Fostering Responsible Online Behavior through Digital Ethics in Bangladesh: An Exploration of Vulnerability, Facts, and Catalysts

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the current Behavioral trends of Bangladeshi online users, vulnerability of different online security dimensions in Bangladesh, identify the impacts of different catalysts and roles of different institutes and stakeholder pursuing responsible online behavior. In this study, opinions of 10 general internet users and 5 E-entrepreneurs have been collected by using semi-structured questionnaire. Rank order scaling and constant sum scaling have been used to compare the data and form comparative analysis. It has been exhibited in this study that, authenticity, nonrepudiation and privacy are the most vulnerable dimensions of cyber security in Bangladesh. Digital ethics can pursue more responsible online behavior with the integration of legal influence and technological measures. Inclusion and collaboration of all the stakeholders like users, academics, E-entrepreneurs, government etc. might bring better digital environment in ethical concern. Family, Educational institutions and social community can play prominent role pursuing more responsible behavior in online by personality formation of tweens & teens, knowledge buildings of young adults and including digital ethics in social norms. This study is an attempt to more quantification of the facts and catalysts through comparison. Despite having a very nominal sample size, this study can serve as a foundation for further rigorous research on the factors and catalysts that encourage more responsible online behavior.

Keywords: Digital ethics, authenticity, privacy, online security

BACKGROUND

Due to the enormous development of Information and technology internet has become an indispensible part of people's life in recent times. Along with the world peoples of Bangladesh are also using social media in various purposes like interaction, sharing information, communication, business, entertainment etc. Most of the people are living dual life; real life and virtual life. Bangladesh is home to 77.36 million internet users in January 2024, 34.2% of whom are female and 65.8% are male. (Datareportal, 2024). In the month of July, 2024, 67179200 people have used Facebook, 7500000 have used Instagram, 60486100 have used Messenger and 8985000 have used Linkedin; additionally, 64.7% of the user of the most popular social media, Facebook was men and 35.3% were women. (Napoleoncat, 2024).

With above 40 million Facebook users, the use of social media in Bangladesh is significant. Bangladesh is now recognized as one of the most digitally allied countries of South Asia. (Ahmed, 2024) These perpetual digital alliances with real-time social platforms are silently evolving the behavioral patterns of the people in online.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the uninterrupted digital connectivity with other peoples through social media peoples scope of interaction with others are increasing gradually. While involving these diverse interactions with diverse people often the concern of internet ethics arises. "The moral evaluation of individual online behavior is known as internet ethics" (Van den Hoven, 2000)

According to (John & Catherine), (2009), Though due to the openness of digital media young people are getting exposed to diverse point of views and empowering them more to take over new responsibilities, but at

some points they might get involves in bullying, avoid accountability, and confine themselves in to narrow interest groups.

Demographic variables like gender and socio-economic condition might influence Ethical concern of people in online and their behavior in online. A study on students aged 11 to 16 in Hong Kong has showcased that male students have the tendency to get involved unethical behavior like unauthorized acts internet stickiness and plagiarism than female students, additionally, Students from lower socioeconomic class appeared to behave unethically than students from higher socio economic class. (Lau & Yuen, 2014)

In Bangladesh women tend to be the victim of cyber bullying than men. After pandemic the number of women entrepreneur using digital platform are growing promptly but not much initiative has been taken for ensuring women and/or women entrepreneurs' safety and security in digital space. Ecommerce Association of Bangladesh (E-CAB) offers 17 benefits for their members, whereas only two of them are related to safety and security. Such as: ensuring customer trust and reliability and assistance on e-Security to entrepreneurs. (https://e-cab.net/content-details/)

Effective communication and interaction are crucial for ensuring ethical behavior in online and all forms of interaction should be safeguarded under the categories of intellectual property, social impact, safety and quality, net integrity, and information integrity. (Namlu & Odabasi, 2007)

E-commerce security can be evaluated on the basis of six aspects like integrity, nonrepudiation, authenticity, confidentiality, privacy, and availability, where, integrity refers to no alteration of information by unauthorized party, nonrepudiation refers to no scope for deny online commitment, confidentiality refers to access of information only by target recipient, privacy refers to control over one's own information and availability refers to ensuring the availability of all parties to each other. (Laudon & Traver, 2014) Besides these online piracies, online hostility, online privacy & security breach, and online sexual harassment are the four underlying dimensions that have been validated by a survey on 308 general users and can use as parameters of measuring Internet unethical behaviors (IUEB) considering 27 factors. (Lin , Tseng, Yeh, Wang, Wang, & Wang, 2022)

Cyber education should be incorporated in formal and informal education to educate young people about the concept of cyber/digital ethics and the idea of responsible and ethical behavior in online so that they can contribute in positive engagement in online spaces , learn to protects the privacy of others, improve security and construct an accountable digital society. (Santhosh & Thiyagu , 2024) By combining information security policies with corporate social responsibility (CSR) that incorporated diversity and inclusion, fairness, and transparency, organizations might initiated corporate digital responsibility (CDR) to get rid of biased algorithms and embracing strict policies that surpass legal requirements. (Marquette University, 2023) Tracking and analyzing consumers' clickstream behavior are often use as tools of consumers; behavioral analysis and profiling, whereas in this Online behavioral targeting (OBT) technique the individual privacy of consumers are getting sacrificed. (Nill, 2014)

After radical evolution of Artificial intelligence the challenges of safety and security are becoming more challenging. Industry, Academia and government have to work conjointly to generate an ecosystem that can combine AI or other Challenges of IT with humanity. (Hossain, 2023) Technological development should consider some ethical concern like, Ethical considerations, Inclusive and fair access, Responsible AI development, Collaboration with stakeholders, Regulation and governance, Continuous monitoring and evaluation, Ethical design principles, Public awareness and education; for ensuring ethical and responsible online behavior along with digital literacy. (Telecom review, 2023)

Law and ethics both have set standards of moral principles or behavior and try to prohibit people from violating those standards. Violation of any ethical rules standard might mean losing conscience but cannot enforce by the law and jurisdiction, rather, moral principles, values, rules and regulations, rules of conducts and ethical practices are the entities of ethics that might be analyzed. (Tzafestas, 2018) Digital citizenship refers to use the internet in a legal, safe, ethical and responsible manner and for safeguarding the tweens and

teens and simultaneously keeping them responsible in online following things should be considered, such as, give respect and expect respect, protect self-reputation, self-privacy and think critically. (raisingchildren, 2023)

Research Gap

Quite a few prior researches are there in which the fact has been identified that people behave less responsibility and less ethically in online but the factors reasons behind this behavior are yet to explore and analyze. The different parameters of online security have been known to everyone but the level of their vulnerability in the context of Bangladesh is yet to be identified. Some researchers have already validated the significance of technology, laws and ethics separately and suggest combining them but comparison of their significance to the users is yet to be done. Besides these several researchers have mentioned about different institutions but not validate their roles and analyze the significance of their roles.

Therefore, this paper intended to understand current major online behavioral trends and the level of vulnerability of different dimensions of online security identify the significance of different catalysts while pursuing more responsible behaviour in online. Additionally, this study aims to provide an initial understanding of the roles of various institutions and stakeholders in promoting more responsible online behaviour.

Research Objective

The preliminary objective of this research is to investigate the behavioral trends and vulnerability of online security in Bangladesh, examining how factors such as technology, laws, ethics, and various institutions and stakeholders might contribute to promoting more responsible online behavior.

Research Question

RQ1: What are the current scenario/trends of social media in the behavioral aspects and what dimensions of ecommerce security seems more vulnerable in the context of Bangladesh?

RQ2: What scopes does Technology, Law and Ethics might have in ensuring more responsible and sensible behavior in online?

RQ3: How does different institute and stakeholders can contribute in pursuing more responsible behavior in online?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study a combination of descriptive approach and action research have been adopted for holistic understanding of the issues and the impacts of interventions. Primary data along with secondary data has been used for better understanding of the facts. Opinions of Five (5) E-entrepreneurs and ten (10) general users regarding different aspects of people's behavior in online have been collected through a survey using semi-structured questionnaire. Two (2) of the entrepreneurs were male whereas three (3) of them were female. Among ten (10) general users five (5) were men and five (5) were women.

The entire questionnaire was fragmented into two sections. The first section was intended to accumulate respondents' demographic information and the second was composed to get information regarding respondents' attitude regarding different aspects of online behavior of peoples, vulnerability, roles of different institutions etc.

For the second section, two comparative scaling techniques, rank order scaling and constant sum scaling have been used to measure their observations in relative terms. (Malhotra, 2008)

Judgmental sampling technique in accordance with convenience sampling technique has been used while selecting respondents. In this study, data has been analyzed in the lens of quantification of qualitative data along with qualitative comparative analysis.

A significant limitation of this study is its constrained sample size, which limits the generalizability of the findings to the broader population.

Analysis and findings

RQ1: What are the current scenario/trends of social media in the behavioral aspects and what dimensions of ecommerce security seems more vulnerable in the context of Bangladesh?

General users are mostly taking social media as a source of Entertainment, Communication and information. Conversely, E-entrepreneurs are mostly using Facebook for branding along with other purposes like Advertising and Promotion, Conduct Market Research, Attract New Customers, Customers Relationship management, Customer service, etc.

From the interviews two facts aspects has been mostly mentioned by the respondents, those are Lack of accountability and Breakdown of human relationship. 8 general users and 3 e-entrepreneurs think that lack of accountability is the reason behind people behaving inappropriate manner in online. They also believe that under the similar circumstances the same people will not behave in the same manner if it happens in real life. That means many people are not finding themselves accountable for their online behavior due to many reasons, like, lack of awareness about digital ethics, lack of verification of identity, lack of standard protocol, Lack of regulatory body, not facing any consequences, etc. Previous studies from other countries also align with the perception of a lack of accountability. According to 5 general users and 2 e-entrepreneurs, the other fact behind peoples such behavior is breakdown of human relationship which makes people more insensitive. Consequently, people are not feeling guilty even after doing any misconduct as the victim is not even acquaintances to them.

The respondents have shared their opinion about the most vulnerable dimensions of ecommerce security. The summary has shown in **figure-1.**
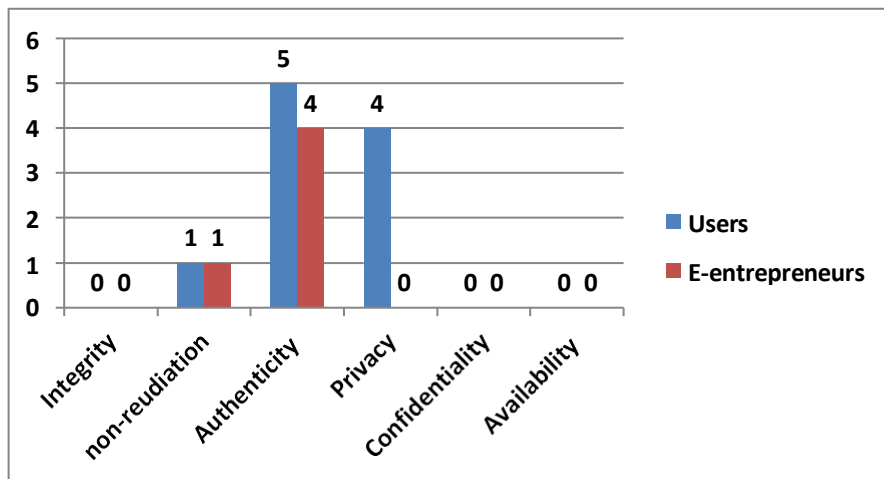

Figure 1: Vulnerability of the Dimensions of Security

From **Figure-1**, it is exhibited that, Non-repudiation, Authenticity and Privacy are identified as the most vulnerable dimensions of security according to the respondents. Authenticity has been identified by 5 users and 4 E-entrepreneurs as the most vulnerable one, whereas, non-repudiation has been identified by 1 users and 1 E-entrepreneurs as the most vulnerable one. Privacy was acknowledged by only 4 users as the most vulnerable dimension. As most of the social media platforms does not has any mechanism to check the authenticity of the people by verifying their identity, Therefore, people tend to create fake account and using that account in all kind of wrongdoings. Even if their account get restricted or reported, they can easily open a new account in the same website and do the same things. Privacy has been an issue to the users only as they are losing control over their information while using social media platforms as most of the sites do not has any mechanism to protect their users' privacy. According to the respondents, Compare to others social media users found Linkedin in a slightly better position in context of privacy than other platforms. Non-repudiation is another

concerned issue for both users and e-entrepreneurs. People might feel less accountable due to lack of authenticity and might deny their online agreements and actions.

RQ2: What scopes does Technology, Law and Ethics might have in ensuring more responsible and sensible behavior in online?

To pursue people to behave more sensibly in online and make them more accountable for their online behavior technology, law and ethics can contribute. A comparative analysis has been done by using constant-sum scale for the opinion of the users and e-entrepreneurs about the implication of these three to pursue for responsible online behavior

Technological solution Vs. Ethical concern

In this section, the respondents were requested to allocate 100 points to Technological solution and Ethical Concern in a way that reflects the significance of their roles in pursuing Responsible Online Behavior.

Table 1: Comparison of the Significance of Technical Solutions and people's Ethical Concerns in pursuing Responsible Online Behavior. (Users' Perspective)

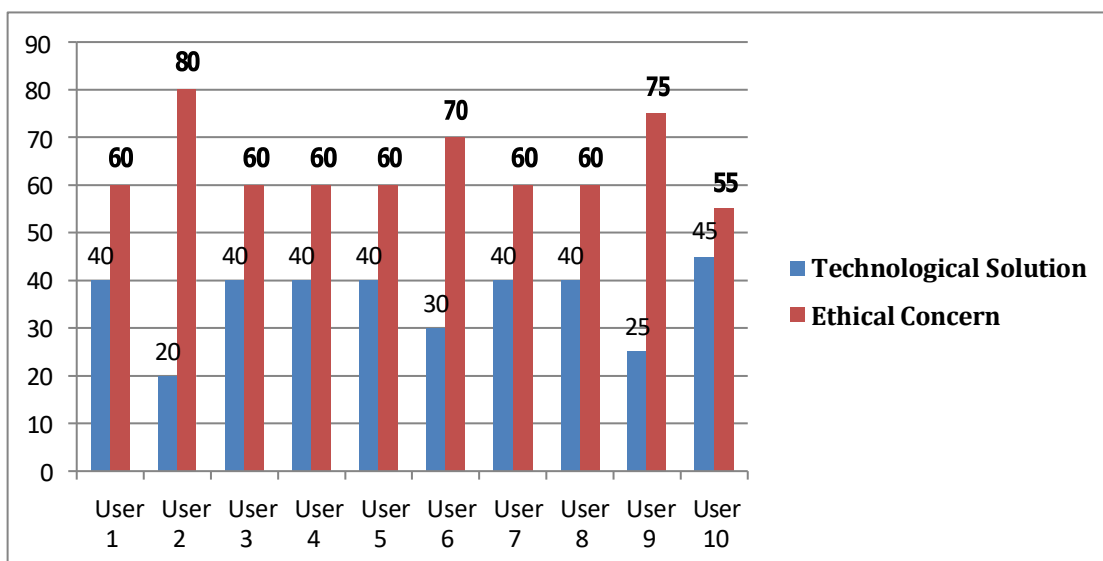| Respondents	Technological solution	Ethical concern	Sum
User 1	40	**60**	100
User 2	20	**80**	100
User 3	40	**60**	100
User 4	40	**60**	100
User 5	40	**60**	100
User 6	30	**70**	100
User 7	40	**60**	100
User 8	40	**60**	100
User 9	25	**75**	100
User 10	45	**55**	100

Figure 2: Comparison of the Significance of Technical Solutions and people's Ethical Concerns in pursuing Responsible Online Behavior. (User's Perspective)

From **Table-1** and **Figure -2**, it is exhibited that, all the users have assigned more points in Ethical concerns of users than Technological solution of the platform. Six (6) users out of Ten (10) users have allocated 60 points to Ethical concern, whereas they allocate only 40 points to Technological solution. It indicates that 2/3 weight has been put on ethical concern and 1/3 weight on Technological solution.

Table 2: Comparison of the Significance of Technical Solutions and people's Ethical Concerns in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (E-entrepreneurs' Perspective)

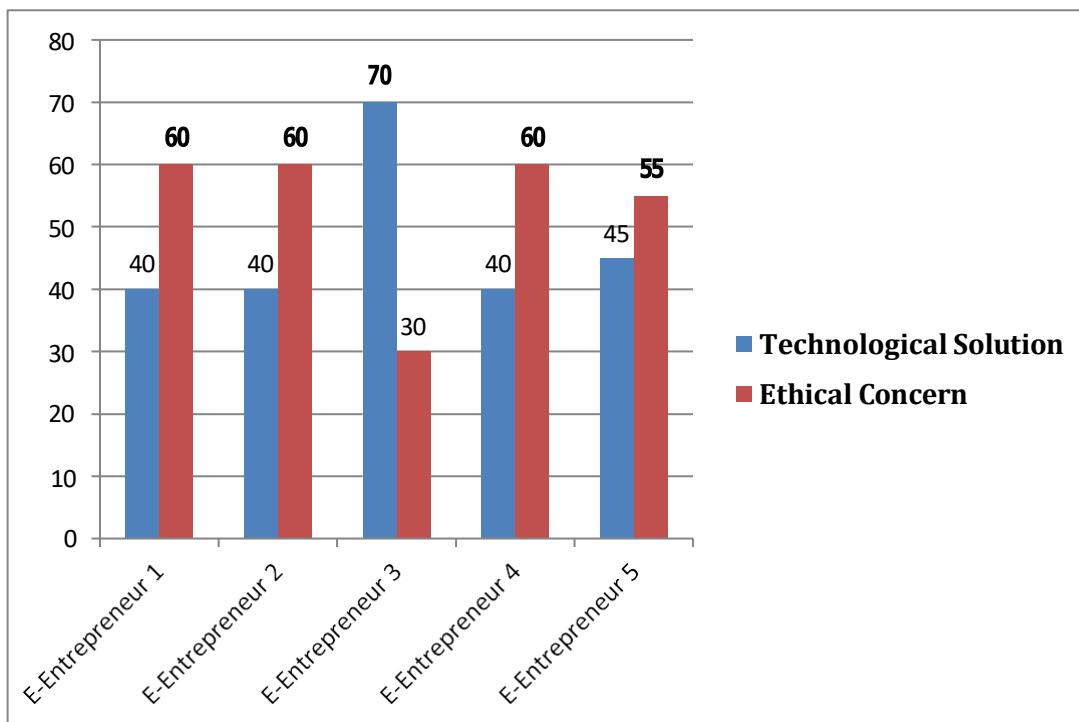| Respondents	Technological Solution	Ethical Concern	Sum
E-Entrepreneur 1	40	**60**	100
E-Entrepreneur 2	40	**60**	100
E-Entrepreneur 3	**70**	30	100
E-Entrepreneur 4	40	**60**	100
E-Entrepreneur 5	45	**55**	100

Figure 3: Comparison of the Significance of Technical Solutions and people's Ethical Concerns in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (E-entrepreneurs' Perspective)

Now, From **Table-2** and **Figure -3**, it is exhibited that, most of the E-entrepreneurs have assigned more points in Ethical concerns of users than Technological solution of the platform. Four (4) E-entrepreneurs out of Five (5) entrepreneurs allocated more points to Ethical concern than Technological solution; whereas one (1) E-entrepreneur allocated more points to Technological solution thank Ethical concern. Three (3) E-entrepreneurs out of five (5) users allocated 60 points to Ethical concern, whereas they allocated only 40 points to Technological solution. It indicates that 2/3 weight has been put on ethical concern and 1/3 weight on Technological solution.

From the both perspectives, it has been observed that the users and e-entrepreneurs have emphasized more on Ethical concern of the users than technological solutions of the platforms. There were some rationales behind their opinions.

- ICT sector of Bangladesh are technologically challenged while taking any high technological measures can be complex and reduce user-friendliness due to the lack of up-to-date technological environment all over the country.
- Often adopting latest technical measures can be expensive which might increase the platform fee.

Lastly, it can be said that the users and e-entrepreneurs think that Ethical concern can be more effective and viable catalyst than Technological measures/ solution while pursuing responsible behaviour in online.

Legal Influence vs. Ethical Influence

In this section, the respondents were requested to allocate 100 points to Legal Influence and Ethical Influence in a way that reflects the significance of their roles in pursuing Responsible Online Behavior.

Table 4: Comparison of the Significance of Legal Influence and people's Ethical Influence in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (Users' Perspective)

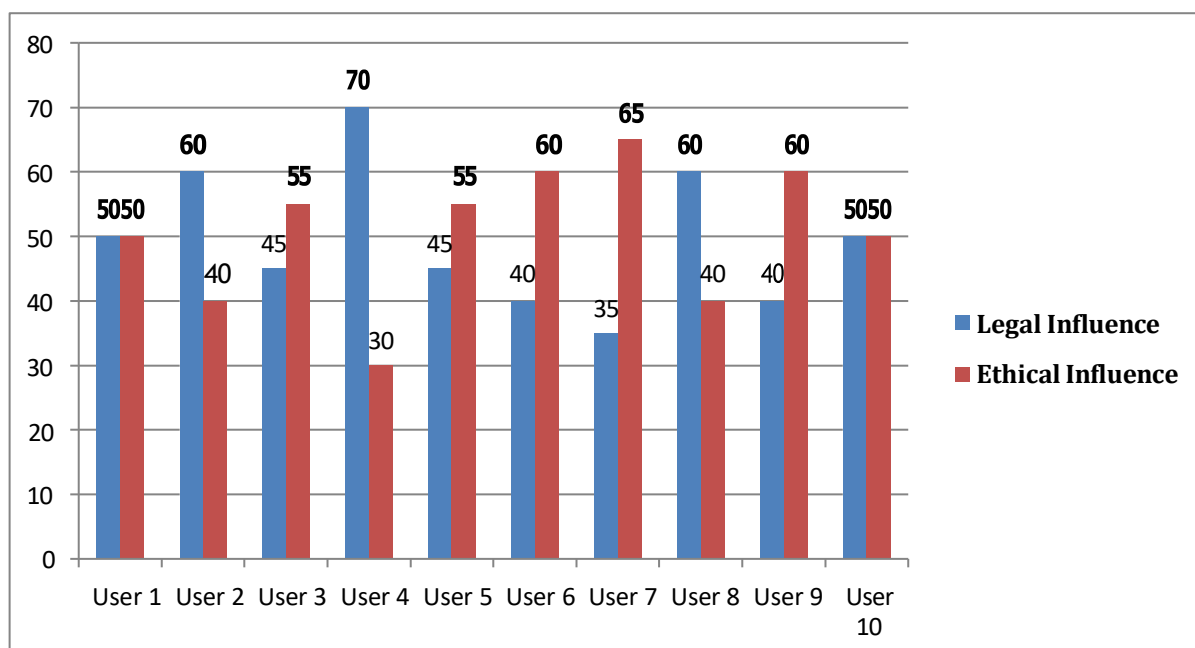| Respondents	Technological solution	Ethical concern	Sum
User 1	**50**	**50**	100
User 2	**60**	40	100
User 3	45	**55**	100
User 4	**70**	30	100
User 5	45	**55**	100
User 6	40	**60**	100
User 7	35	**65**	100
User 8	**60**	40	100
User 9	40	**60**	100
User 10	**50**	**50**	100

Figure 5: Comparison of the Significance of Legal Influence and people's Ethical Influence in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (Users' Perspective)

From **Table-4** and **Figure -5**, it is exhibited that, most users have assigned more points in Ethical influence or equal points to Legal and ethical influence Five (5) users out of Ten (10) users have allocated more points to Ethical influence than legal influence. Whereas two (2) users found both legal and ethical influence equally effective to pursue responsible behavior in online. Three (3) users allocated more points to legal influence than ethical influence. Seven (7) users allocated 50 to 65 points to Ethical influence.

Table 5: Comparison of the Significance of Legal Influence and User Ethical Influence in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (E-entrepreneurs' Perspective)

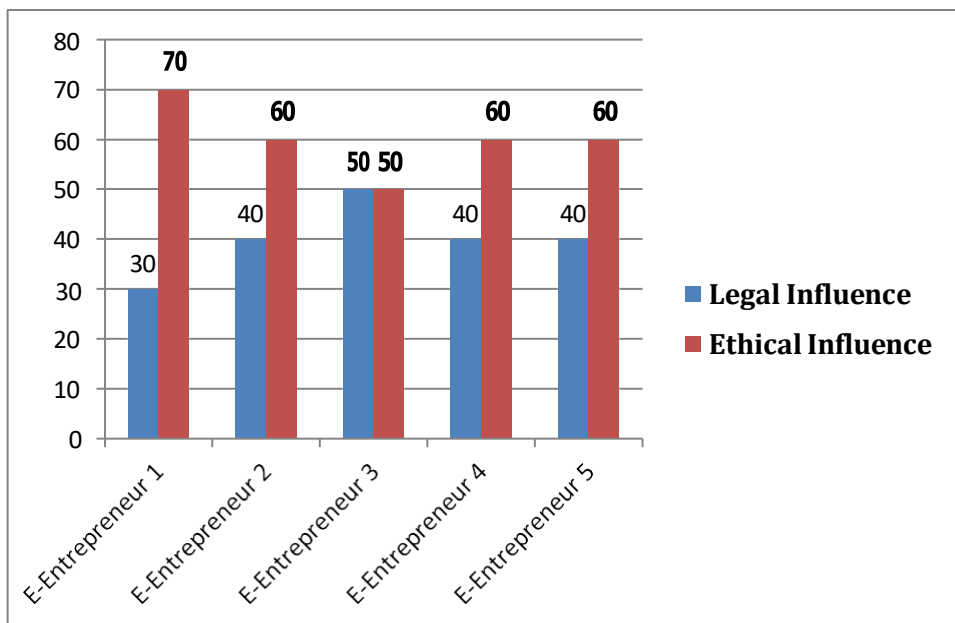| Respondents	Legal Influence	Ethical Influence	Sum
E-Entrepreneur 1	30	**70**	100
E-Entrepreneur 2	40	**60**	100
E-Entrepreneur 3	**50**	**50**	100
E-Entrepreneur 4	40	**60**	100
E-Entrepreneur 5	40	**60**	100

Figure 6: Comparison of the Significance of Legal Influence and people's Ethical Influence in Fostering Responsible Online Behavior. (E-entrepreneurs' Perspective)

From **Table-5** and **Figure -6**, it is exhibited that, Five (4) E-entrepreneurs out of Five (5) have been allocated more points to Ethical influence than legal influence. Whereas one (`1) E-entrepreneur found both legal and ethical influence equally effective to pursue responsible behavior in online. Three (3) users have allocated 60 points to Ethical influence conversely allocated 40 points to legal influence.

It can be observed that users and E-entrepreneurs both either have more emphasized on ethical influence or gave equal importance to ethical and legal influence. E-entrepreneurs have given more stress to ethical influence than legal influence while trying to ensuring responsible behavior in online. Users and E-entrepreneurs' reflections on the rationale of their opinions have given bellow:

The Backdated laws of Bangladesh are not sufficient to address so many unresolved legal issues of cyber and internet security. In case of copyright violation it becomes very tough to prove the offense evidently. Sometimes due to slow & complex legal procedure the victims lose their interest to initiate legal procedure against the offender. Repeated offense is very common as most of the time the offenders has to face very low/

no consequences due to the limitations of cyber laws. Moreover, the victims sometimes do not aware about their legal rights and scopes of getting legal assistance. The offenders can take the advantage of lack of authenticity and repeat the same offense several times even without getting traced by law and order of the country.

On the basis of all respondent's perceptions it can be said that, people are unaware about digital ethics which leads them to behave less responsibly in the online. Setting code of ethics for internet, creating awareness among people of digital ethics and the level of significance of the impacts of their irresponsible behavior on other people's life can improve the situation. Moreover country like Bangladesh, where law and order is not that adequate for this digital era, ethical influence can have better impacts as the people of the society are believed in collectivism.

RQ3: How does different institute and stakeholders can contribute in persuade more responsible behavior in online?

As it seemed that, Ethical influence has been recognized as the most weighted catalyst for influencing responsible behavior in online in a country like Bangladesh. The users and e-entrepreneurs both have identified and ranked the institutions of the society that can play prominent roles to pursue more responsible behavior in online.

Table 6: Institutions that can play prominent role roles to pursue more responsible behavior in online (User's Perspective)

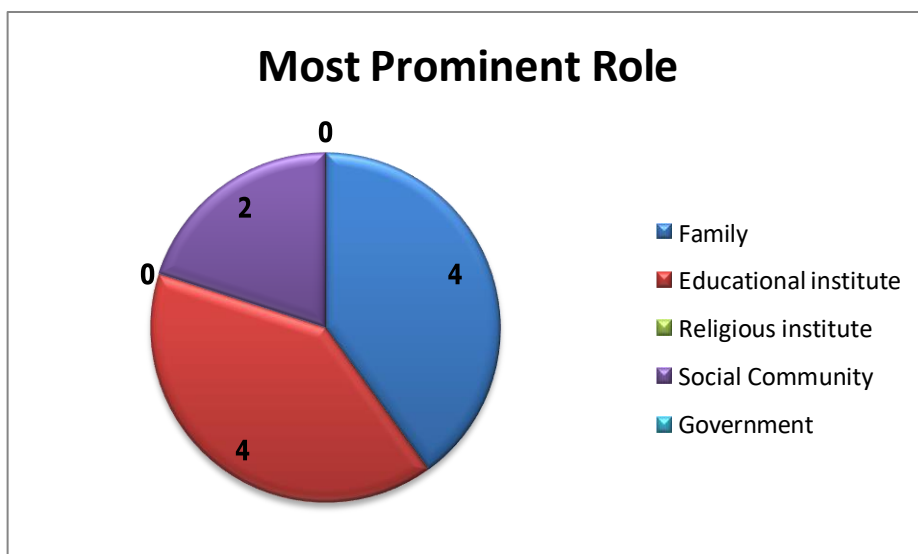| Institutions	Most Prominent
Family	4
Educational institute	4
Religious institute	0
Social Community	2
Government	0

Figure 7: Institutions that can play prominent role roles to pursue more responsible behavior in online (User's Perspective)

Table-6 and **Figure-7** have displayed that, Family and Educational institutions can play most prominent role to pursue ethical online behavior according to the users. Here, four (4) out of ten (10) users have indicated

family as the most influential institute and four (4) users indicates Educational institutions as the most influential institute while pursuing responsible behavior in online. Two (2) of the users have found Social community as an influential institute also.

Table 7: Institutions that can play prominent role roles to pursue more responsible behavior in online (E-entrepreneur's Perspective)

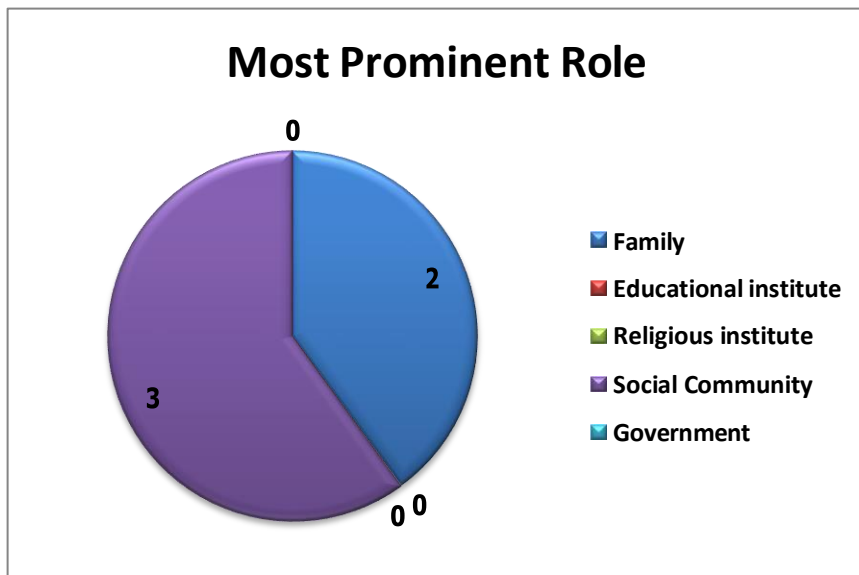| Institutions	Most Prominent
Family	2
Educational institute	0
Religious institute	0
Social Community	3
Government	0

Figure 8: Institutions that can play prominent role roles to pursue more responsible behavior in online (E-entrepreneur's Perspective)

Table-7 and **Figure-8** have displayed that, Social community can play most prominent role to pursue ethical online behavior according to the E-entrepreneurs. Here, three (3) out of five (5) entrepreneurs have indicated social community as the most influential institution and two (2) entrepreneurs indicates Family as the most influential institute while pursuing responsible behavior in online.

In their opinions, Users and E-entrepreneurs both types of respondents have revealed that Family is the most prominent institute that can play vital role in pursuing responsible and ethical behavior in online by Personality formation of the children and adolescents. By building and sharing knowledge about digital ethics among the young adults, Educational institutes can also play a vital role along with social community, where, social community can play role in inclusion of digital ethics in social norms of the society. Some respondents indicate that the people of Bangladesh are more collectivistic, suggesting they may be more concerned about not conforming to social norms than about potential legal corollaries.

According to the respondents, different stakeholders like general users, E-entrepreneurs, Academics, Government, NGOs can also contribute Academics might contribute through building Awareness, organizing

Seminars regarding digital ethics and responsible online behavior, Conducting Research (explore problem areas , Studies cases, etc.), and collaborate with other stakeholders like governments, NGOs and Entrepreneurs. E-entrepreneurs & large business units might contribute through setting digital code of ethics for their employees, add Personality test while recruiting employees, provide training and Monitoring employees, Prefer/ favor accountable /responsible consumers, Associations with regulatory bodies and Set industry digital code of ethics. Government might contribute through Upgrading laws of the country, strict jurisdiction enforcement, funding, Campaign, work as catalyst for affiliations and Include more regulatory body for safety security in digital space.

This study concludes by formulating the following assumptions, which may be validated in future research through a broader perspective and a larger data set.

- Authenticity has been recognized as the most vulnerable aspect of internet security in Bangladesh, as perceived by both users and e-entrepreneurs.
- Ethical considerations may employ a more significant influence on the promotion of sensible and responsible online behavior than technological solutions or legal frameworks.
- Family, educational institutions and social communities may play the most significant roles in fostering responsible online behavior and effecting meaningful change.

This study can serve as a valuable resource for academics, policymakers, e-entrepreneurs, government officials, and other stakeholders, providing a foundational understanding of their roles and the impact of their behaviors in the digital environment. It may also serve as a starting point for developing a broader research framework.

CONCLUSIONS

This study initially found that many people are not finding themselves accountable for their online behavior due to lack of standard protocol, Lack of regulatory body, lack of authenticity, violation of privacy, break down of human relationship, etc. Authenticity, non-repudiation and privacy are the most vulnerable dimensions of cyber security in Bangladesh according to the users and e-entrepreneurs. Ethics can pursue responsible online behavior more than laws and technology. Family, educational institutions and social community can play prominent role to influence people's behavior by Personality formation, Knowledge building & sharing Inclusion digital ethics in in Social norms.

The commencement of bringing change in the online behavior of people can start with setting a code of ethics or Behavioral standard /policies for online environment. The next task can be building awareness about the standard, facts, consequences and impacts of one's unethical behavior on others' lives. Holistic approach can be attempts by Contribution, inclusion and collaboration of all stakeholders.

Although the study has a limited sample size, it may still offer valuable insights to academicians, e-entrepreneurs, researchers, policymakers, government officials, and users by presenting foundational assumptions related to the relevant topics. Further quantitative studies can be done with large sample and to generalize the findings. More investigation of Behavioral change through ethics, laws and technology considering all the macro factors like Geo-demographic, sociocultural, technological, environmental, economical, legal and political environment can be done for understanding the broader aspects.

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