

Cyberbullying: What Can We Do About It?



Abstract

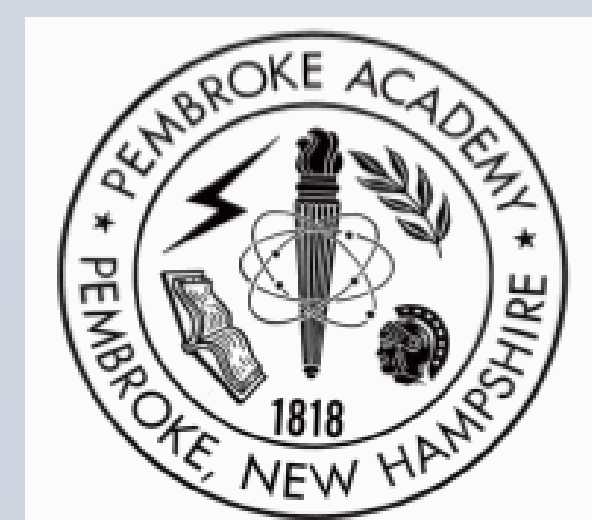
Cyberbullying is one of America's largest issues today, although it is often overlooked. The effects that cyberbullying has on today's youth can be more harmful, in numerous ways, than the effects of physical bullying. Due to the spread and growth of technology, it is easier for today's youth to hide behind the mask of a computer screen and harm others. Cyberbullying has led to countless suicides, depression, and other disorders throughout the past ten years. The cruel words can stay with victims longer because they are able to read them over and over again, and the bullying is becoming harder to escape. Today, verbal bullying does not end when students walk away from each other after school; it continues into the home via computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices. A study done at Pembroke Academy explains how 72 students were anonymously surveyed about cyberbullying. Furthermore, an interview with Nicole Moore, a guidance counselor in Virginia, helps to bring cyberbullying into the light regarding the elementary school population. In this study, solutions to cyberbullying are identified and explained. Solutions begin right from the home, and continue onto school grounds. It is more important than ever before that parents and educators be involved in their child's life, because they may just save their child's life. My research project specifically examines how cyberbullying is affecting our local community to argue that we need to take preventative measures as soon as possible.

Background Information

- The survey was distributed to high school students at Pembroke Academy in Pembroke, NH in November 2013.
- 72 students took this survey, but some skipped a question or two while taking the survey. This has been taken into account when arriving at my conclusions/calculations.
- 38 females and 33 males took this survey, ages 14-18; one participant did not disclose their gender.

Student Totals: (questions had 2 or three possible answers)

| | | |
|----------|-------|-------|
| 1) 54/71 | 18/72 | |
| 2) 14/66 | 52/66 | |
| 3) 37/69 | 12/69 | 20/69 |
| 4) 61/71 | 10/71 | |
| 5) 38/71 | 33/71 | |
| 6) 5/71 | | 55/71 |
| 7) 7/72 | 11/71 | 29/72 |
| | 36/72 | |
| 8) 32/72 | 40/72 | |



Materials & Method (Survey)

The following survey was distributed to students following their voluntary agreement to participate:

This survey is completely anonymous, and is for a study about cyberbullying and how it is affecting today's youth. Thank you for your participation.

1) Have you witnessed cyberbullying on social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)?

Y N

2) Have you participated in cyberbullying yourself / been the bully?

Y N

3) Which do you think is worst out of the three choices given? (circle one):

cyberbullying
physical bullying
verbal bullying



Why? (optional)

4) Do you think cyberbullying has gotten worse over the past 4-5 years?

Y N

5) Are you male or female? (optional)

Female Male

6) Do you think males or females are more likely to be a cyberbully? (circle one)

Males
Females
Neither

7) What do you think is the most effective way for parents/teachers to prevent cyberbullying? (circle one)

Blocking websites
Educating youth
Severe punishments

8) Do you think cyberbullying is becoming a problem for the younger age groups (ages 5-10)?

Y N

Results

- 77% of students have witnessed cyberbullying on social media sites.
- Only 21% of students admitted to being involved in the bullying.
- Students thought cyberbullying (54%) and verbal bullying (29%) were the worst kinds of bullying.
- 86% of students thought that cyberbullying has gotten worse over the past 4-5 years.
- 77% of students thought that FEMALES were the most likely to cyberbully.
- Students thought overall that education (40%) and severe punishments (50%) were the best ways to deal with cyberbullying.

How Did Cyberbullying Become an Issue?

- Became worse in last 2 decades, after Columbine
- Anti-bullying programs emerged
- The growth of the internet changed this
 - 2007= 77 million teens online
 - 2008= 94% of teens online (1)
- People are able to hide behind online profiles.

Who is a Cyberbully?

- May be a friend, acquaintance, or complete stranger
 - Any typical young person
 - Can be a "good" or "bad" student
 - Most are teens (4)
 - Male/female with daily access to internet (6)
- "I didn't think my behavior would affect the victim."**

How is the Victim Affected?

- Low self-esteem
- Words stay with them longer
- Avoiding school
- Bad grades (1)
- Eating disorders/depression
- Suicide/ "bully-cide"



From the Counselor's Office...

"Cyberbullying is a very wide spectrum; you never know what can put the victim over the edge."-Nicole Moore, Guidance Counselor

2011= 123 cases of bully-cide

2013= 34 cases, mostly teens ages 14-16

- Younger generation learning tricks

"At the click of a device, you can spread things so much faster. Rumors, all kinds of things. And it's heartbreaking."-Nicole Moore

Less than ¼ of students speak up.

- Fear of not being believed/taken seriously
- Bystander can be the most powerful in a bullying situation (9)
- Trusting staff members
- Be approachable
- Principals must determine how severe it is (6)
- Encourage parents to cooperate in the home environment

What Role do Teachers Play?

"Most students do not know how to keep themselves safe in cyberspace." (4)

- "Cyber-ethics"= integrated into classes (3)

In Moore's School, Little River Elementary, "RIP Bullying":

R: Repetitive in nature

I: Intentional

P: Power differential

How can the Law Intervene?

- Death threats, discrimination, stalking, sexual images
- Make parents aware that victim could sue bully
- Encourage parents to cooperate if their child IS the bully (7)
- 46 states have bullying laws, but only 22 states specifically mention cyberbullying.

The Power of Parents

Overcome the generation gap (3)

- Pay attention to computer location
- Keep in contact with the school
- Monitor peer relationships
- Strong parent-child bond (7)

BE OPEN TO DISCUSSION



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