

New Penalties for Online Bullying to be Introduced in Japan

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Vocabulary

penalty (noun)

'pen.əl.ti

a punishment for breaking a rule, law, or contract

The **penalty** for drinking and driving in the UK can be up to £2,500 and a driving ban.

bullying (noun)

'bʊl.i.ɪŋ

the use of strength or power to scare or hurt someone weaker

The **bullying** some children get at school can severely affect their learning.

insult (noun)

'ɪn.sʊlt

words or actions that offend someone

The woman was asked to leave the shop after she **insulted** an employee.

fine (noun)

faɪn

money that must be paid for breaking a rule or law

In Singapore, if you throw rubbish in the street, you will receive a **fine** of \$300.

statute of limitations (noun phrase)

ˌstæt.tʃʊt əv lɪ.mɪ'teɪ.ʃnz

a law that sets the period of time within which legal action can be taken on a crime

The defendant could not be charged as the **statute of limitations** had expired.

basis (noun)

'beɪ.sɪs

the frequency that something happens

Most employees are paid on a monthly **basis**.

abuse (noun)

ə'bjʊ:s

cruel and hurtful words or behaviour directed toward someone

The fans shouted **abuse** at the referee because they didn't like his decision.

New Penalties for Online Bullying to be Introduced in Japan

The Japanese government has announced that there will be new **penalties** for online **bullying**, also known as cyber-bullying. The new penalty for cyber-bullying and online **insults** will include spending up to one year in prison, or a fine of up to 300,000 yen, which is about \$2,500.

The new penalties will be added to the current laws that are in place, which include being sentenced to up to 30 days in prison, and a **fine** of between 1,000 yen and 10,000 yen, which is the equivalent of \$8 to \$84. The new law will also change the **statute of limitations** for online insults from one year to three years.

Discussions around changing the law began in May 2020 after the well-known wrestler and TV star Hana Kimura, who was only 22-years-old, took her own life. Before her death, Kimura had made a series of social media posts suggesting that she was being cyber-bullied. Two men were later charged and convicted of bullying the young star and were each fined 9,000 yen, which is about \$75.

It is believed that Kimura received hundreds of mean and often cruel tweets on a daily **basis**. When her fans found out about her death, they and several industry figures spoke out against cyber-bullying and its effect on mental health. Many people believed that the penalties the men received for subjecting Kimura to online **abuse** should have been worse.

Japan's existing laws on insults were first created in 1907, long before the internet and the dangers of online bullying. The new penalties for cyber-bullying will be Japan's first significant change to its laws on insults in over 100-years.

Today, an increasing number of people around the world are being affected by cyber-bullying. A 2018 study by Pew Research Centre found that 59% of US teenagers had been bullied online. Speaking after Kimura's death, wrestling journalist Adam Pacitti wrote: *"I hope this serves as a reminder that interactions on social media can have a serious effect on the mental health of anyone, no matter who they are"*.

Questions

1. What is the new prison sentence for cyber-bullying in Japan going to be?
 - a. one year
 - b. at least one year
 - c. one year or less.

2. How much is the new fine in US dollars?
 - a. around \$10
 - b. at least \$2,500
 - c. \$2,500 or less.

3. What was the previous maximum sentence for online bullying?

4. How were the two men who bullied Hana Kimura punished?

5. When were Japan's laws on insults first introduced?

6. According to the article, a US research study shows that almost 60% of teenagers had bullied someone online.

TRUE / FALSE / INFORMATION NOT GIVEN

Discussion

1. What are your thoughts on Japan's new penalties for online bullying?
2. Do you find it surprising how many US teenagers have been bullied online? Was bullying an issue at your school?
3. Why do you think people act more cruelly online than they do in person?
4. What would you do if you or one of your children were a victim of cyber-bullying?
5. How much of a problem do you think cyber-bullying will be in the future?
6. What do you think is the right age to allow children to use social media? Why?
7. What do you think parents or authorities should do to regulate social media for young people?
8. Do you use social media? Which services?
9. What do you think is the worst aspect of social media?
10. Would you ever consider going 'off-grid' and not using social media at all? If so, how difficult do you think it would be?

Answers: 1. c. One year or less, 2. a. around \$2500, 3. Up to 30 days in prison and a fine of between 1,000 yen and 10,000 yen, which is the equivalent of \$8 to \$84., 4. They were each fined 9,000 yen, which is about \$75, 5. 1907. 6. FALSE