

A Study on Awareness about Cyber Crime & Cyber Laws

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Today technology has advanced a lot and has taken over our lives. Instagram, Facebook WhatsApp etc today all are familiar with especially youth. Mobiles, smartphones, tablets, and computers have become so much part of us that we cannot function without them. Internet in India is growing at a rapid pace and it is found everywhere in schools, offices, industry, banks, malls, shops etc. Internet has made our life much easier; it has helped us to cross barriers from local to reach out to every other parts of the world as anyone with connectivity can have access but with increase in usage of internet in addition to benefits, threat of cybercrimes has increased especially against women and children because the crimes through the digital devices are easier than the physical attack and as there is no need of physical presence of offender near to the victim. Anyone can digitally attack a person from anywhere in the world. Although usage of internet has increased drastically, but majority of users are still not aware of the seriousness of cybercrime and how much they are vulnerable. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), India reported 52974 cases in 2021 and Telangana reported highest number of cases with 10303 cases followed by UP, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam and among cities Bengaluru ranked highest number of cases in 2021 with 6423 cases followed by Hyderabad and Mumbai. As per the NCRB, in 2021 cyber Crime against women stood at 10730 and Karnataka recorded highest number of cybercrimes against women with 2243 cases and most of these cases were related to cyber pornography, publishing obscene materials, with motive of fraud, sexual exploitation, extortion, cause disrepute and personal revenge (Sreedev Krishnakumar 2022). And Kerala in South India recorded least number of cases with 626 reported cases in 2021(DH Web Desk Deccan Herald 2022).

There is no single definition defining cybercrime ,even IT Act 2000 has not defined the term cybercrime but generally it means all the acts done with criminal intentions or illegal acts in cyber space, it is also called as electronic crime, e-crime, computer related crime. Oxford dictionary has defined it as "Criminal activities carried out by means of computers or the Internet" **

"Cyber crime means any criminal or other offence that is facilitated by or involves the use of electronic communications or information systems, including any device or the Internet or any one or more of them"(Cybercrime.org.za)

Cyber crime is classified (Animesh Sarmahet.et.al 2017)into 1.**cyber crime against person**-where crime is committed against individuals like spamming, email spoofing, phishing etc *

2. cyber crime against property- crime against all property of an individual or organization e.g. vandalism of computer, trade mark and copy right infringement, transmission of harmful programs, unauthorized possession of computerized information etc*

3.cybercrime against Organization- crime committed against organization e.g. unauthorized deleting or change of data, DOS attack, salami attack, Trojan horse, software piracy etc.*

4.Cyber crime against society-forgery, Web jacking, pornography, cyber trafficking *

5. Cyber crime against government- is crime against government e.g. cyber terrorism etc.*

With increasing internet users and cybercrimes, need to address the issue was felt. In this regard cyber laws have been passed and IT Act 2000, IT Amendment Act 2008 and Indian Penal Code 1860 deals with issues related to cybercrimes and electronic commerce. IT Act 2000 consists of many sections like 65,66A,66 B,66C,66D,66E,66F,67,67A, ,67B,67C and 69(Nikunj Arora April 28, 2022) etc. for governing of cybercrimes and e-mail and digital signatures were also given legal validity under the act(Animesh Sarmah et.al 2017)

Literature Review

Anupreet Kaur Mokha(2017) in his study has made an attempt to study the awareness of respondents about cybercrime and cyber security and to examine the connection between education level and awareness about cybercrime and cyber security. The study concludes that with increased internet usage there is increase in types of cybercrimes but majority are only aware of few types of cybercrime like hacking, virus/worms and many are not aware of other types of cybercrimes like phishing, ,cyber stalking, defamation, identity theft and most of them were not aware of cyber cell and IT Act.

Adamu Abdullahi Gabra et.al((2020) in their study made an attempt to understand the knowledge of Nigerian University students about cyber security ,whether it is included in curriculum and need for awareness program on cyber security. The study reveals that students do not have awareness about cyber security and even university does not have programs on cyber security and students were found to be interested in learning about cyber security.

Poonam Punia, Sunita and Manju Phor(2019), in their study made an attempt to understand connection between cybercrime awareness and internet addiction and study revealed that there is difference in the cybercrime awareness among boys and girls as boys had increased awareness about cybercrimes and positive relationship between cybercrime awareness and internet addiction was observed and high internet addiction leads to high cybercrime awareness and vice-versa.

Saroj Mehta & Vikram Singh(2013)in their study has made an attempt to study about awareness about cyber laws in India on the basis of gender and Occupation and study revealed that male netizens had more awareness about Indian cyber laws in comparison to their female counterparts and employee users had more awareness of cyber laws in comparison to non-employee users .

Anisha(2017) is of the view that internet usage has increased and it has both advantage and disadvantage and increased incidence of cyber crime is a serious issue and with advancement of technology it is aggravating and process of cyber literacy should start from the grass root level and cyber laws should be flexible to incorporate relevant changes.

Jigar Shah(2016), in his study has made an attempt to study awareness of internet users about cybercrimes and measures to adopt to make users more aware of its severity. The author feels that there is necessary to educate users about cybercrimes and encouraging cross-flow of knowledge and information between all stake holders like media, cyber cells, ethical hackers and education sectors to reach the internet users in easiest and appropriate way

Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the internet usage pattern among the respondent.
2. To comprehend the awareness among respondents about various cybercrimes and also to know about cybercrimes experienced if any.
3. To study the respondent's awareness regarding cyber laws.

Methodology of the Study

The methodology used for the study was based on both primary and secondary sources of information. Descriptive research design was adopted by the researcher. The researcher selected 50 respondents and only female college students (studying in UG, PG, Diploma belonging to age group of 18-25) in Kannur district were included for the study. Non probability convenience sampling method was used in the study. The data was collected from female college students through questionnaires.

Findings of the Study

Profile of the Respondents

Respondents within 18 to 25 years, and only female college going students studying in UG, PG, Diploma in Kannur district were included for the study. Nearly 64% of the students in the study belonged to 18-22 years age category and 36% belonged to 23-25 years and 40% of them were undergraduate students, 34% were postgraduate students and 26% of the respondents were diploma students. Respondents were from rural areas (34 %), urban (32%) and from semi-urban (34%). In the study, 38% were staying in hostel, 20% were staying as paying guest, 18% were staying with family, 16% were staying independently, and 8% of the respondents were staying with relatives.

Internet Usage

Majority i.e.84% of the respondents were using smartphone, 8% of the respondents were using computer and 8% of the respondents were using tab and all the respondents had access to internet on their mobile. And it was found that 74% depend on data card while rest 26% depended on Wi-Fi for internet accessibility on phone.

With regard to daily usage, 78% of the respondents are spending above 8 hours on internet, 4% respondents are spending 5-7 hours on internet, 6% respondents are spending 3-4 hours on internet, 10% of the respondents are spending 1-2 hours on internet, 2% respondents are spending less than 1 hour on internet.

94% of the respondents are using internet daily, 4% of the respondents are using internet weekly, 2% of the respondents are using internet rarely.

42% of the respondents are using internet for entertainment purpose, 38% of the respondents are using internet for chatting with friends, 10% of the respondents are using internet for study purpose, 10% of the respondents are using internet for online games.

With regard to leisure time activity, 52% said they spend their leisure time with social media, 12% said they read books, 10% said they play outdoor games, 10% said they go for picnics during leisure time, 6% said they listen to music, another 6% said they meet friends and 4% said they like to engage in gardening.

With regard to money spent on internet, 46% of the respondents are spending on an average Rs 501-800 per month, 32% of the respondents are spending on an average Rs 301-500 per month, 12% of the respondents are spending on an average Rs 101-300 per month, 10% of the respondents are spending on an average Rs 801-1000 per month on internet usage.

78% of the respondents said they are not addicted to internet but 22% agreed that they are addicted to internet.

With regard to problem faced due to internet usage, 28% of the respondents felt it has affected their studies, 18% felt it has affected their sleeping pattern, 12% felt it has negatively affected their socialization skill, 8% feel it has led to wastage of money, 6% felt it leads to wastage of time, 18% felt internet usage has led to various problems like lack of sleep, problem with studies, wastage of time and money, lack of socialization skills but 10% feel it has not negatively impacted them and felt there are also some benefits of internet like ease of completing works, helps in contacting people at far of places etc.

Cyber Crime Awareness

All of the respondents (100%) were familiar with the term cybercrime.

With regard to awareness about cybercrime, 18% of the respondents said they came to know about it from college, 18% said they came to know it from journals and newspapers, 8% said they came to know about it from their parents, 8% said they came to know about it from their friends, 6% said they came to know about it from conferences and seminar and 42% said they came to know about cyber abuse from all of the above different sources that is from college, teachers, friends, parents, journals and conferences.

When asked whether they have heard about different types cybercrimes, all the respondents said they have heard about child pornography, cyber bullying, cyber stalking, online job fraud, internet hacking, trolls, virus, credit card fraud etc.

But only 84% said that they have heard about phishing, 70% said that they have heard about cyber terrorism, 84% said that they have heard about cyber grooming.

All the respondents agreed that certain activities like sharing offensive threatening message, sending naked pictures to others, posting others naked pictures without their permission, using pictures or videos to blackmail, hacking others account, sending harmful virus software to others is a cybercrime and only 30% felt online gaming is a cybercrime but 34% disagreed and said it is not a crime and 36% said they have no clarity on that.

Impact of Cybercrime -10% said cybercrime creates lots of stress and depression among victims, 10% said sometimes it can also lead to suicide, 10% said cybercrime can also lead to low self-esteem and low self confidence among victims, 16% said cybercrime can also lead to hyper tension and 54% of the

respondents said cybercrime can impact in multiple ways like it can lead to stress, depression, hyper tension and in extreme cases can also lead to suicide.

Reason for increasing cybercrime and abuse-16% said easy access to technology, 12% said lack of in-depth knowledge of using internet, 12% said lack of general awareness among public, 10% said unlimited internet access, 10% said lack of stringent action, 8% said declining values, 6% said non implementation of laws, 4% felt non reporting of abuse and 22% felt not one but multiple factors are responsible for increase in cybercrime.

Cybercrime Experienced

34% said that their password has been hacked by someone in the last one year.

when asked about they being victims of cybercrimes, 10% said they have been cyber bullied, 38% said they have been victim of cyber stalking, 12% said they had experienced online job fraud, 20% said their account had been hacked, and 22% said they had experienced credit card fraud/ ATM fraud, 22% said they had experienced virus attacks, 4% said they have been victim of cyber grooming but none of the respondents said they have not been victim of child pornography, phishing, trolls cyber terrorism.

Types of messages received by respondents during last one year-30% said they had received sexting types of messages in the last one year, 18% said they had received aggressive messages, 16% said they had received harassing/ threatening messages, 12% said they had received bullying types of messages, and 24% said they have received varied types of messages that is aggressive, bullying, harassing, sexting, threatening etc.

Reasons for non-reporting of cybercrime experienced -22% felt victims do not report cyber abuse experienced by them due to shame and fear, 18% felt victims do not report cyber abuse because of lack of awareness about whom to report, 8% felt victims do not report cyber abuse because of lack of awareness about forms and types of cyber abuse and 52% felt victims do not report because of varied reasons like shame and fear, lack of awareness about whom to report, lack of awareness about cybercrime and this encourages the offender.

When asked whom would they approach for help in case of cyber abuse-24% said they would approach their teachers for help, 24% said they would go to their parents for help, 24% said they would go to their friends/ siblings for help, 18% said they would approach police for help in case of cyber abuse and another 10% said they would lodge a complaint in online portal but none of the respondents had thoughts of ignoring cyber abuse nor quitting use of internet because of someone else's fault.

Cyber Law Awareness

All the respondents were aware that IT ACT 2000 has been implemented in India for prevention of cybercrimes.

60% of the respondents knew that Cybercrime investigation cell exist in Kannur, 14% said there is no such investigation cell in Kannur and 26% said they are not sure whether such cell is there or not.

48% knew that fraudulent usage of password, digital signature or other unique identification of another person is an offense under IT ACT 2000 but 52% were not aware of it.

50% of the respondents said they know about the procedure to file complaint against cybercrime.

48% respondents were of the opinion that cyber law has given legal validity to digital signature but 52% of the respondents disagreed with this.

Cyber Safety Measures Adopted

With regard to cyber safety measures adopted by the respondents-6% said that they have installed antivirus, 14% said they adopt two step verification as safety measures, 6% said they adopt firewall, 20% said they adopt password protection for cyber safety, 8% said they use different password for different sites, 10% said that they visit only trusted websites as a precautionary measure, 8% said they adopt frequent updation of password as a method of safety, 8% said they accept friendship request of only known persons and 20% said they adopt multiple methods like antivirus installation, two step verification, firewall, password protection, trusted websites, frequent updation of password, different password for different sites etc. as safety measures.

Conclusion

Although internet is used by majority but many are not aware of different type of cybercrimes. Cybercrimes causes lots of psychological and financial injuries to the individuals especially women and children who are very vulnerable. Raising the awareness about internet usage, cybercrimes, and cyber laws and encourage using cyber security measures would help in dealing with increasing cybercrime.

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