

PSYCHOLOGY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: DECODING THE MINDS BEHIND CYBER CRIME

Ms Vartika Saxena

Research Scholar, Amity Law School, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior, India.

vartika.saxena5@gmail.com

8103032177

Abstract

The proliferation of computers and the Internet in contemporary society has undeniably revolutionized various aspects of human life, facilitating communication, information dissemination, and online transactions. However, along with the myriad benefits, there are significant drawbacks, including the misuse of the Internet for malicious purposes. This article explores the phenomenon of psychological intimidation on the Internet, encompassing issues such as cyberbullying, internet addiction, cyber suicide, cyber racism, and online grooming. It delves into the mechanisms and consequences of each form of intimidation, highlighting the psychological and social ramifications for individuals, particularly young users. Additionally, the article addresses related concerns such as electronic gambling, physical health effects of excessive computer use, and internet security measures. By examining these issues, this article aims to raise awareness and promote strategies for mitigating the adverse effects of Internet usage on mental health and well-being.

Key words:

Cyberpsychology, Cybercrime, Cyber Grooming, Cyber Suicide, Internet Addiction, Cyber Laws

INTRODUCTION

Unquestionably, one of the most significant developments of contemporary civilization is the development of computers and the Internet. By removing barriers and providing quick, simple access to communication and information, they bring their own revolution to human daily life (science, education, information, entertainment, etc.). Internet users may now interact from anywhere in the world, purchase online, utilize it as a teaching tool, work remotely, and conduct financial transactions using a variety of bank services thanks to the ongoing development of new technology. Because of the Internet's limitless potential, people frequently misuse it or use it maliciously against other people, businesses, and government agencies. A number of social issues, including cyberbullying, internet pornography, grooming through social networks, cybersuicide, Internet addiction and social isolation, and racism on the web, have emerged as a result of the Internet's quick development. Furthermore, there is always a chance that fraud of any kind will be exploited by so-called technical specialists who utilize the Internet to commit crimes.

People frequently refer to humans as "social beings." It follows that the Internet's constant evolution from a straightforward instrument for information dissemination to a platform for social engagement and interaction is not surprising (Zhang, 2016). Social networks are defined as online platforms that enable users to establish a public presence inside a well-established network. Users can also see and trade lists of connections generated by themselves and by others in the system, as well as publish a list of other users with whom they are connected. Social networks are a collection of connections and exchanges. These days, the phrase is also used to characterize websites that enable user-to-user interface sharing of reviews, images, and other data. Facebook, Twitter, My Space, Skype, OoVoo, LinkedIn, Tumblr, YouTube, and TripAdvisor are the most well-known of these websites¹. These websites function as online communities where users may interact and make new friends.

¹ Agatston, P. W., Kowalski, R., & Limber, S. (2007). *Students' perspectives on cyberbullying*. Journal of Adolescent Health, 41, 59-60

A social structure composed of several elements, such individuals or organizations, is called a social network². Social networks are online communities that are kept up to date to facilitate the development of relationships between individuals who share interests or hobbies. These individuals are typically active users of the social network. Creating profiles, uploading images and videos, leaving comments on the actions of other network or group members, instant messaging, and many other basic and free services are all provided by the vast majority of social networking sites, which are organized websites with a more focused personality.

One of the greatest technical innovations of the twenty-first century is social networking. Users of social networking services have the ability to build and develop a personal website (Gupta, Amir Maroof Khan, Rajoura, & Srivastava, 2018), adding images, color, music, and photographs to give it a distinct personality. Young people especially like this hobby, which doesn't require any specialized technological skills. Through their virtual profiles, users on these websites connect with other users by sharing images and videos, joining groups based on shared interests, exchanging and publishing artistic works, visiting other users' pages, and using a range of apps. Although the Internet is a highly useful tool in our hands, improper usage of it can put someone in danger. The difficulty with the Internet is identifying possible problems, understanding how to reduce the risks, and coming up with solutions to stop or avoid them.

The following are the main issues that social networking sites may have:

The activity that aims to give the young user confidence so that a covert meeting may be held with them is referred to as "online grooming"³. This encounter may result in the victim being sexually abused, physically abused, or subjected to child prostitution and abuse through pornography, making it a type of online psychiatric treatment. According to a different meaning, "grooming" refers to a tactful handling technique that usually begins without making a sexual approach but is intended to persuade the victim to engage in sexual activity. Furthermore, it can occasionally be described as a seduction in order to emphasize the steady and methodical process of information disclosure from the younger user and establish a trustworthy connection.

Adversarial behavior via electronic means is known as cyberbullying. Young individuals who witness such acts may become uneasy, feel alone, depressed, and afraid, and may even believe that something is amiss. They start to doubt who they are, and they might not want to return to school or make an effort to avoid interacting with their friends. Moreover, in severe instances, strong, ongoing bullying has resulted in dreadful outcomes including suicidal thoughts. Children and teenagers are susceptible to a wide range of kinds of harassment, including diverse forms of intimidation that leave the victim vulnerable in addition to roughhousing and hostility.

Cyber suicide is the term used to describe suicide or suicide attempts that are impacted by the Internet. Since the number of suicide events reported online has been rising, the scientific community has been interested in cyber suicide. There have been suggestions that using the internet, especially particularly websites that discuss suicide, might encourage suicide and increase the number of cyber suicides. Individuals who are strangers get together, meet online, and then congregate at a certain location to carry out a group suicide. In addition to killing themselves online, there are also instances of people "committing suicide in real time via webcam," which is when they kill themselves while online. The influence of the Internet on suicide facilitation has been a topic of active discussion in reaction to the aforementioned instance and others of a similar nature. Practically speaking, there is now little factual evidence to support the theory that the Internet has increased the number of suicides, and scientific study on cyber suicides is still in its early stages. Nonetheless, there are certain aspects of the Internet that lead one to believe that a user can assist in suicide.

Cyber racism: The influence of the Internet on suicide facilitation has been a topic of active discussion in reaction to the aforementioned instance and others of a similar nature⁴. Practically speaking, there is now little factual evidence to support the theory that the Internet has increased the number of suicides, and scientific study on cyber

² Anderson, T., & Sturm, B. (2007). *Cyberbullying from playground to computer*. Young Adult Library Services, Winter, 24-27.

³ Aricak, T., Siyahhan, S., Uzunhasanoglu., A., Uzunhasanoğlu, A., Saribeyoglu, S., Cıplak, S., Yılmaz, N. & Memmedov, C. (2008). *Cyberbullying among Turkish adolescents*. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 253-261.

⁴ Kirwan, & Power. (2013, August). *Psychology of cybercrime*. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.cambridge.org/in/universitypress/subjects/psychology/applied-psychology/cybercrime-psychology-online-offenders?format=HB&isbn=9781107004443>

suicides is still in its early stages. Nonetheless, there are certain aspects of the Internet that lead one to believe that a user can assist in suicide.

The scientific community is now reviewing internet addiction, which is a relatively new type of dependency. In essence, it refers to the growing number of individuals who report using the Internet more and more to boost their sense of happiness and a consistent increase in the amount of time they spend doing so. Internet addiction is a disorder that significantly impairs a person's ability to perform in social, professional, or academic contexts, despite not being recognized as a separate psychiatric entity. More and more mental health professionals are being asked to treat individuals with problematic Internet usage in a therapeutic manner.

Every day, millions of people and businesses use the internet to coordinate their economic activities and conduct electronic transactions. In actuality, it is imperative that users navigate websites containing transactions extremely carefully and confidently in the knowledge that they have taken into consideration impending law and the mandatory insurance transaction over personal data. The Phishing approach is the most often used fraud. It is the result of fusing the terms fishing and password. This is a very clever kind of economic deception since it divulges personal information as well as details about money transactions. Users who are duped into believing that a form on the Internet is authentic may divulge personal information. Double-crossed evidence of the fictitious victim is exploited to get personal information.

The practice in which two or more people get together online to trade wagers is referred to as electronic gambling. Actual financial gain or loss is a possibility with this kind of action. Money loss is one of the key issues with gaming. One may lose their property, house, savings, etc. as a result of this. Many people develop addictions and are unable to give up the hope that they will win their money back in the following round. As a result, in addition to spending a lot of money, one might also lose a lot of time by ignoring current responsibilities and suffering from all the other side effects of an addiction. It was shown that addiction can result even from regular attendance at gaming establishments where actual money is not used. The likelihood that young adults would participate in such activities is increased by the accessibility of online gambling platforms.

Physical difficulties brought on by computer use: Users' health is negatively impacted by their increased computer use, which affects several systems and results in emotional and physical issues. Some users' systems operate differently as a result of these issues, which has an impact on their quality of life. The following systems are impacted by the most significant of these issues: the neurological system, the musculoskeletal system, the ophthalmic system, headaches, and the propensity toward obesity.

Internet security: Although it is a fantastic source of data and services, the Internet should filter the majority of this data so that it is never accepted without question. The following is a selection of some easily accessible information about appropriate procedures and techniques:

- utilizing appropriate methods to search for information sources.
- Evaluation of the information supplied Disclosure of information supplied for financial or ideological gain.
- Secure handling of digital transactions defence against possible internet frauds.

LEGAL ASPECTS OF CYBERPSYCHOLOGY IN INDIA

There have been conflicting findings about the relationship between social media use and psychological functioning, particularly anxiety and depression⁵. According to some research, using social media to connect with others online and/or improve in-person relationships has a good effect on overall wellbeing. Use of Facebook, for instance, is linked to opinions of online social support. The amount of Facebook friends one has appears to be correlated with emotions of well-being and a decrease in stress. Those with lower levels of in-person social support appear to benefit most from having a larger Twitter social network and being more engaged within it when it comes to reducing depression symptoms and thoughts. Similarly, the association between excessive smartphone use and stress and loneliness appears to be moderated by online self-disclosure, as those who use their smartphones excessively and share their feelings and anxieties online report significantly lower levels of stress and loneliness, compared to those who use their smartphones less frequently.

According to the aforementioned research, a significant determinant in the association between social media use and psychological functioning is the accessibility and utilization of current resources. This might be connected to the results of extensive research showing gender disparities. There is no correlation between psychological stress in

⁵ Harun, Marina & Mohd, Idaya & Omar, Muhamad & Mujanah, Siti & Noranee, Shereen. (2023). Exploring the Influence of Technology, Lifestyle and Flexible Working Arrangements on Cyber Psychology among Employees at a Malaysian Investment Holding Company. *Information Management and Business Review*. 15. 1-11. 10.22610/imbr.v15i3(I).3540.

men and regular usage of social media, mobile devices, or the internet in general.⁶ However, there appears to be a minor inverse relationship between tech use and stress levels among women. In particular, women's stated stress levels decrease with the number of photos they post on their phones, the amount of emails they exchange, and how often they use Twitter. Stress reductions may be moderated by women's greater perceived social support levels through technology use. A negative correlation between social media use and psychological functioning has been shown in several studies.

According to a meta-analysis of the social, psychological, and physical repercussions of social media usage, there is a modest to moderate correlation between smartphone use and anxiety and stress. Additionally, a strong correlation has been discovered between social media usage and an increased risk of depression. Across a range of age groups, individuals in the highest quartile of users had considerably higher chances of depression and poorer levels of happiness. Adolescents who use social media at high mean levels over time are more likely to experience depression, according to longitudinal effects research. Engaging with upward social comparison-promoting media appears to be associated with lower levels of self-esteem, which in turn raises depression symptoms.

In India, the legal aspects of cyberpsychology and the internet are dynamic, developing fields that interact with different laws and rules pertaining to mental health and online behaviour. The main piece of legislation pertaining to cyber activity, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and data privacy violations, is the Information Technology Act of 2000⁷. In order to discourage and prosecute offenders, this Act defines cybercrimes and lays out rules for penalties and punishments.

Furthermore, mental health-related legislation are included in India's legal structure. One such law is the Mental Healthcare Act, 2017, which places a strong emphasis on the defence of people's rights and access to mental healthcare treatments. This Act also covers internet treatment and counselling, making sure that providers follow moral guidelines and protect patient privacy.

In addition, the Indian judiciary has come to acknowledge the importance of cyberpsychology in legal procedures, especially when it comes to instances involving online defamation, cybercrimes, and mental health interventions. Courts have highlighted the necessity of expert evidence from cyberpsychology-specialized psychologists in order to evaluate how an individual's online conduct affects their mental health and identify relevant legal remedies.

In general, the legal environment in India pertaining to the internet and cyber psychology is complex, necessitating cooperation between legislators, mental health specialists, and technological experts in order to protect people's rights and encourage responsible online conduct.

Furthermore, the Indian courts has come to recognize the use of cyberpsychology in court cases, especially those involving cybercrimes, online defamation, and mental health treatments. Courts have stressed the need for expert evidence from cyberpsychology-trained psychologists in order to assess how people's online conduct affects their mental health and identify relevant legal remedies. The complicated interactions between technology, psychology, and the law are highlighted by this court acknowledgment, underscoring the necessity of multidisciplinary cooperation in tackling challenging legal issues in cyberspace.

Notwithstanding these developments, navigating India's complicated and multidimensional cyberpsychology legal system continues⁸. Rapid technological advancement brings with it new opportunities and problems that need for flexible and adaptable legal frameworks.

Legislators, mental health professionals, and tech experts must work together to create strong legislative frameworks that protect people's mental health and encourage moral and responsible online behaviour.

In conclusion, protecting people's mental health in the digital era depends critically on the legal dimensions of cyberpsychology in India. Through the implementation of all-encompassing laws, observance of moral principles, and encouragement of cross-disciplinary cooperation, India can reduce the dangers associated with cyberattacks while using technology to improve mental health. In the end, managing the complicated terrain of cyberpsychology and fostering a secure and encouraging online environment for all requires a comprehensive strategy that incorporates legal, psychological, and technological viewpoints.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

⁶ Harley, D., Morgan, J., & Frith, H. (2018). *Cyberpsychology as everyday digital experience across the lifespan*. Springer.

⁷ Kirwan, G. (2010). *Cyberpsychology: An overview of emerging research in emerging environments*. The Irish Journal of Psychology, 31(1-2), 69-84.

⁸ Singh, Amarjit & Singh, Pawan. (2019). Recent Trends, Current Research in Cyberpsychology: a literature review.

A strong legal framework that manages the nexus between technology, psychology, and the law is required in India to meet the complexity of cyberpsychology. The dynamic realm of cyberspace poses a multitude of obstacles, such as cyberbullying, online harassment, and mental health treatments, necessitating customized legal remedies to safeguard persons' rights and welfare. The Information Technology Act of 2000 establishes the fundamental laws that regulate cyber activity by defining cybercrimes and outlining the consequences for violators. But as technology develops so quickly, upgrades and modifications are desperately needed to properly combat new cyberthreats. The Mental Healthcare Act of 2017, for example, places a strong emphasis on access to mental healthcare treatments and ethical standards in online interventions. Other laws pertaining to mental health are also included in India's legislative structure⁹.

The development of complete legislative frameworks including lawmakers, mental health specialists, and technological experts requires multidisciplinary collaboration, which presents challenges in the field of cyberpsychology in India. Furthermore, it is still difficult to ensure that current rules and regulations are followed, especially in light of the quickly changing internet culture and technological advancements.

In conclusion, addressing cyberpsychology in India necessitates working together to create and execute strong legislative frameworks that protect people's rights and mental health in the digital era while addressing new forms of cyberthreats. India can effectively traverse the intricate realm of cyberpsychology and advance a secure and encouraging online community for everybody by encouraging cooperation and creativity.

Apart from the legal frameworks introduced by the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 and the Information Technology Act of 2000, there is an increasing acknowledgement of the necessity for cyberpsychology specialists within the legal system¹⁰. Psychologists with experience in cyberpsychology are called upon by courts more often to provide expert witness in order to comprehend the intricate relationship between mental health consequences and online conduct. This acknowledgement emphasizes how crucial it is to include psychological knowledge into court cases involving cybercrimes, harassment online, and mental health services. Moreover, the dynamic character of technology poses continuous difficulties in successfully tackling concerns related to cyberpsychology. Digital platforms and communication technologies are developing at a rapid rate, which means that legal frameworks need to be flexible and adaptable to keep up with the latest developments in cyber risks¹¹.

It is imperative for legislators to consistently evaluate and revise current legislation in order to tackle developing issues like cyberbullying, internet addiction, and breaches of privacy online.

Furthermore, more public education and knowledge about the legal implications of cyberpsychology are required. People ought to be aware of their obligations and rights in the digital sphere, including how to file reports for cybercrimes and pursue legal action in cases of online harassment or invasions of privacy. Public awareness of the possible dangers and repercussions of online activity can enable people to make wise decisions and help foster a more secure and responsible online community.

In summary, the legal dimensions of cyberpsychology in India are intricate and diverse, necessitating a comprehensive strategy that incorporates technical, psychological, and legal viewpoints. India can successfully handle the difficulties provided by cyberpsychology while supporting the rights and wellness of persons in the digital era by creating comprehensive legislative frameworks, encouraging multidisciplinary collaboration, and raising public awareness and education.

⁹ Ahuja, Vanshika & Alavi, Shirin. (2017). Cyber psychology and cyber behaviour of adolescents-the need of the contemporary era. *Procedia Computer Science*. 122. 671-676. 10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.422.

¹⁰ Kirwan, & Power. (2013, August). *Psychology of cybercrime*. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.cambridge.org/in/universitypress/subjects/psychology/applied-psychology/cybercrime-psychology-online-offenders?format=HB&isbn=9781107004443>

¹¹ Attrill-Smith, Alison, and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology*, Oxford Library of Psychology (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018)

References:

1. Agatston, P. W., Kowalski, R., & Limber, S. (2007). *Students' perspectives on cyberbullying*. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 41, 59-60
2. Anderson, T., & Sturm, B. (2007). *Cyberbullying from playground to computer*. *Young Adult Library Services*, Winter, 24-27.
3. Aricak, T., Siyahhan, S., Uzunhasanoglu., A., Uzunhasanoğlu, A., Sarıbeyoglu, S., Cıplak, S., Yılmaz, N. & Memmedov, C. (2008). *Cyberbullying among Turkish adolescents*. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 253-261.
4. Kirwan, & Power. (2013, August). *Psychology of cybercrime*. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.cambridge.org/in/universitypress/subjects/psychology/applied-psychology/cybercrime-psychology-online-offenders?format=HB&isbn=9781107004443>
5. Harun, Marina & Mohd, Idaya & Omar, Muhamad & Mujanah, Siti & Noranee, Shereen. (2023). Exploring the Influence of Technology, Lifestyle and Flexible Working Arrangements on Cyber Psychology among Employees at a Malaysian Investment Holding Company. *Information Management and Business Review*. 15. 1-11. 10.22610/imbr.v15i3(I).3540.
6. Harley, D., Morgan, J., & Frith, H. (2018). *Cyberpsychology as everyday digital experience across the lifespan*. Springer.
7. Kirwan, G. (2010). *Cyberpsychology: An overview of emerging research in emerging environments*. *The Irish Journal of Psychology*, 31(1-2), 69-84.
8. Singh, Amarjit & Singh, Pawan. (2019). *Recent Trends, Current Research in Cyberpsychology: a literature review*.
9. Ahuja, Vanshika & Alavi, Shirin. (2017). *Cyber psychology and cyber behaviour of adolescents-the need of the contemporary era*. *Procedia Computer Science*. 122. 671-676. 10.1016/j.procs.2017.11.422.
10. Kirwan, & Power. (2013, August). *Psychology of cybercrime*. Retrieved March 17, 2024, from <https://www.cambridge.org/in/universitypress/subjects/psychology/applied-psychology/cybercrime-psychology-online-offenders?format=HB&isbn=9781107004443>
11. Attrill-Smith, Alison, and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Cyberpsychology*, Oxford Library of Psychology (2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 7 June 2018).