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# CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN IN CYBER SPACE IN INDIA: A SNAPSHOT

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#### **Abstract**

The internet is now an indispensible part of our daily routine. It has evolved into a formidable system that has influenced business, commerce, and how we interact with our peers. Because of the rapid expansion of this data highway, different types of online crime have emerged. "Cybercrime" has emerged because of the rapid expansion of this data highway. Some people apply the term "cybercrime" to a wide range of offences. In India, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime collaborated with the "Ministry of Home Affairs" to develop strategic options to prevent cybercrime against children and improve their online security. The government has begun to educate police officers about "cyber-security" "Mobile surveillance", "tracing anonymous emails", "phishing", and other topics are among the training modules available. Every legislature is establishing cyber cells and forensic laboratories. In addition, a special law enforcement training programme for children involved in cybercrime is being developed. Furthermore, the departments of telecommunication and information technology are actively promoting childparent safety through their online portals. In collaboration with parents and children, law enforcement agencies are attempting to create a safe online environment in which cybercrime is minimised. In research papers, the relationship between a child and cybercrime was discussed, as well as how cyber offenders abuse children in the cyber world.

Keywords: Cybercrime, Children, offences, Law, Cyber World.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

A child in the twenty-first century spends many hours each day online playing video games and surfing the internet. On the internet, they encounter a variety of risks in addition to a huge number of opportunities. Because they lack the specialised expertise required, they cannot assess the potential risks or threats associated with the usage of digital technology and the internet. They can be totally blind to the risks. Children may unwittingly spill confidential information and unintentionally expose themselves to consequences in a variety of ways. They can fall prey to cyber security dangers like "social engineering," "cyberbullying," "hacking," "viruses," "damaging malware," "cyber stalking," and other things through search engines, online marketing, and social networking websites. However, the risk of cyber-attacks increases as a company's internet presence grows. Children, more than any other group, are particularly vulnerable to such attacks. Many parents think that allowing their kids to use the Internet at home is perfectly safe. This is untrue because children can connect with practically anybody and anywhere on earth thanks to the Internet. Children in the digital age confront a variety of difficulties and dangers, including worries about "privacy," "exposure to unsuitable content," "money scams," and "child grooming." Although there are many measures in place to ensure cyber security, technology cannot shield kids from harm. Cybercrime is primarily an attack on private, public, or corporate information. This occurs on a virtual body that is available over the internet for a person or business. Social networking sites are used by people all over the world for a variety of purposes, including information gathering, communication, sending messages, letters, court summonses, and emails. Because of modern advances in technology, all classes at schools and colleges are now conducted online, even when there is a lockdown. Even young children can benefit from using technology.

"According to a 2012 international study conducted by software giant Microsoft, 53 % of India's children have been bullied online. The child develops various personalities such as social isolation, few general friendships, negative attitudes and ignorance, difficulty being accepted in activities, schools, and the workplace, and so on. Furthermore, privacy and life and achievement expectations are diminished."<sup>4</sup>

Child pornography is a punishable offence in India. Child pornography is prohibited under Indian statutory laws like the "Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000" and "the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860". According to

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<sup>4</sup> "53 % kids in India bullied online: Microsoft survey," available at: https://www.governancenow.com/views/think-tanks/53-%-

kids-india-bullied-online-microsoft-survey (Accessed on 28-08-2021)

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sec. 2 (K)"Child is referred who is below the age of 18 years."<sup>5</sup> The IT Act makes it illegal to browse, create, and transmit child pornography electronically. The earlier Act covers digital content such as websites, graphic files, SMS, and MMS. Electronic transmission, creation, and browsing of child pornography are all prohibited by the IT Act. Websites, graphic files, SMS, MMS, and digital content are all covered by the prior Act. On camera, graphic sexual behaviours with children that were captured on camera, online child exploitation, or in electronic recordings. Additionally, included under the Act are repetitive phone calls, SMS messages, blank calls, threatening calls, and even MMSs. For girls and women, cell phone harassment is a typical occurrence. According to the "UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is anyone under the age of 18."<sup>6</sup> However, a generalized definition of children under the age of 18 will not be able to show what procedures must be taken to meet the security requirements. This is due to the variety of risks that kids of different ages encounter. Young children under the age of eight are not likely to experience the same difficulties as 14-year-olds. As a result, there are several elements to consider while creating a cyber-security system for kids.

#### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

- To study the rapid growth of cyber crime against children.
- To Strengthen and protection regarding cybercrime in IT Law, POSCO Act and IPC Emphasized its relevance in each aspect of offences
- What is the role of government for the protection of cyber-crime.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research study is based on an analytical study that I conducted of the research, and the data that I used for this research study came from secondary information sources. The data used in this study came from a variety of sources, some of which are included in the References section, including libraries, newspapers, papers, journals, and internet sites.

#### **ABUSE OF CHILDREN OR CYBER ATTACKS**

Since parents are often unaware of their children's actions, children are the most vulnerable members of society and are frequently taken advantage of online. It has been apparent in recent years that youngsters are now being sexually exploited online. Online discussions with youngsters are used by abusers to deceive them about their age and lure them into sex. Modern, cutting-edge technology makes it much easier for crooks to interact with children. In addition to being young and impressionable, they are also particularly vulnerable because they largely rely on social media sites for networking. In order to lure victims into in-person meetings, offenders on online networks create false identities. As a result, instances of child abuse and exploitation have risen, including "sex tourism" and "people trafficking." Whom the child is conversing with is a mystery to them. When they finally meet and see the elderly man in his forties or fifties with whom they were speaking, they realise their mistake. Following the publication of their pornographic images on social media, many children kill themselves.

It is common for children to delay telling their parents about this mistake, although doing so does not result in any further issues. Those who have been taken advantage of through the use of the internet are forced to face the repercussions of their mistreatment for the rest of their lives. In addition to this, it has an impact on the children's mental development as a whole. It is common for children to delay telling their parents about this mistake, although doing so does not result in any further issues. Those who have been taken advantage of through the use of the internet are forced to face the repercussions of their mistreatment for the rest of their lives. In addition to this, it has an impact on the children's mental development as a whole. We are all aware of the importance of protecting children in the real world; however, it is equally important for parents and grandparents to protect their children from online dangers. As a parent, you have an essential part to play in preventing your children from becoming victims of cyberbullying. It is long past due for parents and older people to take an active role in the education of their younger children regarding appropriate and inappropriate uses of technology. It is difficult to apprehend a criminal involved in a case involving cybercrime since the criminal can conduct the crime from virtually any location on the planet. We need the assistance of a cyber-cell police station in order to apprehend criminals in this day and age since they use cutting-edge technology.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> "Juvenile Justice (care and protection of children) Act, 2015" (Act 2 of 2016)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> "UN Convention on the rights of the child –save the children UK", -available at: https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child (Accessed on 18-08-2021)



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#### **CRIME AGAINST CHILDREN IN CYBER SPACE**

It is a place where children will grow up facing a variety of dangers and difficulties, but it is also a place where children will become victims of cybercrime. Offenders were able to target children both on an individual and a group basis by making use of information and communications technology (ICT). Personal gratification, which is typically attained through sexual exploitation, the acquisition of financial gain, and other similar goals, are examples of possible motivations for criminals. The exploitation of children online may be becoming a more widespread problem across the globe as a result of advances in technology that make it simpler for children to be exploited. Because of the relatively low cost of information and communication technology devices and the ease with which one can gain access to the internet, sexual offenders now have new access to content and a web community that validates the abusive and exploitative behaviour they engage in. Children and teenagers are picking up new technologies at a rate that has never been seen before, unwittingly putting themselves in the path of people who prey on children online. Children all over the world are now exposed to new risks as a result of the digital age, including statutory offences committed for both personal and commercial purposes, "child trafficking," "cyber grooming," and "cyber-bullying." These are just some of the risks.

In some instances, the nature and scope of child exploitation have shifted as a result of developments in digital technology. This is true even though there have not been any entirely new forms of child abuse brought about by these advancements. Chat rooms, emails, online games, and social networking sites are just some of the places where potential victims can be found and approached by sexual predators who prey on children and teenagers who use the internet. Cyberspace has simultaneously increased offenders' access to child sex abuse materials while simultaneously lowering the risk that such materials will be accessed by those who commit such crimes. "Before the internet, an offender was thought to have a huge collection with 150 images of children; today, a 150,000 image collection is quite standard, and 1.5 million image collections are not heard of," said Dr. Joe Sullivan, a forensic psychologist who specialises in working with child sex offenders. Dr. Sullivan is a child sex offender specialist at a forensic psychology practice. As a result of the ease of access, new forms of exploitation are emerging. One example of this is the production of "made-to-order" child sexual abuse materials. In this practice, perpetrators order materials according to their specifications, which may include the age and race of the victims, the type of sexual conduct that is depicted, the setting, and fantasy story lines.

1)Pornography of children 2)"Grooming"

3)"Cheating"

4)Stalking on the internet is known as "cyber stalking."

5) "Cyber bullying."

6)"Hacking"

7)Internet-based kidnapping and trafficking

8)"Internet extortion"

9)"Sexual harassment on the internet"

10) A violation of privacy

#### **THREATS OR CHALLENGES**

A. Grooming on the Internet: Cyber grooming is a cyberthreat to children worldwide, not just in India. This is essentially a threat in which a person attempts to develop an emotional connection with a child through cyber means. Individuals participate in this through a variety of cyber channels, including social media and online gaming websites. The person poses as a child, and the children eventually believe him. As the child's trust in the imposter grows, the imposter gains the ability to exploit and exploit the child.

B. Bullying on the internet: Cyberbullying is another big element of today's cyber threats. It is essentially the act of harassing other children by using obscene or abusive language. This can be accomplished by sending children harmful content. However, it has the potential to harm a child's self-esteem. It's critical to realise that if a child's cyberbullying isn't caught early on, it can have far-reaching consequences. Some of the ramifications are detrimental to a child's mental and emotional well-being. As a result, their development may be significantly hampered.

C. Online Transaction Fraud: Despite the fact that the vast majority of children lack personal bank accounts. They do, however, frequently use their family accounts, particularly their parents' accounts, for all online transactions such as shopping and gaming. Criminals use a variety of deceptive tactics as calling to offer you benefits while using a false identity to steal money from your account.

D.Gaming on the Internet: Online gaming has now become a common part of a child's daily routine. Furthermore, due to technological advancements and accessibility, online gaming has evolved into a way for people from all over the world to share their thoughts while playing. In some ways, it has morphed into a form of social media. However, when connecting with people through online gaming, there is a tendency to be careless, which can lead to harm. Furthermore, while installing the software, there is a risk of being infected

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with spam and viruses. This can lead to cyberbullying via foul language, invasion of children's privacy due to the large amount of personal information that is uploaded and can be misused, and online transaction fraud.

E. Email scams: Today, no work or activity would be possible without communication. It's indeed a leader in today's society. The primary mode of communication is the mail, and as such, it has become an essential part of society. To participate in any online activity, whether gaming or social media, we usually need to use email. When the data of such companies is stolen, the email addresses are made available to a large number of unauthorised people. As a result, anyone in the country can send emails with viruses, malware, and bugs in them.

#### **CYBER CRIME PREVENTION MEASURES FOR CHILDREN**

A child's intelligence is the best resource for assessing the information on the internet. In the vast majority of situations, parents are held legally responsible for the behaviour of their children. In order for children to know how to react when they come across hazardous content, parents should have taught them about abuse, pornographic material, hate literature, excessive force, and other issues that alarm them. A private internet service with family control features ought to exist. Children shouldn't disclose any important information online, including their name, address, phone number, password, school name, and parents' names. Children must never decide to meet someone they met online, and they must never reply to any emails that use foul language or seem ominous, strange, or uncomfortable.

#### A NUMBER OF LAWS CONCERN ONLINE OFFENSES CONDUCTED AGAINST CHILDREN

The main instruments for combating cybercrime in India are "the Information Technology Act", 2000, "the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act", 2012, and "the Indian Penal Code" 1860. A. Information Technology Act, (IT, Act) 2000<sup>7</sup>:

This Act has so many provisions which deal with various kinds of cybercrimes. It establishes penalties for unauthorised data access and computer damage caused by cyber-attacks, including viruses, phishing, botnets, malware, etc. Sec 67B of this Act also includes a special provision for protecting children on online platforms.

"Sec 67B: Punishment for publishing or transmitting of material depicting children in sexually explicit act, etc. in electronic form-

Whoever,-

(a) Publishes or transmits or causes to be published or transmitted material in any electronic form which depicts children engaged in sexually explicit act or conduct or

(b) Creates text or digital images, collects, seeks, browses, downloads, advertises, promotes, exchanges or distributes material in any electronic form depicting children in obscene or indecent or sexually explicit manner or

(c) Cultivates, entices or induces children to online relationship with one or more children for and on sexually explicit act or in a manner that may offend a reasonable adult on the computer resource or

(d) Facilitates abusing children online or

(e) Records in any electronic form own abuse or that of others pertaining to sexually explicit act with children,

shall be punished on first conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to five years and with a fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees and in the event of second or subsequent conviction with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years and also with fine which may extend to ten lakh rupees:

Provided that the provisions of Sec 67, Sec 67A and this Sec does not extend to any book, pamphlet, paper, writing, drawing, painting, representation or figure in electronic form-

(i) The publication of which is proved to be justified as being for the public good on the ground that such book, pamphlet, paper writing, drawing, painting, representation or figure is in the interest of science, literature, art or learning or other objects of general concern; or

(ii) Which is kept or used for bonafide heritage or religious purpose."8

#### B. OTHER RELEVANT PROVISIONS:

Sec 66E, "publication or transmission of an image of a private area of a person without the consent of such person is made punishable, if such images are captured under circumstances violating privacy.9"

Sec 66C: "explicitly deals with identity theft cybercrimes. This Sec prescribes punishment for any individual who fraudulently or dishonestly uses personal information like passwords, e-signatures of other people. <sup>10</sup>"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> (Act 21 of 2000), enforced on 17<sup>th</sup> Oct. 2000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> İbid. <sup>9</sup> Ibid



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Sec 66D: "This provision imposes punishment on a person who commits cheating by impersonating another.<sup>11</sup>" Personal and sensitive information about children: This clause establishes legal culpability in the form of "compensation," but it also mandates that people and organisations handling personal data and sensitive information of individuals secure such data against unauthorised use and disclosure. Both sensitive personal data and personal data belonging to children are covered by this Sec, which is sufficiently all-inclusive.<sup>12</sup>

#### C. INDIAN PENAL CODE

Sec 378<sup>13</sup>, This Sec includes only movables not applied to intangible property or immovable properties, and the definition of movable property has been given under Sec 22 of the IPC, which includes only corporeal properties, i.e., tangible properties except land and things which are attached permanently to the earth. The punishment for theft has been given under Sec 378 of this Act.

Sec. 424 of the IPC states that "whoever dishonestly or fraudulently conceals or removes any property of himself or any other person, or dishonestly or fraudulently assists in the concealment or removal thereof, or dishonestly releases any demand or claim to which he is entitled, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description<sup>1</sup> for a term which may extend to 2 (two) years, or with fine, or with both."<sup>14</sup>

Sec. 425 of the IPC deals with mischief and states that "whoever with intent to cause, or knowing that he is likely to cause, wrongful loss or damage to the public or to any person, causes the destruction of any property, or any such change in any property or in the situation thereof as destroys or diminishes its value or utility, or affects it injuriously, commits mischief".<sup>15</sup>"The maximum punishment for mischief as per Sec 426 of the IPC is imprisonment of up to 3 (three) months or a fine or both."<sup>16</sup>

D. Provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012. (POCSO, Act)<sup>17</sup>

In addition, the POCSO Act was enacted in 2012 to offer legal protection against sexual assault, sexual harassment, and the production of pornographic material aimed at children. The Ministry of Women and Child Development worked hard to get the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, which was passed in 2012, into law. This was done with the intention of controlling offensive sexual crimes committed against children through the implementation of stringent legal provisions. "The act defines a child as any person below the age of 18 years, and regards the best interests and welfare of the child as being of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy, physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child."<sup>18</sup> E. Punishments for offences against the children:

I. Penetrative Sexual Assault on a child: - A minimum of ten years, with the possibility of an enhanced sentence of life in prison, as well as a fine.<sup>19</sup> Penetrative sexual assault on a child under the age of sixteen is punishable by a period of imprisonment of at least twenty years that may be extended to life in prison, which would mean that the offender would be imprisoned for the rest of their natural lives, as well as by a fine.<sup>20</sup>

II. "Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault:"<sup>21</sup> The crime of "Aggravated Penetrative Sexual Assault," a fine and a sentence of at least 20 years in jail, with the potential of life in prison.<sup>22</sup>

III. "Sexual Assault:" Sexual assault is defined as any act that involves physical contact without penetration and is done with the goal of gratifying one's sexual desires. This includes touching a kid's vagina, penis, anus, or breast, or causing a child to touch one's own, another person's, or the child's own.<sup>23</sup>

IV. Punishment for Child Pornography: Child pornography depicts sexually explicit activities with a child. Visual depictions include photos, movies, and digital or computer-generated graphics. Crime scene photos and videos are shared for personal use. Live-streamed sexual abuse has emerged. People pay to see live child abuse through video streaming services. This form of abuse is hard to identify due to its real-time nature and lack of digital evidence. Though child sexual abuse material is a global issue, the US remains one of the top producers and consumers. Understanding the nature and pervasiveness of child sexual abuse material is crucial to addressing this crime.

"Use of a child for pornographic purposes is punishable by a minimum of five years in prison and a fine, and a maximum of seven years in prison and a fine if convicted again."<sup>24</sup> The use of a child for pornographic purposes, resulting in penetrative sexual assault, is punishable by a minimum of ten years in prison (in case of child

10 Ibid

11 ibid

12 Id. S. 43A.

<sup>13</sup> "Indian Penal Code, 1860 (Act 45 of 1860)"

<sup>14</sup> Id. S. 424

15 Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid
<sup>17</sup> Supra no. 5.
<sup>18</sup> Id. S. 2d
<sup>19</sup> Id. S. 3
<sup>20</sup> Id. S. 4
<sup>21</sup> Id. S. 5
<sup>22</sup> Id. S. 6

<sup>23</sup> Id. S. 7 <sup>24</sup> Id. S. 14(1)

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below 16 years, not less than 20 years) Use of a child for pornographic purposes, resulting in a 20-year prison sentence and a fine.

If any person stores or possesses pornographic material in any form of structure involving a child, but fails to delete, ruin, or destroy the same, or report the same to the designated authority, as may additionally be prescribed, with the intent to share or transmit child pornography, a fine of not less than Rs 5,000 is imposed; if a second or subsequent offence occurs, a fine of not less than Rs 10,000 is imposed.<sup>25</sup>

5. <u>Steps to prevent the Cyber Crime against Children</u>

According to an article published by the Hindustan Times on September 16, 2021, the total number of cognizable cases had climbed by 28 %, but the number of new cases had decreased when infractions linked to COVID were taken out of the equation in comparison to 2019. The number of cases of kidnapping and abduction decreased by 19.3 %, while crimes against women decreased by 8.3 %, crimes against minors decreased by 13.2 %, and crimes against the elderly decreased by 19.3 % (down 10.8 %). There was a one-% rise in the total number of homicides. On the other hand, the number of complaints that were submitted under provisions that deal with cybercrime climbed to 50,035 the prior year from 44,735 the year before that. This is in line with the overall trend seen around the world, which sees an increase in the number of individuals working and studying from home and spending more time using digital tools.<sup>26</sup>

The penalties established in Sec. 14 and 15 of "the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses (POCSO) Act" were updated in 2019 to incorporate a definition of "child pornography."27

#### **GOVERNMENT ENDEAVOR TO COMBAT CHILD ABUSE IN CYBERSPACE:**

- i. "The Information Technology (IT) Act" of 2000 includes provisions for dealing with cybercrime against children. Sec  $67-B^{28}$  of the Act imposes severe penalties for publishing, browsing, or transmitting in electronic form material depicting children in sexually explicit acts, among other things. "Sec 354-A and 354-D also provide for penalties for cyber-bullying and cyber stalking."29
- ii. A rule published under the IT Act mandates that intermediaries notify users of computer resources that they must refrain from uploading or displaying anything that is obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, or harms minors in any way. They must also refrain from disclosing any information that is currently illegal, or that they will be subject to disciplinary action under the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code).
- iii. It's important to note that the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and national Interpol nodal agency periodically block websites that contain extreme child sexual abuse material (CSAM) for a variety of reasons.
- The government has issued a directive to concerned Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to establish a iv. suitable framework for receiving the Internet Watch Foundation's (IWF) UK list of CSAM websites and webpages on a dynamic basis and banning access to child pornography websites and webpages.
- Internet service providers (ISPs) are recommended to take appropriate measures to enhance v. awareness among their customers about the use of parental control filters on end-user devices via email, invoicing, SMS, websites, and other means.
- vi. Earlier this year, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) established a set of guidelines for schools to follow when it comes to using the internet safely and securely. Additionally, schools are instructed in the installation of efficient firewalls, filtering software mechanisms, as well as effective security rules on all of their computers in this circular.
- vii. For the purpose of combating all forms of cybercrime against women and children, including child pornography, the government is currently putting in place a comprehensive central sector system known as the "Centre for Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)."
- viii. The government has established the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal at the website www.cybercrime.gov.in in order to make it possible for citizens to file complaints regarding any and all forms of cyber crime online, with a particular emphasis on cyber crimes committed against women and children. The respective state law enforcement authorities investigate all complaints that are submitted

https://www.gapinterdisciplinarities.org/

<sup>25</sup> Id. S. 14

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> "Cyber Crime Against registered 11.8% increase last year (2020): NCRB- Reported by Hindustan Times", Available on: https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/cyber-crimes-registered-11-8-increase-last-year-ncrb-101631731021285.html , (accessed on 15-10-2021)

<sup>27</sup> Id, S 2 d(a)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> "Information Technology Act, 2000 (No.21 of 2000)"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Supra No.11



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through this online portal. In addition, a national helpline number (155260) has been activated to assist members of the general public who are filing complaints through the portal.

- ix. A Cyber Safety Handbook for Adolescents and Students has been published by the government in order to educate adolescents and students on the various forms of cybercrime and how to protect themselves against them. Both the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Cybercrime in India host websites where the handbook can be downloaded. The NCERT website also features a copy of the manual that was uploaded by the Ministry of Education.
- x. The Central Government has taken steps to strengthen the mechanism for dealing with cybercrime in a comprehensive and coordinated manner. These steps include raising awareness about cybercrime, issuing alerts and advisories, and building the capacity of law enforcement agencies and providing them with training. enforcement personnel/prosecutors/judicial officers, improving cyber forensic facilities, and so on.
- xi. The "Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre" scheme is being implemented by the government as part of an effort to combat cybercrime in a manner that is both coordinated and comprehensive.

#### CONCLUSION

Today we are living in the age of Technology where everyone is depend on Technologies now we can say that technology is a mile stone in the development of the human life. Life is very easy after the rapid growth and development of the technologies but on some time we pay a huge loss. In the recent years number of Cybercrimes is a big threat to the Human Kind. So it's very necessary to make strict laws to regulate the technologies.

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