Cyberbullying involving ethnic minority youths: a booklet for teachers, parents and professionals

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for ISPCC

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Introduction

Introduction

What is this booklet about?

This booklet is designed to offer an introduction to the topic of cyberbullying when it involves ethnic minority, migrant, refugee, and Traveller students. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to highlight key aspects that shape this complex phenomenon.

The aim is to shed light on how cyberbullying manifests in these contexts by explaining relevant concepts and terms, helping to recognize more subtle dynamics, exploring some of the reasons it occurs, whether ethnic minority youth are the targets or the perpetrators.

This booklet focuses on selected dimensions of a multifaceted issue, offering an entry point into understanding a phenomenon shaped by many layers of social and cultural complexity.

The content is grounded in scientific research and offers an evidence-based perspective. It is meant to support readers in developing a clearer, more accurate understanding, while also encouraging ongoing learning, as the nature of cyberbullying continues to evolve.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is primarily intended for teachers, parents, and professionals who work with young people. While its focus is on ethnic minority youth, the content is valuable for families and professionals across all contexts: in our interconnected world, everyone plays a role.

Although the central theme is cyberbullying, the booklet also explores related topics like racism. That is why everyone is encouraged to engage with its content. Even if you are not a parent, teacher, or someone who has encountered cyberbullying directly, understanding these issues is essential. It helps build the awareness needed to recognize harmful behaviors and respond effectively. It also encourages active engagement in standing up against such behaviors and promoting lasting societal change to create a safer online and offline world for everyone.

1. Understanding the role of the social context in cyberbullying
1.1. The inclusive definition of (cyber)bullying

According to the inclusive definition provided by UNESCO in 2024, bullying is defined as:

"A damaging social process that is characterized by an imbalance of power driven by social (societal) and institutional norms. It is often repeated and manifests as unwanted interpersonal behaviour among students or school personnel that causes physical, social, and emotional harm to the targeted individuals or groups, and the wider school community" (UNESCO, 2024).

This definition highlights the growing recognition of the social context in shaping bullying and, by extension, cyberbullying dynamics. Adopting a perspective that takes into consideration all the contexts that surround young people (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), can be instrumental in unpacking the complexity of cyberbullying, helping us understanding where it originates and how it develops.

The power imbalance inherent in cyberbullying often reflects broader societal inequalities shaped by social identities' aspects, such as ethnicity. To fully understand cyberbullying, we must consider what occurs offline as well. The online and offline worlds exist in a bidirectional relationship: power dynamics rooted in the offline world can shape individuals' attitudes and behaviors online, while online interactions can reinforce these dynamics (Weinstein et al., 2021). The online world can not only intensify offline attitudes but also give rise to new dynamics that, in turn, influence offline behaviors (Blaya, 2019).

Traditional bullying and cyberbullying frequently overlap (Kowalski et al., 2014). Those involved in school bullying, as victims, perpetrators, or bully-victims, are also more likely to be involved in cyberbullying (Sutter et al., 2023; Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015).

Given this overlap, addressing cyberbullying requires working on the offline world, alongside adopting technological efforts and promoting digital citizenship to create safer online spaces. Building inclusive, respectful environments offline can foster more inclusive and healthier interactions online and vice versa. As (cyber)bullying evolves alongside broader social changes, it is essential to promote both online and offline environments that support diversity, inclusion, and emotional safety.

> Tackle cyberbullying by building a culture of respect offline and online

1.2. Ethnic minority and indigenous youths

Children and adolescents from ethnic minority and Indigenous backgrounds may be especially at risk for negative developmental outcomes after being exposed to challenges like cyberbullying, whether as victims or perpetrators (Carlson & Frazer, 2018; Llorent et al., 2016).

The term *ethnic minority* is a broad label used to describe different groups of people who have a less advantaged position in society because of their ethnic or racial background. This includes migrants, racial and ethnic groups, refugees, and national minorities. On the other hand, the majority population holds more power and influence in a given country (Johnson et al., 2019).

Indigenous peoples are those with deep historical roots in a certain region, as they lived on the land before colonization (Williams & Schertzer, 2019). Two important features of indigeneity (or

indigenous identity) are: the way people identify themselves as Indigenous, and their strong desire to keep and pass on their cultural identity and connection to their land (Sarivaara et al., 2013).

Social contexts play a crucial role in the development of minority children, as their social, emotional, and cognitive skills are shaped by the environments they grow up in (Garcia-Coll et al., 1996). Supportive and inclusive settings foster healthier and more adaptive development, while environments marked by discrimination, racism, or homophobia can hinder children's ability to build these essential skills. A child's growth is deeply influenced by the quality of their surroundings, as well as their family and cultural background.

1.2.1. The Irish Travellers

Irish Travellers are an Indigenous ethnic minority in Ireland who received official recognition by the Irish Government as an ethnic group on 1st March 2017 (Joint Committee on Justice and Equality, 2017). Irish Travellers have a unique culture shaped by shared history, language, customs, and traditions. A key part of their identity is cultural nomadism, which distinguishes them from the settled population. Travellers commonly identify with the broader Gypsy and Roma communities.

Travellers' nomadic lifestyle has long been targeted and restricted by laws. Recent laws around trespassing, trading, and horse ownership have further limited traditional Travellers' ways of life by criminalising their practices.

The term "Traveller" comes from their nomadic background, but even though most Travellers today are no longer mobile, cultural nomadism remains central to their identity. This includes strong family ties, rituals around death, economic independence, and flexible work (Delaney, 2001). Government policies often fail to understand that nomadism is more than just physical movement, as it is a cultural identity. As a result, many inappropriate social policies have been adopted harming Traveller communities.

Despite these ongoing challenges and significant levels of prejudice and exclusion in Irish society, Travellers continue to show resilience and pride in their identity (Limerick Traveller Network, & Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service, 2025).

2. Are ethnic minority and indigenous youths more vulnerable to involvement in cyberbullying?

The broad concept of cyberbullying involving ethnic minority and Indigenous youths can be understood as including two distinct phenomena: general cyberbullying and identity-based cyberbullying.

General cyberbullying involving ethnic minority individuals, as either victims or perpetrators, occurs when the motivation behind the behavior is *not* specifically linked to ethnicity or indigeneity.

Identity-based cyberbullying, on the other hand, happens when individuals are explicitly targeted *because* of their ethnic or Indigenous background. Various terms have been used to describe this type of behavior (e.g., prejudice-based, stigma-based, bias-based, racist or ethnic-based

cyberbullying). In this context, the term *identity-based* is used to emphasize the role of social identity within cyberbullying dynamics.

While students from both ethnic majority and minority backgrounds may engage in or experience general (cyber)bullying at similar levels, differences are more likely to emerge in identity-based (cyber)bullying. Ethnic minority youth, in particular, may be more frequently targeted specifically because of their ethnicity than their majority peers (Ortiz-Marcos et al., 2021; Zych et al., 2023). Also, ethnic and racial minority young people might spend more time online, increasing their chances to be exposed to cyberbullying and discrimination (Nagata et al., 2022).

2.1. Understanding identity-based cyberbullying

The internet and social media have become main tools for spreading hate speech and targeting people based on their identity (Blaya, 2019). These online spaces not only help spread harmful messages but also make it easier for people with hateful views to connect and support each other. It has followed that hate speech and identity-based bullying are even more common online than in real life (Stromheier et al., 2022). As technology grows and young people use it more to communicate and connect, there are more chances for this kind of online bullying to happen.

Identity-based cyberbullying can lead to even more harmful effects than general cyberbullying, as it targets core aspects of a person's identity. Negative consequences in terms of health and well-being due to racist-based online victimization have been observed among young people from ethno-racial minorities (Liby et al., 2023). Among adolescents with a migration background, being bullied, online or offline, because of their ethnicity, race, or culture can be especially harmful (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2022). Adapting to a new country already takes a lot of emotional and social effort, as they try to fit in and feel a sense of belonging. Facing rejection during this time, especially for something as central as their identity, can be deeply upsetting and damaging.

Those who (cyber)bully others based on their identity tend to hold stronger negative views about ethnic minority groups (Bayram-Özdemir et al., 2018). Identity-based (cyber)bullying, in fact, can be driven by bullies' prejudices toward ethnic or racial groups (Caravita et al., 2021). Influences like parents, peers, schools, and media shape young people's attitudes and behaviors. Growing up in a prejudiced environment can reinforce stereotypes and lead to discrimination. People from majority groups may also see minorities as a threat to their social norms or power, further fueling discriminatory behaviors (Mazzone et al., 2018; Bayram-Özdemir et al., 2020).

2.2. Experience of multiply marginalized youth

Intersectionality means understanding that people have many parts to their identity, like race, gender, sexual orientation, and economic background, that together shape their experiences, especially when facing marginalization (Stoll & Block, 2015). This approach helps to see how cyberbullying affects young people differently, depending on their identities and the power dynamics characterizing the social contexts they live in (Amadori et al., 2025).

Some groups, like transgender and gender-diverse youth, especially from racial or ethnic minorities, are bullied online more often (Eisenberg et al. 2017; Llorent et al., 2016). LGBTQ+ youth also face more risks because of stigma and school environments, heightening the risk of being victimized online (Strohmeier et al., 2022). Children from poorer families are also more

vulnerable due to social exclusion and fewer resources (Nagata et al., 2022). When someone belongs to several of these groups at once, the effects of (cyber)bullying become even worse.

Young people with multiple marginalized identities, therefore belonging to more than one of these vulnerable groups, face more intense discrimination, which greatly increases their risk of harm (Stoll & Block, 2015).

However, many schools and online platforms do not have the right policies or training to support these youth properly. This shows the need for more effective approaches that consider all parts of a young person's identity. Creating inclusive rules, offering diversity training, and providing targeted help can reduce (cyber)bullying and make schools and online spaces safer and more welcoming for everyone.

2.2.1. Discrimination experiences of LGBTI+ Travellers

Travellers LGBTI+ people experience prejudice not only because they are Travellers or Roma but also because of their sexual or gender identity (Sartori, 2023). Within their own communities, many face homophobia and pressure to fit a narrow idea of what it means to be Traveller or Roma. At the same time, they often face racism and exclusion from the wider LGBTI+ community because of their ethnicity.

This double discrimination means many LGBTI+ Travellers and Roma feel isolated, sometimes having nowhere safe to turn. There are about 4,000 LGBTI+ Travellers in Ireland who often face rejection from family, friends, and society. Anti-Traveller and anti-Roma attitudes exist even in groups that should be supportive, like LGBTI+ organizations. This results in LGBTI+ Travellers facing several barriers when seeking help. Many, in fact, do not seek support due to negative attitudes in society, family, and community. Fear of rejection and discrimination cause most people (over 97% of respondents) to hide their identity and avoid reaching out for help.

2.3. Ethnic minority youths' engagement in cyberbullying others

Engaging in cyberbullying others can lead to serious negative effects. Young people who cyberbully often show other risky behaviors like substance abuse, delinquency, and violence, which can continue into adulthood (Chan & Wong, 2019; Rice et al., 2015). They also tend to have lower self-esteem, more negative emotions, physical health problems, school difficulties, and suicidal thoughts (Hinduja & Patchin, 2022). Ethnic minority youth, who may already face higher mental health risks, often report more problems and higher chances of suicidal behavior (Jones et al., 2019). Additionally, some students who bully online are also victims offline and may use online bullying to get back at others (Schultze-Krumbholz et al., 2018).

2.3.1. The need to belong of ethnic minority youths

Bullying and cyberbullying can sometimes be used by ethnic minority students, such as among youth with a migration background, as a strategy to gain social acceptance and connect with peers. Those young people, in fact, can face several challenges in the process of acculturation, which requires both maintaining their cultural identity while adapting to the norms of the new host country (Berry, 2006). These struggles are often intensified during adolescence, a period already marked by significant psychological, social, and emotional development.

A key aspect of both acculturation and adolescence is the need to form meaningful relationships. While these connections are typically built through friendships, some ethnic minority adolescents may also engage in aggressive behaviors, including bullying and cyberbullying, as a way to feel included and accepted by their peer groups.

The need to belong seems to be the central motive for bullying and cyberbullying among migrant students, but not among their non-immigrant peers, whose behavior, instead, might be motivated by the need to maintain a power status (Fandrem et al., 2009; Strohmeier et al., 2012; Solomontos-Kountouris & Strohmeier, 2021). It is important to understand (cyber)bullying not simply as a form of hostility, but sometimes as an attempt at social integration, particularly among young people navigating the complex process of adapting to a new culture.

> For ethnic minority youths, engaging in cyberbullying can be a way to meet their need to belong

2.3.2. Internalized racism

Internalized racism develops when people from marginalized groups start to believe the negative messages and stereotypes that society says about their own racial or ethnic group (Pyke, 2010). These messages often come from the dominant group and larger systems of racism and inequality in society. As a result, people may feel ashamed of their background, question their self-worth, and even distance themselves from their own culture.

Internalized racism can make people feel confused about who they are and push them to try to fit in with the dominant group by copying their behaviors or even showing biases toward their own group or others in similar positions (David & Nadal, 2013). These harmful beliefs often come from the environment a person grows up in and can be passed down through families over generations. They shape how people see themselves, others, and their place in society.

Internalized racism can also lead people to treat unfairly and discriminate others from the same ethnic group or from other marginalized groups, a dynamic that is called horizontal racism. This creates tension and conflict within and between communities, making it harder to face discrimination and its rooted dynamics (David et al., 2019).

Teenagers are especially vulnerable to develop negative internalized attitudes because adolescence is a critical time for emotional and social growth. During this period, they form beliefs about their ethnic identity, which plays a key role in their overall development (Okoye et al., 2023; Reck et al., 2024). Among adolescents internalized racism may also lead to aggressive behavior (Reck et al., 2024). Internalization of such negative attitudes can lead young people to engage in (cyber)bullying behavior toward others, whether they belong to the same ethnic group or a different one.

3. Fostering resilience of ethnic minority youths through inclusiveness
3.1. The central role of ethnic identity

Adolescence is a key period for developing racial and ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014). During this time, teens begin to think more deeply about their personal experiences and explore their racial background, which helps them form a deeper understanding of who they are. A strong ethnic identity plays a focal role in supporting the healthy development of young people.

A strong ethnic identity can protect young people from the harmful effects of racial discrimination, whether experienced face-to-face or online. Young people from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds often face higher levels of discrimination, which can negatively affect their mental health more than their majority peers (Sciacca et al., 2023). However, a strong sense of ethnic identity can boost self-esteem, which strengthens resilience and helps young people cope better with discrimination, reducing the impact of victimization (Paul et al., 2024). High self-esteem also supports self-efficacy and the development of effective coping strategies. Conversely, cyberbullying can harm self-esteem, potentially weakening these protective effects (Mohammed Yousef & Bellamy, 2015; Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2018; Tynes et al., 2020). Despite their greater vulnerability to cyber-victimization or perpetration, ethnic and indigenous minority youths can be shielded by a strong ethnic identity and positive attitudes toward their culture, which promote resilience and well-being (Cardwell & Boccio, 2024; Paul et al., 2024).

> Ethnic identity can act as a protective factor against the negative effects of discrimination

The role of ethnic identity is also pivotal for the development of adaptive acculturation strategies. As described, acculturation involves maintaining one's cultural identity while also forming meaningful connections within the host country (Berry, 2006). More adaptive acculturation strategies support young people in navigating their evolving identity, positively impacting their well-being. A strong sense of belonging to both their heritage and host cultures can foster a bicultural identity, widely recognized as the most beneficial for migrant youth's psychosocial well-being (Doğan & Strohmeier, 2020; Verkuyten, 2018).

Moreover, while internalized racism can lead to identity confusion and self-doubt, a strong ethnic identity can counteract these effects. It helps reduce the internalization of negative stereotypes and may lower cases of discrimination within and between marginalized groups (Atunah-Jay et al., 2022). Fostering positive attitudes towards own's group can support the development of effective strategies for coping with discrimination (Tao et al., 2022; Tynes et al., 2012).

Families, peers, and the school environment play a crucial role in the development of young people's ethnic identity. To support healthy identity development, it is essential to adopt strategies that promote the inclusion and integration of ethnic and Indigenous minorities.

3.1.1. Indigenous identity of Irish Travellers

Ethnic identity is particularly salient for Indigenous youth. Identifying with the group identity, in fact, is one of the main characteristics of indigenous groups (Sarivaara et al., 2013). For Indigenous youth, understanding their ethnic identity is an important task of growing up and undermining the sense of Indigenous identity can affect their mental health. Focusing attention on promoting a healthy Indigenous identity among young Irish Travellers is, therefore, of paramount importance.

Survey data have shown that Travellers children are discriminated and bullied because of their ethnicity at high levels and that they represent one of the least accepted minority groups, leading to segregation consequences (O'Mahony, 2017).

Keeping Traveller and settled children apart in schools has increased mistrust and prejudice. Without chances to interact and understand each other, it becomes harder to create an inclusive and diverse society. Recognizing and including Traveller culture in schools can help fostering youths' identity development, build trust, encourage positive relationships, and improve communication between schools and Traveller families (Limerick Traveller Network, & Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service, 2025).

3.2. The need of a Whole Education Approach

Understanding the social influences coming from the environments where young people live is essential to understand why ethnic minority youth may be more at risk of cyberbullying involvement. Focusing on young people socialization contexts lead to understand the dynamics at play in cyberbullying cases, identifying risk and protective factors, and ultimately work toward reducing the former while promoting the latter. Effective prevention and intervention efforts should therefore focus on fostering inclusive and supportive environments to both to prevent engagement in cyberbullying and buffer its negative impact (Paul et al., 2024; Tao et al., 2022).

Addressing cyberbullying requires coordinated action from schools, families, and communities (Bell et al., 2025). Cooperation across these settings is key to creating safe and supportive learning environments. However, modern digital platforms add complexity to children's interactions, making cooperation more challenging.

Cineáltas, Ireland's Action Plan on Bullying (Department of Education, 2022), is built on and promotes UNESCO's Whole Education Approach to preventing and tackling bullying and cyberbullying. This approach includes nine key elements that have been shown to effectively reduce both forms of bullying (UNESCO, 2024). This approach offers a comprehensive and unified framework to help policymakers understand the essential parts of a broad, effective strategy for addressing bullying in schools.

As (cyber)bullying is often shaped by societal attitudes, norms, and power dynamics, the Whole Education Approach promoted by *Cineáltas* aims to build a positive, inclusive school culture where students and staff feel safe, valued, and supported. It encourages inclusive teaching, staff training, and stronger connections between schools, families, and communities to foster empathy, understanding, and a shared sense of belonging in Irish society.

Effective communication, shared knowledge, and active participation from parents and schools are essential, but can be hindered by unclear roles, limited training, and lack of resources (Bell et al., 2025). Schools can help parents understand technology, while parents reinforce digital rules at home. Strong home-school relationships foster children's sense of belonging. For lasting impact, supportive laws, policies, and leadership are also needed to enable joint efforts in preventing cyberbullying and promoting healthy online behavior.

3.2.1. Challenges in the education system for Travellers

The relationship between the Irish education system and the Traveller community has long been marked by inequality and exclusion. These challenges, rooted in a history of discrimination and marginalization, have led to lower educational outcomes for Traveller children at all levels, from preschool to higher education (Limerick Traveller Network, & Exchange House Ireland National

Travellers Service, 2025). Education policies have often overlooked Traveller culture, focusing more on assimilation than inclusion. Segregated schooling, low expectations, and the lack of cultural representation have contributed to ongoing disengagement and underachievement.

Recent findings highlight key issues (Limerick Traveller Network, & Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service, 2025). Communication between schools and Traveller families remains a barrier, with 70% of parents struggling to understand school communications and no parental representation on school boards or associations. Traveller parents value education and want to be involved but feel excluded. Poor communication leads to misunderstandings about Traveller parents and students and makes it harder for parents to get involved. Without clear communication, they are often left out and unable to fully take part. Traveller families also do not feel their culture is reflected in their children's schools. Many children still experience discrimination especially in secondary schools, with up to 56% of students reporting discrimination and 71% referring feeling unhappy with school (O'Mahony, 2017). Including Traveller culture in education is seen as essential for improving outcomes and fostering a more inclusive environment.

4. What school can do

Children grow up within interconnected contexts, online and offline, so it is essential to foster a culture of inclusion that spans across all these settings. Rather than treating them in isolation, we must ensure that inclusivity is promoted consistently and cohesively throughout a child's entire environment.

A positive and inclusive school climate, combined with visible support for cultural pluralism, can significantly impact the prevalence of cyberbullying targeting ethnic or indigenous identity (Brand et al., 2003). When schools promote acceptance of cultural diversity, it can reduce the likelihood of students engaging in ethnically motivated bullying, both online and offline (Caravita et al., 2021; Weinstein et al., 2021).

4.1. On a teacher and school staff level

Ethnic minority and Traveller children often experience exclusion in schools due to low expectations, segregation, and a lack of cultural understanding from educators. Awareness and recognition among teachers and school staff of the norms shaping the school environment is the first key starting point.

- See the bias, change the lens
- Color is not invisible
- Reframing the norm
- Culture counts

- **Reflecting on bias**: teachers are encouraged to acknowledge and reflect on their own biases and assumptions. Engaging in anti-racism and intercultural competence training is essential to help teachers recognize and address racism in schools. Improved culturally inclusive training will help teachers better understand and support ethnic minority and Traveller students, reduce both implicit and explicit bias, and promote genuine inclusion and respect.
- **Moving beyond color-blindness**: one issue is the use of "color-blind" approaches, where race or ethnicity is ignored in an attempt to treat all students equally (Apfelbaum et al., 2012). While this might seem fair, it can worsen bias and communication by failing to acknowledge real differences and experiences. Education systems that adopt this strategy can lead children

to develop this mindset early on, which makes it harder for them to recognize discrimination when it happens.

- **Challenging the norm**: instead of promoting Western culture as the norm, schools should raise awareness about cultural diversity and stereotypes present within the school environment.
- **Understanding Traveller culture**: teachers need training on the history of discrimination against the Traveller community and its lasting impact on education. This includes learning about Traveller culture, communication styles, and learning preferences. Misunderstandings often arise when teachers misinterpret these cultural differences, leading to unnecessary disciplinary actions.

4.2. On a student and peer level

- **Promote culture-based strengths and identity:** teachers should strive to support the development of a strong ethnic and cultural identity among ethnic minority and Traveller students, as it can serve as a protective factor against discrimination and to promote self-worth. Actively celebrating their academic and personal achievements helps to build self-esteem and challenge stereotypes.
- **Foster belongingness:** teachers should ensure students to feel seen, valued, and respected in the school environment. Emphasize the vital role that a strong sense of belonging plays, particularly for migrant students, can support their acculturation and overall well-being (Wright & Wachs, 2019).
- **Encourage inter-ethnic friendships and peer support:** teachers can promote meaningful friendships across ethnic groups to strengthen inclusion and mutual understanding. Peer support networks in school should be promoted to provide safe spaces where ethnic minority and Traveller youth can connect and express themselves. Also, by encouraging positive relationships between different ethnic groups and supporting a multicultural identity among migrant youth, young people may feel a stronger sense of belonging to their new community (Marks & Garcia Coll, 2018). This connection can help reduce the chances of them engaging in cyberbullying behaviors (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2019).
- **Develop social-emotional skills:** teachers can support students in building emotional resilience, self-awareness, and empathy skills that can help them navigate challenges and foster positive peer relationships. Nurturing empathy at schools can be extremely beneficial as it can reduce cyberbullying, including identity-based forms related to ethnicity, gender, disability, and increase defending behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2022).
- **Address intersectionality:** teachers should pay close attention to students who may face multiple forms of marginalization. Tailored support is encouraged to acknowledge overlapping identities and ensure all students receive equitable care and opportunities (Amadori et al., 2025).
- **Supporting safe digital use:** minority youth often use social media to learn, explore their identity, and find support (Mayhew & Weigle, 2018). However, spending more time online can also increase their risk of facing cyberbullying. Since the internet is important for identity exploration, it is crucial to help young people use digital tools safely. Teachers should

encourage positive and safe use of technology by teaching digital skills that protect against online risks.

4.3. On a classroom level

- **Inclusive classroom practices**: minority youth are more likely to face rejection, isolation, and victimization in classrooms with fewer ethnic minority students (Özdemir et al., 2018). However, in schools where teachers promote diversity and take a firm stance against interethnic conflict, these students are less likely to experience or internalize ethnic harassment (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2019). Focus on maintaining ethnic minority and Traveller children in mainstream classrooms, providing the necessary support to prevent segregation and encourage true inclusion, is therefore suggested.
- **Nurturing democratic values**: reducing online hate among adolescents involves promoting democratic coexistence in a diverse society (Wachs et al., 2019). It is essential for young people to recognize that basic human rights and democratic values also apply online. Teachers and schools play a key role in teaching and supporting these principles.
- **Fostering critical thinking**: teachers can engage students in open, youth-centered discussions on these topics, creating space for their voices, encourage dialogue, and promote critical thinking.
- **Culture-sensitive curriculum**: representing ethnic minority cultures within classroom content can foster a sense of belonging. Integrating intercultural education and activities that reflect student diversity and Traveller history and culture into the curriculum can increase student engagement and help reduce feelings of exclusion. Sharing knowledge about ethnic minority cultures is key to challenge stereotypes and promot a more accurate understanding of the values and identities of minority students.
- **Culture-sensitive teaching methods**: teachers are called at incorporating inclusive materials and actively engaging ethnic minority students in contributing with ideas and participating in their implementation. Co-creating content and educational resources, drawing on the local history and culture of ethnic minority students, can enhance understanding of cultural diversity while valuing the knowledge and expertise of ethnic minority and Traveller communities (Limerick Traveller Network, & Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service, 2025).
- **Promoting cooperation among students:** activities that promote teamwork and cooperation between students of different ethnic groups can be included in daily classroom lessons and extracurricular programs to help reduce negative feelings between groups (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2019).
- **Culturally relevant extra-curricular activities**: teachers can design and implement non-academic programmes in collaboration with ethnic minority and Traveller youth to support their identity, interests, and self-esteem. These activities should promote personal development for all students in the classroom, with a strong emphasis on building self-confidence and celebrating cultural identity.

4.4. Communication and parental engagement

Parents belonging to different ethnic groups may interpret and react differently to (cyber)bullying incidents, especially concerning collaboration with school and other parents to solve those situations (Fandrem & Støen, 2021). Culturally sensitive strategies are therefore needed.

- **Clear and inclusive communication:** teachers and schools should use diverse, culturally appropriate methods to share information and build trust. Teachers play a key role in supporting families to navigate the school system; therefore they are called in improving communication and fostering effective cooperation between schools and ethnic minority and Traveller families. Strengthening communication and addressing cultural misunderstandings are essential to ensure that parents do not feel disconnected from their children's education.
- **Parent empowerment:** teachers and school can offer training programs and create opportunities to help ethnic minority and Traveller parents become active participants in school life, such as joining school boards or becoming education advocates.
- **Supporting parental digital literacy**: teachers and schools can support parents by offering training to help them understand and navigate their children's online world. These sessions can cover the technical aspects of digital devices, as well as important rules and online safety practices. Digital literacy training can be highly beneficial and should be paired with information about the specific digital and anti-bullying policies.
- **Celebrate diversity:** organize events that highlight cultures of ethnic minority and Traveller students attending the school and invite parents to participate can make ethnic minority and Traveller identity visible and valued within the school, strengthening community ties and student pride.

5. What parents can do

Parents play a crucial role in shaping children's attitudes, toward themselves, others, and the world, as well as their behaviors (Miklikowska, 2017). This influence makes their role pivotal in both preventing and responding to cyberbullying. Parents from different ethnic backgrounds may hold diverse views on how to address cyberbullying effectively. This underscores the importance of approaching cyberbullying through a culturally sensitive lens.

As the primary context for early socialization, the family is where children first begin to form their sense of self (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). A supportive, open, and non-judgmental parent-child relationship plays a focal role in fostering a healthy sense of self and ethnic identity in children. When parents actively nurture their child's ethnic or racial identity, it can serve as a strong protective factor, contributing to greater resilience and emotional well-being. Therefore, positive parent-child relationships provide children with the emotional foundation to cope with challenges, including discrimination and identity-based cyberbullying.

- **Supporting confident self-expression and ethnic identity:** parents play a vital role in encouraging positive self-expression and fostering pride in cultural heritage. By affirming their children's strengths and abilities, and teaching them to value themselves, parents help build self-esteem, self-worth, and cultural pride. Supporting cultural self-expression contributes to the development of a strong and healthy ethnic identity, one of the most powerful protective

factors for resilience. A well-rooted ethnic identity is especially important in helping children cope with discrimination, reducing its negative emotional and psychological impact (Shelton et al., 2005; Tao et al., 2022).

- **Creating a safe space to ask for help**: a trusting parent-child relationship also makes children more likely to seek help when facing issues like discrimination or cyberbullying. Strong social support not only lessens the negative impact of victimization but also reduces the likelihood of children becoming involved in cyberbullying, whether as victims or perpetrators.

- **Sharing empowering socialization messages**: parents play a key role in shaping adolescents' development by providing important socialization messages based on their ethnic background (McHale et al., 2006). These messages help young people build a healthy self-identity and learn how to perceive and respond to experiences of offline and online discrimination (Tao et al., 2022).

- **Being a positive role model**: messages of socialization based on ethnicity and indigeneity might be influenced by internalized attitudes that parents hold themselves. It is important, therefore, that parents understand their role in their children's development starting from being a positive role model towards their own ethnicity and background.

- **Teaching and celebrating ethnic heritage:** parents can engage children in cultural practices, share family stories and traditions, and teach them about the history and strengths of their ethnic group. Celebrating and exploring personal cultural heritage through sharing personal experiences, showing photos, watching movies, listening to traditional music, help fostering a strong sense of identity, building pride, and deepening understanding about their own ethnicity and culture.

- **Raising awareness about stereotypes and discrimination:** parents can help children recognizing that prejudice and discrimination exist and support them in learning how to respond constructively. Parents can encourage critical thinking so they can identify and question stereotypes and biases they may encounter in everyday life.

- **Engaging in intercultural connections among parents:** engaging in meaningful interactions between parents from different cultural backgrounds can help building inclusive communities. Informal gatherings that promote cultural exchange and celebrate diversity offer valuable opportunities for connection. These relationships should be mutual: parents from majority backgrounds can support minority or migrant families in navigating the school environment and broader culture, while minority parents can share their traditions, such as during cultural celebrations, fostering understanding and appreciation across communities.

- **Cultivating openness and respect for cultural diversity:** encouraging children to interact with peers from different cultural backgrounds and participate in diverse cultural experiences is essential for promoting respect and inclusion. Helping children value their own ethnic identity while appreciating others supports healthy integration and a strong sense of self. This is important for both minority and majority ethnic groups. Parents from majority backgrounds, in particular, can help reducing prejudice and fear by fostering their children's exposure to minority cultures, through school, sports, or other activities, and by encouraging inter-ethnic friendships. Promoting empathy also play a key role in developing inclusive attitudes and respect for all cultural groups.

- **Adopting constructive attitudes toward technology**: positive parental attitudes toward technology can strengthen the parent-child relationship and help youth better handle online

discrimination (Tao et al., 2022). When parents view technology as offering valuable opportunities, they are more likely to support their children digital skills development. This positive attitude also makes parents more likely to provide guidance on coping with online ethnic discrimination, helping reduce negative impacts and stereotypes. Moreover, parental positive attitudes can help them support their children in using digital technologies safely, as these tools are valuable resources for exploring identity.

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