Cyber Crime Against Women and Girls on Social Sites in Bangladesh

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INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet and modern communication devices with multiple features like camera, radio, general packet radio service and Wi-Fi networks and the wide diffusion of social media have made dramatic changes in human lives. It has created a virtual world with no boundaries; allows people to develop both personal and professional relationships across borders. The World Wide Web (WWW) permits users to disseminate content in the form of text, images, video, and audio. Worldwide, the number of people using the Internet is increasing day by day (Mala, 2016; UN Broadband Commission for Digital Development, 2015). As of June 30, 2018, more than half of the total world population i.e. 4.2 billion (55.12%) is using the Internet (Internet World Stats, 2018) for entertainment, business, education, information sharing and other purposes. In addition, social networking websites (SNWs) like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Flickr, LinkedIn, Snap chat, Twitter have developed a new platform to meet people. Around 2.62 billion people use different social network sites (Statista, 2018). It allows people to share ideas, pictures, posts, activities, events, and interests with people in their network. Regardless of any distinction, women in society are enjoying this liberation. It allows them to share their experiences with the whole world; their success stories as well as their problems (Halder & Jaishankar, 2009).

However, social sites have also created avenues for various criminal activities. Cybercriminals abuse the technology to abuse people for financial gain, to take revenge, to defame, to ridicule and humiliate for their self-enjoyment and so on. Therefore, social sites put people at risk while it makes life easier, safer, and more social. Pew Research Center (2014) reports that 73% of the adult Internet users have witnessed someone be harassed online and 40% have personally experienced it. The Internet Crime Complaint Center, known as IC3 received 3,463,620 cybercrime complaints since its inception. According to the IC3 report, the total cybercrimes reported in the US shows a steady increase from 2013 to 2015. In 2013, the number of cybercrimes reported was 262,813; in 2014 it was 269,422 and in 2015 it further augmented to 288,012. The Office for National Statistics reported that there were 5.1 million estimated cybercrimes and scams in England and Wales in 2014 (Mala, 2016).

Women are more vulnerable to cyber threats than men are as the offenders were unaccountable for the offences they commit. Moreover, the criminals are committing traditional crimes using the latest information technology as committing the crime is easier and investigating it gets tougher. In the contemporary world, instances of cybercrimes against women are increasing alarmingly (Halder & Jaishankar, 2009). According to the United Nations Broadband Commission Report (2015), women aged 18 to 24 years are at risk of cybercrime victimization. EU estimates show that one in ten women has experienced some form of cyber violence since the age of 15 and the impact on their lives is far more traumatic (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). Women are receiving unwanted emails often containing indecent and obnoxious language. The vulnerability and security of women is a major concern globally (Halder

& Jaishankar, 2008). According to IC3 (2015), in the US, 47.09% of the cybercrime complaints were reported by women. Women made 70% of the cybercrime complaints to the Working to Halt Abuse, a non-profitable organization, from 2000 to 2014 from all around the world. The organization further stated that 42% of the victims did not report their victimization (Mala, 2016). Statista (2017) reports that worldwide 57% of the surveyed women experienced abuse or harassment via Facebook.

Like other parts of the world, the number of Internet users is growing very fast in Bangladesh specifically, through mobile networks. There are 85.92 million Internet subscribers as of April 2018 and among them, 29 million are registered Facebook users; one-third of the subscribers of the Internet are women (BTRC, as cited in Akter, 2018). The average time people stay on Facebook and other social sites has gone up in recent times. People consciously or unconsciously reveal too much of their personal life. Bangladesh ICT Division's Cyber-Help Desk received more than 17,000 complaints; women made 70%. It is found that more than 60% of women faced some form of harassment on Facebook; about 10% of them filed complaints that their images were stolen, merged with pornographic images, and made available on the Internet (Rabbi, 2017). However, they mostly avoid legal assistance due to social stigma.

The Cyber Crime Awareness Foundation Bangladesh (CCABD) reports that 51.13% of women are victims of cybercrime. Women belonging to age group 18 to 30 years mostly become the victim of such crimes (73.71%), while 0.52% are below the age of 18, and 12.77% are of 30 to 45 years and 3% are above 45 years of age. Women Facebook users are often victims of fake accounts and hacking. Once a fake account is created, the stalker spreads propaganda through the accounts; study reveals that 9.77% of women are the victims of such stalking. In addition, the offender can easily send threating messages to the victim and harass her ("51.13pc women harassed on social media," 2018). However, identifying criminal is a difficult job due to the lack of evidence and fear of defamation.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are:

- To understand the impacts of cybercrime on women in Bangladesh;
- To find out existing schemes and mechanisms to deal with the offenders of cybercrime; and
- To explore remedial measures to protect women and girls against cybercrime.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on cybercrime against women and its consequences is an emerging field. There have been a number of studies on cybercrime against women in the international arena.

Sankhwar and Chaturvedi (2018) recognized cybercrime as a major challenge facing law enforcement agencies in India. They claimed that digital space in India opened doors to cybercriminals and the offenders used the cyber platforms to harass and abuse women and children. They focused on the existing legislative intervention measures and prescribed a few suggestions to curtail cyber-crime against woman and children.

Uma (2017) explored common forms of cybercrimes committed against women in India. She claimed that the existing provisions regarding information technology failed to realize women's experiences. The study recommended amendments in the laws to ensure remedies for the female victims of cybercrime.

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