Online Bullying

Key Points

- Online bullying is a widespread online problem that can result in damaging mental and physical health consequences for youth, including loss of self-esteem and academic challenges.

- Industry, government, educators, and other groups can best address online bullying collaboratively with a combination of education, enforcement, policies, and technology tools.

- Governments play a vital role in helping to combat harassment and threats online through laws that are thoughtfully written to balance safety and freedom of speech.

BACKGROUND

Bullying among youth has been a serious problem for many years, but technology now provides bullies with new ways to annoy their victims, giving rise to the phenomenon of online bullying, or cyberbullying. The Cyberbullying Research Center in the United States defines online bullying as "willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices." Online bullying can be thought of as a spectrum from meanness (including teasing) to bullying to cruelty, where someone intentionally sets out to harm another.

Youth who experience online bullying can suffer damaging mental health consequences, and according to the Cyberbullying Research Center,[1] "research reveals a link between cyberbullying and low self-esteem, family and academic problems, school violence, and delinquent behavior."

Estimates of the prevalence of online bullying vary, with surveys finding that between 10 percent and 40 percent of youth in the European Union, the United States, and Australia have at one time been victims of online bullying. A 2012 Microsoft survey in 25 countries found that 54 percent of children age 8 to 17 are concerned that they will be bullied online.

Recognizing the seriousness of the problem, the online technology industry is working with governments, industry groups, and others to help address online bullying through efforts like GetNetWise in the United States and Insafe in the European Union.

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[1] *Cyberbullying Identification, Prevention, and Response*
www.cyberbullying.us/Cyberbullying_Identification_Prevention_Response_Fact_Sheet.pdf

MICROSOFT APPROACH

- Microsoft enforces policies against abuse and harassment on its online services such as Xbox LIVE. Customers who misuse Microsoft services are subject to account termination. Serious incidents may be reported to law enforcement.

- Microsoft provides safety tools like Family Safety, which allows parents to monitor their children's Internet use and block unwanted contact.

- Microsoft works with governments, law enforcement agencies, educators, children's advocacy groups, and others worldwide to help create a safer online environment for children. It does this in part by monitoring online services for abuse and providing safety tools and education.

- Microsoft produces educational programs and materials for teachers, parents, and caregivers to teach young people how to stand up to online bullying.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- Microsoft believes that governments play a vital role in helping to combat harassment and threats online through laws that are thoughtfully written to balance safety and freedom of speech.

- Microsoft supports legislation that provides a safe haven for companies that engage in online moderation of behavior and content by not increasing their liability for engaging in that moderation. Examples include Section 230 of the U.S. Communications Decency Act and the European Union Directive 2000/31/EC.

- Microsoft supports anti-bullying education for elementary and secondary school students as part of a comprehensive online safety curriculum.

Helpful Resources

Microsoft Safety & Security Center materials to help protect young people from online risks
www.microsoft.com/security/resources/young-people.aspx

A comprehensive directory of parental control tools and safety education
www.getnetwise.org

Cyberbullying Research Center
www.cyberbullying.us

An online safety education site created in cooperation with the European Union
www.saferinternet.org

A collection of online resources for addressing bullying in the United Kingdom
www.bullying.co.uk

Microsoft's free Family Safety software
aka.ms/Family-Safety