

CHILD CYBER SEXUAL HARASSMENT



SNAPSHOT

- Most cyber harassment occurs in anonymity; the perpetrator hides behind a pseudonym.
- Cyber-sexual assault survivors show trauma symptomatic to physical sexual assault survivors!
- Children, the ubiquitous digital natives, are the most affected group.
- Perpetrators have been known to install malware in victims' computer hacking into private files, & remote-operating recording devices & cameras to obtain compromising information for sextortion.
- Online grooming involves a gradual drawing out of a victim for cyber-sexual favours through special attention, treating the child as an adult, filling the child's unmet familial needs, coercion, blackmail & blame.
- Other mode of cyber-sexual harassment include spreading rumours, "sexting" without mutual consent, cyber-bullying, slut-shaming & revenge porn.

Cybersexual assault may be described as the use of digital & social media for unwarranted sexual comments & advances, solicitation of sexual favors, & coercion.

Cyber sexual harassment, including cyberstalking, occurs when a harasser sends abusive, threatening, or obscene messages to a victim by e-mail, instant messaging or social media.

With the internet & social media taking over life & easy availability of personal information online, it is imperative for individuals, organizations, schools, and governments to address the issue of cyber-harassment and assault.

WORRYING TRENDS ON THE RISE

- Gender harassment includes gender-humiliating statements, rape threats, & non-consensual sexual comments.
- Graphic gender harassment occurs when the perpetrator sends unsolicited erotic, pornographic, lewd, & lascivious images, videos & audio to victims.
- Cyber stalking is defined as repetitive, unsolicited & undesirable online contact &/or pursuit.
- More serious is the increasing prevalence of group harassment or cyber-mobbing, where two or more people jointly taunt an individual.
- Stalking by proxy & group stalking occur when the original perpetrator eggs on other strangers to continue the harassment.

PARENTS: POINTS TO NOTE!

- ✓ The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children proposes the following redflags for digital sexual abuse trauma in children:
 - Being withdrawn, Sudden changes in behaviour,
 - Anxiety, Clinginess, Depression, Aggression,
 - Sleep problems/nightmares, Eating disorders /changes, Bedwetting, School irregularity, Obsessive behaviour,
 - Drugs/alcohol, Self-harm/thoughts, talk of suicide.
- ✓ The signs of online sexual abuse of adolescents are the following:
 - The adolescent spends a disproportionate amount of time online, texting, gaming or using social media & is furtive about it.
 - The adolescent is withdrawn, upset or outraged, especially after having been on the internet for any length of time.
 - The adolescent is secretive about her online activities.
 - The adolescent has phone numbers, texts or e-mail addresses on her mobile phone, laptop or tablet from unknown sources.
- ✓ Any information, once posted, unless constrained by privacy settings, is available to all & sundry & can provoke commensurate reactions.

- ✓ Do not post anything you wouldn't want your enemy, your teacher, your principal, or your mother to see anywhere online.
- ✓ Stranger danger is just as serious in online existence as in real life. It is not difficult to trace one's every move online & anonymity is not a protective curtain anymore.
- ✓ Research on managing privacy reveals that while most adults think first & then ask questions, teens tend to take the risk & then fire-fight.
- ✓ Laws that criminalize cyber harassment are already in effect in many states e.g. the Violence Against Women Act has made cyberstalking a part of the Federal interstate stalking statute.
- ✓ It is very important for all of us, irrespective of gender, age & nationality, to be aware of the pitfalls of the digital era, & be extra cautious. There is nothing stranger than the online neighbourhood in the digital world.

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