

CHECKING THE BULLIES: EXAMINING THE CYBERBULLYING POLICY

by:

Leonardo M. Apales

Teacher II E.C. Bernabe National High School

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund or UNICEF reported that one in three young people in 30 countries stated that they have been a victim of online bullying. The 2019 report also showed that one in five students said they skipped school due to cyberbullying and violence. UNICEF is the United Nations organization working for rights of children.

On the other hand, the National Baseline Survey on Violence Against Children showed that cyberviolence affects almost half of children aged 13 – 17 in the Philippines. There seemed to be no disparity as to gender of victims as the data also revealed that the prevalence of cyberviolence for females is almost the same for females.

This set of information points us at an issue that is ever more present now: cyberbullying.

Cyber-bullying is defined as a negative act of the user using social networking for making fun of another user. It also entails harassing a user over an instant messaging such as posting picture without permission of the user or even false rumors based on Pak & Paroubek, in 2010.

Cyberbullying is one of the top challenges facing Philippine public schools. Consequently, there are many recurring legal problems confronting public schools reiterated by Li, in 2006. A study revealed that most students felt unpleasant and uncomfortable with cyberbullying experience and with others doing it. The increasing cyberbullying cases of the learners can be attributed due to their growing social media exposure and experiences. By revisiting and developing policies and procedures related

to solving cyberbullying, more students and parents would understand its implications to learners' behavior, performance and activities according to Vargas et. al., in 2018.

Consequently, Republic Act No. 10627 was created to address this issue. It directed the elementary and secondary schools to create or adopt policies to address the issues of bullying in their institutions. It also emphasizes the need to identify the range of disciplinary administrative actions that may be taken against perpetrator/s. The law also mandates that the perpetrator shall be required to undergo rehabilitation. Parents of the perpetrator shall also be encouraged to participated in the said rehabilitation program. The law also ordered schools to keep and maintain a public record. The school's public record shall include the relevant information and statistics on acts of retaliation or bullying. Although the exclusive jurisdiction for complaints of bullying and other related acts rests primarily on the shoulders of Department of Education or the private school, there should be institutional mechanisms that will ensure that the department itself is rigorous in the implementation of the law's provisions.

Notwithstanding the presence of guidance counselors and the law, schools should also establish and equip local helplines to support young people in reporting violence and cyberbullying. Education policymakers should also train teachers and parents to respond and prevent bullying. School leaders can also gather better data about the online behavior of students and young people. We should also note how criminal proliferate the internet. These steps can guide us in creating inclusive and sustainable policies and action plans.

Now that social media plays an important role in our learners' lives, we cannot silently watch while they navigate the online world on their own. This is especially vital since the Internet is no longer a safe space given the presence of cyberbullying and other Internet-related issues and cases. Our role as teachers will transcend over the physical space and onto the digital world as we try to safeguard the rights of Filipino learners.

References:

Li, Q., (2006). Cyberbullying in schools a research of gender differences. *School psychology international*, 27(2), pp.157- 170.

Pak, A. and Paroubek, P., (2010), May. Twitter as a Corpus for Sentiment Analysis and Opinion Mining. In *LREc* (Vol. 10, pp. 1320-1326).

Vargas, E., Niguidula, J. D., Hernandez, A. A., Marquez, P. S., & Caballero, J. M. (2018). Senior High School Students Cyberbullying Experience: A Case of University in the Philippines.

Data lifted from <https://www.unicef.org/philippines/press-releases/online-bullying-remains-prevalent-philippines-other-countries>