The pandemic seemed to knock the globe by its very axis. Due to the viral scare, things that used to be of the norm became distant and out of place. There are so many protocols and rules to follow in the name of safety and precaution. One of the things that changed due to the covid-19 pandemic is the way people interact with one another. Although the use of technology is highly prevalent even before the pandemic, the social distancing and non-personal interaction only served to launch the use of all sorts of online communication. Unfortunately, the increased online traffic and the extended time in which people are using the internet also gave more chances and opportunity for online trolls and bullies to spread negativity.

What is cyber bullying? According to Stopbullying.gov, cyberbullying is any form of harassment, nuisance, or aggravation done to a person over any sort of digital format it may include text messages, social media posts, comments, etc. It is commonly observed in social medias wherein huge number of people interact in a daily basis. It is very easy for people to leave nasty and unkind comments and remarks to people they do or do not know through the internet due to the fact that there is a huge cyber barrier that protects them.

As per the data collected by the Department of Education (DepEd) the bullying cases in elementary and secondary both private and public (including personal and cyber) rose by 21% with the total of 6,363 cases compared to that of 2013 with 5,236 cases reported (asksonnie.info). The data is expected to increase even more as people start to find their voices and report more cases. In 2018 the School Crime Supplement (National Centre for Education Statistics and Bureau of Justice) in the United States showed that
amongst the students’ ages 12-18 years old have encountered or underwent bullying at school and online.

Here in the Philippines there is still a negative stigma that surrounds the idea of bullying, many Filipinos disregards bullying as just part of the process of learning and growing up. However bullying is not as simple as light banters and misunderstanding between peers. Bullying is an intentional harm, through physical or verbal attack that can affect a person’s mental and emotional wellbeing. In cyber bullying, the harm is not inflicted personally but trough online. In many cases the victim suffers from harassments from so many people they don’t even know. It attacks their privacy and their social life, some even receive death threats. To think that a huge percentage of the people leaving unsolicited comments and bashing were strangers to the person in the receiving end of the bullying.

Here is where what is called “band wagon” comes to play. There are tendencies for people to in the internet to jump in to things that the majority is doing. They follow what is trending and adapt an opinion based on the number of people behind that opinion and not based on facts and logical explanation. An example of this band wagon trend is the infamous “cancel culture” in social medias. If an individual spends a hefty amount of time online, it is hard not to be familiarized with this trend. The “cancel culture” is where a enormous quantity of people come together in order to bring down an individual, most of the time a celebrity or influencer, although it also happens to normal people.

This scale of cyber bullying is largely traumatic and can scar a person for life. Bullying is damaging in general. It can cause anxiety and depression which can affect a person’s social and personal relationships. For students, bullying can affect the way they interact with other students and teachers as well as their academic performance. Without intervention, bullying can cause lifelong impairments. This is why family members needs to be vigilant when it comes to spotting any signs of bullying or distress a student or a
child shows, especially now that they spend almost all of their time at home in front of gadgets. It is in the hands of the guardians to mediate if such cases arose.

References:

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