Cybercrime Against Women

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ABSTRACT :

Today's digital age has transformed how people socialize, work, or even communicate. Yet, with all these changes, cybercrime against women remains a disturbing new form of gender-based violence—cybercrime against women. Online harassment, cyberstalking, identity theft, and revenge porn, among others, are the forms of cybercrimes disproportionately affecting women. Cybercrime benefits through anonymity via the internet, and the harm is extended well beyond the digital boundaries. This article goes through the different forms of cybercrime targeting women, psychological impact, and social impact, and viable solutions in preventing this rampant issue.

KEYWORDS : Cybercrime against women, online harassment, cyberstalking, revenge porn, identity theft, psychological impact, legal and technological solutions.

Forms of Cybercrime Targeting Women

The most common types of cybercrime against women include online harassment, cyber stalking, non-consensual pornography, and identity theft. These crimes are done by using social media, messaging apps, and websites.

1. Online Harassment and Cyberbullying

Cyber-harassment is the most common cybercrime against women in India, and this has a significant medium through which any type of sexist remarks, threats, or intimidation could be executed. Approximately 60% of women in India have experienced online harassment. It can affect the mental health, safety, and reputation of women in public spaces.

2. Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking involves the use of technology to harass or intimidate another person repeatedly and is another prevalent form of cybercrime against women in India. It includes stalking the online activity of a person, sending threatening messages, and using social media to cause distress. Different from the old sense of stalking, cyberstalking allows the perpetrator to target their victim without ever having any physical contact, and thus, much harder for women to get out of. In 2017, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported a significant rise in cyberstalking cases in India.
Women victims of cyberstalking, suffer risks of harm in the physical world and their perpetrators employ technology in the tracking of them.

3. Non-consensual Pornography (Revenge Porn)

Non-consensual pornography, commonly known as "revenge porn," is the distribution of explicit images or videos without their owners' consent. Such cybercrime typically involves ex-partners or hackers and can inflict permanent emotional harm on women. It remains an omnipresent crime, despite India having laws to tackle revenge porn but women still face obstacles to justice due to the sheer scale of platforms where such content is shared makes it harder for victims to have the material removed. Due to societal stigma re-victimization and lack of social and legal support women in India are often reluctant to report such cases.

4. Identity Theft and Financial Fraud

Identity theft and financial fraud are also common against women by cybercriminals. If the identity of women is stolen via phishing or hacking, then criminals would have access to their bank accounts and credit cards or even social security numbers. Financial fraud can also lead to long-term and irreparable financial instability along with extreme emotional upset.

Psychological and Societal Impact on Women Victims of Cybercrime

The psychological impact can run very deep in women. In the case of women falling victim to harassment through cyber space, cyber stalking, and revenge porn, she can go to the extent of anxiety, depression, and PTSD as well. All this emotional trauma impacts her personal and professional life and her general well-being.

The cybercrime against women works to reinforce gender inequality in that it silences women's voices online. Many women, from public facing professions such as journalists, politicians and activists, might self-censor or hide behind the web because they are afraid to be harassed. This further marginalizes women's voices and ideas and leads to what is sometimes called a "chilling effect" in the digital space.

Cybercrime also reflects deeply embedded societal attitudes that permit and facilitate gender-based violence. Indeed, most cyber harassment and other varieties of digital abuse are still common with misogyny, making it even harder for women to make their way online and succeed.

Legal, Technological, Societal Cures

What is needed to counter cybercrime against women is coordinated efforts on the part of the government, companies, and civil society. An integrated effort is the need of the hour to make cyberspace safe enough.

1. Strengthening the Laws and Enforcement

India has taken significant steps to criminalize online abuse and provide legal protection to women. The Information Technology Act, 2000, and its amendments in 2008 introduced provisions that criminalize cyberstalking, identity theft, and the sharing of obscene material without consent. Section 66E of the IT Act specifically addresses the issue of the transmission of intimate images without consent, and Section 354D criminalizes stalking, including cyberstalking.

Additionally, in 2013, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) was amended to include provisions for dealing with cybercrimes related to sexual harassment and defamation. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act also applies in cases where minors are involved in cybercrimes. Despite these legal frameworks, many women face obstacles when seeking justice, such as a lack of awareness of their legal rights, inadequate law enforcement, and the challenges of gathering digital evidence.

2. Technological Solutions

Technology firms play a significant role in combating cybercrime. They should develop content moderation systems where explicit abusive content could be better detected and removed early from social media platforms. Privacy controls that prevent abusive sharing of information and reporting tools that users can utilize also ensure a safe atmosphere online. Artificial intelligence may also be applied for the identification of patterns of harassment, hate speech, and others. These problems can be detected and addressed more speedily by flagging these same issues.

3. Education and Awareness

There will also be greater digital literacy, which will empower women to look after themselves better on the internet. Public awareness campaigns can further educate women on matters of online safety, digital privacy, and consent in the real and virtual worlds. Schools and workplaces must also provide resources to enable women to navigate the digital world with greater safety.

However, men and boys have also to form part of the conversation as there is an immediate need to change societal attitudes towards women and online behavior to reduce online abuse.

Conclusion

Cybercrime against women is an emerging problem with serious impacts for individuals and society. From online harassment and cyber stalking to non-consensual pornography, the problem primarily concerns women. Psychological damage from such crimes can be devastating, and the effect that this has at a social level reinforces the gender inequalities already in place.

Strong legal protection, with more effective technological solutions and broader initiatives in education, working together to help women safely use the internet. This is the only way that we can all start taking steps toward a more balanced and secure Internet for women from around the world. Until that happens, this battle against cybercrime will continue to impact all of us who believe in gender equality and digital justice.

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