



EXISTING LANDSCAPE OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT ONLINE

A Survey by
Digital
Empowerment
Foundation



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A Survey by Digital Empowerment Foundation August, 2020

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INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade India has gone through major digital expansion and technological advancement, especially in the field of media and entertainment. Social Media is a fairly new outgrowth of the Media business¹. Unlike traditional media that delivers information or data, social media platforms are interactive spaces, which enable users to share information, ideas or interests with one another^{2 3}.

However this interaction often leads to negative opinion formation, hateful comment, abuse, threat, and harassment in many ways⁴. Online bullying or cyber bullying has become the norm across social media and is affecting the mental health of many users. Internet trolling has become commonplace in online communities to elicit a reaction or for personal amusement^{5 6}. Another form of bullying that has emerged is cyber stalking where the perpetrator uses social media channels to stalk a victim, which might pose a threat to the victim's privacy⁷.

A major difference between cyber bullying and cyber stalking is related to age; whenever an adolescent is involved the term used is cyber bullying while cyber stalking is when an adult is involved⁸. However not all negative interactions online can be regarded as cyber bullying^{9 10 11}.

Cyber bullying is essentially “an aggressive, intentional act or behavior that is carried out by a group or an individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a

1. Singh, L. (2019). Top 7 sectors expected to drive digital transformation in India. People Matters. Retrieved from <https://www.peoplesmatters.in/article/technology/top-7-sectors-expected-to-drive-digital-transformation-in-india-23364>

2. Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I.P. & Silvestre, B.S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. Business Horizons. Retrieved from <http://summit.sfu.ca/item/18103>

3. Obar, J. A. & Wildman, S. (2015). Social media definition and the governance challenge: An introduction to the special issue. Telecommunications Policy. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308596115001172?via%3Dihub>

4. USLegal. Retrieved from <https://definitions.uslegal.com/c/cyber-bullying/>

5. Diaz, F. L. (2016). Trolling & the first amendment: Protecting internet speech in the era of cyberbullies & internet defamation. University of Illinois Journal of Law, Technology & Policy. Retrieved from <http://illinoisjltp.com/journal/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diaz.pdf>

6. Duggan, M. (2014). 5 facts about online harassment. Pew Research Center. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/10/30/5-facts-about-online-harassment/>

7. Smith, A. M. (2008). Protection of children online: Federal and state laws addressing cyberstalking, cyberharassment, and cyberbullying. Library of Congress. Congressional Research Service. Retrieved from <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=735549>

8. Shivashankar, B.S. & Rajan, A. (2018) A critical analysis of cyber bullying in India-with special reference to bullying in college. International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics. Retrieved from <https://acadpubl.eu/hub/2018-119-17/2/146.pdf>

9. O'Keeffe, G. S., Clarke-Pearson, K., Council on Communications and Media (2011). The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. Pediatrics. Retrieved from <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/127/4/800>

10. Ramasubbu, Suren. (2015). Influence of Social Media on Teenagers. Huffington Post. Retrieved from https://www.huffpost.com/entry/influence-of-social-media-on-teenagers_b_7427740

11. Wolpert, Stuart. (2016). The teenage brain on social media. UCLA Newsroom. Retrieved from <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/releases/the-teenage-brain-on-social-media>

victim who cannot easily defend themselves”¹². Incognito Forensic Foundation has listed various types of cyber bullying which are common. These include:

- Posting hurtful, nasty or humiliating rumours or comments about an individual online;
- Publishing an embarrassing or nasty photo or video;
- Creating fake or nasty webpage about another individual;
- Issuing online threats provoking an individual to kill themselves;
- Triggering religious, racial, ethnic, or political vitriol online by posting hate comments;
- Faking an identity online to ask for or post personal or fake information about someone¹³.

Cyber bullying is fairly similar to traditional bullying with some notable differences. In this case it becomes tough for the victims to identify their bully or why the bully is targeting them. Besides, the content through which the bully is intending to harass the victim can easily be shared and sustained over a period of time by involving multiple people who might or might not be aware of the situation they are a part of.

For most of the surveyed respondents trolling meant online verbal abuse by known or an unknown person. With respect to awareness about cyber bullying and trolling, the survey results highlight that there is a lack of awareness about countering bullying and trolling.

In the survey conducted, 53% of 105 respondents did not know about the ways in which they can counter online bullying. Only 6 out of 100 respondents trolled had registered a FIR complaint. Moreover 54% of 98 people who had been trolled started using social media differently, they are more careful in expressing their opinion on social media. Most importantly, a majority of respondents said that online bullying and trolling had impacted their mental health.

Digital Empowerment Foundation conducted a survey on Online bullying and Harassment in South India with over 152 respondents across the 4 states to enquire about the experiences of people, with respect to cyber bullying, the steps they took to counter it, whether or not the measures were efficient, and what according to them can be a viable solution to reduce cyber bullying.

The survey aims to explore people’s understanding of cyber bullying, it’s effect on the survivors, the efficiency of the solutions at hand and most importantly, the changes that can be brought about to improve the efficiency of the mechanism to counter cyber bullying.

12. Moreno, Megan A. (2014). Cyberbullying. JAMA Pediatrics. 168 (5): 500. Retrieved from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/1866047>

13. Incognito Forensic Foundation. Retrieved from <https://iffllab.org/how-to-prevent-cyber-bullying-anti-cyber-bullying-laws-in-india/>

KEY FINDINGS OF THE SURVEY

1. Facebook ranks as the highest used social media platform followed by Instagram, WhatsApp ranks third, twitter ranks second from bottom and YouTube ranks last.
2. Facebook ranks as the highest social media platform on which LGBTQ have been trolled.
3. 56% of 152 respondents use internet for 1-3 hrs.
4. 62% of 152 people have some details of their social media account public
5. Most people define trolling as a form of online verbal abuse by known or unknown user.
6. 40% of 152 respondents have faced 1-3 separate events of online trolling.
7. 55% of 11 respondents who identified themselves as LGBTQ have been trolled in 8 or more separate incidents.
8. 53% of 105 respondents do not know how to counter trolling.
9. Blocking is the most used method for countering trolling.
10. 56% of 34 respondents feel blocking is an efficient way to counter trolling.
11. Only 6% of 100 respondents have filed an FIR against trolling.
12. 60% of 6 respondents who filed FIR said it takes a long time for police action to come into force.
13. 60% of 6 people who filed FIR feel it is an effective way to deal with trolling.
14. 53% of 32 respondents feel social media platforms take some time to respond when they report an internet troll and their account on the platform.
15. Trolling has most commonly affected the mental health of people.



CYBER BULLYING TACTICS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

India has 290 million active social media users with a majority belonging to a younger population segment. Facebook, YouTube, Instagram are some of the most popular social media networks and research suggests that their outreach is huge.

Social media networks such as Instagram have become a popular mode of cyber bullying where insulting hashtags are used, embarrassing photographs are shared, and fake profiles are created. While on Facebook, confession pages of communities or institutes have become another platform for bullying people. The page allows anyone to post anonymously by merely sending a message to the page administrator. Many times these pages allow members to post confessions which include personal photos and information. Another common tactic used on Facebook, and on Twitter is mass trolling, where several people mock and abuse a target through series of posts. The continuous update of social media applications has widened the scope for bullying and trolling people¹⁴.

14. Shivashankar, B.S. & Rajan, Aswathy. (2018). A critical analysis of cyber bullying in India-with special reference to bullying in college. International Journal of Pure and Applied Mathematics. Retrieved from <https://acadpubl.eu/hub/2018-119-17/2/146.pdf>

INCIDENTS OF CYBER BULLYING

As per a study done by Symantec, 8 out of 10 individuals in India are subjected to different types of cyber bullying. The data released by National Crime Record Bureau shows that cases of cyber stalking and bullying¹⁵ of women and children has increased by 36% from 542 in 2017 to 739% in 2018¹⁶.

Some cases of online bullying that caught headlines include an incident of 2017 where an MBBS student in Kerala jumped off the highest floor of her college building¹⁷. This came after her peers made hateful comments on her Facebook profile. Another incident that garnered media attention was of Gurmehar Kaur, who was trolled and abused on social media platform for campaigning against Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), a student organization affiliated to the right wing¹⁸.

15. Incognito Forensic Foundation. How to Prevent Cyber Bullying – Anti-Cyber bullying Laws in India. Retrieved from <https://ifflab.org/how-to-prevent-cyber-bullying-anti-cyber-bullying-laws-in-india/>

16. Maheshwari, R. (2020). 1 In 10 Indian Adolescents Faces Cyberbullying, Half Don't Report: Study. India Spend. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/1-in-10-indian-adolescents-faces-cyberbullying-half-dont-report-study/>

17. Maheshwari, R. (2020). 1 In 10 Indian Adolescents Faces Cyberbullying, Half Don't Report: Study. India Spend. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/1-in-10-indian-adolescents-faces-cyberbullying-half-dont-report-study/>

18. Maheshwari, R. (2020). 1 In 10 Indian Adolescents Faces Cyberbullying, Half Don't Report: Study. India Spend. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/1-in-10-indian-adolescents-faces-cyberbullying-half-dont-report-study/>

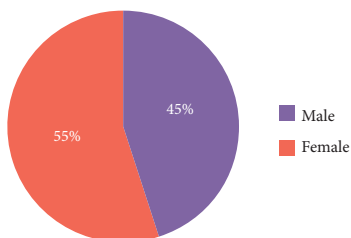


SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTIONS AND CYBER BULLYING

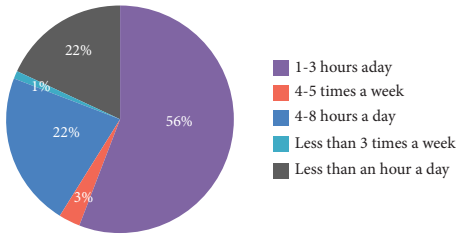
The online community is a reflection of the society that we live in. Though it claims to be a progressive space where one can express oneself freely, the expression comes at a cost. Unlike physical interactions, a discussion on the internet is unpredictable. Every opinion meets a reaction which often spirals into a mean and nasty domain. The reaction can range from negative comments to abuses to sometimes even death threats. This kind of aggressive treatment to harass or bully someone through electronic means is termed as cyber bullying. Through this survey we intend to understand the patterns of online bullying and in the process decode ways to reduce the harm.

Out of 152 respondents surveyed, 55% were females and 45% were males. In terms of number of hours that respondents spend on social media, 56% of 152 respondents spend 1-3 hours a day, 22% spend 4-8 hours a day, and 18% spend less than an hour on social media, 3% spend less than an hour in day, and lastly 1% use social media less than three times a week.

Gender-wise distribution of respondents



Time spent on social media



According to a study titled, “Online Safety and Internet Addiction”, the vulnerability of getting bullied online increases with increase in the use of internet. The study highlights that vulnerability of getting bullied online is directly related to the amount of time one spends on the internet.

The study has shown that 22.4% of people in the age group of 13-18 years who use internet for longer than three hours are vulnerable to online bullying, and 28% of people who used internet for more than four hours a day faced incidents of cyber bullying¹⁹.

Out of 85 respondents who spend 1-3 hours a day on social media, Facebook ranks as the highest used social media platform, followed by Instagram, WhatsApp ranks third; Twitter ranks second from bottom and YouTube ranks last.

In terms of purpose for using social media, entertainment ranks the highest, information on new topics in particular or niche fields ranks next, using social media for accessing news ranks third, keeping in touch with family and friends ranks fourth, using social media for work ranks second from bottom, and using social media to pursue hobby or interest ranks last.

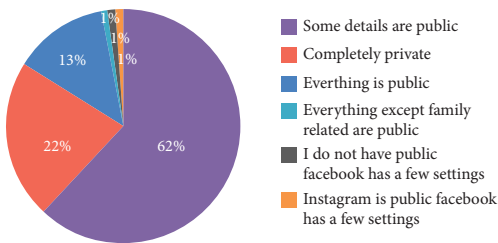
19. Sinha, A.K., Matin, A., Ansari, Y., Sinha, N., Jayaram, V., & Sharma, V. (2020). Online safety and internet addiction: A study conducted amongst adolescents in Delhi-NCR. Retrieved from <https://www.cry.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Online-Safety-and-Internet-Addiction-p.pdf>

PRIVACY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Out of 152 respondents 62% (96) said that some details of their account were public, 22% said that their social media profiles were completely private and 13% said that they had kept everything public except family related information. 1% of the respondents each said they have everything except family-related detail public, Instagram account is public while Facebook has few public settings while the rest 1% do not have an account.

According to the 2014 McAfee report, 'The Tweens, Teens and Technology' 92% of Indian youngsters have a risky online behavior which includes over sharing of personal information²⁰. Ponnuram Kumaraguru, Assistant Professor and founding head of Cybersecurity Education and Research Centre at the Indraprastha Institute of Information Technology is of the opinion that in order to avoid getting bullied online, one should avoid posting any personal information on public forums²¹.

Privacy settings of social media accountnts



20. Financial Express. (2014). One in 3 Indian youth cyberbullied due to risky online behaviour: McAfee report. Financial Express. Retrieved from <https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/one-in-3-indian-youth-cyberbullied-due-to-risky-online-behaviour-mcafee-report/>

21. Taneja, S. (2015). Cyber bullying: Nip it in the bud. Live Mint. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/lpQCFqjETbXachoWRxysO/Cyber-bullying-Nip-it-in-the-bud.html>

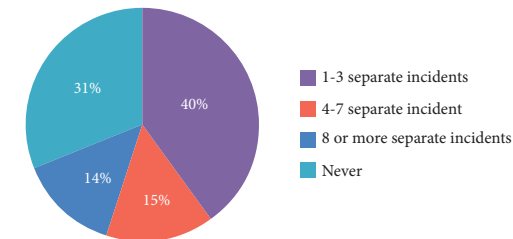
TROLLING ON SOCIAL MEDIA

When respondents were asked about how they would define trolling, the results reveal that online verbal abuse by known or unknown users ranked the highest, followed by unsolicited private messages being sent repeatedly, being threatened by other users online ranks third, being blackmailed or intimidated to remove certain posts either by other users or social media platforms ranks second from bottom and having personal details like address phone number etc. being published ranks last.

Cambridge dictionary defines trolling as an act of leaving an insulting message on the internet in order to annoy someone²². According to a study done by Canada's University of Manitoba, trolls are individuals exhibiting personality traits of narcissists, psychopaths and sadists²³.

The survey conducted by DEF shows that out of total respondents, 40% responded of having 1-3 separate incidents of getting trolled, 15% had 4-7 separate incident of trolling, 14% had 8 or more incidents of trolling, while 31% said they never have experienced trolling.

Incidents of trolling



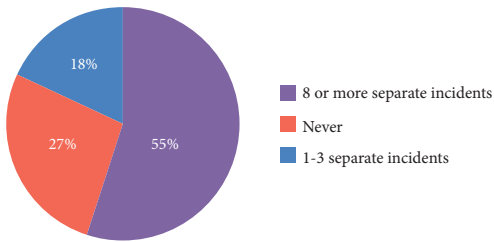
22. Cambridge dictionaries online. (2020). Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trolling>

23. Holloway, K. (2016). What do all online trolls have in common?. Scroll. Retrieved from <https://scroll.in/article/817887/what-do-all-online-trolls-have-in-common>

INCIDENTS WHERE LGBTQ HAVE BEEN TROLLED

142 out of total people responded to the question if they identified themselves as LGBTQ. Out of 142, 11 (8%) identified as LGBTQ. 55% of 11 people who identified as LGBTQ were trolled in 8 or more incidents while 18% were trolled in 1-3 separate incidents, 27% reported they never have been trolled on social media. The social media platforms on which they (LGBTQ) were trolled, Facebook ranks the highest, followed by Instagram, WhatsApp and Twitter both rank third and YouTube ranks last. This highlights that sexuality and gender based minorities are harassed more frequently and this further keeps them away from making use of ICT facilities^{24 25}.

Incidents where LGBTQ have been trolled



24. Business Standard (2019). 40% Indian women fear online trolls as they access Internet: Nielson report. Retrieved from https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/40-indian-women-fear-online-trolls-as-they-access-internet-nielson-report-119121700729_1.html.

25. Banaji, S., Livingstone, S., Nandi, A., Stoilova, M. (2018). Instrumentalising the digital: adolescents' engagement with ICTs in low- and middle-income countries, Development in Practice. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09614524.2018.1438366>



ISSUES ON WHICH RESPONDENTS HAVE BEEN TROLLED

In terms of the issues for which respondents were trolled, posting about women's issues ranked the highest, followed by posting about personal information, posting about opinion piece and current affairs ranked third while posting about religion and LGBTQ ranked last. According to a report by Amnesty International, online violence against women has been seen as an extension of offline violence which further curbs their freedom of expression on online platforms²⁶.

Trolling people especially women for talking or posting on issues related to women and other marginalized groups, reinforces gender stereotype, often targeting their sexuality and is a direct threat to their freedom of expression.

On being asked about the social media platforms on which respondents were trolled the most, Facebook ranks the highest, followed by Twitter, WhatsApp ranks third; Instagram ranks second from bottom while YouTube ranks last.

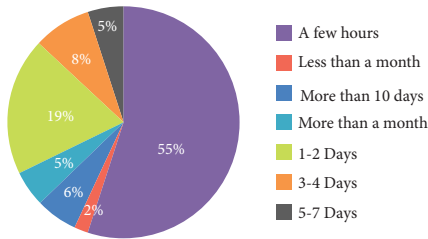
The highest form of trolling that respondents experienced was in the form of online verbal abuse from other users, followed by their account or profile being hacked or an attempt to hack, threats of other form of violence (e.g. physical safety) ranked third, leaking of personal information ranked fourth, social media account being disable ranked fifth; threats against family members and loved ones ranked third from bottom, death threats ranked second from bottom and rape threats ranked last.

26. Maheshwari, R. (2020). 1 In 10 Indian Adolescents Faces Cyberbullying, Half Don't Report: Study. India Spend. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/1-in-10-indian-adolescents-faces-cyberbullying-half-dont-report-study/>

TIME PERIOD FOR WHICH TROLLING LASTED

Out of 102 people who have been trolled on social media in more than 1 separate events, 55% said that trolling lasted for few hours, for 19% trolling lasted for 1-2 days, for 8% trolling lasted for 3-4 days while 6% experienced trolling for more than 10 days and 5% of the respondents each experienced trolling for 5-7 days and more than a month For 2% trolling lasted for less than a month.

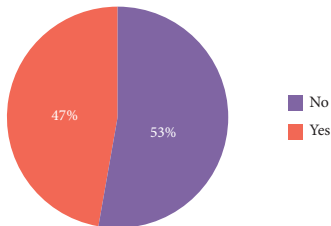
Time Period for which trolling lasted



AWARENESS OF STEPS TO COUNTER TROLLING

As many as 53% of 105 respondents did not know of a way to counter trolling. In a country like India which is just warming up to the idea of such a humongous digital expansion and is plagued by low literacy, knowledge about cyber bullying and troll control might be too far-fetched an expectation.

Awareness of steps to counter trolling

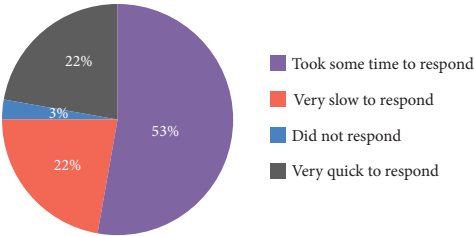


In terms of the steps that respondents took to counter trolling, blocking the trolls ranks the highest, followed by reporting the troll on the social media platform, ignoring the troll ranks third while filing FIR with police ranks second from bottom and deleting or disabling social media account ranks last. One of the reasons for not reporting cyber bullying is that, many people do not recognize that they are being bullied while other reasons include lack of awareness regarding legal option and fear of retaliation ²⁷.

RESPONSE FROM SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Out of 32 people who reported trolls and their accounts to social media platforms, 53% felt that social media platforms took time to respond while 22% of the respondents each felt that social media platforms were very slow to respond as well as quick to respond and 3% did not respond.

Response from Social Media Platforms

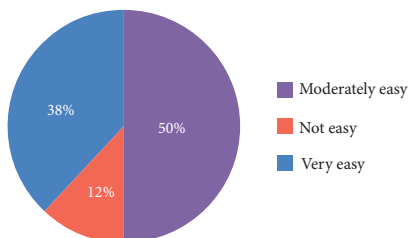


27. Maheshwari, R. (2020). 1 In 10 Indian Adolescents Faces Cyberbullying, Half Don't Report: Study. India Spend. Retrieved from <https://www.indiaspend.com/1-in-10-indian-adolescents-faces-cyberbullying-half-dont-report-study/>

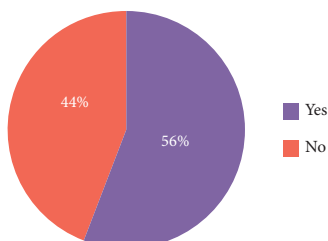
BLOCKING TROLLS ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

As many as 34 people blocked their trolls on social media platforms, 50% of 34 respondents felt that it is moderately easy to block troll on social media platform while 38% felt that it is very easy to block and 12% said that it was not easy to block on social media platform. When 34 respondents were asked if they felt blocking was an efficient step, 56% said yes while 44% said no.

Blocking on social media



Blocking as an efficient step



Elon Green in his article, 'Why blocking trolls doesn't work' has explained that blocking a troll is not an effective method to counter trolling, as the troll can make new accounts to harass the target, which is called as the 'hydra effect'²⁸, the only tools available to counter trolling on platforms like Twitter are either muting or blocking, which he says are ineffective to deal with trolling.

28. Green, E. (2016). Why blocking trolls doesn't work. Time. Retrieved from <https://time.com/4457275/twitter-blocking-troll-failure/>

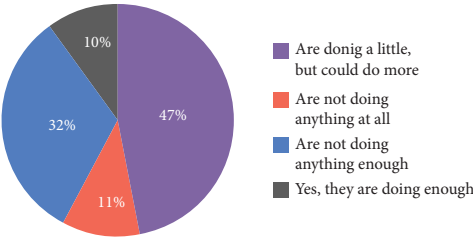
QUALITY OF ACTION TAKEN BY SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

Total 105 respondents who had experienced trolling were asked if social media platforms were doing enough to counter trolling, 47% of 105 respondents said that social media platforms are doing little but could do more, 32% said that social media platforms are not doing nearly enough, 11% said that they are not doing anything at all while only 10% of the respondents feel that social media platforms are doing enough.

Moreover, most of the time the onus of reporting and blocking lies with the victim, instead the social media companies should help victims by making it simple to report or block any abuser²⁹. The survey conducted by Amnesty International with 500 women in 8 countries, also indicates that women feel social media companies need to do more in terms of their response to online violence and should ensure that moderators be trained in identifying gender and identity related threats and abuse on their platforms³⁰.

The responses somewhere indicate that the problem lies with the social media platforms that need to ramp up their safety regulations in order to protect their users.

Quality of action taken by social media platforms



29. Kapko, M. (2015). Social media sites still don't do enough to combat abuse. CIO. Retrieved from <https://www.cio.com/article/2942166/social-media-sites-still-dont-do-enough-to-combat-abuse.html>

30. Amnesty reveals alarming impact of online abuse against women. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/amnesty-reveals-alarming-impact-of-online-abuse-against-women/>

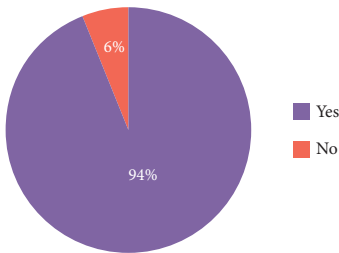
PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO FILED AN FIR

Out of 105 respondents, 100 responded to the question if they have filed FIR.

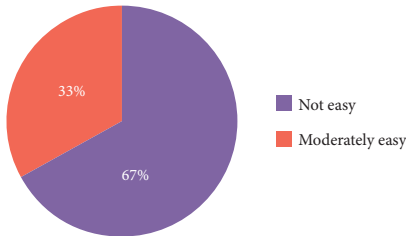
Only 6% (6) of 100 respondents have filed an FIR. Out of 6 respondents who have filed an FIR, 67% said it was not easy to file an FIR while 33% felt that it was moderately easy to file an FIR. Out of 6 respondents, 50% each were fairly satisfied and not satisfied with the police dealing with the situation. 60% said it took fairly long for police action to come into effect while 40% felt that police's action never came into effect. 60% of the 6 respondents, who have filed an FIR, feel that filing an FIR is an effective way to deal with the situation while 40% feel that an FIR is not an effective way.

This clearly shows the abysmal situation of the state's police departments. They aren't trained well enough to handle the ever changing landscape of cyber-crime, the frequent transfers sometimes do not let them be well acquainted with any particular matter, and besides the policy level problems and judiciary together fail the victim in delivering justice³¹.

Percentage of people who filed an FIR

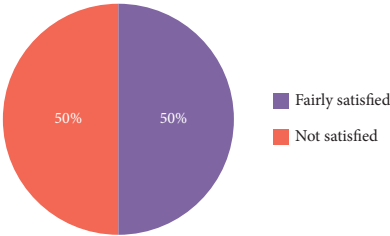


Ease of filing an FIR

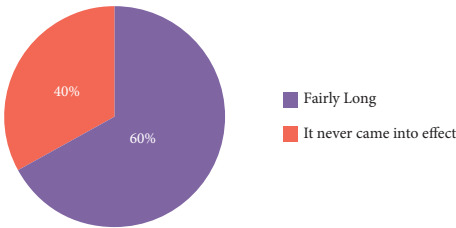


31. Saikia, A. (2016). Why most cybercrimes in India don't end in conviction. Live Mint. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/Home-Page/6Tzx7n4mD1vpyQCOfATbxO/Why-most-cyber-crimes-in-India-dont-end-in-conviction.html>

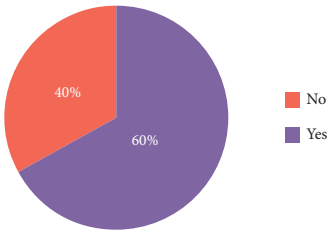
Satisfied with Police dealing with situation



Time taken for Police action to come into effect



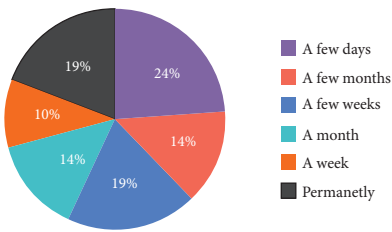
FIR an effective way



TIME PERIOD FOR WHICH ACCOUNT WAS DISABLED

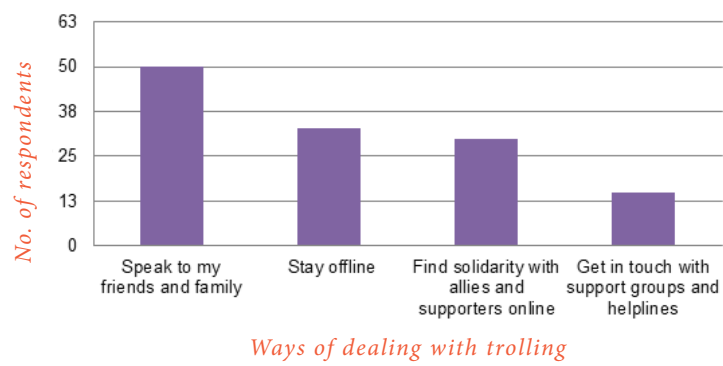
Out of 105 people who were trolled, 98 responded when asked if they had ever disabled their account after being trolled, 79% of 98 said no while 21% (21) said yes. Out of 21 who disabled their account, 24% had disable their account for few days, 19% of the respondents each said they disabled their account for a few weeks and permanently, 14% each disable account for a month and for few months while 10% disabled their account for a week.

Time period for which account was disabled



THE WAYS OF DEALING WITH TROLLING

The ways through which respondents dealt with trolling, talking to friends and family ranked the highest, followed by staying offline, finding solidarity with allies and supporter online ranked third while getting in touch with support groups and helplines ranked last.



In terms of the ways online trolling has affected people’s lives, mental health ranks the highest followed by respondents saying that they feared that their personal information would be compromised, online trolling damaging people’s reputation ranked third, the fear that people in workplace, university or acquaintances will find out ranked fourth, fearing one’s physical safety ranked second from bottom and fearing the safety of family and friends ranked last.

Repeated cases of online bullying results in problems such as depression and suicidal tendencies, according to Manju Mehta, Professor of Clinical Psychology at AIIMS. she says that cyber bullying can even cause self-esteem issues, mood swings, stress, affect family lives and even disrupt relationships³². While other researchers suggest that cyber bullying might lead to symptoms of depression or dissociation and the situation further worsens if there is a previous history of emotional abuse³³.

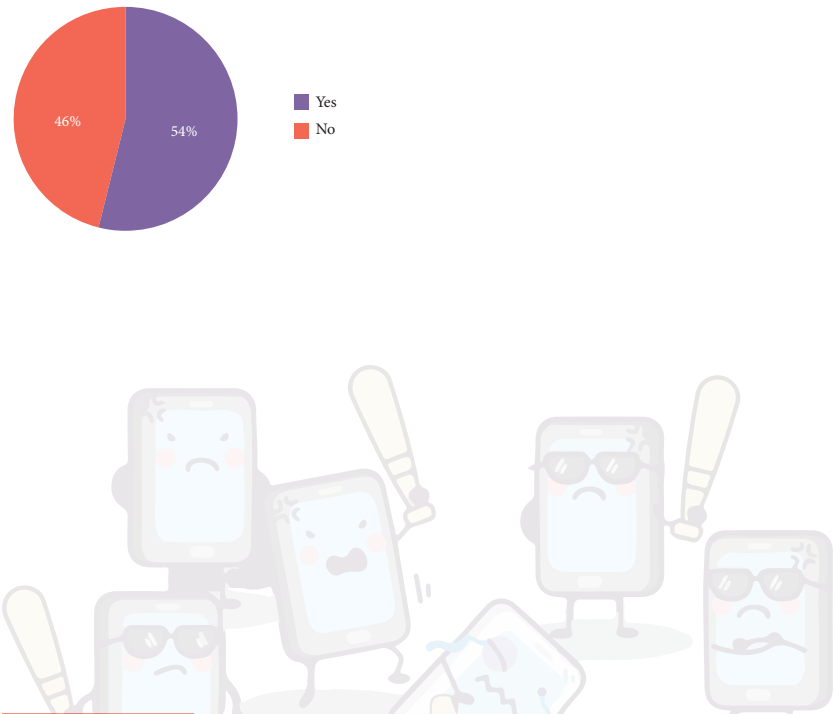
32. Taneja, S. (2015). Cyber bullying: Nip it in the bud. Live Mint. Retrieved from <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/lpQCFqjgETbXachoWRxysO/Cyber-bullying-Nip-it-in-the-bud.html>

33. Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Learning Network. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.psychcongress.com/article/cyberbullying-linked-range-mental-health-effects>.

CHANGES IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA BECAUSE OF TROLLING

As many as 54% of 98 people who have been trolled said that they have started using social media differently, with people being careful in expressing their opinion ranks the highest, followed by posting less frequently, respondents keeping everything private ranks third; not talking about religion, politics or the subject on which respondents were trolled ranks fourth, not posting anything ranks second from bottom and respondents not expressing their true opinions ranks last. A study conducted by Amnesty International on online violence against women, showed that 76% of women had changed the ways they use social media platforms after experiencing abuse or harassment on these platforms³⁴. Both, the survey conducted by DEF as well as the research report by Amnesty brings light to the fact that trolling or bullying on social media often results in self-censorship and forces people, especially women to take a step back from public conversations and expressing their opinions.

If trolled, have used social media differently



34. Amnesty reveals alarming impact of online abuse against women. (2017). Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/amnesty-reveals-alarming-impact-of-online-abuse-against-women/>

RECOMMENDATIONS

The survey has given us an overall picture of cyber bullying, its effect on people and the available solutions at hand, but we need to do more.

- The citizens need to be educated on cyber bullying and its available counter measures right from school.
- Sessions should be conducted on internet safety among students.
- People should be encouraged to report cases of cyber bullying at the cybercrime cell.
- The government needs to bring in better laws for protecting privacy of people.
- The online platforms need to be stricter in their regulations to protect their users.
- Investment should be made in capacity building and training of law enforcement bodies on relevant legislation, gender equality, harms of online violence and abuse.
- The Police department and judiciary must work hand in hand to bring about justice for victims who have been denied their share for so long.

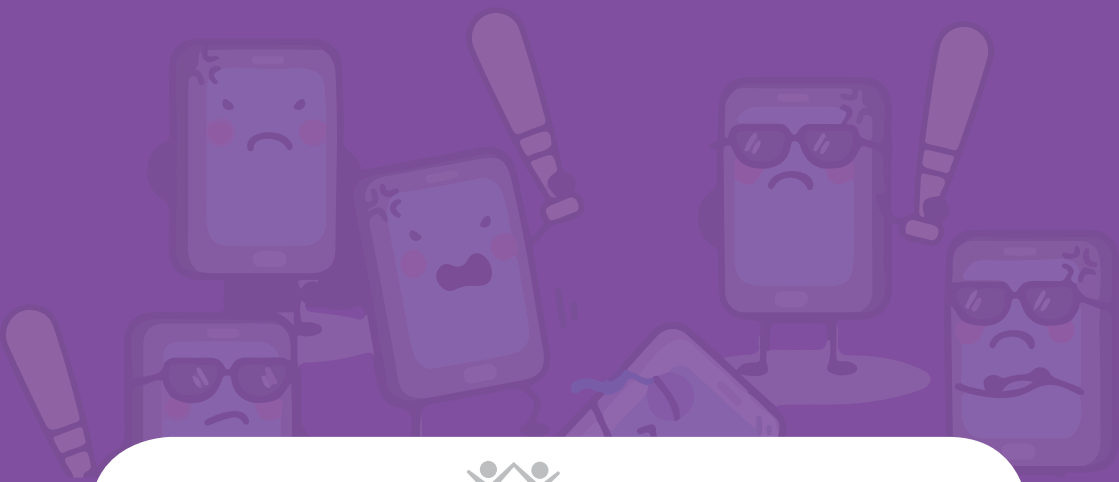




CONCLUSION

The survey analysis has shown that although people are facing bullying and trolling online, they hardly report the incident on the platform, and rarely file an FIR. There is lack of awareness about countering trolling. The analysis also highlights that bullying and trolling affect mental health of those who are at the receiving end. The secondary reports and data have established that incidents of bullying and trolling cause depression and even suicidal thoughts, worsening the mental health of the person.

Thus there is a need to not just create awareness about what constitutes online bullying and trolling but also how one can tackle these incidents by taking legal aid. At the same time there is a need to start conversations around mental health issues, particularly those arising from cyber bullying, and channels through which one can seek the required professional help.



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