

Cybersecurity and Online Harassment

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Introduction

Cyberbullying and online harassment involve using digital platforms—such as social media, email, text messages, or gaming chat—to intentionally harm, threaten, or humiliate others.

Examples:

Spreading false rumors or private information online

Sending threatening or insulting messages

Impersonating others to damage reputations

Doxxing (exposing private data such as addresses or phone numbers)

The Role of Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity plays a key role in preventing, detecting, and mitigating incidents of online harassment. While the root issue is behavioral, cybersecurity provides the technical and structural defense mechanisms to protect users.

Prevention and Protection

Privacy controls: Encourage users to manage digital footprints, strengthen passwords, and use two-factor authentication to prevent impersonation or hacking.

Encryption: Secures private communications and reduces data theft or exposure.

Anonymity protection tools: VPNs and identity protection software reduce risk of targeted attacks.

Detection and Response

AI-based content monitoring: Platforms like X (Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube use algorithms to flag hate speech, threats, and bullying behavior.

Cyber incident reporting systems: Schools, companies, and governments increasingly deploy digital safety centers or hotlines.

Digital forensics: Cybersecurity experts can trace IP addresses and preserve evidence of harassment for legal use.



Education and Awareness

Cyber hygiene training: Teaching users how to recognize scams, fake accounts, or phishing attempts tied to harassment.

Collaboration: Tech companies and cybersecurity professionals cooperate with law enforcement to identify and address online abuse.

Psychological Aspects

Cyberbullying has significant mental health impacts, often more severe than face-to-face bullying because it can occur 24/7 and reach large audiences instantly.

Emotional consequences: Anxiety, depression, isolation, and low self-esteem.

Long-term effects: PTSD-like symptoms, trust issues, and social withdrawal.

Victim and perpetrator psychology: Both often experience issues related to control, identity, and self-worth.

Digital empathy: Education about online behavior and its emotional consequences can prevent escalation.

Social Aspects

Community impact: Online harassment creates toxic digital environments, reducing trust and participation.

Normalization of abuse: Repeated exposure can desensitize users and promote hostility.

Vulnerable groups: Women, minorities, and LGBTQ+ individuals often face higher levels of targeted harassment.

Cultural dimension: Some societies stigmatize victims or fail to recognize cyberbullying as a serious issue.



Legal Aspects

Laws and Policies that address cyberbullying and online harassment.

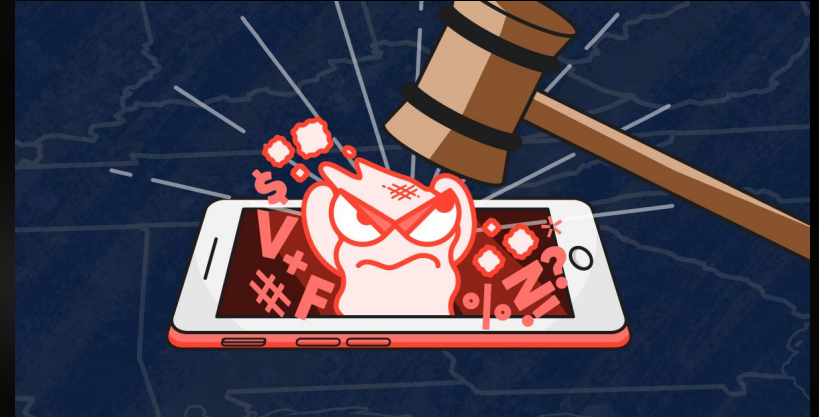
Examples:

- States with cyberstalking and cyberharassment statutes
- Federal laws such as Computer Fraud and Abuse Act(CFAA)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Malicious Communication Acts/ Anti-Harassment
- Budapest Convention on Cybercrime
- Tech companies and law enforcement cooperation

School-based Anti-Bullying Policies

Most states require schools to:

- Establish policies on cyber bullying
- Investigate incidents that disrupt learning
- Report or discipline offenders
- Provide prevention programs



Ways to Prevent/Reduce Cyberbullying

How to prevent cyberbullying

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- Encourage digital literacy
- Create safe environments for open and honest communication
- Make specific guidelines/policies for expectations about online behavior
- Speak out and ask for help
- Take advantage of privacy settings and tools

Conclusion



Cyberbullying and online harassment are not only social and psychological issues but also **cybersecurity concerns**.

Addressing them effectively requires:

- Strong cybersecurity infrastructure (to protect and detect threats)
- Education and awareness (to promote responsible digital behavior)
- Legal frameworks (to hold offenders accountable)
- Psychological support systems (to aid victims in recovery)

By integrating technology, psychology, and law, society can create safer and more respectful digital spaces.

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