

What is cyber bullying? essay sample



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Throughout an individual's educational career it is often taught that bullying is wrong, begging the question why do so many people still choose to bully their peers? Drawing upon my own personal experiences, I recall being constantly subjected to bullying in high school as a result of my weight. My peers would often refer to me as fat and continuously make jokes about my weight. Luckily for me, I was able to adequately make the changes necessary to cease the bullying, however many individuals are not as lucky. Traditional bullying can be described as frequent physical and verbal abuse against a victim. Unlike traditional bullying, bullying has evolved to the point where bullies have unlimited access to victims via the internet. Internet bullying, otherwise regarded as cyber bullying has become a dominant and major issue for today's youth. With the constant improvements in technologies such as computers, smartphones, and the arrival of tablets, bullies now have easier access to their victims. The fact that most teenagers own and utilize these electronic devices makes it far easier for teenagers to take part in cyber bullying.

Overall, today cyber bullying is becoming more damaging than traditional bullying due to a greater number of ways a person can be cyber bullied; cyber bullying forms an ideal environment for bullies given it can occur anonymously and can occur anywhere. Also, cyber bullying is more damaging than traditional bullying because more people are able to witness cyber bullying due to the public nature of the internet, and due to the fact that cyber bullying is not monitored as closely as traditional bullying in schools. There is a considerable difference in how many ways a person can be bullied on the Internet in comparison to traditional bullying. Traditional

bullying usually involves assaulting the victim physically and verbally.

Physical bullying includes pushing, punching and kicking the victim, while verbal bullying can consist of name-calling, rumors, and abusive notes. In contrast, cyber bullying occurs in various ways on different Internet websites and through text messages on a cell phones. First, cyber bullying can occur on a social media website such as Facebook. Facebook has approximately “ five hundred million active users” (Lee et. all).

Facebook is a website where an individual can maintain communication with peers through status updates, pictures, and instant messaging; however Facebook is frequently used negatively. An example of cyber bullying through Facebook is the recent Amanda Todd incident. During this incident, Todd received threatening messages and had inappropriate pictures “sent to [her classmates]” (Friscolanti page). Cyber bullying can also occur on video sharing sites like YouTube. Shaheen Shariff outlines a prime example of cyber bullying through YouTube in “ Bullying Today”. In “ Bullying Today”, Shariff gives the example of Ghislain Reza, who left behind an embarrassing videotape of himself “[dancing] with a light sabre” (Shariff, 343); the video was subsequently leaked on to the Internet for many people to see.

Furthermore, cyber bullying can occur through text messages and e-mails where threatening messages, inappropriate pictures and unwanted contact can all take place.

Clearly, there is countless ways and avenues which people can utilize to participate in bullying using the internet as opposed to traditional bullying, forming one of the main reasons why cyber bullying is more damaging than traditional bullying. There is a substantial difference between traditional and

cyber bullying in terms of anonymity. It is very hard for traditional bullying to be kept anonymous, because both the bully and the victim must be in the same general area for the bullying to occur. The only way bullying can remain anonymous within the confines of traditional bullying is through the usage of notes and rumors. Although traditional bullying has some anonymity, cyber bullying has proven to be virtually untraceable in many instances. According to the journal article “ Extending the School Grounds? – Bullying Experiences in Cyberspace” by Jaana Juoven and Elieshva Gross, based on a 2008 study of approximately two thousand youth aged twelve to seventeen found that only “ two thirds of cyber bullying victims reported knowing their perpetrators” (Juoven and Gross, page). Cyber bullying can be completely anonymous on sites like Facebook or YouTube through the use of fake accounts.

Through the creation of fake accounts, cyber bullies have a greater ability to insult and attack their victim “ without being easily detected” (Shariff, 342). Personally, in high school I have witnessed numerous fake Facebook pages made simply to attack a single person. The amount of anonymity that cyber bullies have is currently giving bullies more power, and as a result this form of bullying is more damaging than traditional bullying. Besides a difference in the amount of anonymity, cyber bullying and traditional bullying are completely diverse in the places they can occur. For traditional bullying to occur almost always the bully must be in close vicinity with their victim. The only exception to this in traditional bullying is if the bully attacks their victim through the usage of rumors. On the other hand, cyber bullying can occur practically anywhere. For example, Amanda Todd’s bully was able to torment

her in completely different physical vicinity than her. Furthermore, the growth in the number of adolescents using cell phones and computers is causing cyber bullying to grow.

According to the journal article: “ Cyber Bullying Behaviors Among Middle and High School Students” by Steve Solomon et al, a recent study of Toronto students revealed that “ almost all participants (99%) had a computer in their home” (Solomon et al). This statistic is important because demonstrates the unlimited access that bullies have to their victims in their homes. Also, from this survey it was found “ half the students indicated they had been bullied online before” (Solomon et. all). Moreover, cell phones and the advent of smart phones increases mobile access to the internet and adds to the increasing instances of cyber bullying It is easier for cell phones now to reach the internet, and easier in turn for the bullies to reach their victim. Finally, traditional bullying victims may feel relieved when they are away from their bullies, however cyber bullying can occur anywhere, anytime, and anyplace and this is yet another reason why cyber bullying is more damaging than traditional bullying.

Along with the differences in the places where cyber bullying and traditional bullying can be administered, there is a significant difference in the number of people who are able to witness these two types of bullying. For traditional bullying there is always a very limited audience. If traditional bullying occurs in a school environment, the audience is limited to the peers of the bully and the victim. If there is a physical situation in an alley, only a select few people would be able to witness or join in. In addition, when traditional bullying takes place it is found that “ thirty percent of onlookers and bystanders

support perpetrators instead of victims” (Shariff, 342). In contrast, cyber bullying plays to a much wider array of people; where “ hundreds of people can get involved in the abuse” (Shariff, 343). For example, Amanda Todd’s bully was able to reach a large amount of her classmates and peers by creating a Facebook page demeaning her. There are approximately “ five hundred million active users” (Lee et. all) on Facebook and any demeaning page, video or photo posted can potentially be seen by anyone. Another example of a large audience witnessing cyber bullying comes from “ Bullying Today”.

In this article, Shariff gives the example of a boy named David Knight who was cyber bullied by his peers, when they “ set up a website about him” (Shariff, 341). This websites only intent was to bully Knight through the use of “ threats, insults, and gossip” (Shariff, 341). Knight explained that this incident was worse than traditional bullying because by creating the website there was up too “ six billion people [able] to see” (Shariff, 341), and able to make fun of him. Finally, due to the larger audience and the ability of others to join in the bullying, these reasons make cyber bullying more damaging than traditional bullying. In addition to having a larger audience, cyber bullying is also less monitored than traditional bullying in schools. In schools today, there is a zero tolerance policy for bullying, and often if there is an issue at school with regards to traditional bullying it is revealed to a parent, schoolteacher, or a guardian.

Also, traditional bullying in school is easily detectable by teachers and other educators who are directly supervising daily interactions between students are therefore able to witness bullying while it is taking place. As a result,

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traditional bullies will often refrain from bullying at school because they are afraid of the consequences. In contrast, in the article “ The Changing Face of Bullying: An Empirical Comparison between Traditional and Internet Bullying and Victimization” by Terry Waterhouse et. al, that “ young people report being victimized online rather infrequently compared to offline bullying” (Waterhouse et al). This statement is significant because it illustrates that adolescents are afraid to tell someone about problems they may be experiencing online. Furthermore, in the journal article “ Sticks And Stones Can Break My Bones, But How Can Pixels Hurt Me?: Students’ Experiences With Cyber-Bullying” by Cassidy Wanda, Margaret Jackson, and Karen Brown, a survey of grade six through nine students from schools within the Lower Mainland found that forty two percent would not “ confide to school personnel” about cyber bullying (Wanda, Jackson, and Brown, 392).

It was also found from the survey that “ one quarter of the respondents ... would not tell anyone about being cyber bullied” (Wanda, Jackson, and Brown, 392). With traditional bullying frequently occurring in school, it is more likely to be monitored than cyber bullying which occurs outside of school. Bullying is a major problem today whether it is traditional or cyber. There have been steps taken to remove traditional bullying from schools, but it is now time to focus on cyber bullying as a major issue today. With the news of the recent Amanda Todd incident, it is clear that cyber bullying is not a current focus for the public, seeing as no concern was given until Amanda Todd took her own life. Cyber bullying is a problem because there are numerous variables to this form of bullying such as anonymity, huge audience, and the number of sites cyber bullying can occur on. Finally,

because victims of cyber bullying feel unsafe, humiliated and degraded every time they are on the internet, whether it is at home, or at school cyber bullying is more damaging than traditional bullying and should be reported every time it occurs.