their

behavior is shaped by their beliefs, attitudes, and personal factors (Bandura, 1986). According to SCT, people's behavior is shaped by the three main factors, which are:

**Cognitive factors:** This includes people's knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes towards a particular behavior. Nigerian youths' knowledge and beliefs about cyberbullying can influence their behavior towards it. Using language that emphasizes the negative consequences of cyberbullying, promotes empathy towards victims, and highlights the importance of positive social interaction can help to change their beliefs and attitudes towards cyberbullying.

**Environmental factors:** The environment in which people live can also shape their behavior. The Nigerian youths' social context, such as their family, peers, and social media, can influence their behavior towards cyberbullying. Using language that promotes positive behavior and condemns cyberbullying in these contexts can help to reduce their engagement in cyberbullying.

**Behavioral factors:** People's behavior can also be shaped by their past experiences and the consequences of their behavior. Since Nigerian youths have been exposed to cyberbullying and some have been victims, this can shape their behavior towards cyberbullying. Using language that emphasizes the negative consequences of cyberbullying and promotes positive social interaction can help to reduce their engagement in the behavior.

In conclusion, Social cognitive theory posits that human behavior is shaped by a combination of cognitive, behavioral, and environmental factors. In the context of cyberbullying, Nigerian youths' behavior can be influenced by their cognitive processes, such as their beliefs, attitudes, and values towards cyberbullying. By using language that emphasizes the negative consequences of cyberbullying and promotes empathy towards victims, Nigerian youths' attitudes towards cyberbullying can be changed, leading to a reduction in their engagement in the behavior.

### **Empirical Studies**

Previous studies have been conducted in the area of cyberbullying. Some of these studies are reviewed below:

Bauman, Rigby, and Hoppa (2008) examined the role of language use in bullying and victimization among Australian schoolchildren. The study found that verbal bullying was more common than physical bullying and that language use played a significant role in the perpetration and victimization of bullying. The study also suggested that language use could be used as a tool to prevent and address bullying, as positive language use was associated with lower levels of bullying and victimization. This present study however concentrates on the role of language in combating cyberbullying.

Similarly, a study by Menesini et al. (2012) examined the effectiveness of a school-based intervention program aimed at reducing bullying and victimization among Italian schoolchildren. The study found that the program, which emphasized the importance of positive language use, was effective in reducing bullying and victimization, particularly among children who had previously been involved in bullying incidents.

In the context of cyberbullying, a study by Li and Luo (2014) examined the role of language use in cyberbullying perpetration and victimization among Chinese adolescents. The study found that negative language use, such as swearing and name-calling, was strongly associated with cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, while positive language use, such as expressing empathy and support, was associated with lower levels of cyberbullying involvement.

Ogunsola, A. A., Adeoye, O. A., & Alese, B. K. (2020) investigated the perception and experience of cyberbullying among secondary school students in Nigeria. The results showed that a significant number of students have been exposed to cyberbullying, with the majority of incidents occurring on social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram. The study also found that students who were victims of cyberbullying reported higher levels of psychological distress compared to those who were not. The authors suggest that there is a need for schools to implement programs that address cyberbullying, as well as for parents to monitor their children's online activities.

Menesini et al. (2012) conducted a study titled "Cyberbullying Definition among Adolescents: A Comparison Across Six European Countries". The study aimed to explore the similarities and

differences in how adolescents from six European countries (Italy, Greece, Spain, Germany, Poland, and the UK) define cyberbullying. The results of the study indicated that there were some differences in the definitions of cyberbullying across the different countries, but there were also some common themes, such as the use of technology to intentionally harm others and the repetitive nature of the behavior. The study highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences when addressing cyberbullying and the need for a clear and comprehensive definition of the behavior.

Smith, P. K. et al. (2008) studied 'Cyberbullying: Its nature and impact in secondary school pupils'. The study explored the nature and impact of cyberbullying among secondary school students in the UK. The researchers found out that cyberbullying is a prevalent problem, with 14.9% of students reporting experiencing it in the past two months. The study also found that cyberbullying victims were more likely to experience psychological and emotional distress, including depression and anxiety, compared to non-victims.

Another study by Li and Li (2019) found that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, were frequently used to perpetrate cyberbullying. The study also found that the use of language that degraded individuals' characteristics or identities was a common tactic used in cyberbullying on these platforms.

Kowalski, R. M., Giumetti, G. W., Schroeder, A. N., & Lattanner, M. R. (2014) researched on 'Bullying in the digital age'. The study was a critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth. This meta-analysis reviewed 36 studies on cyberbullying among youth and found that cyberbullying is a significant problem with negative effects on victims. The authors identified several factors that contribute to cyberbullying perpetration and victimization, such as age, gender, and technology use. They also found that cyberbullying interventions were effective at reducing cyberbullying perpetration and victimization.

Kwan, G. C. E., & Skoric, M. M. (2013) studied 'Facebook bullying: An extension of battles in school'. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 29(1), 16-25. This study examined the prevalence and impact of Facebook bullying among secondary school students in Singapore. The authors found that 44% of students reported experiencing Facebook bullying, and victims were more likely to experience negative emotional outcomes, such as depression and anxiety. The study also found that social support and parental monitoring were protective factors against Facebook bullying.

Williams, K. R., & Guerra, N. G. (2007) examined the prevalence and predictors of internet bullying among a sample of US middle and high school students. The authors found that 11.5% of students reported being victims of internet bullying in the past year, and the most common forms of internet bullying were name-calling and spreading rumors. The study also found that students who reported higher levels of anger and aggression were more likely to engage in internet bullying.

### **Research Methodology**

In this study, the researcher conducted a survey to collect data on the prevalence and characteristics of cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. The survey was administered online and in-person, and questions about the types of cyberbullying behaviors experienced or witnessed were asked. The frequency and duration of cyberbullying, the impact of cyberbullying on mental health and well-being, and the coping strategies used by victims were equally looked into. Structured interviews were also conducted in-person and over the phone. The focus of the interviews were on the factors that contribute to cyberbullying, the motivations behind cyberbullying behaviour, the impact of cyberbullying on individuals and communities, and the strategies for preventing and addressing cyberbullying. The questionnaire items for the study are attached.

### **Findings**

From the survey conducted, these are some of the possible causes of cyberbullying among Nigerian youths include: Anonymity: The anonymity provided by the internet and social media platforms can encourage cyberbullying because it makes it easier for individuals to hide their identity and avoid the consequences of their actions. When individuals hide behind anonymity, they may feel less accountable

for their actions and less likely to face consequences for their behavior. This can embolden them to engage in cyberbullying behaviors that they might not have done otherwise. When individuals feel anonymous, they may be more likely to say or do things that they wouldn't in face-to-face interactions. This can lead to cyberbullying behaviors that are more extreme or hurtful than they might be in other contexts.

Anonymity also leads to online aggression and cyberbullying. The study found that people in anonymous online environments are more likely to behave in ways that are not consistent with their offline personalities. Cyberbullies have low self-esteem. They engage in such behavior because they have low self-esteem and use it as a way to feel better about themselves by putting others down. Again, some individuals may engage in cyberbullying because of peer pressure from friends or social groups. Another factor is lack of awareness. Some individuals may not fully understand the impact of their online behavior and may not realize that their actions can harm others. Misuse of technology has a role to play. The misuse of technology such as smartphones and the internet can lead to cyberbullying. Finally, cultural and societal factors such as gender stereotypes, intolerance, and discrimination can contribute to cyberbullying behavior.

### **Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

Prevention and intervention strategies for cyberbullying can be aimed at different levels, including individuals, families, schools, and communities. These should be done:

**Education and Awareness:** Educating individuals, families, and communities about the nature and impact of cyberbullying can help prevent its occurrence. This can include educating people on how to recognize cyberbullying behaviors and the negative impact it has on victims, and promoting positive online behaviour. Schools can incorporate cyberbullying prevention programs into their curricula to raise awareness among students.

**Parental Monitoring and Support:** Another solution is parental involvement. Parents can monitor their children's online activities and talk to them about responsible online behavior. They can also encourage their children to report any incidents of cyberbullying to a trusted adult. Parents can monitor their children's online activities to detect and prevent cyberbullying. This can be done by setting limits on screen time, using monitoring software, and having open communication with their children. Parents can also provide emotional support to their children who have been victims of cyberbullying.

**Reporting and Intervention:** Victims of cyberbullying should be encouraged to report the incidents to trusted adults, such as teachers, counselors, or parents. Schools can also implement reporting systems that allow students to report cyberbullying anonymously. Once cyberbullying is reported, intervention strategies such as counseling, mediation, and conflict resolution can be employed to address the issue.

**Legal action:** In extreme cases, legal action may be necessary to address cyberbullying. This can include reporting cyberbullying to law enforcement, pursuing civil lawsuits against perpetrators, or advocating for stronger cyberbullying laws and policies.

**Creating Positive Online Environments:** Online platforms and social media can create positive online environments that promote respectful communication and discourage cyberbullying. This can be achieved through the implementation of community guidelines, moderation of online content, and promoting positive online behaviour.

**Promote Positive Online Behavior:** Encourage positive online behaviour and promote kindness and empathy online. This can be achieved by promoting the use of positive language, discouraging harmful behaviors, and creating an online culture of respect and civility.

**Establish Clear Policies:** Social media companies and schools can establish clear policies and consequences for cyberbullying. These policies should be communicated to all users and enforced consistently.

**Provide Support for Victims:** Victims of cyberbullying need support and resources to cope with the emotional and psychological impacts. This can include counseling services, support groups, and access to mental health professionals.

**Involve Students In the Solution:** Students should be involved in creating solutions to cyberbullying. This can include creating peer-to-peer support groups, establishing school-wide anti-bullying campaigns, and developing student-led initiatives that promote positive online behavior.



It is important to note that no single strategy can effectively prevent or intervene in cyberbullying. A combination of strategies that address individual, social, and environmental factors is necessary to combat this issue.

### **Effective use of the English language in Combating Cyberbullying**

The following measures can be taken to curb cyberbullying:

**Providing education on responsible online behavior:** Education can be provided in English language to teach Nigerian youths about responsible online behavior, including the importance respecting others, refraining from sharing sensitive information, and avoiding engaging in cyberbullying.

**Encouraging positive communication:** The English language can be used to encourage positive communication and promote the use of kind and respectful language online. Using positive and respectful language can help to create a culture of mutual respect and reduce the likelihood of cyberbullying.

**Creating awareness campaigns:** Awareness campaigns can be created in English language to educate Nigerian youths about the dangers of cyberbullying, the impact it has on others, and the negative consequences it can have on their own lives.

**Developing community guidelines:** Online platforms can develop community guidelines in English language that promote positive behavior and prohibit cyberbullying. These guidelines can be enforced through strict monitoring and enforcement measures.

**Providing support services:** Online platforms can provide support services in English language to victims of cyberbullying, including counseling services and online support groups. This can help to reduce the negative impact of cyberbullying on the mental health and wellbeing of Nigerian youths.

It is very important for online platforms to provide tools to flag and report cyberbullying content in the English language. Nigerian youths are increasingly using English as a medium of communication on social media platforms, and as such, the language used to report and flag cyberbullying incidents must be easily understandable to them. Online platforms should make reporting tools easily accessible and user-friendly. Reporting tools should be available in English language, and online platforms should ensure that users understand the process of reporting incidents of cyberbullying. Reporting tools should also be effective and responsive, and users should receive timely feedback about the status of their reports. Providing tools to flag and report cyberbullying content is essential to combatting cyberbullying. It empowers users to take action against cyberbullying and sends a strong message that cyberbullying will not be tolerated on online platforms. It also helps to create a safer online environment for Nigerian youths and promotes positive online behavior. It is crucial for online platforms to provide tools to flag and report cyberbullying content in English language to ensure that Nigerian youths can easily report incidents of cyberbullying and take action against cyberbullying.

Summarily, the English language can be used to promote positive online behaviors among Nigerian youths in the following ways:

By providing education in English about online safety and responsible use of social media platforms. This education can include information about the dangers of cyberbullying and the importance of respecting others online.

By using positive language to encourage respectful behavior and discouraging negative behavior. For example, instead of focusing on what not to do, the language can be used to promote what to do, such as promoting kindness, empathy, and respect.

By creating positive online communities where youths can engage in positive discussions and activities. The communities can be in English, and the language used can be positive and encouraging.

By promoting the use of English language in positive online activities such as group discussions, debates, and sharing of positive messages. This will encourage Nigerian youths to use English to engage in constructive and positive activities online.

By using English language in promoting campaigns and initiatives that promote positive behavior online. For example, campaigns can be designed to discourage cyberbullying and promote positive online behavior, using the English language to disseminate the message to Nigerian youths.

The English language can be used to promote positive online behaviors among Nigerian youths by providing education, using positive language, creating positive communities, promoting positive activities, and initiating campaigns and initiatives that promote positive behavior online.

In summary, the English language can be used to prevent cyberbullying among Nigerian youths by providing education on responsible online behavior, promoting positive communication, creating awareness campaigns, developing community guidelines, and providing support services to victims. These measures can help to create a safe and positive online environment for Nigerian youths.

It must be stressed that the Nigerian government can help to a great extent to combat cyberbullying in various ways, such as:

Implementing policies and laws that define and criminalize cyberbullying and provide penalties for offenders. These laws can be written in English and disseminated to the public to ensure that Nigerian youths understand the consequences of engaging in cyberbullying.

Conducting awareness campaigns that promote positive online behavior and discourage cyberbullying. The campaigns can use social media, TV, and radio to reach a wider audience.

Providing educational programs that teach youths about the appropriate use of social media platforms and how to report cyberbullying incidents. The education can be provided in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as through online platforms.

Encouraging online platforms and service providers to provide tools and resources that allow users to report and block cyberbullying incidents. These tools can be provided in English to ensure that they are easily accessible and understandable to Nigerian youths.

Collaborating with English-speaking countries and international organizations to share best practices and strategies for combating cyberbullying. This can be achieved through online forums, conferences, and workshops.

Finally, the Nigerian government can use the English language to create a safer online environment for Nigerian youths by promoting positive behavior, educating on the consequences of cyberbullying, and providing tools to report and block cyberbullying incidents.

### **Conclusion**

While there is limited research on the role of language use in combating cyberbullying among Nigerian youths specifically, this study suggests that language use plays a significant role in the perpetration and victimization of bullying and cyberbullying. Moreover, promoting positive language use through intervention programs and awareness campaigns can be an effective strategy for preventing and addressing bullying and cyberbullying. The study's findings reveal that language plays a significant role in the prevalence of cyberbullying in Nigeria, and the present researcher has identified effective language strategies that can be used to combat cyberbullying.

Again, through the exploration of theories of language and communication, as well as cultural and social factors that contribute to cyberbullying, this study provides important insights into how language can be used as a tool to prevent cyberbullying. The findings suggest that promoting healthy communication practices and encouraging positive language use can be effective strategies to combat cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. In addition, the study underscores the need for continued research and intervention efforts to combat cyberbullying among Nigerian youths. By understanding the indispensable role of language in perpetuating and combating cyberbullying, we can develop more effective strategies to prevent cyberbullying and promote a safer and healthier online environment for Nigerian youths.

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