SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF CYBER ABUSE ON ADOLESCENT POPULATION: A REVIEW

A. G Krishnanunni [1] and Dr. Karthika. C [2]

[1] Research Scholar, Department of Visual Media and Communication,
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kochi Campus, India.
[2] Assistant Professor, Department of Visual Media and Communication,
Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, Kochi Campus, India.

Abstract

Over the past few years, the state has seen a considerable increase in cybercrimes against the youth population. This population's level of social media interaction increased on occasion throughout the post-pandemic period. The study tries to pinpoint the socio-psychological atrocities that teenagers in the state have been through over the previous few years. Additionally, it examines how crucially important state ICT is to students' education on cyber awareness. The study investigates the potential for digital child abuse cases in Kerala. It also highlights the persistent rise in psychological anguish and suicidal thoughts among younger people due to cyberattacks. To defend against attacks in the realm of technology, it is required to develop an educational policy or improve the one that already exists. The analysis shows how the nature of cyberattacks on young people has changed over time. Social media, which is a key medium for mass communication, must be designed with a sophisticated firewall to thwart such attacks. For students to commit to their future engagements in society with a much healthier viewpoint, it is essential to create a well-balanced socio-psychological ecology within the student population. The social and psychological effects on the younger population of cyberattacks have not been adequately covered in studies on the subject. Teenagers could suffer terrible consequences if strategies to stop these attacks aren't implemented right away. This study is important to comprehend the degree of these attacks' impact on students because the spectrum of these attacks is expanding to include various ranges. This presents chances to discover previously unrecognized effects that risky online behaviour might have on young people.

Keywords: Cyberbullying, Cyber-Attacks, Adolescent Population, Suicide, Social Media.

INTRODUCTION

On social media alone, millions of pieces of data are created, processed, and shared every hour. A lot of times, these data are sent to people who weren't directly involved in its creation in the beginning. The formed information has the power to both renew and impart fresh knowledge to those who handle it. Digital platforms frequently transformed purely infotainment facilitators to areas for emotional and personal development. Internet use before the rise of social media was limited to the use of search engines and technologies for storing and processing massive amounts of data. Early Internet interactions were interpersonal, but this changed when social media remapped this instrument as a mass communication platform that responded to the necessity of reaching a wider segment of people on a worldwide scale.

Attacks against minors on digital platforms have gained international attention in recent years, and a few initiatives have been launched to address these problems by various governmental bodies. However, data gathered from several microblogging platforms shows that from a global perspective, government initiatives to combat cyber-attacks against the younger population are not effectively serving the actual purpose for which it was designed (Lyu, 2020b). As crucial as punishing those who commit crimes is figuring out what led to them in the first place and addressing the elements that encourage their commission. The Indian government has taken steps

to protect the adolescent population, including the POCSO e-box and cyber trivia (Kumar, Sanjeev, 2021). It is concerning that females make up a large portion of the victims of cyberattacks.

Younger people who spend more time on social media may acquire addiction-like tendencies toward the manufactured cyberlife they imagine through media platforms. Young brains experience psychological stress because of peer pressure and failing to achieve this life (Orsolini, 2022). Adolescents may experience anxiety problems, feelings of isolation, and other depressive symptoms because of this. Spending a sizable amount of time in digital space could accomplish this. When essential, a person's ability to project confidence may be severely hampered by the degree of attacks that person endured during his or her most vulnerable developmental stage (Steele, 2020).

Younger people are more persuaded to follow this road since vlogging, blogging, and online gaming have become the primary sources of entertainment, and from the display of incredibly opulent lifestyles by some individuals (Luxton, 2012). Even if a small percentage of people can afford the luxurious lifestyle shown online. Children believe it because celebrities encourage it. Realising the truth and struggling to deal with it might lead to depression and, in rare situations, suicide. Crime statistics - Crime Against Children, (2023) shows that there has been a significant increase in crimes against children in the state in recent years.

METHODOLOGY

The primary study sources included statistics on cybercrimes and social media. From the Kerala police's official website, information was gathered on reported cybercrimes against teenagers. This study was initiated using a qualitative methodology based on a narrative literature review. Data collection initially focused on peer-reviewed publications and theses from Research Gate, Sage, Google Scholar, and Connected papers. In this study, phrases like "cybercrime," "adolescent," "ICT," and "child suicides" were used to categorise the data and discover news publications describing cyberattacks. To gain a better knowledge of the psychological and social condition of children today concerning the rise in online crimes around them, research papers, theses, and news articles in national dailies were consulted. The study's supporting documentation came from peer-reviewed journals. The data accessed for the article were handled using a thorough narrative literature method (Green, Johnson, and Adams, 2006). To pinpoint the key goals and ideas that the study put forth, the obtained data sources were carefully reviewed.

DISCUSSIONS

i) Prominent cyber-crimes in digital space.

As the prevalence of cybercrime is overstated. Additionally, it increased the variety of crimes. One of the most common offenses in the state against the adolescent population is cyberbullying. The anonymous profiles that the internet provides provide a haven for the person committing the illegal deeds. A few of the frequently occurring characteristics in social media crimes include gaining access to crucial information about the target and threatening to use it against that person.

When someone is being cyberstalked, their digital traces are accessed without their knowledge and used to track their whereabouts. This technique has elements in

common with unlawful data access and use for financial and other gains. Another risk that poses a threat to minors' existence online is child pornography, which also includes online sexual harassment. 10% to 20% of minors have a higher likelihood of being directly exploited online. The source 68% of the pornographic material that is shared online is child-related. The main victims were typically recognised as being children between the ages of 7-9 (Vilks, 2019). 25% of the victims were under the age of 7, and 36% of the victims were youngsters (Hamm et al., 2015).

In the world of online gaming platforms, grooming is allegedly a crime that is currently gaining popularity. This entails making a buddy with a child while posing as a well-wisher, who eventually manipulates the victim into carrying out the wrongdoer's criminal actions (Magiswary, Maniam, Manimekalai & Iqbal, 2021). Some of the cybercrimes that are increasing in frequency today include hacking and identity theft. Some characteristics of hacking include persuading someone to click a link or open spam mail (Maharjan, Naresh, 2021). Cybercrimes frequently involve utilising a minor's identity without their permission.

ii) Cyber-crimes & adolescents.

Teenagers are particularly affected by cybercrimes, which can cause them to experience severe social and psychological suffering for a long time (Hamm et al., 2015). Adolescents have more affordances than people of any other age group, which increases their likelihood of transgressing the law. This is seen when someone clicks on a link that promises to take them to pornographic websites. The first click is a fleeting action, but its effects diminish the person's ability to think clearly and to distinguish between right and enjoyable misbehavior (Goldsmith, Wall, 2022). The incorporation of social engineering in the PREY (Profiled, Relational, Exploitable, and Yielding) framework allows the anonymous to maintain what seems to be a special kind of relationship with the victims (Drew & Cross, 2013). Even while these crimes were initially associated with financial fraud, there has been an expansion in the way they are committed, such as the grooming of children.

A victim of cybercrime, particularly bullying, has a substantially higher possibility of engaging in it both online and offline with submissive segments of the population. According to Calvete et al. (2010) there is a rise in the usage of mass communication means like email, text messages, or audio-visual formats, those who engage in this type of impulsive violence against others may insult, threaten, or propagate rumors. According to Van Der Hof and Koops (2011), sexting is a new type of cybercrime that is prevalent in the Internet age and targets young people as potential offenders. A verbal argument that escalates into the exchange of foul words in the form of libel and slander often marks the beginning of a cyberbullying incident. One such well-known incident, known as "happy slapping," is where a victim is haphazardly abused in a video that is simultaneously recorded and extensively shared on social media. According to Choi et al. (2016) female adolescents who have been sexually abused send or receive intimate body part photographs and videos. When contrasting with them, their counterparts have not, however, endured as many attacks. Females are easier targets for online predators. The study by Drouin et al. (2015) shows there were candidates among young people who consented to sexting when they were personally not interested. Sexting contributed to unhealthy online dating, which resulted in alcoholism and abusive relationships (Dir et al., 2013). Two of the main causes of a surge in child pornography are sexual disorders in young men and an increase in

pornographic viewership. Rape culture, violence against women, sex stereotypes, and inequities are all becoming more widely accepted (Reddy, 2022).

iii) Impact of AI on cyber-crimes

The new artificially modulated internet domain has experienced various instances in which AI has played both mitigator and perpetrator roles. This futuristic technology, which employs constant evolutionary techniques based on behavioural pattern-based algorithms, allows perpetrators to circumvent practically any conventional firewall. The United Nations has launched an initiative called 'AI for Good' to address the growth in cybercrime related to AI. One of the most significant issues that social media users face is the detection and identification of fraudulent users, which has intensified with the introduction of AI tools that generate potential benefits for illicit users in establishing profiles that demonstrate authenticity among users. Deep fakes are a major issue that can lead to identity theft and character assassination (Thuraisingam,2020). Automated phishing assaults, impersonation attacks, social engineering attacks, and false customer support chatbots are among the most popular types of cyber-attacks classified as AI. Artificial intelligence contributes to a variety of cyber-attacks across many places. This minimizes the perpetrator's chances of being held accountable for their acts. Organizations are developing strategies to counter AI-generated cyber-attacks, including their own adversarial AI, anomaly detection, and detection response systems (De La Torre, 2023).

iv) Government initiatives to counter cyber-crimes.

The Information Technology Act (IT Act) of 2000 established secure Internet use for all segments of India's digital society. Even initially this measure did not specifically address the problems of each segment, including the teenagers individually. Policies that addressed the horrors related to cybercrimes were governed by advancements in crime and the growing worries of victims. To combat child abuse online, the government launched the POSCO e-box and the cyber trivia app. Girls made up most children who were exploited, per the survey conducted by Kumar et al. (2021).

When compared to the preceding years, the pandemic period witnessed a sharp rise in the rate of child suicide. Due to the social and economic circumstances, both the parents and the children were in a precarious position. According to Meethal (2021), 377 kids committed suicide while the country was under lockdown, according to the official data that was received. 50% of teenagers are included in this, along with kids who excel in the classroom, a police cadet, and President's Award recipient. Ninavu is a program that Women and Child Development (WCD), a department of the Kerala government, launched to promote adolescent mental health. Many of the victims often used social networking platforms. Due to the covid period's online classes. The main contributing factor to suicide, according to the survey, is that parents and teachers fail to address the problems that their children encounter. According to reports, students are emotionally weak currently in their lives and are readily vulnerable. They must have someone to talk to in these situations, and those who deal with them at this point must be able to safeguard them and have at least a basic scientific grasp of student psychology.

The government of Kerala launched the Chiri Help Desk because of an increase in child suicide incidents during the pandemic time. When there were no psychological problems during the COVID-19 pandemic, 66 cases of child suicides were reported. One of the major factors contributing to this terrible act of self-immolation among

young people was highlighted as a lack of social interactions. The program's goal is to instill a scientific mindset in people and institutions that work with kids (Official Website of Kerala Police, 2023). According to "Kerala Records Highest Cyber Crime," 15 CE/15 CE, one of the operations the Kerala police put out to stop the spread and production of child pornography was Operation P-hunt. According to government records, a variety of offenders were captured. These people are recognised as repeat offenders and professionals in the later stages of the investigation.

v) Cyber-crime awareness among adolescents.

The necessity to create a user-friendly digital ecosystem is being highlighted by the digital age due to how quickly this technology has spread across national lines. The internet era's quest to discover utility, curiosity, and economic viability makes it more convenient for this to be a tool of multiple wrongdoings. In a study of Chandigarh public school students, Bhatia et al. (2022) found that 52.8% of the students used TikTok, a forbidden app, as well as other messaging applications like WhatsApp (49.2%), Facebook (26.1%), and Instagram (21.6%). 58% of the participants utilised new media for an hour or less, while 17.2% spent more than an hour perusing social media and the Internet. The term "rape of a child" was all that was commonly known about child sexual abuse. Most school responders weren't sure what constitutes good touch, bad touch, or cyber security awareness. According to Quayyum et al. (2021), cyber security awareness for minors strives to accomplish two main goals, including warning those who share cyberspace about online hazards and developing their skills when utilising digital media. Children under the age group were thought to be significantly safer than other teenagers because of how little time they spent on social media. However, when intelligent toys were introduced to them, the scenario changed. The creation of apps like MyPlan, which serves as a relationship advisor for women between the ages of 18 and 24, is crucial for ensuring student safety and security. In its early stages, MyPlan serves as a prototype, asking a wide range of questions about the degree of abuse a woman experiences in her relationships and providing the needed legal and social support. Similar measures might be taken to stop internet bullying among students (Alhusen et al., 2015).

The study Vanessa (2015) suggests that the porn industry is a multi-billion organisation that earns and maintains its profit scale through the exploitation of vulnerable sections of society. The industry is deeply centered on the interest and pleasure of men by deteriorating the morality and security of women, children, and other minority groups. The key developments in the field of digitalization and the internet significantly increased its reach globally. These adolescents' increased usage of social media has led to a huge increase in the public's awareness of teenage sexual abuse. Intelligent toys can determine the location of the youngster who uses them. It allows the user platform to recognise the child's interests and has the power to automatically activate the minor's general purchasing patterns and preferences. The study found that online threats can lead to adolescent impulses towards imitation, outing, deceit, and ostracism towards others or younger people with comparable age profiles or lower. According to a Bele et al. (2014) study, more people are increasingly disclosing their personal information online. This includes memories of loved ones as well as images, movies, and personal accomplishments. All this information cannot be totally deleted from the internet once it has been made public, which could have negative effects on a person's future.

vi) Cyber parenting- Identifying the digital gap.

Children and parents in society currently have a substantial digital divide. The relationship between students and parents will likely suffer if this gap continues to grow. The amount of quality time parents and their children can spend together online is influenced by their financial situation. The level of financial and physical freedom that a parent's job provides is essential because it affects their ability to afford a broadband connection and the likelihood that they will have the free time necessary for recreational parenting, during which they could learn about their child's interests and social media interactions. A gap could be created if these important issues are not properly addressed because of the information's restricted availability, which would reduce parents' chances of making the best educational decisions for their kids and their ability to spend quality time online (Schneider & Buckley, 2002). When analysing history, it is important to note that there have always been communication and access to knowledge disparities. Each generation consumes information at a different rate, and this is mostly due to the tools, receptors, and information sources that allowed for this interchange of knowledge. Since both parents and kids can communicate regardless of distance and time zones, technology has expanded the range of parent-student communication. A child has the chance to communicate with their parents and cultivate an intimate relationship that has no bounds. It creates the potential for closing the communication gap (Rueda et al., 2020).

Parental supervision and monitoring, according to Schneider and Buckley (2002), might result in unpleasant argument exchanges between students and parents. The effectiveness of child locks and filters is limited because today's kids were born into the digital age and can eventually get around any kind of online constraints. All hazardous websites cannot be analysed by the current filters. Having sufficient technical knowledge is essential for parents managing their children's internet activity. Parents should be able to give their kids a smooth escape plan in the event of addiction or serious online threats. When kids and parents flocked to the internet, phenomenal parenting got a makeover. Both groups began to spend a significant amount of time engaged in infotainment online. As a result, there was less time for meaningful interactions between parents and their children in person. Parents must stay in touch with their kids online to determine the veracity of their choices to grasp the interests and content that kids view on social media during face-to-face time.

vii) Misinformation and cyber threats

The distinction between false information and the truth depends on several variables. However, an analysis of disinformation reveals that it does not have a positive and long-lasting association with accurate evidence. Misinformation sources have a brief lifespan. The statistics indicate that this source doesn't persist for a longer time but adopts a different identity to carry out its wrongdoings. This can take the form of new profiles or pages with a different persona on social media (Freiling & Matthes, 2023). All facets of society are struggling with the challenge of misinformation. These false reports on business and technology, geopolitics, elections, and everything from healthcare to simple celebrity rumors are widely disseminated on the internet and on social media. The unrestricted flow of information makes it difficult to address this problem right away. However, methods are being developed for fact-checking to separate bogus news from true. The Quint, Boomlive.in, Factrescendo.com, and Dfrac.org are a few of the trustworthy websites to use when comparing the veracity of

online content. Teenagers are vulnerable to cyberbullying when they react to false information and may even see mistreatment in online. Once they gain a basic understanding, people have the propensity to overestimate the efficiency of technical protection techniques and malware (Martens et al., 2019). According to Sherman et al. (2016) the study, the brain areas were more activated in the teens who liked social media photographs. Rewarding such overwhelmingly popular viewpoints without examining the virtues and shortcomings of the content may establish a habitual tendency in an individual, especially as they progress through their developmental phases. If a person's level of self-esteem depends on social media reach, and more likes to promote confidence and self-love, there is a potential that this will have detrimental effects on psychological resources. This could influence someone's unstable self-esteem (Kernis et al., 2000).

During the Covid 19 outbreak, there was an increase in the spread of disinformation. Incorrect information about treatment options and preventative strategies was extensively disseminated by people with little to no connection to the medical community. It is quite concerning that so few of the sources of this incorrect information sought to correct it or present reliable information (Bode & Vraga, 2021). The danger arises when misinformation falls into the hands of a younger demographic who are utterly incapable of distinguishing truth from mystical experience. Although there are many different fact-checking programs available online, fact-checking is associated with age, ideology, and political behaviour. The likelihood that students will make use of the potential of these fact-checking tools is quite low, given age demographics and peer group dynamics (Amazeen et al., 2019). Misinformation is still a crucial component of propaganda that serves as a growth hormone for political and marketing advantages. There are instances where major media outlets convey information about diplomacy, conflict, and dialogue exchanges incorrectly. Even after the real reality was revealed, these well-known mass media addressing bodies refused to accept it or to republish it with the necessary adjustments (Wilner, 2018).

viii) Socio-psychological impacts and victim rehabilitation

In the study by Bhadury, (2022) it is that the entire national population self-reported, and between 70 and 80 percent of both men and women had some contact with pornography at some point in their lives. There is, however, no research to support the idea that early-life exposure to pornography might have a lasting negative psychological effect on a person. Most often, pedophilia involves engaging a youngster in real or explicit stimulation of pornography. When it comes to pedophilia cases, men are more likely than women to be involved in these crimes. Other than those who are personally connected to the victim, the impact of cybercrimes on victims is agonizing and not readily apparent to outsiders. The alterations in an affected person have a long-lasting effect on them and may lead to changes that may impair how they feel about themselves when speaking in public. The number of people who interact with one person in the social sphere closely relates to their level of satisfaction on social media. According to the study, prolonged online use without any social interaction or conversational interactions can lead to loneliness (Phu & Gow, 2019). Psychoeducational techniques used in the early years of schooling may be able to control teenagers' propensity to desire thinking and help them avoid developing addictive habits (Sharifi Bastanet al., 2022).

The psychological effects of person-centered cybercrime are greater than those of hacking or financial cybercrime, according to Borwell et al. (2021). If the perpetrator has time to talk to the victim, there is a larger risk that the victim would experience psychological victimisation. For this to be practiced, the virtual world provides the required amount of anonymity. A recognised offender has a high likelihood of committing crimes more than once. The typical amount of time spent with the criminal is also entitled to the victim's faith in mankind. The victim's likelihood of losing faith in people is small given the short amount of time invested. The study highlights a real-world application of assumption theory, in which a person loses faith in the society with which they are entrusted following a painful experience because personal beliefs have been violated. The victims could be guided in the correct direction by participating in group discussions with others who had suffered similar setbacks and receiving individual counseling from a certified professional. According to the research Berryman et al. (2018) conducted, social media is not the main cause of adolescent mental illness. In many instances, it serves as a cry for assistance instead. People who experience intense mental stress use social media as a tool to connect with others and access the knowledge they need to recognise their problems and devise solutions. The peer pressure that teens experience about their opinions of physical attractiveness is significantly influenced by social media. This can have a significant effect on the younger demographic since excessive exposure to social networking sites might lead them to adopt unhealthy eating habits and lifestyles (Michikyan & Suárez-Orozco, 2016).

The discussed psychological effects of cybercrimes can have long-term medical repercussions for a person, including depression brought on by peer pressure for social acceptability. PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) is one of the most noticeable symptoms of cyberbullying, according to research. According to Cross & Layt (2021), one of the most prevalent cybercrimes, romance fraud is typically not financial. These behaviours are conducted using social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and various dating services. According to Fernández-González et al. (2012), bullying was reported by less than 20% of the population when it came to aggressiveness against an adolescent partner. Although the victims of these attacks might not suffer financial losses, they may experience long-lasting emotional harm and trust concerns. Lack of professional nutritional advice combined with eating disorder tendencies can result in serious bodily problems and even protracted disease. Young children who use social media should be given the information they need to know about what is true and what is fake. Parenting and peer relationships are essential for completing this task.

ix) Identifying hate speech from freedom of expression

Social media sites give users of qualified groups the freedom to sign up and share their ideas. This occurs with very little gatekeeping. Social media misuse is frequently made more likely by the absence of strict standards. It is necessary to stop the spread of false information, the manipulation of society's most vulnerable groups for informational purposes and financial gain, as well as any attempts to restrict their right to free speech. One of the most common offenses related to cyberbullying is hate speech, and those who are targeted by these attacks can include individuals, families, and even children in some cases. According to Binark (2014), victims of hate speech come from a variety of societal groups. These include women, foreigners, and immigrants. Hate speech against certain groups also targets persons with disabilities

and those with various diseases. The study suggests several strategies for dealing with people, pages, or portals that frequently post discriminatory and intolerant content. To do this, editors must develop media knowledge to inform both current and potential users to offer a means for tracking and reporting hate speech. To give good instances of productive online chats and the degree of positivity they offer. The study emphasises the need to pinpoint the root of hate speech and tackle it from a scientific and psychological angle to develop a long-lasting countermeasure. In this toxic level of communication, threats range from murder to rape of youngsters. Millions of people who use social media are protected by the nation's legal system. A major obstacle to ensuring the safety and security of its users is the maintenance of anonymity profiles by a portion of users who use the cyber system to carry out illicit activities.

CONCLUSION

According to all the studies taken into consideration for this essay, it is effective to create several preventive measures to stop the sexual exploitation of children online. To foster a better understanding, education programs designed expressly to address cyber-crimes must be incorporated into the regular curriculum. To keep the system functioning effectively, the implementation of ongoing monitoring and inevitable remapping should be facilitated. The possibility of starting conversations in living rooms between parents and their children is held by the social awareness of cybercrimes and their seriousness. This opens lots of chances to bridge the generational digital divide and have conversations about problems. The problems linked with the digital world will inevitably get worse as time goes on. The generation that plans to rely on this technology needs to expand its psychological and social boundaries to protect itself from any potential dangers.

Limitation and Study Forward

The study's finding offers more than just remedies for the current situation; it also opens the door to a deeper understanding of the potential effects of future cyberattacks on youngsters. Cyberspace is a complex network due to the development of AI (Artificial Intelligence) and much more advanced technologies, but it also offers a promising setting for the quicker detection and reporting of cybercrimes. This study does not go into detail on the possibilities of AI or potential threats related to cybercrime in the future. The study creates likely opportunities for identifying certain cybercrimes and conducting in-depth analyses of their effects and potential countermeasures. It is important to have a serious discussion about how social media is changing the psychological makeup and social abilities of young people. Only a generation with a strong body and mind might improve living conditions and raise humanity's moral standards.

Practical application of the study

The research aims to raise awareness of the social, psychological, and legal challenges that the adolescent population is dealing with in cybercrime. It also discusses the parent-ward connection in cyberspace, as well as the need for adaptive research and ICT curriculum changes that must be made to support it.

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