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Cyber Crime Against Women In India

Published in IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science

Volume 28, Issue 7, Series 7, July 2023



Editor
IOSR-JHSS

E-mail id : jhss@iosrmail.org

Web.: www.iosrjournals.org

IOSR-JHSS is peer reviewed refereed journal approved by UGC.

Cyber Crime Against Women In India

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Abstract

The internet has presented a significant challenge for females in terms of cyber security in the current era of digitization. The lack of computer and internet literacy among women further contributes to their vulnerability. Online abuse, instead of serving as a means of communication, has unfortunately become synonymous with violence and abuse against women and girls. Privacy infringement, illegal monitoring, cyber stalking, unauthorized data access, and retaliation are all becoming increasingly sophisticated within the IT industry. As Information and Communication Technology (ICT) continues to be widely used in society, a new form of crime, known as cybercrime, has emerged in the cyberspace. Cybercrime presents a unique challenge as it knows no geographical boundaries, and the perpetrators often remain unidentified. It has become a critical issue for all countries, including India, affecting various stakeholders ranging from governments to businesses and citizens. In recent years, cybercrime specially against women has been on the rise in India, in parallel with the increased use of ICT. Therefore, this article aims to analyze the state-wise cybercrime against women occurrences in India over between 2017 and 2020 years while also discussing important initiatives taken by the Government of India to address this issue.

Keywords: Cyber Crime, Cyber Space, Women's.

Date of Submission: 12-07-2023

Date of Acceptance: 22-07-2023

I. Introduction

The rapid growth of Internet and computer technology globally leads to the growth of new forms of transnational crimes (Reddy, G.T. 2022). India's rapid technological advancement has greatly benefited mankind, on the other hand illicit behaviour at the security of computer systems and the data they process through electronic activities defined as cybercrimes (Verma et.al. 2022). In India, the number of smartphone users is projected to reach 1 billion by 2026, according to a Deloitte report. Similarly, the number of internet users has increased from 563.31 million in 2019 to 829.30 million in 2021, as reported by TRAI. Factors such as unawareness and a lack of privacy regulations make women more vulnerable to these crimes. Cybercrime against women has become a prevalent issue in India, with one woman falling victim to such crimes every second. Online platforms have emerged as new battlegrounds where women's privacy, dignity, and security are constantly being challenged. The impact of cybercrimes against women is predominantly mental rather than physical, yet the focus of laws ensuring women's security tends to prioritize physical harm.

Cybercrimes against women often originate from fake profiles on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, leading to serious harm. Perpetrators take advantage of the trust women place in them, leading to the sharing of personal information and resulting in numerous cybercrimes. These ill-intentioned individuals engage in activities like blackmailing, threatening, bullying, and cheating through messenger messages and emails, driven by malicious intent such as illegal gain, revenge, insult to the modesty of women, extortion, sexual exploitation, defamation, inciting hate, control, and information theft. The lack of awareness about the complaint filing procedure allows perpetrators to continue their harassment, abuse, and blackmail. However, even today the Indian police tends to not take cybercrimes seriously. In such scenarios, the woman or the young girl who falls prey to cyber victimization should first contact a women assistance cell or NGO (such as All India Women's Conference, Sakshi, Navijyoti, Centre for cyber victims counselling) which will assist and guide them through the process, also this will make sure that police does not take any case lightly (Sharma, A & Singh, A., 2018).

II. Analysis of Cyber Crimes against Women in India

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, releases annual reports on cybercrime in India titled 'Crime in India'. To address the specific impact on women, the NCRB started collecting data on various categories of cybercrimes against women in its report

Crime in India-2017. These categories include cyber blackmailing/threatening, cyber pornography hosting/publishing obscene sexual materials, fake profiles, cyber stalking/cyber bullying of women, defamation/morphing, and other crimes against women. It's important to note that the latest available data is for the year 2020, which was released by the NCRB in January 2022, after a delay of more than one year. The delay in data release highlights the need for timely and accurate information to effectively address the rising challenge of cybercrime in the country. The data reveals a significant increase in cybercrimes over the past five years. In 2017, there were 21,796 reported cases, which rose to 27,248 cases in 2018, 44,735 cases in 2019, 50,035 cases in 2020, and 52,974 cases in 2021. The growth rate of cybercrimes has been substantial, with a year-on-year increase of 76.96% in 2017, 25.01% in 2018, 64.18% in 2019, 11.85% in 2020, and 5.87% in 2021.

Table 1: Cyber Crimes against Women in India (State/UTs wise)

State/UT	Cyber Pornography/ Hostile/ Publishing Obscene Sexual Materials		Cyber Stalking/ Cyber Bullying of women		Other Crime against women		Total Crimes against women		Percentage of Cyber Crime against women in Total Cyber Crime	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
Andhra Pradesh	1	21	48	145	110	181	173	375	18.58	19.75
Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	NA	3.33
Assam	76	211	12	1	198	675	379	1071	33.83	30.34
Bihar	4	3	2	11	30	27	36	47	8.31	3.11
Chhattisgarh	1	34	11	2	73	79	89	117	52.04	39.39
Goa	0	1	0	1	9	17	9	19	69.23	47.50
Gujarat	3	17	15	26	69	224	94	277	20.52	21.59
Haryana	6	64	27	19	36	121	79	222	15.67	33.84
Himachal Pradesh	6	31	1	7	9	7	30	52	53.57	53.06
Jharkhand	0	3	2	0	24	17	26	20	3.61	1.66
Karnataka	24	142	14	1	681	2715	729	2859	22.96	26.62
Kerala	10	113	8	14	96	113	126	246	39.37	57.75
MadhyaPradesh	21	52	25	28	145	184	192	274	39.18	39.20
Maharashtra	14	75	301	388	787	1142	1119	1632	31.04	29.69
Manipur	9	3	7	3	19	20	27	26	36.48	32.91
Meghalaya	2	7	0	0	3	30	6	39	15.38	27.46
Mizoram	0	1	0	0	3	0	4	1	40	7.69
Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	NA	25
Odisha	23	292	6	0	33	34	62	560	7.52	29
Punjab	3	22	7	14	41	55	61	110	34.65	29.10
Rajasthan	5	24	12	12	67	195	89	238	6.82	17.58
Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA	NA
Tamil Nadu	8	147	2	7	24	111	53	306	23.24	39.13
Telangana	24	11	27	100	130	504	196	649	16.21	12.92
Tripura	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	3	14.28	8.82
Uttar Pradesh	17	325	6	76	231	335	256	749	5.33	6.75
Uttarakhand	2	23	0	1	10	44	30	72	24.19	29.63
West Bengal	4	10	9	17	201	303	270	344	47.53	48.31
A&N Island	0	1	0	1	2	1	2	3	66.66	60
Chandigarh	2	1	5	1	0	8	5	10	15.62	58.82
D &N Haveli and Daman & Diu	0	0	5	0	0	3	1	3	100	100
Delhi	13	8	9	12	47	26	76	51	46.91	30.36
Jammu & Kashmir	2	10	1	0	8	9	13	25	20.63	20.83
Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA	0
Lakshadweep	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	NA	66.67
Poducherry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	NA	0
Total All India	271	1645	555	887	3087	7184	4242	10405	19.46	20.80

Source: National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.

Cybercrime against women has emerged as a critical issue in India, fuelled by the widespread use of technology and increasing internet penetration. By examining the state-level data provided by the National

Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the years 2017 and 2020, we can gain insights into the evolving landscape of cybercrime. In 2017, there were 4,242 reported cases of cybercrime against women out of a total of 21,796 cybercrime cases recorded in the country. This accounted for approximately 19.46 percent of the total cybercrimes reported. In 2020, the overall figure of cybercrime increased to 50,035 cases, with 10,405 cases specifically targeting women. This represents approximately 20.80 percent of the total cybercrimes reported. These statistics underscore the significant prevalence of cybercrimes against women in India, constituting a notable proportion of the overall cybercrime landscape.

Cyber Pornography/Hosting/Publishing Obscene Sexual Materials: The data reveals a significant surge in reported cases related to cyber pornography, hosting, or publishing obscene sexual materials across various states in India. From 271 reported cases nationwide in 2017, the numbers escalated to 1665 cases in 2020, reflecting an alarming increase of nearly 514.39 percent. Several states witnessed a higher rate of increase compared to the national average. For instance, Chhattisgarh experienced a staggering 3300 percent rise, followed by Andhra Pradesh (2000 percent), Uttar Pradesh (1812 percent), Tamil Nadu (1738 percent), Odisha (1170 percent), Uttarakhand (1050 percent), Kerala (1030 percent), Haryana (967 percent), and Punjab (633 percent). These numbers underline the concerning trend of women being exploited through the distribution and dissemination of explicit content. Immediate action and stringent measures are imperative to curb the rising menace of cyber pornography and protect women from such exploitation.

Cyber Stalking/Cyber Bullying of Women: Cyber stalking and cyber bullying have become significant threats to women's safety in the online realm. The data reveals a notable increase in reported cases between 2017 and 2020. In 2017, there were 555 reported cases nationwide, which rose to 887 cases in 2020, reflecting an increase of nearly 59.82 percent. However, certain states and union territories exhibited a negative growth rate compared to the national average. These states include Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Manipur, Odisha, as well as all the union territories. This concerning trend highlights the urgent need to address the growing menace of online harassment and intimidation specifically targeting women.

Other Cyber Crimes Against Women: In addition to cyber pornography and stalking, the NCRB data also includes a category called "other cybercrimes against women," encompassing various forms of cybercrimes unrelated to pornography or stalking. The reported cases in this category saw a significant increase from 3,087 in 2017 to 7,184 in 2020, representing a growth of approximately 132.72 percent. Notably, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Tripura, and all union territories exhibited negative growth rates in this category. This suggests a substantial rise in cybercrimes targeting women, including online fraud, identity theft, online blackmail, and other related offenses.

The following States/UTs consistently recorded cybercrime rates above the national average for both 2017 and 2020. In 2017, Assam reported rates of 33.83%, which increased to 30.34% in 2020. Chhattisgarh had rates of 52.04% and 39.39% in the respective years. Goa reported rates of 69.23% and 47.50%. Gujarat had rates of 20.52% and 21.59%. Himachal Pradesh reported rates of 53.57% and 53.06%. Karnataka had rates of 22.96% and 26.62%. Kerala reported rates of 39.37% and 57.75%. Madhya Pradesh had rates of 39.18% and 39.20%. Maharashtra reported rates of 31.04% and 29.69%. Manipur had rates of 36.48% and 32.91%. Punjab reported rates of 34.65% and 29.10%. Tamil Nadu had rates of 23.24% and 39.13%. Uttarakhand reported rates of 24.19% and 29.63%. West Bengal had rates of 47.53% and 48.31%. Andaman & Nicobar Island had rates of 66.68% and 60%. Dadra and Nagar Haveli reported rates of 100% for both years. Delhi had rates of 46.91% and 30.36%. Jammu & Kashmir reported rates of 20.63% and 20.83%. These regions consistently had cybercrime rates above the national average, indicating higher prevalence and challenges regarding cybercrimes against women.

In 2020, several States/UTs exhibited cybercrime rates against women that surpassed the national average. Haryana recorded a rate of 33.84%, while Meghalaya had a rate of 27.46%. Nagaland reported a rate of 25%, Odisha had a rate of 29%, Chandigarh recorded a rate of 58.82%, and Lakshadweep had a rate of 66.67%. Furthermore, there was a significant increase of 145.29% in cybercrimes against women from 2017 to 2020. Certain states showed growth rates above the national average during this period. Odisha witnessed a growth rate of 803%, followed by Meghalaya (550%), Tamil Nadu (477%), Karnataka (292%), Telangana (231%), Tripura (200%), Gujarat (194.7%), Uttar Pradesh (193%), Assam (182.5%), Haryana (181%), and the union territories of D & N Haveli and Daman & Diu (200%). These statistics highlight the need for concerted efforts to address the rise in cybercrimes against women in these regions.

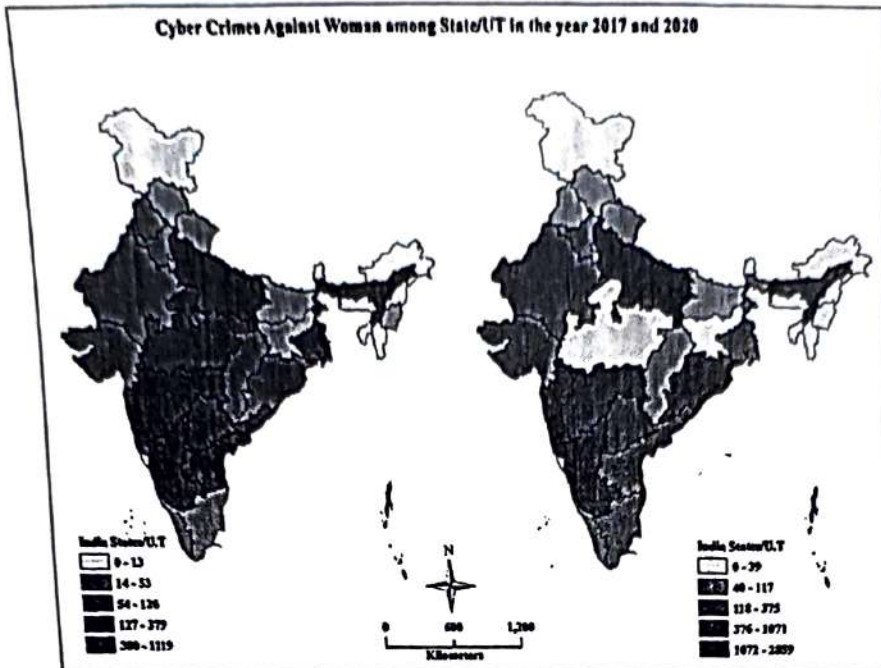


Fig:1

While some states witnessed a significant increase in reported cybercrimes against women, such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, others showed relatively stable or fluctuating numbers. States like Chhattisgarh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand had varying degrees of reported cybercrimes against women, but the numbers remained relatively low compared to other states. States like Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal had noticeable changes in the number of reported cybercrimes against women, although the magnitude differed among them.

In conclusion, the NCRB data on cybercrimes against women in India reveals an alarming rise in such incidents over the years. Cyber pornography, cyber stalking, and other forms of online harassment pose serious threats to women's safety and well-being. These trends emphasize the urgent need for robust cybersecurity measures, awareness campaigns, and legal interventions to protect women in the digital space and address this growing menace effectively.

III. Conclusion

We are currently residing in a digital age where cyberspace transcends boundaries and encompasses the entire world. Consequently, cybercrime is on the rise in all countries, including India. The primary challenge associated with cybercrime is its dynamic nature, driven by the continuous evolution of digital technology. This constant evolution gives rise to new methods and techniques employed by cybercriminals. While the government, as a crucial stakeholder in our society, has taken numerous initiatives to combat cybercrime, there are still challenges that lie ahead for all stakeholders, particularly the government, when it comes to securing India's cyberspace. This becomes even more critical considering the projected increase in our population's digital connectivity in the upcoming years. Therefore, cybercrime should be accorded the same level of importance as other crimes prevalent in our society, such as theft, rape, and murder.

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