

Bullying in the Digital Age

Cyberbullying is the act of “sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else on the Internet” (Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA), 2021). It can include sharing “personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation and some cyberbullying even crosses into unlawful/criminal behavior” (Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs (ASPA), 2021).

While growing up there were different instances where my mental health, physical health, and my academic performance was poor. One instance was while on social media and came across a user named Ben Tennis. He had replied to a picture of me previously posted on my page saying “Wow you are very ugly, how could your parents love you. If you ended your life nobody would care.”. After reading that comment he was immediately blocked and reported to Facebook. A few days later he came back with a different account and kept harassing me until. My self-worth diminished; my psychological health declined, and my academic grades went from As and Bs to Ds and Fs in a span of a few weeks. Eventually after weeks of dealing with this user my account was forced to be deactivated to get rid of the issue as a whole.

Cyberbullying is an issue a lot of us deal with at one time or another when we go onto the Internet. Studies show that “cyberbullying is more likely to occur between current or former friends” (Social Media Victims Law Center PLLC, 2023). Whether it’s the cesspool that is Twitter, crazy Karens on Facebook, or Internet Trolls on YouTube we’ve all had to deal with those kinds of people. Cyberbullying is a very serious crime; it needs to be stopped and the only way for it to be stopped is if it carries legal consequences including jail time. Victims of cyberbullying can experience different effects some experience poor mental health, some

experience poor physical health, some experience poor academic performance, some experience a change in their relationships, and some experienced all four.

Cyberbullying affects victims in different ways; one of the negative impacts is our mental health. When experiencing cyberbullying a person might “drop in social behavior” an example of them dropping in social behavior is by “avoiding friends or social events” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). In addition to a drop in social behavior a person may “isolate themselves in their room more than usual becoming quieter and more withdrawn from the rest of society thus may lead to suicide” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). Victims of Cyberbullying may also start to “lose interest in activities they normally enjoy” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). Lastly they may express “dark thoughts or emotions and sometimes even talking about suicide” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). While the relationship between bullying and suicide is a “strong one in some cases it may not be the sole cause” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). In a recent study researchers concluded that “victims of cyberbullying are twice as likely to attempt suicide or engage in acts of self-harm” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). Recent statistics even reveal that “59% of teens in the U.S. have been bullied or harassed online and over 90% believe it’s a major problem for others their age” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023). Current research even suggests that “suicide attempts among teens have almost doubled since 2008” (What Are the Effects of Cyberbullying?, 2023).

Cyberbullying doesn’t only affect our mental health, but it can also affect our physical health. When experiencing cyberbullying a person may start to experience pains like “headaches and stomach aches.” (Social Media Victims Law Center PLLC, 2023). In addition, they may also start to get feelings of “intense stress and anxiety leading to insomnia, gastrointestinal issues and

dangerous eating patterns” (Social Media Victims Law Center PLLC, 2023). Victims of cyberbullying may also start to “use drugs or alcohol to try and make themselves feel better when in reality it’ll make them feel worse” (Social Media Victims Law Center PLLC, 2023).

Lastly Cyberbullying can impact our academic performance. When experiencing cyberbullying a person may find it difficult to “concentrate on schoolwork leading to grades dropping to a failing grade” (Farhangpour et al., 2019). In addition to having difficulty concentrating on schoolwork they may “express a desire to skip school and may even will skip school” (Farhangpour et al., 2019). According to a recent study “about 41% of victims affected by cyberbullying experienced being less active in class, 24% confirmed their school performance had dropped, and 35% had repeated a grade while experiencing cyberbullying” (Farhangpour et al., 2019). Our relationship with our classmates can also be negatively impacted by cyberbullying. In a recent study a victim of cyberbullying experienced “some of their classmates isolating from the victim, laughing at the victim, and even rejecting the victim after seeing false information posted online” (Farhangpour et al., 2019).

While some believe that students that commit Cyberbullying affect others in a negative way there are some that believe that Cyberbullying shouldn’t carry any legal consequences. Those that believe Cyberbullying shouldn’t carry legal consequences believe “while students that commit cyberbullying should instead be suspended from school because cyberbullying distract from learning, creates emotional distress, and threatens the safety of others they believe it shouldn’t carry legal consequences” (Cornell & Limber, n.d.).

In a debate those that believe that cyberbullying shouldn’t carry legal consequences would lead you to believe that “if a student who committed cyberbullying goes to jail it would ruin their entire future, they shouldn’t go to jail for such a smile crime, and the victim should just

grow up and ignore the aggressor” (Cornell & Limber, n.d.). Cyberbullying is an issue that has been plaguing our students for years and is an issue that needs to be addressed.

One of the opposing viewpoints is if the aggressor goes to jail it’ll ruin their entire life. Students that experience Cyberbullying are “twice as likely to attempt suicide compared to their non-bullied peers; twenty percent of students that are cyber bullied consider suicide while ten percent actually attempt to take their own lives” (Sheppard et al., 2013). Per year there are about “4,500 deaths caused by suicide due to Cyberbullying” (Sheppard et al., 2013). The fact of the matter is if they do the crime they do the time; if the aggressor Cyberbullies someone to the point of suicide the aggressor needs to be sent to jail and charged with negligent homicide.

Another of the opposing is the they shouldn’t go to jail for such a small crime. Cybersecurity is a big deal and shouldn’t be considered a small crime. Cybersecurity is something that occurs very often that the top three countries where cyberbullying was reported was “India at 38%, Brazil at 29%, and the United States at 26%” (Rovenstine et al., 2023). In fact, in the United States “23% of students have reported that they’ve said or done something mean or cruel to another person online” and “27% reported they’ve experienced the same from someone else” (11 Facts About Cyberbullying, n.d.).

The last of the opposing viewpoints is that the victim should ignore the aggressor. The problem with ignoring the aggressor is no matter how hard you try to ignore them they’ll keep on finding new ways to bully the victim also victim blaming the is not the way to go about solving this issue. Also, cyber bullying is something that no one should have to deal with alone. They should always try and find help from others but even that can be difficult. In fact, “60% of young people have witnessed online bullying but most do not intervene and only 1 in 10 teen victims

will inform a parent or trusted adult of their abuse” (11 Facts About Cyberbullying, n.d.).

Fortunately, “81% of students say they would be more likely to intervene in instances of cyberbullying if they could do it anonymously” so it’s the social media’s job to create such things (11 Facts About Cyberbullying, n.d.).

Victims of cyberbullying can experience different effects some experience poor mental health, some experience poor physical health, some experience poor academic performance, some experience a change in their relationships, and some experienced all four. We have all experienced bullying in one form or another some more aggressive bullying than others. At the end of the day Cyberbullying is something that needs to be stopped and if need be carry legal consequences, whether it’s a hefty fine or jail time students should be able to go onto the Internet and go about their daily lives not having to worry if they’ll be bullied.

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