1.3 Cyberbullism- Definition of the phenomenon

It very often happens that mild or acute conflicts between peers can become acts of bullying and prevarication also carried out via the Internet, with serious amplifying effects for the targets. It is important and useful to promote and facilitate a direct confrontation between those concerned to prevent the dislikes from continuing and the situation from escalating into something more serious. The publication of photos, videos or private information of the target, the spreading of slander through technological tools and means such as mobile phones or e-mail, or the implementation of repeated threats directed at the target, are just a few examples of cyberbullying actions. The ease and competence with which the new generations use technology enables them to perpetrate cyberbullying. The CYP engaged in bullying behaviour and the target are separated by a computer screen or the display of a smartphone: this prevents a full understanding of how painful the target is suffering or how serious the action carried out by the cyberbully is. These acts are carried out with the aim of insulting, damaging reputation, instilling fear or dread in someone, gaining popularity within a group, or simply having fun or fighting boredom. It is therefore a matter of intentional bullying (different from what may be a joke or an argument) carried out in a lasting (at least for a few months) and systematic manner, to the detriment of the same person(s), in which there is an imbalance of power, where those who have power, virtual in this case, exercise it to the detriment of those who are weaker. On the web, the audience that witnesses the harassment is exponentially numerous and therefore the social consequences that follow is even more rapid and burdensome, if defamatory. For this reason, the target often develops paranoid thoughts because he/she believes that even in her/his absence, the rumor in the web about him/her is incessant, continuous and constant.

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The possibility of having an anonymous identity and the difficulty in tracing the perpetrator of bullying, makes it easier to engage in persecutory behaviors online and eliminates the worry of being discovered, disapproved of or punished. The ease of access to the network also allows the material disseminated to circulate quietly and unconditionally without time limits and remain on the web for a long time. In this situation, moral disengagement (Bandura, 2002) can be considered one of the psychological mechanisms that drive the cyberbully to persecute someone. The so-called 'victim dehumanisation' occurs: the cyberbully ends up disassociating himself from the distress that would be caused to them. This flattening of empathy, (understood as the ability to 'walk in the other person's shoes'), curbs the emergence and development of guilt in the face of other people's suffering. Indeed, in cyberbullying, the absence of real contact between the CYP engaged in bullying behaviour and the target (face to face contact) facilitates and amplifies dehumanisation. Moreover, the absence of space and time limits allows the phenomenon to spread everywhere and indefinitely in time, while invisibility and the possibility of creating a fake

personality and virtual identity allows the cyberbully to increase his power: this is also why the level of disinhibition is high, and different actions are carried out online from those one would do in real life. In fact, the possibility of being 'another person' online can weaken ethical qualms: the cyberbully, in fact, not really seeing the consequences of his actions, does not realise the seriousness of what he/she is doing. Moreover, the absence of relationship and knowledge with the other person, further amplifies this factor: very often, in fact, in cyberbullying, people do not really know each other. Since it is difficult to find the cyberbully identity makes the phenomenon even more widespread.

Revision #2
Created 14 March 2023 13:20:49 by Gaia Terenzi
Updated 14 March 2023 13:47:34 by Gaia Terenzi