

# University Students' Perspectives of Visual-based Cyberbullying on Instagram

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## ABSTRACT

Investigations of the cyberbullying phenomenon started from the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Existing studies focus on text-based types of cyberbullying toward demographics under 18 years of age. However, given that the population aged 18-29 uses social media heavily in their daily lives, cyberbullying on various sites has become a critical issue for this generation as well. Particularly, studies revealed that visual-based social media platforms are more powerful than text-based platforms in affecting people's emotions, causing significant psychological impacts and raising issues related to cyberbullying.

This dissertation aims to explore university students' perspectives on visual-based cyberbullying with a specific focus on Instagram due to its popularity. This study also investigates current university policies related to cyberbullying, as well as students' perceptions of these policies. This study applies a mixed-method approach using survey, interview, visual narrative inquiry, and scan of university policies. The research design is guided by a holistic theoretical notion that is grounded in the Social Ecological Model and the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral framework.

Theoretically, this study reveals empirical evidence on students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes toward visual cyberbullying. Findings have implications for the existing theoretical foundation of cyberbullying. Methodologically, the visual features extracted from participant-generated cyberbullying scenarios may serve as potential identifiers for training auto-detection models in detecting cyberbullying. Practically, the analysis of university policies and students' perceptions could identify gaps in current practices that need to be addressed. Additionally, this study contributes to the information science literature on university students' information literacy education and designs of the social media system.

# **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Information literacy; Social media; Education programs/schools; Research methods; Sociology of information.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

Visual cyberbullying; Instagram; Mixed methods; Visual narrative inquiry; Social Ecological Model.