

## Cyber Victimization Of Adolescents A Wake Up Call For All

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### **Abstract**

*The era we are living in today is a digital era. We just cannot imagine a second moment without digital connectivity. Each one of us be it a child, an adolescent or an adult, technology has become an integral part of our day to day life. Each aspect of our life is dependent on some or the other way. School going children are also experiencing the same specially the adolescent children. Though they use it to widen their horizons in multiple aspects of life but in that due to unawareness they get trapped into the vicious circle, which is often difficult for them to break without any expert help.*

*Cyber crime is conducted using computer and internet. It is the crime which is far dangerous than the war with weapons. Each day we hear of some new application for some aspect which sounds interesting to us and we download it without knowing the repercussions of it. In present time it is the data theft which is the cause of concern. Each one of us needs to be aware of cyber security. Since India is transforming to digitization at a faster rate, our youth is far more vulnerable to get entrapped in cyber crimes due to lack of awareness of cyber laws. Our children fall prey to cyber bullying, cyber stalking, identity theft, online abuse, online gaming threats and what not.*

*In cases where bullying is moderate and lasts for more than three months, the most commonly used means for it is the mobile phone.*

*Although cyber bullying is a short-lived problem for most adolescents, there is a relatively small, but significant percentage of teenagers who have been subjected to bullying of moderate (less than one attack per week) and severe intensity (more than one attack per week) over the course of more than three months, 4% between 3 and 6 months and 3% for more than a year.*

*In cases where bullying is moderate and lasts for more than three months, the most commonly used means for it is the mobile phone. This could be explained by the availability and vital importance that mobile phones have in life. Previous studies have shown that teenagers aged between 12 and 14 have had an average of three mobile phones, and 63% of them never switch them off, explains Buelga. In the current situation we need to take appropriate steps so that youth can be saved from becoming victim of cyber world.*

**Keywords:** *Adolescent, cyber victim, cybercrime, internet*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The emerging new mobiles and digital technologies today carry the opportunities and risks in parallel for children and adolescents. This paper explores particularly the field of adolescents and cybercrime against a background of an ever growing and developing need of the society combined with an increasing use of new media by youngsters.

Though studies have been done on internet safety pertaining to adults but the issue has not been taken into consideration with regard to children. Little attention is paid to the fact that adolescents, i.e., youth

between the age bracket of 13 to 19, face not only risks but also opportunities in online behavior and that a balance needs to be found between them. Today we must give importance to place anti-cybercrime measures targeted at protecting children and adolescents in the wider context of digital safety.

### **TECHNOLOGY AND ADOLESCENTS**

Adolescents use technology to make friends, gather knowledge in various aspects, and try to solve personal issues by keeping their identity secret. They prefer social networking sites to expand their horizons but at the same time this turbulent phase of their life has unsolved mysteries for them. Today facebook, twitter, instagram, whatsapp etc. are the social networking modes to keep them interconnected. They explore new technologies because of the opportunities and freedom these technologies bring, but it also makes them vulnerable to online crime. The adolescents tend to engage themselves into various forms of cybercrime as Hacking, Pornography, Piracy, and Online hate speech, e-frauds, Identity theft etc. knowingly and unknowingly. A significant portion of teenage life is influenced by Social networking sites. According to Das and Sahoo (2011) private and public life in the age of social networking cannot be demarcated. A person becomes helpless to control the misuse and distribution of his personal data, image or video once it is posted on a website. Any information shared online and though the privacy is set even then it cannot be erased permanently as it is stored over unknown web administrator. Using the information available on Face book profile one can easily determine the physical location of a person. Social networking sites are becoming a privacy threat to an individual. These sites also biologically impact people as they are immersed in a virtual world of relationships. Another disadvantage of social networking site is that the people who spent a lot of time chatting with friends and browsing profiles divert their mind from other primary work, they become obsessed to check their profile time and again. This problem has become much acute in developed countries and in extreme cases the employees are even sacked. A new type of Internet addiction has emerged called as ‘Facebook Addiction Disorder’ in which people become addicted to internet. Cyber criminals get help from social networking sites. Victims can be easily lured on social networking sites by pedophiles. The identity of any person in the virtual space is not traceable thus criminals take advantage of this. Cyber crimes through social networking sites include posting objectionable content on users’ profile, creating fake profiles to defame a person and getting access to someone’s profile by hacking. Social networking sites have the power to destroy relationships and can make life miserable. Welsh (2011) calls today’s generation “digital natives” or the “i-Generation”, a set of studies reveal the psychological and sociological effects of constant networking. Even though studies reveal some of the positive aspects of Face book such as a shy kid who gets a good experience by building online relationships, but negative traits like narcissism, lack of empathy, increase in aggression and mental illnesses like schizophrenia and depression are also reported due to excessive use of social networking sites. It is observed that online social networking distract adolescents from studies. It results in poor academic performance. Online social activities do affect the interpersonal skills of adolescents, they are less confident as compared to the ones who interact with the people face to face. Adolescents are even unaware that any data or photos might be saved by someone and used for some other purpose without their knowledge online or offline.

### **ISSUES ON PRIVACY AND SAFETY**

Parents believe that problems due to online strangers only happen once in a blue moon because people do not read about it every day in the newspaper. The fact is that children and families who are victims generally do not discuss their personal and painful experiences in society. Adults have a difficult time with the use of Internet because it is a new technology and online crimes magnify the risks associated with the use of technology. Cyberspace is a place, which does not discriminate against race, colour, religion, socio-economic status or gender. Every child online is at some risk. The most effective way to combat the risk is through parental involvement. Kohl highlighted the fact that Cyber bullying results in consequences such as; children to change schools, Drop out of schools, being expelled, charged in civil suits and most important committing suicide. The children who are constantly bullied do not report it

because they feel that if they report the incident, the bully may harass them offline or a parent's reaction might be to remove internet privileges. Children need to be taught online manners, just as they are taught everyday manners. Parents should install a “Monitoring device” on the computer. The use of such software is viewed as a way to help adolescents who are tempted through various online means. The privacy issues that need to be taken care of; Cookies, Phishing (Identity Theft), online shopping, frauds and scams etc. They should be told etiquette for the Internet usage, which means following ethical behaviour while being online. People need to follow some guidelines on the net and also teach children how to protect themselves from various forms of online risks.

Children with special needs (CWSN) are assisted to learn using various assisted devices depending upon their level of disability. Here internet usage is again a better way of learning, which intern can be a cause of worry if we do not educate them about careful usage of information technology. They might also become victim of cyber world. Thus not only normal children but even the children who are differently abled are prone to fall entrap of cyber frauds.

## CONCLUSION

From the above discussion it is evident that it is up to human mind how to use technology. It has been developed by man and so the usage is also in his hand. Being the most evolved species on earth man should be able to decide what, when and how much to be used. Nevertheless, cyber crime is the product of technological development. Social networking has become so predominant in our lives because we all are living in “Network Society”. We are in touch with the world constantly. Although, a massive literature has been generated on Cyber crime and Social networking sites, still ambiguity persists on the impact of technology and social networking sites on society because still the effect is in the infancy stage and much needs to be done. Indian society has a dearth of relevant literature on cyber crime and social networking sites. It is also noted that very few studies have been conducted and reviewed on adolescents’ use of social networking sites in Indian context.

It is a wakeup call for all of us to develop policies and measures of cyber worlds for our adolescents. Our youth must be educated the mannerism of technology usage.

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