

# Sociology of Cyber Crime: A Discourse Analysis with Special Reference to India

Dr. Jyoti Sidana

Associate Professor, Dept. of Sociology, Govt. Arts Girls College Kota (Rajasthan)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.805019>

Received: 11 April 2024; Accepted: 26 April 2024; Published: 28 May 2024

## ABSTRACT

In day-to-day language, deviance means moving from an accepted direction to a different direction, that is, not following the accepted norms and expectations of a specific social group is called deviation and crime is an important form of deviance. That is, crime is behaviour expressing violation of the law of the concerned state which brings into existence the prescribed punishment. The rapid expansion of the information revolution and the process of globalization made the concept of cyber-crime possible. Cyber-crime means a crime which is committed through computers and networks. Crimes used to happen earlier too but modern technology has not only created new forms of crime but has also increased the rate of crime.

**Keywords:** Virtual society, cyber-crime, online and offline relationships, cyber bullying, risk society, network society.

## INTRODUCTION

Globalization has converted the whole world into a village (Global Village). It is true that due to the process of globalization, the society formed by the network of social relations has transformed into a virtual society formed by networks. Where there are no face-to-face relationships i.e., offline relations between individuals but there are online relations. It does not require repetition of contact, communication and interactions which are considered to be the constitutive elements of social relations. Now aspects like, share, comment, status updates are considered essential for online relationships. A virtual community consists of a group of people united by a common interest or motivation. They meet in a dedicated digital space where they can connect with each other, use each other's stories and experiences to drive progress and build meaningful relationships. Therefore, now it cannot be denied that no place or geographical space is required to form a society, but through computers and internet, a virtual society of relationships can be established even without geographical space. As a result, the emergence of 'network society' can be seen. The concept of the network society, developed by Manuel Castells, is used in sociological studies to examine the global forces that transform collective action and institutions. In contrast to the concept of the "information society", the network society is seen as an information age social structure organized around relations of production/consumption, power and experience. Castells explains the network society as a social structure that emerges from the interaction of new technologies and social organization. He distinguishes the network society from information and knowledge societies, arguing that knowledge and information are central to societies, but it has always been so, in all historical societies. Social networking has also intensified the distinction between 'online interaction' and 'offline interaction'. 'Online interaction' lacks face-to-face relationships and hence body language is not visible, we use 'written words' instead of 'spoken words'. It is an established argument that written words are relatively more effective and help in developing intimacy in relationships quickly. And that is why this 'online interaction' is taking a person from 'real life' to 'virtual life' which is called 'first life' and 'second life' respectively.

Today, people of all age groups – women, men, children, youth and teenagers – are network users in large numbers and spend most of their time in 'online interaction'. This tendency has forced a person to run away from the practicalities and reality of the real world. The younger generation is experiencing a world that doesn't really exist. Through the 'virtual world', which is a virtual/imaginary world, he wants or is trying to fulfil such dreams which he probably cannot fulfil in his real life. On one hand, social networking sites

provide him a platform to fulfil such dreams. And on the other hand, this generation has become a victim of 'schizophrenia' (a serious mental illness in which the patient is unable to differentiate between the real and imaginary world and behaves in a strange and unexpected way, i.e., it can also be called a fragmented mentality) because cyberspace has a new classification has been created in the form of 'online personality' and 'offline personality'. 'Online personality' is a social identity that an internet user establishes in online communities and websites. It may also be an actively constructed presentation of oneself. The 'online personality' is far from reality, he/she feels extremely satisfied because her friend list is very long and he/she gets many 'likes' and 'comments' whenever she updates her 'status'. And they find themselves forced to stay online most of the time to check these, which impacts their offline life and relationships. On the other hand, 'Offline personality' is pretty straightforward. It is how we act around other people, what information we tell and to who. Here the question becomes important that 'are we in control of technology or is technology in our control'? It can be said that 'Technology can be a good servant but it is a bad master'. For example, this online world has given shape to the concept of cyber-crime which has posed a serious challenge to the security system.

As a result of the rapid changes that the information revolution and rapid technological development have brought about in the society, changes can be seen in the nature and form of all the institutions like family, marriage, kinship, politics, religion, education, economy, market etc. Extended family to joint family - Joint family to nuclear family - Nuclear family to single parent family - Single parent family to Dink family (Double income no kids) - Dink family to nuclear household family, indicate the changing nature of family (Extended family—Joint family—Nuclear family—Single Parent family—DINK family—Single Household family) due to which dominance of individualism in all spheres like marriage pattern, kinship, politics, economy, decline of collectivism, loss of trust in relationships, lack of sharing of ideas. There has been a rapid emergence of values like ending the habit of selfishness, self-centred culture etc. Resultant People try to stay busy till late night by chatting on mobile, playing online games, taking selfies, using WhatsApp or Facebook to end their loneliness. And without realizing it, this online culture has affected our social life to a pathological level. That is, along with relationships, markets, education etc., crimes have also started happening online. Withdrawing money from anyone's bank account, obtaining personal information, stealing formal and informal data, tampering with anyone's photo available on social media, uploading obscene photos or videos, sending obscene messages, personal Examples like threatening/blackmailing of making information public can be discussed in this context.

According to National Crime Records Bureau data 9,622 cases of cyber-crime were reported in the year 2014. In the last 5 years, there has been a two-fold increase in the cases of cyber bullying. In the year 2015 there were 11,592 cases of cyberbullying while in the year 2016 this number increased to 12,317. Recently 65,893 cases were registered under Cyber Crimes, showing an increase of 24.4 percent in registration over 2021 (52,974 cases). Crime rate under this category increased from 3.9 in 2021 to 4.8 in 2022. In the 19 Metro cities also, there was a large jump in registered cases related to Cyber Crimes with a 42.7 percent increase seen. A total of 1.13 million cases of financial cyber fraud were reported in 2023. According to statistics, India is at third place in this matter. According to a newspaper, 80 percent of children in the country have smartphones and in 73 percent of the cases, children facing cyber bullying are below 16 years of age. Probably these figures no longer surprise anyone because daily newspapers are full of such news.

Online child sexual exploitation refers to the sexual exploitation of children under the age of 18 as well as sharing images of abuse, luring children, live streaming, inducing further crimes and coercive blackmail. As technological development is becoming rapid, many new forms of this crime are emerging. It is not that child sexual abuse did not occur before the advent of the Internet era, but this online facility has made this problem very easy and intense. Some examples can be discussed here like:

- A student studying in a school in Kanpur became a victim of cyber bullying and now he neither works on the computer nor plays with friends.
- Someone edited the photo of a student from Banaras with a girl studying in his class and posted it on social networking sites, due to which both of them did not go to school for a long time due to shyness.
- In another case, an engineering student from Punjab committed suicide in his hostel room because his two seniors were harassing him by posting objectionable comments about him on Facebook.

- An IMA student from Bangalore also committed suicide because after the breakup, her boyfriend wrote on Facebook that 'I am feeling super cool after leaving my girlfriend'.
- A cheerful schoolgirl from Allahabad has become a victim of depression because due to some issue her friends deleted her from the WhatsApp group and unfriended her from Facebook due to which she started feeling humiliated.

These incidents are just indicative, many such incidents can be read every day in daily newspapers or seen in television programs like 'Crime Patrol' or 'Savdhaan India'. Cyber Bullying means in this, cyber criminals first befriend women or girls, then win their trust, obtain photos from them and then force them to do whatever they want. Its various forms are prevalent but mainly the following four forms are discussed more which are as follows-

**Cyber stalking** i.e., repeatedly sending text messages to someone, sending friend requests, keeping an eye on status updates and internet monitoring come under the category of this crime.

**Flaming** means sending obscene, lewd or rude messages about that person to a person or to an online group through e-mail or other means. In other words, Flaming is the act of posting insults, often including profanity or other offensive language, on the internet.

**Defamation** means sending harmful, false or cruel messages about a person to others or posting such material online.

**Cyber spying** i.e., installing cameras or recording devices in places like changing rooms, ladies' washrooms, hotel rooms and bathrooms is considered a crime.

**Masquerade/farce** means sending or posting such material to the concerned person under the pretext of someone else which makes that person feel upset or bad. Masquerading attacks consist of a person imitating someone else's identity and using legitimate sources to carry out cyber-crimes in the victim's name.

**Outing** means sending or posting material about a person that contains personal messages or pictures/photos, sensitive, personal or embarrassing information. Outing is a form of cyber bullying. The bully shares private information about the victim often sharing private messages by forwarding them or posting them online.

**Exclusion** means cruelly removing or excluding a person from an online group.

**Cyber pornography** means obscene photos or videos of women are obtained and posted online. Photos are used to tamper with, defame, harass and blackmail.

Market research firm Insight Strategy Group recently reported that children aged 5 to 12 spend most of their time on social media like YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Tik-Tok, Facebook and due to their young age, they are not able to differentiate between How much of the content shown on social media is right and how wrong. Without caring about what should be posted on social sites and what not, they start using all these things as entertainment and do not realize when they become addicted to it and become victims of cyber-crime.

Many reasons can be held responsible behind all these incidents but more in part, people hold technological development responsible. But this fact cannot be denied that along with the development of the society, technological development will also take shape in the society, it cannot be stopped. But it is in the hands of humans whether they use it or misuse it. Technology is like a sharp knife (weapon) with which they cut fruits/vegetables or cut someone's throat. In this the fault lies not with the knife but with the person who cuts it. To meet the needs of rapidly increasing population, science developed technology to help humans in doing many tasks easily and saving time so that the remaining time can be used in other useful tasks. But without thinking, humans started spending that free time on social sites considering it as extra time, due to which the society is forced to face many ill effects today. Ulrich Beck, who has written extensively about globalization and risk, argues that risk is inherently present in modern society, creating a Global Risk

Society. The risk society described in the work of Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens is a social formation in which vulnerability and responsibility for dangers are the object of calculation and calculated distribution among the population. Examples of these risks include climate change, global warming, forest fires, environmental disasters and pandemics. Technological changes are taking place in modern society and technology has introduced many new types of risks to us, we need to constantly respond and adjust to these changes. He says that it is not limited only to environmental and health related hazards but it includes a whole range of changes within the contemporary social life such as changing employment patterns, increasing insecurity in jobs, decreasing influence of traditions and customs, abolition of traditional family patterns and democratization of personal relationships, etc. Beck believes that the specialty of the modern risk society is that the risks are not limited to just one country. In the era of globalization, these risks affect all countries and all classes. Beck argues that the dangers arising in modern societies have been created by ourselves in the name of social development and development of science and technology. The problem is that technology was developed but its use or misuse or advantages and disadvantages were not discussed in time and without knowing all this, we made modern technology an important part of our lives. So much so that technology has entered every part of social life of every age group whether it is public space or private space.

In such a situation, Herbert Marcuse indicates in his book 'One Dimensional Man' that developed/advanced industrial societies have created false needs which results in suffering and stress. For example, after the advent of mall culture, people started spending more on consumer goods, that is, many such things which were never part of human needs have now become part of basic needs. Similarly, after the emergence of information revolution, an increase in technology-centric needs can also be seen. From a young age, children have started becoming techno friendly, they have started depending on technology for all their work like making projects, doing homework, playing games, sharing etc. Probably that is why they have started liking friendship, relationship, entertainment, education, everything online. Not only this, but they prefer text messaging instead of voice contact. That is, in this generation it is common to communicate through writing instead of speaking. This generation is called 'Z-Generation'. This generation is the victim of an epidemic called FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), that is, this generation, accustomed to sharing every moment of their life on social media, always checks what their friends are doing on social media. This in a way generates negative emotions in children when they see others or friends having fun and as a result, they become victims of frustration and stress. On the other hand, many times to overcome their loneliness, they trust strangers online, who initially talk about their interest to win their trust and later, after establishing trust, share obscene videos or messages with them, blackmail them by misusing their pictures/photos, extorting money in the name of making their private conversations or photos public or forcing them to do wrong things, threatening them with harm to their family members. Because since the advent of Android phones, every person has become a part of the surveillance society where nothing is personal, everything is public. The surprising thing is that people don't even want to hide anything anymore. The worrying situation is that most of the population has started using social media but they are not aware of the negative aspects of using it. Even a large part of the illiterate and semi-educated population has started using it because this facility is available in many languages (regional languages), besides symbolic language in the form of emoji is also used in it, hence social media. Everyone's approach has been reached.

Therefore, it cannot be denied that the rapid development of technology has made many such negative aspects a part of human life, which has created challenges for human society. As a result, the youth and teenage generation are getting trapped in the web of cybercrime. Another thinker, John Bowlby in his book 'Forty-Four Juvenile Thieves', considers the socialization of children to be a cause of deviation if it does not generate emotional security. He believes that lack of emotional security turns children into chronic delinquents, meaning they routinely break rules and do not care about their possible consequences. Whatever is there in their life is today and now. That's why they don't care about what will happen tomorrow? Bowlby's argument seems to be correct to an extent that the socialization of children is to blame for this. Today most of the families have one or two children and both the parents are busy in professional life due to which families are unable to develop a sense of security in the children. Also, due to being a nuclear family or a single parent family, other family members like grandparents, uncles, aunts and others are absent in the family, due to which children are not able to learn the spirit of collectivism, tolerance, adjustment or compromise and the value of individualism. Gets involved in their life. As a result, they do

not have the habit of listening to anyone. They are so self-centred that they do not think about anyone else except themselves, no matter how much you try to explain them, they do not understand. 'Chill Karo' (chill out) is their favourite dialogue in life and when they get stuck in any problem, they become escapist. Because to face any problem or face any challenge, it is necessary to have a collective together, to share the problem with others so that its solution can be possible. This is not happening, possibly that is why an increase in aggression, anger, intolerance and suicidal tendencies can be seen in children/teenagers. Many studies prove that the increasing use of modern technology, especially social media, has caused not only mental but also physical diseases in children. Due to which the emergence of an unbalanced society can be seen, which Ulrich Beck has termed 'Risk Society'.

According to the Guardian, an American newspaper, incidents of online abuse have been reported against 10 journalists in Britain, out of which 8 were female journalists. It is clear that in the world, there are more incidents of online abuse against women than men. Also, according to another report, about three-fourths of women who use the Internet are victims of some form of cyber violence and only 35 percent of women file complaints against cyber-crimes. In fact, the main reason behind the rapid increase in such incidents is the lack of knowledge about cyber-crimes and law and the youth exploring imaginary worlds on networking sites where they find solace and try to run away from the many stresses of life. They try to establish trust in virtual relationships instead of real relationships and become so addicted to the virtual world that they lose touch with reality. And this is where cyber-crimes start taking shape.

## CONCLUSION

Therefore, there is a need that before adopting any technology, there should be public discourse on it on a large scale, its use and misuse should be made clear, which the market will never favour, because the market has no rules, ethics or values. The market only knows how to make profit and this is its only rule. Today the market has become bigger than the state, society and family or rather it has swallowed or marginalized all the formal and informal institutions. This statement fits well with today's marketism, 'Father is bigger than brother is the biggest rupee'. Therefore, it is certain that social sites are not making a person social but anti-social, hence there is a need to reshape the role of family, state and society, otherwise it is difficult to imagine what kind of shape the future society will take.

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