

ARTICLE

The Victims of Cyberbullying

Almost nobody apart from the children themselves know about the cases of virtual harassment. Parents (6% of all the cases) or teachers (only 3% of the cases) are rarely informed about them. It means that it is a common belief that a young person should manage such situations him/herself. Why do the victims of bullying and cyberbullying not seek help from the adults even though they trust them and get along well with them? There are actually many reasons:

- 1 The victim is afraid that informing anybody will only make the victims' or his/her own situation worse,
- 2 Somebody blackmails him/her with consequences if they inform anybody,
- 3 The victim is afraid of the consequences in the form of aggression in the virtual or real world, even without being blackmailed by the aggressors,
- 4 The victim is ashamed of his/her own behavior which was connected with an electronic aggression incident,
- 5 The victim is ashamed to inform the adults as the aggression was connected with using vulgar language and indecent content,
- 6 The victim thinks that he/she him/herself is the cause of aggressive behavior so he/she deserves what he/she got,
- 7 The victim thinks that he/she will not be able to describe the situation for the parents or teachers to make them fully understand it,
- 8 The victim is afraid that the adults will trivialize the case of verbal or electronic aggression as these are "just words" in contrast to "real" physical aggression,
- 9 The victim does not know who to ask for help,
- 10 The emotions that the victim experiences in connection with the incident are too strong to make him/her try to look for help,
- 11 The situation described during a cyberbullying incident really took place (e.g. a kiss or other intimate acts with another person) and the victim does not want to spread it further,
- 12 The victim is afraid that the adults will not believe him/her.

Is the cyberbullying victim profile any different from the physical or verbal bullying victim profile? Usually not – children just take advantage of new technologies to achieve their goal which is harassing the others. The Internet and modern technologies provide them with anonymity and the possibility of easily making and spreading things such as memes or doctored photos. There is only one main difference: literally anyone may become a victim of cyberbullying – thanks to the fact that "the distribution of powers" in the web does not have to be undertaken in accordance with those that take place in real world.

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Just like Adam's bullying cycle started from refusing to play on a school team, so the history of another child may begin for a similarly trivial reason, even with an innocent joke on a social networking site. What is more, there are some cases known in which the adults suffer from cyberbullying – parents, teachers or trainers. This situation is quite a novelty and is absolutely unimaginable in real world. The anonymity (illusory very often) that the Internet provides, enables the children to let themselves misbehave much more. There once was a case of two students who pretended to be teachers and held some discussions on sex and using drugs on the school's profile "on their behalf". In another case, a child pasted a teacher's face into a porn photo and sent it to his friends via email.

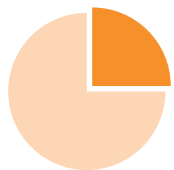
Let's have a close look at some research (based on the *Report from Counselling Service concerning cyberbullying Statistics*), as its results are highly alarming:



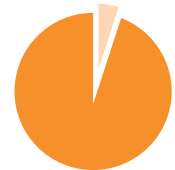
Over half of teenagers have experienced cyberbullying



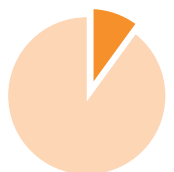
Over half of the teenagers using social networking sites witnessed the act of harassing aimed at somebody



Over 25% of the respondents experience it regularly via mobile phones or the Internet



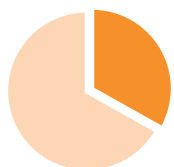
95% of teenagers that witnessed online harassing ignored it, neither taking any actions, or informing somebody



11% of the respondents admit that somebody took a photo of them that was humiliating or discrediting without their consent



Over half of the teenagers admit that they would never tell their parents if they have ever suffered from online aggression



33% of teenagers who have suffered from harassment also received threats or were blackmailed by the offenders



Only one in six parents realize the intensity and the scale of the cyberbullying phenomenon!

The last statistic is especially unpleasant. We really do hope, that the course in which you are currently taking part, will help to broaden the knowledge of parents, caretakers, and teachers when it comes to cyberbullying. As in the world of new technologies, this phenomenon is common and deserves our undivided attention!