

Running Head: CYBER BULLYING

Morality and Social Responsibility: Final Project on Cyber Bullying

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Bullying is no longer limited to the school yard. In this technological age, bullying is taking place twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week through social media, making cyber bullying a growing problem amongst adolescents. Assumptions regarding the issue of cyber bullying can sometimes vary greatly from the facts and also be reinforced by the facts. Some key assumptions explored through the research of this topic include: cyber bullying is not a big issue; bullies have low self-esteem; cyber bullying affects victims physically and emotionally; current laws protect victims; bullies are more commonly boys; and education is key to combat cyber bullying. The facts discovered through in-depth research and analysis of this topic, as described below, will either prove or disprove these assumptions.

According to statistics from a Cyberbullying Research Center study that surveyed over 4,000 kids, 20.8 % of these adolescents reported having been cyber-bullied in their lifetime, with 17% of them having been bullied or harassed while online within the previous 30 days of the study (Cyberbullying Research Center, 2010). Additional information from the i-SAFE Foundation and *The Harford County Examiner* shows that over half of adolescents/teens have been victims of online bullying, and about the same amount have engaged in some form of cyber bullying. Further, these statistics show that one in three young people have experienced cyber threats while online (Cyber Bullying Statistics, 2009). This particular study also pointed out that girls are somewhat more likely than boys to be involved in cyber bullying, as this is a less physical form of bullying. These numbers prove undeniably that cyber bullying is a serious issue affecting a great number of adolescents.

Contrary to general attitudes towards bullying, the bully is often in as much emotional pain as his/her victim. A 2002 warning by the American Medical Association indicated that “bullying is a public health issue with long-term mental consequences for both bullies and their victims” (Lemonick, et al., 2005). Low self-esteem, past history of being bullied by other children at school or by adults in their home may lead young people to look for power and attention, resulting in bullying behavior. After discovering that they can get away with it, they continue the pattern of abuse. Victims of bullying are more likely to report physical and mental health problems, and to contemplate and complete suicide compared with non-victims, thus making the issue of cyber bullying a “serious threat to healthy child development and a potential cause of school violence” (Smokowski & Lopasz, 2005).

Expecting to be bullied during school is no longer a “rite of passage.” Being bullied is actually considered harassment in today’s society. The keys to the cessation of bullying are intervention and prevention. Intervention must happen as soon as it is recognized and action must be taken to stop the behavior and inform the bully that this behavior will not be tolerated. These offenses should be reported promptly. It can be said that “being taunted or attacked physically can be one of the most painful experiences of childhood and can leave lasting psychological scars” (Shore, 2009). Knowing your state’s Anti –Bully laws, if any are in effect, will help to apply corrective actions when bullying occurs.

Prevention is the second step in deterring bullying. Bullying remains a popular problem in today’ society, not just in schools, but online and even in the work place.

Regardless of age, the act and scars of bullying remain a timeless issue. Researching bullying prevention programs, such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, will help to support positive outcomes. These prevention programs include education for parents, teachers, and students. These prevention programs do cost money, but “with relatively little investment is needed to accomplish these goals, and the programs will pay for themselves through reduced school violence, fewer placements for special-education, fewer suicides, and less future crime”(Kass, Evans, & Shah, 2003). By investing in our schools and children, and by taking an efficacious and progressive role in the prevention of bullying, the instances of long-lasting physical and emotional scars can be greatly diminished.

When trying to understand how or why a cyber bullying situation occurs, it is best to hear everyone’s point of view, and not just focus on one single view. There is a reason for the actions displayed and the perpetrator, as well as the one being bullied, will have their opinions as to why it has occurred. The parents of the parties involved will have different outlooks as well, but getting to the root of the problem will require them to remain mature adults and open to any suggestions. There will be disagreements depending on the solutions that are suggested. One must not place judgment against the others involved and be open to suggestions as this will help to ensure that the problem will be solved.

Other solutions for preventing or interfering in a cyber bullying incident include having a trusting relationship with one’s children. This means allowing them to come forward about anything, without becoming upset. These relationships are important so active listening and responding should take place. “Parents need to be the one trusted

place kids can go when things go wrong online and offline. Yet they often are the one place kids avoid when things go wrong online. Why? Parents tend to overreact. Most children will avoid telling their parents about a cyber bullying incident fearing they will only make things worse.” (“What’s the parent’s”). Whether you are the parent, teacher, or someone else involved in the situation, it definitely requires some form of understanding of cyber bullying and why it continues to thrive.

Every individual person needs to help control this issue to keep our children safe. As a society, we need to live by the motto: “A man should wander about treating all creatures as he himself would be treated” (Jainism & Sutakritanga, 1.11.33). Nobody likes being bullied, so an end to this problem begins with each individual making a socially responsible decision. Let’s start thinking about others; instead of ourselves. Let’s take the challenge; one person at a time!

A step that Group Dahlia has taken to help solve the issue of cyber bullying is a Facebook page. The page is called Cyber bullying: Caught in the Web. Here is the link to the page:(<http://www.facebook.com/?sk=welcome#!/CyberbullyingCaughtInTheWeb>). This page has information about online safety and prevention of cyber bullying. It also has great links to websites and resources in order to further your knowledge on cyber bullying. We need to educate parents of the importance of monitoring their children’s online use and to put limits on that use as well. Parents also need to encourage open communication with their children, so they know what is going on in their child’s life.

We need to take an active role in our school systems to help educate our teachers and schools about cyber bullying, including ways to prevent it, ways to get help if you are the bully, if you are being bullied, and the consequences for all who are caught in that

web. Finally, laws need to change in order to help combat this problem. Currently, there are not many laws that protect individuals from cyber bullying. Unfortunately, cyber space is still considered a “free zone.” Politicians need to hear the voices of these victims. Writing letters, signing petitions, and lobbying for changes to the laws are great collective action tools that can really make changes to cyber bullying.

Cyber bullying does not have to happen. With education at home, from teachers, support of responsible bystanders, and the law, there can be an end to cyber bullying. This behavior is wrong and can be combated as long as there are socially responsible people willing to stand against it.

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