

## **STAGE 2: TEMPLATE & GUIDELINES**

### **Introduction**

Face-to-face bullying transitioned to screens way back when affordable computers became available on the market. Some people say that traditional bullying is bad because of its physical risks, but others argue that cyber-bullying is worse for its longevity. Either way, it is something that organizations, schools, and governments have been working to prevent for a long time through campaigns and websites that spread awareness.

### **My Claim**

Cyber-bullying is not as big of a problem as it may seem to be portrayed because limits or restrictions are available, it is not physically harmful, and punishments are possible.

### **Importance**

This discussion about cyber-bullying is important because as citizens of the online world, people have to use the internet to their advantage. Any type of bullying is just unacceptable, and using social media to prevent any further occurrences is a very powerful move, which we have seen in other major historical events such as the Arab Spring. And although it may seem like social media platforms are made to go against the people, most of them are actually very user-friendly and offer many features that can lessen cyberbully victims.

### **Reason 1**

Many social media apps have multiple different ways of blocking, limiting, and censoring messages from outside sources that users may not want to welcome and/or give permission for a certain message to be read.

#### **Details**

One social media app that provides options for blocking is Instagram. It has a whole FAQ website solely answering questions about blocking others, which is helpful for those who may be experiencing cyberbullying. One can block a user through settings, directly, or through their profile (Blocking People, n.d.). Blocked users on Instagram are prohibited from mentioning the user, and bullies can be limited from commenting on one's posts. Plus, there is an option to hide offensive comments automatically and lets users add words, phrases, and emojis to block. Every social media platform also enables users to make their accounts private so that only wanted people can see, like, and comment on their posts.

#### **Counter-arguments to my reason**

Cyber-bullies may just create more accounts or spam them messages until they are tempted to open and read them.

#### **Rebuttal**

First, apps make it easy for users to block other users by a simple click of a button, but if bullies attempt to make more accounts, apps also have limits for that. Social media has rules that restrict the creation of many accounts for any user; only one account can be made per email and some only allow a limited amount per device. There are also options of blocking certain words from appearing on one's comments or timeline, which makes the process faster for users with a large follower count. Apps like Instagram also

have a feature that allows a user to block *future* accounts that a specific person creates, which handles the problem of the same bullies creating new accounts.

## **Reason 2**

It all occurs online through messages and/or social media apps. Bullies cannot physically hurt someone through the screen of their phone, and this proves that they are cowards. Being on social media also means that there are many trolls that purposefully comment on others even when they don't intend on bullying the person.

### **Details**

Cyberbullies hide behind their device's screens with the intent of hurting other people's feelings, and a lot of them create fake identities. Although they are making rude comments about others, they most likely do not have the guts to say it in-person. With this in mind and knowing that they cannot inflict any physical pain, cyberbullying is thought by many to be less harsh than face-to-face bullying.

### **Counter-arguments to my reason**

There is no huge difference between the threats made through the internet versus real life. A threat is a threat and could be detrimental.

### **Rebuttal**

From a research conducted by Queensland University of Technology, students said that in-person bullying is significantly more hurtful than cyberbullying. This is because the kids were scared of physical threats and were also embarrassed that bullies were able to seem them victimized (ScienceDaily, 2015). Interviewees mentioned that they thought cyberbullies were cowards because they hid behind screens, and they were easily able to delete the messages and block the users.

## **Reason 3**

In order to have messages sent from one user to another, they would need to have a profile set. Whoever the bully is, they could be held accountable for whatever they say because of the way social media is built. This allows for consequences for whoever may cyber-bully.

### **Details**

Because any social media user is required to have an account, bullies are attached to their online identities no matter how anonymous they think they are. Many platforms have a story feature in which people can use to expose bully accounts and ask their followers to help them in reporting. An account on Instagram can be deleted if it is reported by three or four different accounts and if it violates the app's community guidelines and term of use (How Many Reports, 2021).

### **Counter-arguments to my reason**

They might have an anonymous account created just to cyber-bully. How would you then hold the bully accountable?

### **Rebuttal**

Again, social media platforms make it possible for users to block accounts, delete messages, and restrict the appearance of words on their profile. Additionally, harsh and

rude comments can be reported, then the app or site is able to restrict these accounts or even delete them. Anonymous or not, bullies are able to get punished.

### **Connections**

As cyber-bullying occurs mostly on social media platforms, these apps/sites are designed for users to be able to control who sees them and who/what they can see. When someone experiences cyber-bullying, he/she can block the troll so they can no longer be reached. Similarly, online bullying means that there is no physical contact, so any physical harm cannot be made. Those bullies are usually trolls who enjoy leaving hurtful comments but cannot say them face-to-face, so their words are definitely not credible. Anonymous or not, online bullies can be exposed and still feel ashamed of their actions. Users can also decide to remove any followers they don't want and even make their account private to avoid any further unwanted comments.

### **Conclusion**

The internet is a place where one can freely express oneself and it is admittedly not the safest space. As cyber-bullying is a frequent problem, people must take caution and use social media to their advantage by either blocking bullies or advocating for a safer online space. This argument isn't saying that cyber-bullying is okay, but that it is actionable and can be prevented.

### **Citations**

*Blocking people.* Help Center. (n.d.). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://help.instagram.com/426700567389543>

*How many reports are needed to delete a Instagram account? - [answer] 2022.* Deleting Solutions. (2021, October 14). Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://deletingsolutions.com/how-many-reports-are-needed-to-delete-a-instagram-account/#:~:text=a%20Instagram%20account%3F-,The%20fact%20is%20that%20the%20account%20could%20be%20deleted%20by,of%20Use%20will%20be%20deleted.>

ScienceDaily. (2015, March 11). *Face-to-face bullying worse than cyber-attacks, students say.* ScienceDaily. Retrieved May 16, 2022, from <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/03/150311091046.htm>