



Young people and Parents Negotiating and Policing gender through online bullying

A qualitative study with young people and adults in Sicily and Denmark, using art-based research methods to explore how gender norms are negotiated, enforced, and resisted across digital and analogue spaces.



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RESEARCH SUMMARY

This study examines how bullying across digital and analogue spaces can be a way young people police gendered norms. It explores how gendered perception of the self is shaped through belonging and exclusion, and understands bullying as a systemic social process, in order to develop more effective and comprehensive interventions.

ONE KEY FINDING

Gender norms construction and (online) bullying emerge as shared, relational processes shaped through interactions between young people, adults, and digital platforms across everyday contexts.

(Online) bullying is a key practice of gender policing, enforcing norms across digital and analogue spaces.

WHY IT MATTERS

This research reframes (online) bullying as a systemic social process tied to gender norms, belonging, and exclusion. It shows the need to move beyond individual blame and address the wider conditions shaping inequality and young people's everyday experiences.

KEY CONCLUSION

Gender norms are reproduced through subtle negotiations and boundary-making, where dominant heteronormative narratives coexist with and resist alternatives. Young people navigate and reshape these norms across digital and everyday contexts, through belonging and exclusion.

Inside the Research

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study examines how gender norms are negotiated and enforced across analogue and digital spaces, where (online) bullying acts as gender policing. It involved youth, teachers, and parents in Denmark and Italy, plus social media ethnography.

STUDY AT A GLANCE

country: Italy and Denmark

participants: 222 young people, 19 parents and 24 teachers

age group: 11–15 years old (young people)/ lower and upper secondary school (Italy), folkeskole (Denmark)

method: Ethnographic work combining traditional qualitative methods with art-based practices conducted with/in analogue and digital spaces

focus: negotiation and policing of gender norms among young people across analogue and digital spaces

FINDING 1

Gender norms are negotiated and policed through (online) bullying as part of a broader societal issue linked to systemic discrimination intersecting with social, cultural, geographical, political and material forces.

FINDING 2

Adults and youth are differently and equally entangled in digital life, reshaping authority, belonging, and gendered norms.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS

(Online) bullying is a social practice within gender policing across analogue and digital spaces, shaped by socio-cultural, political, material, and algorithmic forces. These entanglements shape young people's understanding of gender, belonging, and what is speakable.



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