

Sexual- and Gender-Based Misconduct (SGBM) in the Virtual Environment: Digital Abuse

What is Digital Abuse?

The rise of social media and technology in our daily lives has created more opportunities to commit abuse and violence. These behaviors constitute ***digital abuse***, which refers to “the use of technology to harass or intimidate someone.”¹ Digital abuse can happen to anyone at any stage of a relationship (including outside of intimate partnerships), but is most common among teens and young adults who more frequently use technology. Research suggests that

abuse are compounded by additional means of access, manipulation, and exploitation. The lists below compare and contrast digital abuse with other methods of abuse.^{vii}

Similarities

Rooted in power and control over another person
Often results in victim-blaming
Can cause psychological harm
History of digital abuse spans decades and is not confined to recent uptick in technological advancements
Other forms of abuse are incorporated into abusive tactics (e.g., economic abuse by way of threatening someone's job)
Sexuality shaming

Differences

Violation is misunderstood and more widely tolerated
Technology creates additional tactics to abuse (e.g., altering images, doxing)
Research is new and limited
Digital abuse can increase the vulnerability of someone who is already in a disadvantaged position
Abuse may violate ownership rights if images are shared without permission

What Does This All Mean for the Skidmore Community?

It is important to remember that the College's policy against sexual- and gender-based misconduct also applies to the virtual environment. Forms of digital abuse may fall under the policy's Prohibited Conduct as sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence, stalking, or retaliation, as well as possible charges under the Student Code of Social Conduct.

Lack of affirmative consent for any act within the Prohibited Conduct categories provides a basis for policy violation. If you or a loved one has experienced digital abuse, there are resources both on and off campus to help determine options and identify supports.

For on-campus and local community resources, please visit

<https://www.skidmore.edu/sgbm/contacts.php>.

To learn more about digital abuse or to access options and supports off campus, here are some sites to get you started:

Safety Net Project at the National Network to End Domestic Violence
(<https://www.techsafety.org/>)

Love Is Respect (<https://www.loveisrespect.org/>)

Cyber Civil Rights Initiative (<https://www.cybercivilrights.org/>)

Online Removal Guide (<https://www.cybercivilrights.org/online-removal/>)

