

Cyber bullying

MYGENDER

MEDIATED YOUNG ADULTS' PRACTICES:
ADVANCING GENDER JUSTICE IN AND ACROSS MOBILE APPS



CYBERBULLYING

BOOKLET FOR TEACHERS OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

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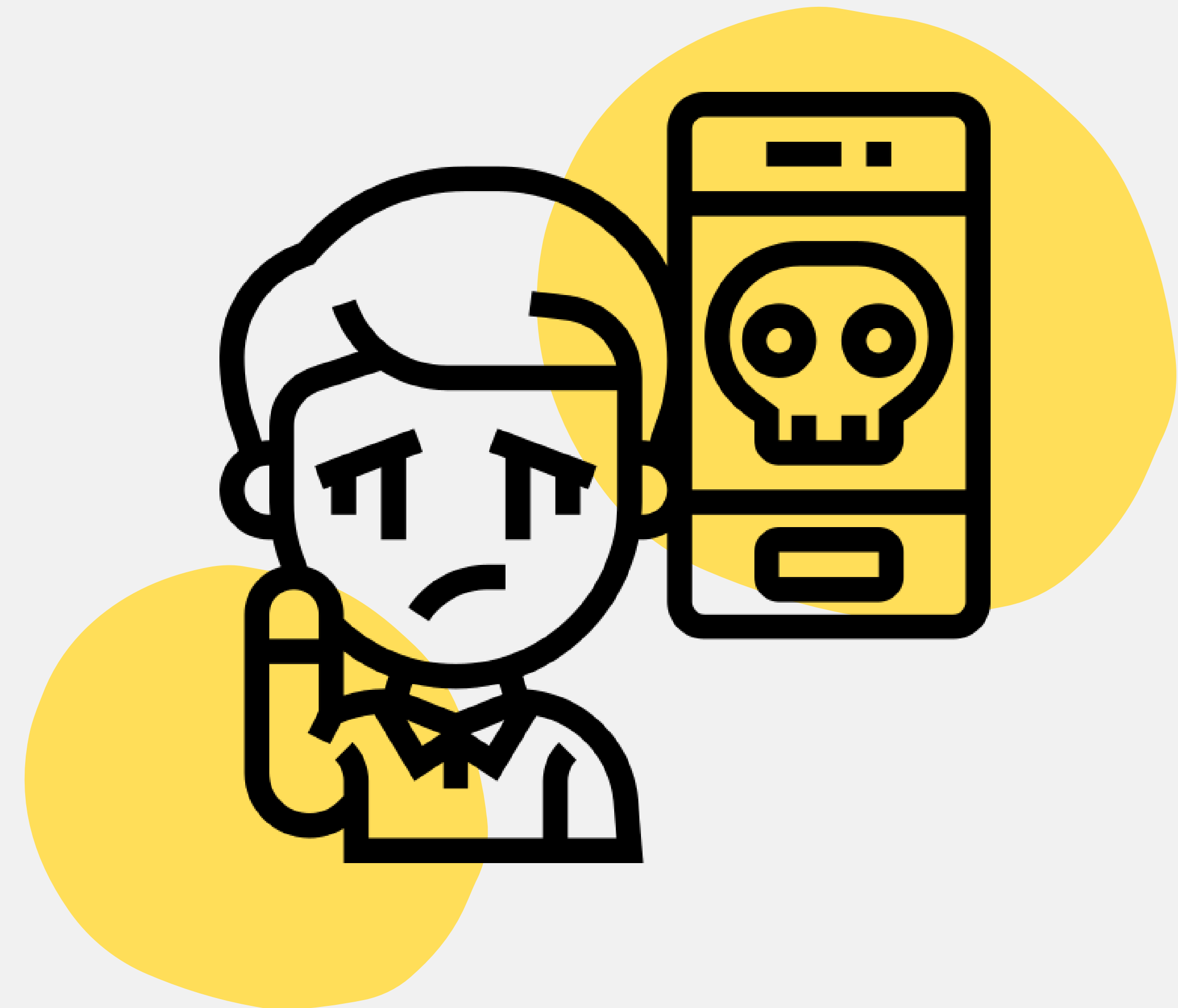
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WHAT IS CYBERBULLYING?

The simplest way to explain the term "cyberbullying" is to conceptualise it as a set of virtual ways of practising bullying. It is thus a set of practices involving the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviours practised by an individual or group with the intention of harming someone else. It generally affects children and adolescents, being a problematic form of a vicious attack, since it goes far beyond the walls of schools. There has been a high growth of cyberbullying practices, due to the growing weight of the online and digital world - namely social media and other online platforms - in every person's life, including in the lives of children and adolescents.

Cyberbullying often happens side by side with bullying that does not occur by digital means. Therefore, when talking about cyberbullying, one should always initially talk about bullying.



🔍 IMPORTANT!



According to the project "NO BULLY PORTUGAL" (2022), for aggression to be considered bullying, there must be:

- A peer relationship: colleagues of similar ages (not adult/child, or co-worker/boss, for example);
- An imbalance of power: bullies use their physical or social power to control or hurt others;
- Repetition: it happens more than once, or has a multiplier factor, such as social media.



BULLYING SHOULD NOT BE UNDERSTOOD AS A MERE PRANK AMONG COLLEAGUES!



It is true that bullying typically happens among children and young people in a school context, however, it is a phenomenon that can happen anywhere and in any context, and between any people.

According to a study conducted by the Centre for Research and Social Intervention of ISCTE in 2020, focused on a period of confinement during the Covid-19 pandemic in Portugal, the phenomenon of cyberbullying has reached new levels of severity with the aggressors not only feeling indifferent but also joyful at the consequences of their attacks.



Q SOME DATA:



- More than 60% of young people (16 to 34 years old) were victims of cyberbullying in the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Cyberbullying increased exponentially in Portugal during the three months of confinement in 2020;
- Around 41% of the people surveyed have assumed themselves to be the author of the attacks;
- 29.4% were indifferent to the suffering caused by their actions;
- Still in the group of aggressors, only 16% admitted they felt guilty about their acts.

WHAT CONSEQUENCES CAN BULLYING HAVE?



In the particular case of bullying of children or young people, it is extremely important that educators - both in family and school environments - who interact closely with these children/young people, understand that bullying in its various forms can have both short- and long-term consequences for everyone involved. Most academic research properly focuses on those who suffer bullying, but in fact, even those who bully others are negatively affected. It should also be taken into account that there are bullying cycles, i.e. situations in which a person who is a victim of bullying ends up bullying others in order to position themselves in a situation of advantage - emotional, social, physical, among others (StopBullying, 2018).

In any case, bullying, of whatever specific type, **proves to be one of the most impactful conflicts in our daily lives,** particularly when it is poorly resolved, which tends to be common. In such cases, it can leave permanent marks both in psychological and physical terms and even in more extreme situations, it may lead to depression, suicide attempts or even death.



TYPES OF BULLYING ...

(No Bully Portugal, 2022)

- **Physical bullying** - using physical force to hurt another person by hitting, pushing, kicking or stealing;
- **Verbal bullying** - using words to humiliate another person, by threatening, insulting, or ridiculing;
- **Relational bullying** - isolating that person from a particular group, by spreading rumours, or seeking to use that person as a scapegoat;
- **Cyberbullying** - using mobile phones, email, chat rooms and social media to bully another person.

The different types of bullying are not mutually exclusive. That is, a given situation can be categorized into different types of bullying at the same time. However, concerning the case of situations that, at least, embrace the digital domain and therefore fall under the definition of cyberbullying, the impact of that aggression may be greater, due to the fact that what is posted online is hardly ever totally eliminated, as its digital trail may be perpetuated, continuously replicated, unlike physical aggression, for instance. If this digital trail can be seen as negative, from the point of view of perpetuating the abuse towards the victim of cyberbullying, there is also a positive side, because this digital trail can become useful and provide evidence to help stop the abuse (UNICEF, 2022).

CYBERBULLYING ... PREVENTION

There is no easy solution. However, since in the digital world the trail cannot be erased, it is advisable that social networks/media are used in a safe way, by being aware of privacy settings. On many of these platforms, one can take preventive actions such as (UNICEF, 2022):

- A person can choose who can view their profile, send them messages directly or comment on their posts;
- Bad comments, messages and photos can be reported, and it is possible to request that they be removed;
- In addition to unfriending, it is possible to completely block a person, who will then no longer be able to view your profile or contact you;
- You can choose to have certain people's comments appear only to them, without blocking them completely;
- It is possible to delete posts from a profile, or hide them from specific people since in most social networks, people are not notified when they are blocked, restricted or reported.





WHAT IS THE ROLE OF ADULTS IN RESPONDING TO CASES OF (CYBER)BULLYING? X

In the school, educators should remind children to report any harmful or offensive behaviour that they perceive as cyberbullying (but also bullying that happens outside of the digital elements).

Children/young people should be informed about the different ways that exist to denounce and report these cases. In the particular case of cyberbullying, one should encourage the positive side of the digital trail, which involves keeping the messages/comments/images, either to talk to adults in a school context (teachers, headmasters, and psychologists), or even to report to the police authorities in more severe cases.

They should also be encouraged to tell their families and friends about the abuse they have suffered, and they may also be encouraged to seek professional help from projects such as "NO BULLY PORTUGAL". In order to end bullying, it is necessary that people identify it. Therefore, reporting it is essential. It can also help to show the bully that their behaviour is unacceptable.



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