

Online Crimes against Women and Children in Cyber Space – A Research Report

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Abstract:

The advancement of technology has not only redefined the human life but it also has redefined cybercrimes. The rapid growth of internet users, speedy spread of mobile information and the use of social media has led to the emergence of cyber violence against women and children of all age groups which is impacting their security, dignity and psychological and social well-being as a whole. The digital space has a constructive reality in which the criminals commit crimes in a more complicated and complex way. Cyber violence against women and children is on a rise in all disciplines and the lack of awareness leads to the unstoppable commission of these crimes. The purpose of the paper is to understand and highlight the common cybercrimes experienced by individuals and to know about their opinions, knowledge and facts on the on-going cybercrimes against women and children and the level of awareness among the individuals. The paper discusses the common types of cybercrimes against women and children which are namely cyber stalking, cyber pornography, morphing, sending obscene messages, blackmailing or threatening, bullying and trafficking. It also highlights the major reasons for the growth of cyber violence, how it is impacting their social life. This paper analyses the cases and their judgements along with the cyber laws on this matter. This paper will also recommend the suggestions and solutions that are required to be taken up in order to curb cybercrime against women and children.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Cyber space, Women, Children, Information technology, Victim, Cyber laws, Security Awareness

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Introduction

India is stepping forward into the digital world with the use of technological powers and the internet. These tools promise an easier life and ease of comfort. The majority of the country's population is indulging in the usage of digital devices with their extensive attention on social media platforms like Facebook, Skype, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. (**Sankhwar and Arvind, 2018**). As the usage of these digital creations increases year over year, we are able to statistically see the pros and cons. As the infrastructure and quality of life gets automatically improved by these technologies but it challenges the security day by day, which directly puts an impact on children and women (**Aggarwal and Shruti, 2016**).

One such downside of these creations has increasingly affected the women and children users of these apps, adversely affecting their lives, and extending the increase of criminal activities in the form of cyber-crimes (**Hamsa, et al, 2018**). With more than 560 million web clients, India is the second biggest online market on the planet, positioned distinctly behind China. It was assessed that by 2023, there would be more than 650 million web clients in the nation. Regardless of the huge base of web clients, the web entrance rate in the nation remained at around 50 percent in 2020 (**Statista**). This implied around half of the 1.37 billion Indians approached the web that year.

There has been a steady increment in web availability contrasted with only five years prior when the web entrance rate was around 27 percent. In any case, web openness and use in the nation to a great extent changed dependent on factors like sexual orientation and financial partition (**Library of Congress**). It was evaluated that in 2019, there were 290 million web clients in the country, India contrasted with 337 million urban web clients (**Uma, 2017**). However, it merits referencing that the lion's share of Indian web clients was somewhere in the range of 20 and 29 years old, and a somewhat higher extent of these clients were from provincial parts (**UNODC**). Simultaneously, there were undeniably increasingly male web clients in the nation contrasted with female clients. What's more, this advanced sexual orientation whole just expanded further in the rustic hinterlands contrasted with urban metros. Facebook was the most well-known informal communication site in the nation. Actually, with around 280 million Facebook clients in the nation, India had the biggest Facebook client base on the planet starting in 2020. The two web-based social networking monsters, WhatsApp and Facebook had the most noteworthy number of clients in India contrasted with the world (**Statista**).

Simultaneously, India positioned second on the planet as far as the quantity of Instagram clients. What's more, despite the fact that these are distinctive online life stages, Facebook possesses both WhatsApp just as Instagram, making it the biggest partner in India's web-based social networking economy (**Statista**). Alongside monetary misfortunes, digital wrong doings in addition all way open wellbeing particularly for minor and defenceless areas of the general public through occurrences of digital harassment and abuse (**Pawar and Sakure, 2019**). In 2018 alone, India recorded more than 2,000 instances of digital wrongdoings identified with inappropriate behaviour and more than 700 instances of digital harassment against ladies and minors (**Statista**).

Maybe this high number of cases had prompted an expanded mindfulness about the issue of cyberbullying, and an enormous portion of Indians felt that the obligation regarding damaging conduct via web-based networking media lay with both the clients just as web-based life stages (**Singh, 2015**). Be that as it may, perhaps the greatest obstacle in checking digital violations has been the absence of mindfulness on digital cleanliness prompting basic advanced vulnerabilities. Most digital wrongdoing occurrences in India went unreported (**Pawar and Sakure, 2019**). Furthermore, in any event, when violations were accounted for by specialists, the framework and procedure to handle such cases were to a great extent wasteful. On the splendid side, in 2018 the Indian government propelled its National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal for residents to enlist their grumblings on the web (NCRB crime portal). Under this activity, digital cells in different urban areas the nation over have additionally been preparing police and government workers how to deal with computerized security episodes and increment open mindfulness simultaneously (**Sankhwar and Arvind, 2018**).

Cybercrime is classified as criminal activities carried out with the help of computers and the internet. It is misconduct against an individual, or a group of individuals, with the purpose of intentional harm (**Aggarwal and Shruti, 2016**). As victims of cyber-crime, women and children are increasingly exposed to harassment, abuse, sexual misconduct, and social ridicule. Unfortunately, the perpetrators of these specific crimes are able to hide behind a veil of anonymity (**Hamsa, et al, 2018**). As the technologies improve, many corporations are able to fight, or input a basic layer of protection, to help mitigate such crime, including language filters, and the ability to block such individuals; however, victims are still subject to further abuse as perpetrators feel that their actions will not be the reason for police intervention (**Singh, 2015**).

In many countries, police are unable to pursue cyber-criminals due to the lack of substantial evidence, witnesses, and also a clear motive. Victims also sometimes lack the path, or support, from companies to provide evidence of a cyber-crime due to lack of a police warrant. For the police, cyber-crimes usually do not fall on a high level of importance. It has been proven that cyber-criminals are able to access the web easily and share pictures and videos, sometimes edited, of their victims (Pawar and Sakure, 2019). The reach of their audience is extensive and sometimes untraceable. The ability to share with the means of social media, or through other web sources (including YouTube, email, messenger apps, etc.) extenuates the circumstances. Their actions help to grow and reach a bigger pool of clients, Including human traffickers, paedophiles, and other consumers of pornography. Therefore, this digital space must be protected for all, including females and children of all ages (Sankhwar and Arvind, 2018).

According to the consequences of a study on the effect of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on media use across India, it was seen that there was a spike in the utilization of VOIP talk applications in the main period of an across the nation lockdown (Statista). This settled in the next weeks with singular clients answering to have utilized talk applications for barely five hours between March 28 and April 3, 2020. In the examination, clients went through near four hours utilizing talk applications in the week going before the coronavirus lockdown (Statista).

Methodology

The entire research paper is organized in a defined and distributed manner. The present study is based on primary as well as secondary data & information (Dhankhar, 2012).

The online survey was conducted among different age groups in urban as well as the rural areas of different parts of the country. A total sample size of 500 respondents would be selected for the study purpose.

The important variables examined which includes a comparison of respondents in terms of social networking sites, cybercrimes, cause, awareness, online child abuse, promoting factor, prevention etc.

Results and Discussion

- **Age**

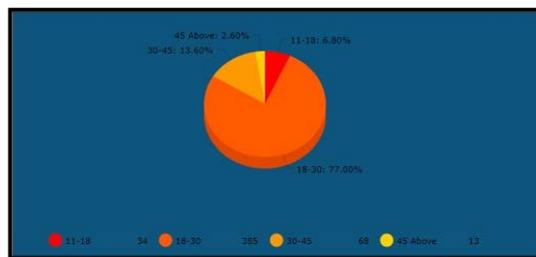


Figure No. 1: Age of Respondents

Out of 500 respondents, 78.2% or (391) persons belong from the age group between 18 to 30 years, 11.8% or (59) belong from the age group between 30 to 45 years, 6.6% or (33) are from the age group between 11 to 18years and 2.4% or (Statista) are above 45 years and the accuracy is 99%.

- **Gender**

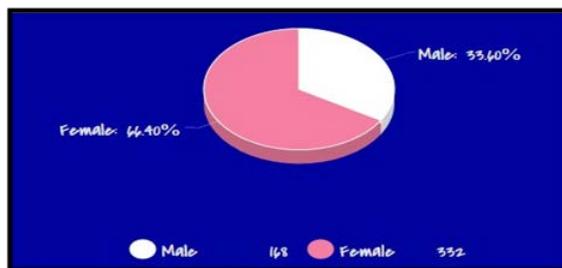


Figure No. 2: Gender of Respondents

The three categories have been defined based on gender which are as Male, Female and Transgender. The graphs show that we have the maximum number of females around 63.4% (girls and women) from different age groups whereas the minimum male user is around 35.8 %. It means that there are 332 females and 148 males from 500people.

- **Occupation**

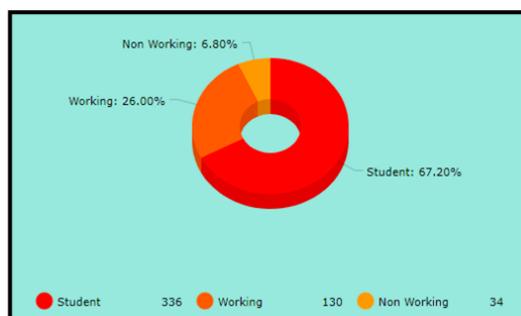


Figure No. 3: Occupation of Respondents

The three categories are as Student, Working and Non-Working. There are 67.20% means 336 are Students, 26% means 130 are working and 6.8% means 34 are from Non-Working backgrounds.

Are You Aware of On going Online Crimes against Women and Children?

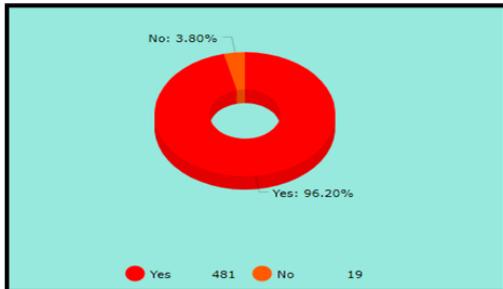


Figure No. 4: Awareness of Respondents regarding on going online crime against women and children

Out of 500 respondents, the majority have been aware of online crimes against women and children.

- **Digital Technology Has Changed The Living Standards But Is Also Dangerous Especially To Women And Children?**

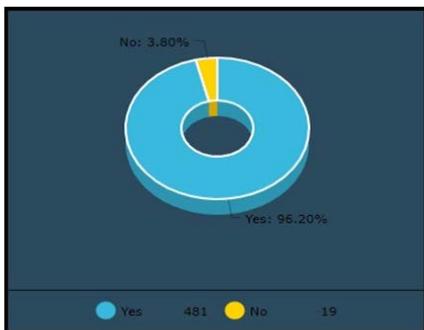


Figure No. 5: Response about the threats of Digital Technology

Out of 500 respondents, the majority have shown that Digital Technology Has Changed the Living Standards but Is Also Dangerous Especially to Women and Children. On the contrary, other respondents are not agreed with this.

- **Incidence Of Online Violation Against WOMEN AND CHILDREN Are Quite Increasing Day By Day.**

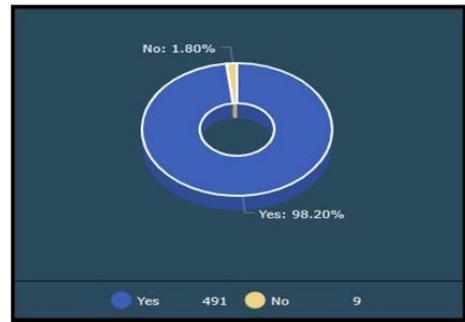


Figure No. 6: Response regarding increasing online violation day by day

Out of 500 respondents, 98.8% means (491 people) have found that Incidence of **Online Violation** against **WOMEN AND CHILDREN** Are Quite Increasing Day By Day and rest of 1.80 means (9 people) said that it is not increasing.

- **Do You Think CHILDREN Are More Prone To Obscene Content?**

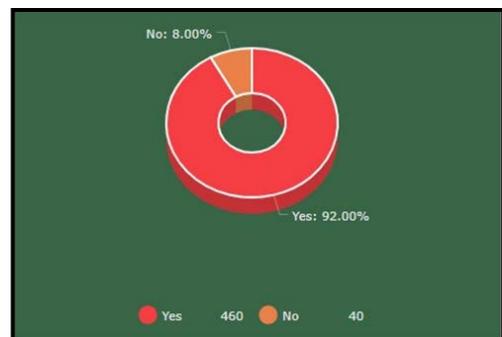


Figure No. 7: Response about the children of respondents

Out of 500 responses we received that 92% or 460 people think that children are more to obscene content whereas 8% or 40 people are not agreed with this.

- **Do You Know Any Child Or An Adult Who Has Been Abused?**

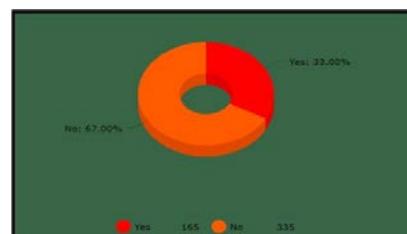


Figure No. 8: Response about an abused child or an adult

Out of 500 responses we got 33 % or 165 people who know those children or an adult who has been abused and 67% or 335 people who had never met anyone who suffered any kind of abuse.

• **Are You Aware Of Any Child Abuse Or Women Helpline Number?**

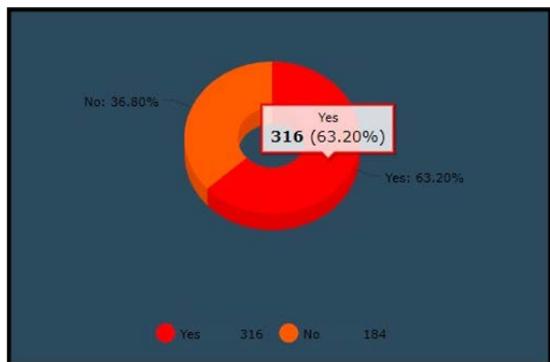


Figure No. 9: Response regarding the knowledge of Helpline numbers

Out of 500 people, 63.20% or 316 are aware of Child Abuse or Women Helpline Number and 36.80% or 184 people hardly know about it.

• **Identify Highest Usage Social Media Platform (you can select one and five options)**

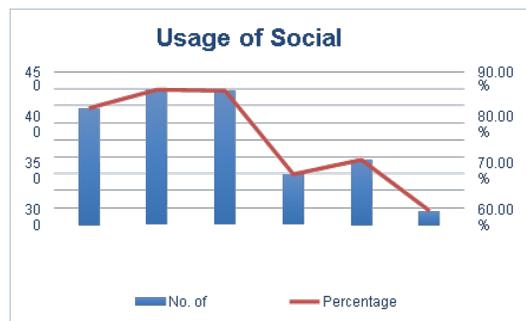


Figure No. 10: High usage social media platform

We referenced some famous web-based social media platforms to realize what of these platforms are utilized for the most part from 500 individuals we got a decent reaction which shows that Facebook is utilized by 68.80% or (344) individuals, Instagram is utilized by 79.60% or (398) clients, WhatsApp is utilized by 79% or (395), Twitter is trailed by 29.80% or (149), Snapchat is utilized by 38.40% or (192) while Hike is utilized by 8.20% methods 41 clients in nowadays

• **According To You, Which Of These CYBERCRIMES AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN Are Frequently Encountered? (You Can Choose More Than One?)**

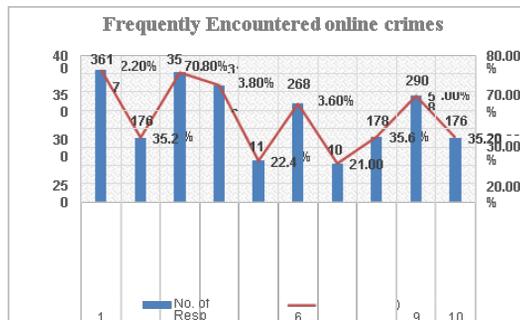


Figure No. 11: Response about frequently encountered crimes

We had listed some cyber crimes against women and children which are frequently encountered by users (especially women and children). Out of 500 users, the majority have shown cyber-stalking as the major crime which is then followed by photo morphing, pornography, cyber-bullying and trolling. Defamation is seen by 35.2% means 176 people, Email Spoofing is encountered by 22.4% means 112 people, Phishing is faced by 21% means 105 persons, Identity Theft is experienced by 35.6 means 178, and 35.2% means 176 persons encountered or seen Online Human Trafficking.

• **Have You Ever Received Sexual And Disturbing Message/Call From Unknown Email And Phone Number?**

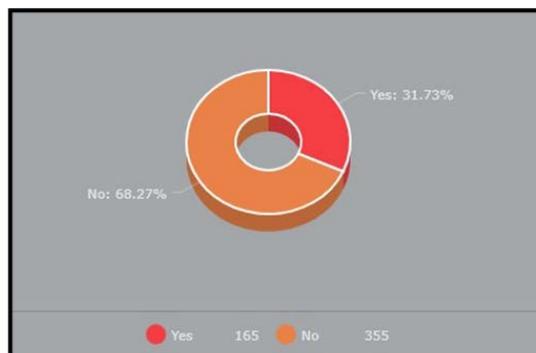


Figure No. 12: Response about abusive messages/calls

Out of 500 respondents, we received a response which indicates that 31.73% means 165 females experienced

Sexual and Disturbing Messages/Calls from Unknown Emails and Phone Numbers and 68.27% means 355 did not receive any such calls.

- **Do You Think These Crimes Affect the Mental and Social Health Of The Victim**

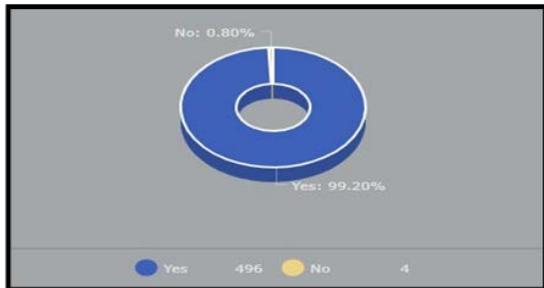


Figure No. 13: Response regarding mental and social health

The majority of the people i.e. 99.20% believed that the crimes have a psychological and social impact while few of them do not agree with the same.

- **Do You Believe Talking To Children About Sexual Abuse Can Harm Or Spoil Them?**

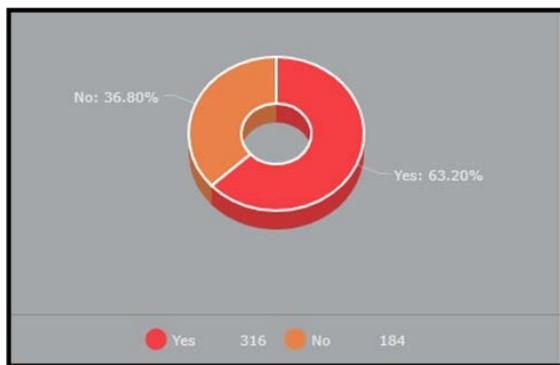


Figure No. 14: Response about talking to children regarding sexual abuse

Out of 500, 63.20% means 316 people told Yes, that Talking To Children About Sexual Abuse Can Harm Or Spoil Them and 36.80% means 184 people said that No, means they are agreed that people should talk about this issue.

- **Do You Think These Cyber-Crimes Remain Unreported Because**

Parents/Guardians Do Not Want To Involve Police In Such Matters?

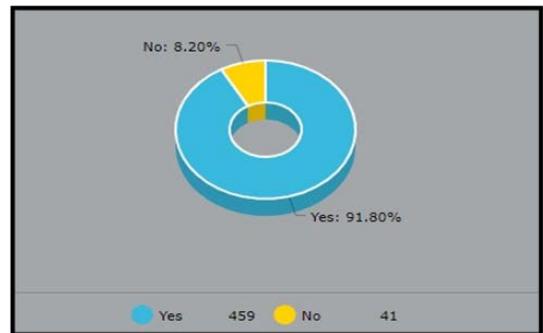


Figure No. 15: Response about unreported crime due to parents thinking

Out of 500 responses, 91.80% or 459 people said that these cyber-crimes remain unreported because parents/guardians do not want to involve the police in such matters and 8.20% or 41 people said No, they are not agreed with the above statement.

- **If Proper Education Regarding CYBERSPACE is provided the Cyber Crime rate will not Increase?**

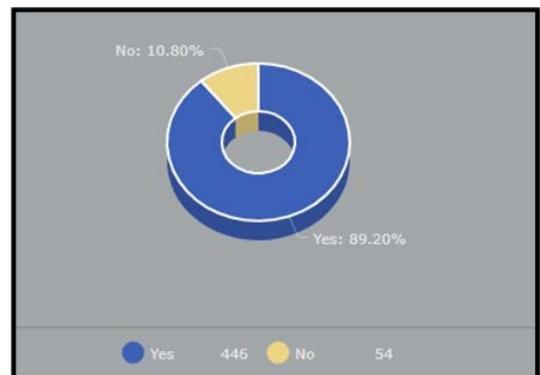


Figure No. 16: Response about proper education

Out of 500 people, 89.20% or 446 people found it correct that if proper education regarding cyberspace is provided the cybercrime rate will not increase and 10.80% or 54 people found that it would not help to decrease the Cybercrime rate.

- **Are You Aware Of Any Child Abuse Law Such As POCSO ACT (Protection Of Children From Sexual Offences Act) Introduced By Government Of India In2012?**

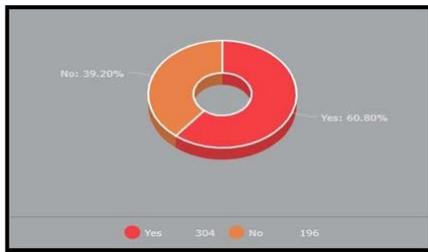


Figure No. 17: Response about awareness of child act

Out of 500 responses, 60.80% or 304 people are Aware of Any Child Abuse Law Such As the POCSO Act (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act) Introduced by the Government Of India In 2012 and the remaining 39.20% or 196 said No, which means they are not aware about any such laws.

• If You Come across Cyber Crime in Your Life. How Would You Respond to it?

- 1. Inform Your Parents 2. Inform the Police 3. React To It on Your Own 4. Ignore it.

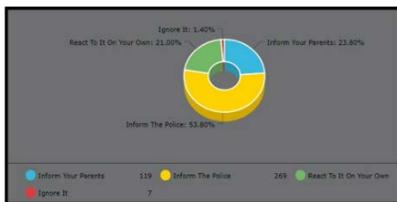


Fig 18: Response about the way of responses against crime

Out of 500 audiences, 23.80% people said they will inform their parents, 53.80% people said that they will inform to police, 21% people said that they will deal with it in their own way and the remaining 1.40% people said that they ignore such incidents.

2. Have You Ever Lodge FIR Against Any Cyber Crime?

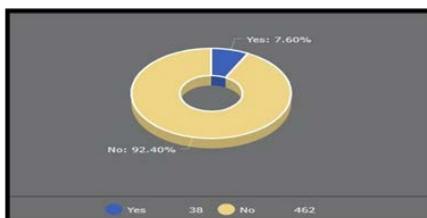


Figure No. 19: Response regarding FIR

Out of 500 people, 92.40% or 462 people have not to lodge FIR against any Cybercrime whereas 7.60% or 38 people who said Yes, that they reported FIR against such crimes.

• Have You Ever Read Information Technology Act 2000 (IT Act 2000)?

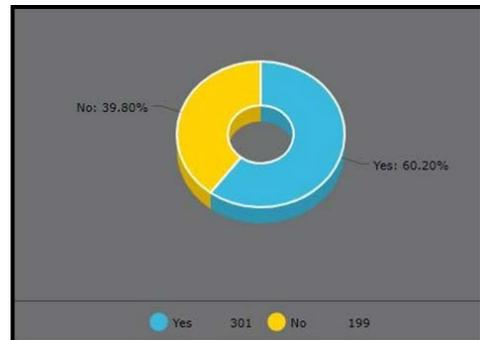


Figure No. 20: Response about awareness of IT Act

Out of 500 responses, we got to know that 60.20% or 301 people know about the Information Technology Act 2000 (IT Act 2000) and 39.80% or 199 people are not aware of the IT Act.

• Due To This pandemic Situation Of COVID-19 Cyber Crimes Against Women And Children Are Increasing As They Are Likely To Spend More Time On Social Networking Sites?

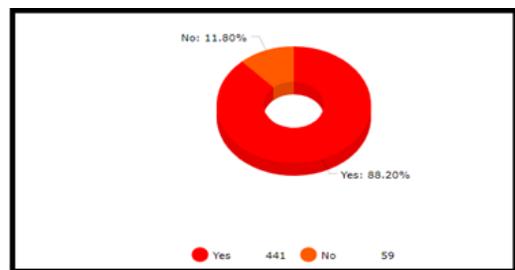


Figure No. 21: Responses against increased crimes during lockdown

Out of 500 people, we found that 88.20% or 441 agreed that Due To This pandemic Situation Of COVID-19 Cyber Crimes Against Women And Children Are Increasing As They Are Likely To Spend More Time On Social Networking Sites whereas 11.80% or 59 people are not Agreed from this statement.

Key Findings

- Online maltreatment is a difficult issue in India, influencing the greater part of review respondents, yet women and different targets need backing and comprehension to react adequately.
- As a report of our survey, frequently used social media platforms are Instagram and WhatsApp.
- As per our survey report, only 63.20% of people are aware about any child abuse or women helpline number.
- The frequently encountered cybercrimes faced by people are cyber-stalking and photo morphing listed by our survey report.
- Due to this world spread epidemic, people are forced to stay home and they are more socially active than ever, hence women and children are more prone to encounter cybercrimes.
- Most people are not aware of the policy guidelines before and even after using different social media sites or platforms.
- A greater part of individuals likes to take part in virtual mingling and don't know about spam or phishing messages and so on. Numerous individuals are ignorant of fundamental digital morals.
- Most of the social networking sites are used for harassment of women and children and they are not aware of any cyber security criteria.
- Less number peoples know about cyber laws and a proper channel to report such offences.
- Peoples are not much aware or educated about their own securities in the digital world.
- Instrument to report maltreatment via web-based networking media stages misses the mark. Casualties are bound to square maltreatment than to report it, yet blocking is ineffectual against sorted out, continued crusades utilizing numerous records.

Conclusion

In the course of the most recent three decades, Computer innovation has become a totally universal segment of current life. The expanding reliance on innovation to help and deal with our lives has made unmatched open doors for wrongdoing and abuse. The cyber-world gives a lot of opportunities to criminals to hurt or threaten innocent people. Indian women are not yet active to report digital wrongdoing. The main problem of cybercrime depends on the modus operandi or motive of cyber-criminal. Cyber-space is

a transit space for many people, including offenders. While people do not live in cyber-space, they come and go to any other place. This nature provides the offenders with the chance to escape after the commission of cybercrime. Cybercrimes against women and children are increasing day by day as they are easily targeted and victimized.

The worldwide spread of COVID 19 has put a full stop on the regular lifestyle of the human being. Everyone is forced to stay at home. Due to excessive ideal time, people are more active on different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and dating sites like tinder, OkCupid etc. since people are not going out and social media is the only way to connect with people, people are more dependent and getting more exposed with such social media websites. Excessive use of the internet has caused a major change in the lifestyle and mindset of people. People are easily getting indulged into so many cybercrimes knowingly and unknowingly and there is an apparent increase in such abuses like cyber-stalking, photo morphing etc. and lots of cases are being reported.

Based on our survey report, the majority of people agreed that children are more prone to obscene content. There are many frequently encountered cyber-crimes against women and children such as child pornography, identity theft, photo morphing, cyber-bullying etc. It is also shown in the result that these types of crimes affect the mental and social health of the victim. On the other hand, people also think that talking to children about sexual abuse can harm or spoil them. These cyber-crimes remain unreported because parents do not want to involve the police in such matters.

People should refrain themselves from talking to strangers on the internet and pass out their personal information's and also keep their account privacy secured with security features like 2-factor authentication and end to end encryption etc. People should be more vocal about such crimes and our government should also educate and make them aware about online threats, preventions from such threats and introduce them with a proper channel for reporting such crimes.

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