

The Repercussions of Technology and Social Media on Mental Health of Women

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ABSTRACT

Although technology is a blessing and social media gives them an opportunity to reconnect with the old friends but it also has certain negative aspects. The anti-social elements are constantly on prowl to target women who seem vulnerable to them. They target women not only on Facebook Instagram but also on matrimonial websites. Disclosing personal information on social media makes people particularly women more vulnerable to cyber bullying, trolling and other crimes of gruesome nature. There are plethora of laws in our country which safeguard the rights and security of women but despite these laws there is a proliferation in crimes against women. (Halder & Jaishankar, 2008, 2009, 2011b). This paper attempts to find out the various reasons behind the fact as to why Indian women are being victimized

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Internet and social media have brought people closer to each other. The world has turned into a global village. All kinds of information be it related to politics, sports, fashion is all a click away from the masses. Through social media and internet people get lots of opportunities to build social relationships and embark on new business ventures (Finn J 2000) Social media has proved to be a blessing for mankind but at the same time it also has series repercussions. (Halder & Jaishankar, 2009). Social media has empowered every section of society including women who had been relegated to confined spaces since ages. Women are reaping the benefits of social media and internet.

Internet in literal sense has a emancipated women from the shackles of patriarchy and give them an opportunity to transform their dreams into reality. women have a platform from where they can voice there opinions and ideologies. (Barak A 2000) Internet has impacted women and made life smoother for Indian women since they can buy things online but at the same time it also poses challenges and threats to the security and safety of women. The safety and mental health of women is precarious because of the anti-social elements in the virtual world who are always on the prowl to victimize innocent people. (Halder & Jaishankar, 2009). Indian women often bear the brunt of having their accounts on social media. The proliferation in crimes against women on Internet and social media can also be attributed to the deeply ingrained patriarchal notions and regressive thought patterns in our

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society (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). There are plethora of stories where women have been subjected to torture and injuries of emotional and psychological nature have been inflicted on them on social media. In this article we have attempted to unravel the factors behind the proliferation of cyber crime against women.

Drastic changes in the life styles of people

In India nuclear family structures have superseded joint family structure. In joint families people were close to each other and had plethora of opportunities to share their feelings and emotions. Foundation of family was trust and respect. In Indian family since men are pre occupied with their work women particularly homemakers become solitary. They are more likely to fall prey to mental health issues in order to overcome the desolation. In order to unburden themselves and get rid of emotional baggage they begin to befriend strangers online. Sometimes chatting and interacting with unknown people provides them an opportunity to vent out their bottled-up emotions (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011b). Parkins (2012) carried out a study about gender and emotional expressiveness. Results of the study concluded that women are more emotionally expressive and communicative than men Thus it becomes easier to seek personal information from women which can later be misused by the perpetrators. Once information including address, bank details, photographs becomes available to the perpetrator it becomes easier for them to damage women be it physically, mentally, financially or emotionally. There have been many instances where abominable crimes of gruesome nature were perpetrated by anti social elements (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011b). Due to this soft nature and emotional temperament women easily fall prey to crimes in the virtual world. (Halder & Jaishankar, 2009)

Inadequate knowledge about viruses and other softwares

Halder and Choudhuri (2011) research to find out level of computer knowledge amount male and female teachers The results of the study revealed that women are less equipped with computer knowledge as compared to the male counterparts. Busch (1995) examined anxiety in relation to computer among males and females the outcome of the study demonstrated that males experienced less anxiety as compared to women. Victimization of women in virtual world can be attributed to the dearth of knowledge or inadequate or frugal knowledge regarding the viruses and privacy policies to be followed for a safe experience on social networking sites. (Finn J 2000)

Process of socialization

Parenting and the role of socialization is very crucial in crime against women in our country (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). In India women are expected to be meek, submissive and docile. Men are expected to be bold and aggressive the very process of gender socialization has a profound impact on the crimes that take place against women in our society The concept of honour is attached to the image of women in the family. The burden of honour of a family lies on the shoulders of a woman. They are supposed to stay quiet and suppress their voices if something goes against their honour Sometimes, they are also taught to bear the atrocities in there in laws house silently. Because of such rearing practices and socialization women become submissive and gradually learn to condone violence and other crimes that are perpetrated against them. (Geetha, 2002).

Marginalization of women and the fragile position in society makes them soft target for such crimes (Griffiths, 1998). Due to fear of being stigmatized and being frowned upon by society women choose to stay shut and brush the issues under the rug. Such kind of socialization does nothing good but only proves to be detrimental for the overall well-being

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and mental health of women. It emboldens the culprits as they begin to think that women will never raise the voices against the crimes that are being perpetrated against them. They begin to think they can harm women and go scot free.

Stigmatization by society

Crime against women on Internet and social media can take abominable forms ranging from morphing the pictures of the victim to coercing her to confer sexual favors to the culprit. Halder, 2013). The culprit tries to tarnish the image of the women by threatening to upload her pictures and videos on sites and blackmailing her. Women refrain to come out and complain against the perpetrators because they strongly believe that the society will blame them and it will damage not only their reputation but also the reputation of their family (Halder & Jaishankar, 2011). There is always a risk and danger of facing harassment by society after facing harassment online. The double harassment faced by women online and by society can adversely impact her overall being.

Opportunities for open communication and obsession

Sometimes people become so obsessed with Internet that that it profoundly affects the thoughts feelings and behaviors this kind of obsession can range from online shopping, surfing to having dating relationships online (Griffiths, 1995, 1998). The anonymity of the person online gives opportunity to have communication with people without any inhibition.

People seek escape from the daily hassles and emotional turmoil of their lives through online dating and chatting. Casual conversations to having an affair online can also have grave repercussions. There have been numerous cases where online dating ended up in a fiasco. (Barak 2005). The recent case of a Swiss national being slain by her lover in Delhi is an example of such gruesome crime. Even in Shraddha Walker case the victim Shraddha was befriended online by her boyfriend who later brutally murdered her.

CONCLUSION

Technology's empower people from all sections of society and gives them opportunity to transform their dreams into reality. Through internet People can have access to meaningful information, keep themselves abreast of the happenings in the world embark on new business ventures and get hang of new things. But like everything else it also has negative aspects which can have serious repercussions for people particularly women who are considered vulnerable by the society.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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