

What is Cyberbullying?



Cyberbullying is the use of technology to intentionally harm, intimidate, or embarrass someone. It involves deliberate and repetitive actions carried out through digital platforms such as social media, messaging apps, email, or gaming networks.

According to Belsey (2004), cyberbullying can be defined as:

"The use of information and communication technologies such as email, text messages, and social media to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group intended to harm others."

It differs from traditional bullying in that it can occur anytime and anywhere, often reaching a much larger audience. Additionally, the anonymity provided by the internet can make perpetrators feel empowered to act in ways they might not in person (Willard, 2006).

Types of Cyberbullying

1

Harassment

2

Exclusion

3

Impersonation

4

Doxxing

5

Cyberstalking

Harassment

Harassment refers to the repetitive sending of offensive, threatening, or cruel messages to a person through digital platforms. It is often a relentless form of bullying aimed at overwhelming or intimidating the victim. Harassment can escalate quickly because digital communication allows bullies to reach victims at any time, increasing their sense of vulnerability (Betts et al., 2016).



Example: A student receives daily text messages or social media comments mocking their appearance or academic performance.

Exclusion

Exclusion involves deliberately leaving someone out of online activities, groups, or events. This form of bullying is subtle yet powerful in making the victim feel unwanted or ostracized. Since digital communication often revolves around group chats, online games, and social platforms, being excluded can lead to feelings of loneliness and rejection (Betts et al., 2016).



Example: A group of classmates creates a private chat to plan a school event but intentionally excludes one person. Later, they share inside jokes about the event publicly, further alienating the excluded person.

Impersonation

Impersonation occurs when someone pretends to be someone else online to harm that person's reputation, create conflict, or spread false information. This is typically done by creating fake accounts or hacking into the victim's existing profile (Betts et al., 2016).



Example: A bully creates a fake social media account using another student's name and photo, then posts embarrassing or offensive content to damage their reputation.

Doxxing

Doxxing involves sharing someone's personal or private information online without their consent, usually with the intent to harm or intimidate them. This might include publishing addresses, phone numbers, or sensitive details about a person's life (Betts et al., 2016).



Example: A bully posts a classmate's phone number on a public forum, encouraging others to send threatening messages.

Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is a persistent form of cyberbullying where a person repeatedly sends threatening or intimidating messages or monitors someone's online activity obsessively. It can escalate over time, making the victim feel unsafe in both online and offline spaces (Betts et al., 2016).

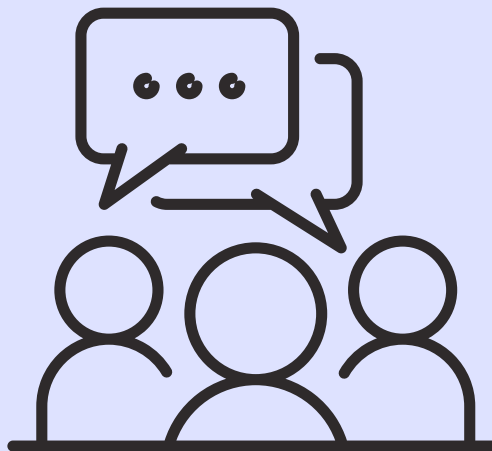


Example: A bully constantly comments on every post a victim makes, sends repeated direct messages threatening harm, or monitors their online activity to criticize or ridicule them.

Group Discussion Activity

You will work in small groups to explore different types of cyberbullying. Each group will investigate one specific type, find real-life examples, and discuss them with the class.

1. **Team Up:** Get into groups of 4-5 people.
2. **Your Topic:** Your group will be given one type of cyberbullying: Harassment, Exclusion, Impersonation, Doxxing, or Cyberstalking.
3. **Find Examples:** Look for real-life examples or stories about your type of cyberbullying.
4. **Talk It Over:** Share and discuss the examples you found with your group.
5. **Think About It:** Decide how each example shows your type of cyberbullying and talk about how it affects people.
6. **Share with Everyone:** Present your examples and ideas to the class.



Causes of Cyberbullying

1

Anonymity

2

Peer Pressure

3

Jealousy and Insecurity

4

Seeking Attention or
Validation

Anonymity

Some people who wouldn't normally bully others in person might do it online because they can stay anonymous. This means they can hide who they really are when using phones, computers, or social media. (Englander and Muldowney, 2007) describe cyberbullying as an "opportunistic" behavior because it doesn't require face-to-face interaction, takes little effort to plan, and makes bullies feel like they won't get caught.

Thinking Exercise:



How can we prevent cyberbullying when people hide behind anonymity?

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Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is one of the main reasons some teenagers participate in cyberbullying. As they grow older, many teens start relying more on their friends for acceptance and self-worth, which makes them more likely to be influenced by their peers (Sumter et al., 2009). This influence can lead to copying the behaviors of others, especially if those behaviors include aggression or bullying (Akers, 2011; Allen et al., 2006).

Thinking Exercise:

What are some ways to resist peer pressure online?



Four horizontal dashed lines for writing answers.

Jealousy and Insecurity

Feeling insecure or jealous can lead some students to bully others online. When someone feels bad about themselves—maybe because of their looks, social status, or abilities—they might take out those feelings on others. This often happens when they feel jealous of classmates who seem more popular, talented, or successful.

For example, if a student sees a peer getting a lot of likes on social media or doing really well in school, they might feel threatened. To cope, they could bully that person online to feel more powerful or to make themselves feel better. (Horizon Treatment Services, n.d.).

Thinking Exercise:

What are some ways to resist peer pressure online?



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Seeking Attention or Validation

People often seek attention and validation from others to feel accepted and valued. Social media can make this even more noticeable because platforms are designed to highlight popularity through likes, comments, and shares. While wanting to feel accepted is natural, seeking attention in unhealthy ways can sometimes lead to behaviors like cyberbullying.

When someone feels ignored or unimportant, they might use harmful actions online to draw attention to themselves. This could include spreading rumors, posting mean comments, or sharing embarrassing photos of others. (Nesi et al., 2021).

Thinking Exercise:

What are some ways to resist peer pressure online?

