

Review Article
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What are Phases of Cyberbullying Victim's Feelings?

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ABSTRACT

In 2003, one of Canada's neighbours stood up to talk about cyberbullying for the first time. Bill Belsey defined it as follows: "Cyberbullying is the use of information and communication technologies to deliberately, repeatedly and aggressively engage in behaviour towards individuals or a group with the intent to cause harm to others [1].

Cyberbullying cannot be compared to harassment in the real world, as discussed in one of my scientific publications [2]. The method, the impacts and the propagations are different than in the real world. In fact, the impact on the victim is also different. She does not feel the same reproaches, criticisms, insults, as in the virtual world and does not experience them in the same way.

In fact, the emotional cycle from the moment of receiving the insult to reparation or resignation is different. This is what I have found when working on several cases of cyberbullying victims and their predators. I name this theory: "Phases of Cyberbullying Victim's Feelings"

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It is the fifth in my family of theories on Behavioral Differences between the real and the virtual [3]. "Avatarization", "Transversal Zone", "Virtual Intelligence" and "Modus Operandi in the virtual" as well as my books on net-profiling [4].

Understanding these emotional phases of the cyberbullying victim allows to better apprehend the said victim and prevent him from committing suicide, but also to prevent the cybercriminal. The victim will also feel better considered.

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relentlessness and immoderation of their enemy. This is what I have studied the most, having myself been a victim of cyberbullying a few years ago.

Victims of cyberbullying are little considered in psychology in France and legally. As a result, they don't feel understood and don't get reparation. Especially if the press has fuelled or created the cyberbullying. Because the press is untouchable. Yet it is the instigator of fake news [5].

It is difficult to talk already when you are being harassed. It is even difficult for some profiles to believe they are being harassed, to define harassment. In fact, few victims bring it up. When they do, they don't know where to turn. They are rarely heard and understood. Knowing that law enforcement officers are not trained to do this, let alone lawyers.

The acts of cyberbullyers are violent, repetitive, excessive, sometimes aided by other stalkers. Harassment in the real world can be less virulent and above all has less echoes than in the virtual

world where everything remains [6]. I worked to understand the emotional stages that victims of cyberbullying go through and listed them. What I propose to discover in this article.

Discussion

Here's the graph I drew to represent the emotional stages of cyberbullying victims [7]. The phases I observed are in the aggregate what the victims of cyberbullying revealed. They are not exhaustive and seem to be a basic starting point in order to understand the stages that a cyberbullying victim can go through. They allow a reflection in order to improve and develop them.

The stalking victim's lack of acceptance is more complex than he or she may not see or even know his or her cyberbully. As for him, he uses «Avatarization» in order to better apprehend his prey in the comfort of a “Transverse Zone” [8]. The complexity of the situation makes it difficult for the victim to understand what is happening to him, why he and why so much hatred against him has been made public? The difficulty also lies in the fact that the stalker has no control over the victim, that he cannot really defend himself. Human-to-human identification does not really exist. And this is true for cybercriminals, who sometimes think they're hitting their target like you win a video game. He conceals the fact that he is a human being who will suffer to the point of losing his life.

This process has been studied more on adults than on children. Studies of children who are victims of cyberbullying are more important than studies of adults [7]. Wrong. Modesty, strength, willpower, shame, are all emotions and reasons why the adult victim does not even complain about cyberbullying. Even less do not talk about it. Which distorts the statistics. And yet, there could be more cyberbullying than children. What are the emotional steps of the What are the emotional steps of the cyberbullying victims I've discovered?

Awareness

In my opinion, this is the first step, i.e. becoming aware of being a victim of harassment. Indeed, it has been found that many people underestimate the first signs of cyberbullying. Insulting words are sometimes taken lightly, considered as a joke, or even not considered at all.

Underestimating this step is the best way not to accept the situation and therefore to aggravate the following emotions to come when faced with the cyberbullying situation, which will be amplified and remain on the Internet.

It is necessary to consider the harassment upstream, to verify that it is one in order to take charge of what could follow and to stem it by behavioral attitudes such as I use them in net-profiling. This is obviously the pivotal step to avoid the following process emotional and make a real victim of cyberbullying.

Denial

“It's not possible” is often the next step after. This lack of understanding of why I did what I did. A flood of questions comes into our heads to realize that we are being insulted, that we are victims of rumors, that we are being discredited, that we are being written down, that we are being judged. But who is this “one” that sometimes we don't know, or who knows us little and who speaks about us by discreetly and publicly insulting us, sometimes leading to comments from other people who graft themselves on this cyberbullying without knowing anything about it. The victim may still be in the possibility of believing that it is not possible and that it will get better.

Realization of the Act

A milestone that, although it is the realization of what the victim is going through, will not be the realization of what is really happening and what will happen next. This step allows the victim to consider that she is not dreaming, that she is indeed the person who is being cyberbullied, that she is indeed the person who has been attacked by others, sometimes unknown, and that she is indeed the target. She considers that the fact is not insignificant. A form of doubt arises in her to wonder what she did to undergo this. This is often what helps her become aware of what is happening. If the victim of cyberbullying is taken care of at that moment, the following steps can be modified or even disappear by the treatment of the case, legally as well if possible.

A set of emotions appears at this stage. The guilt of being an idiot, of not seeing things coming, of not knowing how to avoid them. Shame may also appear, the shame that things are publicly known about you, even if they are not true. The shame that you are spoken about badly, that you are incriminated and that you cannot really defend yourself. A form of sadness sets in. A sharing of emotion and of knowing what we are going to do, what is going to happen and how it is going to end. How it's going to be handled, too.

Expression of Suffering

Awareness of the next step regarding the share of responsibility, what the victim has done, is clearly what will trigger the suffering that will be expressed in different ways. Why am I a victim of cyberbullying? Why am I being harassed, why are you criticizing it? Am I what they say about me? Am I what people think of me? Am I what it says? Why me? What have I done about it? Who does this to me?

When the cyberbullyer is unknown, the questions that arise will be more about where it comes from. If the cyberbullyer is known, there will be guilt for the trust given to this person just for having frequented him, doubts about what has been said, understood, personal and/or professional. But questions will be asked at this stage without necessarily having answers. This will start the next step. The notion of losing control without really realizing what's going on.

Gravity Measurement

Awareness that you have no control over the harassment you are being subjected to, of the situation, of what is occurring, of what is happening. This stage is a stage with negative emotions because the context is difficult to control. The search for help to understand, to assert one's rights, to have explanations even from one's tormentors is strong at this stage in the hope that it will stop and assert one's rights. In vain in almost all situations of cyberbullying.

A kind of loneliness and incomprehension sets in, knowing that the victim of cyberbullying may not dare to talk about it. If they do, they may also come up against people who are not very understanding or good listeners. The victim is open to being helped, understood, to be helped. Rarely with success. Things could change in the face of the rise in awareness of cyberbullying.

It is a stage which can cause a serious psychological problem, a blockage with heavy consequences, a behavioral deregulation or even suicide in the face of the difficulty to assume so much hatred, in the face of the quantity and quantity of evils and words coming from the torturer (s) and the relay of the Internet users who become in their turn cyberbullyers.

Fight

Depending on the profile, the type of cyberbullyer, the importance of the context, the will of the victim, the fight can be launched against cyberbullyers. Not all victims of cyberbullying pass this stage. Sometimes they stop at the previous one. This fighting stage is the decision to consider the situation unfair and reparable. Without measuring the likely difficulties ahead. Such as everything remains on the internet.

It is easier to fight in the face of a weak, but vincible case of a sextape, rumour, fake news by the press, the situation being heavier, it requires more courage and willingness to fight. Considering it as an unfair situation helps to take the step and fight harder, which can however be stifled by discouragement depending on the next steps.

Anger

Anger will exist especially at the stage of measuring the seriousness of the situation. It will hinder the management of the fight and other future stages. But it is a necessary emotion to fuel the engine of restoring the truth. Anger will cause mistakes to be made if it is not channeled. Which may fuel even more harassment from the executioners. And, in a vicious circle, increase the anger.

It will be characterized in many ways, sometimes even internally to build revenge, to feel guilty, to fight against the executioners but also to lower oneself, etc.. It can be productive, driving and also not very good counselor. The manager while making her evacuate herself is important to manage this type of crisis and not to fall back to some previous phases related to suffering and awareness. It is quite possible to go back at this stage without going further. Discouragement may be the cause. The fact also of feeling after anger more guilty of what happens and that one deserves it too.

Impression of Being Alone

Feeling alone will weigh in the face of a fight that will not be as efficient as one would like and will take a long time. If the fight is only in response to making one's truth heard, the results will only be exceptionally good. In today's world, such is the management of cyberbullying.

But the fight will be a lonely one, because in most cases few people will support and take a stand for the victims of cyberbullying. The courage to support is rare unless the harassment proves to be totally false, especially with supporting evidence, or if one is a fan of the victim. Reparation will not come as naturally and simply as it should, depending on the seriousness of the cyberbullying.

The fight is therefore more lonely, and a feeling of loneliness will set in almost from the beginning of the emotional stages. And will weigh down the consequences of the fighting. It is also the exhaustion of the emotions experienced in the previous stages that will favor this stage. And another thing. We can only understand what we're experiencing. In fact, we cannot consider the suffering as much as the victim, knowing that she may have very little verbal expression.

Not Be Able To Do Anything

The stage of relaxation after anger and loneliness. A stage of exhaustion more or less important according to the results obtained. This stage can be short or long. Besides like the others. Doubts will arise, questions, even weariness coming from the victim, especially since at this stage, a certain amount of time will have passed since the beginning of the facts. This stage can lead directly to resignation and/or the last stage of emotions. It can also lead to a behavioral or psychological imbalance, or even to the end of one's life.

An awareness that the battle is hard and illegal since everything is broadcast on the internet on a global scale and remains. Depending on the management of this cyberbullying in communication, legal and e-reputation, this step can be very brief and short. It can also, depending on profiles and cyberbullying, be repeated throughout the process.

Refusal

The refusal phase will then take place as a new awareness of the complexity of the case and the need to re-establish the truth. His truth. So refusal to believe in a possible positive outcome, refusal to fight any more, refusal to let these enemies continue their harassment, refusal that rights are difficult or even impossible to obtain. In short, a period of assessment that will highlight what is possible or not and what we want to take as a step or not. Doubt will set in more or less. Leaving the door to the next step open.

Resignation

Resignation to what is happening, to be a victim, to suffer and/or to give up. Resignation that the situation is very real, that the victim does not control it, that it is little or not considered, that it will probably not allow a favourable outcome, etc. This stage can be very short or very long. It can remain as it is or disappear depending on the profile, the type of cyberbullying and the will. But also the amount of support.

Acceptance or Rejection

The last step in figuring out what we're going to do with this cyberbullying. What if we finally fight to get past it, while trying to set the record straight, while waiting for the facts on the Internet to go away or if we just let it go? We can give up because we don't care, or because it's not important, or because the victim has gone beyond these steps, or because we have better things to do, or because we lack courage, etc.

One can also fight by detaching oneself from the subject, by letting partners who are paid for or time. We can also stop fighting for lack of opportunity without being negative and continue to live with it.

Conclusion

As Bullying UK, a support organization for victims of cyberbullies, writes: "...no-one deserves to be treated in this way and has done nothing wrong". This is an obvious fact that is not at all so in the eyes of bullyers.

The victims of cyberbullying are numerous and marked for life by the evils that their detractors have provoked in them. The process of changing their emotions can be long, depending on the profile, cyberbullying, courage, willpower and support. Sometimes courage is the only way out, especially for the first victims who had little attention or consideration.

The analysis of the non-verbal, the use of profiling is necessary in order to treat these victims. Each step deserves to be accompanied although it would be desirable to intervene upstream. The management of this cyberbullying in communication, legal and e-reputation must be managed correctly at the same time as the accompaniment of the victim in psychology and/or behavioral.

We know perfectly well that reparation is an important step to move forward in life and not to assume an injustice. It begins by being considered, it begins by being accepted and appreciated at its true value. But few victims talk, how many hide their suffering and play hard to get?

It should be noted that legally in France, there is a real void in terms of cyberbullying, a right to oblivion [9]. The press having all rights, including the right to say anything about anyone without the prior consent of the person concerned, to refuse the legal right of reply, a victim of harassment, blackmail, rumour, etc. therefore has no means of defending himself or obtaining redress. This increases the victims' chances of committing suicide or resigning themselves without obtaining reparation. France is not the only poor country in these news, just look at the case of Tiziana Cantone in Italy, victim of sextape, then cyberbullying including by the press. She killed herself [10].

Lessons have not been learned from this case, nor from others. Cyberbullying continues, sometimes without being aware of harassment on the Internet. Awareness of the victims of what they suffer and of the harassment that human beings receive for their malicious acts is an urgent work to be put in place. Validating that cyberbullying is a cyber crime that can kill could be a start in this direction.

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