We thank the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for supporting this research, and Learning & Technology Services for printing this poster.

“I am scared to talk about my political beliefs in fear of bad grades or being called out by my peers.”

ULLYING

and

45.9% of respondents indicated they had witnessed someone else being cyberbullied at least once in the past five months. ... we ran a chi-square test of independence. Once again, only sexual orientation proved statistically significant: \( p < .005, \) Cramer’s V = 0.16. While 14 of 51 (27.45%) non-heterosexual respondents self-reported as victims of traditional bullying, 37 of 324 (11.42%) heterosexual respondents reported the same; therefore, non-heterosexual students tend to be victims of traditional bullying more than heterosexual students.

Reasons participants believed they had been bullied or bullied others. The current study distributed an online survey to a random sample of 1000 undergraduate students at a midwestern university. The questionnaire, created and distributed using Qualtrics Survey Software, consisted of blocks for demographics, experiences with traditional and cyberbullying, and open-ended questions. Potential participants were notified via email of their random selection and provided with an online link to the questionnaire. Respondents received no compensation for their participation.

449 undergraduate students began the questionnaire (approximately 15% response rate). Responses from those who were not enrolled as undergraduate students during both the Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semesters as well as partial responses, were excluded. This left 283 participants between the ages of 18-56 years (M = 20.69, SD = 3.66) for data analysis.

For demographic information on the race and gender identities of participants, see Table 1. 85.1% of participants identified as heterosexual and 13.8% identified as non-heterosexual (N = 26 Bisexual, 13 Homosexual, 8 Pansexual, 4 Asexual, 2 Other). 1% of participants (N = 4) chose not to disclose their sexual orientation. 42.4% of participants identified as liberal, 20.6% conservative, 21.9% moderate, and 26.9% apolitical. 12% of participants (N = 46) chose not to disclose their political ideology.

Respondents indicated their experiences with traditional and cyberbullying using a modified version of the Cyberbullying and Online Aggression Survey Instrument. The questionnaire defined both traditional and cyberbullying for respondents. Traditional bullying was defined as “behaviors such as harassment, threats of physical harm, aggression, or violence—[usually occurring] repeatedly and intentionally with the purpose of causing harm (physical, emotional, or psychological).”

Cyberbullying was defined as “when someone repeatedly harasses, mistreats, or makes fun of another person (on purpose to hurt them) online or while using cell phones or other electronic devices.” Respondents first indicated their experiences with traditional and cyberbullying in the last five months (never, once, a few times, or many times) and then what they believed to be the reason behind the incident (gender identity, sexual orientation, political ideology, support for a particular candidate, race, or other). Finally, respondents answered open-ended questions reflecting on their experiences.

RESULTS

TRADITIONAL BULLYING

Overall, 22% of respondents indicated they had been the victims of traditional bullying at least once. See Figure 1 for additional information.

To test the relationship between a respondent’s identity (race, gender identity, sexual orientation, or political ideology) and victimization, we ran a chi-square test of independence. Only sexual orientation proved statistically significant: \( \chi^2 (1, N = 378) = 7.95, \) \( p < .005, \) Cramer’s V = 0.16. While 14 of 51 (27.45%) non-heterosexual respondents self-reported as victims of traditional bullying, 37 of 324 (11.42%) heterosexual respondents reported the same; therefore, non-heterosexual students tend to be victims of traditional bullying more than heterosexual students.

POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS

Of the potential reasons behind their traditional or cyberbullying experience, victims consistently chose political ideology and support for a political candidate as one of the prominent reasons. See Table 2.

To test the relationship between a respondent’s political ideology (conservative, liberal, moderate, or apolitical) and experience (victimization or offending) due to political ideology or support for a political candidate, we ran a chi square test of independence. No significant results were found, suggesting that politically charged bullying occurs similarly across ideologies.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that bullying affected almost a quarter of students at the midwestern university surveyed since the election of 2016. Nearly half of respondents witnessed at least one incident of cyberbullying in the past five months. In addition, over a quarter of non-heterosexual respondents indicated they had experienced traditional bullying in the post-election period. One of the major reasons cited by victims of bullying was their own political ideologies or support for a particular political candidate. Further research should be conducted on a campus with more diversity of gender identities, races, sexual orientations, and political ideologies.

CITATIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS


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INTRODUCTION

The polarization of United States politics gained significant attention during the 2016 election cycle. Technological advancements have allowed people a new medium to express their political frustrations; however, the academic research on politically charged traditional and cyberbullying is scarce.

Past research indicates that anywhere between 8% and 21% of college students have experienced cyberbullying (Crosdin & Golman, 2014). Additionally, one study of almost 300 participants from a western university found that 52% of college students engaged in cyberbullying behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2014). The current study seeks to understand what populations tend to be targeted by both traditional and cyberbullying, as well as if the political situation has had an impact on the way students are interacting on college campuses.

METHOD

The current study distributed an online questionnaire to a random sample of 1000 undergraduate students at a midwestern university. The questionnaire, created and distributed using Qualtrics Survey Software, consisted of blocks for demographics, experiences with traditional and cyberbullying, and open-ended questions. Potential participants were notified via email of their random selection and provided with an online link to the questionnaire. Respondents received no compensation for their participation.

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