ONLINE ABUSE OF WOMEN

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Abstract
For girls and women, harassment is not just about ‘un-pleasantries’. It’s often about men asserting dominance, silencing, and frequently, scaring and punishing them. Women are more frequently targeted with gendered slurs and pornographic photo manipulation because the objectification and dehumanization of women is central to normalizing violence against us. Women take online harassment more seriously not because we are hysterics, but because we reasonably have to. There is no gender equivalence in terms of the denigrating, hostile and sometimes exceedingly dangerous environmental effect that misogyny has, online or off. It has a long history and cannot be isolated from actual violence that we adapt to avoiding every day. The fact that that violence has always suppressed women’s free speech is only now becoming too obvious to ignore. Now a days this violence is taking place through our online world. My paper will scrutinize how online abuse of women and girls has spiraled out of control.

Keywords-Online abuse, Women, Stalking, cyber bullying, Government.

Introduction
The status of women has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. With the decline in their status from the ancient to medieval times, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, their history has been eventful.

In modern day, women have held offices including that of president, prime minister, speaker of lok sabha, leader of opposition, union minister, chief ministers, and governors. However, women from the very early times to the present day continue to face numerous problems such as sexual assault, gender inequality and dowry. On one hand we consider as goddess and on the other hand they are bound to face the accusations of witchcraft. Not only this, there are several places of worship in India, where women are still not allowed to enter or have restricted entry. Authorities do not allow women to enter n the temple in Assam’s Barpeta temple to what they say is an attempt to preserve its purity. They also cite menstruation as a reason behind barring entry of women. It has taken up its root to online form as a result of technological inventions and development. When we talk about going digital or online, it create a sense of ease and more connected but this is not in the case of women empowerment. On one
side our modern society is giving women the equality they need and on the other side today’s internet has given the society to insult women and their prestige and self-respect. It comes in the form of cyber bullying of women, increase in pornographic content, unregulated use of social platforms like Facebook, twitter, tumblr etc. it has grown to such an extent that the government is also becoming helpless and is unable to take right steps to curb it. Internet has become a place where open channels into each other’s lives exist, the spread of harassment, abuse and vitriol can be equally pervasive and personal. Alarmingly, research and testimony are increasingly showing what many women have long known, that the internet is not an equal space. The online landscape bears more risks for women the man, and get riskier depending on other parts of identity. Attacks and abuse online can include stalking, rape threats, doxing, the nonconsensual disclosure of sexuality explicit images and videos, and a barrage of other harassment with the intent to shame and silence. The most severe attacks can spill over into violence in the real world, and threaten a woman’s life. This results in neglecting of woman’s spirituality and faith.

The extent to which cyber abuse is rising is traumatic and when talk about young girls, the scene is worst. Young girls are the major part which suffers from online abuse. 96% of the total online abuse happens with the young girls of our society and it is clearly traumatic. Revenge porn is one of them which have destroyed the social and academic life of young girls. Ashley Judd, a motivational speaker, says: ‘online violence is an extension of in-person violence’

Cyber abuse is a term that encompasses a wide range of aggressive online activities. Cyber abuse occurs insidiously via web based and other forms of modern technology. The detrimental effects of cyber abuse are evident, including feelings of depression, confusion, guilt and shame as well as self-harm and withdrawal from peers and family. As a result of the scale of this type of abuse, some women have resorted to self-censorship or have disengaged from their work or online platforms. In an era where technology is quickly becoming everything, the consequences of women being unable to access the Internet safely and securely, without facing misogynist abuse, cannot be overstated, and have a direct impact on women’s right to freedom of expression as well as equality in society as a whole. Ashley Judd says: ‘Online misogyny is a ender rights tragedy and it is imperative that it ends’

**Cyberstalking**

Cyberstalking is the way by which a person keeps an eye over other without letting them know that they are being stalked. This plays a crucial role in giving birth to violence and the stalker keeps a close eye on the activity. It gives the stalker a way or opportunity to harm the person. Cybrstalking happens mostly with women and they are the one who suffers a lot. The stalker can be anybody; in today’s world it is very easy to stalk someone because everybody is available on internet. Offline stalking has taken a new shape in the form of cyberstalking. Analysis revealed that the individuals who stalked the girls could be strangers they met online or could be known to the girls in their real-world rid settings. Stalking ranged from unwanted, annoying e-mails to death threats that were considered credible and terrifying. It is found that the cyber stalking has arisen as a result of easing access of information through new forms of technology. Offline stalking needs a stalker and victim to be located in the same geographical area but cyberstalking is possible from any part of the world. The women of our society are being stalked on social
media platforms about their activity, about their interests to build propaganda to hurt them. In many cases it is found that the stalker can be a girl’s ex-boyfriend or a one sided lover. Cyberstalking can lead to dangerous consequences for the victim.

12 years ago, the highly reputable department of justice published a report defining cyberstalking, the dangers to children. In this report, the DOJ is not only through but prophetic as well. They clearly stated the problems of cyberstalking and predicted that the number of cyberstalkers would increase every with each passing year. Cyberstalking cases differ from regular stalking in that it is technologically based, though some cyberstalkers escalate their harassment to include physical stalking as well. A cyberstalker acts of out of anger or a need to control, or gain revenge over another person through threats, fear, and intimidation. There are several forms of cyberstalking, including:

- Harassing the victim
- Embarrassing and humiliating the victim
- Isolating the victim by harassing his family, friends, and employer
- Frightening the victim by using scare tactics and threats

Cyber stalking is serious because it is hard to detect, prevent, and isolate the process. It is also a serious problem because it helps in accessing anyone’s personal information and that personal information can help the stalker to stalk the victim in offline world also. Popularity of social networking sites help the stalkers to access the information easily. Blogs and social platforms provides locations on the blog or the photos posted on social media platforms which makes easy for the stalkers to detect the victim’s geographical area. Through this stalker can do anything by showing his dominance over the victim. The stalker feels that they are invisible and can commit cyber stalking easily and nobody can detect them. In many cases it is found that the stalker downloads the girl’s photos from her social media accounts and makes a fake profile and posts vulgar posts which can make the girl more depressed.
Hess, a victim of cyber stalking, wrote an article on how she was being stalked. Hess ends her article on a somber note, listing the ways in which her online stalker still abuses her, and her method of documenting it. She saves every comment, tweet and blog post he makes, prints them out and then files the stacks of papers nearly in her apartment, waiting for the day she’ll need to turn them into the police.

When we see such things a question comes in our mind that how can we avoid these things? The answer is not by leaving all online activity but by doing these following steps:

- Avoiding posting personal data on social media platforms because it can be used in various ways to harm you.
- To avoid fake profile cases conduct your name search always, if found immediately report it.
- Always create strong passwords; stalkers will always try to hack your account by entering different combination of passwords.
- Never give any personal information to phone calls or unidentified e-mails.
- If you have doubt that you are being stalked immediately inform to the authority or your guardian.

We are responsible for this and we must raise our voice against it. We should teach our children because a responsible citizen leads to a responsible family and a responsible family leads to a good nation. It is also seen that the victim’s voice is stifled within them. Our society needs to understand that the victims are not responsible for that heinous crime but that stalker is required to get that punishment.
Cyber bullying

Cyber bullying is when someone uses technology to send mean, threatening, or embarrassing messages to or about another person. It might be in a text, e-mail, message, or in a post online. Cyber bullying can be anonymous, which can sometimes make it even worse. It also has a wider audience, and can spread quickly. Finally, targets of cyber bullying often feel like they can’t get away from the bullying. If someone is bullying you at school, when you leave for the day it’s over. But cyber bullying can follow you home, and continue all night. Cyber bullying is rife on the internet and most young people will experience it or see it at some time. In our recent national bullying survey, 56% of young people said they have seen others be bullied online and 42% have felt unsafe online. Cyber bullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and it can go viral very fast.

There are many ways of bullying someone online and for some it can take shape in more ways than one. Some of the types of cyber bullying are:

**Harassment** - This is the act of sending offensive, rude, and insulting messages and being abusive. Nasty or humiliating comments on posts, photos and in chat rooms. Being explicitly offensive on gaming sites.

**Denigration** – This is when someone may send information about another person that is fake, damaging and untrue. Sharing photos of someone for the purpose to ridicule, spreading fake rumours and gossip. This can be on any site online or on apps. We even hear about people altering photos of others and posting in online for the purpose of bullying.

**Flaming** – This is when someone is purposely using really extreme and offensive language and getting into online arguments and fights. They do this to cause reactions and enjoy the fact it causes someone to get distressed.

**Impersonation** – This is when someone will hack into someone’s email or social networking account and use the person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others. The making up of fake profiles on social network sites, apps and online are common place and it can be really difficult to get them closed down.

**Outing and Trickery** – This is when someone may share personal information about another or tricks someone into revealing secrets and forwards it to others. They may also do this with private images and videos too.

**Cyber Stalking** – This is the act of repeatedly sending messages that include threats of harm, harassment, intimidating messages, or engaging in other online activities that make a person afraid for his or her safety. The actions may be illegal too depending on what they are doing.

**Exclusion** – This is when others intentionally leave someone out of a group such as group messages, online apps, gaming sites and other online engagement. This is also a form of social bullying and a very common.

The worst thing about social networking sites and messaging apps is that anything nasty posted about you can be seen by lots of people and these posts can go viral very fast and be shared by so many people within minutes in some cases. From what we have heard from people who have been bullied online, the most vicious gossip and rumors are often spread by people who were once your best friends so it's best to keep secrets and personal information to yourself. Only tell people things if
it wouldn't embarrass you if other people found out about them. Posting false and malicious things about people on the internet can be classed as harassment.

Cyber bullying takes place by commenting abusive comments of the victim’s physical appearance, sexual behavior, sexual concern, guinam on social media platforms. Not only this but victim is also bullied based on their choice of sexual partners (lesbian).

Even though Black’s experience is pretty unique, she knows that bullying isn’t. she says:

"I will never fully understand how I became one of the first people to experience online bullying in an extremely intense way," she continued. "But I do know now that what happened to me is truly just a global extension of something that goes on in every school, on every computer screen and in every neighborhood. Black wants everyone to know that if you’re experiencing bullying, you don’t have to handle it alone.

When we navigate our concern on cyber bullying in India, we come across the fact that it has spread it roots to a vast area. An Indian victim of cyber bullying says: "Nobody needs to suffer in silence, like I did, for so many years. Talk to someone who can help, whether that’s a friend, a trusted adult or a mental health professional," she concluded in her essay. "Whatever a bully is saying about you is wrong. It didn’t feel that way when I was 13 and people were writing about how awful and undeserving I was, but I now know they were wrong."

In India, we can see the cases of cyber bullying in a vast quantity, many of them which remains unreported because of the fear of being punished or not supported by their guardian or authority. The data comes in a way which is very scaring for the future generation and also for the future of our country. In 2018 India has the highest percentage of cyber bullying:

![Five countries facing the highest percentage of cyberbullying](image_url)
The IT ACT 2000 should be re-amended to specific provisions pertaining to cyber bullying. Further, cyber bullying needs to be made a serious offence with minimum five years imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 10 lakh. Unless you have deterrence in law, it will continue to be a prevalent offence. We need to divert our concern toward this because it will have a very disastrous effect in every aspect of developing our nation.

**Pornography or going viral of girl's photos**

It is a new world order where technology rules everything we do. This is why smartphones are very important in our lives and we do all sorts of things with them. Some people go as far as sharing nude pictures with their trusted friends. For others, they may mistakenly share the nudes online or hackers may take advantage of their phone’s insecurity to hack their phones or computer and splash the picture all over the Internet. And before you flip your fingers, the picture has gone viral and may have been viewed or clicked thousands of times. This can be very embarrassing and can lead to depression and then suicide.

Most of this type of online abuse is done by ex-boyfriend and ex-husband. According to the data of BBC shows that most of the revenge porn takes place among college students who are in the age of 20-29.

**How old are victims of revenge pornography?**

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<th>Percentage of age of victims where mentioned in police reports</th>
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The child pornography is another concern to be taken care of because many small children become the victims of this heinous act. From the very small age they are bound to be used as a sex toy and this is also a shameful act of our society. From the very small age they are exposed to the pornography and they become a source of income of the sex agents. The children and youths portrayed extensive exposure to online pornography. Boys and girls as young as 12 years of age reported regularly accessing online pornography out of curiosity and for sexual gratify. The children and youths were acutely aware that viewing pornography
was illegal and against their parents' rules. Many feared being caught, yet none indicated having been. The children and youths described a sophisticated ability to "cover" online tracks to prevent parents from discovering evidence of their having accessed pornography. Victimization through child pornography means that the victimization never ends. Images placed on the internet can never be fully erased or recovered. Images continue to be passed from person to person indefinitely. Many users of child pornography amass large collections. Immediate effects on child victims: Physical injury and pain, including sexually transmitted diseases; Feelings of shame, unworthiness, anger, and confusion; Somatic responses (headaches, stomachaches, etc.); Withdrawal and isolation; Anxiety, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including nightmares, flashbacks, etc. Long-term effects on child victims: Depression, anxiety, PTSD, and other mental illness; Feelings of worthlessness & low self-esteem. A teenage girl was recalling what her childhood had been like—a childhood marred by porn. "When I was eight years old," she wrote "my father made me look at [pornographic] pictures involving sex acts he wanted her to perform."I went along with him, not knowing any better," she said. For years this girl's father raped her while using these pictures—and at age 16, she had a sexually transmitted disease. "I may die of this disease," she wrote sadly. "Pornography has ruined my life."

Not only children but also many of the celebrity's nudes have gone viral and it never got erased as it is impossible to erase something permanently from the internet. In India nudes of celebrities like Radhika apte , poonam pandey, shruti hasan etc have gone viral. It puts a question mark on our society that even the VIP became the victims, then how safe is the normal people.

The youths were extremely reluctant or unwilling to tell their parents about accessing online pornography, out of "embarrassment" or fear of punishment both by their parents and by the law. Some youths knew of resources that allowed them to remain anonymous, such as cybertip.ca. Despite their own feelings of guilt and responsibility, the children and youths expressed the conviction that ‘innocent’ children needed to be protected from exposure to pornography, which they considered to be ‘abuse’.

Conclusion

As a result of the scale of this type of abuse, some women have resorted to self-censorship or have disengaged from their work or online platforms. In an era where technology is quickly becoming everything, the consequences of women being unable to access the Internet safely and securely, without facing misogynist abuse, cannot be overstated, and have a direct impact on women’s right to freedom of expression as well as equality in society as a whole. As noted earlier, some self-taken indecent images will be as a result of grooming and facilitation by adult offenders. Social networking sites are also often used by perpetrators as an easy way to access children and young people for sexual abuse. The primary purpose of Police involvement in these cases should be to ensure that the potential contact with adult exploiters is properly explored. As per Police guidance, the focus of investigations
should not be on the behaviour of children who have been the victims of abuse or exploitation but on the adult offenders who 'coerce, exploit, and abuse children and young people'.

A referral to Children’s Social Care should also be made on the same day if there is evidence that persons found in possession of indecent photographs/pseudo photographs of children are living with, or have unsupervised contact with, children and young people.

Adults who have made/taken, download or distributed abusive images of children, have committed an offence under the Sexual Offences Act 2003 and a referral to the Police is always required. If the alleged abuser lives in a household with children/young people or comes into contact with children/young people through their personal, work or voluntary activities a referral to Social Care will also be required. Radical and extremist groups use social media as way of attracting and drawing in children and young people to their particular cause; this is similar to the grooming processes and exploits the same vulnerabilities. Threats of violence and abuse online have a profound impact on women at all levels of individual development. Victims experience a sense of fear and attack on their integrity. Amnesty International found that of the women who experienced abuse or harassment online, 41% of responding women felt that their physical safety was threatened. In the same survey, 1 in 5 of women in the UK (20%) and over 1 in 4 (26%) in the USA said they felt their family’s safety was at risk after experiencing abuse or harassment on social media platforms. 1 in 2 women experienced lower self-esteem or loss of self-confidence as well as stress, anxiety or panic attacks as a result of cyber violence.

India has been slowly waking up to the pervasiveness of violence against women in the online sphere. While it lacks a nationwide comprehensive study on the issue, the widespread prevalence of gender based online harassment and abuse against women has come increasingly under the spotlight owing to the national and international media. Women journalists and other women who make their political stance known online are especially vulnerable to receiving sexist and misogynistic comments that often escalate to criminal abuse in the form of rape and death threats. Women who face online violence or witness other women facing abuse often exit or suppress their visibility online. Attacks by a multitude of abusers working in tandem – often referred to as a ‘troll army – creates an environment of hostility leading to a chilling effect on women’s free-expression.

The union Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) has taken steps to tackle online harassment and violence. Complaints of online harassment can be made directly to #IamTrolledHelp, the social media handle of the Ministry.

Apart from the above, the Government has set up a Cell with a dedicated email id, i.e. complaint-mwcd@gov.in, to report complaints relating to online trolling/harassment with effect from July, 2016. So far, 97 complaints have been received through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.
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