Cyberbullying in higher education: a review of the literature based on bibliometric analysis

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this study is to review cyberbullying incidents among students in higher education institutions (HEIs). Cyberbullying has become a threat to students' wellbeing as it penetrates one life due to the pervasive availability of digital technologies.

Design/methodology/approach – Through a bibliometric analysis, this study analyzes 361 journal publications from the Web of Science (WoS) based on bibliographic coupling and co-word analysis.

Findings – Significant themes were found related to cyberbullying in HEIs, particularly related to the impact and determinants of cyberbullying on students. Bibliographic coupling produces three clusters on the current research fronts, while co-word analysis produces four clusters on the prediction of future trends. Implications of this phenomenon warrant comprehensive intervention by the HEIs management to dampen its impact on students' wellbeing. Findings would enhance the fundamental understanding through science mapping on the prevalent and potential incidence of cyberbullying.

Practical implications – Crucial insights will benefit the government, HEIs' management, educators, scholars, policymakers and parents to overcome this dreadful phenomenon of cyberbullying. Several managerial interventions and mitigation strategies are proposed to reduce and control the occurrence of cyberbullying.

Originality/value – This study presents a bibliometric review to uncover the knowledge structure of cyberbullying studies in HEIs.

Keywords Cyberbullying, Higher education, Students, Wellbeing, Bibliometric analysis, Web of Science

Paper type Literature review

1. Introduction

Rapid technology growth provides many advantages to humankind in daily life. Despite its convenience, other problems have occurred, of which cyberbullying is considered one of the primary issues among adolescents and youth (Abaido, 2020). Cyberbullying issues have risen drastically in recent years due to increased access to digital and information technology. It is a form of bullying that can occur at any age, contributing to social networks' anonymity and ubiquity (Peter and Petermann, 2018). It has been declared a global issue at different educational levels (Evangelio *et al.*, 2022). As higher education institutions (HEIs) require engagement using information technology, university students are vulnerable and exposed to cyberbullying (Shaikh *et al.*, 2020). Students in HEIs are young, independent and somewhat immature in dealing with social issues and life challenges. Being exposed to cyberbullying incidents, particularly victims of one, would expose these young minds to negative consequences such as mental health (Kwan *et al.*, 2020; Skilbred-Fjeld *et al.*, 2020; Ali and Shahbuddin, 2022)) that might lead to suicide ideation (Brailovskaia *et al.*, 2018).

The definition of cyberbullying varied throughout the literature (Skilbred-Fjeld *et al.*, 2020). Among the definition of this phenomenon is an "intentional and aggressive act by group or individual through an electronic platform that is repeated over time against the defenseless victim" (Smith *et al.*, 2008). Hinduja and Patchin (2009) termed cyberbullying "a repeated, willful act inflicted using electronic devices such as computers and cell phones. The problem of defining cyberbullying to traditional bullying is due to power imbalance, repetition and anonymity (Kofoed and Staksrud, 2019). Despite some similarity between