

Title: NCW Sponsored National Conference on Cyber Crime and Women: Precautions and Strategies

Name and Address of the Organization Holding the Conference: Amity Law School, Amity University Chhattisgarh, Kharora, Chhattisgarh 493225

Funding organization: National Commission for Women

About the Funding Agency:

The National Commission for Women is a statutory body of the Government of India which was established in January 1992, as per the provisions of the Constitution of India as defined in the 1990 National Commission for Women Act. The commission is committed towards promoting and protecting women's rights and dignity. It also acts as an advisory body to the government with respect to legislations of policies that centres on the questions of women's issues.

The major functions of NCW include:

- To investigate and examine the matters related to women safety as well as to safeguard their rights guaranteed by the constitution.
- To present report to the government at the centre relating to the work done to ensure women's safety and rights.
- To review the legislations related to women's issues and to identify any insufficiency and probable shortcomings.
- To inform authorities about the cases that tantamount to violation of law against women
- To suggest measures and recommendations for effective implementation of such policy or laws that is aimed at maintaining women's safety and rights.
- Take cognizance of complaints and to take suo-moto action with regard to the same.
- To work towards safeguarding women's rights
- To mitigate the difficulties and hardship that women face and to provide them with lasting solutions
- To ensure each women have a claim to welfare and relief
- To give a call for special studies or investigations into specific problems or situations concerning women's issues

Introduction

(a) Background Note: The Internet has revolutionised the 21st century by enhancing proximity and connectivity between people across the world by a simple touch on the phone, laptop or any other similar device. Connecting to anyone sitting far across the globe, in a different continent or closer to home in a different city is now a simple technological matter. Wherever one goes, the internet follows, thanks to the universality of the social media which serves as a personal domain to remain in virtual contact with the public. As much as the cyber space promotes connectivity, knowledge-sharing, exposure in the private and public domain it also carries its own vices that often leads to the modelling of gender based violence and crime. Women by and large remain exposed to violence in the private and public sphere owing to the inherent gender disparity and the resultant discrimination that is systematically propagated through beliefs, customs and practices. The Cyber Space is but the virtual reflection of the social and women mostly remain vulnerable to threats, violence and organised as well as unorganised crimes in this space. From gas lighting, blackmailing, psychological threat, physical and sexual violence, abuse and manipulation the cyber space is a breeding ground for violence against women. Stalking, Bullying, Catcalling, Hacking, Morphed Compromising Pictures, Defamation are some of the classic strategies to instil an acute insecurity syndrome and exercise a very unique brand of psychological control on the women. A sense of constant vulnerability, threat, in confidence is what it takes to push these women towards becoming victims of cyber crime.

(b) Objectives of Conducting the Conference:

The dichotomy between victimhood and survival remains rather ambiguous when it comes down to the individual woman who remains at the receiving end of such violence. While many women are able to identify as survivors, seeking an agency for themselves, there are good number of women who struggle with shame, stigmatisation and victim blaming while the predator often goes unpunished. Even more a number of women remain largely isolated from seeking legal justice. It is important that there is increased academic engagement covering the theoretical and practical aspects of cyber crimes, so that its causes, nature and consequences can be better identified. Once the edifice is set, the engagement would further

result in addressing the theoretical questions of victimhood-survivor dichotomy, exploitation, violence that is more closely located within the disciplines of social sciences. On the other hand, the more practical aspect of seeking legal justice/redressal, precaution can be addressed from the structured perspectives of legal studies. A combination of socio-legal methods, theoretical engagements is not only academically enriching but also very crucial for developing the right kind of awareness to seek justice and to undertake precautionary measures.

The Amity Law School with the generous support of the National Commission for Women therefore organised a two-day national conference titled “National Conference on Cyber Crimes and Women: Precautions and Strategies” that saw rigorous discussion on the issues of cyber crime and women.

The conference was organized with a focus to understand why the virtual space remains so volatile and why women are rendered vulnerable to abuse.

- There was also a concerted effort to understand the victim-survivor dichotomy and to acknowledge the agency in women.
- The cyber Space remains largely under-theorized, the academic deliberations were conducted with an aim to understand the cyber space in its entirety as a virtual space where abuse against women come out as a stark reality.
- To sensitize the participants about various forms of cyber crimes and the laws pertaining to them.
- To create a space for students, scholars and academic practitioners from all over the country to come together and engage in rigorous academic discussions and dialogue.
- To sensitize the participants about the laws and policies pertaining to preventing and mitigating cyber crimes.
- To understand criminal psychology- decoding the mind of the abuser.
- To understand the psychology of the victim who remains on the other end of the spectrum, at the receiving end of such violence or abuse.
- To understand how therapy and professional help can enable survivors to cope with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other forms of traumatic experiences.
- To understand the nuanced technical aspects of cyber forensics, cyber crimes and cyber terrorism as a threat to state as well as human security.

- To outline the policies and the strategies that need to be employed to prevent such crimes from happening.

(c) Methodology adapted for conducting the Conference:

The conference was organised with an aim to discuss some of the urgent questions related to cyber crime and women. The idea was to generate debate, discussion and exchange of ideas across the entire spectrum of interested scholars, students and administrators. Thus, our inaugural session had a senior IPS officer who had in her service tenure held the portfolio of women's safety along with a cyber expert who works in the field of cyber security and safety.

There were also two Thematic Panel Discussions which was titled: Understanding and Analyzing the Socio Legal Contours of Cyber Crime and The Techno-Social focusing on the technical and sociological aspects of cyber crime during the first and second day of the conference respectively. To have scholarly engagements from students, there were three thematic sessions of paper presentations that dealt with the socio-legal aspects along with the psychological and technical dimensions of cyber crime.

2. Proceedings of the Conference

Inaugural Ceremony: The inaugural ceremony was conducted in the University Auditorium at 10.00 a.m. which was chaired by Dr. Rajendra Kumar Pandey, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, Amity University Chhattisgarh. Mrs. Anjana Sinha, IPS Andhra Pradesh Police was invited as the keynote speaker. The session was also attended by Dr. J.S Sodhi, Group CIO & Senior Vice President, Ritnand Balved Education Foundation (AMITY Group) & Executive Director Cyborg Cyber Forensics and Information Security Pvt Ltd. Throwing light upon some of the cases of cyber violation and cyber crimes that she encountered Mrs. Sinha, discussed the preventive and precautionary measures of using cyber space also giving an idea to identify the red flags or warning signs while exploring the cyber space. The Vice Chancellor discussed about the internet of things or the interconnection via the internet computing devices embedded in everyday objects, enabling humans to send and receive data is becoming the prime seat of danger, exposing every user of internet to the potential danger of intrusion. The internet is

not just a double-edged sword but also a multi edged sword, operating in numerous ways, sometimes in the performance and sometimes in its prevention. Dr. J.S.Sodhi, senior member of Amity Education Group, in his engaging talk delved into the propensity of the criminal activities in the digital world, and emphasized on the myth associated with the domain, the myth being “we are safe” but the reality speaks that the backdoor usage of the cyber space is making people more and more vulnerable. The Registrar Dr. S.C. Mukhopadhyay highlighted the need for creating awareness and the importance of individual responsibility to be informed about the things that go around in the domain of cyber space.

The inaugural was followed by a panel discussion titled “Understanding and analyzing the Socio-Legal Contours of Cyber Crime and Violence against Women” which was subsequently followed by parallel sessions in which almost 90 papers were presented. The conference was attended by Technocrats, Lawyers, Academics, Researchers, Students and Academic Council Members, AUC. The vote of thanks was moved by Deputy Pro Vice Chancellor Dr. Vijay Singh Dahima. The response of the students and other stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive and different aspect of the problems: technology, law, psychology and the social dimensions were adequately addressed in the problem.

Panel Discussion 1:

“Understanding and analyzing the Socio-Legal Contours of cyber crime and violence against women”

Distinguished academicians were invited in the panel discussion that took place in the Auditorium at 12 p.m. with Prof. Sabiha Hussain as the moderator. Prof. Sabiha Hussain reflected upon the following questions,

“What is cyber crime?”

“How cyber space is becoming unsafe for women?”

She elucidated on the need to educate the stakeholders and the common people about cyber space and how technology is used and misused. Her deliberations were on the forms of violence against women in the cyber space.

Prof. Anindya Jyoti Majumdar, the second panellist threw light upon the problems of structural inadequacy, culture of security, and the idealisation, which gives way to cyber crime. He further added that the inter play of security and insecurity creates a ghetto. The

inept or the unsuitable space is the product of idealisation that paves way for a greater danger in the cyber space.

Dr. Tumpa Mukherje, spoke about Gender socialization and pointed out on how activists and journalists are the major targets of cyber crime. She agreed with the proposition of the lack of social norm in cyber space facilitating immoral activities. She recommended conducting cyber sensitization, awareness programmes, counselling of cyber crime victims and more importantly, the parents must be given adequate knowledge about cyber space so that they could extend their hand towards their children at times of need. Moreover, she stressed upon the introduction of Cyber criminology as a subject in schools and colleges to impart knowledge in this area to the youngsters.

Dr. Atul Pandey discussed about the specific laws that deals with cyber crime and deliberated elaborately on obscenity, privacy violation and identity theft. He added that language has a massive effect in the process of cyber crime. He quoted Idi Amin Dada's famous dialogue, "You have freedom of speech but freedom after speech, and I cannot guarantee that."

Ms. Deeplina Banerjee, the organizing secretary concluded the panel discussion. She discussed on how anonymity in cyber space acts as an agent of cyber crime and more specifically how it results due to the thinning of boundaries between the virtual and the personal in the ambit of the cyber space. The need to secure the cyber space is all the more urgent because of the deep sense of insecurity embedded within the system. She concluded that in order to prevent the cyber crimes against women, it is important that the youth are sensitized thoroughly about the dangers so that they can take preventive measures.

Technical Session 1:

Theme: Law and Policy

Dr. Atul Pandey chaired the first Technical session, which was held in the Seminar Hall from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. The students of ALS, Amity University Chhattisgarh, presented their research papers along with the students of HNLU and Amity Law School, Amity University Kolkata who also participated in this technical session. The Session focused on analyzing the existing legislative framework for dealing with cyber crimes not only in India but also abroad. The presenters critically evaluated the laws in force in India for the protection of women from the threats of cyber world. They emphasized on the right to privacy held by individuals and the need to enhance it. The speakers dealt with laws regarding cyber stalking,

extortion, harassment and obscenity. Chairperson Dr. Atul Pandey concluded the session by adding that there is an urgent need to create awareness among the people regarding cyber crime.

Second Panel Discussion:

“The Techno-Social” – Understanding the Technical and Social give and take in the virtual cyber space”

Distinguished guests were invited in the panel discussion that took place in the auditorium at 10.00 a.m., which continued until 12.00 p.m. Prof. Prosenjit Gupta moderated the panel. He delved into the precautionary measures that one must take to avoid and prevent cyber crime also stated about the issues related to privacy. He said that research has to be done to come up with better safety policies in the cyber space.

The next panellist was Advocate Anand Shankar Jha who reflected upon the various issues related to cyber crime and pointed out to the deliberate need of training the investigating officers to combat cyber crime. He also said that Law school’s curriculum needs to be updated and along with Law teachers, IT specialists should teach the students the subject of Cyber Law, enforcing the necessity to cultivate measures in the students to prevent being a helpless victim.

Dr. Atul Kumar Pandey was the third panellist who said that Cyber Law deals with a “plethora of issues”. Continuing with that, he gave presentation on ‘scaling up digital forensic- the past, present and future of cyber crime investigation’. He added that in India there is no law regarding the regulation of encryption code system.

The registrar of AUC was the last speaker of the panel. Dr. Mukhopadhyay talked about women’s vulnerability; how fear becomes an important factor during the post-traumatic period that results in a deep sense of insecurity. The power to combat the post-traumatic shock comes from within, and should be dealt in a very significant manner. Law and sociology goes hand in hand and both the disciplines are intertwined, therefore, should be read in accordance with each other.

Technical Session 2:

Theme- Sociological and Psychological Aspect of Cyber Crime

The second technical session focused on the sociological and psychological dimensions of cyber crime and its impact on the individual. There were advocates from Chattisgarh High Court, and Professors from local colleges along with students of Jadavpur University and Jawaharlal Nehru University as well as Amity University Chhattisgarh who explored the dimensions of the shift of violence from the physical to the virtual, victim advocacy, therapy that are available to the survivors among others. The speakers spoke about the trauma associated with cyber bullying or online violence that although do not have any immediate physical effect leaves a lasting impact on the psyche of the minds of the women who remain at the receiving end of such violence. The speakers dwelt on the questions of empathy and creating a secure virtual space for women who remain the most vulnerable. Speakers also spoke about feminizing the cyber space to address the problem of women's security from a ground level. There were also discussions on how the questions of "Gendered- Cyber Insecurity" is deeply rooted in the patriarchal set-up and how similar such patriarchal tropes could be debunked was also raised and discussed. This session was moderated by Mr. Anand Shankar Jha.

Technical Session 3:

Technical Aspects of Cyber Crime:

The third technical session focused on the technical aspects of cyber crime which was chaired by Prof. Prosenjit Gupta. This session also saw some very interesting papers that were presented by students of AUC, Jadavpur University and Jawaharlal Nehru University. There were discussions on the various forms online threats; cyber bullying and cyber harassment can be addressed. The speakers discussed about the issues of violation of privacy vis-a-vis the misuse of cyber space. Speakers also shed light on how mobile apps are controlling the lives of women in Saudi Arabia thus compromising personal freedom. It was noted that although there were laws to address this growing menace there was hardly any effort to see to the actual implementation at the ground level. The speakers also talked about the need of awareness drive so that users can be made aware of the red-flags or the warning signs and the possible measures to counter the threats prevalent in the cyber space. There was

also discussion on revenge porn and online gas lighting and mean comments made on celebrities on their social media handles or posts. The speakers also talked about the construction of feminine identity in the cyber space and how it subsequently leads to identity theft thus paving the way for white collar crimes. The speakers also tried to explore the themes of cyber voyeurism and the impact it has on the lives of individual women who remain at the receiving end of online harassment and cyber stalking. Discussions also centred on strategizing safety and empowerment in the cyber space and the policies and strategies that could be put to practise urgently.

3. Observations

1. The guest-speakers made some very pertinent points related to strengthening the security in the cyber space. It was discussed that since the cyber-space is a virtual domain where boundaries do not exist there needs to be more stringent laws to prevent crime and violence against women.
2. The speakers also highlighted that there needs to be a combination of technology and law in the training or teaching methodologies to help students and scholars understand the more nuanced aspect of cyber crime and how it affects women. This practise will also help in understanding the prevalent cyber laws and how they could be modified or if new laws could be introduced to address the growing menace.
3. The participants lay great focus on the security and safety of women in the cyber space through their presentation. Important points related to the mental wellbeing of women remaining at the receiving end of such atrocities were raised.
4. The participants also highlighted on the issues related to creating awareness among youth about how to identify harmful or dangerous sites and to sensitize them about online privacy.
5. Mrs. Anjana Sinha, the key-note speaker had a huge impact on the participants especially the female students. She appeared as an icon to the female students, as a woman who is not only serving in the Indian Police Force but also have actively tackled cases related to cyber crime, online harassment and bullying.
6. The participants also highlighted that it is important to look beyond the gender binaries while addressing issues of cyber crime and cyber bullying. It is important to take the

individual in consideration so as to ensure that they get justice and the perpetrators can be brought before law and adequately punished.

7. It was also discussed during the conference that there is an urgent need to sensitize the people especially women about various forms of cyber crimes that include phishing, morphing, cat-calling, gaslighting, verbal abuse, revenge-porn etc and how they can possibly combat them.

8. The participants discussed about identity theft and online voyeurism and how they become intricately linked with cyber crime and online harassment that leads to violating privacy and space that women occupy.

9. There were also suggestions to develop curriculum in educational institutes to help identify the warning signs of cyber harassment and to develop a holistic idea about violation of rights, space and abuse in the cyber space.

10. There needs to be a thorough sensitization of women about how they can avoid voyeurs, identify abusers, where they can raise their complaints and what are the possible actions that they can take to bring down the perpetrators.

4. Recommendations/Action Points

(i) Those relating to Local Administration and/or its agencies

1. There needs to be a 24x7 government helpline that can register problems related to online harassment/bullying and cyber security from women.

2. The local administrating agencies may conduct sensitization programmes or drives in the educational institutes to create and spread awareness among students about how to securely use the internet.

3. The agencies can also ensure that the students who represent the youth population understand the basic concept of privacy and be sensitized enough to respect and acknowledge the private space of another individual.

(ii) Those relating to State Administration and/or its agencies

1. The Chhattisgarh State Government can have an online helpline to assist women who have been victims of cyber violence.
2. There should be psychological help for women in the government hospitals or medical schools to help women overcome the trauma associated with online harassment, bullying, trolling or similar such abuse.
3. The state government should encourage and support such endeavours in the form of seminars, conferences or awareness drives to educate women and also to allow dissemination of knowledge.

(ii) Those relating to Govt. of India and/or its agencies

1. The Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development should develop and introduce a curriculum that takes a holistic approach to understand the social, psychological, legal as well as technical aspects of cyber-based violence and crimes to help sensitize young students.
2. The Government of India should ensure that more women are involved into writing codes and developing the security techniques to combat cyber crime.
3. There needs to be a 24x7 helpline for psychological help for victims of cyber violence. The Government should ensure that victims receive any such medical help that helps them to survive and overcome the trauma or abuse.
4. There is a need for more holistic efforts towards victim advocacy and to ensure that women who undergo such violence are delivered justice and redressal at the earliest. The laws need to be strict and perpetrators should be heavily penalized.
5. There should be a regulatory check on harmful websites and a list may be published so that people can refrain from using or visiting those sites.
6. The National Commission for Women should extend their support towards academic endeavours to discuss about issues related to women's safety in the cyber space.

7. The Commission should also encourage educational institutions to conduct seminars, conferences or to hold special lectures to allow discussions on these very urgent issues as well as to address the problems faced by women in the cyber space.

Conclusion: The Conference was highly appreciated by Prof (Dr.) Rajendra Kumar Pandey, the Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Amity University Chhattisgarh as well as all the guests, dignitaries and participants who shared their ideas and valuable inputs. The students of AUC were filled with enthusiasm which reflected in their participation during the conference.

As a result of the deliberations, the course on Cyber Laws and other related academic discourses has received a fillip and students are encouraged to participate more in similar such academic endeavours. The issues and problems that were raised during the conference related to the security of women in the cyber space have received due academic attention from the Vice Chancellor and other higher administrative officials at Amity University Chhattisgarh as well as the participating guests and scholars. New course structures and training to equip the students with the understanding of the virtual space, the technicalities that work in the background as well as the cyber laws prevalent in the existing legal framework will be proposed shortly.

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(Organising Secretary)

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