

“How children are getting exploited by using Online Platforms”

A Brief Report



Submitted By

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Bal Kalyan Sangh (BKS) was established as Bhartiya Kisan Sangh in 1978 as a farmer's movement. Currently, the organization is engaged in addressing multiple vulnerabilities being faced by women, children and marginalized communities in Jharkhand (eastern India). The mainstay of our work is child protection and extending support services to trafficked girls. The organization is running the State Resource Centre (SRC) and Integrated Rescue cum Rehabilitation Centre (IRRC). In Jharkhand, BKS is running two CHILDLINE programmes. In a nutshell, the focus of the organization is on protection of children, young people, women, rehabilitation, prevention of human trafficking and its mitigation through different projects and activities.

Recently, BKS has been nominated as a member of the Sub-group on "Child Rights and Child Protection" formulated by the NITI Aayog under NITI Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Standing Committee for engagement of NGOs for achieving National Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in India. Therefore, BKS would like to be in forefront on all the protection aspects of children and ensuring the rights of the child with its full capability.

Corona Covid -19 has posed a difficult situation for everyone in the country and has affected every part of the world. There are issues emerging out of lock down, mobile internet usage and online teaching of the students which needs to be understood in an appropriate context. Therefore, our organization has taken a humble endeavor to conduct a short study to understand various nuances of how children's can get exploited on online platforms.

I would like to acknowledge for the inspiration we have got on this theme. Various webinars and discussions organized and participated by the NCPCR have been a great source of inspiration. BKS always seek guidance and views of the Commission on various matters related to child protection. BKS also has heard many experts and realized that it must ensure to work on the issue of vulnerability of children being

online, trafficking aspects, behavior of children during Covid 19 related lockdown, issue of CSAM, Cyber Protection mechanism etc so that appropriate mechanism can be developed to address the issues. Therefore, I take the opportunity to express my gratitude to EQUATIONS for giving the opportunity to BKS for conducting this study. My heartfelt thanks to Ms. Joyatri Ray, Equations for her guidance towards the study.

I would like to thank the City/Centre Coordinator's of CHILDLINE Nodal & Collaborative organizations of Dhanbad, Pakur, Khunti, Chaibasa and Koderma along with the Counselors', Teachers, Psychologists, NGO personnel dealing with online Child Sexual abuse for participating in the study.

My special thanks to Captain Vinit from Cyber Peace Foundation for answering to the questionnaires and providing information's to enhance the study. The most important of all who are the core of the study who responded to the questionnaires are the girls and boys in the age group of 14-18 years without whom the study was unconceivable.

I would also like to thank my BKS team- Ms. Shilly Menon & Mr. Sunil Kumar Gupta for developing the online tools for collecting the Primary data of the study along with collecting the secondary information for the study which made the study being conducted via online in this Corona COVID 19 situation.

A special acknowledgement to the Research Advisor- Shri Dushyant Meher for guiding the study and gratitude to Ms. Sagari Sahu, Ms. Vandana Nanda of Samvalita Enterprises for helping writing the study report.

With regards and best compliments,



(Sanjay Kr. Mishra), Executive Director, BKS

INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and the Internet have become an integral part of modern life that also plays an important role in the educational and social development of children. However, the technology also exposes children to new and evolving forms of sexual exploitation, child trafficking, luring children online and getting hooked to the pornographic sites. While the focus lays on the online child sexual exploitation but the issues like children using porn sites and sharing their physical location which lead to their trafficking need detailed investigation. In reference to sexual exploitation, it has soared in recent years as reflected by the ever increasing production and distribution of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM) due to the use of more advanced ICTs by perpetrators. To understand the situation in the context of state like Jharkhand- an eastern states of India, Bal Kalyan Sangh with its research wing and a team of professional researchers have made an endeavor to conduct a short study in Jharkhand and sought feedback from agencies like Cyber Peace Foundation as well as referred to the relevant documents to form its views and set forth some of the recommendations that are potential to address the issues in an effective way.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study proposal was prepared based on some of the news reports highlighting the increase in the traffic of dark webs and the study Child Sexual Abuse Material in India “Report on Demand for Child Pornography & Pilot Deterrence Using Artificial Intelligence” APRIL, 2020 by India Child Protection Fund New Delhi, India. The experience shared by specialized NGOs like Prajwala that alerts about the reported cases of girls being trafficked by using their mobile phones as link and location tracing. The availability of Child

Sexual Abused Material (CSAM) is also one of the added factors. Accordingly, methodology of the study was developed to capture first hand information from the adolescent girls, boys, teachers, counselors, child line and NGOs. Views were also sought from the Cyber Peace Foundation, a specialized NGO working in India on cyber safety. To supplement and compliment; findings from some of the recent studies and reports have also been examined to enrich the study.

STUDY PROPOSAL: To understand the nuances of how the online platforms are being used for exploitation and various crimes against children and how it is impacting differently on children and families of different socio-economic background; overall objective of the study is to understand the situation pertaining to use of online platforms for various types of exploitation and the possible interventions to combat/prevent these exploitation. Efforts have been made to cover the following objectives in the study:

- i) To understand the various aspects of Trafficking of children by using online platforms
- ii) To understand the various kinds of Online Sexual Abuse of children
- iii) To assess the Socio-economic condition of children and families that are prone to abuse and exploitation
- iv) To understand how the online platform for study, games and entertainment by the children affecting upon their behavior pattern during and after the lock down.
- v) To understand how children are using the mobile phones to reach various "porn" website which are free of cost
- vi) To suggest various interventions to prevent children from the issues being faced by them due to use of online platform.
- vii) To suggest various ways of restoration and rehabilitation services

FORMS, TYPES OF EXPLOITATION: MODES AND METHODS USED BY PERPETRATORS

Through the primary data collection method, findings of these studies and views of experts in respect to the forms of exploitation are given as under:

Bullying and Harassments: Experts and secondary data suggest that 50 % children - both girls and boys are being bullied and harassed online.

Online sexual abuse a new Concern: Online sexual abuse and vulnerability of children and adolescents is one of the new areas of concerns, especially during the onset of Covid 19 Pandemic when the screen time of children and adolescents have increased considerably.

Use of mobile to lure girls and women for trafficking: Use of mobile to lure girls and women for trafficking: Traffickers are using mobile to lure girls and women for trafficking. They have adopted various methods like offering lucrative jobs on social media, monetized live streaming, offers to advertise products and modeling offers etc.

Trend in Child Sexual Abuse & CSAM: As per the experts and available reports suggests non contact abuse is becoming more common and compared to other kinds of sexual abuse. As on the ease of access provided by internet and social media platforms. With respect to CSAM, most of the content being shared is self generated. Predators lure young users or coerce them into sharing private photos and videos, which are further used to blackmail and threaten them.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE VICTIMS

The study covers the children and young adults belonging to lower middle class who have access to mobile and many have personal mobile as well. These girls and boys mostly are studying in schools and colleges, however, a kind of hopelessness can be perceived while interacting with them as economy is down. Many believe that the good time may not be the same as it used to be before Corona Covid-19 period. These children and young adults accessing mobile are more vulnerable for they are easily lured in the name of job, money and other offers. The state of Jharkhand is known for unsafe migration and there are reported cases of girls being trafficked. The Corona Covid-19 situation poses a greater threat of girls and women being trafficked. Generally, persons who are vulnerable to trafficking are as follows:

Most victims would have faced one or more option-less situation listed below before they are spotted by a trafficker. Based on internal analysis of cases of trafficked persons who were admitted in NGO shelters a common factor that emerges is that of a 'known person' who starts the chain of trafficking.



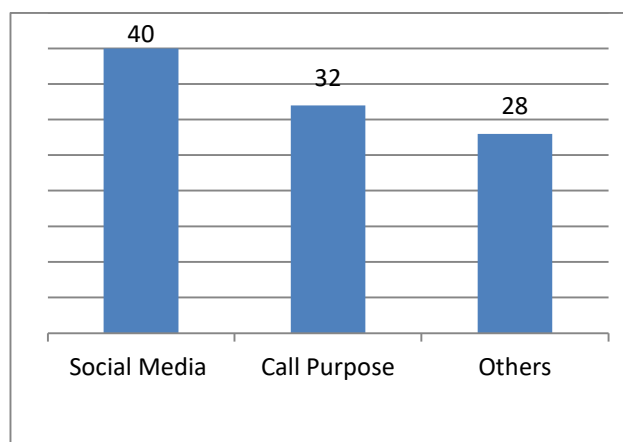
MOBILE USAGE AMONGST CHILDREN/YOUTH RESULTING INTO VULNERABILITY

The girls, boys and young adults from 8 districts i.e. Dhanbad, Koderma, Giridih, Dumka, Khunti, Bokaro, Chatra and West Singhbhum representing all regions of Jharkhand were interviewed to learn their pattern of mobile and internet use. Out of 100 adolescent girls in the age of group of 12 to 18 years were interviewed; 40 % girls mentioned that they use mobile internet for social media purpose. In addition, 22 % of them mentioned they receive invites from unknown persons for the purpose of friendship, chatting and interactions. Regarding the risk factors, 29 % of them shared that they have heard of unknown persons becoming friends and take all the personal details to harass the girls in future. Similarly, with the boys of the same age group, the questionnaire administered with 100 boys who shared that 57 % of them receive invites from unknown persons for friendships, chatting, interactions and alarmingly, 56% of them shared that they have heard from peer group and others that objectionable material and suggestive links are available in social media platforms and internet. It may be noted that 74 % boys use mobile for social media purposes. It can be interpreted that how the boys are most vulnerable to get in touch with such kind of material.

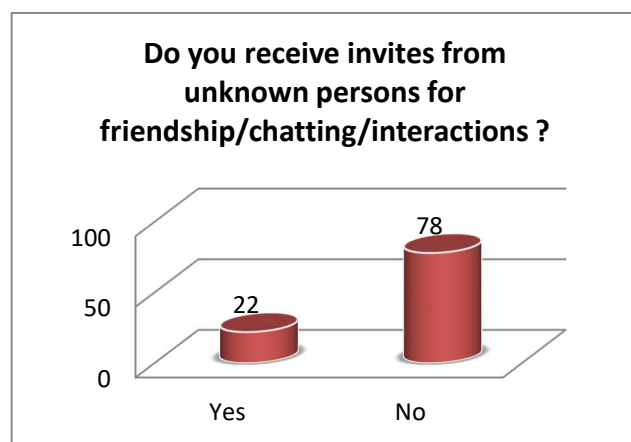
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA:

DETAILED FINDINGS: ADOLESCENT GIRLS: Girls who are using mobile phones and internet were covered in the interview for the purpose of this study. Though mobile phone symbolizes an important device for their empowerment- from where they seek education, updated information, events, contents of the study, however, poses them a risk factor in their personal life and safety. Out of 100 adolescent girls in the age of 12 to 18 years were

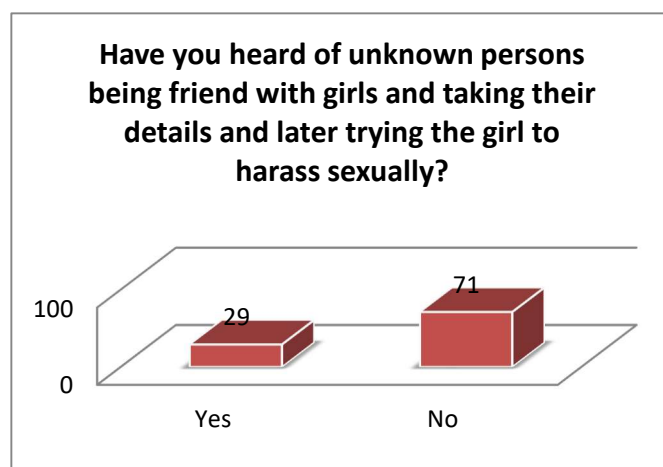
interviewed; 40 % girls mentioned that they use mobile internet for social media purpose. In addition, 22 % of them mentioned they receive invites from unknown persons for the purpose of friendship, chatting and interactions. Regarding the risk factors, 29 % of them shared that they have heard of unknown persons become friend and take all the personal details to harass the girls in future.



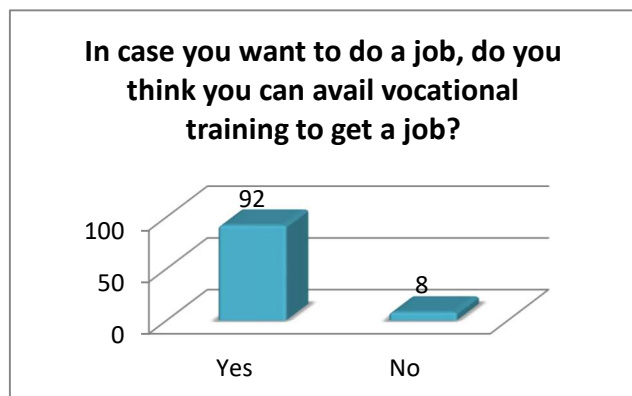
(For what purpose you use mobile and internet)



Therefore, situation reveals their vulnerability and highlights for a need to understand in detail about their circumstances and various other aspects in respect to their mobile use, socialization, physical safety and online safety etc.

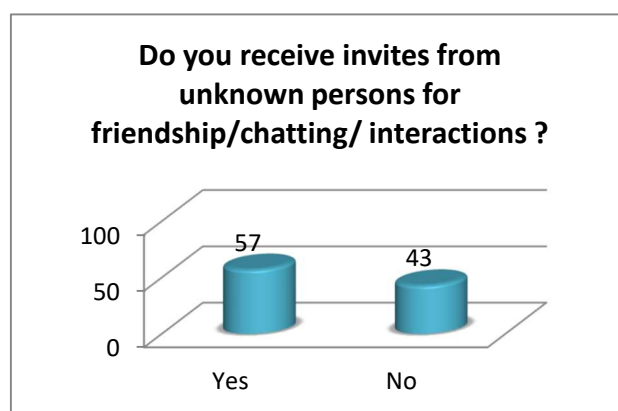


DETAILED FINDINGS: ADOLESCENT BOYS: Regarding boys of the same age group, the questionnaire administered with 100 boys

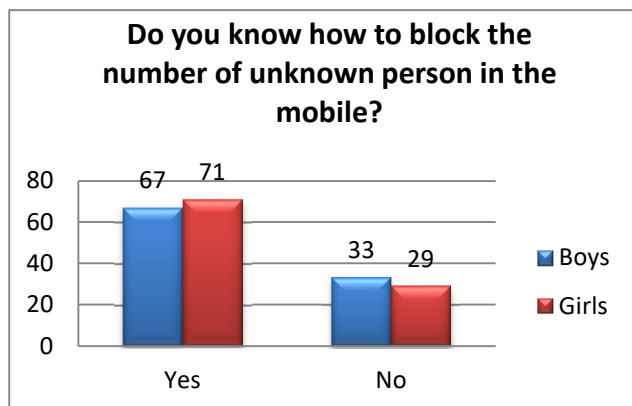


starting with their job aspirations. 92 % of them said they can avail vocational training if they want to do a job. 57 % of them receive invites from unknown persons for friendships, chatting and

interactions and alarmingly, 56 % of them shared that they have heard from peer group and others that objectionable material and suggestive links are available on social medial platforms. It can be interpreted how the boys are more vulnerable and exposed to such kind of material available on the internet.

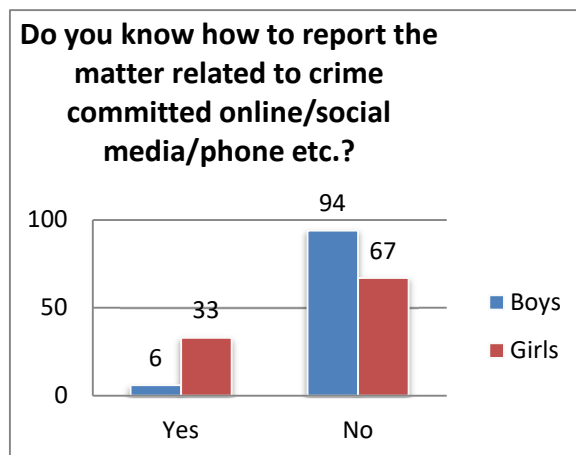
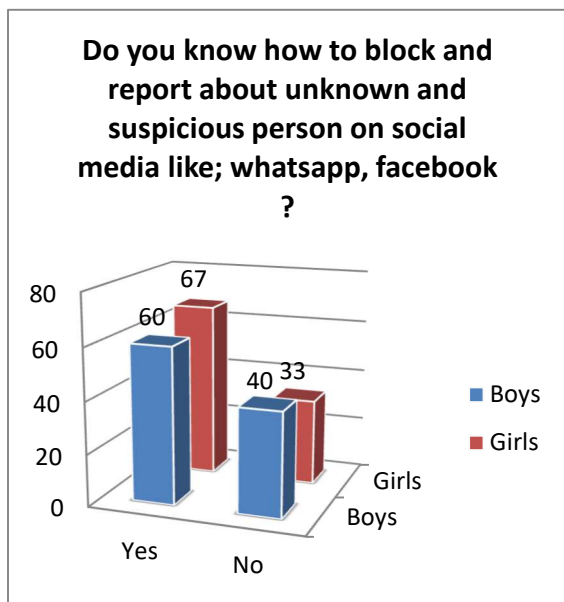


Safety & Reporting: Regarding mobile safety, a question was administered regarding how to block the number of unknown persons in the mobile, 67 % boys answered yes to it; however, 71 % girls confirm that they know how to block the persons. Further to

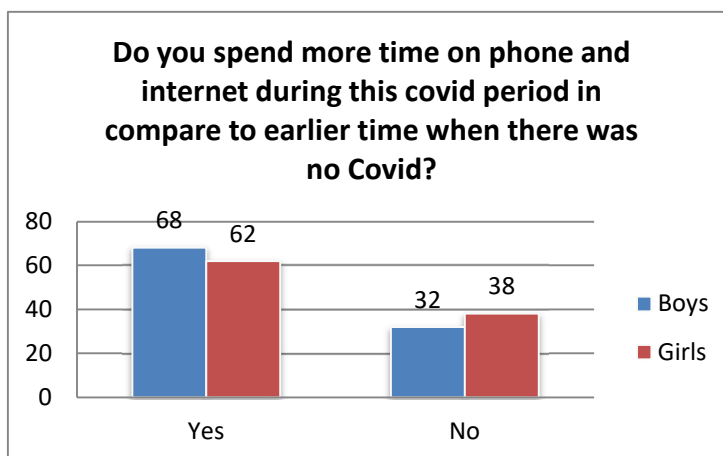


this another question regarding how to block the number of unknown persons and report about unknown suspicious persons on social media; 60 % of boys say yes whereas 67 girls answered in positive.

Most importantly to the question how to report a crime committed online/social media/phone; only 6 % of the boys could answer they know against 33 % of the girls.



In Covid 19 situation; a specific question was administered that is “do you spend more time on phone and internet during this Covid 19 period in compared to earlier time when there was no Covid” 68 % boys said yes to it whereas 62 % girls gave affirmative response.



Experience and Views from Counselors and Teachers: During the study 14 Counselors and Teachers were interviewed telephonically. Some of the findings important for this study are as follows: All 14

of them agreed that Covid -19 pandemic has brought new situation/dimensions in the lives of children and students. Regarding any changes in the behavioral pattern of students/ children during the lockdown, 12 are affirmative about change in behavior patterns during lockdown. These children are also emotionally vulnerable mentioned by 10 out of 14 participants during the interview. Similarly, 10 out of 14 have observed changing behavior pattern of students /children due to excessive use of mobile/internet. Alarming, 6 respondents have mentioned that they are of the view that the behavior of students can be suggestive that they may be accessing objectionable contents on the internet?

KEY FINDINGS:

Mobile Penetration: The penetration of mobile and internet has been increasing day by day especially amongst young people and adolescents. Despite the digital divide the access to internet service by the adolescents is becoming significant day by day.

Bullying and Harassments: Experts and secondary data suggest that 50 % children - both girls and boys are being bullying and harassed online.

Online sexual abuse a new Concern: Online sexual abuse and vulnerability of children and adolescents is one of the new areas of concerns, especially during the onset of Covid 19 Pandemic when the screen time of children and adolescents have increased considerably.

The vulnerability because of staying online: 40 % girls mentioned that they use mobile internet for social media purpose. In addition, 22 % of them mentioned they receive invites from

unknown persons for the purpose of friendship, chatting and interactions. Regarding boys, 57 % of them receive invites from unknown persons for friendships, chatting and interactions and alarmingly, 56 % of them heard that the objectionable material with suggestive links are available on social media platforms in the internet. Therefore, it can be interpreted how the boys are more vulnerable and exposed to such objectionable material available on the internet.

Staying safe in mobile: Regarding mobile safety, a question was administered regarding how to block the number of unknown persons in the mobile, 67% boys answered yes to it, however, 71% girls confirm that they know how to block the persons. Further to this another question regarding how to block the number of unknown persons and report about unknown suspicious persons on social media; 60% of boys said yes, whereas, 67% girls answered in positive.

Use of mobile to lure girls and women for trafficking: Traffickers are using mobile to lure girls and women for trafficking. They adopt the methods like offering lucrative jobs on social media, monetized live streaming, offers to advertise products and modeling offers etc.

The cases of child sexual abuse: According to the Cyber Peace Foundation; various news articles and statements from stakeholders talk about an increase in cases of child sexual abuse. At the same time, many refute this claim as well. From the calls that we have received, we have not seen an increase per se. However, ***“because children are using the internet more than ever now, which does make them more susceptible to being contacted by predators”***.

Children who are prone to the network of child sexual abuse: As per information sought from experts and studies suggested that

children who have faced physical or mental abuse are more susceptible to online abuse, and also children who lack trusted adults in their lives. Sometimes, children are pressured by their peers to create accounts on certain platforms that make them vulnerable. However, there are no set criteria. It can happen to anyone, anytime.

Trend in Child Sexual Abuse & CSAM: As per the experts and available reports suggest non contact abuse is becoming more common and compared to other kinds of sexual abuse. Primarily because of the ease of access provided by internet and social media platforms. With respect to CSAM, most of the content being shared is self generated. Predators lure young users or coerce them into sharing private photos and videos, which are further used to blackmail and threaten them.

Children are accessing social media platform such as facebook, Instagram, Tweeter, Whatsapp, Telegram etc. and the pornographic material and the links to access such material are also available and circulated amongst the users on these platforms .Therefore, it was observed that children below 18 years have easy access to these materials without any check.

The internet has three layers, namely the surface web, the deep web and the dark web. The dark web refers to encrypted online content that is not indexed by conventional search engines. It is a component of the deep web that describes the wider breadth of content that does not appear through regular internet browsing activities. To access dark web one need special browsers, search engines and also different networks.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

To create a protective mechanism: Key recommendations drawn from the field as well as institutions like Cyber Peace Foundation are as follows: sensitization is the key that goes a long way. Helping children identify unsafe behavior, so that they can stay safe when online. Creating safe spaces for children to encourage them to talk about their experiences.

Awareness on Child Sexual Abuse: There is a need to create awareness about online child sexual abuse, bullying and harassment amongst children and adolescents. In addition, they need to be sensitized and oriented on how to report about the matter. In this matter the media and civil society organizations should come forward to play an important role.

Reporting of the Cases: Children and adolescents should be provided a protective and enabling environment so that they can talk about their experience if any regarding bullying and harassment online. They need to be aware of reporting mechanisms that can help children report inappropriate and illegal activities. Unless there is a proper reporting system and reporting; the issue would not be brought into forefront and the children and adolescent victims would continue to suffer emotionally and psychologically without any interventions.

A new area of concerns that to be dealt Comprehensively through convergent action: Since, online sexual abuse and vulnerability of children and adolescents online is a one of the new areas of concern; there is a need of forming new convergence platforms with relevant stakeholders to address the issues more effectively. The possible players and stakeholders that can play most important roles are; the parents, teachers, counselors, Peer

members, Child line, Counseling Psychologists, NGOs working on Cyber security, police, district level child protection mechanism etc.

The issue to be dealt sensitively with the children: Online safety of children is a sensitive issue to be dealt sensitively with more cautions for it involves information and nexus that could be more harmful if revealed to children without guidance and counseling support to them.

Training to the key protective officials: The traditional law enforcement agencies who have little knowledge and skill on cyber issues need to be trained to handle such cases in more effective way. Similarly, child protection officials also need to be trained on the issues pertaining to online child sexual abuse and harassment.

Children and Adolescents to live more in the real world: Children and adolescents to be counseled not to forget about the real world and spend maximum time interacting with real friends, families, communities and peer groups rather socializing on social media platforms and to be in a virtual world.

Strengthening of families, Adolescents and youths: The access to mobile phone is very easy in India. People from all strata are capable to use mobile internet. Hence, children and adolescents belonging to socio-economically deprived communities are more susceptible to be fall prey to the trap of predators because of their economic vulnerability. Therefore, with awareness and sensitization; economic empowerment would also play an important role in prevention. Accordingly, in any such project on prevention and mitigation; a component of socio-economic empowerment of adolescents and youth should also be included.

The Seamless access of Social Media Platforms may lead to Sex Tourism involving vulnerable communities: It is pertinent to

observe and monitor that because of easy access to social media platforms should not lead to any kind of sex tourism. The state like West Bengal which is a neighboring state of Jharkhand and the border areas are already prone to unsocial elements, trafficking and other illegal activities may contribute to sex tourism because of the economic recession and depression. Therefore, such areas across the state of Jharkhand may be mapped, observe to prevent sex tourism or any such activities.

Restoration of Victims: Restoration and rehabilitation services for the victims of trafficking, sex trafficking, online sexual abuse must be offered on priority along with all the concerned authorities. The victims must be linked with all available schematic benefits and offered counseling as well as mental health support services.

Adolescents Service Centre: A district level programme in the line of adolescent service centre must be initiated. This service centre should be equipped enough to provide counseling services, information on various online cyber related issues, train/counsel children and adolescents how to block people on social media platform, how to report about a cyber crime etc. this service centre must establish convergence with the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Anti Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU), Childline -1098 etc.

Campaign for Parental Awareness: There must be a campaign introduce for greater awareness among parents to recognize early signs of child abuse, on online risks and how to improve online safety for their child. It should be mandatory for schools to undertake training of parents making them aware of hazards for children of free access to smart phones and the Internet at an early age.

Creating and Sharing Online Safety Booklets: For users where the content specifically focuses on best practices to use to stay safe on the internet like creating strong passwords, two step verification along with understanding privacy setting and reporting content and users. Also hosting Online Safety workshops with planned outreach and viewership numbers by partnering with organizations which use the platforms.



MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

THIS STORY IS FROM FEBRUARY 7, 2020 Why India lags in tackling online child sex abuse

Jaya Menon | TNN | Updated: Feb 7, 2020, 10:08 IST

CHENNAI: The content on the dark web, the part of the internet not indexed by search engines and accessed through specific software,

is truly a dark world — offensive, degrading and downright horrific. Navigating through it to access child pornography in anonymity is easy. But, so too is accessing such material on the open internet.

Hundreds of groups thrive under the radar on WhatsApp, Facebook and Telegram, exchanging offensive visuals and pornography involving children, toddlers and even newborns. As India grapples with [child sex abuse material](#) (CSAM) invading digital platforms like never before, the enforcement authorities struggle with very little tools, skills or knowledge to track the criminals online. The sheer digital complexity of the crime requires support of global agencies. For instance, it was Interpol that recently flagged India's high number of online offences. Strangely though, India is not a member of Virtual Global Taskforce yet. Nor is it a member of the WeProtect, a global alliance with heads of states as members to stop online child sexual abuse and exploitation.

Though the country claims to have access to Interpol's International Child Sexual Exploitation database, of late it depends heavily on US-based NCMEC (National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children) for alerts. Interpol's database holds more than 1.5 million images and videos and has helped identify 19,400 victims worldwide. It is not clear though if [CBI](#) has access to this database.

KEEPING A WATCH

A 14-member panel in the Rajya Sabha led by Congress leader and MP Jairam Ramesh submitted recommendations to check child sex abuse material on social media. Here are some of the suggestions:

- Broadening of Pocol Act by include written material, visual representation and audio recording advocating sexual activity with a minor

- Defined "sexually explicit" in the existing definition and included "cyber-grooming" (when a person with sexual intent persuades or coerces and arranges a meeting with a child) as an offence

- Requested PM to take the lead in creating a global alliance to combat CSAM on social media

- Called for amendment of the IT Act to enhance scope of the darknet investigators

- The committee has also recommended a code of conduct for social media platforms, mandatory apps on all devices sold in India that monitor children's access to pornographic content

- Filters for parental control and age verification

COUNTRY IN FOCUS

Findings from The Out of Shadow Index by the Economist Intelligence Unit examining how 40 countries are dealing with child sexual abuse

India ranks 15th with a score of 57.6
WHERE IT'S SLIPPING

Indicator	Score
National policies	30
Victim support programme	40
Contextual legal framework	42
Law enforcement capacity	43
Complaint mechanism	50
Civil society engagement	50
Child-specific rape laws	50

STORY IN THE DETAILS

Other global findings of The Out of the Shadows Index

- Nine of 60 countries established mandatory law for reporting, content blocking or deleting and record keeping of child sex abuse material

- Research in 28 countries, including the USA, China, India, Russia, and Brazil, found 17% children faced cyberbullying (one aspect is online sexual harassment)

- Interpol's Child Sexual Exploitation database holds more than 1.5 million images and videos, recording the abuse of more than 19,400 victims worldwide

30%
of internet users are children

➤ Internet Watch Foundation found more than **105,000** websites hosting child sexual abuse material

Source: ITU & Unesco

G Joy Theophilus

India has neither a ministry of internet safety and security nor eSafety commissioners — all essential to crack down on the offensive websites of dark operators steering a multi-million market that trades in children's dignity. The ministries of home affairs, external affairs and women and child development coordinate for international cooperation in cracking child offensive sites and hunting down perpetrators of the crime, said Rakesh Maheshwari, group coordinator, (cyber laws and e-security) of the ministry of electronics and information technology. "We would definitely like to

be a part of all these international groups. The ministries are working on it," said Maheshwari.

Operating without international assistance could prove a tough battle in the cyber world. "The cyber space does not have boundaries. The offensive content can originate from any country," said Cyber Peace Foundation founder Vineet Kumar. "What's missing is cooperation among countries, which is essential in cracking the crime," said Kumar. His foundation, a civil society organisation and a cyber security think tank, has been working on safety of children online. "It is not just the dark web. Children are stalked and trapped on surface webs," said Vineet.

On January 12, an ad-hoc committee led by Congress MP Jairam Ramesh submitted a 21-page report with 40 recommendations on dealing with the 'alarming issue of pornography on social media and its effect on children and society as a whole'. A suggestion was that Prime Minister Narendra Modi take the lead in building a global political alliance to combat child pornography on social media. "The committee is obviously not aware that other countries have long since been cognisant of the issue and taken multifarious initiatives in handling this complex crime. In fact, India is just playing catch-up game," said Vidya Reddy.

The committee also failed to get consensus on a crucial recommendation on safeguards for minors engaged in sexting and selfies. "This was the only recommendation where we could not get an unequivocal view. So, we kept it open," said Ramesh. Some members felt the possession of all sexual material by minors must be banned outright and some felt that young adults between the age group of 16-19 should be covered under this exception. Some others opposed this ban. "The committee seems to be existing in a time warp, to conflate children watching porn with children used in creating sexual material. We are living in a sexualised world, not just online but in a real-time world too," said Vidya Reddy of Tulir, a Chennai-based Centre for the Prevention & Healing of Child Sexual Abuse.

In all the rush of hi-tech tracking and trapping offenders, a crucial

aspect of creating awareness among children and a specialised counselling of those who have been traumatised are yet to gain traction. "Teachers, parents and other stake holders should be roped in. Counselling should be high up on the agenda," said advocate and cyber victim counsellor Debarati Halder. A proactive approach that begins with providing programmes to prevent prospective offenders from committing a sexual offence against a child, is a step towards a safer environment.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Bengaluru: Calls on child abuse rise, online classes a factor

TNN | Updated: Aug 5, 2020, 09:33 IST

BENGALURU: The number of calls to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC) about kids facing mental and [physical abuse](#) or neglect has increased since March, in worrying signs of how the [pandemic](#) is triggering tensions within families.

The committee's helpline receives over 200 distress calls related to ill-treatment daily in Bengaluru. The allegations range from kids being beaten up for not paying attention during online classes to being denied proper meals. Not every call becomes a formal police complaint as authorities' first try to counsel families and resolve conflict points.

The coronavirus crisis has posed multiple challenges to parents and children, who miss attending school and meeting friends, an experience which is so crucial for their development. Parents face new demands and stresses at work and at home, and some are taking it out on their children.

"Earlier, children would often pour their hearts out before their school teachers and friends, who helped them by reaching out to us on our helpline 1099," CWC chief commissioner [Anjali Ramanna](#) told TOI.

Overall, the number of complaints to the CWC, which deals with a wide range of issues, including child marriage and labour, has not gone up because of the pandemic. But the nature of complaints has changed. Minors often called the helpline for emotional support earlier. Now, the conversation has shifted to mental and physical abuse, according to Anjali.

“Parents are busy with chores and work, and don’t have the time to pay attention to their children. Some switch on the laptop and continue to work, and when they find the child distracted, they hit him/her,” Anjali said.

Recent complaints received by the CWC pertained to children being pressured to sit for online classes for long hours. “It’s not mandatory to attend online classes for a long duration, yet many schools and educational institutions expect children to sit for over four hours,” said education activist Ajith Malhotra, who lives in Whitefield.

There are also complaints of teachers behaving harshly with students. “Children face verbal abuse even if their internet connection is poor,” said Indiranagar techie Anirban Bhattacharya. He witnessed one such incident while sitting with his son, a sixth-grader, for an online session. “My son’s friend was scolded for slow internet. The teacher used foul language. I could not tolerate it,” Bhattacharya said.

The CWC has also received calls about kids not getting adequate nutrition. Anjali said the distress calls didn’t entirely reflect the severity of the problem as many kids don’t know how to seek outside help. Ill-treatment of children is rampant, she added. The CWC registers a complaint with the police after its intervention fails to solve the problem. Since March, it has filed 232 complaints on child marriage, labour and begging, and 2,020 cases in connection with abuse of children by parents or other family members.Box:

THE TIMES OF INDIA

NCPCR issues notice to online platforms over child sexual abuse material

TNN | Apr 25, 2020, 21:43 IST

NEW DELHI: Taking a serious view of child sexual abuse material circulating online and of reports warning of spike in users accessing such content during lockdown, the national commission for protection of child rights has issued notices to Google, Twitter, [WhatsApp](#) and iOS, [Apple India](#).

The commission has started an independent inquiry on availability of CSAM online. Based on evidence found so far, the [NCPCR](#) has given these online platforms time till April 30 to respond to the notice. The commission wants to know from them the policy followed by them to prevent CSAM on their platforms, the number of complaints received related to pornography and CSAM and what is their policy in dealing with such cases.

The NCPCR led by chairman [Priyank Kanoongo](#) has reported and forwarded the details of links, handles and other details where they found such abusive material to the Union home ministry's cyber crime portal for action.

In its notices to all platforms, NCPCR cites a recent report by [India Child Protection Fund](#) that warns of a steep spike in those searching for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) online during the lockdown. The NCPCR then goes on to point out that the commission is now carrying out an independent inquiry.

"It is noticed during inquiry that pornographic material is accessible through the Apps available on Google Play Store. This is enabling accessibility of the children to such material. There is also possibility that the CSAM is also available on these Apps," it is stated in the notice to [Google India](#).

In the notice to Apple India iOS, it is stated that the commission noticed that CSAM and pornographic material is rampant and easily accessible through Apps available on iOS.

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*Instead of just issuing notices, the NCPCR should affect UTM, firewalling of listed and identified online sites proactively by all Internet providers in India. Notices only elicit more curiosity a...**Konfucius Ken***

During inquiry it was also noticed that there are encrypted WhatsApp groups and the CSAM is rampantly present in these groups. "The links to these groups were found to be propagated by various handles on Twitter. The commission is of the view that propagating links of these WhatsApp groups on Twitter handles is a serious matter," NCPCR states in its notice to WhatsApp India.

In the notice to [Twitter India](#), NCPCR states, "it is seen that as per your standard terms and conditions, a person of 13 years and above is eligible to open an account on Twitter. If you are allowing children at the age of 13 to open an account, the commission is of the view that you can't allow the other users to publish, propagate pornographic material, links etc. on Twitter."



Ramya Kannan, CHENNAI, APRIL 18, 2020

THE HINDU,

Most online content on child sexual abuse from India

19.87 lakh reports of such material uploaded from country

In a global compilation of reports of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) found online, India stands right on top of the list, with 11.7% of the total reports or at 19.87 lakh reports, followed by Pakistan, which contributes 6.8% of all reports (11.5 lakh reports). Bangladesh comes in fourth with 5.5 lakh reports and a share of 3.3%.

The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) urges people to report CSAM found online across the world annually, on their online platform CyberTipline.

This year, the Centre received a total of 1.68 crore reports. The material thus reported by the members of the public and electronic service providers, principally comprises still pictures and videos depicting children in a clear sexual angle.

Three of the top four countries were in South Asia, raising concerns among child rights activists about the online safety of children in the region.

The NCMEC adds that the reports include geographic indicators related to the upload location of the child sexual abuse material, but country specific numbers may be impacted by proxies and anonymisers.

John Carr, a member of the Executive Board of the UK Council on Child Internet Safety, says, “It has long been suspected that India was very high (as CASM source) but the data wasn’t being published before now so I guess nobody on the inside track will be surprised. Their suspicions have merely been confirmed.”

Mr. Carr added, “I am not going to venture any guesses as to why India is the world’s number 1 but it is astonishing that three out of the four top countries — India, Pakistan and Bangladesh — are all in the same part of the world.”

Vidya Reddy of Tulir Centre for Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse, raised concerns about the fact that the reports only account for material that has been uploaded.

“We are not even talking of downloading or browsing. We need to focus on finding out whether this is re-uploading content already circulating on the net, or whether it is new content being uploaded,” Ms Reddy said.

Pointing out that the numbers are consistent with Google searches on sexual content across the world, she said, “We need to look at the South Asian region with great interest and concern, at their interest in using children’s pictures for sexual stimulation.”

Lockdown impact

There is also concern that the lockdowns across the world will lead to an exacerbation of the situation.

Mr. Carr says: “Police and child welfare experts around the world are all expressing great anxieties about the impact of the mass lockdown. Paedophiles who work online are seeking to exploit the situation, looking for bored children. It might be some time before official figures show any increase in arrests or harms to children. That’s unavoidable but also, sadly, inevitable.”

“The coronavirus pandemic has led to an unprecedented rise in screen time,” said Howard Taylor, of Global Partnership to End Violence