Identity Orientation Dimensions as Correlates of Cyber-Aggressive Behaviour among Undergraduates

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Abstract:-The increasing use of the internet has transformed the process of human socialisation. The internet provides people with anonymity, where one can hide under the veil of anonymity to perpetrate evil to another with the intention of not getting caught. Cyber-aggression as one of the dangers of the wrongful use of internet is the major concern of this work. Cyber-aggression can be seen as a 21st century hurting behaviour because it is wide speared. This study investigated identity orientation dimensions (personal, relational, social, and collective) as correlates of cyber-aggressive behaviour among undergraduates. The participants for this study comprised of 204 undergraduates, consisting of ninety-seven (97) male (47.3%) and one hundred and seven (107) female (52.7%). Their age ranged from 18-29 years with a mean age of 19.98 and a standard deviation of 2.33. The instruments used were: Cyber-aggression questionnaire and Aspects of identity questionnaire. Five hypotheses were tested. The study is a survey design and adopted Pearson Product Moment Correlational coefficient to analyze the data. The result revealed that the first hypothesis which states that personal identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was confirmed correct (r = -.368, p<.01), and the remaining four hypotheses were not confirmed. The implication of findings of this studyis that, understanding the concept of identity orientation dimensions can enable our immediate society to understand why people exhibit cyber-aggressive behaviour especially among the undergraduates. This study will also serves as an eye opener to the dangers of cyber-aggressive behaviour which is now wide spread, thus calling on the psychologists to develop adequate intervention programme to help youths build proper identity orientation. The study concludes that the importance of one's identity orientation cannot be over emphasized. Identity orientation still remains a significant factor to consider when studying Cyber-aggressive behaviour.

Keywords:-Identity Orientation Dimensions, Cyber-Aggressive Behaviour and Undergraduates.

I. INTRODUCTION

> *Background to the study*

The idea that identity orientation can affect economic preferences and behaviour among youths is now obvious reality, for we are we think. The recent Cyber-aggression which can be seen as a 21st century hurting behaviour because it is wide speared can be considered the product of individual orientation via use of information and communication technologies (ICT). The increasing use of information and communication technologies (ICT) hastransformed the process of human socialisation. ICT has brought a change in the risk andexposure of users by facilitating the discovery of information in a more invasive way(Nobles, Reyns, Fox, and Fisher, 2012). The Internet has caused many changes in the fieldof socialisation, access and exchange of information and has become an asset to all users.However, this tool can also be used as a means of surveillance and intrusion and offersanonymity to users who so desire (Carvalho, 2011). Despite the wide-spread use of information communication technologies (ICTs) in everyday life, we are only now beginning to understand the effects and influence of the use of internet or cell phones on communication skills and social relationships. Despite the endless opportunity and access provided by ICT for learning, communication and interaction, it has also become a medium for act of aggression (Madan, 2014).The use of electronic technology allows many conveniences, but it is not without consequence. This growing diffusion of ICT in daily lives leads to greater visibility of and increasingconcern about the possible negative experiences in the virtual environment, especially inyoung people, given their greater vulnerability to victimisation and perpetration of cyber-aggression(Bilic, 2013).

Cyber-aggressive behaviour is a widespread phenomenon and therefore something of concern (Novo, Pereira, and Matos, 2014). Cyber-aggression can be seen as one of the consequences of the electronic technology and it has attracted the attention of parents, educators and researchers (Wright, 2014). Taking various behavioural forms (example, threats, and insults), cyber-aggression occurs through an assortment of electronic technologies (example, cell phones, and the internet). As a broader form of cyber-bulling (that is, electronic extension of school

bullying), cyber aggression includes cyber-bullying behaviours but extends the definition to include behaviours that do not typically happen in a face-to-face setting (example, hacking into someone's e-mail account). Cyber-aggressive behaviours include but are not limited to the following: excursion, harassment, outing, and cyber-stalking, fake profiles, trickery, trolling and cat fishing. Nigeria like many other countries of the world is not immured from the menace of cyber-aggression. Cyber-aggression can lead to panic and confusion in the society as can be seen in the numerous hate speeches and false messages that go viral daily on social media, for instance the bathing with salt issues that went viral four years ago, two died and twenty others were hospitalised in various hospitals in Plateau state over excessive salt consumption and bitter kola to prevent Ebola virus Disease (EVD) (Aliyu and Nanlong, 2014). However the panic caused by cyber-aggressive behaviour can lead to psychological imbalance, for instance the commotion caused in the entire south East zone in October, 2017, following widespread rumour alleging invasion of schools by men dressed in military uniform and allegedly injecting pupils and students to death with an unknown vaccine to monkey pox. The negative outcome of cyber-aggression can also cause hurting behaviour as can be seen in the case of 2015 Miss Anambra cucumber saga which went viral in October, 2016, the then Miss UNIZIK nude photos which went viral in July, 2013 is also part of cyber-aggression. Such hurtful images can lead to depression, inferiority complex, and even death of the victims.

The researcher observed that a great number of undergraduates are involved in behaviours that are viewed as cyber-aggressive. Posting rumours about someone on social network, impersonating someone, posting unguarded moments photographs and video of someone are some of the practices that are common in schools and among the students. The incidence of students posting edited pictures of lecturers and furnishing a bad image of the school, undermining the authorities of the school is wide spread. This causes the researcher to wonder if there is any difference between these students and other students elsewhere. Are there situational and environmental factors that cause this cyber-aggressive behaviour? Is there something common in the lives of these students who involve in this kind of behaviour? All these questions precipitated this study.

The solution to the problem of cyber-aggressive behaviour and other social problems in Nigeria have been sought in so many ways such as constitutional amendment, national orientation programmes, redesigning of the school curriculum and programme etc. but the researcher felt that the answer may lie in another field – identity orientation, since the behaviour of individuals stem from orientation (Bandura, 1986).Identity orientation is defined as the tendency for people to focus more attention and effort on their internal or external environment in defining their identity (Cheek, 1989). Identities are the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group memberships that define who one is (Oyserman, Elmore

and Smith, 2012). Identities can be focused on the past- what used to be true of one now or the future- the person one experts or wishes to become (Oyserman, et al 2012). Identity orientation has the following dimensions: Personal identity orientation, Relational identity orientation, Social identity orientation and Collective identity orientation.

Personal identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of an internal emphasis, based on self-knowledge and self-evaluation (Carducci, 2001). Social identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of an external emphasis, based on interactions with and the reactions of others. It reflects a more public sense of self (Carducci, 2001). Relational identity orientation describes the role-relationship between two individuals (Ashforth andSluss, 2007). Relational identity orientation is more other-directed rather than self-focused. The motivation to promote the other's welfare emerges when a relational orientation is made salient. Collective identity orientation describes share sense of belonging to a group. Collective identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of a communal emphasis, based on a sense of belonging to a larger social group.

➢ *Objective of the Study*

The general objective of this study is to investigate on the identity orientation dimensions (personal, relational, social, and collective) as correlates of cyber-aggressive behaviour among undergraduates. But specifically seeks study:

- If personal identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.
- To determine if relational identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.
- To examine if social identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.
- To explore if collective identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.
- To ascertain if general identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.

➢ *Operational definition of key study variables*

- **Identity orientation:** refers to the relative importance that individuals place on various identity attributes or characteristics when constructing their self-definitions (Cheek & Briggs 2013).
- **Cyber-aggression:** Behaviours that intentionally harm, offend, or hurt others through the use of electronic devices (Álvarez-García, Barreiro-Collazo, Nú~nez&Dobarro 2016).
- **Undergraduates:** These are the university students who have not yet taken a first degree.

II. METHODS

➢ *Participants*

A total number of two hundred and four (204) undergraduates of NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka served as the participants in this study. Their age ranged from 18-29 years with mean age of 19.98 and standard deviation of 2.33. The participants are made up of ninety-seven (97) males (47.3%) and one hundred and thirteen (107) females (52.7%). The breakdown of the sample is given as follows: Faculty of Social Sciences (Department of Economics) = 50 (24.5%), Faculty of Physical Science (Department of statistics) = 41 (20.1%), Faculty of Education (Department of Guidance & counselling) =32 (15.7%), Faculty of Law = 32 (15.7%), Faculty of Agriculture (Department of Animal science and Technology) = 49(24.02%).

➢ *Instruments:*

Two instruments were used to collect data for the present study, they include the following: Cyber-aggression questionnaire developed by Álvarez-García, Barreiro-Collazo, Nú̃nez and Dobarro (2016) and Aspects of identity Questionnaire developed by Cheek and Briggs (2013).

Cyber-aggression Questionnaire: This is a 19-item instrument that measures cyber-aggression. It was developed byÁlvarez-García, Barreiro-Collazo, Nú̃nez and Dobarro (2016). All items are responded to using a 4-point Likert format ranging from 1= Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Often and 4=Always. The scale contains question such as; I have passed myself off as someone else on the internet, posting comments under his/her name as if I were him/her, to annoy someone, I have called a mobile phone and deliberately did not respond when it was answered, I have hit someone, I have recorded it, and then I have shared it etc. Reliability and Validity:A pilot study was conducted by the researcher to determine the reliability of this instrument. Seventy (70) students of ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu University (Igbariam Campus) served as the population for the pilot study. According to the results from the pilot study, the Cronbach alpha obtained for cyber-aggression was .83; this is an indication that this instrument was reliable for this study.

Aspects of Identity Questionnaire: This is a 45-items scale that measures Identity orientation. It was developed byCheek and Briggs (2013). The scale has 4 sub-scales which include: personal Identity orientation (items 2,5,8,11,14,18,21,25,27,32). relational identity orientation (items 22,26,28,31,34,35,37,39,41,43). Social identity orientation (items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17, 20). Collective identity orientation (items 4,7,10,13,24,29,38,and 42). In addition it has special items which are not scored on scales (items 1,16,19,23,30,33,36,40,44,45). All the items are responded to using a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from 1= Not important to my sense of who I am, 2= Slightly important to my sense of who I am, 3= Somewhat important to my sense of who I am, 4= Very important to my sense of who I

am and 5= Extremely important to my sense of who I am. With the help of my supervisor the items were added "is" and "are" were appropriate for better understanding of the questions. The scale contains questions such as; the things I own, my possessions are..., my feeling of belonging to my community is..., my commitment of being a concerned relationship partner is... etc. Reliability and Validity:A pilot study was conducted by the researcher to determine the reliability of this instrument. Seventy (70) students of ChukwuemekaOdumegwuOjukwu University (Igbariam Campus) served as the population for the pilot study. According to the results from the pilot study, the Cronbach alpha obtained for identity orientation dimensions was .75; this is an indication that this instrument was reliable for this study.

➢ *Procedure:*

The researcher first obtained approval of topic from her supervisor after proper scrutiny of the instruments needed for the study. The researcher then conducted a pilot study to test the reliability and valid of the instruments using 70 undergraduates of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (Igbariam Campus), as participants. Each of the participants used in the pilot study got a pen for filling the questionnaire; this is to motivate them to take their time in reading and understanding the questions before answering. The researcher having found from the result of the pilot study that the instruments were both reliable and valid then proceeded to the main study. The researcher used simple random sampling technique in selecting the faculties used in this research. The researcher achieved this by first listing the 14 faculties of NnamdiAzikiwe University, Awka which include: Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Basic Medicial Sciences, Faculty of Biosciences, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences and Technology, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Management Sciences, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Faculty of Physical Sciences and Faculty of Social Sciences. The researcher then wrote out the Faculties on a single paper and folded it into a ball-like shape. The folded papers were put in a container and the researcher called on a neutral third party to dip her hand inside the container containing all the names of the different faculties and select 5 papers randomly. This is to give the faculties equal chances of being selected. At the end of the exercise the following faculties were randomly selected: Faculty of Physical Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Social Sciences and Faculty of Agriculture.

The researcher then listed Departments under the Faculties and they include Faculty of Physical Sciences (Department of Computer Science, Department of Geological Science, Department of Mathematics, Department of Physics and Industrial Physics, Department of Pure and Industrial Chemistry and Department of Statistics), Faculty of Law, Faculty of Education (Adult Education, Human Kinetics and Health Education, Guidance and Counselling, Science Education, Education Management and Policy, Early Childhood and Primary

Education, Library and Information Science and Education Foundations), Faculty of Social Sciences (Department of Psychology, Department of Political Science, Department of Economics, Department of Mass Communication and Department of Sociology), and Faculty of Agriculture(Agricultural Economics and Extension, Animal Science and Technology, Crop Science and Horticulture, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Food Science and Technology, Forestry and Wildlife Management, Soil Science and Land Resources Management). The researcher then used the same simple random sampling method used in selecting Faculties to select the Departments. The follow Departments were selected: Faculty of Physical Sciences (Department of Statistics), Faculty of Education (Department of Guidance and Counselling), Faculty of Social Science (Department of Economic) and Faculty of Agriculture (Department of Animal Sciences and Technology). The researcher then went to the various Departments to share her questionnaire.

The researcher met the students while they were having lectures and waited until the lectures were over; this helped to gain access to the students while they were still together. The researcher used the assistance of the course representatives and some of the lecturers in the selected Departments to explain the nature and essence of the study

to the respondents. The researcher created a good rapport with the respondents and assured them of the confidentiality of whatever response they will provide as well as telling them that there are no wrong or right answers to any of the items in the questionnaire. Afterwards, the researcher distributed the questionnaires using accidental sampling technique by sharing the questionnaire to people that are willing to fill the questionnaire. The researcher stayed close and available for any questions or confusion while the respondents filled the questionnaire. In a bid to encourage honest answers, respondents were instructed not to include their names in the activity. The process of administering the questionnaire took the researcher close to two weeks. The researcher gave one day for each Department in an effort to reduce the number of missing instrument of incomplete questionnaire. Out of the 250 questionnaires that were administered, only 204 were properly filled and returned to the researcher.

➤ *Design and Statistics:*
The design for this study is correlation design because the study seeks to ascertain the relationship between identity orientation dimensions and cyber-aggression. Based on this, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistics was employed in analyzing the data using the SPSS 23 software for data analysis.

III.   RESULTS

Variables	Mean(X)	Standard Deviation(SD)	N
Personal	34.75	6.12	204
Relational	33.87	6.84	204
Social	21.18	4.34	204
Collective	26.20	7.78	204
General	33.29	6.53	204
Cyber aggressive behaviour	37.02	9.68	204

Table 1:- Summary of Mean and Standard deviation of Cyber-aggressive behaviour and Identity orientation dimensions.

Variables	Pearson Correlation	N	Sig
PIO*CAB	-.368**	204	.000
RIO*CAB	.110	204	.117
SIO*CAB	.088	204	.210
CIO*CAB	.078	204	.265
GIO*CAB	-.038	204	.589

Table 2:- Summary of Pearson Product Moment correlation co-efficient on Identity Orientation dimensions (personal, relational, social and collective) and Cyber -aggressive behaviour.

Note: PIO stands for personal identity orientation, while CAB stands for cyber- aggressive behaviour.
RIO stands for relational identity orientation, while CAB stands for cyber -aggressive behaviour.
SIO stands for social identity orientation, while CAB stands for cyber-aggressive behaviour.
CIO stands for collective identity orientation, while CAB stands for cyber-aggressive behaviour.
GIO stands for general identity orientation, while CAB stands for cyber-aggressive behaviour.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation in table 2 revealed that personal identity orientation significantly correlated with cyber-aggressive behaviour negatively among undergraduates ($r = -.368^{**}$, *p<.01*). This confirms the hypothesis which states that personal identity orientation would correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation in table 2 revealed that relational identity orientation did not correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates (r=.110, *p>.05*). This indicates that the hypothesis which states that relational identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation in table 2 revealed that social identity orientation did not correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates (r=.088, *p>.05*). This indicates that the hypothesis which states that social identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation in table 2 revealed that collective identity orientation did not correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates (r=.078, *p>.05*). This indicates that the hypothesis which states that collective identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct.

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation in table 2 revealed that general identity orientation did not correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates (r= -.038, p>.05). This indicates that the hypothesis which states that general identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct.

IV.   DISCUSSION

Fundamentally, the main objective of the research was to investigate if personal identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates, to examine if relational identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates, to determine if social identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates, to explore if collective identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates and finally to ascertain if general identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduates. Five hypotheses were tested. Hence, the discussion is based on the analysis done.

The first hypothesis which states that personal identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour among UNIZIK undergraduate was confirmed correct because the result revealed that personal identity orientation significantly correlated with cyber-aggressive behaviour negatively. This means that there is a negative correlation between personal identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour among undergraduates. It goes on to say that when personal identity orientation is increasing, cyber-aggressive behaviour is decreasing among undergraduates. In a nutshell individuals who have personal identity orientation will not engage in cyber-aggressive behaviour.

This result is consistent with the findings of Fondacaro, Brank, Stuart, Villanueva-abraham, Luescher and McNatt (2016), who found moderating effects of personal identity orientation on procedural fairness judgements. The significant negative relationship between Personal identity orientation and Cyber-aggression in the present research can be attributed to cultural differences, individual differences as well as availability of internet facilities. The relationship between personal identity orientation and cyber-aggression is due to the fact that personal identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of an internal emphasis, based on self-knowledge and self-evaluation. People with this orientation focus on their emotions, thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and personal goals to define their sense of self.

However, the second hypothesis which states that relational identity orientation will correlate with Cyber-aggressive bahaviour was not confirmed correct. This is in line with research conducted by Fondacaro et al (2016). This can be because relational identity orientation is more other-directed rather than self-focused.

Moreover, the third hypothesis which states that social identity orientation will correlate with Cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct. This is also confirmed in the research of Fondacaro et al (2016). Social identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of an external emphasis, based on interactions with and the reaction of others. Thus, social identity orientation reflects a more public sense of self.

Nevertheless, the fourth hypothesis which states that collective identity orientation will correlate with cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct. This is also consistent with the research of Fondacaro et al (2016). This can be because collective identity orientation describes a sense of self within an individual that reflects more of a communal emphasis, based on a sense of belonging to a larger social group.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis which states that General identity orientation will correlate with Cyber-aggressive behaviour was not confirmed correct.

➢ *Limitations of the study*

Like every other study in social sciences, this study has some limitations. First, there is the problem of population coverage. The sample size is not a true representation of the entire population of undergraduates in Anambra state in particular, and Nigeria in general.

Again, the fact that all measures of this study were self report which asks questions that are too personal, pressure may have existed for participants to respond in a certain way, thus answering dishonestly. On this basis, some of the participants may not have fully expressed their feelings in filling out the questionnaires because they felt that they would be judged if they expressed themselves especially with regards to cyber-aggressive behaviour, this caused some form of bias during the study.

There is also the issue of social desirability. It is possible that some participants responded in ways that would make them appear in good lights.

➢ *Suggestions for future studies*

The limitations of this study raised several points that could be explored in future research. Further research on this study should expand the population coverage, hence should be replicated in other universities in different localities to enable the researchers arrive at a more holistic result.

Further research should create awareness of such research before it is carried out to both prepare the minds of the participants at the same time clarify the issue on confidentiality.

➢ *Implications of the study*

The implication of this study is that, understanding the concept of identity orientation dimensions can enable our immediate society understand why people exhibit cyber-aggressive behaviour especially among the undergraduates. This study serves as an eye opener to the dangers of cyber-aggressive behaviour which is now wide spread. And invite psychologists to develop adequate intervention programme to help youths build proper identity orientation.

The study can also help the legislative arm of government in terms of policy making on how to reduce the dangers of cyber-aggressive behaviour in the society. Nevertheless, the society will be more enlightened from the research findings; this will motivate other researchers to carry out further studies in this area.

V. CONCLUSION

This study have examined the relationship between personal identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour, relational identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour, social identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour, collective identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour and general identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour. The finding of the study shows that Personal identity orientation correlates negatively with Cyber-aggressive behaviour. This shows that there is a significant negative relationship between personal identity orientation and cyber-aggressive behaviour among undergraduates in NnamdiAzikiwe University Awka, Anambra state, Nigeria. Really, it can be clearly stated that the importance of one's identity orientation cannot be over emphasized. Identity orientation still remains a significant factor to consider when studying Cyber-aggressive behaviour. Whether the behaviour is normal or abnormal with regards to the cultural setting of the individual, the study of identity orientation dimensions will help to deduce the reason(s) for such behaviour.

➢ **Conflict of interests:** The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately affected their report of the findings of this research.

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