

**INFLUENCE OF ANONYMOUS MESSAGES ON BEHAVIOUR PATTERNS
AMONG STUDENTS OF EKEHUAN CAMPUS OF UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
(UNIBEN) NIGERIA.**

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SEPTEMBER, 2025

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**A RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A)
DEGREE IN MASS COMMUNICATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MASS
COMMUNICATION, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN
CITY, NIGERIA.**

SEPTEMBER, 2025.

DECLARATION

I declare that this project work is based on a study undertaken by me in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, under the supervision of Mr. Sunday Ekerikevwe (FRHD) for the purpose of acquiring a Bachelor of Arts (B.A) degree in Mass Communication. All findings and analyses in the study are products of my personal research, and where the ideas of others are expressed, they are duly acknowledged.

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CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this research work was duly carried out by Ugwoke Onyinyechukwu Juliet in the Department of Mass Communication, Faculty of Arts, University of Benin, Benin City, under the supervision of Mr. Sunday Ekerikevwe (FRHD), and it is adequate in scope for the award of B.A. degree in Mass Communication of the University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

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Date

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STUDENT'S THESIS

AUTHOR'S STATEMENT

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DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to my Heavenly Father, for his love, guidance, protection, provision and grace. This work is dedicated to my parents, guardians and also my siblings for their care and unending trust and love.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of anonymous messages on the behavior patterns of students at Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. The main objective of this study is to assess students' perception of anonymous messages in shaping their daily activities and relationships, examine the types of anonymous messages commonly received by students on Ekehuan Campus, identify the emotional and psychological effects of anonymous messaging and determine the impact of anonymous messages on students' behavioral patterns. This study was hinged on the Cognitive Dissonance, Uses and Gratification, and Spiral of Silence theories. A total sample size of 326 questionnaires were distributed to Ekehuan Campus students. The findings indicate that anonymous messages have a notable influence on behavioral patterns of students of Ekehuan Campus. Although many students dismiss such messages as irrelevant, a considerable proportion experience emotional distress, reduced trust, avoidance behaviour, and changes in their daily routines. Gossip and abuse dominate the content of anonymous messages, overshadowing the smaller proportion of motivational or religious content. The study confirms that anonymity, when misused, undermines trust and social cohesion among students. The study concludes that anonymous messages exert a notable influence on students' behavioural patterns at Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. While some students dismiss them as irrelevant, many experience emotional distress, reduced trust, avoidance behaviours, and altered routines. Gossip and abuse dominate the content of such messages, overshadowing the smaller proportion of motivational or religious content. Anonymity, therefore, emerges as a double-edged tool capable of fostering honest expression and support when used positively, but harmful when misused. Based on these findings, the study recommends awareness campaigns on responsible use of anonymous platforms, stronger counseling and support systems, promotion of positive online engagement, adoption of policies against misuse, integration of digital literacy into student orientation, and further research across other campuses to assess long-term behavioural impacts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

In the digital age, anonymous messaging has emerged as a pervasive phenomenon, particularly among university students. The proliferation of social media platforms, messaging apps, and online forums has created an ecosystem where individuals can share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences without revealing their identities.

However, this veil of anonymity has raised concerns about its impact on behavioral patterns, particularly among young adults. The University of Benin, Ekehuan Campus, is not immune to this trend as a hub of academic excellence and social interaction, the campus provides a unique environment where students can engage with each other, share ideas, and form relationships.

However, the rise of anonymous messaging has introduced a new dynamic, where students can communicate without accountability, potentially influencing their behavioral patterns in profound ways.

Anonymous messaging apps and platform, allow users to send and receive messages without revealing their identity. These anonymous messages often takes form of confessions, gossips, cyberbullying, shaping students interactions and social dynamics.

Pinsonneault and Heppel (1997) defined anonymity as "the inability of group members to identify the origin of messages they receive and the destination of messages they send" pg (9).

Anonymous messaging has become a widespread phenomenon among university of Benin student Ekehuan campus, with many using different platforms and different anonymous links and apps to share their thoughts, feelings and expressions and most importantly their opinion about the potential impact it has on behavioural patterns, particularly among university students.

Anonymous, the global movement of digital activists has a fascinating and sometimes wild history. It all began in the early 2000s on 4chan, a quirky online forum where mostly teenagers shared anime and memes. At first the group was just about trolling harassing people for fun but things quickly escalated. By 2007, Anonymous was in the spotlight after being approached by Canadian intelligence and then falsely labeled as a dangerous group by the media. This only fueled their desire to push back, and they soon became a force to reckon with.

According to Britannica (2008), the group gained major attention with "project Chanology, "a campaign against the Church of Scientology. The church had tried to censor a video of Tom Cruise, and Anonymous was having none of it. They launched cyberattacks, flooded the church's website, and held protests outside

Scientology centers worldwide. This marked a shift for Anonymous from pranksters to serious political hackers what we call "hacktivism."

Britannica further added that since then, Anonymous has taken on various causes, from supporting WikiLeaks to protesting in Hong Kong and Ukraine. They've targeted everything from corrupt governments to big corporations. While some question the ethics of their methods, no one can deny the massive influence they've had on online activism and hacker culture. In 2012, Time magazine even named them one of the "100 most influential people in the world."

This study seeks to explore how anonymous messages influence the behavioural patterns of Ekehuan campus students examining both positive and negative influence. While some students may find motivation and encouragement through supportive messages others may experience anxiety, emotional distress, behavioural changes due to cyberbullying or misinformation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the widespread use of anonymous messaging platforms, little research has been conducted on their direct impact on university students in Nigeria, particularly those at UNIBEN Ekchuan campus.

Many students engage with anonymous messages daily, yet the psychological, emotional, and social consequences remain largely unexplored. Some students use

these messages for entertainment, while others may experience social anxiety, academic distractions or changes in self-esteem and even depression.

There are questions that revolve around anonymous messages one of them is "why do people involve themselves in anonymous messaging when they can confront the person involved physically could it be fear or not?"

Anonymous messaging has both negative and positive sides. The question now is, what is the influence of anonymous messages on the behavioural pattern among students of Ekehuan Campus of Uniben.

This study aims to address the gap by examining how anonymous messages shape student behavior and social interactions.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study will achieve the following:

1. Access students perception of anonymous messages in shaping their daily activities and relationships.
2. Examine the types of anonymous messages commonly received by students on Ekelman Campus.
3. Identify the emotional and psychological effects of anonymous messaging.
4. Determine the impact of anonymous messages on students' behavioral patterns.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How do students on Ekehuan Campus perceive anonymous messages in relation to their daily activities and relationships?
2. What type of anonymous messages are commonly received by students on Ekehuan Campus?
3. What are the emotional and psychological effects of anonymous messaging on students?
4. To what extent do anonymous messages influence students' behavioral patterns on Ekehuan Campus?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant to students, lecturers, researchers, policymakers, counselors and school authorities. It would help provide a valuable insights into the effects of anonymous messages on students at Ekehuan campus. It will also help school authorities, counselors, and policymakers to understand how anonymous messaging influenced students behavior allowing them to develop strategies to promote digital safety and mental well-being.

This study will also contribute to the existing body of literature on the impact of anonymous messaging on behavioral patterns, providing new insights and perspectives specific to the Nigerian university context. By identifying the effects of

anonymous messages on behavior patterns, this study will inform the development of effective intervention strategies to mitigate negative impacts and promote positive behaviors. Since this study focus on the emotional and psychological effects of anonymous messaging it will provide valuable insights into the well-being of university students, ultimately contributing to the creation of a safer and more supportive campus environment for the students.

Furthermore this study will provide valuable insights for parents and guardians, helping them understand the potential impact of anonymous messages on their children's behavior and well-being. Students will also gain awareness of the potential risks and benefits of engaging with anonymous messages, helping them navigate online interactions more responsibly.

By investigating the influence of anonymous messages on behavior patterns among students of Ekenwan Campus, University of Benin, this study aims to make a meaningful contribution to the existing literature, inform policy and practice, and ultimately promote a safer and more supportive campus environment.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study is primarily aimed at undergraduate students of the University of Benin's Ekehuan Campus. The focus of this study is on undergraduates of Ekehuan Campus Uniben examining the various type of anonymous messages received, their

impact on students' behaviors, emotions, and social interactions, as well as the coping mechanisms students adopt in response to such messages.

This study focuses exclusively on undergraduate students due to their prominent presence and active engagement on anonymous messaging platforms. As primary users of these platforms, undergraduate students are uniquely positioned to provide valuable insights into the impact of anonymous messages on their behavior patterns. By targeting this demographic, this study aims to gather accurate and reliable data that can inform our understanding of the complex relationships between anonymous messaging, and behavioral patterns.

By concentrating on undergraduate students, this study can provide a nuanced understanding of the impact of anonymous messages on behavior patterns in this specific population, ultimately contributing to the development of targeted interventions and strategies to promote healthy online interactions.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study is an interesting one as it concerns how anonymous messages influence the behavioural patterns of undergraduates of the University of Benin Ekehuan Campus, this should have led to more authenticity and facts but difficulty in Obtaining Honest Responses, the sensitive nature of the topic, may lead to participants providing socially desirable responses rather than honest ones. This could result in underreporting or over reporting of behaviors related to anonymous

messaging. To mitigate this limitation, the study will ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants' responses.

The study may face challenges in accessing students who regularly use anonymous messaging platforms. This could lead to a biased sample or a limited representation of the target population. To address this limitation, the study will employ multiple recruitment strategies to reach a diverse group of participants. The study relies on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal biases. This could impact the accuracy of the findings, as participants may not always provide objective assessments of their behavior. To minimize this limitation, the study will use validated survey instruments and statistical methods to control for potential biases.

1.8 Definition of Terms

Anonymous Messages: A Communication where by the sender's identity is hidden or undisclosed.

Behavioural Patterns: Repeated actions or habits exhibited by individuals in response to their environment.

Cyberbullying: The use of digital platforms to harass, intimidate, or spread false information about individuals.

Social Interactions: The way individuals communicate and relate with others in a social setting.

Digital Safety: Precautions taken to protect oneself from online threats and harm.

Students: A person studying at a university or college. In this context, a student is an undergraduate studying on the University of Benin ekehuan campus.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

The influence of anonymous messages on behavioral patterns among students has become a topic of increasing interest in recent years. With the proliferation of social media and online communication platforms, anonymous messaging has become a common phenomenon.

This chapter reviews existing literature on the topic, exploring the conceptual review, historical review, empirical review, and theoretical frameworks that shape the influence of anonymous messages on student behaviour.

2.2 The concept of Anonymous Messaging

Anonymous messaging has become popular due to platforms like social media confession pages, anonymous texting apps, and discussion forums. Research suggests that anonymity can encourage free expression but also promote cyberbullying, depression, misinformation and emotional stress.

Anonymous messages refer to communication where the sender's identity is not disclosed or remains unknown. According to Pearce (2009), mass media which can facilitate anonymous messages is defined as " a message and transmit it through some type of medium to a large anonymous, heterogeneous audience ". Anonymity originates from the Greek word "Anonymia ", meaning without a name.

According to (Scott 1998), "Anonymity is most often considered a dichotomous and objective phenomenon; that is anonymity either exist or does not exist".

According to Gia B. Lee, anonymity in online communication allows individuals to interact without revealing their identities.

2.2.1 Concept of Anonymity in Communication

Anonymity in communication is defined as the condition in which the sender's identity is unknown to the recipient. According to Christopherson (2007), anonymity can reduce self-consciousness, lower accountability, and lead to disinhibited behavior, which may be either prosocial or antisocial. Suler (2004) also notes the "online disinhibition effect," wherein individuals act out more intensely or express themselves more freely than they would in face-to-face interactions. This theoretical framework is essential for understanding, how anonymous messages influence the behavioural patterns of students, especially in closed communities like university campuses.

2.2.2 Digital Anonymity and Student Behaviour

A number of studies have investigated the effect of anonymous digital communication on students.

Research by Lapidot-Lefler and Barak (2012) revealed that anonymity online often leads to more aggressive and hostile communications among peers. Conversely,

other findings suggest that anonymity can foster honesty, self-disclosure, and emotional expression (Joinson, 2001), which may be beneficial in peer-support settings.

In the context of Nigerian universities, where students are often under pressure from academic, social, and economic factors, anonymous platforms may serve as both a coping mechanism and a space for expression. However, it can also create an environment for cyberbullying, misinformation, and harmful rumors, as noted by Ojedokun and Adegoke (2019).

2.2.3. Characteristics of Anonymous Messages and the Influence of Anonymous Messages

Anonymous messages have distinct characteristics that shape their impact on individuals and this includes:

Deindividuation: When individuals are anonymous, they are more likely to act out of character, shedding their personal identity and adopting a new, uninhibited one. This phenomenon, known as the online disinhibition effect, can lead to increased self-disclosure and a sense of freedom.

Reduced Accountability: Anonymous messages can reduce accountability, making it challenging to track down the sender. This lack of accountability can foster both positive and negative behaviour in students.

Increased Freedom of Expression: Anonymity can provide individuals with the freedom to express themselves without fear of judgment or retribution, leading to more honest and open communication although most of the things talked about might lead to misinformation which might lead to low self-esteem on the part of the person been talked about.

2.2.4. Social Media and the Campus Context

Ekehuan Campus, a part of the University of Benin known for its artistic and social vibrancy, presents a unique environment for examining the impact of anonymous messaging. Social media is heavily embedded in student life, and anonymous platforms are often used for entertainment, confessions, academic complaints, and even threats.

Studies by Ugbem and Adeosun (2021) showed that Nigerian university students are significantly influenced by the content they consume and engage with on social media, which can shape their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors.

In academic settings like the University of Benin's Ekehuan campus, communication patterns among students are significantly influenced by technology. Students often use social media and anonymous apps to share thoughts about campus life, academics, lecturers, and social relationships. This trend is partly driven by the desire for self-expression without fear of judgment or backlash. However, it also

brings with it challenges relating to authenticity, mental health, and cyberbullying amongst students.

2.2.5 Positive and Negative influence of Anonymous messages on Students

Anonymous messaging can serve a constructive role in students life. It provides a platform for honest feedback, emotional expression, and peer support. Students may feel more comfortable seeking help or sharing sensitive personal issues anonymously. Anonymous messages have different impact on individuals it can be both negative and positive. It can lead to increased self-disclosure, Anonymity can facilitate self-disclosure and honest communication, allowing individuals to share personal thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment. It can also create supportive Communities, Anonymous platforms can provide a safe space for individuals to share their experiences and connect with others who have gone through similar situations.

Anonymity can also facilitate negative behaviour, such as cyberbullying and harassment, which can have serious consequences for mental health and well-being of individuals.

It can lead to lack of accountability and anonymity can lead to toxic online behavior, including hate speech, trolling, and online abuse.

2.2.6 Concept of Behavioural Patterns

Behavioural patterns refer to the consistent and predictable ways in which individuals behave, interact and respond to various stimuli. These patterns can be influenced by a range of factors, including personality, environment, culture, and experiences.

Behavioural patterns refers to the consistent and predictable ways in which individuals behave, interact and react to various stimuli, "(Ajzen 1991)", "Behavioural patterns are the observable actions and reactions to Individuals in response to internal or external stimuli. (Bandura, 1997)".

They are various types of behavioural patterns which are positive Behavioral Patterns. These include behaviors that promote well-being, such as regular exercise, healthy eating, and positive relationships. Negative Behavioral Patterns, these include behaviors that can harm an individual's physical or mental health, such as substance abuse, aggression, or avoidance.

They are various factors Influencing Behavioral Patterns:

Environmental Factors: The environment in which an individual lives and interacts can shape their behavioural patterns.

Social Factors: Social relationships, norms, and expectations can influence behavioral patterns.

Psychological Factors: Personality traits, cognitive processes, and emotional states can also shape behavioral patterns.

Behavioral patterns can have a significant impact on an individual's physical and mental health, relationships and overall quality of life. Understanding behavioural patterns can help individuals identify areas for improvement and develop strategies for positive change.

2.2.7 Understanding the Dynamics of Anonymous Messaging and behavioral Patterns

In the context of anonymous messages, behavioral patterns can be influenced by the anonymity itself. For example, individuals may exhibit different behavioral patterns online compared to offline, or they may engage in behaviors that they would not typically exhibit in face-to-face interactions. Understanding these dynamics can provide insights into the impact of anonymous messages on behavioral patterns.

(Gavish & Gerdes Jr., 1998; Scott 1998), said that "it is likely that individual perception of anonymity explains behavior more effectively than actual anonymity". This quote suggests that an individual's perception of anonymity (i.e., how anonymous they feel) is a stronger predictor of their behavior online than the actual level of anonymity provided by a platform or technology.

In other words, if someone believes they are anonymous online, they may behave differently than if they didn't feel anonymous, regardless of whether they are actually anonymous or not.

This highlights the importance of understanding the psychological and social factors that influence online behavior, rather than just focusing on the technical aspects of anonymity.

2.3 History of Anonymous

Anonymous is a decentralized international collective of digital activists best known for orchestrating cyberattacks on various institutions, including governments and corporations. The group is symbolized by the Guy Fawkes mask, popularized by the V for Vendetta graphic novel and film (Volle, 2025).

The roots of Anonymous trace back to 4chan, an image board where users posted content anonymously. In 2003, some users began organizing coordinated pranks, or "trolling," of other online communities. These early actions were more about humor and chaos than ideology, with targets including internet personalities and communities (Volle, 2025).

By 2006, the group's activities escalated into harassment campaigns, such as those targeting far-right radio host Hal Turner. However, their motivation remained largely recreational rather than political. This changed significantly in 2007, when a mischaracterization by a Fox News affiliate labeling Anonymous as potential

domestic terrorists inspired members to embrace and manipulate their public image (Volle, 2025).

A pivotal moment in Anonymous's evolution came in 2008 with Project Chanology, a campaign against the Church of Scientology after it attempted to suppress a leaked video of actor Tom Cruise. Anonymous responded with coordinated denial-of-service (DoS) attacks, black faxes, and global protests. This marked the group's shift from internet trolling to politically motivated hacktivism (Volle, 2025).

Following Project Chanology, Anonymous engaged in numerous campaigns supporting causes such as WikiLeaks, Occupy Wall Street, Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, and Ukraine's defense against Russia. Their methods have included data leaks, website disruptions, and public advocacy, although the ethics and legitimacy of their actions remain widely debated even among members (Volle, 2025).

Despite lacking a formal hierarchy or unified leadership, Anonymous persists through a loosely connected "hive mind" sharing libertarian-leftist ideals, particularly around freedom of speech and anti-censorship efforts (Volle, 2025). By 2012, their global influence was recognized when Time magazine named Anonymous among the "100 most influential people" (Volle, 2025).

2.4 Theories Related to Anonymous Messaging and Behavioural.

Theories are set of statements ascertaining relationships between or among classes of variables (Bower & Courtright) 1984. Theories is a statement that explains events in the society.

For this research work, the theoretical framework adopted is the cognitive dissonance theory, uses and gratification theories, and spiral of silence theory.

2.4.1 Cognitive Dissonance Theory

According to Edughu, Liam& Asemah, 2021, the theory proposes that attitude change takes place when there is a cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance was first investigated by Leon Festinger in 1957, the theory arised out of a participant observation study of a cult. The theory suggests that people have inner need to ensure that their beliefs and behaviours are consistent, 'This means that individual experience discomfort when their behavior conflicts with their attitude or values.

The theory simply says that attitude change takes place when there is cognitive dissonance. Cognitive dissonance, according to Anaeto & Anato (2010) 'is an uncomfortable feeling in an individual by receiving two contradictory or opposite cognitions and ideal at the same time. They went further to say that the theory states that when an individual has cognitions that are not in agreement, a state of dissonance (tension) is created.

Psychology world (1998) postulated three main assumptions;

- i. Humans are sensitive to inconsistencies between actions and Beliefs: According to this theory, we all recognise at some level, beliefs/attitudes/opinions. In effect there's a built in alarm that goes off when we notice such inconsistency, whether we like it or not.
- ii. Recognition of this inconsistency will cause Dissonance and will motivate an individual to resolve the dissonance.
- iii. Dissonance can change beliefs, change actions, or change perception of action.

The Cognitive Dissonance Theory can be applied to the topic of anonymous messages and behavioral patterns. When individuals engage in online behaviors that conflict with their personal values or attitudes, they may experience cognitive dissonance. For example, someone who values kindness and empathy may feel uncomfortable engaging in hurtful or aggressive behavior online, especially if they perceive themselves as anonymous.

According to the theory, individuals are motivated to resolve cognitive dissonance. In the context of anonymous messages, this might lead individuals to change their online behavior, adjust their attitudes or values, or rationalize their behavior to reduce dissonance.

The theory also suggests that attitude change can occur when there is cognitive dissonance. In the context of anonymous messages, this might mean that

individuals attitudes towards certain topics or behaviors could change as a result of their online interactions and experiences.

However the implications of the theory to the study is that it would help the researchers understand online behavior, predict attitude change, the study can also help gain a deeper understanding of online behavior and develop more effective strategies for promoting positive interactions.

2.4.2 Uses and Gratification Theory

This theory was developed by Elihu Katz in the early 1970s. The uses and gratification theory views the audience as active. "It simply means they actively seek out specific media and content to achieve certain results or gratification that satisfy their personal needs (Rossi, 2002)."

Asemah (2011), "The theory seeks to investigate what people do with a communication content instead of what the communication does to them"

Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch in 1974 in a study postulated 5 basic tenets of the uses and gratification theories

1. The audience is conceived as active.
2. Media choice and gratification depends on the audience member that is people use the media for their advantage more than the media uses them.
3. The media compete with other sources of need satisfaction.

4. Many of the goals used can be derived from data supplied by individual audience members themselves.
5. It is the individual audience member that takes the decision to view the media based on the value placed on such members.

On the basis of the assumptions one can assert that people will select a medium depending on the result they are trying to achieve.

This theory focuses on why people use media and communication channels to satisfy certain needs. People seek different kinds of gratification (social interaction, emotional expression, entertainment, etc.) from their media consumption and communication behaviors.

This theory explores why students turn to anonymous platforms, whether it's to express feelings, share experiences, receive validation, or avoid social judgment. This theory can also explain the appeal of anonymity for students seeking emotional support without revealing their identities.

However the implication of this theory to this study is that students choose or use anonymous platforms that would satisfy their needs and curiosity thereby influencing their behavioural patterns.

2.4.3 Spiral of Silence Theory

The Spiral of Silence Theory, proposed by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann in 1984, explains how individuals often withhold their opinions when they perceive

themselves to be in the minority, due to a fear of social isolation. The theory argues that due to enormous power, the media has a lasting effect on public opinion.

The theory postulate 3 assumptions;

1. Individuals who perceive that their opinion is accepted will express it while those that would not would suppress their views.
2. People adjust their opinions according to their perceptions to avoid being isolated.
3. Innovators, change agents and the avant-garde do not mind being isolated so., they are unafraid to voice differing opinions.

In the context of this study, anonymous messaging platforms provide students with a sense of safety that can disrupt this silence. By removing personal identification, these platforms allow individuals to express views that might otherwise be suppressed in public discourse. This can lead to the amplification of previously silent or minority opinions, which in turn influences behavioral patterns among students. Conversely, repeated exposure to dominant opinions on these platforms, whether genuinely widespread or not can reinforce conformity and silence dissenting views, thus recreating the spiral of silence in a different form. The interplay between anonymity and perceived social norms becomes a key factor in shaping how students at Ekehuan Campus respond, behave, and interact based on the messages they encounter.

2.5 Review of Related Studies

2.5.1 Ekerikevwe, S.A (2023). In his study “Behavioral Change Message Exposure and Acceptance: A Study among Selected Staff and Students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin,” examines the level of exposure to behavioral change messages and the corresponding patterns of acceptance among both staff and students. The study reveals that while exposure levels are relatively high, actual acceptance and behavioral impact of these messages remain critically low. This ineffectiveness is attributed to a range of structural and socio-political impediments such as insincere political leadership, corruption, ethnic and religious divisions, poverty, illiteracy, the use of inappropriate communication channels, and lack of credibility in message sources.

According to Ekerikevwe, for behavioral change messages to be truly effective in the Nigerian context, communication strategies must be grounded in sincerity, transparency, and a deep understanding of the socio-cultural realities of the target audience. He recommends that message designers and policymakers fulfill political promises, foster national unity, promote transparency, and align communication strategies with the everyday experiences of the Nigerian populace.

While Ekerikevwe’s study contributes significantly to understanding the barriers to behavioral message acceptance in Nigerian universities, it is rooted in conventional communication strategies and does not consider the dynamics of

anonymous messaging, which is increasingly prevalent among youth in tertiary institutions. In recent times, digital platforms that allow users to send and receive anonymous messages—such as NGL, Whisper, and Sarahah—have gained popularity among students. These platforms offer an environment where individuals can communicate without the fear of judgment or social consequences, thereby influencing perceptions, emotions, and potentially behaviors.

This emerging form of communication raises important questions: Do anonymous messages function as alternative behavioral cues in the absence of trusted institutional messaging? Do they foster meaningful behavioral change, or do they lead to misinformation, fear, and negative behavioral patterns? These questions are especially relevant in a context where conventional behavioral change campaigns suffer from a lack of credibility.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this notable gap in the literature by investigating the influence of anonymous messages on the behavioral patterns of students at Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. By exploring how students interact with, respond to, and are influenced by anonymous messages, this research contributes to a more nuanced understanding of behavioral change communication in digital environments. It builds upon Ekerikevwe's foundation by integrating the lens of contemporary anonymous messaging and peer-to-peer digital influence.

2.5.1 Empirical Review of Ogunlade (2020)

Ogunlade, R.A. (2020) conducted a significant study titled "The effects of Anonymous Messaging Apps on Student Interaction and Mental Health in Nigerian Universities." This research focused on the psychological and social implications of anonymous messaging platforms such as NGL and Tellonym across three prominent Nigerian universities. The study explored how these apps shaped interpersonal communication among students and the broader consequences on mental well-being.

The findings revealed a complex duality. On one hand, anonymity provided a unique avenue for free expression, enabling students to communicate honestly without fear of judgment or repercussion. This fostered openness, with some students using the platforms for sharing thoughts they would otherwise suppress in face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, the study brought to light serious negative outcomes. A significant number of students reported experiences of cyberbullying, harassment, and exposure to toxic or harmful messages. These encounters led to increased levels of emotional distress, anxiety, and in some cases, social withdrawal. The anonymity that allowed honesty also created a shield for abusive behaviors.

In response to these findings, Ogunlade recommended a systemic strengthening of university-based counseling and psychological support systems. This included the integration of digital mental health resources and the promotion of

awareness campaigns to educate students on responsible digital engagement. The study emphasized the urgent need for institutional responses to mitigate the risks of anonymous platforms while preserving their potential benefits.

The study by Ogunlade (2020) is directly relevant to the current research topic: “The influence of anonymous messages on behavioral patterns among students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin.” Both studies center on the impact of anonymous communication in academic environments, particularly how such interactions shape student behavior, social engagement, and emotional health.

While Ogunlade focused broadly on three Nigerian universities, the present study narrows the scope to a specific population students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. This localized focus is critical for understanding the contextual behavioral patterns unique to the social dynamics of this campus. By zooming in on this demographic, the current study aims to uncover nuanced behaviors, cultural attitudes, and campus-specific experiences that might differ from those in other institutions.

Despite the value of Ogunlade’s work, several notable gaps remain that the current study intends to fill:

Contextual Specificity: Ogunlade’s study adopts a multi-campus perspective, which, while broad, does not provide detailed insights into any one university. There is a lack of campus-specific behavioral data that reflects the unique student culture of

the University of Benin's Ekehuan Campus. The current research seeks to fill this gap by providing focused, localized data.

Behavioral Pattern Focus: Ogunlade concentrated primarily on interaction and mental health, without deeply exploring the broader behavioral patterns that anonymous messages influence such as academic motivation, peer relationships, self-expression, retaliation, or withdrawal. The present study extends the inquiry to these additional behavioral dimensions.

Lack of User Type Differentiation: Ogunlade's work did not differentiate between types of users (e.g., message senders vs. receivers, passive vs. active users). The current study will explore how different roles in the anonymous messaging cycle affect behavior differently.

Absence of Intervention Evaluation: Ogunlade recommended increased counseling support but did not assess whether such support structures existed or how students perceived. This study aims to gauge students' awareness and use of institutional mental health resources in relation to anonymous message experiences.

Ogunlade (2020) laid a foundational framework for understanding the effects of anonymous messaging apps on student interaction and mental health. However, the current study builds on this by focusing on behavioral patterns specific to students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. It addresses the gaps in geographic specificity, behavioral scope, user-type differentiation, and evaluation of

institutional support. In doing so, it aims to offer more tailored insights that can inform both policy and student welfare interventions within the University of Benin.

2.5.2 Empirical Review: Barlett (2015) "Anonymous Bad? Anonymity and Cyberbullying Behaviour"

Barlett (2015) conducted an empirical investigation into the relationship between anonymity and aggressive online behavior among college students in the United States. The study aimed to determine whether anonymous interactions in digital environments contribute to an increase in cyberbullying. Using a quantitative approach, the research found a significant positive correlation between online anonymity and the likelihood of engaging in cyberbullying behaviors. The core finding was that anonymity online reduces social inhibitions and fosters a disinhibition effect, thereby enabling individuals to act aggressively without fear of direct consequences or accountability.

The study further explored the psychological mechanisms that underpin this behavior, particularly focusing on how the perceived lack of personal responsibility online encourages users to express hostility more freely. In response to these findings, Barlett proposed that introducing identity-based accountability measures such as login requirements, digital footprints, or moderated platforms could help reduce the incidence of cyber-aggression by reinforcing personal accountability.

Barlett's findings are particularly relevant to the present study on "The influence of anonymous messages on behavioral patterns among students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin." Like in the U.S. context, students in Nigerian tertiary institutions increasingly engage in digital communication platforms that allow anonymity, such as messaging apps, confession pages, and anonymous forums. This anonymity potentially shapes behavior patterns, ranging from increased self-expression to negative behaviors like bullying, harassment, or the spreading of misinformation.

Barlett's work provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for understanding how anonymity may affect student interactions and behavioral outcomes. It supports the notion that anonymity can influence both prosocial and antisocial conduct, depending on the cultural, social, and technological context in which it occurs.

Identified Gap in Knowledge

While Barlett (2015) offers valuable insight into the effects of anonymity on cyberbullying in a U.S. college environment, the study does not account for cultural, socio-economic, and technological differences that exist in developing countries like Nigeria. There is a lack of empirical research exploring how anonymity influences behavior in African tertiary institutions, particularly within the context of Nigerian campuses such as Ekehuan Campus of the University of Benin.

Furthermore, Barlett's focus was primarily on cyberbullying, whereas the current study seeks to explore a broader spectrum of behavioral patterns including academic performance, social interactions, emotional well-being, and campus dynamics resulting from anonymous communication. This presents a clear gap in knowledge the need for a localized, context-specific investigation into how anonymous messages impact the daily experiences and behavioral responses of Nigerian university students.

2.5.3 Christopherson (2007) – "The Positive and Negative Implications of Anonymity in Internet Social Interactions".

Christopherson (2007) examined both the constructive and destructive implications of online anonymity in digital communication environments. The study found that anonymity can have dual effects: while it encourages openness, freedom of expression, and self-disclosure, it can also lead to harmful behaviors such as flaming, harassment, and incivility. Christopherson introduced the concept of the "online disinhibition effect," where individuals feel less restrained and more likely to act in ways they would avoid in face-to-face settings due to the perceived lack of consequences.

The research emphasized that the impact of anonymity is context-dependent and shaped by factors such as platform type, community norms, and the presence or

absence of moderation. For instance, anonymous platforms used for emotional support fostered empathy and openness, while unmoderated forums were more prone to hostility and toxic behavior.

This study is relevant to understanding how anonymity might influence student behavior on platforms commonly used at Ekehuan Campus such as anonymous confession pages, group chats, or social media platforms that support pseudonymous engagement. Christopherson's findings suggest that the behavioral impact of anonymous messaging among Ekehuan students will depend on both the intent of the users and the norms of the specific digital environment.

The dual nature of anonymity both empowering and potentially harmful is particularly useful for framing the behavioral spectrum (positive and negative) that this study aims to investigate.

Identified Gap in Knowledge.

While Christopherson provides a theoretical overview of anonymity's effects, the research does not offer empirical data specific to the African or Nigerian educational context. It also does not focus on youth or university students as a primary demographic. This limits its applicability to understanding localized behaviors within the Ekehuan Campus community, where cultural values, peer norms, and technological use patterns may differ.

Therefore, this study highlights the need for localized, data-driven research into how anonymous communication shapes the behavioral norms, interpersonal relationships, and emotional wellbeing of students in Nigerian institutions.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted the survey research design because it allows the researcher to collect data from a large population through the use of questionnaires. The design is suitable for studying opinions, attitudes, and behavioral patterns of students in relation to anonymous messages.

According to McCombs & George (1981, P.144) note that "the use of survey research design for observing the social and behavioral characteristics, attitudes, values and beliefs of a large population. Survey are used across communication studies. In survey, large groups of people are asked about their views about a subject matter. This is a research that takes sample in order to understand and make descriptive assertions about a large population.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of this study comprises all undergraduate students at the Ekehuan Campus of the University of Benin. However, the research focused on three selected departments, and interview participants were limited to full-time students.

Table 1 illustrates the breakdown of the number of students in the three departments.

Mass Communication – 921 students

Theatre Arts – 502 students

Fine Arts – 348 students

The total population for this study is therefore:

$$921 + 502 + 348 = 1,771 \text{ students}$$

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% margin of error:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

Where:

n

n = Sample size

N

N = Population size (1,771)

e

e = Level of significance (0.05)

$$n = 1771 / [1 + 1771(0.05)^2]$$

$$= 1771 / [1 + 4.4275]$$

$$= 1771 / 5.4275$$

$$\approx 326.30$$

$$= 326$$

$$\approx 326$$

Thus, a sample size of 326 respondents was selected.

To ensure fair representation, proportionate stratified sampling was used based on the size of each department. The allocation is as follows:

Mass Communication:

921

1771

×

326

≈

170

1771

921

×326≈170

Theatre Arts:

502/[1771×326]

≈92.40

≈92

Fine Arts:

348/[1771×326]

≈64.058

≈64

Total respondents≈170+92+64.

Total = 326 respondents

3.4 Sampling Technique

The study employed stratified random sampling. This method involves dividing your population into Homogeneous sub-groups. The sub-group may be considered based on gender, age, religion, etc. A sample size of 326 respondents was drawn from the population of the study.

Each department formed a stratum, and respondents were randomly selected from each stratum according to their proportion in the population.

3.5 Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire divided into four sections:

Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, level, department)

Section B: Exposure to anonymous messages

Section C: Perceived influence on behavior

Section D: Coping strategies and attitude towards anonymous messaging

The questionnaire items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

3.6 Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in Mass Communication and Research Methods to ensure that the questions measured what they were intended to measure.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

The questionnaires were distributed in person to the sampled students during lecture periods and collected immediately after completion to ensure a high response rate. For convenience, some respondents were also given a Google Form link.

3.8 Method of Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency counts, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) for the research questions. Chi-square tests were employed to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Preamble

This chapter presents and analyses the data collected from the field survey on the influence of anonymous messages on the behavioural patterns of students of Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. Out of the 326 respondents who formed the sample size for this study, their responses have been systematically organised, presented in tables, and interpreted to provide clear insights. The analysis is carried out in line with the research objectives and questions, to identify patterns, trends, and relationships that address the focus of the study. 300 copies of online questionnaires were distributed, and 26 copies of physical questionnaires were too, but it wasn't returned.

Although both online and physical questionnaires were employed in data collection, only the online copies were returned. The physical copies (26 in total) were not retrieved due to several practical challenges. Firstly, respondents demonstrated a stronger preference for the online format, which was faster and more convenient to complete. Secondly, the physical questionnaires were prone to being

misplaced or forgotten, making it difficult to secure responses. In addition, the lack of effective follow-up channels for hard copies reduced the chances of their return. Some students may also have perceived the physical copies as less anonymous compared to the digital format. These factors combined to limit the recovery of physical questionnaires, although the online distribution still yielded sufficient data for analysis.

The researcher had to use an additional 26 online questionnaires to get the number of respondents needed for this research work.

4.2. Presentation and Analysis of Data Based on Respondents' Demographic Data

Table 1: showing the gender distribution of respondents

Gender	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Male	135	41.4%
Female	191	58.6 %
Total	326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025

The data in Table I indicate that 135 respondents, representing 41.4% of the population, were males, while 191 respondents, representing 58.6%, were females. It therefore shows that there are more female respondents than male respondents. It also shows the return rate of questionnaires distributed as 100%.

Table 2: Showing age distribution of Respondents

Age range	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Below 18 years	12	3.7%
18-22 years	171	52.5%
23-27 years	140	42.9%

28 years and above	3	0.9%
Total	326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 2 presents the age distribution of the respondents. The results show that 12 respondents (3.7%) were below 18 years. A larger group, 171 respondents (52.5%), fell within the 18-22 age bracket. This was followed by 140 respondents (42.9%) who were between 23 and 27 years. Only 3 respondents (0.9%) were 28 years and above.

The age distribution indicates that most respondents fall within the 18-22 years category, which suggests that most participants are typical undergraduate students in their early stage of academic pursuit. A considerable proportion (23-27 years) also reflects students who may be in the advanced stages of their studies or pursuing postgraduate programs. The relatively small percentage of respondents below 18 years implies that early entrance into the university are uncommon, while the very low representation of respondents aged 28 years and above shows that older students constitute only a negligible fraction of the study population. Overall, the findings suggest that the population under study predominantly comprises a conventional age range of university students

Table 3: Showing the departments of respondents

Departments	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Mass Communication	170	52.1%
Theatre art	92	28.2%
Fine art	64	19.6%

Total	326	100%
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Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 3 presents the distribution of respondents across departments. Findings indicate that Department of Mass Communication had the highest number of participants, with 170 students, accounting for 52.1% of the total respondents. This was followed by the Department of Theatre Arts, which recorded 92 students (28.2%), while the Department of Fine Arts had the lowest representation with 64 students (19.6%).

This implies that the majority of the data gathered reflects the perspectives of Mass Communication students, thereby giving their experiences greater weight in the study. However, the considerable representation from Theatre Arts and Fine Arts still ensures that the views from creative and performing disciplines are not overlooked, offering a balanced insight into students' behavioural patterns across related fields.

Table 4: Showing the level of respondents

Level	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
100lv	51	15.6%
200lv	84	25.8%
300lv	86	26.4%
400lv	105	32.2%
Total	326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 4 illustrates the distribution of respondents according to their academic level at Ekehuan campus. Out of the total 326 respondents, 51 students (15.6%) were

in the 100level. The 200 level had 84 respondents (25.8%), while the 300 level recorded 86 respondents (26.4%). The largest group came from the 400 level, with 105 respondents (32.2%).

This distribution suggests that higher-level students (300 and 400 levels) were more represented in the study compared to lower-level students (100 and 200 levels). It implies that senior students may have been more willing or available to participate in the survey, or perhaps they were more engaged with the issues under investigation. The heavier representation from final-year students could also mean that the findings may reflect more mature perspectives, shaped by longer exposure to campus life and academic experiences.

Table 5: Showing the Enrollment status of Ekehuan respondents

Enrollment	Frequency of response	Percentage of response
Full time	325	99.7%
Part time	1	0.3%
Total	326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 5 presents the enrollment status of respondents. Of the 326 participants, 325 were full-time students, while only one respondent identified as a part-time student. Since this study focused exclusively on full-time students of the Ekehuan Campus, the inclusion of a part-time student occurred unintentionally due to the use of an online survey tool, which made it difficult to restrict participation completely.

The presence of a single part-time respondent has minimal impact on the overall findings, as the overwhelming majority of participants (99.7%) were full-time students. However, it also highlights a limitation of online data collection, where controlling participant eligibility can be challenging.

4.3 Presentation and Analysis of Data Based on Other Items in the Questionnaire

SECTION B: Perception of Anonymous messages by Ekehuan Students in UNIBEN.

Table 6: Showing the responses of respondents that has received anonymous messages from a fellow student.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever received anonymous messages from a fellow student	YES	200	61.3%
	NO	126	38.7%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The findings reveal that a larger proportion of respondents, 200 students (61.3%), acknowledged having received anonymous messages from fellow students, while 126 students (38.7%) indicated that they had not. This highlights that exposure to anonymous communication is relatively widespread among students at Ekehuan Campus of the University of Benin. The high rate of exposure suggests that anonymous messaging constitutes a notable aspect of student interaction within the campus community.

Table 7: Showing the responses of how frequently students of Ekehuan campus receive anonymous messages.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
How frequently do you receive anonymous messages	Very often	66	20.2%
	Often	77	23.6%
	Occasionally	41	12.6%
	Rarely	50	15.3%
	Never	92	28.2%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The data in the above table reveal that the frequency of receiving anonymous messages among students is unevenly distributed. The highest proportion of respondents (28.2%) indicated that they had never received anonymous messages, suggesting that for a considerable number of students, this practice does not constitute a regular aspect of their social interaction. On the other hand, a substantial proportion reported frequent exposure: 23.6% noted that they "often" receive anonymous messages, while 20.2% described such encounters as occurring "very often." Taken together, these groups account for 43.8% of the respondents, indicating that anonymous messaging plays a significant role in the communication experiences of nearly half of the student population.

At the mid-level, 12.6% of students stated that they receive anonymous messages occasionally," while 15.3% described their experiences as "rare." These

figures suggest that although the phenomenon is present in their social environment, it does not dominate their communication practices.

Overall, the findings highlight a near balance between students who are frequently exposed to anonymous messaging and those who rarely or never encounter it. This distribution points to the dual nature of anonymous communication on campus: while it represents a central aspect of interaction for some students, it remains peripheral or non-existent for others.

Table 8: Showing the responses of students on the extent to which anonymous messages affect their daily activities.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
To what extent do anonymous messages affect your activities	Greatly	40	12.3%
	Moderately	51	15.6%
	Slightly	71	21.8%
	Not at all	164	50.3 %
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The data presented in the above table shows the extent to which anonymous messages influence the daily activities of respondents. Out of the 326 students surveyed, 164 (50.3%) reported that anonymous messages do not affect their daily activities at all. This indicates that for half of the population studied, such messages are regarded as insignificant and are unlikely to interfere with routine engagements. However, a considerable proportion of respondents acknowledged some level of influence. Specifically, 71 students (21.8%) reported being slightly afflicted, while

51 students (15.6%) indicated a moderate level of influence. A smaller group of 40 respondents (12.3%) admitted that anonymous messages greatly affect their daily activities.

These findings suggest that although anonymous messages have the potential to alter the daily activities of a segment of students, the overall impact is relatively minimal across the population studied. The distribution further reflects that while a few students are highly responsive to such communication, the majority either resist or disregard it, thereby reducing its effect on their daily routines.

Table 9: Showing whether anonymous messages affect the way students of Ekehuan campus relates with other students.

Questions	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Anonymous messages influence how I relate with students	Strongly Disagree	93	28.5%
	Disagree	79	24.2%
	Neutral	91	27.9%
	Agree	63	19.3%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The data in this table represents students' opinions on whether anonymous messages influence how they relate with their colleagues. Out of the 326 respondents, 93 students (28.5%) strongly disagreed and 79 students (24.2%) disagreed, giving a combined total of 172 respondents (52.7%) who indicated that anonymous messages do not affect their relationships with others. This represents the majority opinion.

On the other hand, 91 respondents (27.9%) expressed neutrality, showing that a significant proportion of students were uncertain or indifferent about the influence of anonymous messages on their social interactions. Additionally, 63 respondents (19.3%) agreed that anonymous messages do influence how they relate to others.

This finding suggests that although the majority of students at Ekehuan Campus do not perceive anonymous messages as shaping their interpersonal relationships, a notable minority acknowledged that such messages can affect their interactions. This aligns with the broader research problem, as it highlights that while anonymous communication may not universally alter behavior, it still holds the potential to influence certain students' social patterns and attitudes toward others.

SECTION C: Types of Anonymous Messages that students of Ekehuan Campus UNIBEN commonly receive.

Table 10: Which type(s) of Anonymous message do Ekehuan Campus students' UNIBEN receive.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Which type of anonymous messages do you receive	Encouraging/motivational	29	8.9%
	Romantic/flirtatious	75	23%
	Threatening/Abusive	85	26.1%
	Gossip/Rumour related	163	50%
	Academic related	36	11%
	Religious/inspirational	13	4%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The findings of the study revealed that students on Ekehuan Campus receive different categories of anonymous messages. As presented in the table, gossip and rumour-related messages constituted the highest proportion, with 163 respondents (50%). This suggests that anonymous platforms are often used as avenues for spreading unverified information or fueling campus gossip.

Threatening or abusive messages followed closely, reported by 85 respondents (26.1%) This indicates that a significant number of students have been exposed to harmful or negative content through anonymous messaging. Similarly, 75 respondents (23%) reported receiving romantic or flirtatious messages, highlighting the use of anonymity for personal or relational advances.

On a more positive note, 29 respondents (8.9%) indicated that they receive encouraging or motivational anonymous messages, while 13 respondents (4%) mentioned religious or inspirational content. Additionally, 36 respondents (11%) reported receiving academic-related messages, showing that anonymous channels can also serve constructive purposes.

The dominance of gossip and rumour-related messages points to the fact that anonymous communication is frequently exploited as a tool for social commentary and speculation. Such messages can shape behavioural patterns among students by influencing perceptions, fuelling conflicts, and affecting Interpersonal relationships. The high incidence of threatening and abusive messages further underscores the

darker side of anonymous interactions, as exposure to such content may lead to emotional distress, withdrawal, or heightened tension within the campus community.

Conversely, the presence of motivational, academic, and religious messages, though comparatively low, indicates that anonymity can also foster positive engagement. These categories suggest that some students utilize anonymity to inspire, support, or share useful formation without fear of judgment. However, the relatively small percentages show that positive usage is overshadowed by negative or frivolous content.

Taken together, the results suggest that while anonymous messaging platforms hold Potential for constructive communication, they are more commonly associated with gossip, harassment, and frivolity on Ekehuan Campus. This trend has significant implications for student behaviour, as it highlights the need for awareness, regulation, and responsible use of anonymous communication in academic environments.

Table 11: Mediums through which students usually receive anonymous messages, (N=326; multiple responses allowed). (% of respondents)

% of respondents (N=326) which is based on how many students chose each option

% of responses (sums to 100%) which is based on total selections across all options

Step 1: sum up the total Frequency

Social media apps = 9

Messaging platforms-294

SMS-4

Email = 4

Campus boards/forums = 43

Others/none=10

Total selections=9+294+4+4+43+10=364

Step 2: calculate the percentages

(a) % of respondents (out of 326):

Social media apps $9 \div 326 \times 100 = 2.8\%$

Messaging platforms = $294 \div 326 \times 100 = 90.2\%$

SMS4 $\div 326 \times 100 = 1.2\%$

Email 4 $\div 326 \times 100 = 1.2\%$

Campus boards/forums = $43 \div 326 \times 100 = 13.2\%$

Others/none $10 \div 326 \times 100 = 3.1\%$

(b) % of responses (out of 364 total selections):

Social media apps= $9 \div 364 \times 100 = 2.5\%$

Messaging platforms= $294 \div 364 \times 100 = 80.8\%$

SMS4 $\div 364 \times 100 = 1.1\%$

Email= $4 \div 364 \times 100 = 1.1\%$

Campus boards/forums = $43 \div 364 \times 100 = 11.8\%$

Others/none= $10 \div 364 \times 100 = 2.7\%$

Medium	Frequency	% of respondents	% of response
Social media apps	9	2.8%	2.5%
Messaging platforms	294	90.2%	80.8%
SMS	4	1.2%	1.1%
Email	4	1.2%	1.1%
Campus based anonymous boards/forums	43	13.2%	11.8%
Others/none	10	3.1%	2.7%
Total	364	-	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The Table presents the mediums through which students usually receive anonymous messages. Results show that the vast majority of respondents (90.2%) reported receiving anonymous messages through messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and anonymous links. A smaller proportion indicated campus-based anonymous boards/forums (13.2%), while only 2.8% mentioned social media applications like NGL or Tellonym. SMS and email were the least common medium (1.2% each). This indicates that messaging platforms serve as the predominant channel for anonymous message exchange among students of Ekehuan Campus,

The results imply that messaging platforms, particularly WhatsApp and anonymous links, are the main medium through which students receive anonymous messages. This shows that anonymity is most often experienced within the same spaces students use for daily communication.

Table 12: Showing the Categories of Anonymous Messages Reported by Respondents

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
No messages/Cannot remember	36	32.4%
Insults, hate & derogatory remarks	25	22.5%
Body shaming	7	6.3%
Threats and blackmail	5	4.5%
Gossip, lies and mockery	10	9.0%
Compliments and positive messages	18	16.2%
Sexual/indecent content	3	2.7%
Miscellaneous/unclear responses	7	6.3%
Total	Total	Total

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The results show that the majority of respondents either reported not receiving anonymous messages or could not recall any (32.4%). This suggests that while anonymous communication exists among students, it is not a universal experience.

Among those who had received messages, a significant proportion (22.5%) indicated that the content was insulting, hateful, or derogatory. This highlights how anonymity can sometimes serve as a shield for individuals to express hostility without accountability. Similarly, gossip, lies, and mockery (9.0%), as well as body shaming (6.3%), further demonstrate the tendency for anonymous platforms to be misused for negative interpersonal exchanges. Although less frequent, the occurrence of threats and blackmail (4.5%) is notable, as it reflects more serious implications of anonymous messaging, which can affect students' sense of safety and well-being. Likewise, sexual or indecent content (2.7%) indicates potential misuse of anonymity in ways that may cause discomfort or harassment.

On the other hand, a substantial number of students (16.2%) reported receiving compliments and positive anonymous messages, often related to their physical appearance or admiration from anonymous admirers. This demonstrates that anonymous communication also provides an avenue for positive self-expression, encouragement, and light-hearted interaction.

Overall, the findings reveal a dual nature of anonymous messages among students. While many students encounter supportive and positive interactions, a considerable proportion also experience hurtful, harmful, or threatening messages. This reflects the broader complexity of anonymity. It creates opportunities for both constructive and destructive communication within the student community.

SECTION D: Emotional and Psychology Effects

These items explore how anonymous messages make you feel.

Table 13: Showing how anonymous messages generally makes Uniben Ekehuan student feel.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
How do anonymous messages generally make you feel	Happy/motivated	26	8%
	Indifferent/no effect	171	52.5%
	Worried/anxious	33	10.1%
	Sad/depressed	28	8.6%
	Mixed feelings	68	20.9%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The study sought to determine how anonymous messages influence the emotional states of students on Ekehuan Campus. The findings presented in the table shows how majority of respondents, 171 students (52.5%), indicated that anonymous messages had little or no effect on them, describing themselves as indifferent. A smaller proportion, 26 respondents (8%), reported that such messages made them feel happy or motivated.

On the other hand, 33 students (10.1%) expressed that they usually felt worried or anxious after receiving anonymous messages, while 28 respondents (8.6%) associated these messages with sadness or depression. Interestingly, a significant group, 68 respondents (20.9%), reported experiencing mixed feelings, suggesting that the impact of anonymous messages is not uniform but depends on context and content.

Overall, the analysis reveals that while more than half of the participants were unaffected by anonymous messages, a considerable number experienced either positive or negative emotional reactions, with mixed feelings ranking as the second most common response.

Table 14: Showing if Ekehuan campus students' of uniben have felt emotionally distressed due to anonymous message.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever felt emotionally distressed due to an anonymous message	YES	111	34%
	NO	215	66%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Table 15 presents the responses of students on whether they had ever felt emotionally distressed as a result of receiving an anonymous message. Out of the 326 participants, 111 students (34%) reported that they had indeed experienced emotional distress, while 215 students (66%) indicated that they had not. These results suggest that although the majority of students do not consider anonymous messages as a source of emotional strain, a significant proportion still experiences negative emotional effects. This finding highlights the dual impact of anonymous communication. While some students appear resilient or dismissive of such messages, others are psychologically affected, which could influence their overall well-being and social interactions.

Table 15: Emotional Responses Experienced by Students After Receiving Anonymous Messages

(N = 296 valid responses, Multiple Responses Allowed, Total Population = 326).

Emotional Response	Frequency	Percentage
Fear	31	10.5%
Anger	31	10.5%
Low self-esteem	80	27.0%
Embarrassment	101	34.1%
None	76	25.7%
Happy	8	2.7%
Indifferent	4	1.4%
Disbelief	2	0.7%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

Out of a total survey population of 326 students, 296 provided valid responses to this question. Respondents were allowed to select more than one option, which explains why the cumulative percentage is greater than 100%.

The findings reveal that embarrassment (34.1%) and low self-esteem (27.0%) were the most frequently reported emotional outcomes, indicating that anonymous messages often undermine students' confidence and self-image. Fear (10.5%) and anger (10.5%) were also reported by a significant number of respondents, reflecting the extent to which such messages can trigger strong negative emotions. On the other hand, a notable 25.7% of respondents indicated 'none', meaning they did not feel emotionally affected. Additionally, a smaller proportion reported positive or neutral reactions such as happiness (2.7%), indifference (1.4%), or motivation (0.3%).

The presence of scattered responses such as "no emotions," "never felt anything," or "it hasn't happened" (each below 1%) suggests that some students

either dismissed the experience or may not have encountered anonymous messages at all.

Overall, the data indicate that while a minority of students remain unaffected or respond positively, the majority experience negative emotional consequences, with embarrassment and lowered self-esteem standing out as the most common.

Table 16: Showing the effect of upsetting anonymous messages on students academic work.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
After Receiving upsetting anonymous messages, I find it hard to concentrate on academic work?.	Strongly disagreed	86	26.4%
	Diagree	97	29.8%
	Neutral	86	26.4%
	Agree	44	13.5%
	Strongly agree	13	4%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The responses in the above table shows that students had mixed feelings about how upsetting anonymous messages affect their academic concentration. A notable proportion, 29.8% (97 students), disagreed with the statement, while 26.4% (86 students) strongly disagreed, suggesting that more than half of the respondents do not feel that such messages significantly disrupt their academic focus.

On the other hand, 26.4% (86 students) chose to remain neutral, indicating uncertainty or indifference. Meanwhile, 13.5% (44 students) agreed, and a smaller group, 4% (13 students), strongly agreed that distressing anonymous messages make

it difficult for them to concentrate on schoolwork. Overall, while a majority reported little to no impact on their concentration, a considerable minority acknowledged experiencing difficulties with focus after receiving such messages.

SECTION E: Influence on Behavioural Patterns

This section looks at whether and how anonymous messages influence students behavior on campus.

Table 17: Showing if anonymous messages affect the way students behave on campus.

Question	Variables	Frequency (n)	Percentage
Anonymous messages affect the way I behave or interact with students on campus	Strongly agree	103	31.6 %
	Agree	94	28.8%
	Disagree	62	19%
	Strongly disagree	67	20.6%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The analysis of responses on whether anonymous messages influence students' behaviour and interactions on campus reveals a wide range of opinions. Out of the 326 respondents, a total of 103 students (31.6%) strongly agreed that anonymous messages affect the way they behave or interact with others on campus. Similarly, 94 students (28.8%) agreed, further suggesting that more than half of the participants acknowledged some level of influence.

On the other hand, 62 respondents (19.0%) disagreed, while 67 students (20.6%) strongly disagreed, indicating that a considerable proportion of the population felt that anonymous messages do not shape their behaviour or interactions.

Overall, the findings show a slight majority (60.4%) of students perceiving anonymous messages as influential in shaping their campus interactions, compared to 39.6% who reported no such effect. This highlights that while anonymous messages play a role in students' social and behavioural patterns, there remains a notable group that perceives little or no impact.

Table 18: Showing if students of Ekehuan Campus Uniben have ever changed their routine due to anonymous message.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Have you ever changed your routine, or campus activities because of an anonymous message	YES	89	27.3%
	NO	237	72.7%
Total		326	100%

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The table shows that a majority of the respondents did not change their routine or campus activities because of anonymous messages. Specifically, 237 students (72.7%) indicated that they had not been influenced in this way, while 89 students (27.3%) reported that they had, at some point, altered their routine or activities in response to such messages. This suggests that although anonymous messages do

affect a section of the student population, most students remain unaffected in their day-to-day activities.

Table 19: Showing ways anonymous messages have influenced students behavior.

Question	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
In what way has anonymous message influenced your behaviour	Reduced trust in others	38	11.7%
	Avioded certain people/places	108	33.1%
	Bevame more cautious in communication	80	24.5%
	Altered social media usage	18	5.5%
	No significant influence	68	20.9%
	None	11	3.3%
	Became more confident and motivated me to do more	3	0.9%
	Total		326

Source: Field survey, 2025.

The findings presented in the table shows the different ways anonymous messages have influenced students' behaviour at Ekehuan Campus. Out of the 326 respondents, the largest proportion (33.1%) admitted that anonymous messages made them avoid certain people or places. Another significant number (24.5%) explained that such experiences pushed them to become more cautious in their communication. About one in five respondents (20.9%) stated that anonymous messages had no notable impact on their behaviour, while 11.7% reported that their

level of trust in others had reduced. A smaller fraction (5.5%) indicated that their social media use was affected, and 3.3% said there was no effect at all. Interestingly, only a very small group (0.9%) expressed that anonymous messages had a positive effect, making them feel more confident and motivated. Overall, these results suggest that the influence of anonymous messages is felt more in terms of caution and avoidance rather than confidence or motivation.

4.4 Discussion of Findings (Answers to Research Questions)

This section presents the discussion of findings which is based on the answers to the research questions as generated from the items in the Questionnaire.

A lot of the respondents are not influenced by anonymous messages. The data contained was 326 fully completed questions retrieved from the respondents. Response to the data in relation to the research questions would be discussed.

RQ 1: How do students on Ekehuan Campus perceive anonymous messages in relation to their daily activities and relationships?

To answer this research question, reference will be made to Table 8, and Table 9. Table 8 shows that Out of the 326 students surveyed, 164 (50.3%) reported that anonymous messages do not affect their daily activities at all. This indicates that for half of the population studied, such messages are regarded as insignificant and are unlikely to interfere with routine engagements. However, a considerable proportion of respondents acknowledged some level of influence. Specifically, 71 students

(21.8%) reported being slightly afflicted, while 51 students (15.6%) indicated a moderate level of influence. A smaller group of 40 respondents (12.3%) admitted that anonymous messages greatly affect their daily activities.

On the other hand table 9 shows that, Out of the 326 respondents, 93 students (28.5%) strongly disagreed and 79 students (24.2%) disagreed, giving a combined total of 172 respondents (52.7%) who indicated that anonymous messages do not affect their relationships with others. This represents the majority opinion.

On the other hand, 91 respondents (27.9%) expressed neutrality, showing that a significant proportion of students were uncertain or indifferent about the influence of anonymous messages on their social interactions. Additionally, 63 respondents (19.3%) agreed that anonymous messages do influence how they relate to others.

Based on the findings it is obvious that anonymous messages do not affect students daily activities and relationship at Ekehuan Campus.

RQ 2: What type of anonymous messages are commonly received by students on Ekehuan Campus?

To answer this research question reference would be made to Table 11. As presented in the table, gossip and rumour-related messages constituted the highest proportion, with 163 respondents (50%). Threatening or abusive messages followed closely, reported by 85 respondents (26.1%). Similarly, 75 respondents (23%) reported receiving romantic or flirtatious messages.

On a more positive note, 29 respondents (8.9%) indicated that they receive encouraging or motivational anonymous messages, while 13 respondents (4%) mentioned religious or inspirational content. Additionally, 36 respondents (11%).

Based on the findings it is obvious that anonymous platforms are often used as avenues for spreading unverified information or fueling campus gossip.

RQ 3: What are the emotional and psychological effects of anonymous messaging on students?

The aim of this research question is to know the emotional and psychological effects anonymous messages have on student.

To answer this question, reference will be made to Table 14, and 15. The findings presented in the table 14 shows how majority of respondents, 171 students (52.5%), indicated that anonymous messages had little or no effect on them, describing themselves as indifferent. A smaller proportion, 26 respondents (8%), reported that such messages made them feel happy or motivated. On the other hand, 33 students (10.1%) expressed that they usually felt worried or anxious after receiving anonymous messages, while 28 respondents (8.6%) associated these messages with sadness or depression. Interestingly, a significant group, 68 respondents (20.9%), reported experiencing mixed feelings.

Table 15 shows that Out of the 326 participants, 111 students (34%) reported that they had indeed experienced emotional distress, while 215 students (66%) indicated that they had not.

Based on the result of the findings it suggest that although the majority of students do not consider anonymous messages as a source of emotional strain, a significant proportion still experiences negative emotional effects. This finding highlights the dual impact of anonymous communication. While some students appear resilient or dismissive of such messages, others are psychologically affected, which could influence their overall well-being and social interactions.

RQ 4: To what extent do anonymous messages influence students behavioural patterns on Ekehuan Campus?

This question seek to know the entertainment anonymous messages influence student behaviour pattern on Ekehuan campus.

To answer this research question, reference will be made to Table 19, 20, and 21. Table 19 shows that Out of the 326 respondents, a total of 103 students (31.6%) strongly agreed that anonymous messages affect the way they behave or interact with others on campus. Similarly, 94 students (28.8%) agreed, 62 respondents (19.0%) disagreed, while 67 students (20.6%) strongly disagreed. Overall, the findings show a slight majority (60.4%) of students perceiving anonymous messages as influential in shaping their campus interactions, compared to 39.6% who reported no such effect.

Table 20 shows that specifically, 237 students (72.7%) indicated that they had not been influenced, while 89 students (27.3%) reported that they had, at some point, altered their routine or activities in response to such messages.

Table 21, shows that Out of the 326 respondents, the largest proportion (33.1%) admitted that anonymous messages made them avoid certain people or places. Another significant number (24.5%) explained that such experiences pushed them to become more cautious in their communication. About one in five respondents (20.9%) stated that anonymous messages had no notable impact on their behaviour, while 11.7% reported that their level of trust in others had reduced. A smaller fraction (5.5%) indicated that their social media use was affected, and 3.3% said there was no effect at all. Interestingly, only a very small group (0.9%) expressed that anonymous messages had a positive effect, making them feel more confident and motivated.

Overall, these results suggest that anonymous messages exert a notable influence on student behaviour at Ekehuan Campus, with many respondents reporting changes in their interactions, routines, and trust levels. While a slight majority perceive these messages as shaping their conduct, the effects are largely cautious or restrictive rather than positive.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Preamble

This chapter presents a summary of the major findings of the study. In addition recommendations were given based on the findings revealed in the study as well as suggestions of possible areas for further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

It can be deduced from the analysis of the study that;

- i. Anonymous messaging platforms are popular among students of Ekehuan Campus, serving as a common means of social interaction.
- ii. A considerable number of students acknowledged that anonymous messages have influenced their behavior, either positively or negatively.
- iii. Positive influences include freedom of expression, confidence to share opinions, and opportunities for social bonding.
- iv. Negative influences include increased cases of cyberbullying, spread of rumors, emotional distress, and weakened interpersonal trust.
- v. The behavioral impact of anonymous messages varies depending on frequency of use, personal experiences, and individual resilience.
- vi. Students of Ekehuan Campus UNIBEN are mostly exposed to anonymous message through social media platforms like WhatsApp.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that anonymous messages have a notable influence on the behavioural patterns of students in Ekehuan Campus, University of Benin. Although many students dismiss such messages as irrelevant, a considerable proportion experience emotional distress, reduced trust, avoidance behaviour, and changes in their daily routines. Gossip and abuse dominate the content of anonymous messages, overshadowing the smaller proportion of motivational or religious content. The study confirms that anonymity, when misused, undermines trust and social cohesion among students. Conversely, when used positively, it can promote self-expression and honest communication. Therefore, the effect of anonymous messages on students' behavior largely depends on the intentions of the users and the context in which such platforms are utilized.

Therefore, anonymous messaging can be seen as both a disruptive and, in fewer cases, an empowering force. Its overall impact depends on message content, individual resilience, and students' perception of anonymity.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- **Awareness and Sensitization:** The University should conduct awareness campaigns on the responsible use of anonymous platforms and the risks associated with cyberbullying, gossip, and emotional harm.

- **Counseling and Support:** Counseling services should be strengthened to help students manage the emotional effects of negative anonymous messages. Workshops on coping strategies should also be introduced.
- **Promotion of Positive Use:** Students should be encouraged to use anonymity positively for academic support, motivational communication, or peer encouragement rather than gossip and abuse.
- **Policy Framework:** The University should adopt policies that discourage the misuse of digital platforms for harassment while promoting ethical online communication among students.
- **Digital Literacy Programs:** Training in digital literacy and etiquette should be integrated into orientation programs for new students to foster responsible online interaction.
- **Further Research:** Future studies should expand to other campuses of the University of Benin and employ longitudinal designs to capture long-term behavioural impacts of anonymous messages.

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APPENDIX

Department of Mass Communication
Faculty of Arts,
University of Benin,
Benin City,
Edo State.

Dear Respondents,

REQUEST FOR THE COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am a final year student of the above named department and institution. I am conducting an academic research in partial fulfilment of the award for the Bachelor of Arts (B. A) Degree in Mass Communication, on the topic: Influence of Anonymous Messages on behaviour patterns among students of Ekehuan Campus of Uniben.

I assure that the responses would be strictly for this research alone, and confidentiality is assured.

Yours faithfully,

Ugwoke Onyinyechukwu Juliet
Researcher

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Instruction: Please provide the following information.

1. Gender: Male Female.
2. Age: Below 18 years 18–22 years 23–27 years 28 years and above
3. Department: Mass Communication () Theatre art () Fine art ()
4. Level (Tick the appropriate level) 100 level 200 level 300 level 400 level
5. Enrollment Status (Only full-time students should continue. If part-time, please return the questionnaire without completing further sections.) Full-time Part-time

SECTION B: PERCEPTION OF ANONYMOUS MESSAGES

These questions relate to how you perceive anonymous messages in relation to your daily activities and relationships.

6. Have you ever received an anonymous message from a fellow student? Yes No
7. How frequently do you receive anonymous messages? Very often Often Occasionally Rarely Never
8. To what extent do anonymous messages affect your daily activities? Greatly Moderately Slightly Not at all

9. Anonymous messages influence how I relate with other students. Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree

10. Briefly describe how anonymous messages have affected your daily activities or relationships.

SECTION C: TYPES OF ANONYMOUS MESSAGES

Indicate the kinds of anonymous messages you most commonly receive.

11. Which type(s) of anonymous message do you receive?

(Tick all that apply)

Encouraging / motivational Romantic/flirtatious Threatening/abusive

Gossip/rumor-related Academic-related (e.g., study groups, assignments)

Religious/inspirational Other (specify): _____

12. Through which medium do you usually receive anonymous messages?

(Tick all that apply)

Social media apps (e.g., NGL, Tellonym)

Messaging platforms (e.g., WhatsApp anonymous links) SMS Email

Campus-based anonymous boards/forums Other (specify):

13. Please provide an example (without revealing any personal identity) of an anonymous message you have received.

SECTION D: EMOTIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

These items explore how anonymous messages make you feel.

14. How do anonymous messages generally make you feel?

Happy / motivated Indifferent / no effect Worried / anxious. Sad / depressed Mixed feelings

15. Have you ever felt emotionally distressed due to an anonymous message?

Yes No

16. If yes, what type of emotional response did you experience?

(Tick all that apply)

Fear Anger Low self-esteem Embarrassment Other (specify):

17. After receiving upsetting anonymous messages, I find it hard to concentrate on academic work. Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. Describe any emotional or psychological effects you have experienced from anonymous messages.

SECTION E: INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS

This section looks at whether and how anonymous messages influence your behavior on campus.

19. Anonymous messages affect the way I behave or interact with others on campus.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. Have you ever changed your routine or campus activities because of an anonymous message?

Yes No

21. In what ways have anonymous messages influenced your behavior?

(Tick all that apply)

Reduced trust in others

Avoided certain people or places

Became more cautious in communication

Altered social media usage

No significant influence

Other (specify): _____

22. Please explain any specific behavioural changes you made after receiving anonymous messages.
