

Cyber Stalking Among Higher Secondary School Students in Kerala

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Abstract

Social Medias like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have turned our life online and offline. Younger generations, particularly students are the predominant users of social networks. People can easily access the internet and social media applications from many different doorways. Social networking has become a salient feature of social life. Social networking sites are one of the most important means of communication among students. Most of them are not aware of the fact that how posting something improper can harm their security. The present study investigates the victimising cyber stalking of higher secondary school students and its relation with gender, frequency of login into cyber media and period of using social media. Data collected from 160 higher secondary school students using social media have been analysed with the help of the cyber stalking scale. Independent sample t-test, ANOVA and Chi-square tests were used to test the significance of difference. Study reveals that cyber stalking among higher secondary school students is high and there is no significant difference in the cyber stalking based on the frequency of login cyber media and duration of using social media, but difference is seen based on gender.

Key Words: cyber stalking, social media, Social Networks

Introduction

It is almost impossible to see a single individual without a mobile phone in any part of the world now. It became a life partner of every individual. The smart phone has turned our life knowledgeable and information friendly. The various applications in the smartphone lead us, guide us and motivate us. Social Medias like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter have turned our life online and offline. This online technology including internet helped people far and near to connect together. It enables us to build relationships

among people and has paved way for speedy communication with each other even in different continents. It helps us to listen to our lovable music, read our favourite books, look at the photos of our dear and near and much more. During the time spent on sites we go into connections and get the chance to speak with a number of individuals especially the youngsters. Younger generations are the predominant users of social networks.

East (2016) is of the opinion that social networks have negative impact especially on the teenagers, as they often build the impression that love

and friendship can easily be built and destroyed. Many educational institutions restrict students to access social networks within the campus in order to help them concentrate on studies. These restrictions actually hinder students from accessing resource materials for their academic purpose.

Social networking has become a salient feature of student's social life. They can access the internet and social media applications from many different entry points. It is true that social networking sites enrich the platforms of learning of any individual. In the early development of childhood children learn by observing others and through social interaction. Some socio-cultural theories suggest that children learn in the context of their social and cultural environment (Green Field, 2009). Social media has, in fact, an influence on the learning environment of children. Social media also performs an important developmental task for adolescents by opening avenues for social learning and identity formation. Social media has redefined the ways through which social ties are created among individuals and between individuals and the organisations that serve them.

Stalking has been differently defined by researchers and legal systems around the world. Both of them accept the elements of stalking as repetitive conduct by the perpetrator that induces a concern to harm to the victim. The behaviour of the perpetrator can involve different tactics and patterns of use. These include, surveillance (follow, watch and wait, etc.), life invasion (calling up, messaging, entering

premises, bothering acquaintance of victim, etc.), intimidation (implicit or explicit threats to victim and their close ones and damage to property, etc.), and attack (running reputation, road rage and sexual assault etc.). The pattern of stalking depends on the duration, intensity and its frequency. The awareness of surveillance generates anxiety in the victim.

Cyber stalking, sometimes referred to as Internet stalking, e-stalking or online stalking is a criminal practice where an individual uses the Internet to systematically harass or threaten someone. It can be perpetrated through email, social media, chat rooms, instant messaging clients and any other online medium. Cyber stalking can also occur in conjunction with the more traditional form of stalking, where the offender harasses the victim offline. There is no unified legal approach to cyber stalking, but many governments have moved toward making these practices punishable by law.

The internet usage provides new avenues for self-disclosure. It helps to develop relationships based on common interests and values. Internet allows anonymity which can be used for bullying, sexual exploitation, and spreading unverified information. Thus stalking behaviour is now moved to virtual space. Cyber stalking is different from offline stalking because of anonymity maintained by the stalker until cyber experts and legal agencies get involved. Physical proximity between the victim and stalker is not necessary in cyber stalking. The victim may not be aware of the surveillance.

Based on the severity cyber stalking has been classified into hyper intimacy, threat, sabotage, and invasion. Hyper-intimacy type involves affection, expression, ingratiation and hyper-sexual communications. Threats include implicit or explicit harm intended on person's reputation by real or falsified information, and also threats of physical harm to the person, their close ones, or their property. Sabotage involves attack on the person's character by spreading rumours or gossips to their colleagues, friends, or family. Invasion involves access to victims' device via spyware or other means, which enables stalkers' complete access to the victims' digital activities. The stress and anxiety perceived by victims of cyber stalking is similar to that experienced by those from physical stalking. These include social withdrawal, disturbances in sleep pattern, and changes in social habits. Apart from that, cyber stalker perceives them to be emotionally closer to their victims than that would be expected from the physical stalker.

Social networking sites are one of the most important means of communication among students. Most of them are not aware of the fact that how posting something improper can harm their security. The boom in mobile technology paved the way to easy access to smart phones. There is incessant growth of technologies which attracts students to Instagram, Pinterest and 9gag, etc. which caught the fancy of adolescents. Adolescents are keen to try out new social networking methods. These apps have given them the right tools to enter into new social networks with both existing friends and new

virtual friends

Theoretically stalking is conceptualised from symbolic interactionism. Major proponents of this theory are Blumer (1969), Charon (2001) and Hewitt and Shulman (2011). Blumer states that Symbolic Interactionism is built upon the premises that:

1. humans act towards objects, including people, situations and whatever they have to deal within their world, on the basis of the meanings such objects have for them;
2. these meanings arise out of social interactions and
3. The meanings are conveyed through the interactive process adopted in dealing with the objects encountered by the actors.

According to Charon (2001), how people interpret a situation affects and guides their action in that situation and although there may actually be a reality out there, their definition is far more important for what they do.

Thus from a symbolic interactionist perspective, the way in which students interpret and explain social interaction patterns have been conceptualised as stalking and how they encounter such situations.

As per the new Sociology of childhood, children and adolescents are not passive recipients but active agents in their socialisation process. They are moulded by structure and at the same time act as agents acting in and upon structure. They are not simply internalising the world but strive to make sense of their culture and to participate in it.

According to Corsaro (2005) children create and participate in their own unique peer cultures by creatively taking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how they make sense of social situations, phenomena as well as how these understandings or perspectives are related to societal norms and discourses in order to understand their actions and interaction pattern.

Social networking through online media is nowadays very common and deep-seated among the youth worldwide, and majority of the users are students. Outside straightforward communication, many students occupy in highly creative activities on social networking sites. Through words, simile, music, photos and videos students are expressing themselves by creating, and sharing content online. In addition to these some uses the Internet to systematically harass or threaten someone. The present study is an attempt to understand the level of use of online social networking services and cyber stalking among the higher secondary students in Kerala.

Objectives of the study

1. To know the extent of cyber stalking among higher secondary school students in Kerala.
2. To find out the significance of difference in cyber stalking based on duration of usage, frequency of login and gender of the respondents.

Hypotheses formulated

1. There is no significant difference in the victimising of cyber stalking of higher secondary school students based on gender.
2. There is no significant difference in the victimising of cyber stalking of higher secondary school students based on frequency of login per day.
3. There is no significant difference in the victimising of cyber stalking of higher secondary school students based on duration of usage.

Method of study

As we penetrate our inquiry towards the frequency of victimising cyber stalking, the subject under study is a survey type of research, because it is concerned with the collection of data for describing and interpreting existing conditions of victimising cyber stalking. Cyber stalking is most convincingly related with the adolescent population. Hence the population selected – the higher secondary students of Kerala, is the most suitable population. A total of 160 higher secondary school students from two schools in Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala have been selected as the sample. For which two batches consisting of 40 students were randomly selected from each school. To measure the level of cyber stalking among higher secondary school students, likert-type scale consisting of 10 statements were used as a tool for data collection. The tool was experimented to a small group of 30 students from another school as a trial and corrective measures of modifying statements was done. Inferential statistics was used

for summarizing the properties of a population from the known properties of the sample of the population.

Analysis

Preliminary analysis was carried out to

identify cyber stalking and to determine the association of cyber stalking with gender and frequency of use of cyber media. Data were collected from the 160 higher secondary school students. The socio-demographic profile of the students is given in Table 1.

Table - 1 Profile of the respondents

Variable	Group	N	%
Gender	Male	57	35.6
	Female	103	64.4
Class	+1	80	50.0
	+2	80	50.0
Locality of the school	Rural	80	50.0
	Urban	80	50.0
Income of the family (yearly)	Below Rs-20000	54	33.8
	Rs 20001-30000	47	29.4
	Rs 30001-40000	41	25.6
	Above Rs-40000	18	11.3
family Type	Nuclear	129	80.6
	Joint	31	19.4
Total		160	100.0

It is evident from the above table that 35.6 percent of the students belong to male and the majority (64percent) of the respondents belong to the female categories; 50percent each of the respondents fall in plus one and plus two and rural and urban categories; 33.8percent students belong to the family income category below Rs. 20000, 29.4percent students between Rs. 20001-30000, 25.6percent student come under Rs. 30001-40000 income group and 11.3percent fall in above Rs. - 40000 annual income of the family. Based on the family type, 80.6percent come from nuclear families and

19.4percent from joint families.

Frequency of login Cyber media

Frequency of login cyber media refers to the number of times login was done per day or per week. The respondents were asked to mark one of the choices depending on their frequency of login cyber media as -many times in a day, once in a day, few times in a week, once in a week and rarely. The number of respondents that marked each frequency and their percentage based on gender is presented in Table 2.

Table – 2: Frequency of login Cyber media

Frequency	Male	Female	Total
Many times in a day	26 (45.6%)	24 (23.3%)	50 (31.2%)
Once in a day	10 (17.5%)	22 (21.4%)	32 (20.0%)
Few times in a week	9 (15.8%)	13 (12.6%)	22 (13.8%)
Once in a week	6 (10.5%)	9 (8.7%)	15 (9.4%)
Rarely	6 (10.5%)	35 (34.0%)	41 (25.6%)
Total	57 (100.0%)	103 (100.0%)	160 (100.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square = 14.38; df = 4; p = 0.006			

The above table presents distribution of respondents in the selected schools according to the frequency of login cyber media. The highest proportion of higher secondary school students (31.2percent) usually login cyber media many times in a day. Frequency of login many times in a day is more in males (45.6 percent) than in females (23.3 percent). Twenty percent of students login once in a day. Here the percentage of female is more than male. One fourth of the students (25percent) rarely login cyber media. From the table it is clear that the number of female students (34percent) is more than the number of male students (10.5percent). Students log in cyber media few times in a week or once a week are 13.85percent and 9.4percent, respectively.

The data highlights that majority of the higher secondary school students log in cyber media many times a day or at least once in a day. The number of male students logging in many times in

a day is more than female students. A marginal proportion comes under once in a week to login cyber media. Pearson Chi-Square test score is 14.38. It shows that there exists significant difference in the frequency of login based on the gender, since the p-value (0.006) is less than 0.05. It is clear from the table that the frequency of login cyber media is high among the male students than the female students.

Duration of Cyber media usage

Duration of cyber media usage refers to how long the respondents are using the cyber media. The respondents were asked to mark one of the choices depending on the duration of login cyber media as - below one year, 1-2 years, 2-3 years, 3-4 years and above 4 years. The number of respondents that marked each frequency and their percentage based on gender is presented in Table 3.

Table - 3: Period of using cyber media

Period	Male	Female	Total
Below one year	3 (5.3%)	19 (18.4%)	22 (13.8%)
1 – 2 year	6 (10.5%)	51 (49.5%)	57 (35.6%)
2 – 3 years	20 (35.1%)	26 (25.2%)	46 (28.8%)

3 – 4 years	12 (21.1%)	5 (4.9%)	17 (10.6%)
Above 4 years	16 (28.1%)	2 (1.9%)	18 (11.2%)
Total	57 (100.0%)	103 (100.0%)	160 (100.0%)
Pearson Chi-Square = 52.86; df = 4; p = 0.000			

When the data was analysed on the basis of duration of usage of Cyber media, it is found that 35.6 per cent of higher secondary school students have been using the social media for 1-2 years. Among this group the percentage of female students using cyber media (49.5percent) is much greater than the percentage of male students (10.5percent) using it. 28.8percent of students are being used Cyber media for two to three years in which the male students dominate the female students. The percentage of students using Cyber media for three to four years is 10.6 and 11.3percent students are using for more than four years. Apart from this only 13.8percent of higher

secondary school students are using cyber media within one year only. Here the female dominate the male students. Pearson Chi-Square test shows that the calculated chi-square value (52.86; p = 0.000) is greater than table value. Hence, there exists significant difference in the duration of usage of cyber media based on the gender

Victimising cyber stalking

Victimisation of cyber stalking takes place when there is acceptance of communication from anonymous persons. Various ways of victimising cyber stalking of higher secondary students are presented in Table 4.

Table - 4: Frequency of victimising cyber stalking of higher secondary students

Statement	Gender	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	Total
Accept unknown friend request	M	24 (42.1)	16 (28.1)	13 (22.8)	4 (7.0)	57 (100.0)
	F	79 (76.7)	15 (14.6)	9 (8.7)	0 (0.0)	103 (100.0)
	Total	103 (64.4)	31 (19.4)	22 (13.8)	4 (2.5)	160 (100.0)
Initiate online conversation with unknown friends	M	20 (35.1)	16 (28.1)	18 (31.6)	3 (5.3)	57 (100.0)
	F	67 (65.0)	21 (20.4)	11 (10.7)	4 (3.9)	103 (100.0)
	Total	87 (54.4)	37 (23.1)	29 (18.1)	7 (4.4)	160 (100.0)
Communicate online friends against your will	M	37 (64.9)	12 (21.1)	6 (10.5)	2 (3.5)	57 (100.0)
	F	74 (71.8)	17 (16.5)	10 (9.7)	2 (1.9)	103 (100.0)
	Total	111 (69.4)	29 (18.1)	16 (10.0)	4 (2.5)	160 (100.0)
Enable security / privacy setting of the account	M	16 (28.1)	16 (28.1)	12 (21.1)	13 (22.8)	57 (100.0)
	F	35 (34.0)	16 (15.5)	26 (25.2)	26 (25.2)	103 (100.0)
	Total	51 (31.9)	32 (20.0)	38 (23.8)	39 (24.4)	160 (100.0)

Change passwords of cyber media	M	17 (29.8)	16 (28.1)	15 (26.3)	9 (15.8)	57 (100.0)
	F	31 (30.1)	30 (29.1)	34 (33.0)	8 (7.8)	103 (100.0)
	Total	48 (30.0)	46 (28.8)	49 (30.6)	17 (10.6)	160 (100.0)
Feel uncomfortable with online conversation	M	23 (40.4)	14 (24.6)	11 (19.3)	9 (15.8)	57 (100.0)
	F	43 (41.7)	32 (31.1)	23 (22.3)	5 (4.9)	103 (100.0)
	Total	66 (41.2)	46 (28.8)	34 (21.2)	14 (8.8)	160 (100.0)
Feel frightened in online conversation	M	26 (45.6)	13 (22.8)	10 (17.5)	8 (14.0)	57 (100.0)
	F	53 (51.5)	19 (18.4)	25 (24.3)	6 (5.8)	103 (100.0)
	Total	79 (49.4)	32 (20.0)	35 (21.9)	14 (8.8)	160 (100.0)
Receive porn photographs or texts from cyber friends	M	37 (64.9)	13 (22.8)	2 (3.5)	5 (8.8)	57 (100.0)
	F	84 (81.6)	5 (4.9)	7 (6.8)	7 (6.8)	103 (100.0)
	Total	121 (75.6)	18 (11.2)	9 (5.6)	12 (7.5)	160 (100.0)
Receive late night texts	M	24 (42.1)	14 (24.6)	13 (22.8)	6 (10.5)	57 (100.0)
	F	74 (71.8)	15 (14.6)	12 (11.7)	2 (1.9)	103 (100.0)
	Total	98 (61.2)	29 (18.1)	25 (15.6)	8 (5.0)	160 (100.0)
Experience problem due to online relationship	M	32 (56.1)	11 (19.3)	12 (21.1)	2 (3.5)	57 (100.0)
	F	75 (72.8)	12 (11.7)	14 (13.6)	2 (1.9)	103 (100.0)
	Total	107 (66.9)	23 (14.4)	26 (16.2)	4 (2.5)	160 (100.0)

(Values in parentheses are percentages)

The analysis of victimising cyber stalking of higher secondary students was done on the basis of the primary data. The table shows that 64.40percent of the higher secondary school students never accept unknown friend requests. The female students are ahead in not accepting (76.7percent) unknown friend requests than the male students (42.1percent) 54.40percent higher secondary school students never initiate online conversation with unknown friends. Here also, the girls are ahead in not initiating online conversation. 69.40percent of students never communicate with online friends against their will. 41.30percent of Higher Secondary students never feel uncomfortable with online conversations. Another 49.4percent feel frightened of online conversations.

75.60percent never receive porn photographs or texts from cyber friends. 61.3percent never receive late night texts and 66.90percent never experienced problems due to online relationships. In all these case the girls were found to be ahead in not responding than boys. Table reveals that sometimes the higher secondary school students are being victimized of cyber stalking incidents.

Comparison of Victimized cyber stalking based on Gender

Gender difference in victimizing the cyber stalking incidents and frequencies is compared using the independent sample t-test and it is presented in Table 5.

Table - 5: Comparison of victimizing Cyber stalking based on gender

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	57	19.61	4.97	3.595	.000*
Female	103	16.89	4.35		

* $p < 0.05$, significant at 0.05 level.

The analysis on the basis of gender indicate that there is significant difference between the mean scores of victimizing cyber stalking of higher secondary school students based on Gender ($t = 3.595$, $p < 0.01$). Thus it can be inferred that there is significant difference between the mean score of higher secondary school students based on gender. Since the mean score of the male students ($M = 19.61$) is greater than that of the female students ($M = 16.89$), it can be concluded that

higher secondary school male students are more victimized for cyber stalking compared to female students.

Comparison of victimizing cyber stalking based on frequency of login per day

Comparison of victimizing Cyber stalking based on frequency of login per day by the secondary school students is done using analysis of variance and it is presented in Table 6.

Table - 6: Victimizing Cyber stalking based on frequency of login per day

Frequency	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
Many times a day	50	18.7800	4.79494	1.635	.168
Once a day	32	17.7813	3.89983		
Few times a week	22	17.8636	5.01707		
Once a week	15	18.9333	4.84719		
Rarely	41	16.4146	4.97984		
Total	160	17.8625	4.75366		

Analysis of variance ($F\text{-value} = 1.635$, $p = 0.168$) presented in the table 6 reveals that there is no significant difference among higher secondary school students in victimizing cyber stalking based on frequency of login per day at 0.05 level of significance. Cyber stalking did not influence the frequency of using social media by the students.

Comparison of Victimizing Cyber stalking based on duration using social media

Victimizing of Cyber stalking based on duration of using social media by higher secondary school students is presented in Table 7

Table - 7: Victimizing Cyber stalking based on duration using social media

Duration	N	Mean	SD	F-value	p-value
6 months	22	17.5000	4.50132	0.606	.659
1 year	57	17.3509	4.40167		
2-3 years	46	18.0870	4.64196		
4-5 years	17	19.2941	6.76170		
Above 5 years	18	18.0000	4.37909		
Total	160	17.8625	4.75366		

The table (7) discloses that, as per the F value obtained from the analysis of variance ($F = 0.606$; $p = 0.659$) there is no significant difference among higher secondary school students of being victimized of cyber stalking based on duration of using social media at 0.05 level of significance. Duration of using social media has no significant role in victimizing cyber stalking among higher secondary school students.

Findings of the study

In this study - Cyber stalking among higher secondary school students in Kerala - an attempt was made to investigate to find out the frequency of login, Duration of using social media and level of cyber stalking. Study reveals that there exist significant difference in the frequency of login and Duration of using social media based on gender. Mean cyber stalking score of the male students (19.61) is significantly greater ($t = 3.595$, $p < 0.01$) than that of the female students (16.89) and it can be concluded that higher secondary school male students are more victimized of cyber stalking compared to the female students. Analysis of variance (F-value = 1.635, $p = 0.168$) reveals that there is no significant difference among higher

secondary school students in being victimized of cyber stalking based on frequency of login per day. Duration of using social media has no significant role in higher secondary school students being victimized of cyber stalking.

Conclusions

The study investigates the victimisation in cyber stalking of higher secondary school students and its relation with gender, frequency of login cyber media and period of using social media. Study reveals that majority of higher secondary school students have login cyber media many times a day or once a day. Half of the higher secondary students are using cyber media for more than two years. Study reveals that there exist significant difference in the frequency of login and Gender wise difference is seen in the duration of using social media and frequency of login per day. Study discloses that sometimes the higher secondary school students victimizing the cyber stalking incidents and male students have more victimizing cyber stalking compared to the female students. Duration of using social media and frequency of login per day has no significant effect on the victimizing cyber stalking.

Suggestions

It is essential to give proper awareness to the higher secondary school students regarding the cyber stalking and apt way of practice in the cyber world.

Necessary guidelines may be provided to make use of cyber media for regular learning. Students may be made aware about the cybercrimes and cyber mis-uses and immediate action need to be taken to rescue from such situations.

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