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Cyberbullying on Social Media

Cyberbullying is a very popular way in which social media is used as communication in order to bully a person. This usually involves sending an intimidating or threatening message to the person. According to Meier, “Approximately 34% of student’s report experiencing cyberbullying during their lifetime. About 15% of students admitted to cyberbullying others during their lifetime. Adolescent girls are more likely to experience cyberbullying in their lifetime” (Meier, 2015). Ninety-two percent of teens reported going online daily and about 24% of those reported going online constantly (Patchin, 2010). In a study, social media usage seemed to be linked with many different mental health problems such as depression, sleep disturbances, and eating concerns (Patchin, 2010). Cyberbullying is a big problem in social media and most teens do not know how to cope with bullying, especially online bullying. Since the effects of bullying on teens is so extreme, most do not understand how to cope with the effects which often leads to suicide, lower self esteem, depression, and feelings of powerlessness (Meier, 2015). I think social media sites should have a feature that monitors when someone is bullying someone else and report it and have that user’s social media site shut down. I think if the users bullying others had a threat, such as their social media being shut down, they would think more before bullying someone online.

One way in which cyberbullying could be reduced is by increasing the age limits on different social media sites. Facebook for instance allows users to be 13 when they join the site (Meier, 2015). Many teens join these sites and are unaware of the dangers that come with joining. Children expose themselves to strangers or even predators. When teens that age are exposed to sexually explicit language, photos and videos through social media, I find it strange that those same teens must be 17 years old to attend an R rated movie (EyeGuardian). I think parents who do not want their child to be exposed to these things through an R rated movie would be happy to have the ages increased on social media sites. I believe increasing the age limits in which you can join social media would help reduce cyberbullying and its effects. In order to use a social media site to prove your age is correct, you should have to enter a state issued identification card. According to DMV, “Each individual must have some kind of photo identification card to board an airplane, get a job, set up a bank account, and to make some purchases” (DMV.org). Therefore, most people already have a form of identification so they might as well use it for social media to ensure they are the correct age for the account.

Another way in which I believe we could reduce the amount of people being cyberbullied, could be to make all accounts private when members sign up. In doing so, it would make a person’s information unavailable to others unless they are “friends”. If accounts are private for each user, they must first accept the request to either follow or be friends with another person. If they become friends and one user begins to bully the other user, they can simply delete them as a friend. Deleting them as friends would also help those who are being bullied offline. If they are being bullied offline, they can simply not become friends with the person online to keep from being bullied online as well.

Another important problem that is an effect of cyberbullying, is the decrease in a child’s grade point average. When a child is being bullied offline and is also bullied online it tends to decrease their grade point average. I think parents should highly support not using so much social media to help prevent cyberbullying and to allow their children to do well in school.

According to Costello, social media can also lead to substance abuse. Substance abuse usually occurs due to celebrities glorifying the substances on social media. Social media has been targeted as a way for dealers to sell drugs. Many industries have began using social media platforms to market teens that are fully accessible to getting products such as tobacco, electronic cigarettes, and alcohol. Social media has helped industries market the youth and even market towards minors. Even the cannabis industry is allowing teens to have a greater exposure to the drugs just by going through their social media accounts. It is very hard to regulate what is put on social media that relates to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco products (Costello, 2017). To help prevent substance abuse, we should limit the amount of time we allow teens to spend on social media.

According to Pappas, cyberbullying is linked to many different mental disorders, eating disorders, and psychological disorders, but one of the main effects is depression. Younger generations have been seeing a rise in levels of analysis due to the series of high profile suicides in teens that were bullied on various social media sites. One example of these mass suicides is when teens joined a website where you could ask one another questions anonymously which led to the teens being bullied. This site led to mass bullying which then caused high rates of suicide for teens. Between 89 and 98 percent of teens that use social media have a Facebook account. In a study conducted, Facebook received the highest amount of exposure to cyberbullying which increased the likelihood of depression (Pappas, 2015). By decreasing the amount of social media teens use, could help decrease the number of teens with depression and other disorders.

According to Kavanagh, in order to help prevent cyberbullying, we must first understand why

someone bullies another person. The reasoning for this is because they think it is funny and they justify the torment of another person. Bullies generally bully others out of fear, insecurity or anger. Some may have experienced or are experiencing family problems at home including divorce, alcoholism, or abuse. Recent studies show that most bullies view themselves negatively and have low self-esteem, so they bully in order to feel more powerful. The bullies choose to pick on other people to make them feel less insecure about themselves. A bully generally chooses a target that is easy for them to bully because they may not fit in as well with others. Cyberbullying gives teens another way to bully those that are easy targets in order to appear cool to other peers (Kavanagh, 2018). If we understand why someone bullies another person, we can help prevent the bullying from taking place.

According to Kavanagh, there are some precautions that can be taken in order to help prevent

 cyberbullying. Teens should be cautious when deciding who to give their contact information to, whether its their phone number, email, or social media profile. The person being bullied should ignore the bully by not replying to the message sent by the bully because it will only encourage them to continue. If others chatting in a group become nasty, teens are advised to leave the conversation. Teens are also encouraged to use the privacy settings on their social media sites in order to keep the bully from seeing information to use against their victims (Kavanagh, 2018).

According to Kavanagh, when teens see or are experiencing cyberbullying, it should be reported

by telling someone they trust such as a parent, teacher, or a friend. Teens are advised to keep messages sent by the bully as evidence of the bullying. Teens are also told to block email addresses, or certain users on social media sites. Lastly they should contact the service provider for any site in which the cyberbullying occurs. When someone is harassing another person on pretty much any site, it often violates the terms of service, which could lead to the bully being suspended from the account, site, or network where the bullying took place (Kavanagh, 2018). If the teens report the bullying to an adult, in most cases I think it could put an end to the bully, but I think it could also possibly cause more bullying to take place.

According to Kavanagh, when we know or see someone being cyberbullied, there are many

things we can do to help. First, parents should talk with the teen before bullying occurs in order to prevent the issue. Parents are also encouraged to set rules for social media use to limit cell phone and computer use. Parents may also teach the child or teen how much of an impact bullying has on a victim and how serious the consequences can be. The parents should also learn to be approachable for the child or teen so they feel as if they can talk to them without judgment. If the teens can trust the people around them, they may be more willing to share what is happening to them instead of taking action into their own hands. Teens should be reminded to not share personal information that they do not want to be shared publicly, such as passwords, to anyone they do not trust (Kavanagh, 2018). I think if we talk to teens about bullying at a young age, they are more aware of the issue and it could prevent them from being bullied. If the teens understand more about bullying they know what to do if it did happen and they know that they should not bully others.

Cyberbullying is a very serious problem, especially in teens. Many teens experience cyberbullying weekly. There are ways in which we can help prevent cyberbullying by increasing the age in which they can get social media and making the sites private. We can also help by reporting any cyberbullying that is taking place. Together we can help prevent suicide, depression, and many other disorders just by ending cyberbullying.

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