

## BULLYING

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Cases in bullying and harassment in schools has expanded pace in recent years as an upshot of digital confirmations shared on social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. Through these social media platforms, young people who were victims of bullying and harassment finally have somewhere to tell their stories.

It is a huge break from the stigma that surrounds bullying in the past. Dejectedly, bullying and harassment in school setting has been inscribed in the system ever since the very first school was established by Spanish Friars in 1611. Victims are terrified to comfort due to humiliation and in fear of being outcast by the society.

The seriousness of discrimination and abuse has become increasingly apparent as the new generation grows more open minded about issues and themes that were formerly frowned upon by the older generation.

Due to the innovation of mobile phones with cameras and recorders, it also easier for students to provide tangible evidences that makes the cases stronger. According to the most recent publicly available Department of Education (DepEd) statistics, our beloved country had a histrionic 21 percent spike in bullying from public and private schools in 2015.

According to a poll conducted by the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 6 out of 10 Filipinos experienced bullying in 2018. In 2019, UNICEF estimated that one out of every three young people in 30 countries had suffered cyber abuse.

Although technology gave the victims of bullying an amplified voice, the advancement in technology also gave bullies a new platform to do their dirty work. Bullying through virtual platform is known as cyberbullying. It is a form of new age harassment and abuse that takes place in internet through social media and content sharing platforms (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Youtube, and Tiktok) wherein people interact freely all across the globe.

Cyberbullying can include, spreading rumors and lies with intent of tarnishing someone's reputation, posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone without their consent, sending abusive, threatening, and hurtful messages to people through direct messages (dms) or through comments, identity theft and using fake accounts to troll people. Hence, cyberbullying is more chaotic and challenging due to the anonymity provided by the virtual setting where the harassment and abuse take place.

Moreover, cyberbullying has become so common in our age that it has spawned its own toxic culture, dubbed "cancel culture." The "cancel culture" began as a tool for social change, a manner of conveying personal realities to those in positions of power or influence. Whereas it used to be reserved for authority officials, public humiliation and shame has become the preferred method for expressing real or imagined dissatisfaction towards anyone. It used to be used to demand accountability on social issues from celebrities and influencers, regrettably, it is now used to inflict personal grudges and issues to normal people in social media. Cancel culture has evolved into bullying with a more appealing moniker. It prioritizes exclusion over knowledge, judgment over compassion, and deafening resistance to redemption and transformation.

Bullying is evil, no matter what shape or form it comes with. Being the target of cyberbullying, anyone can damage a person's confidence, self-worth and dignity. It can cause emotional and mental damage that can last years.

The psychology of bullying is rooted from negative emotions, either from being a victim of bullying themselves, or the blatant need for self-validation through a display of dominance or power over other people. Either/or, bullying comes from a dark place and is projected to the world through negative acts.

Bullying can be disallowed through proper implementation of school rules, discipline, deep observation of teachers and personnel, there are always tell-tale signs of bullying, being able to pick up on it and introduce intervention can reduce the occurrence of incidents.

Online on the other hand is a whole new battlefield. These days, there are technology that are designed to trace IP address of severe cases of online bullying. However, the technology is very expensive and is not accessible for normal people, in fact, it is not certain if that kind of innovation is available here in the Philippines. The least that teachers and parents is to monitor the children's activities online, set up boundaries and build a safe space where they will be comfortable to open up.

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