

CYBER BULLYING

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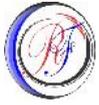
Cyber Bullying is no laughing matter, legal vacuum persists

Rashi Jain (name changed) could not believe it when her best friend created a fake profile of her on a social networking site and sent derogatory messages to common friends in a bid to get back at Rashi for having friendship with a boy she liked. "She used my personal images and insulted me on a public forum," the victim related.

Children in India reported the third highest online bullying rate, after China and Singapore, among the 25 countries surveyed under a recently commissioned project by Microsoft Corporation to understand the global pervasiveness of online bullying. In India, the survey indicated that 79% were worried about the cyber bullying. 77% reported being bullied online and/or offline.

There was a time when parents were able to sleep easy at night, knowing their young teenage children were safely tucked up in their bedrooms and well away from danger. It is not the same case now anymore. We all live in a virtual world where predators are looking for their prey. Cyber bullying is the intentional and repeated use of negative comments, insulting, teasing remarks to put another person down on social media or internet targeting one's body shape and structure, educational qualifications, professional qualifications, family, gender orientation, personal habits and outlook.

A person can be cyber bullied by harassment via e-mails, cyber-stalking, defamation, morphing of photographs, email spoofing, posting obscene photos with mean comments, creating fake IDs and posting bad messages.



As per Ms Aftab, Facebook's international advisory board, cyber bullying is minor-to- minor digital harassment; when this activity involves adults, it is called cyber harassment. She said everybody has a responsibility to ensure people are safe online from trolls and cyber bullies. When it does occur, she urged victims to report it so that Facebook can do something about it.

The folks behind online game "Killing Floor 2" are taking steps to keep things friendly in their online world, and to prevent abuses such as cheating and cyber-bullying. They lay out some harsh penalties for gamers caught engaging in cyber bullying.

Impact of Cyber Bullying on a person

It can make a person feel embarrassed, humiliated and worthless which can lead to anxiety, depression and cause a person to stop wanting to go to school or work, to lose interest in interacting with others, or to become isolated and withdrawn.

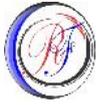
In the most extreme cases, cyber bullying can lead to self-harming behaviors, suicidal feelings, even cause feelings of hatred, anger and lead to violence against others. Constant harassment can cause low self esteem and chronic pain which could grow worse over a period of time.

Many incidents have been reported about children taking extreme step to avoid embarrassment.

How the person being bullied should react

Although it may be difficult not to respond or retaliate, it is always better to ignore cyber bullying. A cyber bully is looking for attention and giving them a response only feeds this need and makes them feel more powerful.

By ignoring the bully, you are taking away their power to cause you emotional harm. If you are being bullied, it is best to ignore it, inform a parent, teacher or trusted adult and cut off communication with that person if you



can. Do not feel embarrassed of the emotional impact the bully may have on you and do not hesitate to seek support. Talk to your parents or teacher about such incident. Send us a email at **info@empoweringkids.in** reporting such issue, we will provide adequate help and guidance.

Legal Vacuum

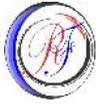
Section 66A of the Information Technology Act, has been declared unconstitutional. There is no law that deals with cyber-bullying and online abuse specifically directed at children. The criminalization of speech is only acceptable in a very narrow set of cases, as the Supreme Court has again stressed while striking down section 66A of the IT Act.

Facebook and Twitter have taken a more drastic measure to protect its users. Twitter has planned to enforce a policy that you have to have a real name to a real Twitter account and allow people to only follow real people whereas Facebook allows you to remove the tags from the pictures you feel offended or do not like it. Social media is also actively restricting the users the ways in which others could be bullied.

Conclusion

Since India which is ranked number 3 in cyber bullying, government should consider creating good laws regulating bad speech and harassments on the internet. Awareness should be spread amongst children and parents. It should be taught right from the basic classes as a subject, as we learn moral science which prepares us for moral values in life same way cyber hygiene/netiquette and digital moral science should be taught to netizens.

Internet exposure does not necessarily lead to negative effects, which means it is okay to go online. But the key seems to be learning how to cope with the stress of the experience and knowing how to reduce the chances of being exposed to online risk. Not allowing teens to use the internet has its own risks.



As much as there are negatives associated with online use, there are also a lot of benefits to using online technologies. Parents should be aware that restricting online use completely could hurt their children educationally and socially

Schools should also team up to prevent children from being bullied by someone behind a computer screen or cell phone. Schools need to inform parents about how they can protect their kids by showing them how to access apps where bullying is widespread. Make the parents understand - Take it, check it, block it, and report it philosophy. Because parents need to know that they should take their child's phone and look at it, and you need to block things from going onto it.

Online gaming community should also keep an eye to stop cyber bullying happening during the game.

References:

1. Sergeant John J. DeVon - "Digital Dangers 2015, USA",
2. James Harris - "Digital spy 2015, UK"
3. "Internet safety for Children" book by Deepak Singh
4. Article about cyber bullying "<http://www.endcyberbullying.org/>"