Cyberbullying Proposal

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 The usage of internet by children, adolescents, and adults has rapidly increased in the last few years. Having an increased exposure has many benefits but also many negative outcomes that affect our development. The focus though, is on the biggest and most negative issue from online exposure known as cyberbullying. Cyberbullying has many definitions and is a different form of bullying that comes from many mediums like text messages, pictures, videos, emails, and social networking sites. There are some studies that say cyberbullying really is not as big of an issue as people make it seem and other studies that say it is rapidly increasing and needs to be addressed. The schools and government should require training and education to staff and parents to teach the students and children the importance of how to use social media appropriately, how when we post things online they never go away, how to avoid the negative influences, and how to treat others the way you want to be treated in person or online. All these lessons on respect, influences, values, treatment of others, and more are vital in life. If we stop giving people more ways to negatively go after someone and attack them, then we have children, adolescents, and adults with better mental health, better relationships, and people who avoid suicide or mental health issues. It is because of cyberbullying that this digital world is one to question.

Growing up at some point in time we have all been bully’s either to our siblings, friends, or other people. Pulling our siblings hair, talking meanly to friends or family, and even probably encountered some form of bullying as well. It is a fact of life. How we treat others, and what we use to do so all plays a role in our behavior. Having everything before more digitized gives more ways to use that social media as a form of bullying called cyberbullying. Cyberbullying is defined as the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature. “Cyberbullies” use these media to harass, insult, intimidate, threaten, and socially isolate victims. They choose victims of online bullying the same way they choose victims of in-person bullying. Because it is essentially the same problem, a large part of the solution is also the same” (Covington). Bullying no matter how it occurs is a problem with devastating consequences. Some consequences could include the bullying following you everywhere you go, you continue getting bullied outside of school, a larger audience views and joins in on bullying, and our mental health could be affected which could lead to suicide. Everyone gets bullied or has had a form of being bullied by someone in their life. We all go through life wishing we had what other people had and can be mean or act better than others when we have more than they do. There is no escaping it, but we can try to control the severity of it. Those who are normally too scared to speak now can hide behind a screen and cause some serious damage that is a problem. “Cyberbullying” was more strongly associated with emotional problems for females and with behavioral problems for males. This evidence identifies unique adverse effects associated with cyberbullying on both emotional and behavioral problems and sex differences in the strength of these associations” (Kim, Colwell, Kata, Boyle, & Georgiades, 2017). No person should get devalued or tormented in any way and have our future behavior and mental state affected. Although not all may agree that cyberbullying is the reason for the negative behaviors, suicide, and mental state of people, there is clearly a negative impact from such and social media has some of the blame.

Some people and therapists argue that cyberbullying is an increasing issue and others disagree. Many people agree that bullying is something that needs to be addressed, but cyberbullying has no scientific proof to be the cause of suicide or any other negative factors. One author strongly feels that way as she states,

“There is no scientific evidence that bullying causes suicide. None at all. Lots of teenagers get bullied (between 1 in 4 and 1 in 3 teenagers report being bullied in real life, fewer report being bullied online). Very few commit suicide. Among the people who commit suicide, researchers have no good data on how many of them have been bullied” (McBride, 2017).

 McBride also states, “It is journalistically irresponsible to claim that bullying leads to suicide. Even in specific cases where a teenager or child was bullied and subsequently commits suicide, it’s not accurate to imply the bullying was the direct and sole cause behind the suicide” (2017). The news even recently reports that, “In a presentation late last week to American Psychological Association, two nationally representative surveys totaling nearly 5,000 pre-teens and teens found that 15 percent said they’d been bullied on the Internet during the past year. (Updated: An earlier version of this story reported a cyberbullying rate of 17 percent. Based on a new analysis, Ybarra revised the estimate to 15 percent.) While that at first may seem high, past studies had pegged the cyberbullying victim rate anywhere from 30 percent to as lofty as 72 percent” (Briggs, 2012). This does not include the many cases that never report really getting bullied online and otherwise. Since this new door has opened to give people a new way to hurt others it is much trickier to fully figure out if what is said is just a joke or really a form of bullying. NBC news also states, “Spotting, identifying and stopping true cyber-bullying is trickier than breaking up a playground fight between a bully. A remark from one teen to another that may be meant as sarcastic, yet good-natured teasing may be misconstrued as harassment or as true bullying by some adolescents” (Briggs, 2012). It is clear many can see there is a problem that needs to be addressed. The way to go about it is tricky and unclear what ways will give the best results. Given that if there were stricter requirements of educating our children and training/educating the staff on how to catch, stop, and educate how to be online using social media and how to not treat people wrong online could ultimately lower the amount of cyberbullying occurring.

How we present ourselves online defines us not just in the digital world but in society too. If we don’t want to become a statistic we need to consider our actions and remember they all have consequences. There is many facts and statistics that show how important it is that we do something about this issue.

 “Because the National Crime Victimization Survey data is weighted to represent the entire enrolled 9th-12th grade student population, it is estimated that about 2.2 million students experienced cyberbullying in 2011. Of the 9% of students that reported being cyberbullied in the National Crime Victimization Survey compared to 6.2% in 2009 (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2013): 71.9% reported being cyberbullied once or twice in the school year, 19.6% reported once or twice a month, 5.3% reported once or twice a week, and 3.1% reported almost every day. When asked about cyberbullying in the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCES, 2013): 3.6% of students reported being cyberbullied with hurtful information on the internet, 1.1% reported private information being purposely shared, 1.9% reported unwanted contact via e-mail, 2.7% reported unwanted contact via instant messaging, and 4.4% reported unwanted contact via text messaging” (“Cyberbullying and Social Media”).

Bullying is extremely hurtful regardless of how it is done. There are so many statistics on the harms of what all this bullying does, how the bullying occurs, and how many. It is shocking to look and see just how much information is reported and collected from research.

“Of the students that reported cyberbullying (Zweig, Dank, Lachman & Yahner, 2013): 25% of teens on social media reported having an experience resulting in a face-to-face confrontation with someone. 13% reported concern about having to go to school the next day. 12% reported being called names they didn’t like via text messages. 11% received a text message from another student intended to hurt their feelings. 8 % reported having physical altercations with someone because of something that occurred on a social network site. 6%reported another student sending an instant message or chat to hurt their feelings. 4% reported having something put on a profile page to hurt their feelings. 3% reported receiving a nasty email from another student” (“Cyberbullying and Social Media”).

If this does not change your mind that something needs to be done, then I am not sure what would. There needs to be something done to lower these numbers. Although it looks small because the percent are low remember it comes from the millions of students who reported the cyberbullying. “Solutions to bullying are not simple. Bullying prevention approaches that show the most promise confront the problem from many angles. They involve the entire school community—students, families, administrators, teachers, and staff such as bus drivers, nurses, cafeteria and front office staff—in creating a culture of respect. Zero tolerance and expulsion are not effective approaches. Bystanders who intervene on behalf of young people being bullied make a huge difference” (“Facts about Bullying”). To conquer we are gonna need everyone to play a part. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services also states, “Studies also have shown that adults, including parents, can help prevent bullying by keeping the lines of communication open, talking to their children about bullying, encouraging them to do what they love, modeling kindness and respect, and encouraging them to get help when they are involved in bullying or know others who need help” (“Facts about Bullying”). The most important thing we can do is talk to our children about social media and cyberbullying. Deal with cyberbullying the same way you would handle with someone getting bullied in-person and document it or take a photo or screen shot of it. Teach your child or adolescent what it means to be a good digital citizen. “Just as you taught them how to behave in the physical world when they were young, you must also teach them how to behave in the digital world. The same social interaction rules apply. Teach them empathy in all avenues of life, including their online interactions. Along with this, it is essential that you model good online behavior. Don’t contribute to the negative online diatribe. Teens learn cyberbullying behaviors from what they see adults post online. Instead, post, tweet, and text constructively” (Covington).

 Cyberbullying is a problem no matter if it is viewed as big or small. We live in a digital age where it is constantly changing by becoming more digital and with that gives more responsibility and more ways to use in negative ways. Technology is very beneficial and should get to be taught to kids, so they can use it for the benefits and be taught how to avoid using it in an inappropriate manner. Having both the parents and staff in school trained and educated on how to spot inappropriate online usage and correct the way the children and adolescents use it, we can make a change to get kids to be more mindful of what they post and how they treat others in the digital world. Our digital citizen we become is something that is almost or just as important as the citizen we are in society. What we want is to make the world a better place and to adjust to the new time and age. By doing so can make society a better place and avoid any serious consequences that could come from negative outcomes like the evils of cyberbullying.

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