How Filipino Youth Identify and Act on Bullying and Harassment on Social Media

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Executive Summary

This report presents our findings on how Filipino youth identify, experience, and respond to bullying and harassment on social media.

(1) Bullying and harassment on social media are shaped by how the youth enact different kinds of relationships through their use of polymedia, that is, the integrated communicative environment that emerges from the mixing and matching of the different features of social media.

Bullying is not just about transposing a physical act to a virtual space, although physical acts of bullying can be extended online. Social media can both amplify and create new experiences of bullying and harassment because of how these digital spaces allow such acts to be done: (a) in a simultaneous manner across different social scales, from the most private and one-to-one to the most public and many-to-many, (b) in a networked manner that spreads through nodes and webs that reach many individuals, and (c) in a persistent manner that crisscrosses to and from different but converged platforms.

Altogether, we highlight that the online and offline environments are no longer separate—in many ways they interact in shaping the youth's social environment.

(2) Filipino youth characterize bullying and harassment on social media as an intersection of three key dimensions: targets, acts and, spaces. We thus need to account for this by rethinking our understanding of how young people identify and experience them.

Bullying and harassment on social media happen both in social and technological contexts and, as such, include a wide range of targets, acts, and spaces. Since the youth interpret the many configurations of these dimensions in personal ways, we should broaden how bullying and harassment have been traditionally defined.

(a) Bullying and harassment on social media can be targeted at *individuals, groups, and ideas.*

The common understanding is that victimization takes place through direct attacks to individuals. By including groups and ideas as targets, the Filipino youth and their experiences revealed that online bullying is not necessarily directed toward a specific individual. The emphasis on groups and ideas as targets extends the argument that online bullying is an inter-group phenomenon and involves social processes. Articulating that targeting can be directed at individuals, groups, or ideas does not only expand our understanding of bullying or harassment targets. It also implies that there is fluidity and normalization of bullying among the youth within their day-to-day social relationships.

(b) Bullying and harassment can manifest as direct or veiled acts.

Our findings point to a distinction between direct and veiled acts of bullying and harassment, which involve a range of rhetorical practices, textual genres, and technology-specific strategies that engage social media's unique features.

Bullying and harassment are often associated with direct acts such as dehumanizing a person or a group or directly expressing contempt or disgust toward a person. The youth perceive these acts to be motivated by ill feelings. And they are unequivocal in identifying them. In contrast, the youth also identify a range of veiled acts where bullying or harassment are not done directly—expressed in the form of jokes, sarcasm, or other related forms of articulation embedded in local communicative cultures. The youth find more ambiguity in these acts, as the rhetoric opens them up to more than one interpretation. That said, the severity of these acts can still be immense for some individuals.

One implication of the presence of both direct and veiled acts is that intentionality is not always necessary for an act to be identified as bullying. Illustrative of most forms of bullying would be direct acts that the youth perceive as intentional. That said, there are times when the youth perceive veiled acts as unintentional, but still experience these as bullying.

A second implication is that an act that can be inflicted once can already be identified as bullying or harassment and the youth should be able to report them as such. Bullying is often defined as a prolonged or repeated mistreatment by a person who harbors malicious intentions and who is perceived to be more powerful than the victim of abuse. Yet, whether direct or veiled, none of our participants identified bullying or harassment as a necessarily repetitive or prolonged act.

(c) Bullying and harassment take place in bounded and open spaces on social media. These are also fluid and may move from one space to another.

By differentiating between bounded and open spaces, Filipino youth's experiences revealed that online bullying may happen across different social media spaces. In bounded spaces, private group chats served as dominant sites for witnessing and experiencing online bullying. When online bullying happens in open spaces, it creates opportunities for "cancel culture" and "bashing" to take place, which are linked to bullying as an intergroup phenomenon. Yet, online bullying is fluid and may actually move from one space to another. The youth may first experience and/or witness online bullying in bounded spaces such as private group chats that may later move to open spaces such as public walls. This also implies that it can happen in a physical space (e.g., school campus) and quickly transfer online. Coupled with advanced cameras and videos, social media features can extend from in-person aggressions to social media.

(3) Several factors influence how the youth are impacted by and cope with social media bullying and harassment: individual personality, social norms, and the individual's relationship with technology.

Bullying and harassment on social media can impact self-image, psychological well-being, and mental health. The impact can be short-term or long-term, and for some, this can result in some forms of trauma. Importantly, the youth's relationships with people are affected as well. With self-doubt, feelings of insecurity, and fear, some choose to isolate themselves from others, both online and offline. Finally, bullying and harassment on social media can result in a negative worldview, where the youth see the online space and the broader environment in general, as unsafe for them. Given the diverse ways impact is experienced by the youth, this should not be invalidated nor dismissed as these may have negative and long-term consequences.

The youth also shared a range of mechanisms for coping that involve emotional, cognitive, and behavioral strategies.

(4) Responding to the challenge of social media bullying and harassment requires the collective response of platforms, the youth, and local communities (i.e. schools and guardians).

We offer data-driven recommendations for action for Facebook, schools, guardians, and the youth in terms of how social media bullying and harassment can be prevented and its impact for victims mitigated. Given the growing complexity of the youth's social media engagements, we emphasize the importance of considering a broader range of scenarios (targets, acts, and spaces) that characterizes enactments and experiences of bullying and harassment.

Chapter 1

THE PROJECT AND OUR APPROACH

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT are unfortunately becoming an increasingly familiar experience with the youth on social media. Different studies done in the last decade suggest that this is the case in many countries across the globe. In the USA, for example, 59% of teenagers online say that they have experienced at least one form of such bullying in their life.[1] In the UK, the number is 56% for young people up to 25 years old.[2] In China, it is 70% of those aged 8 to 17.[3]

This phenomenon is also of particular concern for the so-called "next billion users", that is, those in the developing world who are poised to dominate the online, despite their still less than ideal digital access.[4] A case in point is the Philippines, which is the subject of this report. Even if it has a relatively underdeveloped telecommunication infrastructure,[5] many of its youth are online. Of the country's staggering 89 million active social media users (or 80.7% of the total population), almost 44 million of them are 13 to 24 years old.[6] The other is that these young people have also been reported to spend the most time on social media in comparison to global counterparts. On average, they are online for 4 hours and 15 minutes per day across these different platforms.

Our concern is that in dealing with bullying and harassment online, social media platforms have tended to rely on a specific set of definitions of what constitute these acts. But bullying and harassment are socially constructed and the way these are identified and recognized by people is a reflection of social norms, processes, and group cultures.[7]

This report argues for the need to go beyond the seemingly top-down application of such definitions of bullying and harassment online. In aiming to add to the theoretical debates about how to understand and define these concepts, [8] we turn to the youth themselves. Here we focus specifically on 15- to 25-year-olds coming from the different major regions of the Philippines. We spotlight what these young people themselves consider as constitutive of bullying and harassment on social media, including the most popular platforms of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

Approach, Focus, and Methods

The practice of using an a priori definition of bullying and harassment—laden with assumptions of universalism and static understandings—has dominated the earlier literature. Research has pointed out the limitations of relying on axiomatic definitions of bullying and harassment.[9] For example, traditional bullying definitions focused on intentionality, prevalence, and repetitiveness of incidents. Studies show that these sometimes fail to grasp the subtleties and complexities in technologically-mediated processes and the relational

“We approach the question of bullying and harassment on social media with the premise that bullying and harassment are communicative and socially constructed.”

interactions among the youth across varied contexts. Further, applying a priori definitions in surveying the youth about their experiences has been found to condition the youth to disregard particular experiences that do not fall within known categories of bullying or harassment. [10] Policy and media literacy interventions may tend to propose to “teach” children and the youth the “right” definitions of victimization and how to act accordingly, following normative definitions of bullying. To a large extent, research and interventions are limited because they assume that bullying and harassment are universally applicable and static, and present the youth in different cultures as unable to challenge these definitions based on their experiences.[11]

Social media platforms also tend to rely on the underlying principles attached to axiomatic definitions. This figures into the examples highlighted in their Community Standards that also guide users under what conditions they are eligible to report an act to be bullying and harassment. This implies that the actions that these platforms take toward self-reports are also hinged on these definitions.

We approach the question of bullying and harassment on social media with the premise that bullying and harassment are communicative and socially constructed. This approach underscores how the everyday interactions wherein these acts emerge are shaped by dialogue and by the cultural norms and relational contexts of the youth. We are interested in seeing how the mediation of communication influences bullying and harassment processes and experiences in ways that may reinforce or expand the core assumptions and premises about these aggressions. As such, we explore the broader range of practices that the youth consider to be bullying and harassment, as well as how and why these take place. We hope to then build on, inform, and expand the definitional work of online bullying and harassment. Our approach also posits the need to further understand how social media plays out exactly in the youth’s relational experiences of bullying and harassment. Is social media a tool or a mere site where bullying and harassment can take place, or is social media bullying and harassment, based on how the youth identify and experience it, uniquely shaped by the features of the technology?

Given the above, we were interested in understanding **how Filipino youth identify and act on bullying and harassment on social media.** We first probed into the content and textual genres (such as posts, memes, messaging, and commenting) as well as the technology-specific practices (such as tagging, creation of online groups) that signal harassment and bullying on the platform, and we had them describe in which exact spaces on the platform these take place.

We also asked for specific examples of **how the youth experience social media bullying and harassment,** including linguistic and visual cues that characterize youth’s experience of harassment and bullying on social media and how they think these affect the youth, whether short or long term.

Moreover, we examined **how the youth are impacted when they experience bullying or harassment on social media and how they respond.** We sought their views on the roles of multiple actors: parents, family, schools, community, and the platforms for attending to the problem of online bullying and harassment whether as a form of prevention, mitigation, or support for the victims. In examining this engagement of youth practices on social media, we included several levels of analysis: individual, social, technical, and cultural aspects that shape the youth’s perceptions toward bullying and harassment.

We conducted online in-depth interviews with 152 Filipino youth aged 15-24 from four sites across the country (see Figure 1): Manila (for National Capital Region), Batangas (for Balance Luzon), Negros Occidental (for Visayas), and Misamis Occidental (for Mindanao). We selected provinces across Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao with the largest youth population and presence of La Salle schools with which we could collaborate. While 122 of the participants represented school-going youth, 30 were out-of-school youth (OSY). In selecting the participants for each site, we aimed to cut across genders and age groups (see Table 1).

The design of this project is built upon the principle of "doing no harm" and best practices of working with the youth for digital research.[12] Each site had a designated field coordinator who is also a registered psychologist and guidance counsellor who was in charge of recruiting participants. As registered psychologists, the field coordinators had strong institutional linkages with different organizations working with OSY at their respective sites. Given access challenges in the country, each participant was provided internet connectivity allowance to support participation.

Figure 1. Project sites

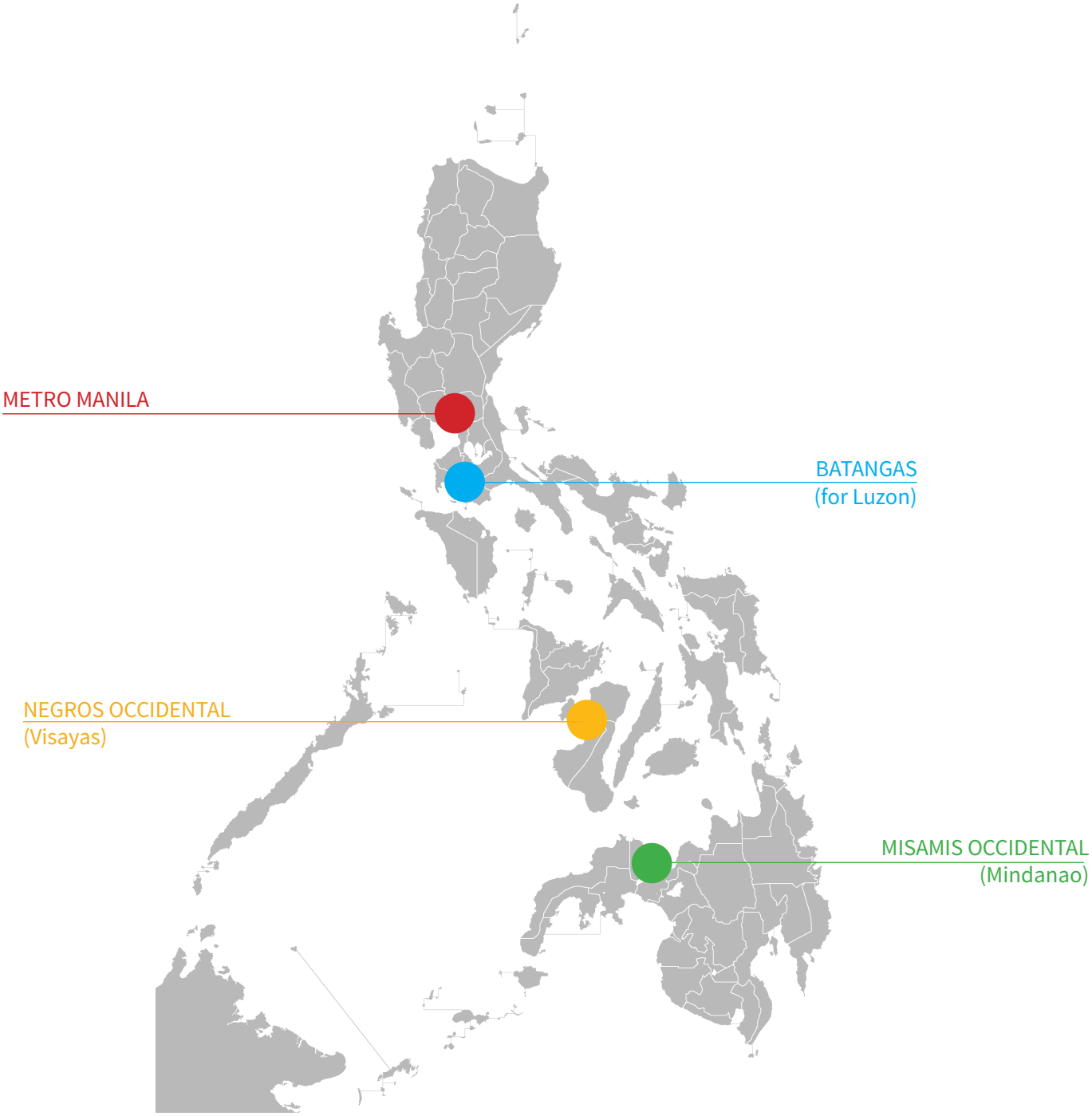


Table 1. Breakdown of the 152 Filipino youth interviewed

	GENDER		AGE GROUP		EDUCATIONAL STATUS	
	Female	Male	15-17	18-24	School-going	OSY
Metro Manila	22	16	14	24	30	8
Batangas (Balance Luzon)	20	18	17	21	32	6
Negros Occidental (Visayas)	19	19	9	29	30	8
Misamis Occidental (Mindanao)	19	19	10	28	30	8
SUB-TOTAL	80	72	50	102	122	30
TOTAL	**152**		**152**		**152**	

Three validation sessions were conducted to communicate the results and obtain feedback from specific stakeholders. First, we participated in a meeting with Facebook and academic researchers to communicate the progress of the project, share initial findings, and obtain initial feedback. Another validation session was conducted with parents, teachers, and guidance counselors. Validation sessions were also conducted with Filipino youth through regional FGDs to verify the findings and further solicit the youth's recommendations on what they think are viable actions to both prevent and mitigate social media bullying and harassment. Overall, these validation sessions provided opportunities to offer a more nuanced and grounded understanding of online bullying and harassment among Filipino youth.

Our Report unfolds as follows. This Chapter introduces the project and our approach. Chapter 2 discusses youth's responses to what they identify as bullying and harassment on social media, including a discussion of specific acts and spaces on social media where these are perceived to take place. Chapter 3 covers how the youth experience social media bullying and harassment, the extent to which they are affected, and how they respond. Chapter 4 analyzes the process of how Filipino youth evaluate the severity of particular acts of bullying and harassment. We flesh out the key socio-technical dynamics at work in this process. We end the report with a summary of our recommendations for action to be taken by key stakeholders, discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 2

IDENTIFYING BULLYING AND HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA: PERSPECTIVES FROM FILIPINO YOUTH

IN THIS CHAPTER, we address the question, *What do Filipino youth identify as communicative practices and technology-specific strategies that signal harassment and bullying on social media, and in which spaces on the platform do these take place?*

The conceptualization and understanding of bullying on social media often take off from the experiences of physical bullying and harassment.[13] As social media reaches greater ubiquity especially among young people, efforts to understand the diverse ways in which bullying and harassment are inflicted and experienced by the youth become more important. Exploratory studies of online bullying have raised critical questions about superimposing the conventional definition from the in-person context onto the social media context, and assuming this to hold across multiple social media settings and cultural contexts. For example, traditional acts of bullying are often directly articulated toward a clear target [14] and take place in bounded physical spaces.[15] Although there are parallel experiences online, social media poses unique conditions that necessitate a rethinking of the ways bullying and harassment on social networking sites are identified and experienced by the youth.

The Filipino youth identified a broad range of acts that signal bullying and harassment on social media. These acts differed in terms of the nature of the (a) target, (b) acts, and (c) spaces on social media where these took place. Before we explain these acts, we follow suit with earlier works on socially-oriented approaches to technology and narrate the nature of our participants' digital access.

DIMENSIONS OF HOW YOUTH IDENTIFY ONLINE BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

1 Targets

How bullying and harassment online can be aimed at individuals, groups, or ideas

2 Acts

How bullying and harassment online can be done in a range of direct or indirect ways

3 Spaces

How bullying and harassment online can be done across bounded and open settings

TARGETS

Online bullying is not necessarily directed towards individuals, but also as attacks towards groups and ideas that the youth affiliate with. The fluidity of targets implies that online bullying is a normalized inter-group phenomenon and involves social processes.

ACTS

Social media bullying can be fluidly articulated as direct or veiled acts. Veiled acts expressed in the form of jokes, sarcasm, or other creative forms of articulation are also construed as bullying, sometimes with the perpetrator and the victim blurring in the process.

SPACES

Acts inflicted in siloed and bounded spaces can easily flow into open spaces, and vice versa. Social media bullying and harassment can be done through episodic interactions that can become continuing and persistent, involving multiple actors due to the dynamic and fluid flows of interactions in bounded and open spaces on social media.

Gradated but constant digital access

One striking aspect about the Filipino youth in this study was that despite their wide-ranging socio-economic backgrounds (see the discussion on research design in Chapter 1), their digital access spanned more than one social media platform. When asked about which platforms they and their peers would use the most, they often mentioned at least two. The young people invariably included Facebook, Messenger, and YouTube. To a lesser degree—and more commonly for the in-school, urban, middle and upper class ones—they also mentioned Twitter and Instagram.

The youth had varied kinds of access. The in-school participants, and the middle to upper classes in the urban areas especially, tended to have a polymedia-rich online experience. This was characterized by a constant connectivity to a diverse range of social media platforms. They had Wi-Fi at home and their family provided them with postpaid mobile data plans. Some participants from the lower class, meanwhile, had a generally more limited version of polymedia. This could best be described as "good enough access."[16] Although they did have online connectivity, it was subject to many material constraints, like the weak data signal inside their houses and their family's limited prepaid data allocation.

There were, however, important similarities in the digital access of the youth. First was that their ability to go online was premised on what we described in Chapter 1 as the underdeveloped telecommunications infrastructure of the Philippines.[17] All of them were bound to have encountered choppy data calls, laggy video chats, and intermittent connections. This did not stop most of them, however, from spending a significant amount of time being on their favorite social media platforms. We return to this later on in the chapter, when we talk about how their time spent online was something that mattered in terms of how they identify and experience bullying online.

Connected to the point above, a key technology that was central to many of the youth's digital access was the smartphone. This technology was often where they experience polymedia.[18] For the in-school participants, the smartphone was their easiest access point, which they used together with other devices such as their tablets and their laptops. For some participants, it was their main access point, especially if they and their families did not own any other devices. Since smartphones were mobile, portable, and readily available, they opened up the youth to the possibility of a polymedia access that was ubiquitous and, literally, always in their pocket.[19] The thought of their constant connection to polymedia was crucial to how young people encounter bullying online.

Finally, many of the youth had been online since primary school. And their most common entry platform was Facebook. This was in spite of the company's policy that only those who are 13 years old and above are allowed to create an account. As a consequence of the many years that these young people have spent on social media, they tend to feel familiar with these technologies. In their narratives, there was often an implicit assumption that they were very much digital natives.[20] As we discuss in Chapter 4, however, they did not always know the platform features of Facebook and other social media that might have helped them mitigate their experience of bullying and harassment online.

Diverse Targets

We begin our discussion of how Filipino youth identified acts of bullying online by referring to particular targets or recipients. These targets may be broadly categorized into individuals, groups, and ideas. This expands the literature that often identifies victims as individuals, and which implies a clear binary between "bullies" and "targets" (or those perceived to possess less power than the attacker).[21] By articulating that targeting can be directed at individuals, groups, or ideas, we do not only expand our understanding of bullying or harassment targets. We also indicate the greater fluidity and normalization of bullying among the youth within everyday socialities on social media.

Individuals

Filipino youth talked about individuals as targets of online bullying, and they referred to individuals as either themselves or their peers. Although the youth were not asked about direct experiences in our interviews, some of them, especially those from Metro Manila, disclosed how they personally encountered online bullying. Meanwhile, some of the youth talked about individual bullying in terms of how they observed the experience of their classmates and friends. Whether personally experienced or as observations of their peers' experiences, they shared that individuals were attacked and bullied for physical characteristics such as facial appearance, skin color, body shape, or speaking and writing flaws, while others were bullied by calling out their attitude.

The perpetrators may also be known or unknown to the individual targets. Known perpetrators were usually identified as classmates, schoolmates, or friends but there were many instances where unknown individuals were able to perpetrate bullying or harassment due to social media's ability to enable dummy accounts.

Groups

When groups become the target of online bullying, the focus is on extending the perceived in- and out-group differences in social media. The emphasis on groups as targets extends the argument that online bullying is also an intergroup phenomenon and involves group process.[22] Emphasis on in- and out-group differences manifested in two ways.

First, it highlighted regional differences, that is, residents from one province were viewed unfavorably, or even bashed, by those from another province. For instance, an interviewee from Mindanao shared,

> "...they would say that there are a lot of immoral people here. Like there are a lot of scandals spreading here even if it's not true"

(Misamis, female, 15-17, in school)

The same identification of regional differences became the anchor for online bullying in the Visayas region. Although the bullying could start from a single person, in-group identification triggered the commenting and participation of more people, leading to group bullying. This is illustrated in the example "...in the Bacolod and Iloilo bashing, it started with one post, status, and then comments, and that's it, it spreads. It started with a post, with a status, then they bashed each other, then it spread, and the people from Bacolod joined together, the same with Iloilo" (Negros, male, 18-24, in school).

The second characteristic of group bullying was that it reinforced discrimination against specific social groups. These attacks were enacted by sharing memes, regular posts or comments that did not pertain to any particular person. For example, an interviewee characterized attacks against the LGBT community as a form of bullying that is inflicted upon people who associate themselves with this identity, especially when the comments become expressions of hate such as calling them a "burden to society" (Misamis, female, 15-17, in school).

Ideas

While not as salient as individuals and groups, ideas were likewise objects of online bullying. Moreover, Filipino youth and their groups felt that they were targeted because of the ideas that they represent. In calling for government accountability during COVID-19 for instance, an interviewee experienced online bullying from an unknown perpetrator:

> "It's like they're attacking your personhood. Because I've personally experienced that in the comments...It was something about COVID funds...I also commented something about where the [government] funds go...Some stranger commented that I'm still young. And so, I don't have a right to speak...and then he started attacking me. That based on how I looked, it seemed like I knew nothing"

(Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in school)

By including groups and ideas as targets, the Filipino youth and their experiences revealed that online bullying is not necessarily directed toward a specific individual.

While individuals, groups, and ideas could be distinct, they also overlapped, and as a result, contributed further to a characterization of online bullying as involving a broad range of acts.

As narrated by Filipino youth, individuals who are affiliated with groups and/or ideas may also experience online bullying.

Acts: A Range of Articulations

Face-to-face bullying or harassment is usually direct, such as using hurtful words or actions to threaten a person repeatedly. There has been a tendency to categorize specific types of acts of aggression within a wider field of interactions and then distinguish bullying or harassment from those other types of aggression. Yet, the exploration of "bullying" to encompass a broader set of aggressive interactions across different cultures and practices on social media has not been well studied. For example, joking, teasing, and rough play appear differentiated from bullying, but the immediate exclusion of certain acts in consideration of a priori conceptual and normative definitions has been raised as a limitation in the examination of bullying across contexts.[23]

Although the Filipino youth identified several forms of directly conveyed attacks, they also recognized veiled acts as constitutive of bullying or harassment. Unlike previous characterizations of acts of bullying and harassment that refer to "extraordinary practices and behaviors",[24] we emphasize that direct and veiled acts illustrate the breadth of everyday acts identified as bullying and harassment on social media that ordinary youth inflict and experience, sometimes with the perpetrator and the victim blurring in the process. We make a distinction between ***direct*** and ***veiled*** acts illustrate further how these involve distinct communicative practices and technology-specific strategies that engage social media's unique affordances.

Direct Acts of Bullying

We define direct acts as "in your face" acts. In Filipino, this can be construed as *"tinutumbok"* or *"walang paliguy-ligoy,"* direct aggressions that are unequivocally identifiable by the youth and which are often motivated by ill feelings. In the stories of the youth, these included dehumanizing a person or a group, directly expressing contempt or severe disgust toward a person, mobilizing or calling on others to harm a person or group, inflicting or threatening to harm a person or group through statements of threat or other physical harm, or sharing private images/videos, especially of sexual nature, to attack or humiliate a person. These direct acts of bullying and harassment were enacted by engaging the multiple affordances of social media. They were also inflicted by known or anonymous perpetrators. Perpetrators could "go an extra mile" by creating "dummy accounts and use it to send harsh messages privately or even post stuff online to demean a person" (Batangas, female, 15-17, in school). Anonymous attacks created distress for the youth aiming to find out who the perpetrator was; it could also create tensions in their relationship with friends whom they suspected to be the perpetrators.

Commenting

The most common form of direct attacks were done by commenting in public or private spaces. This included making negative remarks or bashing a person through the comments section. Many young people observed such forms of overt bullying among their peers:

> "I have experienced many situations like that and I witnessed my classmate when we were in Grade 8. It was a cyber bullying matter that was brought to the school office because of the severity and it is about her speaking condition that is lisping. She has had that condition since birth and it was offensive for her but she bottled up all her feelings. Others just disregarded her feelings and kept on teasing her when she posted her profile pic on Facebook with comments like 'ponga' (lisp). I experienced it as well but not as deep as hers."
>
> 
>
> (Negros, male, 15-17, in school)

What worsened such acts was when they would become the seed for other harsh comments to follow.

As expressed by a respondent, "because someone already made a negative comment, others just imitate it...it can be both [in] private [chat] or on the newsfeed" (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school).

This public bashing could also be triggered by calling out particular people on social media, which the youth also considered as bullying.

The participation by known or unknown others in the comments section implied that "even if you don't know the background story, you just post about a person...and then you'll say that this person needs to be cancelled because of certain attributes that might not be true" (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school).

Targeted Posting

Sometimes the youth would also post expressions of contempt or disgust publicly toward a person or a group. The victims were distressed because of the loss of control toward the situation, especially since it took place on another person's newsfeed. To illustrate:

> "Before...I was very fat. I was dark, I had a lot of pimples. Then someone posted on Facebook that I was from a mental hospital. They were saying that I was so fat, that I have a bad attitude, they were posting it. I was like, 'What?!' Then they spread it on social media and I couldn't do anything about it, I couldn't delete the post itself because it wasn't mine."

(Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in school)

Tagging

Another common modality of a direct attack was tagging the person. According to the youth, this was a strategy to call the attention of someone "who may have opted out of updates from another person," and which made it difficult for them to avoid such attacks. Observers may further tag other people, making the attack more visible to publics who may know the victim, creating greater feelings of shame for the victim:

"That's the thing, they want to see people shaming other people on social media and once they made their truce, the other meddlesome people would be the ones to fight... They just want to see the mess, to see people fighting" (Metro Manila, male, 15-17, in-school).

Posting in Group Chats

Group chats were also a common site for direct attacks. In one example,

"there's a group chat there and then all of my classmates are there and also we have this one nerd guy. We can bully him through that group chat. Like we talk about him, how he looks and how he talks like that" (Metro Manila, male, 18-24, in-school).

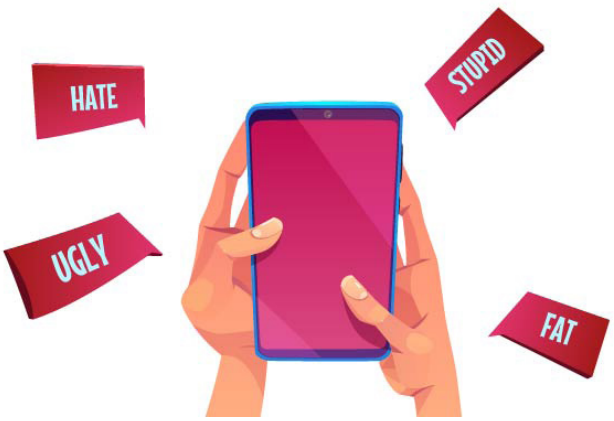
In this example, the victim was part of the group chat and therefore was well able to identify that the attack was directed at him. Attacks that happened in online group chats where the members were known to the victim as peers inflicted a particularly strong impact because they created internal feelings of isolation and embarrassment.

Posting on Online Pages or Groups

Direct attacks also took place in online groups where members had no established relational connection within or beyond the virtual space. This included *Online Rambulan*, a private site designed particularly for facilitating antagonism between and among people of different provinces in the Mindanao region. Sometimes, a person could be

"attacked or bashed in this group because they belonged to a particular province or spoke a certain language" (Metro Manila, male, 18-24, in-school)

and could feel directly or be bullied even when the attacker was not well known to them.



Direct Acts of Harassment

Overall, our data indicated that no clear distinction between bullying and harassment was seen by the respondents, although harassment was generally seen as being "more severe" or "more threatening", often involving extreme cases of online bullying. Like bullying, harassment can be inflicted directly. In fact, most acts considered by the Filipino youth as harassment are directly inflicted attacks. Below are examples of rhetorical devices or technology-specific practices identified as direct acts of harassment:

Private Sexual Attacks

The most common form of social media harassment shared by the youth was sexual in nature. These happened privately, usually on messaging apps (i.e. Messenger). Among the common examples of private sexual attacks included catcalling, where victims would receive messages from anonymous or vaguely known individuals commenting on their looks or body or make demands of a sexual nature:

"There is...cat-calling. When you don't really know who the person is but then he's trying to sexually call you and he just sexually seduces... you're just uncomfortable..." (Metro Manila, male, 18-24, in-school).

In another example, a young girl spoke about an unknown guy messaging her,

"Let me taste you. It is like I (perpetrator) want to—I want to taste your body, something like that" (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school).

The participant then expressed the distress that such a form of harassment caused her.

Broadcasted attacks of harassment

Harassment could also be undertaken by broadcasting a person's characteristics publicly in an antagonistic and directed way that can inflict severe feelings of pain or embarrassment. A participant's example illustrated this:

"if you are in a relationship, and your girlfriend cheated on you and you directly describe her bad characteristics like you are broadcasting to everyone who she is, like 'Asshole! How dare you do this to me after all I've done for you. How could you cheat on me after all the sacrifices I have done?'" (Misamis, male, 15-17, in-school).

Not only would the victim easily identify that the attack is directed at her; friends and classmates familiar with the relationship were also readily able to identify the victim.

Commenting and tagging "kuyog"

Connected to broadcasted attacks in social media news feeds were commenting and tagging, which the youth claimed to lead to harassment. Tagging other friends could reinforce the attack, turning it into "bashing" in the form of "kuyog," a Filipino concept referring to collective antagonism toward another. It then led to escalated aggression:

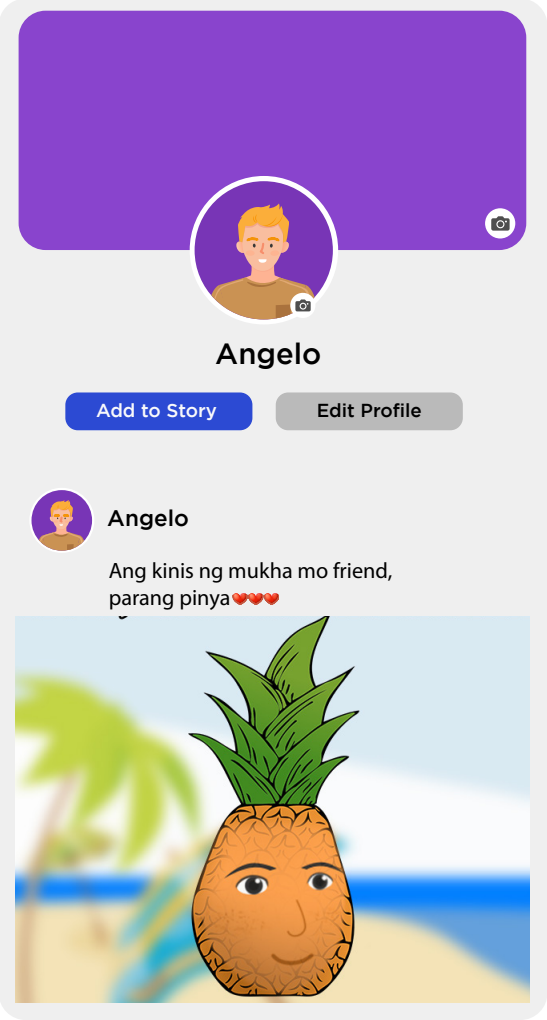
"... how they harass people is like they will pm or if the victim will post, well they will comment with trash talk. They will tag, the offender tags persons who are the companion of the offenders, too, they will simultaneously trash talk the victim. Everything is trash talk. It's really irritating" (Negros, male, 18-24, in-school).

DIRECT ACTS

- Private Sexual Attacks
- Broadcasted Attacks of Harassment
- Commenting or Tagging *"Kuyog"*

Veiled Acts of Bullying and Harassment

Veiled acts, meanwhile, can involve targets that may be identified, but the bullying or harassment are not done directly. These are "veiled"—expressed in the form of jokes, sarcasm, or other related forms of articulation. The rhetorical device renders equivocality and ambiguity, in the sense that the act can be open to more than one interpretation by different young people. In Filipino language, these can sometimes be construed as "paligoy-ligoy" (indirect), "patago" (hidden), "parinig" (hint or insinuate), "patama" (veiled hint), or "pasikreto" (secretly), which find their articulation and meaning using rhetorical strategies and practices supported by the unique affordances of social media.



VEILED ACTS

- Joking and Teasing
- Attacking a person without directly naming or identifying the target ("Pagpaparinig")
- Concealed and backstage bullying and gossiping ("Patago")
- Unconcious participation in bullying and harassment

> "It can be called as—that's just how you make fun with your friends... But sometimes, they don't know that it can actually hurt you."

Joking and Teasing

These included teasing a person about their physical characteristics, shortcomings, or disability, including comparing people to objects for fun or pranks. They were inflicted in various ways such as by posting, commenting, tagging, as well as by using memes or photos. One concrete example that the participants mentioned was posting an unfavorable photo of a friend, annotated with a joke. Joking about a friend can be an intended or a mindless action by the youth on social media. But even if it may not have been intended to bully or harass, their peers might nevertheless perceive it as such. As one participant from Batangas shared,

"This happens when someone shares your photos without permission and makes jokes out of them. They will expose your insecurities and spread it on social media. Instead of gaining confidence, they end up feeling like they are being dragged down. That is bullying" (Batangas, female, 15-17, in-school).

The fun nature of social media created a disjoint between the fun intent and the impact of aggression that a victim may feel toward the joke.

Another young person from Misamis recalled seeing a friend sharing another friend's photo juxtaposed on an image of the *marang* fruit (a native fruit with a spiny exterior), with annotations that make fun of the person's physical appearance. Because they were friends, the participant shared that the victim just commented "hahaha" but the observer saw this as offensive and constitutes bullying:

"It was funny but it was mean and can hurt, so it is bullying" (Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school).

In another example, a participant shared how her photos were jokingly mocked by her friends on social media because of her broad forehead; in several similar examples, peers would comment on a friend's photo or video with humorous remarks or memes that indirectly antagonize one's size, looks, skin color, hair, or sometimes even talent. This was done via tagging:

"one thing I remember is the 'tag a person who is like this' (i.e. a funny photo) trend. I feel like even if it's just a small joke we don't know the person in the picture, jokes that are degrading can be considered as online bullying" (Batangas, female, 18-24, in-school).

Due to their closeness with each other and proximity of experience, peers can share private knowledge or jokes about each other in public spaces, sometimes in tune with the playful nature of social media. Often, the youth explained that the exposure of private knowledge about a peer or an inside joke, to the public eye—and scalable to known and unknown publics—worsened the impact, especially when this turned into a mockery without the friend's consent:

"What I saw from my classmates is the classic way of joking, making fun of a classmate, sending embarrassing photos, embarrassing private moments which are sometimes not within his consent to be seen by others" (Batangas, female, 18-24, in-school).

The act could then be aggravated because these could be shared across platforms and become persistent due to social media's networked nature. The funny image or meme shared on Facebook walls, along with comments attached to it, could be captured by a screenshot, shared across platforms and become searchable and persistent long after the act has been perpetrated.

Despite their humorous or candid nature, many young people shared that the victim would feel hurt and offended by such acts: "It can be called as—that's just how you make fun with your friends. It means that you love them, something like that. But sometimes, they don't know that it can actually hurt you." Others elaborated on the offense:

"Of course that's going to hurt, right? Especially on social media, it's really degrading, like…. You're just sharing your happy moments and you don't really expect to be bullied just because of your appearance, your height, the person you're with" (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school).

In the validation meetings, the youth explained that people might not understand the gravity of the effects of jokes, teasing, or sarcasm. They may not possess ill intentions or motivations but they can still be perceived as hurtful by the recipient:

> "People may not see the gravity of the act because they don't think through what they say and the consequences or effects. So, as one participant remarked during one of our validation meetings, "even if you are regretful of the act, the damage has already been done."
>
> (Negros, female, 18-24, in school)

The youth may not openly express that they were offended by the act and would choose to keep this to themselves. As one young person from Misamis explained,

"You know. It all starts with a joke, they're just joking around without even knowing that the person is already hurt. And sometimes when you're hurt, you just keep it in, keep it in if you don't want to cause more trouble. More of you don't want to make the issue bigger, you just handle it with grace and composure" (Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school).

The youth as peer observers noticed that their friends just did not admit or call out the bullying publicly:

> "I know a lot of people that they feel like they are already being bullied but they can't really admit that they are being bullied because they feel like they are going to be judged like,
>
> 'She's overreacting, it's just this and she's already calling it cyberbullying'."

(Metro Manila, female, 15-17, in school)

These also imply that the youth feel that in identifying bullying or harassment online, the effects or consequences of an act are more important than the intent behind it. This is interesting in contrast to the literature conceptualizing bullying and harassment in terms of intent of perpetrators.

Attacking a person without directly naming or identifying the target ("*pagpaparinig*").

Filipino interpersonal relationships are said to be characterized by harmony and non-confrontational communication.[25] Some Filipinos, especially those brought up in close conservative cultures, find it difficult to give direct feedback or express criticism directly.[26] From our interviews the youth would point out that some of them "don't say it directly" or would express their thoughts using indirect means because "they cannot stand by the consequences of their actions" even when "they really want to attack or say something" (Validation meeting, Manila). These included

"posts on Twitter that are like passively aggressively targeting that person without naming them" (Metro Manila, male, 15-17, in-school).

A participant narrated,

> "In a group of friends, there's someone who they find toxic so what they do is they share a meme which aims at him just because they don't like him. This meme may not be too obvious but the circle knows what it is about and who is being targeted."

(Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school; see also Negros, male, 18-24, in-school)

In another example, a young person from Batangas described that even when posts by friends were used in indirect ways, due to familiarity in context, peers

"understand who that post was about even if it didn't mention the real name" (Batangas, female, 15-17, OSY).

> **“Whether attacking a person without directly naming him or her, or backstage bullying, the youth identified these as bullying because of the ill intent of the act and not necessarily based on their effect on the victim.**

Concealed and backstage bullying and gossiping (“patago”)

Watching over people’s actions or posts and discussing them negatively in private group chats appeared to be common among the youth (Visayas, female, 18-24, OSY; Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school; see also Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school). This everyday observation of other youth’s actions in social media sometimes led to certain behaviors such as backstage bullying and gossiping, where comments on publicly observed acts were aired and exchanged in private spaces. This is consistent with the findings in earlier literature considering rumors and gossip as a form of bullying well-suited to the nature of online communication.[27] This also aligns with previous findings where online bullying is seen to be constitutive of “concealing one’s actions” such as “masquerading as someone other than oneself by assuming a peer’s–typically a friend’s–identity, or posting disparaging pictures while remaining hidden.”[28] One participant narrated that a friend’s grammatical and spelling errors would often become the subject of gossip in their class section’s group chat: *“the classmates would take a screenshot of the mistakes and the group would then mock the person” (Negros, female, 18-24, OSY)* secretly in the group chat, even as they would not directly confront the person.

Many of the examples shared by our participants under this set of acts occurred in the context of school-based relations (i.e. schoolmates or classmates), where a peer may become the subject of bullying in private group chats for various reasons, such as romantic affiliations, looks, or sometimes even for excelling too well in school. Although the “backstage bullying” may not become known or visible to the victim, the youth considered this to be an act of bullying. Thus, whether attacking a person without directly naming him or her, or backstage bullying, the youth identified these as bullying because of the ill intent of the act and not necessarily based on their effect on the victim.

A related act is gossiping, often rooted in group chats but which can be shared and circulated in more public spaces of social media. One participant from Misamis narrated that she knew that her neighbor was bullying her in group chats by spreading gossip about how she had a child out of wedlock. She further shared that the same neighbor also publicly spread false news about her brothers’ drug addiction problem. Such rumors may spread among neighbors and networks of friends of the victim on social media before they would reach the actual subject. This created feelings of shame and frustration because the victim felt helpless about the inability to correct and control the rumor that had already spread across the platform.

“The main way [that bullying happens] is via the comments. Or usually, probably, they get defamed or insulted in private chat groups where gossip can circulate. Like a person gets talked about in private chat groups without him/her knowing” (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in-school).

Unconscious participation in bullying or harassment

Our final example of ambiguous acts pertained to unconscious participation by the youth in bullying and harassment, which the youth pointed out was also triggered by the culture of toxicity on social media. Earlier research has shown that social media gives individuals a platform to harm victims by revealing humiliating information about them, and where social media publics can then participate unconsciously in the aggression.[29] As one young person narrated, the youth would often use people's pictures as memes, and this can be posted on news feeds or in group chats. The participant further lamented,

"people just share those memes without even knowing that those pictures were uhm just taken from real bodies of real people" (Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school).

Another common example in harassment was sharing photos and "video scandals" with sexual content among the youth:

"(These are videos)... both known and random. They will send videos and they will say, look, look. Then it will spread and many people will see it" (Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school).

As the youth emphasized,

> "You don't have any idea that the photo can hurt other people. Sharing sex videos like that then we might not know what happened to that person. So, anything really can be a form of cyber bullying...because, again like, we are in the social media world right now, we didn't intend to hurt other people but we don't know what's the (feelings/ reaction) of that person."

(Misamis, female, 18-24, in school)

According to the youth, this stemmed from an emerging culture where they were attracted out of curiosity or trend to participate in social media and get involved in issues or trending topics, including those not directly involving them or people known to them. The participant continued:

"I forgot the name of that person and then what happens is that it was like a sex video or like, say for instance, that post on YouTube and then that guy is fingering that girl and then we didn't know what really happened on that post on YouTube but what tends to happen is just one day it was circulated in all forms of social media…Their captions were funny, like making memes out of it. Like for example, 'sus kalami sa feeling' like they wanted to feel the same feeling because that girl was very gorgeous" (Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school).

Following the cancel or callout culture, there was a tendency to attack and throw judgements at people who erred or were involved in sex scandals "without trying to understand the circumstance of each individual" (Validation meeting, Manila). The sharing of private images/videos, especially of a sexual nature, out of curiosity or trend, was complicated by collective sharing and commenting made possible by social media's affordances. The original person sharing the post may not have had ill intentions, "yet the intention changed when it reached the view of others". Other participants on social media may be triggered to bully or harass the people on the video that was initially only innocently shared.

Spaces: Across Bounded or Open Setting

Space became central to the ways Filipino youth were able to identify online bullying.[30] In particular, it oriented their experiences toward who were able to witness and join in online bullying. When they mentioned where online bullying can happen in social media, the Filipino youth also emphasized the importance of who were able to see and participate. In order to make sense of how space is implicated in the ways Filipino youth identify online bullying, we differentiate between bounded and open spaces. On the one hand, bounded spaces may suggest limited visibility and low participation. On the other hand, open spaces are porous with unrestricted visibility and high participation. We note, however, that the impact of online bullying does not necessarily differ whether it occurred in either open or bounded spaces.

Bounded spaces and group chats as dominant sites for online bullying

Filipino youth experienced and witnessed online bullying in bounded spaces, specifically on Facebook Messenger. To illustrate, a participant shared

"If the online bullying is private, maybe the bully has hidden hatred toward you. Where it is only you who can say that "Oh, this person is bullying me'" (Batangas, male, 18-24, OSY).

It became worse when victims were threatened privately by people directly known to or close to them:

"It was done on Messenger that if she won't do what he wanted—I think there was a video and picture. That was on Messenger. She was being blackmailed by the friends of her boyfriend" (Misamis, female, 15-17, in-school).

Although the perpetration of the act in a private space implied that less people knew about it, this could also lead to a tendency for some youth to wallow and avoid reporting, even when they were severely affected by the act.

While online bullying may happen using one-on-one chat, it could also be experienced and/or witnessed in group chats, with similarly severe implications for the victim because it created feelings of isolation and out casting from peers known to them:

> "Yeah, uhm, I have a friend, I won't say her name for privacy. When she was in high school, her friend, her "friends", were making fun of her cos she already had uhm, uhm mental issues, and then, she found out in a group chat, like some of the people she knew, they were talking about her and then one of the people said that she hopes that she'll just kill herself already. Like that. So, yeah, I think that's one instance of online bullying that has happened to someone I know personally."

(Negros, female, 18-24, in school)

Open spaces and the emergence of "cancel culture"

In open spaces, there is a high likelihood that a lot of people (known or even unknown to the victim) can witness online bullying. Furthermore, there is a high likelihood that others can participate or join in the spread or perpetuation of online bullying as posts in open spaces can be freely shared to known and unknown publics. To explain open spaces as sites of online bullying, we listened to stories of Filipino youth about "cancel culture" and "bashing." In characterizing "cancel culture" and "bashing" as online bullying, a participant said:

> "I think bashing can be a form of bullying. And, one thing I've also noticed as a form of bullying is 'call out culture' in social media, as well as 'cancel culture'... Like, you just bombard people, you just call out people without letting them explain their sides. That's ruining because for example, physical bullying is hitting a person, and then that person can't fight back. The same with call-out culture, bashing and cancel culture, we try to call out individuals, to cancel or to bash that certain individual when that individual himself cannot fight or defend himself."

(Negros, female, 18-24, in school)

It is also interesting to note how participants emphasized anonymity for enabling "cancel culture" and "bashing" in open spaces. To illustrate, a participant shared his experience on Twitter:

"So, since I use Twitter, Twitter is very very umm, I don't, I can't even think of a word to describe how Twitter's tweets can just destroy someone's life especially when it comes to cancel culture. Because in Twitter, there is like, anonymity, so they feel they can say whatever they want because they are anonymous. So, with, with what is in social media that has become prevalent in cancel culture is the mindset of the people that they cannot be directly opposed, they cannot directly converse with someone" (Negros, male, 18-24, in-school).

Fluidity of bullying and permeability of bounded and open spaces

Although we differentiate between bounded and open spaces, we recognize that online bullying is fluid and may actually move from one space to another. It can happen in a physical space (e.g., school campus) and quickly transfer online. When face-to-face bullying has been recorded, it can be uploaded online and create opportunities for enabling online bullying. For instance, a participant shared

"there would be people who would consider bullying them physically but they would extend that sample footage or a picture of bullying" (Metro Manila, male, 18-24, in-school).

Part of the movement across spaces is the transfer of online bullying from one social media platform to another. Filipino youth may first experience and/or witness online bullying in bounded spaces such as private group chats and that later move to open spaces such as public walls. The ability of online bullying to move from one social media platform to another has been linked to several features of social media such as "tagging" and "posting." To illustrate, a participant narrated:

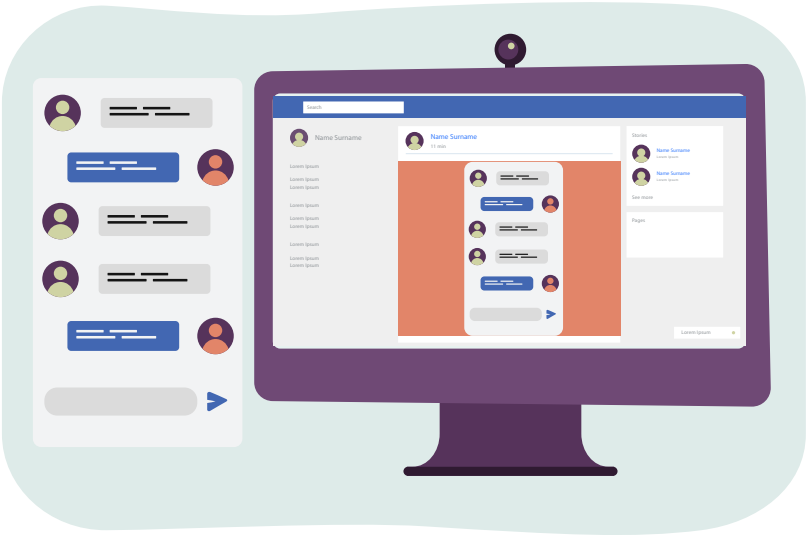
> "Sometimes through messages, for example, they're teasing each other which normally happens in group chats, then some are through newsfeeds which happen through a post, sometimes they attack, or tag friends in the photos, did you see the memes that are spreading where they use a picture of someone else and make fun out of it to create something that's funny for people."

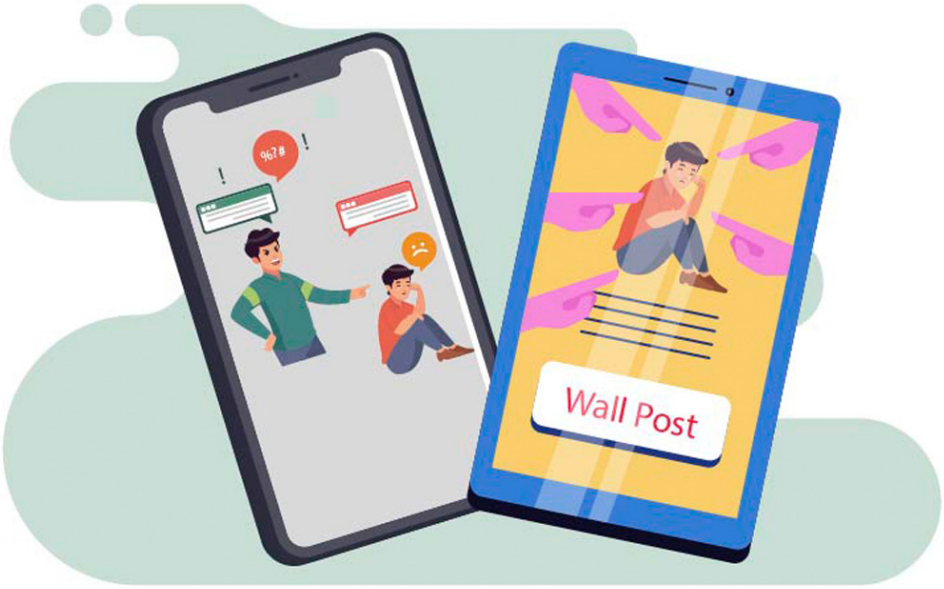
(Batangas, male, 18-24, in-school).

Aside from “tagging” and “posting,” the affordance of persistence also facilitated the movement of online bullying from one social media platform to another. Messages that qualify as online bullying for the Filipino youth continued to circulate across bounded and public spaces largely because people can take “screenshots.” These “screenshots” can be stored and later circulated across platforms to perpetuate online bullying.

By differentiating between bounded and open spaces, the youth’s experiences revealed that online bullying may happen on different social media platforms. In bounded spaces, private group chats served as dominant sites for online bullying to be witnessed and/or experienced. When online bullying happens in open spaces, it creates opportunities for “cancel culture” and “bashing”, which are linked to bullying as intergroup phenomenon and involving group process.[31]

Instead of discounting face-to-face or traditional bullying altogether, their experiences highlighted how bullying may transfer from one space to another. Coupled with advanced cameras and videos, social media features can extend face-to-face to online bullying. The experiences of Filipino youth underscored the extent to which online bullying can move from one social media platform to another. Although open and bounded spaces may differ, the boundaries remain permeable, allowing online bullying to be fluid. This implies further understanding of the roles of technological features and social media affordances in diversifying characterizations and experiences of online bullying that may not have been captured in other contexts.





Chapter Summary

At the beginning of this chapter, we set out to ask the question:

What do Filipino youth identify as bullying and harassment on social media?

> **"Intentionality is not always necessary for an act to be identified as bullying by the youth.**

	Bullying (conventional)	Social Media Bullying
Target	Individual	Individual -- Group -- Ideas (Real -- Symbolic)
Articulation	Direct	Direct -- Veiled
Spatiality	Bounded	Bounded - Open

While we distinguish the key differences in targets, acts, and spaces where bullying and harassment in social media can take place, we want to emphasize that these, in many ways, interact. Individual or group targets overlap, in the same way that direct and veiled articulations can be enacted simultaneously. Further, as we have shown, bullying and harassment on social media that take place in private or bounded spaces can easily spill over into public domains, making the act visible and open to participation by both known and unknown publics.

Intentionality has often been considered a key component of dominant conceptualizations of bullying. For example, bullying is defined as unjustified aggressive behavior in which people "intentionally hurt others",[32] implying the "infliction of willful harm"[33] where people transgress moral principles.[34] Even Facebook's Community Standards define bullying as an "attack that is meant to degrade and shame."[35]

However, we find that intentionality is not always necessary for an act to be identified as bullying, although intentionality manifesting in direct acts tends to be illustrative of harassment. Although the Filipino youth are unable to make clear distinctions in social media bullying and harassment during individual interviews, their collective responses appear to show that this may be a key marker of the difference in how bullying and harassment can be identified. For bullying, the impact can be perceived to be more important than the intent of the act. Meanwhile, intentionality often appears to be present in acts of harassment identified by the Filipino youth.

Bullying has been defined as a prolonged or repeated mistreatment by a person who harbors malicious intentions and who is perceived to be more powerful than the victim of abuse,[36] and often, this conceptualization has been carried over in the analysis of bullying on social media. For example, Google's conceptualization of bullying on YouTube highlights "prolonged or malicious insults based on intrinsic attributes."[37] **Yet, whether direct or veiled, none of our participants identified bullying or harassment as a necessarily repetitive or prolonged act. This implies that an act inflicted by an attacker once can already be identified as bullying or harassment and the youth should be able to report them as such.** This contradicts extant literature emphasizing online bullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted"[38] toward another.[39] Nonetheless, these singular attacks can escalate given the quick spread of content on social media, where other attackers can start to get involved and partake in the bullying, even if it started with a singular attack by one person.

In Chapter 4, we build on the preceding discussion by describing the process of how Filipino youth evaluate the severity of particular acts of bullying and harassment. We flesh out the key socio-technical dynamics at work in this process. But in the next chapter, we first talk about the impact of social media harassment on Filipino youth.

Chapter 3

IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA BULLYING AND HARASSMENT ON FILIPINO YOUTH

Social media bullying and harassment impact the Filipino youth in different ways. As pointed out in literature,[40]

> "The impact of social media bullying and harassment needs to be understood in terms of four pairs of social media elements and effects, namely profiles and self-presentation, networks and social mobilization, streams and social comparison, and messages and social connectedness.

The findings in our study highlight that the impact of online bullying and harassment on Filipino youth are different for each one depending on the interactions of the various social media elements. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the perceived psychological impact of online bullying and harassment is an interplay of the content and features of technology.

Whereas both the bullies and the bullied are affected by online bullying and harassment, this chapter focuses on cybervictimization, referring to the impact on those who were bullied and harassed online. Our findings support previous studies on how cyberbullying impacts the psychological well-being of the youth. Compared to non-bullied adolescents, cyberbullying victims are described to have higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower levels of psychological well-being,[41] negative effect on mood, self-esteem, self-concept, and mental health.[42]

Some examples of cybervictimization that are commonly experienced by the Filipino youth include being tagged with hurtful and negative comments, shaming, and bashing, which can then impact their psychological well-being, mental health, and self-image. The thought that these words and posts are made and stay public for a long time aggravates their negative feelings. Based on a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies, cybervictimization is a risk factor of internalizing problems such as anxiety and depression, and over time, these internalizing behaviors predict further cybervictimization.[43] Moreover, they fear that these contents may be seen by many people, including their family and friends. The perceived lack of control of the interaction in social media can overwhelm young people. The following section is a discussion of the different impacts of cybervictimization on Filipino youth.

Self-image and Mental Health

Regardless of content, severity, and ways of online bullying, self-image is affected. With the negative comments they receive online, some youth begin to have self-doubts and feelings of insecurity, and may lose confidence in themselves. With repeated bashing, they start to feel inferior and to believe that something is wrong with them.

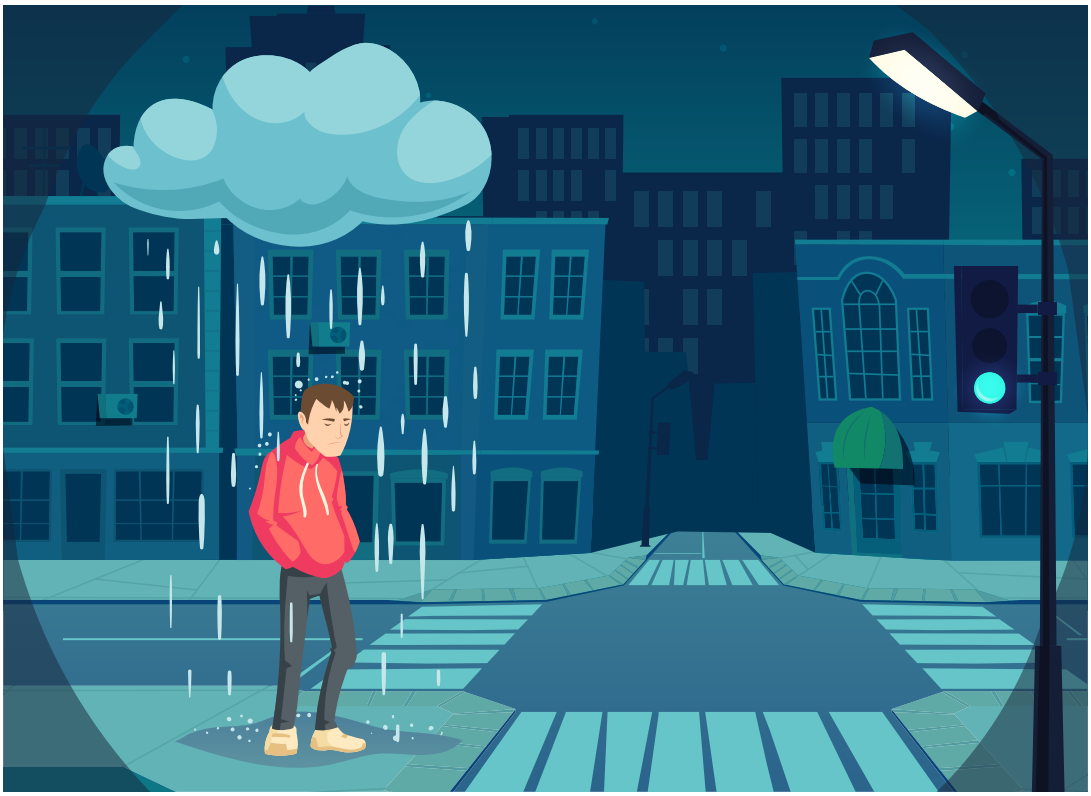
> "...it's scary and it really kills your self-esteem like really kills it by a big amount; that's also the cause of mental illnesses for other people which leads to anxiety, depression, or self-harm."
>
> (Metro Manila, female, 18-24, in school)

> *"It does not only lower the self-esteem of the person but also the confidence gets destroyed, as well as the inspiration."*
>
> *(Negros, female, 18-24, in-school)*

Cybervictimization likewise impacts psychological well-being and mental health, validating results of previous studies that the youth who are bullied online develop anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. Many claim that cybervictimization makes the youth overthink and question their worth. The examples below illustrate how the Filipino youth's mental health is affected when they experience online bullying and harassment.

The impact can be short-term or long-term, and for some, this can result in forms of trauma. Some mentioned that for people who have experienced prolonged and severe online bullying, suicidal thoughts can develop. Even after the incident has ended, they are still affected by the experience of online bullying and harassment. When done persistently for a long time, online bullying can indeed lead to trauma. Some youth take the bullying seriously to the point that they do not want to live anymore.

> "Online bullying and online harassment causes trauma and fear because it's a form of disturbing someone else's peace and when peace is disturbed, things happen. And the outcome of those things is fear, paranoia and trauma, because we don't anymore feel safe in the platform."
>
> (Negros, male, 15-17, in-school)



"I think for others who have no one to talk to, and their feelings get bottled up, they tend to hurt themselves, while others would even take away their lives."

(Negros, female, 15-17, in-school)

Relationship with People

With the experience of cybervictimization, the youth's relationships with people are affected as well. With all the self-doubt, feelings of insecurity, and fear, some choose to isolate themselves from others, both online and offline. There are some who harbor feelings of anger and resentment toward those who bully them and sometimes toward people in general, including bystanders and their friends who did not support nor understand them. The experience of cybervictimization makes it difficult for some to trust people again. **After being bullied or harassed online, some have difficulty forming friendships, either online or offline.**

The victims see social media as an unsafe place to interact with people. They not only have difficulty chatting or interacting with friends online—sometimes they have difficulty forming new friendships, online or offline, because of the trust issue.

Change in Worldview

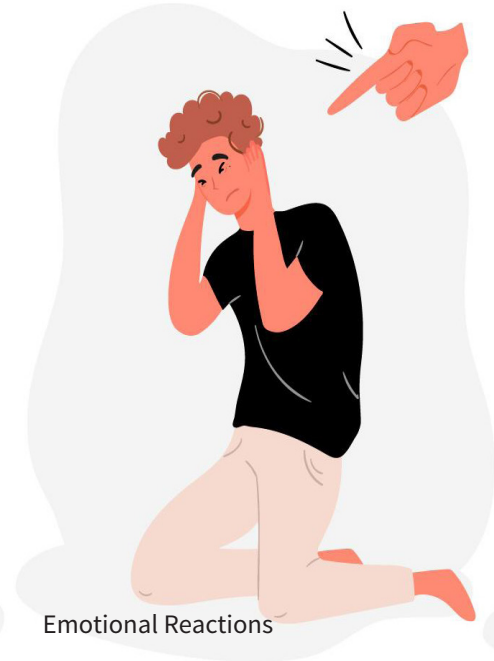
There are also cases when online bullying and online harassment result in a negative worldview, seeing the online space as unsafe for the youth. This negative worldview tends to extend beyond the online space. Many claim that the lives of those who have been bullied severely and for a prolonged time are never the way they used to. Their relationships, academic performance, and day-to-day functioning are affected. They cannot function the way they used to be. Some even went as far as transferring school.

How Youth Cope with Bullying and Harassment on Social Media

To address our final research question, we found that the youth have different kinds of responses to online bullying and harassment. These responses represent different ways of coping with the cybervictimization experience. Studies show that compared to bully-victims (victims who also bully) and those who are not involved in bullying, victims tend to use emotion-coping strategies both in their daily functioning and when bullied.[44] The different reactions and coping strategies of the Filipino youth are discussed in this section.

Emotional Reactions

> "One common type of reaction to cybervictimization is emotional in nature. Some people are sensitive and get hurt easily, succumb to hurtful words (Batangas, male, 15-17, in-school). On one end, some choose to keep quiet or wallow in self-pity.



Emotional Reactions

There are youth who internalize and bottle up their feelings, thinking that no one understands them. They feel that they might get judged if they openly express their feelings. Some of the youth pointed out that the differences in emotional reactions they observed can depend on the sensitivity of the victim:

> *"Like those memes... and then that person is sensitive. Then we tag her because we are the same barkada (group of friends). Then, she suddenly left the group chat…. for me, maybe it also depends on the sensitivity of a person. That there are also those who are really more tolerant. There are also those who so readily get offended and also, with the closeness maybe with the person" (Negros, male, 18-24, in-school).*

Others choose to express their reactions directly, passionately, and in a confrontational manner. There are some who have outbursts, which can be seen in their angry posts and retaliations. Some will try to vent their feelings regarding the online bullying incident. Emotional outbursts can include crying, breakdown, or anger, and they take these feelings out on whoever are with them in a given situation.

Cognitive Reactions

Cognitive Reactions

Some victims try to cope with their experience in a more cognitive way, using cognitive reappraisal to make sense of their experience. Some would try to defend themselves with logical arguments. Others would reframe their experience and think positively and learn from their experience. The negative comments are turned into something positive that can inspire them.

There are also those who use the bullying experience as an opportunity to be better and stronger. What follows are some of their thoughts after the online bullying experience.

> *"For example, if you get bullied because of your face, you will just do whatever to make yourself more presentable so that the bullying will stop."*
>
> *(Misamis, female, 18-24, in-school)*

> *"When friends say 'how come you didn't do anything with this' and they'll probably reply 'why will I bother if I already know I'm not guilty, I'll just be wasting my time in posting a statement when no one will believe me anyways'."*
>
> *(Batangas, male, 15-17, in-school)*

Behavioral Reactions

In order to cope with cybervictimization and to protect themselves from further online bullying and harassment, the Filipino youth use different strategies, which range from ignoring the bullies and the act of bullying to attacking the bullies. This then results in a cycle of bullying. Another response is reporting the bullying incidents to authorities who can provide support and protection, e.g., parents, school and community authorities. The reported coping strategies may be negative and harmful to the victims, or positive and empowering.

For most victims, the immediate reactions are focused on protecting themselves. These may include getting out of the bullying situation, which can be both positive and negative. Some examples of protective reactions include withdrawal from social media, e.g., deactivation of accounts. Some negative reactions include keeping the bullying to themselves or locking their room all the time (Batangas, female, 18-24, in-school).

Our findings show that many victims choose to ignore the situation, rationalizing that they do not want to make a big issue of it, especially for those who think that they are not guilty and did not do anything wrong. For these victims, keeping peace is more important. As one respondent shared:

"There are others who choose peacekeeping, where they don't want to make it a big issue, since they know in themselves that they're not guilty, they won't bother anymore" (Batangas, male, 15-17, in-school).

> **"Some victims are described as empowered. They take concrete actions, which include reporting the incidents and experiences to people they trust and who can provide support and protection, such as parents, school and community authorities.**

Some choose to report to friends (online or actual) and peers who can provide moral support. Previous studies also highlight the protective mediating effects of social support from family, friends, and teachers on the relationship between cyberbullying and psychological well-being.[45]

Youth are noted to be closer to their friends than to their parents, so most would tell their friends but not their family. Likewise, many reach out to their friends since they are more accessible online and friends know what is happening to their other friends on social media. Most of the time they would confide in their friends since they spend more time with friends than with their family.

“In fact, there are mixed reactions when it comes to sharing their bullying experience. Some claim that parents usually do not know if their children are bullied online or not. There are also a lot of things that youth hide from their parents and hence, they would rather not report an online bullying/harassment experience as this might result in revealing some of the secrets they keep on social media.

One participant narrated that sometimes parents tend to invalidate and minimize the cybervictimization of their children. Similar to the experience of Thai youth,[46] most Filipino youth keep online bullying problems to themselves and do not seek the advice of their parents.

Those who tend to share with their parents are those who have good relationships with the latter. When the bullying persists and the victims feel helpless about the situation, some claim that the youth have no choice but to report to their parents. Online bullying victims’ decision not to involve their parents is common across youth of different cultures. For youth in Spain, the role of parents in intervening needs to be reinforced.[47]

“Reporting to authorities is also not seen as a common practice among youth when it comes to online bullying and harassment. Few choose to report to authorities, e.g., teachers, or app administrators. Some youth are afraid and uncomfortable to talk about their problems, especially to their teachers.

There are a few who confront bullies and defend themselves on social media. One participant said:

“I need to fight this because that’s not really me” (Batangas, male, 15-17, in-school).

For some, openly sharing their experiences is a way of encouraging others to come out into the open, hoping that a group of bullied victims can come together to fight online bullying. By doing this, some of the victims gain strength and confidence.

“To protect themselves from further online bullying, some withdraw or deactivate their social media accounts. Some call this response as social media detoxification or a social media break.

They get away from social media. Some, on the other hand, unfollow, unfriend, and block the perceived bullies. Some, on the one hand, join online groups as a way of protection. For those who have experienced extreme bullying and harassment and are affected severely, they seek professional help. Others unfollow, unfriend, and block those who bully them or support the bullies.

Behavioral Reactions

> **“In sum, the way Filipino youth cope with cybervictimization depends on the actual bullying experiences (content, severity, frequency), their personal resources and coping strategies, and social support (family and friends).**

There are both positive and negative coping strategies.

Youth with differing relationships with technology, such as whether they take social media too seriously or give much value to it in their lives, may experience this act differently. Similarly, depending on their personality characteristics, some would ignore this act as a mere joke, while others would consider this to be bullying—whether or not they openly confront their peers. We also found a temporal dimension marked by one’s personal growth or capacity to process their experience, indicating that the youth do not identify the same act as bullying or harassment across time. The youth shared with us that as they mature and reflect on their experiences with social media, they realize that certain acts (i.e. banter with friends, innocent jokes) that affected them when they were younger are in fact constitutive of bullying even when they did not initially identified it as such. For some, they are able to disregard remarks that they may have considered as bullying in the past. For others, they realize that they should have called out an act that they felt like bullying but were uncertain at the time.

Chapter 4

UNPACKING HOW FILIPINO YOUTH ASSESS THE SEVERITY OF BULLYING AND HARASSMENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

IN CHAPTER 2, we fleshed out the differences and convergences of three key dimensions that the Filipino youth draw on when identifying bullying and harassment in social media. In Chapter 3, we examined how the Filipino youth perceived the impact of online bullying and harassment, including how they respond to these experiences of online aggression.

In this chapter, we further deepen our discussion by shedding light on the socio-technical dynamics that underpin the process by which the youth come to value the severity of online bullying and harassment. As the stories of our participants show, it is important to comprehend bullying in social media relationally. This entails seeing that what young people do on one platform does not happen in a vacuum. They are instead linked to the broader social context in which they find themselves as well as to what they do on other platforms available to them as well.

To help frame our discussion, we draw on the concept of "polymedia."[48] The first of its two key ideas is that people's experience of online platforms are no longer of individual technologies having distinct possibilities and limitations. What they experience is an integrated communicative structure that allows them certain "technological affordances" as regards mixing up different platforms and overcoming the individual constraints of technologies.[49] In this chapter then, we pay particular attention to how the Filipino youth encountered Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms in an integrated way. Crucially, we underscore that these social media did not fully determine what the youth do online. These technologies, however, did have intrinsic characteristics that framed what young people thought they could possibly be done with them.

The second key idea of polymedia is that because technologies are no longer constrained by their individual affordances, what becomes important in understanding how individuals engage with them are the other social dynamics at play.[50] The concept particularly urges

us to think about the social and emotional consequences of the way we negotiate with the affordances of the technologies that we use. In the subsequent discussion then, we also show that while social media offer certain affordances for how Filipino youth identify and experience bullying and harassment online, these possibilities are moderated by these young people's relationship to other individuals, to ideas, and to the platforms as well.

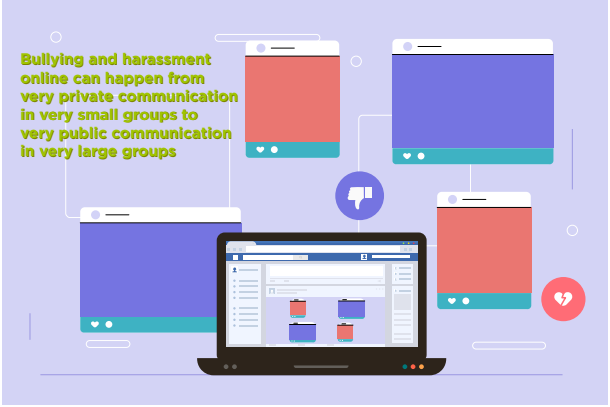
In the following, we discuss our analysis of the dynamics underpinning how Filipino youth assess the severity of bullying and harassment online into two sections. First, we discuss the impact of how well they are able to manage and work around social media's technological affordances. Second, we also consider their proximity or perceived closeness to people, groups, or beliefs that are featured in online content.

On the youth's engagement with and perceived value of social media

Based on the stories of the Filipino youth, we can glean three key technological affordances of bullying and harassment online that make these young people's assessment of their severity different from face-to-face bullying. That is, that they are (1) scalable, (2) networked, and (3) persistent.

1 Social Media Bullying as Scalable

The scalability of social media means that young people can experience bullying and harassment online across two interrelated continuums.[51] One is from very private communication, such as Facebook Messenger, to very public communication, such as an open post on one's Facebook wall. The other is from a very small group, such as one-on-one messaging, to a very large group, such as free-for-all online forums.



There are acts of bullying and harassment online that can be located in a single intersection of the two scales. One example of this is an act done both via private and one-on-one communication, such as with direct messaging. Another kind of act at a single intersection of the two scales of sociality is one done via relatively more public and more group-oriented communication, like with publicly readable comments on Facebook.

It seems though that social media bullying and harassment are most distinctly and distressingly polymedia when it is done across a range of intersections along the two scales of sociality. These are acts that simultaneously involve the private and the one-to-one as well as the public and the group oriented. Because they seem to span a person's online life, they can feel relentless.

2 Social Media Bullying as Networked

A second technological affordance of bullying and harassment on social media that we saw is that they can be networked. Quite different from face-to-face bullying that feels like contained individual incidents, each of these acts have the potential to be a "node" that connects a wider web of relations.[52] Although they begin as incidents that are known only to the original participants, they can quickly become visible because of the participants' connections to other people online, but also offline. A second connected point is that as nodes, these acts have the potential to become open to many "input connections."[53] Once these incidents attain high visibility, they can spur people not originally involved to participate and, as such, amplify their pernicious implications.

One concrete way that we can see networked bullying at work is via the phenomenon of social media convergence. Riffing on the notion of "media convergence",[54] we refer to acts that flow from one platform to another, with their boundaries collapsing in the process. As a consequence, the different features of these technologies become used alchemically in a mix-and-match manner, allowing many people not only to participate in the bullying, but to do so in multiple ways as well.

3 Social Media Bullying as Persistent

A third and final technological affordance of social media bullying and harassment is that they can be persistent. On these online platforms, the original act—which can already be scaled and networked—also stays on and, taken to the extreme, even accumulates. If it were easier before social media to "edit or 'overwrite' our childhood memories in order to carry forward only information deemed relevant or tolerable, we are now entering an era in which our relationship to the past is out of our control."[56]

One thing that makes traces of bullying online difficult to erase is that so many people can post, share, and comment about a particular act across many different social networks. They spread very far and wide, so trying to find and delete them all becomes almost impossible. Some of the other youth identified the reasons why this kind of bullying might spread even quicker online in such a way that one cannot track its traces anymore. These include, among many things, tagging individuals, dropping content in group chats, and even taking time out to make highly shareable memes.

Apart from the online persistence of acts of bullying and harassment on social media, there are people who can also take screenshots of these and store them offline as evidence, which can be recirculated online at an opportune future time. This is something colloquially called a “resibo” (or receipt). This persistence of online bullying and harassment also has to do with how people can constantly revisit the act. This is something they do by reposting the original content with a new caption, reenacting it, and the like.

Taken together, this persistence of bullying on social media can lead to a kind of coral-like accumulation of many virtually unerasable acts online. This especially happens when content featuring young people leads not only to the seemingly endless recirculation of this original material, but also to the creation and further recirculation of other new materials.

In light of all these technological affordances, some youth avoid platforms which they perceive to be more toxic, or are more strategic in their use of platforms where certain people known to them such as friends and relatives are and where they can build more productive relationships. Connected to their varying levels of control and literacy, some are able to comfortably use its features or work around its complications, such as hiding friends or posts, controlling the visibility of their posts, or discerning which messages to post in public or private spaces. Others, however, are not as forthcoming in navigating the multiple affordances that also differ across social media spaces.

Here, it is important to note that alongside all these affordances, young people are strongly affected by what is written about them and therefore see certain acts as bullying because of how they see the importance of social media in their lives and to the people around them.[57] This also encompasses how much time they spend on social media or how much they care about what people say to each other on the platform.

Proximity or perceived closeness to people, groups, and ideas

> **“How the youth assess whether an act is bullying or harassment or how grave an act it is, is also connected to the level of their relationship with the perpetrator, group, or idea, and, when the act is visible to people known to them.**

Some of the youth are more directly and strongly affected by the act when they know the perpetrator (i.e. as a friend, a classmate, or a relative) or when they know that people close to them have seen the act on social media. In this case, the person who experienced it might be affected even when only a few people are exposed to the act, as long as these are people they personally. Sometimes, the identity can be concealed but the person who directly experienced bullying may be able to identify the perpetrator to be a friend, and this can be perceived to be more hurtful. The effect might not be as strong, although still considered bullying, when the perpetrator or the observers are not too well known to the person who experienced bullying.

It seems that the participation of people whom one knows to be part of social media bullying and harassment makes the experience worse. But of course, they know that these acts can flow around the social media environment. As we have illustrated in Chapter 2, the youth may also consider an act of “joking” or “teasing” by their friends as bullying, even when they might not call this out or react publicly, especially when the act is done within the public view of other friends. For example, when friends share a photo of a friend publicly while jokingly mocking the friend’s physical appearance, we found that the friend may see this as bullying, whether or not the victim calls this out as such.

The youth’s proximity to groups and ideas or beliefs is also important in terms of how online bullying and harassment are enacted and identified as such by the youth. As shown in Chapter 2, these happen in group chats where membership may make them experience or inflict bullying or harassment by liking, agreeing or commenting on such posts. This means two things: first, social media bullying and harassment can be perpetrated due to these mediated collective ties and affinities; and second, acts can be perceived by the youth as bullying or harassment due to their affinity or connection to a group or a belief system, whether or not they are the direct target of bullying.

Still, many of the acts that we identified are beyond the youth’s ability to control and negotiate with the affordances of social media. So, how they might differ in the way they experience and respond to bullying or harassment can be shaped by their individual attitudes and personality differences. Here, individual personality characteristics emerge to be important on whether a young person would identify an act to be bullying or harassment, as well as how they would experience or respond to the act in particular ways. These individual characteristics may include temperament and personality traits. There are individuals who are more sensitive than others, and therefore may react more personally to jokes perceived to be harmless by others. Likewise, there are people who are more hardy and therefore are less affected by online bullying. In general, it may be difficult to predict who is likely to feel bullied or severely impacted.

Chapter 5

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

SOCIAL MEDIA BULLYING AND HARASSMENT are complex phenomena that require the collective response of platforms, local support communities such as schools and guardians, as well as the youth themselves. This chapter presents the implications for action and our recommendations. These recommendations are divided according to key stakeholder groups: platform (i.e. Facebook), local communities (schools and parents), and the youth. Across these stakeholders, we emphasize the importance of considering a broader range of scenarios (targets, acts, and spaces) by which bullying and harassment can be enacted and experienced given the growing complexity of the youth's social media engagements.

Further, we highlight that the online and offline environments are not separate—in many ways, they interact in shaping the youth's social environment. This implies that while responses primarily point to the development of standards and actions guiding online behavior and engagements, the promotion of safe environments in households, schools, and community spaces are equally important.

I. Platform (for Facebook)

Facebook Community Standards outlines what is and is not allowed on the platform and these policies are based on feedback from the community and the advice of experts in fields such as technology, public safety, and human rights. Community Standards are written to ensure that people's voices are valued and Facebook crafts policies that are considerate of different views and beliefs.

Drawing from our research, we present recommendations that can address both the prevention and mitigation of social media bullying and harassment.

(a) Prevention: Consider a broader range of scenarios of social media bullying and harassment

In this study, we presented the multiple ways bullying and harassment can manifest and be experienced by the youth. These include variations in terms of the targets, acts, and spaces where these can be enacted. This connects to the value of considering how cultural nuances affect the manner in which actions on social media are perceived and experienced by the youth.

> **“To date, the range of scenarios that qualify as bullying or harassment in community standards and policies tend to be limited. Thus, we encourage social media platforms such as Facebook to consider this broader range of scenarios of bullying, harassment, and victimization on social media.**

1. We recommend that the multiple ways that bullying and harassment on social media can be experienced by the youth be communicated to the Facebook team of policy makers and content moderators.

2. We suggest that this be reflected in Facebook’s Community Standards and Policies. If possible, there should be a local version of these examples, with local language translation options that users can opt to access.

3. When people create group chats, we suggest adding an automated message that is explicit about promoting safe spaces on the platform. An automated message about responsible GC use may include a clickable link to the Community Standards that presents the broad range of possibilities in which bullying and harassment can be enacted in the group context and ways by which this can be scalable to other spaces in and beyond the platform.

4. Facebook is encouraged to make interactive educational materials (e.g., short videos, infographics) to communicate the breadth of bullying and harassment acts and experience, in ways attuned to local contexts. This includes providing educational tools (e.g., videos, infographics) to train teachers and parents on how to respond to and prevent bullying in order to ensure the safety of children and young people.

(b) Mitigation: Make the reporting process more encouraging for victims, witnesses, and in a broader range of platform spaces

The youth victimized by bullying and harassment already experience personal difficulties including possible effects on self-esteem, and acting on the experience via reporting can be an additional struggle. Self-reporting can be encouraged if the reporting process 1) promotes self-efficacy, or can be comfortably done by the youth; and 2) articulates response efficacy, or that reporting is important, effective, and contributes to a collective effort and goal of promoting a safe social media environment by correcting the act of bullying and harassment and minimizing them in the space.[58]

Promote Self-efficacy

1. When asked to describe the youth's responses to social media bullying and harassment, our respondents shared the low likelihood that the experience will be reported by the youth to the platform. Many of them say that reporting seems like a "hassle" and can only create further problems for them. **A revisit of its current reporting mechanism is therefore recommended. Making reporting more encouraging and simple by providing clear guidelines would be helpful.** Response time is of course connected here, which is crucial to prevent the further sharing of posts to other social media platforms. Self-reporting should not be a burden among those who have already experienced bullying or harassment on social media.

2. **Facebook may consider expanding the "self-reporting" mechanism to make identification of bullying and harassment a shared responsibility.** This implies allowing others—as "witnesses" and not direct victims—to report acts that they observe to be harming their peers on the platform. In so doing, Facebook can provide opportunities for bystanders to participate actively in mitigating bullying and harassment on social media.

3. Our study found that bullying can take place in smaller group chats (GCs) than can escalate to public spaces, and vice versa. In GC reporting, we suggest adding bullying as an option under "Something's wrong". While Facebook upholds that "privacy is at the heart of Messenger—where you can be yourself with the people who matter most to you"—it lacks the mechanism to cater to bullying concerns especially in the context of GCs. **Although GCs provide a reporting mechanism addressing different concerns such as harassment, self-harm, sharing inappropriate content, hate speech, or unauthorized sales, there is no specific option that allows a user to tag the experience as bullying. Thus, the platform is encouraged to add bullying as an option under the "Something's wrong" tab under Groups.** It would also be helpful if it provides a short definition of terms for the user's convenience and proper tagging. By promoting self-efficacy, Facebook will make self-reporting become less difficult both for those who directly experienced bullying or harassment on social media and those who have witnessed them.

Emphasize Response Efficacy

1. **The platform can make the acknowledgement of a report more encouraging for victims who come forward and underscore the value of reporting in its response.** We found that some of the youth are discouraged because the automated response leaves the user with a feeling that what had been experienced is "not as important" as other forms of grievances or concerns. In particular, as one young member shared during the validation session:

   "When someone reports, Facebook gives only basic messages that 'we received your report'. But these can be people who have been severely affected. So it would be better if they give a sense of affirmation that they are acting on the report. Otherwise, it can be discouraging to report."

   Although Facebook is doing its best to improve reporting mechanisms, changing the tone and the statements in the Policies and Reporting to convey a warmer and encouraging stance could be helpful. This further includes improving the feedback mechanism by telling the youth what Facebook is doing to address the report. In so doing, Facebook can communicate to the youth that reporting is an effective mechanism of mitigating bullying or harassment on social media.

2 **Secondly, encouraging the user to report the incident to the parents, trusted friend, or adviser may be added to the acknowledgement of the report.** This can include mentioning relevant national helplines that are based on the user's country to support young people in reporting harassment, bullying, and violence, or identifying available and trusted self-help communities within its platform or elsewhere. By emphasizing response efficacy, Facebook will make self-reporting become worthwhile both for those who directly experienced bullying or harassment on social media and those who have witnessed them.

II. Local Communities

Social media bullying and harassment, although taking place online, have an impact on the physical lives of the youth. Similarly, as we have shown, the occurrences of bullying and harassment on social media relate to the youth's offline relationships with peers, classmates, and broader communities surrounding them.

When the youth are victimized, they may be afraid to come to school or go home, for fear of what awaits them. There are several examples in recent years of teens who have committed self-harm and even suicide as a result of bullying and harassment on social media. Those deaths have resonated throughout local, national, and international communities. As such, schools, parents and other relevant stakeholders, including the young people themselves, need to be included in the development of appropriate solutions.

In this section, we discuss our recommendations for two key actors: schools and parents, given their positions of social authority, and how they can assist in both the prevention and mitigation of bullying and harassment on social media, including helping the youth in the management of the experience and in their reintegration to communities.

> "We emphasize that schools fortify their efforts toward bullying and harassment by considering a broader range of scenarios of bullying, harassment, and victimization on social media.

A. Schools

The learning environment is an important space that can shape the youth's ideas about online harm, and how they can cope with these harms. Similar to our recommendations to Facebook, we emphasize that schools fortify their efforts toward bullying and harassment by considering a broader range of scenarios of bullying, harassment, and victimization on social media.

Preventive

1. Embed Social Media Bullying and Harassment in the Curriculum

Incorporating social media bullying material into the curriculum would be an important intervention that schools can adopt to prevent social media bullying and harassment. Schools may integrate a discussion of the broad range of scenarios in which bullying and harassment, both in-person and on social media, can be enacted and experienced by the youth into their curricula or into specific courses such as media and information literacy or even during homeroom sessions.

As technology evolves rapidly, so too must the school curriculum. Curriculum development may also involve the parents. Parent-teacher meetings can be used as a venue and opportunity to engage in the issues through open and frank discussion. Beyond teaching about how bullying and harassment can be enacted and experienced, the curriculum should focus on empowering students in terms of digital literacy, technological skills, critical thinking skills, e-safety, assessing their own online risks, measures to protect themselves, their reputation, and their privacy online.

2. Action within the guidance and counselling program

We also recommend that schools integrate social media bullying and harassment awareness in the Guidance and Counselling Program. Teachers involved in student affairs, counseling education, educational leadership, and higher education could prepare school counselors and those that are counselors-in-training about the multiple iterations of social media bullying and harassment, the different ways youth experience this, and how they respond. In addition, counselor educators, guidance and counseling staff and aides, and other professionals could actively partake in the process of educating students about the potential effects of bullying, both to the perpetrator and to the victim. Highlighting concepts of empathy, respect, and individuality would be crucial.

a The first step is to take the matter and acknowledge the presence of bullying and harassment seriously, including a careful consideration of the multiple ways this can be perpetrated and experienced by students. Understanding how social media works and how it operates is important.

b Counselors can create a conducive environment where the youth can openly discuss what it means to be kind, responsible, and respectful to others, whether in-person or online. This includes highlighting the role of peers in upholding a safe and healthy online environment. Bullying and harassment can be mitigated when the bystanders speak up. Encourage bystanders to carefully assess the content that they encounter, whether on newsfeeds or in private groups, and reflect on their behavior toward these. The youth should be encouraged that they have a role in refusing to pass along bullying and harassment content, and that they can stand up for their peers when they observe such acts online. Critical to creating a conducive environment is the need to communicate the importance of privacy, such that the youth will know that what they will share will not be disclosed to other parties without the necessary safety nets.

c Discussions initiated by guidance counselors could involve ways to avoid victimization. Reminding teens to be mindful about uploading sensitive content into an electronic format and sending it to people can be included in conversations.

d Students view most adults as unknowledgeable about the digital world and bullying or harassment in particular, a perception validated by studies done with educators.[59] Students are unlikely to tell school personnel if they do not think that they can help them. Thus, school personnel require further education and training regarding engaging in the digital world. [60] A commitment to professional development in this area coupled with the design and development of collaborative interventions involving psychological service providers, teachers, parents, and youth is needed. [61] We suggest that a training manual for Counsellors and teachers include information about the basics of online bullying and harassment, a practical orientation; and discussion of skills and strategies for diagnosis and intervention.

Mitigation

The youth need to see that they have an ally in the school counselor or teacher. Victimization can induce feelings of shame and self-doubt, and speaking about it to others, especially persons of authority, may be overwhelming to the youth.

School programs need to establish a welcoming environment for the students to open up and speak about experiences of victimization without judgment. It is important to communicate to teens that their counselors and teachers care and want to help, and if there is a problem, these actors can advocate for them, not blame and threaten to limit social media use. We suggest encouraging reporting and sincerely hearing out experiences of abuse, harassment, and bullying.

When the youth and their guardians have approached school authorities about experiences of victimization that involve school peers, it is important that the school also offer regular updates on actions being taken and what resolutions have been made. In so doing, the school reinforces the idea that reporting is an effective way of mitigating bullying or harassment on social media.

Promote parent-teacher partnership to prevent bullying and harassment

Schools are encouraged to involve parents in shaping the youth's knowledge about social media bullying and harassment and how they can respond to these experiences. Parents are considered as the primary gatekeepers and managers of the youth's internet experience since they are with the youth on a more regular basis and are seen overall as persons of authority. Thus, they are the most often cited source of advice and the biggest influence on teens' understanding of appropriate and inappropriate digital behavior. Yet, some parents may not fully understand how social media operates, or the breadth of circumstances and possibilities in which bullying and harassment can be enacted and experienced on social media.

Parents and teachers are encouraged to forge a partnership to proactively address bullying concerns and develop preventive measures. These could be done through regular parent-teacher conversations and by developing informational materials attuned to parents' needs.

Explicit discussion in Student Handbook

Philippine schools may be struggling to create policies that deal with social media bullying and harassment, including the use of cell phones in schools. While banning technology is not the answer, youth should be encouraged to be good digital citizens who are more discerning of when and how they use technology. This can be made explicit in the Student Handbook. When schools adopt codes of conduct, it would be helpful to apply them to activity in or out of school and discuss the consequences up front. The notion that home and school are two separate spaces no longer exists in the minds of digital kids, especially now that they are navigating the pandemic with online schooling. Bearing in mind the premise that schools are using technology to deliver education and instruction—they have a responsibility to educate students to use it in a more productive way.

B. Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians are the most often cited source of advice and the biggest influence on teens' understanding of appropriate and inappropriate digital behavior. However, based on our interviews, there are many circumstances that prevent children and the youth from divulging or discussing their social media bullying and harassment experience with their guardians. These include a generational gap—the perception that their older guardians know less than they do about digital life, or understand it very differently. Another can be the perception that they can be reprimanded if they open up about their direct experiences with bullying or harassment to them.

1 Foster a safe home environment

We recommend that the key action in the household is for guardians to foster a safe home environment, which can translate outside the home and into social media. Fostering a safe home environment involves promoting respect for the youth's actions and ideas and facilitating open conversations about their everyday experiences and curiosities—whether about the online environment or not.

When the youth open up about experiences of bullying and harassment on social media, they should be encouraged to discuss their feelings about the experience, and the guardians can guide them through the processing of this experience. Guardians can also offer help on what options are available for them, which include reporting to the platform or to the school, or confronting the bully. However guardians should respect the youth's decision and what they ultimately decide to do at a particular point in time. Guardians should never invalidate experiences of bullying and harassment as being unimportant, overreacting, or simply the result of extensive gadget or social media use. We encourage guardians to observe the youth for changes in behavior, such as depression or being aloof, that may be initial manifestations of victimization.

2 Practice digital safekeeping and have open conversations about limits

Guardians are the primary model of good behavior on social media. They may influence their children/youth's behavior through a dialogue with them about screen time limits and agreeable conditions of good and bad behavior on social media. Guardians can talk to the youth about safe, risky, and disrespectful online practices. They can also answer questions that youth have and give advice in response to questions. Part of this open conversation involves asking the youth about who they interact with on social media and their overall experiences around it. Parents may also have open discussions about being friends with their children on social media and what the youth feel about this.

III. The Youth

Our research spoke to the Filipino youth to better understand how they interpret and experience bullying and harassment on social media and we now present recommendations that attend to the youth in particular:

1 Recognize and promote the youth's awareness about a broader range of scenarios and acts that may constitute bullying and harassment on social media.

Our research participants—the youth themselves—pointed out a broad range of acts and scenarios that they would consider to be bullying and harassment on social media. These can be targeted at individuals, groups, or ideas they care about. While many of these are articulated unequivocally and directly, numerous acts fall in the grey area or what is expressed in "veiled" forms that may be ambiguous for both the perpetrator and the person to whom the articulation is directed. The youth may be performing actions online that are unknowingly hurtful and perceived as bullying and harassment by another. Similarly, many of them pointed out that they may already feel heavily offended by certain actions of their peers and suspect this to be a form of bullying or harassment, but might invalidate their feelings because they are unsure about how to label their experiences. Some are able to realize this as they mature, or upon speaking to peers, and this allows them to report the act or seek counselling; but others keep the feelings to themselves, which sometimes propel them into isolation or worse, self-harm.

We therefore emphasize that the youth should be made aware of the breadth of the possibilities of perpetrating or experiencing bullying and harassment on social media. **The youth's experiences and feelings should not be invalidated simply because these may not fit our conventional definitions or expectations of what bullying and harassment should be. Their own interpretations of bullying or harassment—as experienced in context—should be recognized and acted on. This is important because recognition of their experiences will shape the way in which they will and can respond.**

2 Acting on experiences of social media bullying and harassment

In the previous sections of this Chapter, we suggested important shifts in perspective and policy that platforms and local support communities (i.e. parents and schools) may take to help prevent and mitigate bullying. Nonetheless, there are available options for action that the youth can take, and it is important that they are made aware of these possibilities for action.

Connected to our recommendations about the mechanisms for support by local institutions and communities, the youth should seek access to and be provided with opportunities to disclose and report their experiences at a pace that is comfortable to them. When they take the courage to approach schools, peers, or parents about their experiences, concrete mechanisms that can support their emotional state or that can re-integrate them into helpful social circles should be available. We found from the accounts of our participants that the youth are able to process their experiences with the help of social circles (whether in person or on social media) that are able to relate to and not invalidate their experiences.

3 The importance of becoming an upstander for other youth

Although bullying and harassment on social media takes place within a mediated context, these are well situated within social groups and circles that become direct or indirect witnesses of the act. Our youth participants revealed that sometimes, even peers who witness bullying and harassment remain as bystanders or worse, co-participate in further bullying, either because they are unable to recognize the act as bullying, or because they do not see their role in its prevention or mitigation.

The youth should be made aware that they can stand for their peers and perform concrete actions to support them when they feel victimized.

Recognition of a broad range of possibilities by which bullying and harassment can be enacted can help the youth in more carefully assessing their actions and engagements on social media, possibly choosing not to participate in them when they see them unfold in group chats, or even actively calling out or reporting perpetrators when they witness incidents, whether they personally know the victim or not. Directly reaching out with understanding and support is also valuable because those who experience bullying may try to isolate themselves for fear of "having lost face" or having become social outcasts.

Overall, our recommendations above should function holistically, and in complementarity with each other.

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