Online Behaviour and Degree of Awareness as to Cyber Crimes among College Students: A Study

[1] Trishna Gurung, Research Scholar, Department of Law, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India.

[2] Dr. Naveen Kumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Law, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya, India

Abstract

In the technological age, the advent of the Internet has proved to be the greatest asset to human civilization in many regards. The Internet has played a pivotal role from the most remarkable innovations to basic everyday activities as people can communicate easily sitting at any place, they can also surf anything on the Internet, etc. There are many positive impacts of the Internet, but the dangerous impact of the Internet also cannot be ignored. With the increasing numbers of internet users everywhere, the risks of falling prey to cyber crimes are also increasing. Internet users with little or no knowledge or awareness about cyber crimes' menace and online safety have become a huge challenge. Moreover, among the various populations, students seem more vulnerable to cyber threats on the Internet as they use it more frequently to search for study materials and to connect with different people through social media sites. In this light, this paper explores the trends in online behaviour among college students and their degree of awareness towards the threat of cyber crimes.

Keywords: Internet, cyber crimes, online behaviour, awareness, college students.

I. Introduction

Today, the internet plays a significant role in the lives of the people. It has made easy for them to communicate with anyone through various social media sites, they can also upload or download pictures or videos, play games, search for information, etc. However, the using of Internet offers both advantages and disadvantages to the users. It is frequently described as a dark online realm populated by a variety of dissident computer hackers, organized criminals, radical political movements, and sellers of pornographic materials. A crime committed with specialized understanding of cyberspace is referred to as a cybercrime. Although "crimes directed at computer or a computer system" is a simple and straightforward definition of cybercrimes, such narrow and simplistic language is insufficient to convey the complexity of cybercrimes (Stephenson, 2000).Generally speaking, the phrase "information technology" refers to a wide range of practises and innovations connected to the use of computers and communications. Cyber laws are those that deal with automated control and communication systems.

Nevertheless, among the various population of the people, the impact of Internet is more significant in the lives of the young people. As they are more engaged in the online activities and spend more time in chatting with friends, playing different online games, etc., which make them more vulnerable to the cyber crimes. In the absence of legal knowledge how to deal with such threats, they suffer mentally and physically. Therefore, the necessity of analyzing the current patterns in online behaviour among the people is obvious given how the

data economy is developing and how swiftly India is adopting the mobile environment and the mobile web. This paper involves the study of the online behaviour and degree of awareness of the students studying in college.

II. Survey design and procedure

Objectives:

1. To examine the usage of internet by the college going students of urban/ sub-urban backgrounds.

2. To assess the online activities of the college going students.

3. To analyze the degree of awareness of the students about the threat of cyber crimes.

Research Question:

1. What is the trend of online behaviour among college students?

2. What is the degree of awareness of the threat of Cyber crimes among the respondents?

Research Methodology

The methodology of this paper involves an empirical investigation into the trends of online behaviour and the degree of awareness of the threat of cyber crimes and online safety among young adolescents. The structured questionnaires had been prepared to collect the responses of different students studying in one of the general degree colleges in North-Bengal region. The students were randomly approached with a questionnaire on a particular day. Since the number of students available on that day was sixty-one, hence the sample size for the purpose of this study stands at sixty-one (61) respondents.

Variables investigated

- Independent variables:

    1. Age

    2. Gender

    3. Education Qualification

- Dependent variables

    1. Online Activity

    2. Internet Usage

3. Use of Social Networking Sites

4. Cyber Security awareness

5. Cyber threats awareness

6. Legal awareness as to Cyber Crimes

Research Tools

For the purpose of this study, the research tool that has been used is the structured questionnaire constructed by the author.

Questionnaire

A questionnaire method was used to collect data from the respondents. The said method was used for reasons mentioned below:

i. the questionnaire can help collect information precisely and shortly.

ii. the respondents can answer freely and without inhibitions.

In this study, close-ended and multiple-choice questions were included in the questionnaire.

III. Results and Interpretation:

There was a total of Sixty-one (61) respondents who answered the questions in the questionnaires and submitted their responses. The results of the study are displayed (either in the form of numbers or percentages) and interpreted below:

1. Demographic Characteristics

Gender	Nos.	%
Male	25	41%
Female	36	59%
No. of Respondents	61	

Table 1: Number of Male and Female Respondents

Age	Nos.	%
18 – 19 years	14	23%
20 – 21 years	24	39.3%
22 – 23 years	18	29.5%
Above 23 years	5	8.2%

Table 2: Age distribution of the Respondents

Educational Qualification	Nos.	%
UG – I	3	5.6%
UG - II	21	34.4%
UG - III	36	59%
PG	1	1%

Table 3: Educational Qualification of the Respondents

Table1 shows that there were total 61 respondents. 25 males (41%) and 36 females (59%) were among the respondents.

Table 2 shows that 14 respondents belonged to the age group of 18- 19 years old (23%), 24 respondents belonged to the age group of 20-21 years old (39.3%), 18 respondents belonged to the age group of 22-23 years old (29.5%) and 5 respondents belonged to above 23 years (8.2%).

Table 3 shows that as per the educational qualification, 3 of them were 1st year undergraduate students (5.6%), 21 of them were 2nd year undergraduate students (34.4%), 36 of them were in 3rd year of under graduation (59%) and 1 of them was a postgraduate student (1%).
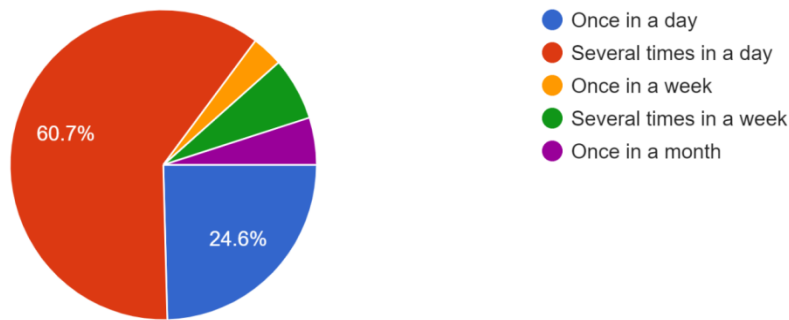
2. Online Activity

Activity	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Chatting/ videocalling with friends/ family/ relatives]	17	29	13	2
Check mails and information from the college	19	22	18	2
Online Shopping	5	29	21	6
Online banking/fee payments]	13	14	14	20
Social Networking (Facebook/ Instagram/ others)	22	22	15	2
Downloading music/ songs/ movies/ videos	16	23	16	6
Sharing/uploading files	11	28	14	8
Playing online games	17	10	14	20
Browsing websites	13	24	15	9
Post comments online (Youtube/ forums/ others)	8	20	20	13
Search for study and project materials	29	19	10	3

Table 4: Online Activities of the Respondents

As per the table above, the online activities of the 61 respondents showed the varied frequency of such activities. Based on the responses, it was observed that the most frequently undertaken online activity was searching for study and project materials with 29 respondents. The next frequently undertaken online activity was using social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram with 22 responses. The least undertaken online activities were online banking/ fee payment and playing online games,with the most "Never" responses (20 respondents each) in both categories/ activities.
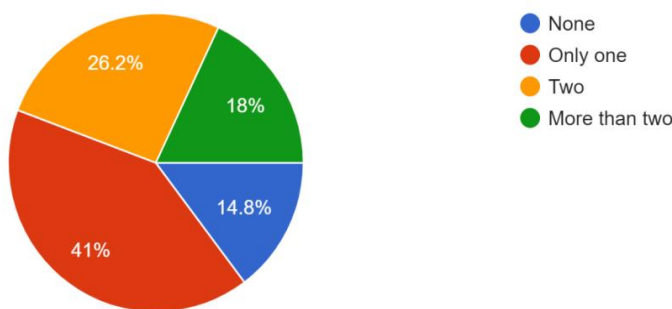
3. Internet Usage

Chart 1: Time of the usage of Internet

The trend in internet usage among the respondents in the chart 1 shows that 60.7% of the students used the Internet several times a day, while 24% of the students used the Internet at least once a day. Hence, it can be said that with the ever-growing numbers of smartphone users and cheaper and user-friendly Internet, the percentage of internet usage showed an upward graph.

4. Use of Social Networking Sites

Chart 2: Number of accounts on Social Networking Sites

In Chart 2, most of the respondents (41%) had only one account on any social networking site, 26.2% of respondents had two accounts, while 18% even had more than two accounts. To a bit of surprise, 14.8% of the respondents did not have a social networking site account.

5. Cyber Security Awareness

Change of password/s for the following;	Never	Once a year	Once in 6 months	Once a month	Only when required due to some problems with my account (s)
ATM	38	7	2	2	12
Social Networking Sites (e.g.,Facebook/ Instagram)	26	11	2	5	17
Mail ID	29	11	3	6	12
Other online accounts	30	11	2	6	12

Table 5: Cyber Security Awareness of the Respondents in changing passwords on different online accounts.

Table No. 5 shows that most respondents did not change the passwords of their ATMs, Social Networking sites, Mail IDs or other online accounts as a general practice which implied a lack and absence of cyber security awareness. Only a few students knew the importance of changing passwords on their online sites regarding cyber security.
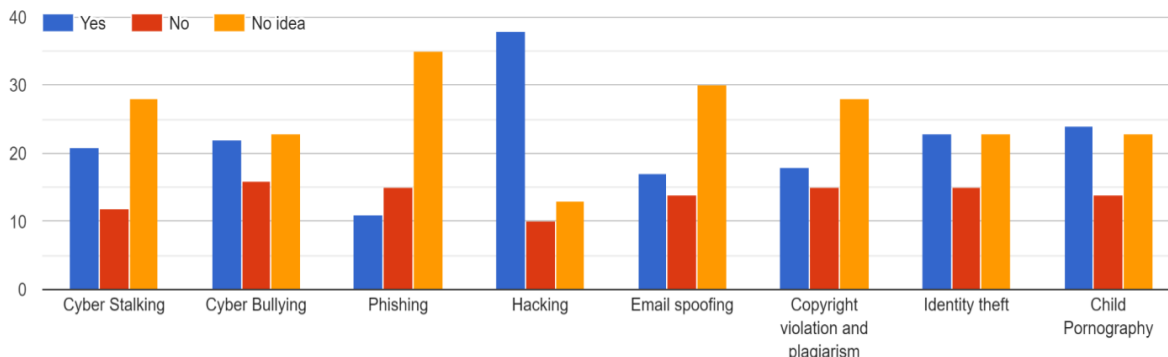
6. Cyber Threats Awareness

i. Awareness as to the different kinds of cyber crimes among the students.

Kinds of Cyber crimes	Yes	No	No Idea
Cyber Stalking	21	12	28
Cyber Bullying	22	16	23
Phishing	11	15	35
Hacking	38	10	13
Email Spoofing	17	14	30
Copyright Violation and plagiarism	18	15	28
Identity Theft	23	15	23
Child Pornography	24	14	23

Table 6: Responses regarding awareness of various Cyber Crimes.

The data collected above shows that the most known cyber threat among the respondents was hacking while the least known cyber threat was phishing. Also, on comparative analysis of the above data, most respondents had less or no idea about the various cyber threats lurking in society. Thus, it clearly showed a lower level of awareness among the respondents concerning the different kinds of cyber crimes.

Chart 3: Respondents' responses regarding awareness of various Cyber Crimes.

The chart also shows that respondents were more aware of hacking then follows child pornography, identity theft, cyber bullying, and cyber stalking. But less aware about the Copyright Violation and plagiarism, email spoofing, phishing. This is of real concern that respondents were young and they were not aware of the cyber crimes and its legal impact.

ii. Attitude towards reporting cyber crimes

Hypothetical Statements	Yes	No	Do not want to tell
Ofcourse, I will report it if I see such a crime	51	6	4
I will report only when I become a victim of a cyber crime	24	30	7
No, because I don't feel reporting is necessary in such cases	7	47	7
I will not report because my name would come in the media	17	34	10
I will not report because my family and I would be harassed by the police and also by other people	18	36	7
I will not report itbecause I do not have faith in the police	17	35	9
I will not report it because my friends will make fun of me	7	47	7

Table 7: Respondents' attitude in reporting the cyber crimes.

A positive attitude was seen among most respondents (51 Nos.) when asked whether they would report if they saw a cyber crime taking place or not. However, when the respondents faced situations that were more specific and with a personal approach, the responses submitted varied, showing a decreased positive attitude towards reporting the same with some respondents.

7. Legal Awareness

Acts	Yes	No
Information Technology Act, 2000	18	43
Indian Penal Code, 1860	17	44

Table 8: Respondents' responses regarding the legal awareness.

Table 8 shows that when the question came down to the degree of legal awareness among the respondents, the majority were unaware of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which is the sole cyber law in India (43). They were also unaware of the various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, mainly used to book online crimes in the absence of the Information Technology Act of 2000 (44). Only few knew about these two statutes that could be used to deal with the cyber crimes.

IV. Conclusion

Cyber crime is a threat to the society irrespective of age and education. Number of young internet users is increasing and therefore, there is ample chance that it will impact more in their lives. And, this paper is to analyze and explore the awareness with aspect to cyber crimes among students studying in the college. Most of the respondents are active and regular internet users having access to various platforms online and the data collected showed the varied trends in their online activities. The facts that majority of the respondents had lower level of cyber security awareness when it came to their various online activities and platforms along with the lower level of awareness with regards to the different kinds of cyber threats, imply the importance and relevance of the study among the students. Another important factor to be noted was that the level of legal awareness among the respondents was very low. Although some respondents showed fear and lack of confidence in police and media and public opinion, the brighter side of the study was that majority of respondents showed positive attitude towards reporting cyber crime.

In light of this study, it is evident that there is need for more general and legal awareness on this topic. The awareness programmes, workshops, advertisements, etc. need to be communicated through various mediums. The government, teachers, parents, advocates and various NGO'S must take initiative to spread awareness about cyber security and cyber crimes. The practice of dissemination and acquiring of relevant and positive information with regards to safe and healthy online behaviour should be encouraged at all levels.

References

Anisha. (2017). *Awareness and strategy to prevent Cybercrimes: An Indian perspective*. INDIAN JOURNAL OF APPLIED RESEARCH. pp. 144-116.

Bele, JulijaLapuh., Dime, Maja., Rozman, David., Jemec, Andreja Sladoje. (2014). *Raising Awareness of Cybercrime- The Use of Education as a Means of Prevention and Protection.* 10th International Conference Mobile Learning. pp. 281-284.

Dr. Kumar, K. K., Basha, M., Nividitha, S., (2016). A Survey of Cyber Crimes, *International Journal of Engineering Research & Technology, (ICACC) 4(34)*.

Fatima, T. (2016). *Cyber Crimes*. Lucknow: Eastern Book Company.

Government of India www.legislative, (1860). *The Indian Penal Code.* Retrieved August 18, 2018, from.gov.in: https://legislative.gov.in/sites/default/files/A1860-45.pdf

Government of India, Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2. (2008, February 5). M*inistry of of Electronics & Information Technology,New Delhi*. Retrieved October 15, 2018, from meity.gov.in: https://www.meity.gov.in/writereaddata/files/itact2000/it_amendment_act2008.pdf

Halder, D., Jaishankar, K. (2013). *Use and Misuse of Internet by Semi-Urban and Rural Youth in India A Baseline Survey Report.* Centre for Cyber Victim Counselling (CCVC).

Mali, Prashant., Sodhi, J.S., Singh, Triveni., Bansal, Sanjeev. (2018). *Analysing the Awareness of Cyber Crime and Designing relevant framework with respect to the Cyber Warfare: An Empirical Study.* International Journal of Mechanical Engineering and Technology (IJMET). pp. 110–124.

Shah, Jigar. (2016). A Study of Awareness About Cyber Laws for Indian Youth. International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development. pp. 10-16.

Stephenson, P. (2000). *Investigating Computer-related Crime.* Washington DC: CRC Press.