PREVENT CYBER BULLYING AND ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Cyber bullying is an emerging menace which manifests through hate-speeches, harassment, cyber-stalking and forms of disparagement online and text messages which leads to anti social behaviour. Unlike regular bullying, the ability to mask identities, impersonate and to pile-on means that cyber-bullying is a lot harder to spot and monitor. Studies show India ranks third in the countries affected by this problem, hence the need to look into the law.

Keywords: *Cyber bullying, anti social behavior, Prevention*

Introduction

Bullying classmates, juniors or even seniors in the educational institutions is a common culture among the young students in India. Mostly it is unprovoked teasing which in some circumstances turn as unintentional abuse of power by one or more students in order to inflict pain or cause distress to another student on repeated occasions. Bullying in a broader sense also includes cyber bullying through internet and mobile phones. While simple teasing regarding one's personal habits, figure , or any other object which generates curiosity in the young minds is not gravely harmful, but when the same verbal remarks make a child suffer deep depression, withdrawal symptoms or even affect his studies, the seriousness of the issue does not remain bounded in only "just for fun sake". With the easy access to mobile phones and internet by the students, the matter becomes more serious as the identity of the victim may be revealed to a bigger circle. It is   however, a very much neglected fact that the habit of bullying and cyber bullying in schools open the pathway for the offender to become a habitual ragger in colleges and even turn him into a cyber criminal.

Since the main targets of cyber-bullying are children, there is a threat of children feeling unsafe, being subjected to mental trauma, defamation and the possibility of being driven to suicide. Legal issues relating to cyber bullying can be defamation on cyberspace, abetment of suicide, violation of privacy, cyber-stalking and obscenity. However, one challenge that must be addressed is that of punishment of children, as the liability for actions classified as cyber-bullying is primarily criminal. Cyber-bullying is a recent phenomenon and there is very limited literature about the Indian stance on cyber-bullying.

What Is Cyber Bullying And Why Is It Bad?

Cyber bullying is the use of information technology to repeatedly harm or harass other people in a deliberate manner. According to U.S. Legal Definitions, Cyber-bullying could be limited to posting rumors or gossips about a person in the internet bringing about hatred in other's minds; or it may go to

the extent of personally identifying victims and publishing materials severely defaming and humiliating them. Cyber bullying is defined in legal terms as

- actions that use information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, that is intended to harm another or others.
- use of communication technologies for the intention of harming another person
- use of internet service and mobile technologies such as web pages and discussion groups as well as instant messaging or SMS text messaging with the intention of harming another person.

Examples of what constitutes cyber bullying include communications that seek to intimidate control, manipulate, put down, falsely discredit, or humiliate the recipient. The actions are deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior intended to harm another. Cyber bullying has been defined by The National Crime Prevention Council: "When the Internet, cell phones or other devices are used to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person."

A cyber bully may be a person whom the target knows or an online stranger. A cyber bully may be anonymous and may solicit involvement of other people online who do not even know the target. This is known as a 'digital pile-on. Cyber bullying can happen at any time of the day, not just school hours, and can manifest in many forms and in varying degrees. Like any other form of bullying, cyber-bullying can lead to depression, unwillingness to attend school, self-esteem problems and in extreme cases, it can even lead to substance abuse, or suicide.

Statistics show that a majority of minors who have been online have been subject to some degree of cyber bullying and that many of them have engaged in it as perpetrators. India is the third most affected country by the problem of cyber bullying. Reports of invasion of privacy, blackmail and nuisance through circulating content online, all of which can very well fit into the scope of cyber-bullying, have been on the rise in cyber police wings. The problem is prevalent and some statistics suggest that most parents are aware of what cyber bullying is. This suggests that they have the capacity to regulate and protect their children from being the predator and the prey respectively.

Cyber bullying can affect a child's self esteem and mental and physical health. It can lead to harmful reactions such as substance abuse or suicide. Welfare of vulnerable sections of the society, particularly children is important to many countries. Cyber bullying conflicts with this goal directly and is undesirable.

Cyber Bullying Prevention

A new dimension in anti-social behavior among students has emerged as technology has created new forms of peer harassment. The rise of social media and the ubiquity of the Internet have enabled bullying behaviors to manifest in many forms online. Cyber bullying is unique from traditional bullying behavior in that the Internet allows for anonymous interaction. Anonymity lets students

bully and reach a large audience without the threat of identification or adult intervention.

Most instances of cyber bullying go unreported, only in extreme cases involving suicide, rape or major injury are assailants identified. Students are unwilling to report cyber bullying because they fear losing access to the technology. Further complicating the issue is that traditional bullying programs rely on incident reporting to be effective. These programs are not effective for cyber bullying, since most instances go unreported. To fill this gap, some researchers have proposed prevention methodologies that delineate cyber bullying from traditional bullying in prevention curricula. However, while it remains important to investigate prevalence and risk factors associated with cyber bullying, the differentiation of cyber bullying from traditional bullying is not appropriate or necessary for prevention efforts. Both forms of bullying are a result of poor peer relationships and anti-social behavior, and distinguishing between the two forms dilutes the overall prevention message.

Research also indicates that reactive interventions that block access to certain technologies, or advocate policies designed to monitor student behavior, are not effective. Students are immersed in communication technologies; we have entered an era of hyper-personal communication.

Cyber bullying is a serious problem that cannot be solved by downloading an app. The manifestation of anti-social behavior must be addressed with a contextually appropriate message. While research is continuing, social scientists are nearly unanimous in their conclusions: Cyber bullying requires a comprehensive, preventive effort that addresses the underlying problem behaviors, emphasizes healthy communication habits, and promotes positive peer relations.

Proposed Solutions

This problem can be effectively controlled by non-legal or indirect legal controls. Children should be taught effectively about how to have healthy interactions and about how bullying is bad. They should also be taught how to react if bullied. Moral controls do impact actions of children. Listening to and observing the child and his friends is also important. Many children who feel they are cyber bullied may actually speak to an adult or give indications that they are troubled by something. The adult should be attentive and try and encourage the child to share his thoughts and what is troubling him and seek to address the problem. This would prevent the child from succumbing to the negative effects of cyber bullying. Similarly, listening to and observing the child and his friends would disclose whether the child is a bully. There is every likelihood that a bully who has access to the internet is a cyber bully as well. An attentive adult may easily pick-up and address the victim of cyber bullying. The more difficult part is to identify a cyber bully in a child who is otherwise mild, meek, and well mannered and does not display any aggressiveness. So also an otherwise assertive child may be a victim of cyber bullying and may not confide in an adult. When children begin to use the internet, initially, they should be counseled on how they should use, behave and interact on the

internet. They should also be explained the courtesies and protocols that they must follow and explained how deviant, aggressive, obscene, malicious material uploaded on the internet or e-mails are serious matters resulting in serious sanctions no different than in the real world.

School policies on bullying and approved online behavior should be formulated and implemented. They should include punishments such as detention or in serious cases, expulsion and should also apply to students resorting to bullying outside the school. The Department of School Education and also the Department of Higher Education shall lay down strict rules relating to conduct and bullying. These rules are to have statutory force and to be altered from time to time.

The law should make it a legal duty for schools to have such policies and frame guidelines and mandate that bullying and cyber bullying be punishable by schools. It shall then be the responsibility of the Principal to ensure that the policy is framed and implemented.

To prevent cyber-bullying through mobile phones, some people suggest that minors should be prohibited from using mobile phones. This is absurd. By that yardstick, even use of computers should be prohibited. Denying children use of computers and computer resources and mobile phones in this present day and age is denying them the basic tools for their education and communication.

Conclusion

Due to rapid globalization, cheap mobile phones, easy access to internet and virtually no law to stop abusing school children by their fellow classmates, the problem of cyber crime among children and young adults are on the high. In the western society, even schools are brought under strict vigil of law and administration. Cyber crime, cyber bullying may be common issues in western countries but laws are being made constantly to prevent the growing number of such crimes. India lacks the legal infrastructure to combat the core issues of cyber crimes. Children are the softest targets of the perilous effects of electronic media. Traditionally, in India, it is not the parents but the schools which play a major part to mend a child. Hence stricter laws should be made to prevent school bullying and for ensuring the safety of school children in the cyber world. Hence stricter laws should be made to prevent school bullying and for ensuring the internet safety of the students of educational institutions in the cyber world. In my view, cyber bullying is a serious menace. However, criminalizing children for cyber bullying is undesirable and should be the last resort. Guidance, counseling, and supervision would, to a large extent, prevent cyber-bullying. In the cases that do occur, minor punishments like detention, additional homework or community service may be given. Persistent or serious cyber bullying, despite all the foregoing, may require professional assistance. It is only when the offence is very grave and serious and the child is persistent and does not respond to any remedial measures and steps that the offence should be criminalized and mild punishment meted out, with due regard to rights of juveniles.

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