



Short Article

Cyber Grooming: A Malediction of Virtual World

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Abstract: *Technology is an advanced creation of mankind. The advancement of the virtual world has formulated numerous contingencies that affect the psychic state and cultural well-being of youths. In today's scenario, there are some very treacherous uncertainties in the cyberspace which are sexting, cyberdating, cyberbullying, cyber stalking, and online grooming. This article reviews a framework on how technology could develop further to neutralize and alleviate the devastation produced by online perpetrators. Further, the focus would be on existing laws and suggestions to curb this type of attacks in a precise manner. This involves an apprehension phase employing automated systems to recognize and analyze such attacks and exercising precautionary standards as a component of the response towards the enigma such as refining undesired interactions.*

Keywords: *Cyber, Technology, Virtual, Cyberspace.*

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1. Introduction

Cyber grooming¹ is a very awful part of the cyberspace. The internet has empowered people to socialise and trade intimate erudition online with a high standard of anonymity, mutually with deficiency of surveillance, this has assisted various kinds of anti-social act towards weak people including teenagers. Most of the virtual harm consists of chat dialogues within a sexual meaning, distributing photos or videos including intimate content, virtual sex through webcam. The victim gets confined in a series of abuse by the offenders who coerce them at regular intervals, intimidating to disclose the material already interacted.

2. Minors and Sexting

When a person sends a venereal image or message to another person can be called “sexting”. Earlier, people were using SMS to send sexually explicit messages and images, but due to the contemporary growth and use of social media and various image-based applications, sexting is now more generally correlated with social media applications. Sexting² can be performed through any kind of electronic devices. It has become very widespread for adolescents and modern people because they contribute more extra time using the internet and are more expected to get attached and evolve online-based relations.

2.1. Drawbacks of Sexting

As sexting’s prevalence rises, related obstacles continue to substantiate themselves. It is essential that anybody considering the distribution of specific images with different people is informed of the perils linked with sexting. Some of the possible perils correlated with sexting are:

2.1.1. Screen capturing

When exporting pictures or messages of an intimate nature, it is necessary to memorise that the receiver could comfortably screenshot those pictures and messages. After that, it can be shared anywhere at any time, on any platform without consent.

¹ Daniel Bennett, ‘What Is Cyber Grooming and How to Protect Children’ (*Tech Acute*, 23 March 2020) <<https://techacute.com/what-is-cyber-grooming/>> accessed 4 August 2021

² Haider M. al-Khateeb & Gregory Epiphaniou, ‘How technology can Mitigate and Counteract Cyberstalking and Online Grooming’ (2016) *Computer Fraud and Security* 14

2.1.2. Sextortion

Sextortion³ is a sort of intimate extortion where someone obtains passage to erotic photographs or messages and frightens to distribute them publicly unless the victim does additional sexual performances or performs money transfers.

2.1.3. Unanticipated sexual encounters

If a juvenile gets into sexting, they may feel constrained or favoured to have sexual connections with people before they are bodily or intellectually ready. This could lead to sexual exploitation⁴, educational difficulties, adolescent pregnancy or more detrimental.

2.2. Operation Blackface: A Conspicuous Initiative by the Cyber Wing of Maharashtra Police

Recently, the cyber-crime prevention wing of the Maharashtra⁵ police department has acquired software from Interpol to hunt down suspects of child obscenity and associated crimes. The mentioned software can identify nakedness accompanying the age of the person in the media through facial composition and other features. A special unit has been formed by the cyber unit which is known by the name of “Trace”.

Basically, the whole operation has been framed with a goal to defend the young children and to restrict futuristic cybercrimes. During the process, the assigned unit recognises areas from where child obscenity correlated content has been transferred in the last few months. It is an action to restrain the increasing cases of child indecency. The assigned unit informed that a lot of wrongdoers are using substitute servers or Virtual Private Network to bypass Government limitations to obtain such content.

3. Safeguarding Unwanted Communication

Computerized exposure of undesired communication has very newly been included within the domain of instrument learning, nevertheless, there has already been an adequate level of progress despite the technological hurdles. The character of the moderation procedure in position, detection is indispensable in

³ Roberts K, ‘The Impact of Media and Digital Technology on Children and Adolescents’ (*The Royal Australian & New Zealand College of Psychiatrists*, May 2018) <<https://www.ranzcp.org/news-policy/policy-and-advocacy/position-statements/media-digital-technology-impact-on-children>> accessed 4 August 2021

⁴ Soumitra Bose, ‘Paedophiles ‘cyber grooming’ children for Pornography’ (*The Times of India* 28 May 2020) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/nagpur/paedophiles-cyber-grooming-children-for-pornography/articleshow/76049729.cms#:~:text=Nagpur%3A%20Maharashtra%20cyber%20intelligence%20and,to%20tackle%20such%20child%20pornography>> accessed 4 August 2021

⁵ Wonk Team, ‘Operation Blackface: New Software to help track Child Porno Suspects’ (*The Wonk*, 9 December 2020) <<https://thewonk.in/operation-blackface-new-software-to-help-track-child-porno-suspects/>> accessed 4 August 2021

the battle against virtual predators. It is needed to allow additional operations to separate the offence, hinder communication or quarantine content to help the possible digital criminological examination⁶. Furthermore, without the assistance of artificial intelligence and computer learning to separate virtual messages, apprehension could sink in many situations, as before-mentioned, a stable composite strategy could very well be the solution to the enigma. It is very crucial to have an effective tool to further shield the communication, our critical conversations and which can separate out or repudiate undesired signals and communications.

4. Indications of Grooming

Each circumstance is distinct⁷. Virtual groomers are remarkably skilled at misleading regarding who they are, this suggests it can be challenging to know if someone is an online companion. In case the wrongdoer insists on you to share sexual images or to perform something sexual, they will definitely ask for these points:

- 1) The offender will convey many messages to the targeted person.
- 2) They may message on various platforms, for illustration through Facebook or any other messaging application.
- 3) The offender will definitely ask to keep the conversations secret.
- 4) To obtain more information pertaining to the victim the offender will dig up more, maybe use the method of stalking.
- 5) The wrongdoer may ask the victim not to tell anyone regarding their chat and to keep it confidential.
- 6) After some time, the offender will ask for more sensitive information.
- 7) Soon after that, they will try to blackmail the victim in all possible ways. they could warn to upload the images virtually or expose them to people you know if you don't transfer them more.
- 8) After getting the emotional entrance into the mind of the victim, the wrongdoer will send obscene messages at regular intervals, they will also try to seduce the victim to get closer to the targeted person.

⁶ Juan M. Machimbarrena *et. al.*, 'Internet Risks: An Overview of Victimization in Cyberbullying, Cyber Dating Abuse, Sexting, Online Grooming and Problematic Internet Use' (2018) 5(11) International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 2471

⁷ Shuchi Nagpal, 'Cyber Grooming: 3 scary Secrets' (*Tech Law Blog*, 21 July 2020) <<https://www.asianlaws.org/blog/cyber-grooming-3-scary-secrets/>> accessed 4 August 2021

5. Indian Regulations Related to Child Grooming

There has been a huge hike⁸ in the number of cases during the lockdown. In most maximum cases, the sufferer already knows the offender. With the expansion in the number of child exploitation cases, there has been a surge in child obscenity too, we do have numerous provisions dealing with this kind of heinous crimes which are:

Section 11(4) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act: A person is said to perpetrate sexual harassment upon a minor when such person with sexual purpose, frequently or invariably follows or watches or reaches a minor either undeviating or through technology, digital or any other means.

Section 11(6) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act: Provides that a person who tempts a child for obscene desires or enjoyment, with intimate intent is said to perform sexual harassment upon a minor.

Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code: Deals with sale of obscene books in India.

Section 293 of the Indian Penal Code: Any person who sells obscene objects to a young person whose age is below twenty.

Section 67B(c) of the Information Technology Act: Executes the allurements of teenagers in a virtual connection with the intention of publishing or transmitting material portraying children in the sexually specific act in computerised form.

6. Suggestions

6.1. Intended for Government

There is an unquestionable need to empower Indian regulations to shield children from online grooming. The nature of the provisions has to be more stringent and accurate. The government can work with all the applications and can draft suitable and convincing policies which can tackle cyber grooming and would be extremely helpful for the upcoming generations. Further, authorities can prepare a list of all the offenders who can be enduringly banned from using various websites. The provisions of information technology are

⁸ Devika Agarwal, 'Child grooming: India must take measures to protect children from Online Sexual Abuse' (*Firstpost*, 11 May 2017) <<https://www.firstpost.com/india/child-grooming-india-must-take-measures-to-protect-children-from-online-sexual-abuse-3438528.html>> accessed 4 August 2021

extremely vague due to the risk of subjective analysis of statutory provisions and the inadequacy of any lawful duty on intermediaries to defend children from online menaces. Therefore, it is very essential for the government to introduce a clear meaning of the word “Cyber Grooming” with all suitable punishments for this particular offence which will further help to avoid any incertitude in the definition of the term.

6.2. Intended for Parents

It is remarkably necessary to watch the children and the websites which they are using at regular intervals in order to prevent futuristic crimes and which will also help the parents to keep a record of their children. There should be a constant discussion with the children regarding the pros and cons of the internet and electronic media and devices. A different approach to counter virtual predators and cyber grooming is to control the websites the kids can use. Establishing boundaries and hindering vulnerable websites can go an extended way toward preserving your child.

7. Conclusion

In the current scenario, identifying such highly advanced cybercrimes with the help of conventional tools has become more difficult. It is high time to learn sophisticated skills and machine learning to tackle all kinds of virtual attacks. Furthermore, more R&D work can be carried out in the same field which would help to generate more restraint techniques for future attacks and learnings. The balance has to be maintained from both sides, including the government and parents in order to prevent the children from such kind of online attacks. This write-up has described all the recent techniques, provisions, suggestions which could be useful to block various risk.