

Bullying in the Digital Era: Power, Roles, and Institutional Pathways in Contemporary Schooling

1. Introduction & Theoretical Framework

- School bullying is not a "normal" part of growing up, but a serious social and educational problem that threatens student safety and rights.
- **Social Learning Theory (Bandura):** Aggressive behavior is acquired by observing models (peers, adults) and seeing actions rewarded or tolerated (e.g., social status, peer laughter).
- **Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner):** Bullying is embedded in a network of interlocking environments, shaped by how family life, school organization, and social norms interact over time.

2. The Digital Ecology (Cyberbullying)

- Digital environments function as an additional, complex "stage" of school life where online and offline interactions intersect.
- **The Chrono-system:** Digital connectivity removes time and space boundaries; late-night notifications allow conflicts to persist, eliminating safe offline zones for targeted students.
- Perceived anonymity, physical distance, and the absence of immediate adult feedback lower behavioral inhibitions online.

3. The Bullying Triad in Hybrid Spaces

- **The Perpetrator:** Often holds high social status and uses aggression instrumentally to control group norms. In digital contexts, they curate public images and administer group chats to decide who is included or muted.
- **The Targeted Student:** Vulnerability stems from difference (appearance, identity) or limited social networks. Constant digital exposure deepens shame ("everyone has seen it") and leads to school avoidance.
- **The Observer:** The largest group in the ecology. Online, scrolling past harmful posts or staying silent provides social fuel to the aggressor. The goal is to develop digital citizenship to shift them from passive bystanders to active upstanders.

4. Educational Implications & Second-Chance Schools

- **Whole-School Approaches:** Effective prevention must coordinate school policy, positive climate, restorative practices, and digital ethics rather than one-off lessons.
- **Second-Chance & Alternative Schools:** Due to their smaller scale, these environments offer a unique laboratory to repair trust, use student-led digital projects to reshape fixed roles, and model alternative, respectful uses of power.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Prentice Hall.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.