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WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

“PROTECTING THE YOUNG IN A DIGITAL WORLD: ADDRESSING THE THREATS OF CYBERCRIME TO EDUCATION AND WELL-BEING”

AUTHORED BY - SAGARIKA ACHARJEE¹

Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital technology has significantly increased the vulnerability of children to various forms of cybercrime. This paper explores the growing threats landscape faced by children in online environment, highlighting key issues such as the surge in online threats, identity theft, and financial fraud targeting minors. Additionally, the psychological impact of cybercrime on children, including anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal, is examined to underscore the severity of the problem. The study emphasizes the urgent need for enhanced cyber security measures, digital literacy and parental awareness to safeguard the well-being of children in the digital age. With the increasing use of the internet by children for education, entertainment, and social interaction, the risk of exposure to cyber threats has escalated. From cyber bullying and online grooming to identity theft and financial fraud, children are becoming frequent targets of cybercriminal. The lack of awareness, supervision and proper security mechanisms contributes to the growing menace. This paper aims to shed light on the types of cybercrimes affecting children, analyze their consequences, and propose preventive strategies for creating a safer online environment. In addition, excessive screen dependency increases vulnerability to cyber threats while negatively affecting physical health, social interaction, and overall development. The study highlights the urgent need for awareness, parental guidance, stronger cyber laws, and digital literacy programs to protect children in the online space. Ensuring a safe digital environment is essential to secure their education, mental well-being, and future growth.

Introduction:

Although the concept of cybercrime is not new, there is still a great deal of disagreement among users, computer security specialists, and academics regarding the scope of actual cybercrime. "Cybercrime" refers to anything that has a stronger human component despite being mostly

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technological in origin. Today's internet development has both positive and negative effects, as evidenced by the rise in crime that affects all people, including children. Given that children require the best protection possible to ensure their development as the nation's hope, cybercrime that affects them as victims should be taken seriously.

The purpose of this study is to ascertain and examine the effects of cybercrime on children who are its victims. This study employs a descriptive analysis of the legal sociological research approach. Cybercrimes either target or use computers as tools. The growth of the internet has made it possible for people all over the world to effortlessly access data and information. While there are numerous benefits to the internet, there are also many drawbacks. unlawful use of the internet, including viruses, spam, cyberstalking, online pornography, and website hijacking. Another form of cybercrime is abuse, in which criminals exploit the internet as a platform. The most recent victims of cybercrime are children and adolescents, who are frequently the targets of child sexual exploitation.²

The study highlights the security flaws and the lack of awareness regarding the possible risks associated with the Internet. Additionally, as many educators themselves lack the requisite knowledge on the topic, education systems are not required to include internet safety courses in their curricula. Additionally, the survey found that many parents are ignorant about online safety and believe their kids are more tech-savvy, which makes it harder to have a conversation about internet safety. This enables a child to use the internet without adult supervision because many parental settings may be circumvented³.

Increasing online Threats to children:

According to research, using the internet may be linked to unpleasant experiences like cyberstalking, cyberbullying, or being inspired to commit a crime. For those who are not completely aware of the risks involved in using the network, these phenomena can pose a major threat. The young person's integrity and mental health are seriously threatened by going through them. These days, more and more kids have access to the internet through portable electronics like game consoles, computers, and tablets. Youngsters sign up for a variety of platforms in order to interact with their classmates, meet new people, and express their

² Sushma Singh, Shafianazi Shah. About the conference, 127, 2022

³ Dickson A Abimbola-Akinola, 2017- opus.govst.edu

interests. On OSN platforms, there are risks and hazards that are expressly directed at children. Children on OSNs are at risk from sexual solicitation, cyberbullying, cyber-grooming, online harassment, and online predators. Parents are aware that their children's online social networking sites may negatively impact their future as well.⁴

Educational Disruption Caused by Cybercrime:

The rise of cybercrime has created serious challenges in the field of education, especially for children who depend heavily on digital learning. With the growth of online classes, e-learning platforms, and digital study materials, cybercriminals are increasingly targeting students, causing disruption in their academic journey. One major issue is online fraud and scams. Children may unknowingly click on fake educational links or download harmful files, leading to data theft and loss of study materials. Such experiences create fear and discourage students from using online learning resources effectively.

Another disruption comes from the misuse of online classrooms. Incidents like hacking into digital classes, disturbing lectures, or sharing inappropriate content interrupt the learning environment. These distractions lower concentration, reduce motivation, and harm overall academic performance.

Cybercrime also exposes children to inappropriate content while studying online. Instead of focusing on lessons, students may be redirected to misleading or harmful websites, which affects both their education and personal development.

In addition, cyberbullying linked to education is becoming common. Students who are bullied online often avoid digital classes, lose confidence, and perform poorly in studies.

Thus, cybercrime disrupts the learning process and threatens children's educational growth unless strong protective measures are adopted.

Rising Identity Theft and Fraud:

As the digital realm becomes an integral part of children's lives, it brings with it the shadow of

⁴ ALEKSANDAR karadimce, MARIJA Bukalevska, WSEAS Transaction on Advances in Engineering Education 20, 25-31,2023

cyber threats, including online harassment, cyber bullying and identity theft. The study aims to shed light on how children perceive and are affected by these digital dangers. The rising awareness of cyber risks and the efficacy of existing protective measures, with many children feeling ill-equipped to handle such online adversities⁵. Identity theft cases are on the rise, with juvenile identity theft incidences growing faster than other forms of identity theft. Financial, medical, and character-related identity theft are all possible. Adult/child identity theft victims are people who were harmed when younger than 18 but were unaware of the crime until they were 18 or older, according to Foley and Nelson (2009). Six victims of identity theft, including adults and children, made up the study's sample⁶. It is necessary to comprehend and rationalize the perplexing taxonomy linked to identity-related crimes. One could argue that the idea of identity-related crimes is just as nebulous and ineffective as the idea of white collar crime. Hopefully, the criminological community can steer clear of the decades-long controversy that surrounded efforts to define the term "white collar crime."⁷ Although identity theft has been a problem for many years, in recent years, the tactics employed by those who commit what was formerly known as true name fraud—stealing a victim's personal information and using it to make significant purchases in their name—have evolved. Using actual data from several victims, including residences and social media numbers, this novel tactic involved creating a false identity.⁸ Additionally, they are unaware that this information may be readily gathered, extracted, and connected, which could provide imposters with a possible identity to exploit and perpetrate crimes like using the person's possessions or accruing debt in their place.⁹

Psychological impact on cybercrime:

Around the world, the frequency of cyberattacks is steadily rising. Cybercrime's psychological effects are still little understood, though. Research on the many forms of cybercrime is scarce. Since the victim's interpersonal trust is most severely damaged after suffering person-centered cybercrime, it was expected that the negative feelings would be particularly intense. It was also believed that if the victim knew the criminal and had a lot of interaction with them before to the crime, the psychological impact would be more detrimental.¹⁰ Cybercrimes have psychological repercussions that are just as significant as those of other crimes. To comprehend

⁵ Szandra Anna Laczi, valeria poser, 2024 IEEE 18th International symposium on Applied Computational Intelligence and Informatics (SACI), 1-6, 2024

⁶ Axton Elliott Betz, Iowa State University, 2012

⁷ Russell G Smith, Handbook of internet crime, 273 – 301 , 2013

⁸ Kevin Narajo , Unpublished paper. <https://www.cs.tufts.edu/comp/116/archive/fall2018/knarajo.pdf>, 2018

⁹ Mahmood Tahir, Identity Theft: Trends, Detection and prevention, 2021

¹⁰ Louisa von der Ahe, University of Twente, 2022

the effects of cybercrimes on victims, it is essential to examine them from a psychological and forensic standpoint.¹¹ Cyber psychology and gives a summary of how psychology is now comprehending online crime. We began by discussing the various types of cybercrimes, including cyber-pornography, cyber-trespass, and cyber-deception and theft. The Cyberbullying is a major public health issue since it is linked to significant detrimental mental and psychological effects in kids and teens. A systematic mapping review was carried out to find systematic studies that examined the connection between cyberbullying and young people's mental and psychological outcomes in order to examine the best quality of available evidence.¹²

Digital Addiction and Screen Dependency:

Another growing concern linked to cybercrime is digital addiction and screen dependency among children. With the availability of online games, social media, and entertainment platforms, children are spending increasing amounts of time on digital devices. While moderate use of technology can be educational, excessive and uncontrolled screen time often leads to negative consequences. Cybercriminals take advantage of this dependency by designing harmful apps, addictive games, and fraudulent platforms that keep children engaged for long hours. Many children unknowingly fall into traps such as in-app purchases, gaming frauds, or exposure to inappropriate content. Over time, this not only makes them vulnerable to cybercrimes but also disturbs their mental and physical health. Digital addiction also affects academic performance. Instead of focusing on studies, children spend more time online, which reduces concentration, lowers productivity, and creates academic stress. Additionally, long hours of screen use can cause problems like poor eyesight, sleep disturbances, and lack of physical activity, leading to long-term health issues. Most importantly, screen dependency weakens real-life social interaction. Children may isolate themselves, avoid family communication, and struggle to build healthy relationships. Thus, digital addiction not only fuels exposure to cybercrimes but also hampers the holistic growth of children.

Research:

Child-targeting cybercrime is on the rise. The FBI Internet Crime Centre Report (2015-2020)

¹¹ Swapnali Jadhav, Swaroop S Sonone, Mahipal singhsankhla, Mayuri kumara, Priyanka Kacker, The Indian Police, 31

¹² Irene Kwan, Kelly Dickson, Michelle Richardson, Wendy MacDowall, Helen Burchett, Claire Stansfield, Ginny Brunton, Katy Sutcliffe, James Thomas, Cyberpsychology, Behavior and social Networking 23(2), 72-82, 2020

states that there were 8 children exploited online per day in 2020, a 144% rise in crime against children compared to 2019. The biggest risks children face online

1. Cyber bullying.
2. Cyber predators
3. Posting private Information
4. Phishing
5. Falling for scams
6. Accidentally Downloading Malware
7. Posts that come back to Haunt a child Later in Life.

Since 2019, there has been an 87% increase in the number of allegations of child sexual abuse material examined by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The research states that in 2019 and 2020, there were 305 and 1,102 recorded instances of cybercrime against children, respectively. Cybercrimes against women were reported to have occurred 8,379 times in 2019 and 10,405 times in 2020 within the same time period. Online threats to children are covered by Section 11 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), 2012, in India. Sexual harassment is defined as any frequent internet communication or threats pertaining to a child's body or sexual activities. The Information Technology (IT) Act of 2000 was used to register the case. Sending a youngster degrading posts, harassing messages, or threats of death in order to induce mental distress and a suicidal or depressed state of mind is known as cyberbullying. As per research all those children are abuses day by day in online threatening so first step was conducting one awareness camp to for parents those are didn't know the online systems.

Cybercrime cases in Tripura have seen a notable rise, with 123 cases registered and 74 individuals arrested over the past three years. While specific data on child cybercrime cases isn't readily available, the state's efforts to combat cybercrime suggest a growing concern.

1. Total cybercrime cases: 123 cases registered in the past three years.
2. Arrests: 74 individuals arrested in connection with cybercrime cases.
3. Complaints Received: 9,308 complaints received by police stations from 2023 to January 2025.
4. Investigations completed: 8,485 investigations completed out of the received complaints.¹³

¹³ The Indian Express, <https://indianexpress.com>

State/UT wise details of cyber fraud report during the period- 1.1.2023 to 31.12.2023

1. Andaman & Nicobar – 526 complaints reported
2. Andha Pradesh – 33507 complaints reported
3. Arunachal Pradesh – 470 complaints reported
4. Delhi- 58748 complaint reported
5. Gujrat – 121701 complaints reported
6. Haryana- 76736 complaint reported
7. Himachal Pradesh- 5268 complaint reported
8. Jharkhand – 10040 complaints reported
9. Karnataka- 64301 complaint reported
10. Puducherry- 1953 complaint reported¹⁴

As per the report emphasizes the need for a proactive approach to online safety, including education, awareness, and protection. AS per my suggestion for parents and guidance to keep an eye on your children's online activities and set boundaries. To teach your child about online risks and how to stay safe. Utilize software to block inappropriate content and limit screen time. Talk to your child about their online experiences and concerns.

Mitigating Techniques:

There is no denying that modern technology brings with it a number of serious risks that have the potential to negatively impact people's lives and undermine their stability. The issue of cybercrime has significantly grown in recent years due to the rise in the usage of computers and internet-connected mobile phones. The field of cyber security urgently needs to create more creative and potent virus defence strategies. It is recommended that the government regulate online activities, that users of social media and cyber systems be taught to be cautious about their online behaviour, that strong cyber policies and laws be put in place, that information be verified and authenticated before being shared, and that cyber law enforcement be trained and involved to examine messages and information moving through social media and cyber systems. The safe cyber safety program, the missing cyber safety program, and the in-school cyberbullying intervention were the three cyber abuse interventions that were evaluated in these three studies. Knowledge of internet safety was most significantly impacted by I-safe cyber safety.

¹⁴ Posted on:06 FEB 2024 5:45 PM by PIB Delhi, <https://pib.gov.in>

According to HAHASO and the missing program, the intervention did not considerably alter attitudes toward online safety or lower the amount of reported instances of cyberbullying.

Conclusion

Cybercrime is becoming an increasing threat to children, exposing them to dangers such as cyber bullying, online scams, and harmful content. As technology advances, it's crucial for parents, educators, and authorities to work together to educate children about safe online behavior and implement stronger protections to ensure their digital safety. Cybercrime has a profound impact on children, affecting their safety, well-being, and development. It is essential for parents, educators, and policymakers to take steps to protect children from cybercrime and ensure their online safety. As digital engagement becomes an integral part of children's lives, the rise in cybercrimes targeting them demands urgent attention. The increasing prevalence of online threats, identity theft, and psychological harm highlights the need for a multi-layered approach to protection. Ensuring online safety for children requires collaborating among parents, educators, policymakers, and technology providers. By promoting digital literacy, enforcing stricter cyber laws, and encouraging open communication between children and guardians, we can create a safer and more secured digital environment. Addressing these issues today is essential to protecting the future generation from the long-term consequences of cybercrime. In essence, safeguarding children in the digital world is a shared responsibility. It calls for continuous education, robust cyber security policies, and a proactive approach to both prevention and intervention. Only through collective efforts can we ensure that the internet remains a space for learning and growth free from fear and exploitation for the children of today and tomorrow. To address these challenges, a collective effort is required from parents, teachers, policymakers, and law enforcement authorities. Parents must guide children toward safe internet practices, schools should incorporate digital literacy and cyber safety programs, and governments must strengthen cyber laws to ensure strict action against online offenders. Protecting children in the virtual space is not only a matter of technology but also of responsibility and awareness. If society can create a safe and supportive digital environment, children will be able to enjoy the benefits of technology without falling victim to its dangers. Ultimately, ensuring cyber safety for children is essential for safeguarding their education, well-being, and future.