

## **HELPING TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COLLEGE STUDENTS TO DEAL WITH CYBERBULLYING**

In the midst of the challenges faced by the post school education and training section across the globe, Covid 19 has forced people and students to use technology more than ever. Institutions of learning have resorted to a hybrid strategy to deliver curriculum as students are learning remotely and in the classroom on rotational basis. For teaching and learning to continue as envisaged technology usage has come to our rescue. However, the usage of technology has its inherent challenges as people - young and old, students, and employees experience bullying through their interaction with the various social media platforms. This type of bullying in the cyberspace is called cyberbullying because it does not happen in the physical environment like classrooms, offices, playgrounds, etc.

Cyberbullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten, embarrass, or target another person to cause hurt and inflict pain. It is not bound to any space nor time and it is equally or more painful although one cannot physically face the perpetrator or vice versa. It is in the form of text messages with damaging content, emails, photos, website postings which go viral in a short space of time. Damaging content is often based on unexplained behaviour; not facts, and is posted on social networking sites. The effects of bullying penetrates into the classrooms and cannot be ignored by institutions because they have an impact on teaching and learning, more so the academic work of students. Therefore, students need to be capacitated on the negative effects and impact of cyberbullying which may lead lead to anxiety, depression, and worst of all, suicide. The victim may experience long lasting effects of cyberbullying throughout her/his lifetime. College communities have a responsibility to cultivate and promote the climate of respect amongst students and all members of the college community. It is critical to educate students to be able to look out for signs of cyberbullying, how to deal with it, and when and where to seek help.

### **What may students do if they feel/think they are exposed to cyberbullying?**

When one feels like she/he is exposed to cyberbullying she/he may report the incident and not respond to the perpetrator. The victim should not respond, get physical or show your emotions/feelings as that encourages the perpetrator to perpetuate cyberbullying. Therefore, it is ideal for the victim to seek professional help, talk to parents or someone elder and trusted, talk to a friend, join support groups, and protect your identity online. A teacher may confront the perpetrator, if she/he one of the students, in an effort to mediate and to make them aware of the effects of their behavior. The victim and the perpetrator must be brought to the table to address the matter and to come up with a solution. It may be necessary to report the matter to the police if you are in immediate danger.

The bully needs to be engaged so that her/his behavior may be addressed. The perpetrator might have challenges causing her/him to bully others. Professional help may be sought to assist colleges to groom young people to become responsible and respectable adults.

TVET Colleges have Student Support Services offices which provide a myriad of support services to students including non-academic support to students. Therefore, students may approach these offices to report or seek referrals if necessary. In addition there are various organisations which may be of assistance. Some colleges have Higher Health coordinators in the campuses and a hotline to call 24/7 for psychosocial support. Higher Health may be contacted at 0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336.

### **References:**

<http://kameron.org/Cyber-Bullying-Articles-Facts>

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/cyberbullying-what-teachers-and-schools-can-do/>

<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/cyberbullying.html>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/abuse/bullying-and-cyberbullying.htm>