CHANGING THE CULTURE

TACKLING ONLINE HARASSMENT AND PROMOTING ONLINE WELFARE

LITERATURE REVIEW

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social media and the internet have become inescapable parts of our society. The internet has many benefits such as global communication and information sharing, however, it can also be used as a platform to defame, harass and abuse people within the sanctuary of their own homes.

The Universities UK (UUK) taskforce to examine violence against women, hate crime and harassment affecting university students published its final report _Changing the Culture_ in 2016. In collecting information for the report, many universities highlighted the growing problem of online harassment and the inherent complexity of managing this issue now that students use social media extensively in everyday life. This was echoed in evidence given to the taskforce from the National Union of Students (NUS) and wider stakeholders including Jisc and Tell MAMA, all of whom highlighted that social media is becoming a more prominent vehicle for harassment and hate crime. Considering the evidence, UUK's taskforce acknowledged that more should be done to address hate crime taking place in online spaces and recommended that:

'Universities UK should work with relevant bodies such as the NUS, Jisc and Reclaim the Internet to assess what further support may be needed in relation to online harassment and hate crime.' [1]

In response, UUK undertook a successful Catalyst funding bid in partnership with the University of Bedfordshire to fund a project to investigate and respond to online harassment among university students. The University of Bedfordshire developed a cyber awareness programme and a package of peer-to-peer support for students to respond to online harassment, and UUK has developed guidance that explores robust strategies to tackle online harassment and promote online welfare.

The new guidance, _Tackling online harassment and promoting online_ welfare builds on the principles already established by the UUK taskforce and represents part of UUK's proactive programme of work to support universities to prevent and respond to harassment in all its forms.

To inform the development of the guidance, UUK undertook some desk research on online harassment among university students. The outcomes were written up into a short literature review, which was used to provide a baseline for a UUK roundtable discussion on this topic in October 2018. Drawing on the feedback from the roundtable and further engagement with experts, the initial review was developed and the evidence from this was used to inform the principles and recommendations for addressing online harassment in UUK's new guidance.

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1. Universities UK (2016) Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK Taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students p. 59

The review sets out an understanding of what is meant by 'online harassment'; summarises what is currently known about the nature, scale and impact of this form of misconduct among higher education students and explores current practice in tackling this form of harassment in the UK and internationally. This is followed by examples of interventions and strategies drawn from the research which could be implemented by universities to support the effective prevention of and response to online harassment. Attention is also drawn to the value of promoting online welfare and how this can be achieved within a university setting.[23]

The review also acknowledges the significant role gender plays in online harassment throughout the educational lifespan, including at university. It is well documented that online abuse is experienced predominantly by women and perpetrated by men, and forms part of the overall continuum of gender-based violence (GBV) in society.

Universities are ideally placed to support students to engage with the internet safely and to raise awareness of the potential harm that can be caused by online harassment, including the impact on mental health. The higher education sector has an opportunity to lead the way in changing students' perceptions of how to engage and communicate using the internet. This review has been developed to support the sector to do this.

2. Cowie H, Myers CA (2019) Cyberbullying Across the Lifespan of Education: Issues and Interventions from School to University International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Vol. 16 No. 7 pp.1217–1231

3. Phipps A Young (2013) That's What She Said: Women Students' Experiences of 'Lad Culture' in Higher Education NUS, London, UK

INTRODUCTION

In 2016, UUK published *Changing the Culture*, a report proposing a series of recommendations for the higher education sector to improve its response to addressing violence against women, hate crime, and harassment affecting university students. While this report fulfilled its scope and set out a strong direction for the higher education sector in tackling these issues, the specific issue of online harassment was identified as an area that required further attention.[4]

The NUS and wider stakeholders including Jisc and Tell MAMA all highlighted their concerns to the UUK taskforce regarding the increased use of social media as a vehicle for harassment and hate crime[5]. Reference was also made to the impact of online harassment on students' mental health and wellbeing as well as disrupting their current education and future employability and career prospects[6].

In 2016, NUS found that 48% of students agreed that internet trolling was getting worse and that online shaming, threats and abuse were now considered a norm within the daily routine of social media posts and messages.[7]

The international anti-bullying charity, Ditch the Label, draws together the largest bullying-related dataset from around 10,000 young people across the UK each year. The outcomes from their research in 2014 looking specifically at online bullying and harassment found that:

- 17% of participants said they had been abused online
- 69% had done something abusive toward another person online
- 28% had had their information shared online without their consent
- 62% had received nasty private messages via social media, of which 42% were hate-based comments on the grounds of race, sexuality or gender identity

The research also demonstrates that online harassment can have a detrimental effect on people at each stage of the education progress and that there are continuities in the form it takes at each point including at university.[8]

4. Universities UK (2016) Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students p. 5

5. Universities UK (2016) Changing the Culture: Report of the Universities UK taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students p. 44

6. NUS (2016) Antisocial Media: Briefing for Students' Unions

7. NUS (2016) Antisocial Media: Briefing for Students' Unions

8. Cowie H, Myers CA (2019) Cyberbullying Across the Lifespan of Education: Issues and Interventions from School to University International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Vol. 16 No. 7 pp.1217–1231

Methodology

This short desk-based literature review presents an analysis of some of the research on online harassment within the context of the higher education sector. To inform the review, a range of sources have been analysed, including existing practice in the UK secondary and higher education sectors; practice in the international higher education sector; academic articles and research, and grey literature such as reports from anti-bullying charities.

An initial version of the literature review was produced for a roundtable chaired by Bill Rammell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Bedfordshire, on 19 October 2018. Following the roundtable, attended by academic experts, professional staff, NUS, Jisc and other stakeholders, the review was amended to include additional ideas and good practice examples highlighted during the discussion.

Limitations

Literature on online harassment among university students, including UK-based research, is limited. As a result, it is not possible to determine the incidence rate and impact of online harassment and to identify 'what works' in a robust way in universities.

Other factors also make it difficult to fully assess the prevalence and impact of online harassment in UK universities.

- Changing criteria is used to document examples of online harassment among researchers.

- Some students state that they are unsure of how to report incident(s) which implies that online harassment may be underreported (as is the case with other forms of harassment and hate crime in higher education and across society).

- Research shows that students can desensitise the action or impact of online harassment[9], which can further reinforce low levels of reporting.

9. Cowie H, Myers CA (2019) Cyberbullying Across the Lifespan of Education: Issues and Interventions from School to University International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Vol. 16 No. 7 pp.1217–1231

TERMINOLOGY

Victim/survivor

A person who is subject to inappropriate or unlawful conduct[10]

While 'victim' is a technically accurate term that is used particularly in legal documents and in speech, use of the term can suggest powerlessness, particularly for those who have experienced sexual violence, and may also encourage a focus on the person who has experienced the violence as opposed to the student against whom a complaint is made (sometimes referred to as the alleged perpetrator).

The term 'survivor' is a more empowering term and is often used by campaigners and activists seeking to end violence and those working to support people who have experienced it.

For the purposes of the literature review, 'victim' has been used throughout to align with the language most often used in the research that has informed this literature review. However, universities may wish to note that the term 'survivor' might be a more appropriate term to use in communications with students. Other terms used by universities include the reporting and responding student. This is the terminology that has been used by UUK in the guidance.

Online harassment

Also referred to as: cyberaggression, cyberbullying, cyberharassment, cyberhate, cybervictimisation, deviant online behaviour.

The use of information and communication technologies by an individual or group to repeatedly cause harm to another person with relatively less power to defend themselves.

The terms 'online harassment' and 'cyberbullying' are often used interchangeably by researchers and organisations. There is, however, evidence to suggest that the term 'cyberbullying' can contribute to the perception by students that it is not a behaviour to be taken seriously, or one that has any real moral or legal consequences. In view of this, UUK uses the term 'online harassment' to help emphasise that there are laws across the UK that apply to harassment whereby inappropriate behaviour online could constitute a criminal offence.

10. This is taken from the definition used in the Changing the Culture report and was prepared by lawyer Dr Rachel Fenton, University of Exeter

When looking to define online harassment and/or cyberbullying, some researchers and organisations have adapted traditional definitions of bullying[11, 12] to incorporate abuse that occurs online. Many researchers consider online harassment a digital extension of traditional bullying and harassing behaviours.

Key features referenced by most definitions of traditional bullying are:

- repeated activity/behaviour
- intention to harm
- a consideration of power and power imbalance

Other researchers argue that there are substantial differences between offline and online harassment as illustrated below.[13]

Repetition

Traditional bullying definitions usually include reference to behaviour/activities being repeated. Arguably this is a less useful determinant when defining online harassment; some kinds of online behaviour, such as perpetrating image-based sexual abuse, can be a singular act, but there can still be enduring impacts and consequences upon the victim. The permanent nature of most kinds of online communication also means that victims themselves may engage in behaviour that repeats their experience of the harassment, for example by rereading messages.

Intention

Traditional bullying definitions usually reference intent to harm someone (either physically or emotionally) as part of their definition, whereas the Equality Act's definition of harassment makes clear that if a person's behaviour violates another's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a person, this behaviour is also harassment, regardless of whether the person intended to cause harm. An emphasis on perceived harm over intention to harm is especially important in relation to online harassment, as studies report that some students may desensitise the action or impact of harassment occurring

11. The common definition originates from Olweus, D. Bullying at School, Oxford, UK Blackwell's, p. 9, which defines bullying or victimisation in the following way: 'a student is being victimised or bullied when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the party of one of more other students'

12. Barkoukis V, Brighi A, Casas JA, Del Rey R, Gobel K, Guarini A, Plichta P, Pyzalski J, Scheithauer H, Smith PK, Svhultze-Krumbholz A, Thompson F, Tsorbatzoudia H (2015) A comparison of classification approaches for cyberbullying and traditional bullying using data from six European countries Journal of School Violence, Vol. 14, No. 1 pp. 47–65

13. Giumete GW, Kowalski RM, Lattanner MR, Schroeder AN (2014) Bullying in the digital age: A critical review and meta-analysis of cyberbullying research among youth Psychological Bulletin Vol. 140 No. 4 pp. 1073–1157

online, considering it 'banter' or a prank rather than an action with legal and moral consequences.[14]

Power

Traditional bullying definitions usually reference that there is an imbalance in power between the perpetrator and victim. Online harassment can also be used to express wider beliefs rooted in prejudicial attitudes in society, thus certain groups, such as women, Black, and minority ethnic students, disabled people, and the LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and non-binary) community are much more likely to experience online harassment.[15]

Research has consistently shown that women are the most likely targets for online harassment and harm[16, 17, 18], and that sexual violence, stalking and partner violence are often interconnected behaviours, which are ultimately symptoms of the root structural problem of sexism and misogyny in society. It is important to note that many of the harmful behaviours between students online are in fact a digital extension of traditional forms of GBV.[19]

Socio-economic class should also be considered as a factor that can contribute to the increased likelihood of experiencing online harassment. While the majority of students entering higher education today will have engaged with technology and social media from an early age and consider it an integral part of their lives, access to technology should not be assumed and a power imbalance can lie in students who have not had the same level of integration with technology as other students may have had.

The context of the peer group and wider networks can also contribute towards power inequalities between victims and perpetrators. Just as with traditional bullying, much of the harassing behaviour online is experienced within a group of peers who adopt a range of participant roles, and evidence suggests that perpetrators seldom act alone

14. Cowie H, Myers CA (2019) Cyberbullying Across the Lifespan of Education: Issues and Interventions from School to University International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Vol. 16 No. 7 pp.1217–1231

15. DeMartini A, Shariff S (2016) Cyberbullying and rape culture in universities: defining the legal lines between fun and intentional harm. Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students London: Routledge pp. 172–190

16. Freiburger TL, Higgins GE, Marcum CD, Ricketts ML (2012) Battle of the sexes: An examination of male and female cyberbullying. International Journal of Cyber Criminology, Vol. 6 No. 1 pp. 904-911

17. https://www.childnet.com/blog/girls-twice-as-likely-as-boys-to-experience-cyberbullying accessed 12/07/2018

18. DeMartini A, Shariff S (2016) 'Cyberbullying and rape culture in universities: defining the legal lines between fun and intentional harm' Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students London: Routledge pp. 172–190

19 Henry N, Powell A (2014) Beyond the 'sext': Technology-facilitated sexual violence and harassment against adult women Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology Vol. 48 No. 1 pp. 104–118

but are usually supported by an immediate group of assistants and reinforcers.[20, 21]

The behaviour can escalate further as a result of the response (or non-response) of bystanders. This wider audience of bystanders can perpetrate secondary abuse, for example through sharing the harassing content or by adding their own comments. This can further exacerbate the impact the harassing behaviour has on the victim.

The bystanders' lack of action to support the victim of online harassment can be explained in several ways. Bystanders often feel morally disengaged[22, 23] from the behaviour they witness, and this indifference is often justified on the grounds that the victim in some way deserved to be treated this way[24]. Bystanders are perhaps trapped in a moral dilemma: although they understand that the behaviour is wrong, they are aware of their own need for security within the peer group.[25] Bystanders report being afraid of becoming a target in turn if they challenge the bullies or defend the victim, and they may justify their non-action by rationalising in terms of blaming the victim[26] for not being capable of defending themselves.[27]

Definitions of online harassment remain in flux

Because online harassment is a relatively new phenomenon, there is an ongoing debate among researchers about how it should be defined.

As technology develops and social networking sites continue to expand, online harassment continues to grow and take on many forms. Consequently, definitions of online harassment, and the behaviour it encompasses, are in a state of flux. This is exacerbated by the fact that the lines between on and offline harassment have become increasingly integrated among young people. For some young people, online

20. Salmivalli, C. (2014) Participant roles in bullying: How can peer bystanders be utilized in interventions? Theory into Practice Vol. 53 pp. 286–292

21. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: the social and legal contexts of cyberbullying among university students Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 p. 10

22. Cowie H, Myers CA (2019) Cyberbullying Across the Lifespan of Education: Issues and Interventions from School to University International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health Vol. 16 No. 7 pp.1221–1222

23. Cowie H, Myers CA (2013) University students' views on bullying from the perspective of different participant roles Pastoral Care in Education Vol. 31 No. 3 pp. 251–267

24. Schnauber A, Weber M, Ziegele M (2013) Blaming the Victim: The Effects of Extraversion and Information Disclosure on Guilt Attributions in Cyberbullying Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking Vol.16 No.4 pp. 254–259

25. Salmivalli C (2014) Participant Roles in Bullying: How can Peer Bystanders be Utilized in Interventions? Theory into Practice Vol. 53 pp. 286–292

26. Purdy N, York LA (2016) Critical investigation of the nature and extent of cyberbullying in two post-primary schools in Northern Ireland Pastoral Care Education Vol. 34 pp. 13–23

27. Schnauber A, Weber M, Ziegele M (2013) Blaming the Victim: The Effects of Extraversion and Information Disclosure on Guilt Attributions in Cyberbullying Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking Vol.16 No. 4 pp. 254–259

abuse is just part of being a teenager, highlighting a significant disconnect between the true severity of the behaviour. This is exemplified in the recent introduction of revenge pornography legislation[28] as well as in the perceptions of perpetrators, or even victims, who consider the behaviour to be 'banter', 'a laugh' and something not to be taken 'too seriously'[29].

KEY FINDINGS

Social Context

This section explores the factors that may contribute to why university students engage in online harassment and other risky and harmful behaviours online.

Young people and technology

Many students within the current university sector see the use of digital technology as a normalised and integrated part of their everyday lives. They often operate very freely in the online world and are likely to be living a substantial proportion of their life online.[30]

Young people within or coming into the university sector today are often assumed to be 'digital natives'[31], however, competency and expertise with technology and the internet should not be assumed: young people are not a homogeneous group and will have a wide variety of experience with the digital world. Furthermore, students who have grown up with technology may still not understand online risks or recognise online harassment. Research suggests that young people are increasingly normalising harmful behaviours online, which could constitute criminal behaviour.[32]

28. For England and Wales: Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 Section 33. For Scotland: Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016 Part 1 Section 2. For Northern Ireland: Justice Act 2016, Part 3

29. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: the social and legal contexts of cyberbullying among university students Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 p. 14

30. Department for Education (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education, and Health Education in England. Government consultation response pp. 5–6

31. Powell-Jones H (2017) Bullying and Social Media, Cowie H, Myers CA School bullying and mental health: Risks, Intervention and Prevention Routledge: London UK

32. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: the social and legal contexts of cyberbullying among university students Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 p. 14

Continuation of childhood behaviour

Online harassment that occurs at university could be an escalation of similar behaviour that occurs in school.[33] There is a growing body of evidence that suggests there is some continuity in being a bully or a victim from childhood through adolescence and into young adulthood.[34]

A reduced sense of accountability to one's parents, and increased exposure to people of different backgrounds have also been suggested as likely contributors to the continuation of engaging in online harassment at university.[35]

The prevalence and impact of online harassment among school-age children has been recognised by the Department for Education in England, which has recently produced new statutory guidance making lessons on online safety a core part of the curriculum[36], as well as new compulsory Sex and Relationships education that includes modules focused on the online world[37]. Similar interventions are also evident in the rest of the UK. Given the limited time these interventions have been in place, it is difficult to determine their impact. Evidence also shows that such behaviours continue in older students, with some researchers evidencing that perpetrators of online harassment could have been using the techniques for years and view their behaviour as acceptable and 'normal'.[38]

Universities could be considered to heighten the social competition and relational conflicts that often motivate online harassment.[39, 40] As students come to university, their social groups and identities formed within them are likely to change. Navigating such changes can be difficult for some students, making them more likely targets for online harassment. For example, students away from home experiencing the loss of their pre-existing social groups, particularly students who are struggling to find a

33. Pörhölä M (2016) 'Do the roles of bully and victim remain stable from school to university? Theoretical Considerations', Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying Among University Students pp. 35–47

34. Cassidy W, Faucher C, Jackson M (2014) Cyberbullying among University Students: Gendered Experiences, Impacts, and Perspectives Education Research International pp. 1–10

35. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: The Social and Legal Contexts of Cyberbullying Among University Students Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 pp. 1172–1182

36. Department for Education (2018) Keeping Children Safe in Education: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges p. 22

37. Department for Education (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education: Draft statutory guidance for government bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers

38. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: The Social and Legal Contexts of Cyberbullying Among University Students. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 p. 11

39. Hoff DL, Mitchell SN, (2009) Cyberbullying: Causes, effects, and remedies. Journal of Educational Administration Vol. 47 pp. 652–665

40. Sharma A, Vaillancourt T (2011) Intolerance of sexy peers: Intrasexual competition among women Aggressive Behaviour Vol. 37 pp. 569–577

place in the new social order, may turn to online environments to maintain contact with friends and establish new relationships.[41] Investigations into online harassment have increasingly looked at the group element of bullying and the range of roles adopted by those involved to better understand why people engage in this behaviour.[42]

The power of the peer group and wider networks needs to be better understood if online harassment can be tackled effectively at university level. For this reason, the review also explores the culture of 'laddism', and the incidence of online harassment rooted in sexist ideologies.

The issue of 'laddism' in universities was also considered in UUK's *Changing the Culture*.

Discrimination

Ultimately, online harassment is symptomatic of the wider issues of discriminatory attitudes and beliefs in society. These are often rooted in sexist, racist, xenophobic, homophobic, transphobic or ableist prejudices.[43, 44] These perspectives and attitudes can influence and shape the behaviours of students (whether young or mature) throughout their education. If students are not given appropriate opportunities to challenge these prejudices, they may continue to influence students as they navigate their way through university life and into the workplace.[45]

Groups more likely to experience online harassment

Online harassment can happen to anyone, with close to half of internet users in the UK saying that they have seen hateful content online in the past year.[46] However, evidence also shows that certain groups are more likely to experience online harassment than others or are more likely to experience more severe impacts because of online harassment.

41. Thurber CA, Walton EA (2012) Homesickness and adjustment in university students. Journal of American College Health Vol. 60 pp. 415–441

42. Salmivalli C (2014) Participant Roles in Bullying: How can Peer Bystanders be Utilized in Interventions? Theory into Practice Vol. 53 pp. 286–292

43. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: The Social and Legal Contexts of Cyberbullying Among University Students Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 pp. 1172–1182

44. De Martini A, Shariff S (2016) Cyberbullying and Rape Culture in Universities: Defining the Legal Lines between Fun and Intentional Harm. Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students pp. 172–190

45. ibid

46. OFCOM (2018) Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report p. 10

Having an understanding that certain groups of students are more likely to be at risk of experiencing harassment, and may experience different impacts, is important when developing appropriate interventions to tackle online harassment.

Young people

As previously stated, digital technology and online spaces can play an integral part in many young people's lives, with young people aged 14–25 using social media to a much greater extent than older age groups.[47] With increased usage comes increased risk of exposure to online harassment or other types of online harms, thus, young people may be more likely to experience online harassment.

Student nurses/doctors

Studies of nursing and medical students report significantly higher rates of harassment than other students. In one study, just under half of all trainee doctors interviewed (104 female, 54 males) had experienced online harassment during their training.[48] It is important that students undergoing professional training are aware of the support available should they experience harassment and the impact harassment can have on physical and mental health and how their online interactions may affect their future careers.

Students' union representatives

Forty-eight per cent of students agreed that internet trolling is getting worse and NUS has highlighted that online shaming, threats and abuse are now considered a norm within the daily routine of social media posts and messages.[49]

In 2016, in response to growing reports of online abuse aimed at current and potential student union representatives, NUS released a short briefing for student unions that provided a model social media charter[50] to implement in their organisation.

The briefing also encouraged student union officers to foster a 'more open and respectful debate and environment, clamping down on hate speech and calling out abuse and intimidation'[51] and referred to the development of a campaign called

47. OFCOM (2016) The Communications Market Report: UK p. 181

48. Axtell C, Coyne I, Farley S, Sprigg C, Subramanian G (2015) Exploring the impact of workplace cyberbullying on trainee doctors Medical Education

49. NUS (2016) Antisocial Media: Briefing for Students' Unions

50. NUS (2015) Social Media Policy

51. NUS (2016) Antisocial Media: Briefing for Students' Unions

#antisocialmedia that aimed to:

- raise awareness of the issue of bullying and harassment and its effects on education, attainment health and academic discourse

- provide support and resources for students' unions and students' union officers

- support NUS' defence of free speech and academic freedom and reimagine longer term how social media and the internet has changed education and empowered students

Students with protected characteristics

Online harassment is often symptomatic of wider societal beliefs rooted in prejudicial attitudes toward specific groups such as women, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, LGBTQ+ people and disabled people.

The next section of the review considers some examples of the issues faced by certain groups with protected characteristic when online.

LGBTQ+

Research has shown that there is not a significant association between online harassment and sexuality generally, with hetero and non-heterosexual young people experiencing online harassment at relatively the same rates.[52] However, people from the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to become victims of certain types of potentially harmful online behaviours, and more likely to experience greater impacts as a result of such behaviour. One example is that of Tyler Clementi, a student at Rutgers University, New Jersey, who was filmed kissing another man by his roommate. After the video was posted online, Tyler received a torrent of homophobic abuse online. Tyler died by suicide as a direct result of this abuse.

Evidence shows that young people identifying as LGBTQ+ are more likely to form romantic relationships online than non-LGBTQ+ youth.[53, 54] Research also shows that those identifying as LGBTQ+ may be more inclined to form online relationships as a form of seeking feedback while developing self-identities[55], as 90% of young people

52. Campbell M, Wensley K (2012) Heterosexual and non-heterosexual young university students' involvement in traditional and cyber forms of bullying Cyberpsychology, Behaviour, and Social Networking Vol. 15 No. 12 p. 660

53. Rivers I (2016) 'Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying at Universities' Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying Among University Students p. 62

54. Ditch the Label (2017) The Valentine study p. 15

55. Nesi J, Prinstein MJ (2015) Using social media for social comparison and feedback-seeking: gender and popularity moderate associations with depressive symptoms Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology Vol. 43 No. 8 p. 1430

feel that the internet makes it easier to explore their sexuality.[56]

For those identifying as LGBTQ+, online dating can also be risky. One US survey reported that 28% of online daters reported that they had been contacted by someone through an online dating site or app in a way that made them feel harassed or uncomfortable[57], and 54% of online daters said that they felt that someone else had seriously misrepresented themselves in their profile. This can place someone in potential danger if they were to meet with a person who has masqueraded as someone else, or if they had shared private information with the person, for them to use this to perpetrate forms of cybercrime such as fraud or online harassment including image-based sexual abuse.

Disabled people

There is a significant relationship between the visibility of a person's protected characteristic and the likelihood of experiencing harassment. Disabled people with visible disabilities can be targets for both on and offline harassment.

Disabled people have reported that motivations for abusive behaviour range between hate, jealousy, stigma, stereotypes (of life not worth living), and accusations of fraud in cases of invisible impairments.[58]

It is also worth noting that disabled people can be more significantly affected by incidents of harassment. This can be due to their impairment creating extra difficulties in getting support or not being able to effectively articulate the bullying they experience and the effect it has on their wellbeing.[59]

In a survey of young disabled people, many respondents reported that they had experienced a lack of support or appropriate responses when they had disclosed that they were being harassed. This included a lack of understanding about how to respond to disablist bullying and how to deal with online harassment.[60]

Respondents noted that they were often told to avoid the internet as a way of stopping the behaviour. However, this was considered inappropriate advice by respondents as it did not acknowledge the positive aspects of using the internet, such as the ability to

56. Ditch the Label (2017) The Valentine Study p. 11

57. Duggan M, Smith A (2013) Online Dating and Relationships Pew Research Centre: Internet and Technology

58. Quarmby K (2015) Disability Hate Crime Motivation Survey Results

59. Alhaboby AZ, Al-Khateeb MH, Barnes J, Short E (2016) 'The language is disgusting, and they refer to my disability': the cyber-harassment of disabled people Disability & Society Vol. 31 No. 8 pp. 1138–1143

60. Anti-Bullying Alliance (2013) Cyberbullying and Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities: The Views of Young People. Sen and Disability: Developing Effective Anti-Bullying Practise p. 11

connect with other disabled people with similar experiences and impairments, and to get support and build social connections in ways they may not be able to in their day-to-day lives. In some cases, young people reported that they used the internet as a space they could use to escape the difficulties of living with an impairment as it provided a medium where an impairment could be concealed.[61]

Black, Asian and minority ethnic students

In 2016–17, there were 80,393 offences recorded by the police in which one or more hate crime strands were deemed to be a motivating factor across England and Wales. This was an increase of 29% compared with the 62,518 hate crimes recorded in 2015–16, the largest percentage increase seen since the series began in 2011–12.[62]

Of these 80,393 offences, 62,685 (78%) were race-based hate crimes, an increase of 27% from 2015–16 to 2016–17.[63]

While it is not possible to tell whether a similar increase has occurred in the number of incidents reported in higher education, as publicly[64] available data on this is limited, the sector has seen an increase in the media profile of incidents of racial harassment on university campuses over the same period. A recent report, gathered by freedom of information requests, found that race-based campus incidents have increased from 80 to 129 reported cases from 2015–2017.[65]

Of the 94 universities who provided comparable data, nearly two in five institutions have seen the number of incidents of racism increase in the last two years[66].

An initial analysis by UUK looking at media reports of race-based harassment at UUK's member institutions through the period of 2016–18 (overlapping the period where the increase in national hate crimes took place), found that digital communication as a medium for harassment was a prevalent theme in many reports. Several instances of race-based harassment occurring between university students were reported to have taken place on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, popular dating sites such as Tinder, or instant messaging apps such as WhatsApp.

61. Anti-Bullying Alliance (2013) Cyberbullying and Children and Young People with SEN and Disabilities: The Views of Young People. Sen and Disability: Developing Effective Anti-Bullying Practise p. 5

62. Home Office (2017) Statistical Bulletin 17/17

63. Home Office (2017) Statistical Bulletin 17/17

64. The only data available on reported incidents in higher education is available through freedom of information requests.

65. The Independent (2018) https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/racism-uk-university-students-campus-nus-incidents-a8390241.html

66. The Independent (2018) https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/racism-uk-university-students-campus-nus-incidents-a8390241.html

Religious groups

Over the last three years, antisemitic or Islamophobic incidents were reported to 26 UK universities.[67]

In 2017, 1,382 antisemitic incidents were recorded nationwide by the Community Security Trust the highest tally the Trust has seen since it began gathering such data in 1984.[68] As with the national hate crime statistics, it is not possible to know if a similar increase has occurred in the number of incidents reported in higher education. However, there is increasing interest in the media around incidents of harassment happening on university campuses that are based on the grounds of religion.[69]

In the same freedom of information request by The Independent, it was revealed that the number of religiously motivated hate crime incidents at universities doubled from six in 2015 to 12 in 2017.[70]

NUS delivered a report on the experiences of Jewish students in 2016–17, which found that, although the majority of Jewish students surveyed had not experienced any crime (65%) of those who had experienced hate crime believed these incidents were motivated by the perpetrator's prejudice toward them based on their Jewish belief (66%). A significant number of these students had experienced personal abuse through social media or other communication (28%) rather than other kinds of physical harm or damage (18%).[71, 72]

It is important to note that there is often a racial dimension to Islamophobia, in particular. Muslims in the UK are mostly African, Asian or Arab, thus many suffer hate incidents or discrimination because of their intersecting racial and religious characteristics.[73]

Participants in Tell MAMA's survey reported that they were targeted in both the virtual and physical world because of their Muslim name and/or Muslim appearance. Participants were unable to take comfort in the belief that what happened to them was

67. The Independent (2018) https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/racism-uk-university-students-campus-nus-incidents-a8390241.html

68. The Guardian (2018) https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/01/antisemitic-incidents-in-uk-at-all-time-high

69. https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/feb/18/uk-universities-urged-tackle-rising-tide-antisemitism-campus

70. The Independent (2018) https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/racism-uk-university-students-campus-nus-incidents-a8390241.html

71. NUS (2017) The experience of Jewish students in 2016–17 p.

72. 18% overall divided as follows: 7% experienced vandalism, 3% property damage, 3% personal theft, 3% property theft, and 2% burglary and robbery

73. Shah S Is Islam a Race? https://www.criticalmuslim.io/is-islam-a-race/

simply random and 'could have happened to anyone'. Rather, they were forced to view this abuse as an attack on their Muslim identity and this had severe implications for their levels of confidence and self-esteem, as well as their feelings of belonging and safety in the UK.[74]

Research suggests that Muslim women are more likely to be attacked in comparison to Muslim men, both in the virtual world and in the physical world.[75] Individuals can thus experience online and offline anti-Muslim hate crime because their abusers have been motivated, either solely or partially, by other factors such as gender.[76]

Gender

Research shows that while men and women are engaging with the internet in a way that can threaten their privacy and security, women are more vulnerable to privacy attacks, more likely to be victims of sexual harassment and more often receive higher levels of scrutiny than men for certain behaviours in cyberspace.[77]

A report by the European Union, which interviewed over 42,000 women aged 18–74 years old across the EU, stated that one in 10 women have experienced cyber harassment since the age of 15 (including having received unwanted, offensive sexually explicit emails or SMS messages, or offensive, inappropriate advances on social networking sites). The risk is highest among young women between 18 and 29 years of age.[78]

The next section considers some of the ways in which sexism and misogyny manifest in online platforms.

Lad culture

Lad culture has been described as a pack mentality embedded in campus activities such as sport, heavy alcohol consumption, and 'banter' that is often sexist, misogynistic and homophobic. At its most extreme, lad culture involves rape supportive attitudes, sexual harassment, and violence.[79]
Researchers have argued that 'lad culture' is a potentially problematic term, as it

74. Awan I, Zempi I (2015) We Fear for our Lives: Offline and Online Experiences of Anti-Muslim Hostility p. 25

75. Awan I, Zempi I (2015) We Fear for our Lives: Offline and Online Experiences of Anti-Muslim Hostility

76. Awan I, Zempi I (2015) We Fear for our Lives p. 14

77. Allen AL (2000) Gender and Privacy in Cyberspace Faculty Scholarship Paper 789 Pennsylvania: Penn Law

78. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014) Violence against women: an EU-wide survey, p. 104

79. Phipps A, Young I (2013) That's What She Said: Women Students' Experiences of 'lad culture' in Higher Education NUS: London p. 53

can create the impression that it is wholly linked to men and masculinity, and that it implies a homogeneity and cohesiveness that may not necessarily be found across communities or over time.[80]

The term could also create the impression that the behaviour that encompasses 'lad culture' is trivial and not serious, or lead to an assumption that misogyny, racism and homophobia are specific to an alcohol/sporting culture when they are present across all cultures and demographics.[81] It is important to keep in mind these complexities when investigating, understanding and working to tackle lad culture.

Contemporary lad culture can be understood as one of a variety of masculinities and cultures in UK university communities that may shape the identities and attitudes of students and frame their experience of university life.[82] It has been linked to a broader 'sex object' culture among young people and has also been shown to be connected to social problems such as sexual harassment and violence.[83]

In a 2013 survey led by NUS, participants felt that lad culture contributed to a gendered experience of university education, which was particularly influential in social or personal contexts. Extra-curricular activities and sports were singled out as key sites, and it was reported that sexism in these environments could spill over into sexual harassment and humiliation.[84]

'Nightlife' was described in similar terms, with many participants relating experiences of sexual molestation and identifying a pressure to engage in a high frequency of sexual activity with different partners.[85] Many participants reported misogynist jokes and 'banter' circulating in their friendship groups, which made them feel uncomfortable.[86]

The lines between online and offline sexual harassment have become increasingly integrated across universities, with manifestations of lad culture increasingly occurring in online spaces.

80. Phipps A, Young I (2015) 'Lad culture' in higher education: agency in the sexualisation debates Sexualities Vol. 18 No. 4 p. 460

81. Universities UK (2016) Changing the culture: report of the Universities UK taskforce examining violence against women, harassment and hate crime affecting university students p. 18

82. Phipps A, Young I (2013) That's What She Said Women Students' Experiences of 'lad culture' in Higher Education NUS: London p. 5

83. Levy, A (2006) 'Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture' , Walter, N (2010) Living Dolls: The Return of Sexism London: Virago Press

84. Phipps A, Young I (2013) That's What She Said: Women Students' Experiences of 'lad culture' in Higher Education NUS: London pp. 43–44

85. Phipps A, Young I (2013) That's What She Said: Women Students' Experiences of 'lad culture' in Higher Education NUS: London pp. 45–47

86. Phipps A, Young I (2013) That's What She Said: Women Students' Experiences of 'lad culture' in Higher Education NUS: London p. 48

Research shows that in some cases students are acting out established adult social norms of misogyny. However, some researchers suggest that students may be acting without the intent to commit criminal offences and without recognising the severity of their actions and the criminal consequences it can have.[87] Therefore, it may be that deep-seated discriminatory societal attitudes are emerging as normative forms of online communication among some young adults who have grown up in the digital age.[88]

Image-based sexual abuse, or revenge pornography

Over the last few years the media has increasingly drawn attention to cases of revenge pornography, also known as image-based sexual abuse, perhaps giving the impression that such behaviour is a new phenomenon. However, research has consistently shown that sexual violence, stalking and partner violence are often interconnected behaviours, which are ultimately symptoms of the root structural problem of sexism and misogyny in society. Thus, many argue that revenge pornography is better understood as a digital extension of traditional sexual violence.[89]

Revenge pornography is the disclosure of private sexual photographs and films without the consent of an individual who appears in the photograph or film, with the intent to cause distress to the individual.[90] These images are generally produced in one of two ways: either consensually (for example by the victim in a private relationship) or non-consensually (for example by surveillance or hacking).[91] Individuals of all ages, sexuality and gender, can be a victim of revenge porn, but women are the most common victims[92], with displays of sexuality penalised in society to an excessive amount[93].

87. De Martini A, Shariff S (2016) 'Cyberbullying and Rape Culture in Universities: Defining the Legal Lines between Fun and Intentional Harm', Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students p.184

88. De Martini A, Shariff S (2016) 'Cyberbullying and Rape Culture in Universities: Defining the Legal Lines between Fun and Intentional Harm', Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students p.175

89. Henry N, Powell A (2014) Beyond the 'sext': Technology-facilitated sexual violence and harassment against adult women Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology Vol. 48 No. 1 pp.104–118

90. Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Section 33

91. Henson J, Stroud SR (2016) 'What exactly is revenge porn or non-consensual pornography?', Scheinbaum AC (Eds.) Online Consumer Behaviour: The Dark Side of Social Media London: Routledge Poole E (2015) Fighting back against non-consensual pornography University of San Francisco Law Review Vol. 49 pp. 181–214

92. Poole E (2015) Fighting back against non-consensual pornography University of San Francisco Law Review Vol. 49 pp. 181–214

93. Crofts T, Salter M (2015) 'Responding to revenge porn: Challenging online legal impunity' Comella L., Tarrant S (Eds.) New Views on Pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law Santa California: Praeger

Revenge pornography is largely motivated by the malicious intent to harm and humiliate the victim, who is often the perpetrator's previous romantic partner.[94] However, not all acts are committed for revenge purposes, and can instead be committed as a means of extortion, intimidation or for the pleasure of causing annoyance in others.[95]

The act of revenge porn seems to be increasingly employed by the offender as reprisal for a romantic relationship ending and is becoming more prominent with the growing popularity of sexting.[96]

Ditch the Label found that in a group of 2,732 young people aged 13–25, 37% had sent a naked photo of themselves, and 24% of participants stated that, to their knowledge, someone had shared a naked photo of them without their consent.[97] The evident popularity of sexting among young people implies that young people may be more likely to become victims of revenge pornography.

Relatively little research has been undertaken into the characteristics of those who perpetrate such behaviour, or the psychological and physical effects such behaviour has on its victims.

Ditch the Label found that young people who had had naked images of themselves shared without consent were less confident (32%), had experienced suicidal thoughts (26%), attempted to take their own life (12%), or self-harmed (24%). Truancy, drug and alcohol abuse and the development of antisocial behaviours were also common impacts.

These findings are supported by research conducted with participants aged 19–63, which also indicates that victims of revenge pornography experience psychological/ physical effects such as self-harm, increased isolation from family and friends, experiencing disturbing repeated memories of the incident and an increased paranoia that a similar incident would happen to them again.[98]

Interestingly, Ditch the Label found that young people also reported positive impacts from the experience of having their photograph shared without their consent, with

94. Burris A (2014) 'Hell Hath No Fury Like a Woman Porned: Revenge Porn and The Need for a Federal Non-Consensual Pornography Statute', Citron DK, Franks MA (Eds.) Criminalizing revenge porn Wake Forest Law Review Vol. 49 pp. 345–391

95. Henry N, Powell A (2016) Sexual violence in the digital age: The Scope and Limits of Criminal Law Social & Legal Studies Vol. 25 No. 4 pp. 397–418

96. Barnes J, Brown A, Pitchford M, Short E (2017) Revenge Porn: Findings from the Harassment and Revenge Porn (HARP) Survey – Preliminary Results Annual Review of Cyber-therapy and Telemedicine Vol. 15 p. 161

97. Ditch the Label (2014) The Wireless Report: How Young People Between the Ages of 13–25 Engage with Smartphone Technology and Naked Photos p. 21

98. Barnes J, Brown A, Pitchford M, Short E (2017) Revenge Porn: Findings from the Harassment and Revenge Porn (HARP) Survey – Preliminary Results Annual Review of Cyber-therapy and Telemedicine Vol. 15 p. 164

participants reporting that the incident had increased their confidence (13%) and increased feelings of attractiveness (12%). Some participants in the survey reported that they had started to share photos of others without their consent (2%)[99], perhaps due to the supposed positive impacts they reported experiencing when their photos had been shared. This again highlights the disconnect between the severity of the incident in relation to the impact on a person's wellbeing, and the tendency of young people to view such incidents as 'banter'.[100]

Incidents of revenge pornography are now a criminal offence across the UK.[101] However, since becoming a criminal offence in 2015 (England and Wales), 7,806 incidents of revenge pornography have been reported to the police, yet 2,813 of these cases were withdrawn by the victim. It is likely that these figures are a fraction of the actual number of people experiencing revenge pornography due to the under-reporting of sexual violence and abuse, particularly by women who often do not wish to disclose abuse to the police[102] and may underreport abuse in surveys, particularly during face-to-face interviews.[103] In addition, estimates of the total number of incidents of revenge pornography often do not consider important context and impact information, for example whether the violence caused fear, whether multiple attacks were experienced, and who experienced coercive controlling behaviour.[104]

Victims of revenge pornography have reported that the lack of anonymity granted during an investigation as the reason for withdrawing their allegations[105]: this arises as revenge pornography can be treated as a communications offence[106] as opposed to a sexual offence, whereby victims do not have the right to anonymity.[107] Lack of support from police has been given as another reason why.

99. Ditch the Label (2014) The Wireless Report p. 25

100. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: the social and legal contexts of cyberbullying among university student Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 p. 25

101. For England and Wales: Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Section 33. For Scotland: Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016, Part 1, Section 2. For Northern Ireland: Justice Act 2016, Part 3

102. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (2014) Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse p. 31

103. Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2015) Crime Statistics, Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14 Chapter 4: Intimate personal violence and partner abuse p. 3

104. https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/how-common-is-domestic-abuse/

105. BBC (2018) Revenge Porn: One In Three Allegations Dropped. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-44411754

106. Revenge pornography can be considered an offence under the Communications Act 2003 or the Malicious Communications Act 1988. Behaviour of this kind, if repeated, may also amount to an offence of harassment under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997

107. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-law-to-tackle-revenge-porn

Cyberstalking

Stalking is generally characterised by repeated and unwanted communication intended to frighten, intimidate or harass someone. Threats are not required for the criminal offence of stalking to be prosecuted.[108, 109]

Stalking creates a level of fear for one's own safety or that substantially adversely affects their day-to-day activities, based on some form of fixation on the part of the perpetrator.

The Crime Survey for England and Wales has found that 4.9% of women and 2.4% of men reported experiencing stalking in the last year. This equates to 734,000 women and 388,000 men each year, indicating that stalking is as pervasive as domestic abuse.[110]

Stalking is often experienced as part of domestic violence[111] and holds serious risks to the life of the victim, with recent research identifying stalking behaviour in 94% of 350 criminal homicide cases in 2017.[112]

From 2014 to 2017, a total of 241 women were killed by their partner/ex-partner in England and Wales[113], which averages at three women every fortnight[114]. Stalkers are most likely to target someone known to them: in 55% of cases of stalking reported to the National Stalking Helpline, there had been an intimate relationship between the victim and the perpetrator.[115] Only 10% of people are stalked by someone they have no prior relationship with. Other groups of stalkers include acquaintances of the victim (22%), colleagues/ex-colleagues of the victim (5%) and members of the victim's family (4%).[116]

Cyberstalking is increasingly used as part of an overall course of conduct of stalking behaviour; it may occur solely in the digital realm or may form part of a wider campaign targeting individuals on and offline.

108. https://paladinservice.co.uk/

109. https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/stalking-and-harassment

110. Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2018) Managing Stalking Offenders

111. https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/how-common-is-domestic-abuse/

112. Hale S, Monckton-Smith J, Szymanska K (2017) Exploring the Relationship between Stalking and Homicide. Suzy Lamplugh Trust: UK

113. Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2018) Domestic abuse: findings from the Crime Survey for England and Wales: year ending March 2017

114. 241 [52x3] 1.54 women per week

115. Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2018) Out of Sight Out of Mind: Two Years On

116. Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2016) Out of Sight Out of Mind

Typical cyberstalking behaviours include:

- locating personal information about a victim
- unwanted communication with the victim
- surveillance of the victim (also using spyware)
- damaging the reputation of the victim
- electronic sabotage such as spamming and sending viruses
- tricking or encouraging other internet users into harassing or threatening a victim[117]

Research indicates that cyberstalking forms part of overall stalking behaviour in more than 37% of cases.[118] However, it is likely that the number of incidents of cyberstalking is much higher. This is due to factors such as stalking occurring through online channels not being recognised as stalking, or a lack of faith from victims that reporting cyberstalking will effectively end the issue as there are a high number of reported cyber abuse cases that do not reach a prosecution or community resolution.[119]

Participants in one study reported that they felt unable to control or change the situation of their cyberstalking experience, further exacerbating depressive symptoms.[120] This lack of control over the incident(s) was commonly reported in conjunction with comments about a lack of effective victim support. Most participants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the lack of support they received; victims reported they were not taken seriously by law enforcement, social media platforms, or their places of work/study. Some participants linked the lack of help from expected sources as a factor contributing to an escalation of the negative impact the initial cyberstalking incident had caused.[121] Victims of cyberstalking arguably experience additional impacts compared with stalking that only occurs offline. This is due to the pervasive nature of cyberstalking:

- time and geography are no longer important factors in facilitating stalking as a perpetrator can stalk and harass a victim anytime, and anywhere, with the aid of the internet
- the increased visibility of private information allows perpetrators to access their victims and their information more easily than when offline

117. http://www.cps.gov.uk/legal/s_to_u/stalking_and_harassment/#a05a8

118. Suzy Lamplugh Trust (2016) The Stalker in Your Pocket

119. HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate (2017) Living in Fear – the police and CPS response to harassment and stalking p. 72

120. Corcoran R, Short E, Wheatcroft JM, Worsley JD (2017) Victims' voices: Understanding the emotional impact of cyberstalking and how individuals cope with this phenomenon Journal of Interpersonal Violence Vol. 17 pp. 50–63

121. Corcoran R, Short E, Wheatcroft JM, Worsley JD (2017) Victims' voices: Understanding the emotional impact of cyberstalking and how individuals cope with this phenomenon Journal of Interpersonal Violence Vol. 17 p. 57

- opportunities for re-traumatisation increase as victims can repeatedly access the same messages

- the broadcast of abuse on social networks creates an increasingly public threat to a victim's reputation

In addition, victims of cyberstalking are also more likely to experience secondary and third-party abuse in the form of virtual mobbing and third-party stalking.

Cyberstalking can be a traumatic experience.[122] One study reported that 33% of participants who had experienced cyberstalking screened positively for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); individuals who had experienced stalking through a combination of online and physical means had significantly higher scores of PTSD symptoms.[123] Common emotional responses among cyberstalking victims include increased fear and anxiety, with anxiety manifesting as a post-traumatic stress response or as acute physiological responses such as panic attacks. Flashbacks and intrusive thoughts were also common themes mentioned by many survey participants. Participants also reported increased symptoms of depression including loss of control, low mood, rumination, helplessness and hopelessness.[124]

Cyberstalking victims also experience impacts on their social lives, with 87% reporting that they had experienced changes in at least one aspect of their life. The majority reported that these changes occurred due to increased isolation: 36% lost touch with family and friends and 46% reported that they gave up social activities.[125]

IMPACT

Unsurprisingly, online harassment can have immediate negative effects on a victim, with potentially harmful long-term impacts on psychological development, self-esteem, academic achievement and mental health.[126, 127] For students who are

122. Trauma can be considered an appropriate term to use here as the psychological term assumes two factors: that the person has been exposed to a dangerous experience that exposes them to physical threat or fear of physical threat; and that it pierces strong psychological defences that enable us to function in general life to produce a state of fear, helplessness and/or horror, both of which are evidenced in the cyberstalking research referenced in this review

123. Brown A, Maple C, Short E (2011) Cyberstalking in the United Kingdom: an analysis of the ECHO Pilot Survey National Centre for Cyberstalking Research: University of Bedfordshire pp. 25–26

124. Corcoran R, Short E, Wheatcroft JM, Worsley JD (2017) Victims' voices: Understanding the emotional impact of cyberstalking and how individuals cope with this phenomenon Journal of Interpersonal Violence Vol. 17 pp. 50–63

125. Brown A, Maple C, Short E (2011) Cyberstalking in the United Kingdom: an analysis of the ECHO Pilot Survey National Centre for Cyberstalking Research: University of Bedfordshire pp. 25–26

126. Flores N, Frías CP, Jenaro C (2018) Systematic review of empirical studies on cyberbullying in adults: What we know and what we should investigate Aggressive Violent Behaviour Vol. 38 pp.113–122

127. Sleath E, Walker K (2017) A systematic review of the current knowledge regarding revenge pornography and

victims of harassing behaviours online, the experience is unpleasant and distressing in the short term. There are also longer-term negative consequences for their mental health and academic career. Harassment affects self-esteem and can often lead to social withdrawal from peer-group networks. Consequently, victims of online harassment can run a heightened risk of mental health disorders such as depression and social anxiety.[128, 129]

Researchers suggest that the impact of online harassment may even outweigh that of traditional bullying due to the potentially limitless audience[130], increased accessibility of the content and the ease with which content can be passed on or seen repeatedly. Online content usually has a long lifespan. It remains visible and accessible for a long period of time and can remain so even after the person who posted it 'deletes' it.

Ditch the Label reported that the most common impacts of online harassment on participants aged 12–20 were as follows[131]:

- 41% developed social anxiety
- 37% developed depression
- 26% had suicidal thoughts
- 26% deleted their social media profiles
- 25% self-harmed
- 24% stopped using social media
- 20% skipped classes
- 14% developed an eating disorder
- 9% abused drugs/alcohol

These findings reflect the impacts documented in research on specific types of online harassment such as revenge pornography and cyberstalking.

It is not just the victims of online harassment that can experience negative impacts. A primary explanation for why online harassment is difficult to tackle is because those engaged in the behaviour may do so without an understanding of the legal and moral implications; namely, they may perceive the behaviour as 'banter' and a 'laugh', however such behaviour could be considered a criminal offence. [132] Even if not

non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit media Aggressive Violent Behaviour Vol. 36 pp. 9–24

128. Helenius H, Ikonen M, Klmoek AB, Koskelainen M, Lindroos J, Luntamo T, Ristkari T, Sourander A (2010) Factors Associated with Cyberbullying Among Adolescents: A Population-Based Study. Archives of General Psychiatry Vol. 67 pp. 720–728

129. Bauman S, Ives J, Simmons J (2016) 'Cyber-aggression among members of college fraternities and sororities in the United States' Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying Among University Students pp. 93–109

130. Cross D, Dooley JJ, Pyzalski J (2009) Cyberbullying versus face-to-face bullying: A theoretical and conceptual review Journal of Psychology Vol. 217 pp. 182–188

131. Ditch the Label (2017) The Annual Bullying Survey p.16

132. Cowie H, Myers CA (2017) Bullying at University: The Social and Legal Contexts of Cyberbullying Among University Students. Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology Vol. 48 No. 8 pp. 1172–1182

prosecuted, inappropriate online behaviour can impact a person's career prospects, as more employers are checking the social media content of potential employees before hiring them.[133, 134]

The University of Exeter Law School have produced a guide for Exeter Law students on how to use social media responsibly and a useful social media policy[135] to support its students to be better equipped to present themselves in a professional way online. This is available in the *Case studies* report which accompanies this review and the Online Guidance.

EXISTING PRACTICE AND 'WHAT WORKS'

Many researchers report that attempts to define the lines between online fun and online harassment, and to police them, can make the situation worse and that punitive methods may not always be effective in reducing online harassment; furthermore, zero-tolerance approaches could result in criminalising young people as opposed to tackling the issue.[136] In view of this, there is research that suggests the use of restorative approaches such as mediation, conciliation and awareness raising can help to reduce the incidence of online harassment.[137, 138]

The next section explores examples of existing practice and highlights the importance of engaging students in the development and execution of interventions to tackle online harassment.

Schools

Given that online harassment is a relatively new phenomenon, evidence on the

133. YouGov survey (2017) https://yougov.co.uk/topics/politics/articles-reports/2017/04/10/disgracebook-one-five-employers-have-turned-down-c

134. University of Exeter Law School (2019) How to Use Social Media Responsibly: A Guide for Exeter Law Students. See annexes in guidance Tackling Online Harassment and Promoting Online Welfare

135. University of Exeter Law School (2019) How to Use Social Media Responsibly: A Guide for Exeter Law Students. See Tackling Online harassment and promoting online welfare: case studies

136. Shariff S, Strong-Wilson T (2005) 'Bullying and New Technologies: What can Teachers do to Foster Socially Responsible Discourse in the Physical and Virtual School Environments?' Kincheloe J (Ed.) Classroom Teaching: An Introduction. New York: USA David Lang Publishers pp. 219–249

137. Almeida A, Bauman S, Cowie H, Coyne I, Myers CA, Prohola M (2013) 'Cyberbullying amongst university students: an emergent cause for concern?' Cyberbullying through the new media: findings from an international network Psychology Press p. 175

138. The University of Sussex was successful in its bid for the second round of Catalyst funding and are in the process of developing and delivering a restorative justice project that intends to 'repair the harms of hate and prejudice through student-led dialogue'. The preliminary report of this project can be found here http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/81958/

effectiveness of programmes and initiatives is limited, with most evaluations of programmes in the UK having taken place in schools.[139, 140, 141] This is not surprising given that schools in the UK are required by law to have anti-bullying policies in place[142, 143] whereas universities are not. It is therefore useful for the sector to be aware of existing practice in schools. A brief summary of the approaches in schools across the nations of the UK are set out below.

England

In England, Childnet International[144] worked with the government Equalities Office to develop guidance for schools, *Cyberbullying: Understand, Prevent and Respond.*[145] The guidance updates guidance for schools originally published in 2007 and is drawn from best practice and knowledge from schools, key organisations and experts working in this area and from young people themselves. A summary of the key points in the guidance is set out below and provides a useful reference point for the development of guidance in higher education.

Guidance for schools in England:

- The adoption of a proactive response to bullying to avoid bullying occurring in the first place. This can be achieved by implementing prevention strategies such as creating an ethos of good behaviour where pupils understand what acceptable behaviour is and treat each other and staff accordingly.[146]

- The need to understand the motivations behind cyberbullying, particularly when there may be differences (or perceived differences) between children.[147]

- The importance of understanding the potential impact of bullying in all its forms, including the negative impact on mental health and how this can continue into

139. Deiss DM, Eden J, Ramos-Salazar L, Roberto AJ, Savage MW (2014) Outcome evaluation results of school-based cybersafety promotion and cyberbullying prevention intervention for middle school students Health Communication Vol. 29 pp. 1029–1042

140. Boulton AJ, DePaolis KJ, Elledge LC, Little TD, Salmivalli C, Williford A (2013) Effects of the KiVa antibullying program on cyberbullying and cybervictimization frequency among Finnish youth Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology Vol. 42 pp. 820–833

141. Göbel K, Jäkel A, Scheithauer H, Schultze-Krumbholz A, Wölfer R, Zagorscak P (2013) Prevention 2.0: Targeting Cyberbullying at School Prevention Science Vol. 15 No. 6 pp. 879–887

142. Education and Inspections Act 2006, Chapter 1, Section 89

143. The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations (2014) Part 3, Section 10

144. Childnet International is a non-profit organisation working in partnership with a variety of organisations around the world to help to make the internet a safe place for children. They currently work with children and young people ages 3–18 but have recently announced plans to expand this to include those under 25 years old

145. https://www.childnet.com/resources/cyberbullying-guidance-for-schools

146. Department for Education (2017) Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies p.10

147. Department for Education (2017) Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies p. 8

adult life.

- The Equality Act 2010 in relation to a school's duty of care for those with protected characteristics.

- The duty of care to provide support when persistent bullying can lead to concerns around a student's social, emotional or mental wellbeing.[148]

- The importance of staff training; this includes an understanding of cyberbullying by staff and the importance of tailoring interventions to suit the needs of the pupil.

- Being aware of a school's legal obligations to prevent and tackle bullying and the sanctions including disciplinary penalties.[149]

- The value of engaging pupils in developing interventions and initiatives to prevent and responds to cyberbullying.

In developing the guidance Childnet International worked directly with students. This approach has been adopted by Project deSHAME, which is a collaborative venture between Childnet (UK), Kék Vonal Child Crisis Foundation (Hungary), Save the Children (Denmark), and the University of Central Lancashire. The project aims to increase the reporting of online sexual harassment among minors and improve multi-sector cooperation in preventing and responding to this behaviour. Evidence was sought on young people's experiences of online harassment via a survey and focus groups, and the findings are set out in the report Young People's experiences of online sexual harassment: a cross-country report from project deSHAME (2017). The report sets out the types of online harassment and demonstrates the complexity of this area.[150] This evidence has been used to inform the development of a suite of resources for addressing online sexual harassment. These are free and available on the website.[151]

In England, the government has also made online safety a compulsory part of the computing curriculum for primary and secondary school children[152], and more recently, has made steps to modernise the teaching of 'Relationships and Sex Education' (RSE)[153], which will become statutory in all secondary schools from September 2020[154], although schools are able to begin teaching a year earlier if they

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148. Department for Education, Department for Health (2015) Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

149. Education and Inspections Act 2006, Chapter 1, Section 90#

150. See page 13 of the report.

151. https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame/research

152. https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-measures-to-keep-children-safe-online-at-school-and-at-home

153. Previously named sex and relationships education (SRE)

154. Children and Social Work Act 2017, Section 34

wish.[155] It is anticipated that this will help support a programme of work to address the increasing prevalence of online harassment, sexting, online grooming and abuse among students of an increasingly young age.

The proposals recommend that pupils are taught rules and principles for keeping safe online, including 'how to recognise risks, harmful content and contact, and how and to whom to report issues … have an understanding of how data is generated, collected, shared and used online, for example, how personal data is captured on social media or understanding the way that businesses may exploit the data available to them'.[156] Reference is also made to the value of teaching internet safety. Having a focus on healthy relationships and broader Relationships Education can also help young people understand acceptable behaviours in in relationships.[157]

Northern Ireland

Similarly, the government in Northern Ireland has provided guidance for schools to help ensure the safety of pupils online and to prioritise online safety within the school's preventative education curriculum and overall safeguarding policy.[158] Northern Ireland also requires all grant-aided schools to develop their own policy on how to address RSE within the curriculum, however, the specific curriculum is not legislated. Recently the government have updated their guidance to better support schools to plan and develop approaches to teaching controversial and sensitive issues at whole school and classroom levels, this includes explicit guidance to support young people to keep themselves safer in the digital world.[159]

Scotland

The national curriculum in Scotland provides opportunities for students to learn about bullying within the health and wellbeing curriculum area. The Scottish government has also produced Respect for All: A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young people[160], which sets out a holistic framework

155. Department for Education (2019) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: Draft statutory guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers

156. Department for Education (2018) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. Draft for consultation: July 2018 p. 21

157. Department for Education (2018) Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education: guidance for governing bodies, proprietors, head teachers, principals, senior leadership teams, teachers. Draft for consultation: July 2018 p. 21

158. https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201627-online-safety

159. https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/relationships-and-sexuality-education

160. https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/pages/1/

for schools to support them to tackle all forms of bullying among students. The framework makes explicit reference to the fact that bullying can be based on prejudices that relate to gender, race, sexuality and ability. To support this, the Scottish government has also partnered with several charitable organisations to produce specific guidance for schools on how to approach different types of bullying.

This includes:

- **Addressing Inclusion:** effectively challenging racism in schools, which provides information and guidance to school staff on addressing homophobic and racist bullying.

- **Hate Online:** A guide to responding to online hate speech and hate crime[161] to explicitly tackle types of bullying occurring in online spaces.

In 2018, the Scottish government announced that proposals developed by the TIE Campaign, a Scottish Charity, for LGBT-inclusive education would be implemented into the school curriculum across all state school, by updating the current Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools, (2014)[162] guidance for teachers. All work is expected to be completed by 2021[163].

Wales

The Welsh government has produced an *Online Safety Action Plan for Children and Young People* as well as resources available on *Hwb Digital Learning for Wales* and an online safety self-assessment tool, *360 degree safe Cymru*.

Since 2015 the Welsh government has worked alongside schools and experts to design a new curriculum for Wales that is due to be completed by 2021. The curriculum is currently being changed in several ways, including in the areas of ICT and sex and relationships education. The ICT steering group responsible for developing new curriculum recommendations in this area advocated for the inclusion of a statutory Digital Literacy Framework. The framework consists of four strands, one of which is titled 'Citizenship' and includes online behaviour and cyberbullying. Schools have been actively encouraged to become familiar with the framework since 2016. The framework has been designed to help teachers incorporate skills into the curriculum that will help all students thrive in a digital world, from Foundation Phase (nursery) through to post-16 education.[164] in their latest report, the Sex and Relationships

161. Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (2016) Hate Online: A guide to responding to online hate speech and hate crime

162. The Scottish Government (2014) Conduct of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood Education in Schools

163. https://www.gov.scot/news/lgbti-education/

164. ICT steering group (2013) Report to the Welsh government p. 9

Education Expert Panel make several references to the importance of ensuring the lessons relate to activities online as well as offline.[165]

Despite these developments in school policy across the UK, some researchers have argued that it should not be assumed that all young people will have had access to online safety education at primary and secondary level.

There are several reasons why this may be the case, for example:

- academies and free schools are exempt from following the national curriculum

- parents retain the right to withdraw their child/children from sex education, (with new rights for children to 'opt-in' as they approach age 16) [166]

- schools have some flexibility in terms of the approach used to teach the new RSE curriculum, for example faith schools are allowed to teach within the tenets of their faith[167]

Safer 360° is an online safety self-review tool run by South-West Grid for Learning (SWGfL)[168] that allows schools to evaluate their own online safety provision, benchmark against others and identify ways to improve. The self-review tool covers schools in England, with versions for Scotland and Wales also available.

The most recent assessment of the English submissions to the self-review found that, while schools are generally effective on online safety policy, there were concerns around the provision of education and training, which are more resource intensive.[169] Some of the findings are set out below.

- 50% of schools had carried out no governor training around online safety issues – this was a slight improvement from 2017.[170]

- 43% had no staff training to date around online safety, although this had improved to 47% from 2017 (staff training remains consistently one of the weaker aspects from each annual assessment).[171]

165. The Welsh Government (2017) The Future of the Sex and Relationships Education Curriculum in Wales: Recommendations of the Sex and Relationships Education Expert Panel

166. Long R (2019) Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England), briefing paper no. 06103

167. Long R (2019) Relationships and Sex Education in Schools (England), briefing paper no. 06103

168. South-West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) is a charitable trust that specialises in supporting schools, agencies and families to affect lasting change with the safe and secure use of technology. They are a founding member of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety as well as the lead partner in the UK Safer Internet Centre

169. Phippen A (2019) UK schools Online Safety Policy and Practise Assessment 2018: annual analysis of 360-degree self-review data p. 23

170. Phippen A (2019) UK schools Online Safety Policy and Practise Assessment 2018: annual analysis of 360-degree self-review data p. 11

171. Phippen A (2019) UK schools Online Safety Policy and Practise Assessment 2018: annual analysis of 360-degree self-review data p. 11

- 54% of schools had not evaluated the impact of their online safety efforts.[172]

These findings suggest that the standard of online safety education for school-age children may vary across the UK, as such it should not be assumed that all students that progress into higher education will have the tools needed to be safe and resilient online. The difference in the age and social maturity of university students also means that new online scenarios are likely to arise in their lives that may not have been considered while at school, particularly given the fast pace at which technologies continue to develop. This highlights the value of developing programmes targeted at university students as well as those in schools.

Higher education

The higher education sector's policies and practices to prevent and respond to online harassment is largely undocumented. Some evidence was obtained by a qualitative study initiated by UUK in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in 2017. The outcomes of the study were published in *Changing the Culture: one year on*.

This research found that most of the universities participating adopted a range of approaches when addressing online harassment. Many did this via general student misconduct approaches and through other policies such as acceptable use policies, dignity and respect policies or through a disciplinary code of conduct. Several institutions also noted that their policies may need to be updated.[173] Only one institution stated that they had a policy for sexual misconduct that included a specific strand for online behaviour. Many of the participating universities also reported that online misconduct was often dealt with in the same way as offline misconduct, that as equally serious.

Several universities also acknowledged that this was a complex area, for example, one incident could involve multiple alleged perpetrators. In addition, ensuring policies are kept up to date with the rapid changes in both the formats and the functionality of social media formats could be challenging. This highlighted the need to regularly review policies and practices.

Some institutions noted that when online harassment did occur, it could result in the availability of written evidence that could make disciplinary intervention more straightforward. However, institutions also acknowledged that there were exceptions to this, for example, some social media apps deleted content shortly after sharing.

172. Phippen A (2019) UK schools Online Safety Policy and Practise Assessment 2018: annual analysis of 360-degree self-review data p. 11

173. Universities UK (2017) Changing the culture: one year on – an assessment of strategies to tackle sexual misconduct, hate crime and harassment affecting university students pp. 44–45

Some universities also highlighted that students completing professional vocational degrees received clear information on what constituted online harassment through their education on fitness to practice

Examples of specific preventative activity in this area included:

- online misconduct themes in preventative campaigns (many of these campaigns were themselves online)

- clear policies on online misconduct and sanctions – although the title/scope of these policies varied hugely

UUK sector-wide survey

Alongside the qualitative study, in 2018 UUK developed a survey for universities to provide a mechanism for institutions to assess their own progress in safeguarding students as well as informing progress across the sector. The survey found that reporting in person or by phone were the most common mechanisms used by students to report online harassment. Just under half of the participating institutions also reported that they had an option for students to make an anonymous report regarding online harassment. This is significant as research shows that the ability to make an anonymous report is particularly important in the case of online harassment.

The survey also found that 77% of participating institutions collected, recorded and stored data in relation to online harassment. This is important as some researchers have argued that the lack of evidence of effective policy and procedures in this area has arisen because some institutions may have adopted the approach that online harassment and bullying is a prank and not to be taken seriously.[174]

Although research on evaluation and the impact of interventions in schools clearly indicates that working with students in developing interventions enhances results, engaging with students becomes even more important in higher education.[175]

UUK Roundtable to address online harassment

The roundtable discussion held on 19 October 2019 provided UUK with the opportunity to explore what good practice looks like with sector experts in higher education. Having specific policies in place and ensuring that policies, systems and

174. Cowie H, Myers CA (2016) How can we prevent and reduce bullying amongst university students? International Journal of Emotional Education Vol. 8 No. 1 p. 118

175. Chen Y, Cunningham C, Cunningham LJ, Deal K, Ratcliffe J, Rimas H, Vaillancourt T (2015) Modelling the Anti-Cyberbullying Preferences of University Students: Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis Aggressive Behaviour Vol. 41 pp. 369–385

processes are effectively joined-up and working to safeguard staff and students[176] across a university was acknowledged as critical in tackling online harassment. It was also evident that it may be more helpful for universities to centre solutions on awareness raising and pastoral care and support, as opposed to investments in restrictive IT systems or punitive responses. Although IT systems could support change, addressing the wider social aspect of online harassment was also important in creating effective cultural change. For example, studies show that some students prefer to make an anonymous report to reduce the risk of retaliation or do not want to divulge something about their own online activities.[177]

Exploring the importance of student-designed interventions

Research investigating programme design preferences to tackle online harassment among Canadian university students found the following key themes emerging from participants.[178]

1. *Emphasise the impact of online harassment on victims*

Students involved in any role of online harassment (perpetrator, victim, bystander, and combination) preferred an advertising strategy focusing on the impact of online harassment on victims. This design preference is supported by evidence linking online harassment to moral disengagement and low empathy.[179] Empathy training is an integral component of programmes that have reduced online harassment in younger students and is linked to improved outcomes.[180]

2. *Change prevention attitudes toward online harassment*

Prevention attitudes scores from the study suggest that perpetrators would be more likely to respond positively to programmes if evidence was supplied to showcase that such programmes are effective; barriers to participation in the programme are reduced and significant individuals support involvement.

3. *Teach strategies to prevent online harassment*

Students in all roles responded favourably to an advertising and communication strategy that teaches them strategies on how to prevent online harassment.

176. JISC email correspondence with UUK, 23/07/2017

177. Chen Y, Cunningham C, Cunningham LJ, Deal K, Ratcliffe J, Rimas H, Vaillancourt T (2015). Modelling the anti-cyberbullying preferences of university students: adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis' Aggressive Behaviour Vol. 41 pp. 369-385

178. Cunningham et al. (2015) used a discrete choice conjoint experiment (DCE) to model the anti-cyberbullying programme preferences of Canadian university students

179. Gini G, Hymel S, Pozzoli T (2014) Moral disengagement among children and youth: A meta-analytic review of links to aggressive behaviour Aggressive Behaviour Vol. 40 pp. 56–68

180. Göbel K, Jäkel A, Scheithauer H, Schultze-Krumbholz A, Wölfer R, Zagorscak P (2013) Prevention 2.0: Targeting Cyberbullying at School pp. 879–887

4. *Enable anonymous online reporting*

Students in all roles preferred an anonymous online process, reporting that it would limit the risk of retaliation and thus encourage students involved as witnesses or victims to report.

5. *Combine prevention with consequences*

Mild consequences (for example suspension of university internet privileges) were preferred by participants across all roles. Participants reported that consequences such as this would increase the credibility of the programme for victims, deter witnesses who might be drawn into becoming perpetrators and discourage repeat offences by those involved as perpetrators.

The inclusion of consequences in anti-bullying programmes is associated with improved outcomes[181], whereas programmes perceived to limit decision control, or impose change via coercive strategies (for example mandatory reporting, severe sanctions such as suspension) may elicit a counter-productive response through the phenomena of psychological reactance. This is a response characterised by negative emotions, counterproductive cognitions, efforts to assert personal control, and, paradoxically, an increase in the behaviour the initiative is designed to prevent. Psychological reactance is thought to have undermined efforts to reduce problems such as substance abuse[182] and racial discrimination[183] among university students.

Overall, student participants advocated a programme that combined education, prevention, anonymous online reporting and logical consequences. The study also found that mandatory reporting and more severe sanctions compromised the support of witnesses, perpetrators, as well as a significant proportion of victims.

This evidence highlights the benefits for universities by working with students to address online harassment. A recent UK example of an institution that has effectively engaged students in developing systems to prevent and respond to online harassment is Keele University in partnership with its Students' Union.[184]

181. Farrington DP, Ttofi MM (2011) Effectiveness of school-based programs to reduce bullying: A systematic and meta-analytic review Journal of Experimental Criminology, Vol. 7, pp. 27–56

182. Jung T, Mantaro T, Shim W (2010) Psychological reactance and effects of social norms messages among binge drinking college students Journal of Alcohol & Drug Education Vol. 54 pp. 7–19

183. Gutsell J, Inzlicht M, Legault L (2011) Ironic effects of antiprejudice messages: How motivational interventions can reduce (but also increase) prejudice Psychological Science Vol. 22 pp. 1472–1477

184. See annexe for the guidance Tackling Online Harassment and Promoting Online Welfare for a copy of this case study

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This short review of the research on online harassment demonstrates the importance of empowering staff and students through a common understanding of online harassment to identify, support and respond to this form of harassment. This is of particular importance in higher education due to the increasing normalisation of harmful behaviours online resulting in students potentially not being aware of what is or is not appropriate behaviour online.

In terms of who is affected, evidence clearly shows that online harassment is often closely linked to discrimination and prejudice[185] and takes place in a gendered context that produces disproportionately negative outcomes and experiences for women and for people from groups with protected characteristics. It is also clear that that the issue is not isolated to higher education, but occurs throughout the educational lifespan of a student, requiring action at each stage of the education process. Lastly, mobilising students to be part of the solution is absolutely key in addressing this agenda.

Finally, the review demonstrates that further research is required and that there is much more to be done in this area, particularly in evaluating the impact of interventions in universities and in sharing 'what works' across the sector. In the meantime, UUK has drawn on the outcomes from the literature review, our roundtable with professional staff, key organisations and academic experts, to develop a set of principles and recommendations to support the sector in addressing online harassment and to promote online welfare. These are available in UUK's new guidance, *Tackling online harassment and promoting online welfare*. This is the first national resource for universities.

185. De Martini A, Shariff S (2016) 'Cyberbullying and Rape Culture in Universities: Defining the Legal Lines between Fun and Intentional Harm'. Cowie H, Myers CA (Eds.) Bullying among University Students pp.172–190

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