

Strategies to prevent and reduce cyberbullying



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Living in the twenty-first century, technological advances appear to be an expectation. Technology has the ability to make everyday life easier, but unfortunately, it can also lead to new and dangerous problems all across the internet. In today's society, internet users face a worldwide issue called Cyberbullying. Cyberbullying involves different forms of harassment and bullying throughout the internet. Unlike any other form of bullying, cyberbullying takes place through electronic communication rather than in person or face to face. Instead, it is through email, text, and social media sites. Even then, cyberbullying still has the ability to have a powerful impact on its victims. It often said that, sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt. Unfortunately, cyberbullying has proved this statement to be false. This research will discuss where cyberbullying comes from, and the steps to take in order to not only reduce, but to also prevent online bullying.

So, what exactly is social media? Today's generation of adolescents look to social media for all the answers. If one wants to know what the latest trend is or what just happened in their local community, they can find what they are looking for with just a click of a button. It is communication that is referred to as a pastime in which groups of individuals connect with each other online to share information in a simple way regarding words, pictures, videos, audio messages, and much more (Moreno, 2016). This form of communication is increasing and becoming more and more popular with adolescents all across the world. On the other hand, Moreno also provided that cybercrime can be more challenging to handle than traditional bullying. There can be positive results if used in a correct and responsible way. Huffman (2013) said these

networking applications can help adolescents find their true identity by learning about different perspectives from different places of the world. She also indicates that social media allows society to be more engaged. This enables the students to build relationships and better connect with those who have the same interests around them. However, one of the downfalls of social media is that it is beginning to evolve negatively in school systems. This leads to one of the biggest leading causes of internet issues, Cyberbullying.

Undoubtedly, one problem school systems have the hardest time dealing with is bullying, and something more complex than traditional bullying is Cyberbullying. According to Anderson (2010), cyberbullying occurs when hurtful and harmful comments are posted on social media applications intended to start gossip. Cyberbullying appears when someone is anonymously behind a computer screen making it difficult for the victim or victims to uncover the true identity of the predator. When one gets behind a computer screen and says hurtful words they may not even realize they are being a perpetrator. There are eight distinct types of Cyberbullying (Simmons & Bynum, 2014) where each are being used differently in order to humiliate other peers. For example, Flaming occurs when profanity and resentful messages are made into online arguments (Siegle, 2010). An example of this would be when two friends are instant messaging and they start arguing in a vulgar way. People who take part in flaming enjoy seeing others reactions which is why they continue to do it. Next is harassment. Just as Mitchell, Jones, Turner, and Wolak (2015) describe harassment as when you continue to name call, tease, and send other repulsive messages to

specifically target someone over and over again. This could occur when someone posts a picture on social media and people begin commenting rude and impulsive messages to make the victims self esteem drop. Another form of cyberbullying is Denigration. Denigration is when someone purposely tries to ruin ones image. For instance, spreading made up words about an individual to get other people to believe those words are true (Siegle, 2010) (Simmons & Bynum, 2014). Additionally, Impersonation is a form of cat-fishing, which is when you pretend and act like someone else behind the computer screen. When you give someone incorrect information about yourself, it makes you seem like a completely different person who is playing the game of false identity. Outing and Trickery (Siegle, 2010), can go hand in hand. Outing is caused when someone has shared personal information intended for that one person and then they go and spread it on the internet. He also discussed trickery as when you force or deceive someone to put their personal information online so everyone can see it. The sixth form of cyber bullying he mentioned is Exclusion, which is when you purposefully do not include someone in a group on social media sites and chat rooms. Holding a grudge against a certain person is a part of exclusion because you try to kick them out from their group of friends. Siegle (2010) finally mentioned Cyberstalking as over occurring attacks online that can lead to harm. Breaking into someone's account can lead to cyberstalking. Cyberstalking is when a person gets a hold of someone's information online which helps the victim track down the suspect (Simmons & Bynum, 2014). Oddly enough, there are multiple ways that you can experience or take part in cyberbullying — spreading rumors is not the only way.

Cyberbullying can occur anywhere and at anytime, but where it begins is in the school systems. Schools are beginning to let students use their phones or other technological devices more frequently. As mentioned earlier, social media can be very beneficial, if used in the correct way as it gives us a source of entertainment and information. Though, some students will go as far as hurting other students on social media for their own personal entertainment. According to Stewart and Fritsch (2011), it is the schools' duty to protect the well-being of their students. They also mentioned that the administration is unwilling to intervene on these situations because of the students freedom of speech. However, there are strategies that school administrations can implement throughout the school year. Considering the bullying starts at school, but is initiated in the homes, Simmons and Bynum (2014) mentioned that parents and students should obtain proper instruction on cyberbullying. They also said that schools should provide a class which all students should be required to take that covers the issue. This would help students learn how to properly use the internet and it could also teach them the harms and effects of cyberbullying. In order for the students to report this kind of harassment, the teachers and other education professionals must secure a positive and healthy relationship with their students (Simmons & Bynum, 2014). Another relationship the schools should acquire is with the law enforcement agencies. According to Simmons and Bynum (2014), police could come in and talk about important matters to keep the students and parents updated on computer techniques and resources on how to prevent cyberbullying. Ockerman, Kramer, and Bruno (2014) said the amount of bullying going on is shocking. Ockerman et al. (2014) suggests that there are six things schools should do to prevent cyberbullying— implement

administrative power, have a structured environment, enforce rules, provide proper training, ensure safety, and share a responsibility within the system and public. This can help the students, teachers, staff, and the community get to know a little more about each other and to feel comfortable reporting any instances of cyber bullying to a responsible adult. There is always going to be bullying in schools, but with certain steps and precautions, it can come to an end.

At the beginning, it was recognized that social media can be used in a good way, but every good comes with a bad. When there is an issue that gets out of hand who do most citizens turn to? Law enforcement. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (BJA, 2012) recognizes that law enforcement takes cyberbullying seriously. No matter what state you are from there are laws against online bullying (BJA, 2012). If someone is a victim of cyberbullying and they do not trust an adult at the school or in the community, the police are there to help. Many schools have an School Resource Officer on campus. Although law enforcement is there to help, it is always good to learn the defensive tactics so one can be prepared at any time (BJA, 2012). It also stated that police are already trained on how to step in, take away devices, record any messages that are harmful or derogatory in any way, and how to properly manage and deal with the offender. If the situation was bad enough to where law enforcement had to step in there are consequences already set in place. According to Gillespie (2006) a person who is charged with a communication offense can be incarcerated for a maximum of six months. Not every case of cyber bullying will be caught. In order for a communication offense to be committed the crime abuse must be

done through communication between one individual to another (Gillespie, 2006). He described a communication offense as being caught sending rude messages through some form of communication. Another consequence that could happen is a restraining order. He also indicated that when a restraining order is implemented it refrains them from any use of the internet or device. Once someone gets in trouble with the law, because of their actions and behavior online, the victim will most likely not commit the crime again. This is why law enforcement can impact the way we reduce this crime.

Unfortunately, cyberbullying has been around for quite some time. As technology continues to advance it allows for more social media sites providing more opportunities for an anonymous user to spread hurtful and false words about their peers. There are eight different forms of cyberbullying: Flaming, Harassment, Denigration, Impersonation, Outing, Trickery, Exclusion, and Cyberstalking, all of which can lead to making someone feel like their self-worth does not compare to their peers. Having the school systems implement programs to educate the parents, students, and community can help reduce this harassment taking place in the slightest bit. However, the police are trusted adults who know how to handle the situation. There are laws in place that try to prevent this from happening. When schools, law enforcement, and local communities work together, an answer is found. Cyberbullying may be on the rise, but with the right education and training, it can be stopped.

References

- Anderson, W. L. (2010). Cyber stalking (cyber bullying) – proof and punishment. *Insights To A Changing World Journal*, (4) , 18-23.

- Gillespie, A. A. (2006). Cyber-bullying and harassment of teenagers: The legal response. *Journal of Social Welfare & Family Law*, 28 (2), 123-136. doi: 10. 1080/09649060600937772
- Huffman, S. (2013). Benefits and pitfalls: Simple guidelines for the use of social networking tools in k-12 education. *Education*, 134 (2), 154-160. Retrieved from [http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,uid,cookies&db=slh&AN=93663126&site=ehost-live](http://0-search.ebscohost.com/library/acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,uid,cookies&db=slh&AN=93663126&site=ehost-live).
- International Association Chiefs of Police. (2012, November). *Law enforcement and cyberbullying fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Cyberbullying-Fact-Sheet.pdf>.
- Mitchell, K. J., Jones, L. M., Turner, H. A., & Wolask, J (2015). *Technology-involved harassment victimization: Placement in a broader victimization context* (Research in Brief). U. S. Department of Justice.
- Moreno, M. (2016). *Electronic harassment: Concept map and definition* (Research in Brief). Seattle, WA: U. S. Department of Justice.
- Ockerman, M. S., Kramer, C., & Bruno, M. (2014). From the school yard to cyber space: *A pilot study of bullying behaviors among middle school students*. *Research in Middle Education Online*, 37 (6), 1-18. Retrieved from [http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie&db=a9h&AN=94979306&site=ehost-live](http://0-search.ebscohost.com/library/acaweb.org/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip,url,cookie&db=a9h&AN=94979306&site=ehost-live).
- Simmons, K. D., & Bynum, Y. P. (2014). Cyberbullying: Six things administrators can do. *Education*, 134 (4), 452-456. Retrieved from [http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.acaweb.org/login](http://0-search.ebscohost.com/library.acaweb.org/login).

aspx? direct= true&AuthType= ip, url, uid, cookies&db=
slh&AN= 97060946&site= ehost-live.

- Stewart, D. M., & Fritsch, E. J. (2011). School and Law Enforcement efforts to combat cyberbullying. *Preventing School Failure, 55* (2), 79-87. doi 10. 1080/1045988X. 2011. 539440