

Women: An Easy Trap for Cybercriminals

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Abstract: *Women play a vital role in the development of the country. We can see them in every front of life, professional or personal life! The COVID-19 pandemic has affected living conditions and people tried to adapt to the changing situation that is the 'new normal'. Technology has gained a lot of importance and space in everyone's life. It is a matter of concern that when people spend a lot of time online, they are vulnerable to cybercrime. People, when spending time online must be aware of their cyber safety, especially women. The cybercrime rate is increasing due to the unawareness of women. The present paper investigates the cybercrime risk of women. It was found that women are vulnerable to cybercrime and there is a lot of scope for creating awareness. The government is taking many initiatives, but women are not aware of the initiatives. There is a need to bridge the gap between women and awareness programs to make them more knowledgeable in the cyber world.*

Keywords: Women, Cyber world, Cyber Crime, Cyber Safety and Security, Awareness Programs

1. Introduction

Women is Empowered in 21st century. She has the opportunity to do what she wants. We can see the presence of woman in every walk of life, be it personal or professional. In this technical world where the whole generation in depend on technology, especially internet, women is not behind. According to a global survey by Plan International revealed that 60 percent of girls and women have experienced harassment on social media platforms. Activities like sexual harassment, trolling, messages threatening rape and murder, or leaking private pictures and videos without consent have become very prominent. (Norzom, T. & Balakrishnan, R. October 8, 2020). The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) in India has reported that cases of cybercrimes against women have increased from 4, 242 in 2017 to 6,030 in 2018.

These concerns have created a gap between the people using cyber space and their awareness on cyber safety and security. The awareness on cyber safety and security can reduce the risk of internet use in cyber world. Thus, an attempt has been done through this paper to figure out the government initiatives to reduce the cyber crime against women as they make half of the population of the country and are active member of cyber world.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To study the status of cyber awareness on cyber safety and security of women.
- To identify the initiatives taken by the Government of India for cyber security and safety of women.
- To provide solutions for the cyber safety and security of women.

Operational Definition:

Cyber world: Cyber World is the space in internet world where people use internet to connect with people and perform various activities like financial transactions, shopping, surfing, browsing, chatting, blogging etc.

Cyber Safety and Security: Cyber Safety and security is an activity to keep oneself aware about the pros and cons of being in cyber world. It is to know and apply the required safety and security measures while using internet.

Awareness Programs: Awareness programs are the programs that make people aware about the risks of being in the cyber world and provide the users, the tricks, and tips to be safe online.

Cyber Crime: Any unlawful act where computer or communication device or computer network is used to commit or facilitate the commission of crime". Some of the common cyber crimes that women face Cyber stalking, Cyber defamation, Cyber Pornography, Cyber bullying, Cyber grooming, and Cyber Theft etc.

Cyber Crime Rate in India against women: The cybercrime against women is increasing day by day as it has been reported by many agencies who are exclusively working for women protection in cyber world. In 2021, the National Cybercrime Portal run by the Home Ministry received more than 600, 000 complaints, including crimes against women. A total of 50, 035 cases in 2020 were registered under cybercrimes, showing an increase of 11.8 per cent in registration over 2019 (44, 735 cases). According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB India), there was rise in cybercrimes against women between 2018 and 2020. According to National Commission for Women, 704 cases of Cyber Crime against women were registered in 2020. Cybercrimes reported in the Capital saw an increase of 55% in 2020 as compared to 2019. Total number of 166 cases was reported in 2020 as compared to 107 in 2019. NCRB reported that Uttar Pradesh (2, 120) saw the highest number of cases of sexually explicit content online, followed by Assam (1, 132). Bengaluru reported the highest number of cases-248 for publishing and transmitting obscene or sexually explicit act in electronic form, followed by Lucknow. Cases of cyber stalking and bullying of women rose from 739 in 2018 to 872 in 2020. A study conducted on 72 women by Megha Desai and K. Jaishankar titled 'Cyber Stalking-Victimization of Girl Students: An Empirical Study', states that 12.5% of the respondents had intimate relationship with their cyber stalker before the stalking started. According to the research, 62.5% of harassment

started through emails and online chats. These data show the increase in cybercrime against women. It has been observed that the motives behind all these cybercrimes are financial fraud and sexual exploitation.

It is a point of concern that states like Punjab, Rajasthan, Goa, Assam do not have a single cybercrime cell. Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh have only one or two cybercrime cells. The situation is more or less same in all the states of India.

3. Methodology

For this study systematic review of research papers, government policies and government initiatives has been done by analysing the data collected from secondary sources like e-newspapers, NCRB, Journals etc. were accessed, retrieved, and analysed.

Government Initiatives for cybercrime awareness:

The Government of India has taken initiatives to spread awareness about cybercrimes. The Government has launched the online cybercrime reporting portal, www.cybercrime.gov.in. It is user friendly website where anyone who face any cybercrime can report and do the follow up of the case. MHA has started a scheme 'Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I₄C)' for the period 2018-2020, to combat cybercrime in the country (17th Jul. 2019, PIB Delhi). Cyber Swachhta Kendra (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) has been launched for providing detection of malicious programmes and free tools to remove such programmes. Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) operational since 2004 is the national nodal agency for responding to computer security incidents. It issues alert and advisories regarding cyber threats and counter measures. ISEA (Information Security Education and Awareness) has published guidelines for Information Security awareness for women to help them be safe online. The National Commission for Women has submitted a report on "ways and means to safeguard women from cybercrimes". The Policy helped to discourage hacking activities, dedicated helpline numbers were provided, and it talked about imparting of proper legal aids to combat cybercrimes. National Commission for Women (NCW) has partnered with Facebook and the Cyber Peace Foundation to run a Digital Literacy Programme for women. But only few percentages of women are getting benefitted as they are not aware about these initiatives. In its first phase, 60, 484 students were sensitised in Delhi-NCR, Haryana, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, and Tamil Nadu. The second phase is launching in Lucknow under the "We Think Digital" Campaign, to train one lakh women and girls across Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Bihar.

4. Findings of the Study

Women spend lot of time in cyber space doing online chat, shopping, surfing, and browsing etc. The cybercrime rate has increased against women in India since 2018. There are various schemes run by the government to make people, especially women aware about the cyber safety and security. The most common means like messages, emails, video

advisories, newspapers, government advertisements are displayed time to time to make people aware about cyber safety and security. Still there is majority of women including women in workplace are not aware about the do's and don't to be safe online. A big concern is that the Indian women are shy to report these kinds of issues.

Suggestions for Cyber Safety and Security of women

People spending a lot of time online. Women need to adapt the cybersafe practices. There are few suggestions like:

- 1) Women need to maintain their privacy online and be aware of fake profiles.
- 2) Check your account settings regularly and don't let others peep into your accounts.
- 3) Don't respond to email messages that ask for personal information.
- 4) Pay attention to privacy policies on Websites and in software.
- 5) Don't post all the pictures and events to be happen on social media.
- 6) Frequently change your password.
- 7) Use paraphrasing for strong password.
- 8) Don't save all password on computer or mobile.
- 9) Don't leave your webcam on while leaving computer or mobile.
- 10) Report cybercrime in the nearest cyber cell or police station or National Cybercrime Reporting Portal ([cyber crime.gov.in](http://cybercrime.gov.in)).

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