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Cyberbullying Through Social Media

Cyberbullying is an immense issue in today’s world. It can be seen throughout all ages, but it is predominantly seen in the youth. In 2015, approximately 34 percent of students reported that they had experiences cyberbullying during their lifetime (Foundation, 2018). Another 15 percent of students admitted to cyberbullying others at some point (Foundation, 2018). Since social media is very easily accessible to many people, it is a platform that people use when they are going to cyberbully someone. To be able to stop cyberbullying through social media, one has to be able to notice the signs that someone is being harassed online and one must make a stand to put a stop to it. There has to be legislation put in place to prevent this from happening. However, legislation is not enough to prevent it. Parents and teachers should monitor what their kids are doing online and should always be on the lookout for the signs of cyberbullying.

Since social media is accessible to kids of different ages they can start having an account when they are able to access an electronic device and the internet. There is a remarkable 95 percent of teens in the U.S. that are online (Sameer Hinduja, 2018 ) with most of them accessing the internet on their mobile devices. Teens are constantly connected to technology which makes them constantly susceptible to victimization all the time. 20.4 percent of high school students have reported that they have previously experienced cyberbullying victimization and that they have also cyberbullied others (Ng, 2018 ).

Getting cyberbullied can lead to many other problems like depression, anxiety, or even lead up to suicide. Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in childhood with 5-10 percent of children and 25 percent of teens suffering from it (Jenna Glover, 2018). Social anxiety can derive from having the fear of negative evaluation by others. Today’s youth wants to fit in with everyone, so they are always on their social media accounts and posting things. Since social media was designed to allow people to share things and interact with others. These interactions can lead many young people to create unrealistic comparisons between them and another person. Many of these kids feel like they have to be on social media all the time to know what is going on and develop the fear of missing out (FOMO). High levels of FOMO in the youth mediated the relationship between anxiety symptoms and negative consequences.

Kids spend most of their day at school during the school year, so teachers have to take on the responsibility to educate these students on how to cultivate a positive life online and be able to notice the signs of cyberbullying. 13 percent of kids have been subject of rumors online (Adams, 2010). In 2010, 8 percent of public schools reported that cyberbullying had occurred among students daily or once a week (Foundation, 2018). Teachers and schools have to take the matter seriously when students report that they have been cyberbullied. Teachers have to be able to recognize the signs. They have to be able to notice if a student looks depressed, withdrawn, or if his grades are dripping. Teachers can start to stand in the hallways and lunchroom to look for changes in student relationships, such as a certain student is getting casted out by their fellow peers (Adams, 2010). Students have to report what is going on even if it isn’t happening to them. If they get a message that is talking bad about one of their classmates, they can refuse not to pass that message along and tell a grownup instead. The problem needs to get resolved right away instead of letting it wait and allowing the bullying to continue.

The parents also have a big role when it comes to the prevention of cyberbullying. I believe that parents shouldn’t let their kids have a social media account until they are about 14 years old. This is because at any age before that kids are still very much immature and don’t have the logical thinking that is needed to be on social media. When the kids do get a social media account the parents have the role to educate their kid on appropriate online behaviors (Sameer Hinduja, 2018 ). Parents should also monitor what their child is doing online especially while their child is still new to the social media world. This doesn’t necessarily mean that it is okay for parents to spy on what their kid is doing online, it has to be a mutual thing between the parent and the child, so it does not hurt the parent-child relationship. A good way to monitor this is by keeping the home computer in an open area, 73 percent of parents keep the home computer in an open family area (CBS, 2018). Parents also need to be able to identify the signs that their child is being bullied online. 58 percent of kids have not told their parents abount an online bullying incident (Adams, 2010). If the parents do find out that their kid is being cyberbullied they need to make the child feel safe and let them know that they can come talk to them and convey that they support them no matter what. Depending on the severity of the situation the parent could notify the authorities if needed. The parents and the school administration should work hand in hand to avoid cyberbullying from happening.

We have all heard that saying that says ‘sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me’. There are people that believe that cyberbullying is not that big of an issue and that there are greater things that need more attention over it. To this I say they are wrong because cyberbullying is a big issue in today’s world. In 2013 there was a national crime victimization survey done. 36 percent of students reported being cyberbullied with harmful information on the internet (Foundation, 2018). 19 percent reported unwanted contact through email, 27 percent reported unwanted contact through instant message and 44 percent reported unwanted contact through text message (Foundation, 2018). Of those teens that reported cyberbullying 25 percent of teens on social media reported having an incident result in face to face confrontation with someone. 13 percent reported concern about going to school the next day, 12 percent reported being called names they did not like, and 8 percent reported having a physical altercation with someone over something that had happened on a social networking site (Foundation, 2018). Cyberbullying is associated with symptoms of social anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, low self-confidence and low self-esteem.

There is legislation that has to do with bullying in general and how schools should go about handling bullying situations but there is no legislation that indicates how to properly go about handling cyberbullying. Cyberbullying doesn’t just stop at the school like normal face to face bullying. It follows the person home and takes away the feeling of being safe. It is harsher because people feel more powerful behind a screen and say things that they would not dare say to someone’s face. Since we are connected to social media all the time it is easy to get caught up in the circle.

This is a situation that needs to get taken care of and it needs to happen pretty fast. We need to properly educate our youth on how to properly cultivate a life online and to be mindful of what they say and post. People need to know the signs of cyberbullying. They need to notice the changes in mood or behavior, depression or anxiety, the avoidance of friends or school, sudden aversion to using phones or the computer (Foundation, 2018). Parents and teachers need to be able to notice these signs in their kids/ students. Adults need to make the child feel safe and let the child know that they can come talk to them whenever they need to. People need to not just be bystanders, if they see something going on say something to someone of authority because there is a chance the person getting bullied isn’t going to say anything because they are too scared. There has to be immediate repercussions for kids that are doing the bullying. If these actions are taken in the right way, then there is a chance that we can stop cyberbullying. Everyone has the right to enjoy social media and everything it has to offer without having the fear that someone is talking bad about you or having the feeling that you don’t belong. All we can do is help educate people and tell them that words do cut deep, and they do hurt just like those sticks and stones. If by any chance, there is a situation you get cyberbullied just remember that everything will turn out alright and that the person saying things is hiding behind a computer screen so they don’t have the guts to say it in person.

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