



Attribution of Online Delinquencies Impacting Mental Health on Indian Teenagers: Cyberspace Acculturation Lag Theory and Mitigation Strategies

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ABSTRACT

No doubt the internet is a place of infinite wonders and yields numerous opportunities and benefits for children. However, it has also exposed children to very serious dangers that defy age, geographic location, and other boundaries, unlike in the real world. This study reveals that digital incompetence and ignorance about the online risks, due to lag in cyberspace acculturation, are the prime cause for increased online abuse resulting into psychological distress. Cyberspace culture is the most dominant culture across the globe today and the teenagers are in the process of adapting to it. Based on analysis of real-life reported crime cases and survey of 15000 Indian teenagers, the study concluded that adapting to cyberspace culture becomes difficult due to lag in acculturation process. “*Cyberspace acculturation lag theory*” states that the lag between the accelerating change of technological developments in cyberspace and the pace of acculturation process creates psychological distress. The paper suggests priority interventions to accelerate the cyberspace acculturation process to keep the children safe online.

Keywords: - Cyberspace acculturation lag theory; Online safety; Indian teenagers; Digital Parenting; ARMOUR, Online abuse, Digital resilience

INTRODUCTION

We live in an age in which technology is to be enjoyed safely and responsibly, however, the lack of digital literacy and online safety measures have been exposing children to high risk of online crimes and abuse (Sigit & Maulidya, 2021). Increasingly, the police have had to deal with several incidents of teenagers using computers, tablets and smartphones to send indecent images of themselves and others to each other, bully others in school, illegally accessing social media accounts belonging to others to upset and threaten people. They have been creating fake social media accounts to trouble others. Children have been contacting strangers online, befriending people they do not know, having sexual conversation, sharing obscene images of themselves and others, and in the process getting victimized, threatened, blackmailed, and exploited. (Wittes, et al, 2016). All these eventually results in depression, anxiety, fear, isolation, and self-harm. *Studies claim that 21% of Indian adolescents committing suicide is because of online harassment and India ranks third in the world when it comes to cyberbullying (Telenor & BCG, 2012).*

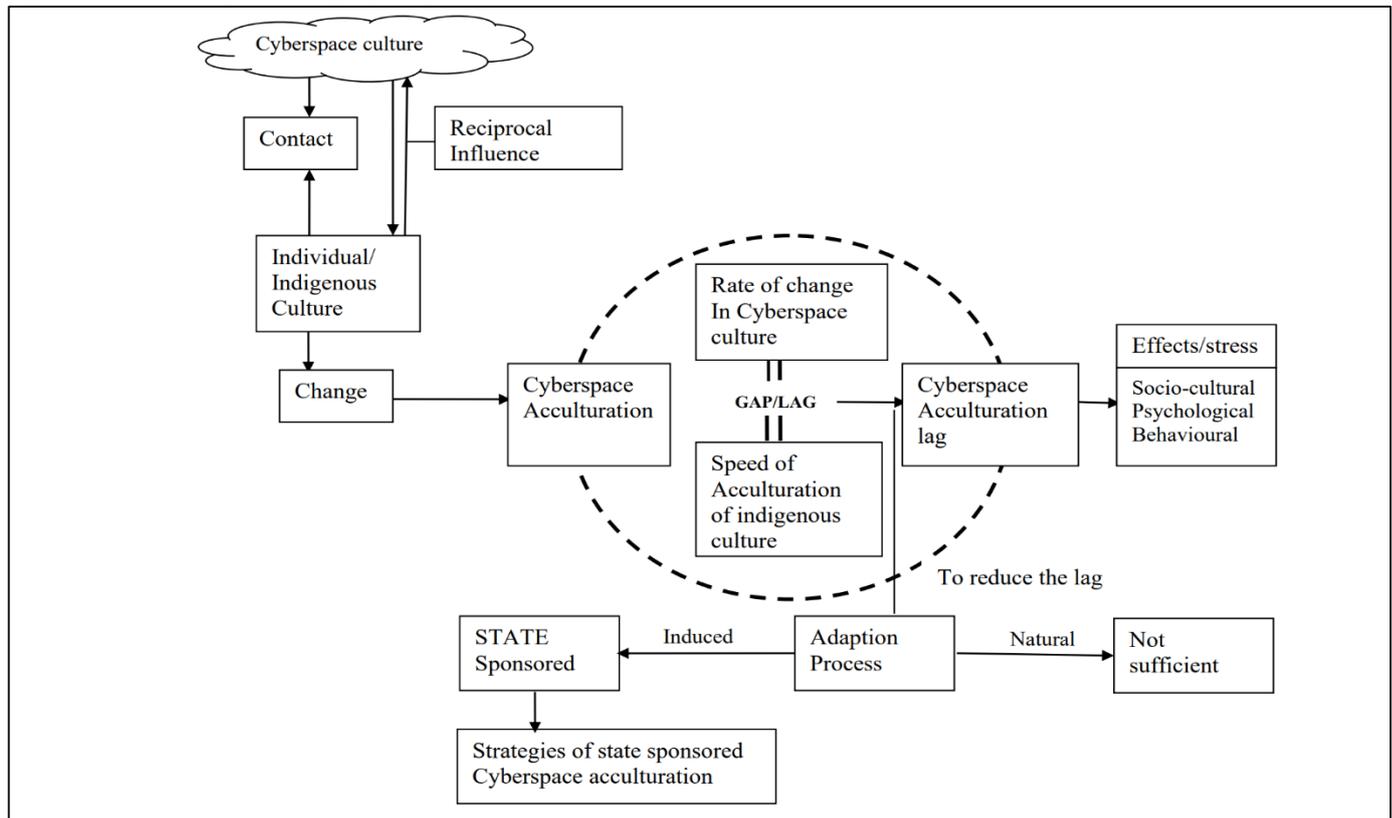
It is painful to see the psychological conditions of many of the victims; they keep alone without informing anyone. It is especially true of victims whose images have been recorded and are being exploited using them. They do not even disclose their suffering to their parents, just because there is a social stigma attached to the incident. Such situations will have a series of negative impact on the teenager, ranging from mild depression to isolation, and they even have the potential for self-harm, depending on the gravity of the offence (Gavrilović Nilsson et al, 2019). Only in rare cases have the victims' mustered enough courage to speak to a counsellor or the police, and that too with the pre-condition that their parents should not be informed. Developmental research suggests that teenagers use social media as self-identity and self-disclosure and intimacy development (Bartsch M. & Subrahmanyam K. 2015). The technology-mediated communication and human to human communication in cyberspace has led to a new culture, and the teenagers are slowly imbibing it (Leah P. Macfadyen, 2006). Although children are very smart when it comes to technology, but they lack the worldly wisdom which comes through socialization and acculturation.

Cyberspace Acculturation

The contact between two culture is not a new phenomenon, it has been physically taking place historically. And the meeting of different cultures and the resulting reciprocal changes are what collectively has come to be known as acculturation. Acculturation is a process of social, psychological, and cultural change that stems from the balancing of two cultures while adapting to the prevailing culture of the society. Presently cyberspace culture is the most dominating the globe, and the Indian teenagers are in process of absorbing this culture through acculturation. Every acculturation process involves three stages i.e., *contact, reciprocal influence, and change* (Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (Eds.), 2006). This process is known as **Cyberspace Acculturation**. But the bigger question is “How do the people born and brought up in one physical cultural society manage to adopt and follow the culture of virtual cyberspace society, that is culturally very different from the indigenous physical culture?” The possible answer could be: -

- First possibility could be that the behaviour of the person entering in cyberspace remains unchanged. They maintain continuity but they might risk themselves in maladapting to the norms of new culture or the setting.
- The second possibility is that they adopt quickly to the culture of the new virtual society and make behaviour changes rapidly and easily. They immediately learn and adopt in the new setting.
- Last option could be that there is a change in multiple complex patterns. They maintain their original behaviour continuity as well as make changes in their behaviour and they negotiate how to live in their new society. But those changes to fit into new setting are insufficient for two reasons; having dilemma in adapting to cyberspace culture vis-a-vis their indigenous culture continuity and not being able to cope up with the pace of the changes in the dominant culture.

As mentioned in third point, complexity in which there is a dilemma clubbed with lag in coping with the required changes to adopt to the new culture involves many psychological issues, for instance learning new culture, occurrence of stress and its coping mechanism, identity issues, developing resilience, mental health issues, cultural conflict with the new setting. It is pertinent to mention that adapting to cyberspace culture becomes very difficult as compared to adapting to any new culture in physical world. This lag is called as Cyberspace Acculturation lag. “**Cyberspace acculturation lag**” is the lag between the rate of change of developments in cyberspace and the rate of acculturation process to adapt, which creates between stress and difficulty for adaptation.

Fig 1: Flow chart representing *Cyberspace Acculturation*

This paper focuses on postulating a “*Cyberspace Acculturation lag theory*” to explain the reason why the teenagers and adolescent are more vulnerable, falling victim to cyber abuse and developing psychological mental health issues. The paper also highlights the undeniably dark side of the internet, from cyberbullying to online child sexual abuse, to dangerous gaming, to addiction, to online radicalization and economic offences and other illegal activities that exposes children to unfathomable levels of risk. The study concludes with developing a model for increasing the pace of cyberspace acculturation to the parents and caregivers, to keep their children protected from the invisible dangers on the online world and has recommended positive interventions to be taken by the government and other stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

A. Nature of Data

The guiding aim of this research was to analyse the association between the cyberspace acculturation lag and vulnerability of being victimised online. As the part of the research, data was collected following three different methods.

- Firstly, the cybercrime cases reported in last two years (2020-2021, secondary data) in Kerala state have been collected and the case diaries were studied. The registered cases having similarity in the nature and the modus-operandi were categorised under the relevant headings, to list out most common online abuse against teenagers.
- Secondly, survey of 15000 teenagers (10-18 years age group) was conducted and primary data collected.
- Thirdly, available literature and research papers, documents, articles, and reports connected with online abuse of teenagers, their psychological impact were studied. Investigation officer and other stakeholders such as parents, and teachers were interviewed.

B. Study Area:

The data is collected from the several district of **Kerala**, India in year 2021. The district included are Alapuzha, Ernakulam, Idukki, Kannur, Kasaragod, Kollam, Kottayam, Kozhikode, Malappuram, Palakkad, Pathanamthitta, Thiruvananthapuram, Thrissur and Wayanad.

There is a specified reason behind taking the responses from the state Kerala as its literacy rate is highest among all the other states of India, to correlate whether literacy by itself will increase the cyberspace acculturation and reduce the online vulnerability.

C. Statistical Analysis:

In this research a questionnaire is used as a method for gathering data. The survey is created on online platform and responses are stored. An enormously useful data analysis Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 has been used to analyse the data. The descriptive statistics were computed which includes frequencies and percentages. Chi-square test for association is employed to know the factors associated with the harassment faced by the children and p-value below 0.05 has been considered statistically significant.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

1. Interpretations From the Crime Case Studies

The case files, statements of the victim and the accused of the cybercrimes were thoroughly analysed to find out the types of modus-operandi used for committing the crime. The statements used to understand the cause of the crimes. The parents of the victim and the schoolteachers were questioned to find out the reasons why the children were so vulnerable to the online risks.

Most common online offences causing impact psychologically on teenagers:

From the crime cases reported, the most frequently reported cyber offences and risk, causing psychological and mental issues among teenagers can be broadly categorised into five common headings: -

- i. Content related*
Cyberspace has several contents which is open and available to everyone, which may not be appropriate for teenagers. For instance, sexually explicit materials, violence, websites spreading hate and radicalisation, fake news that appears to be true, harmful self-generated websites like drug use, self-harm, suicide etc. These risks may be upsetting, disgusting, uncomfortable, especially if they encounter it accidentally.
- ii. Contact related*
These are the types of risk which the teenagers are subjected when they meet different people online. These risks include coming into contact with adults posing as children online, strangers who persuade teenagers to meet them in real life, and online scammers. Not everyone who comes in contact are good people. Offences such as cyber-bullying, online harassment, cyber stalking, sextortion, cyber grooming, sexual exploitation takes place.
- iii. Conduct related*
On several occasion, the teenagers due to lack of awareness, and improper acculturation they conduct cyber delinquencies and leading them on the wrong side of law. For instance, cyberbullying, sexting, impersonating, creating inappropriate contents, plagiarism, addiction, online gambling etc. the children.
- iv. Consumerism related*
These risks are associated with financial loss. Several scammers are waiting to victimise children to cheat or commit financial frauds, for instance online lottery, phishing, inheritance frauds, shopping frauds etc. Teenagers being naïve and unaware of worldly wisdom they happen to be victim very fast. Several online addictive games create dent to their wallets
- v. Privacy and security related*
Large amount of personally identifiable information is continuously fed by teenagers into cyberspace, knowingly or unknowingly due to several online activities. Details about their personal information's, their movement, likes and dislikes, friends, future plans are among the

few things which are available on cyberspace waiting either to be used for marketing or for causing harm.

2. Results from the Survey Conducted

Table 1: Awareness among the children regarding the cyberspace

		Frequency	Percentage
Number of parents attended at least one online seminar			
Yes		4980	33.2%
No		10020	66.8%
If children get a link or attachment in their email, or through social media from unknown person, what will they do?			
Open it		1426	9.3%
Neglect it		6599	42.2%
Not Aware		6975	45.7%
Children reading the privacy settings (terms and condition) before installing an App?			
Yes		9930	66.2%
No		5070	33.8%
If child send messages or chat with sexual content to someone, this could lead them to			
Trouble, blackmailing and threatening		7399	49.3%
Nothing will happen because you feel that person is trustworthy		860	5.8%
Never thought of the consequences (risky behaviour)		6741	44.9%
Children awareness that if they click on link/attachments, your phone/computer can be hacked			
Yes		6239	41.6%
No		8761	58.4%
Children Attended Cyber Awareness Seminar			
Yes	Male	1569	(10.4%)
	Female	2289	(15.3%)
No	Male	5035	(33.6%)
	Female	6110	(40.7%)

Above table 1 conclude the facts that maximum number of parents (66.8%) have never attended any cyber seminar to be aware about the cyber world. 45.7% of the children don't know how to deal with the unknown link and attachments they get on social media. 44.9% of children do not even think about the consequences they would face if they accessed the unsuitable content and 58.4% of children do not have knowledge of the links they get from unknown sources might hack their devices and it could lead to serious issue of financial loss or identity theft. Majority of children have not attended any cyber awareness classes.

Note- In data 7723 (51.4%) marked that they have faced the harassment and the further tables are based on the children who have faced the harassment.

Table 2: Negative Experiences faced by children online

	<i>Any Negative or insulting Comment/Unwanted Vulgar comments</i>	<i>Asking your personal photos/Intimiding/Threatening/blackmailing</i>	<i>Unwanted friend request/odd hours messages despite your willingness</i>	<i>Unwanted sexual approach /display of obscene/sexually suggestive content</i>	<i>Pressure from friends to do things online despite of unwillingness/ bullying or harassment by friends</i>	χ^2
Use internet with Whom						
Alone	1328 (19.4%)	774 (11.3%)	2816 (41.1%)	409 (6.0%)	326 (4.8%)	101.01 (<0.001)
Parents	769 (11.2%)	438 (6.4%)	1329 (19.4%)	177 (2.6%)	159 (2.3%)	
Age						
10-14	1512 (19.6%)	750 (9.7%)	2460 (31.9%)	274 (3.5%)	331 (4.3%)	161.03 (<0.001)
15-18	843 (10.9%)	597 (7.7%)	2223 (28.8%)	371 (4.8%)	209 (2.7%)	
Attended Cyber Awareness Classes						
Yes	727 (9.4%)	476 (6.2%)	1632 (21.1%)	252 (3.3%)	171 (2.2%)	24.49 (0.022)
No	1628 (21.1%)	871 (11.3%)	3051 (39.5%)	393 (5.1%)	369 (4.8%)	
Gender						
Male	1371 (17.8%)	635 (8.2%)	1985 (25.7%)	312 (4.0%)	283 (3.7%)	181.24 (<0.001)
Female	984 (12.7%)	712 (9.2%)	2698 (34.9%)	333 (4.3%)	257 (3.3%)	
Residence						
Urban	868 (11.3%)	558 (7.2%)	1711 (22.2%)	263 (3.4%)	228 (2.9%)	34.54 (0.028)
Rural	1489 (19.2%)	788 (10.2%)	2971 (38.5%)	380 (4.9%)	312 (4.0%)	
Device Used						
Own	800 (10.4%)	421 (5.5%)	1425 (18.5%)	174 (2.3%)	169 (2.2%)	86.74 (0.007)
Parents	1555 (20.1%)	926 (12.0%)	3258 (42.2%)	471 (6.1%)	371 (4.8%)	
Hours of Usage						
1-2 hours	1353 (17.5%)	698 (9.0%)	2400 (31.1%)	256 (3.3%)	1353 (17.5%)	78.97 (0.006)
2-4 hours	490 (6.3%)	302 (3.9%)	1049 (13.6%)	160 (2.1%)	490 (6.3%)	
4-6 hours	150 (1.9%)	93 (1.2%)	281 (3.6%)	53 (0.7%)	150 (1.9%)	
Not Measured	362 (4.7%)	254 (3.3%)	953 (12.3%)	176 (2.3%)	362 (4.7%)	

The table 2 reveals that there exist association between children using internet with or without the supervision of parents and online threats experienced by them, the children accessing internet in parents' supervision are less vulnerable to the cyber harassment. Age and gender of the children also have significant association with the harassment faced by them as the more number of children of age 10-14 are in sphere of danger in comparison to the children of higher age. Female children are experiencing slightly more online threats in comparison to males, that shows males are equally facing the threat. Above table also shows that children having knowledge and awareness have experienced lesser online abuse whereas the

children not having awareness classes are more vulnerable to online negative experiences. The online harassment of children is also significantly associated with the residence of children, hours of internet usage and whose device they use for accessing internet content. Children of rural area are more in circle of online threats, children using parents' devices for accessing the internet are experiencing more online threats. It is seen from the data that children with less hours of internet usage are more at risk in comparison to the children who are using internet more this must be suggesting the fact of cyber space acculturation, Children who are using the internet for more time are adapting to the cyber culture faster and being aware about the real online risk.

Table 3: Psychological effects on children

<i>How did Children feel after facing online uncomfortable situation or cyber harassment?</i>	<i>Gender</i>		
	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Afraid/Nervous/Depression</i>	211 2.7%	151 2%	362 4.7%
<i>Angry/ Terribly Upset</i>	193 2.5%	185 2.4%	378 4.9%
<i>Embarred/Humiliated/Insulted</i>	265 3.4%	171 2.2%	436 5.6%
<i>Intimidated/Uncomfortable</i>	330 4.3%	519 6.7%	849 11%
<i>Neutral/You simply ignored</i>	2751 35.6%	2947 38.2%	5698 73.8%

Table 3 reveals that most of the children ignored the online harassment that means these large number of cases are not even reported to the parents. Also, this table inform that females suffer more psychological damage due to online harassments. This can be interpreted that if the children were properly socialised, they would have better knowledge on how to respond to such situation and they would have been comfortable in communicating to their parents.

Table 4: Who given psychological support to children

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Friends</i>	1582	20.5%
<i>Family</i>	1238	16%
<i>Helpline</i>	682	8.8%
<i>Counselling person</i>	998	12.9%
<i>Police</i>	908	11.8%
<i>None</i>	23315	30%
<i>Total</i>	7723	100%

From table 4 we can conclude that most of the teenagers are rely on their friends for the psychological support whereas only 16% has their family support, reporting of cases to police are very less and most children (30%) didn't even get support from anyone or there might be a reason that they had not shared their harassment incident to anyone.

3. Inferences drawn from the analysis of both data:

- a) *Gap between cyber space and individual culture:* One of the most prominent causes of high online risk among Indian teenagers is combination of increased access enabled by affordable internet and smartphones, and low resilience, with parents and children lacking the knowledge on how to safeguard themselves against different cyber threats.
- b) *Association between awareness and online abuse:* It is very evident that the teenagers who possess knowledge and have acclimatized themselves with cyber culture, they are less vulnerable to online abuse and know better how to respond during negative experiences.
- c) *Typical Indian parenting syndrome:* It is in vogue in many households in India even today. Parents feel uncomfortable to talk to and discuss certain topics, especially regarding sexuality, with our children. This uncomfortable feeling creates a gap between parents and children, and it acts as a barrier which does not allow children to open up when they are in distress, compelling them to keep suffering and keep falling prey to exploitations. The results are depression, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, fear, and isolation and sometimes suicide tendencies.
- d) *Non disclosing of cyber abuse:* Fear of stigmatization, or blame prevents children from reporting such matters, Children prefer to suffer alone, or seek help from their peers instead of approaching parents. Parents feel that seeking help from the police will be a futile exercise in terms of time and resources spent. Hence, they try to downplay the gravity of the offence. Sometimes they blame the kid and move ahead.
- e) *Legal mechanism is not sufficient:* Every online abuse experienced by the teenagers are not criminalised as per law. Moreover, there is lack of awareness of available legal provisions and grievance redressal platforms among teenagers, resulting into lower reporting cases.
- f) *Gap between Knowing and doing:* The risk-taking tendencies have increased tremendously due to online peer pressure, FOMO, and online social deprivation due to comparison. Hence, in several cases the children conduct cyber delinquencies despite being aware about the risk of their action.

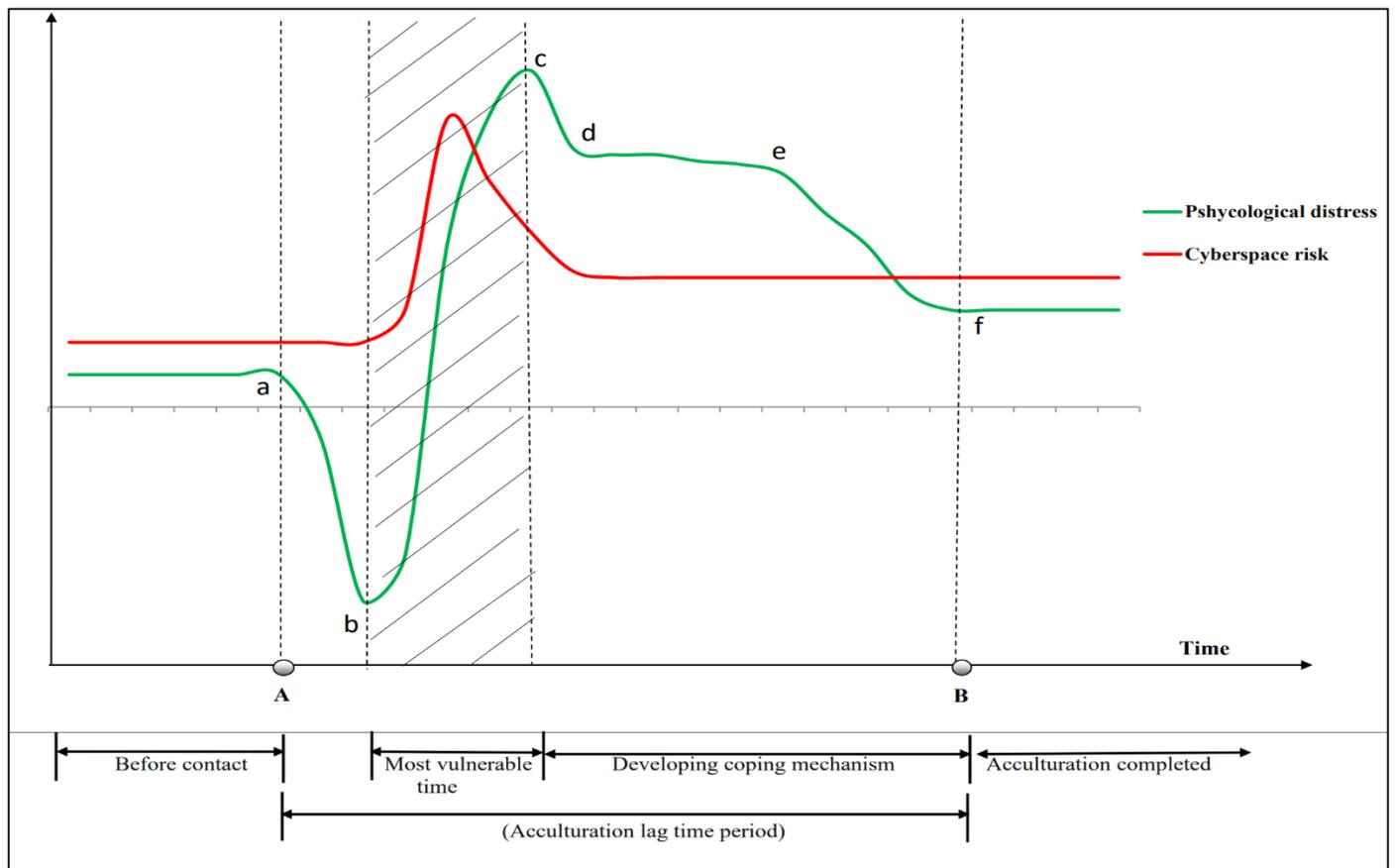
DISCUSSION

Cyberspace acculturation lag and associated psychological issues:

In the history of technology, it has been observed that there is exponential nature of the rate of technological change, but it is not accompanied by equally profound social cultural change. There have been several technological inventions which has shocked the people of that time and it took considerable time to accept, adapt and start using it. For instance, when television was invented, parents at that time were apprehensive of their children getting addicted to it, but slowly the technology was accepted and adapted to new technology. Many may argue that why so much hue and cry on cyberspace, when historically we have adapted to technologies. There exists a major difference in previous technologies and cyberspace. Earlier the pace of technological development was slow, and a considerable time was available to people to naturally adjust to that technology, but the accelerating changes in cyber space today, is so high and it's changing every moment, and the corresponding adjustment in social and cultural behaviour lags behind resulting into psychological issues. Adaptation to the cyberspace culture naturally will be difficult, time taking, and lag will always exist during which several persons will have to face the psychological and mental health issues. Hence induced and sponsored efforts should be taken by all stakeholders to increase the pace of cyber space acculturation to fill the lag.

The study revealed that cyberspace acculturation lag exists at all levels i.e., at individual and at institution level. The teenagers are using cyberspace, but they are not aware of risks and dangers, coping mechanism, platforms available for remedies. Teenagers are not adapted or adjusted on how to handle their own conduct arising of anonymity, disinhibition, and deindividuation, they could not balance between self-presenting and privacy, they cannot handle online influences and distractions. Teenagers are comparing others on social media and are facing relative deprivation resulting into stress. Parents, teachers are also facing the same difficulty. At the institution level, lack of proper infrastructure, shortfalls in legal update and not overcoming the hurdles in investigation are just few examples of lag in cyberspace acculturation.

Fig 2: Cyber Space- Stress-Acculturation-Risk-Time Chart (Cyber-START chart)



Based on the responses of cyber victims, and teenagers, the above Cyberspace-START chart is plotted to explain Cyberspace Acculturation lag and the corresponding stress which the individual has to undergo. The chart is divided into five different phases: -

- i. *Before the contact of cyberspace*: this zone is prior to the individual coming in contact with the cyberspace culture. During this period the individual has some amount of risk associated with physical world, and corresponding level of psychological stress. There is more or less stability in the risk and the stress level.
- ii. *Positive experience after contact*: Immediately after the individual comes in contact of cyberspace, there is positive experiences such as meeting new persons, visualizing opportunities, feeling of being connected and getting attention.
- iii. *Negative experience after contact*: This phase is most vulnerable. During this phase the individual start experiencing the risk, darker side of cyber space and the stress level is at peak. During this phase the individual undergo psychological stress, depression, isolation and in some cases, they resort to self-harm.
- iv. *Developing coping mechanisms*: This phase is longest and during this period the individual develops coping strategies as natural process depending upon their experiences. During this phase there is reduction of the risk, but the stress level does not reduce correspondingly. The stress level is still higher due to negative experience and apprehension.
- v. *Total cyber space Acculturation*: This is the final stage when the cyberspace acculturation takes place completely. The risk and stress level comes back to stability. It may be noticed that the Stress-Risk level stability after acculturation is at higher level as compared to prior to cyberspace contact, which is very obvious because the risk and corresponding stress in cyberspace is higher.

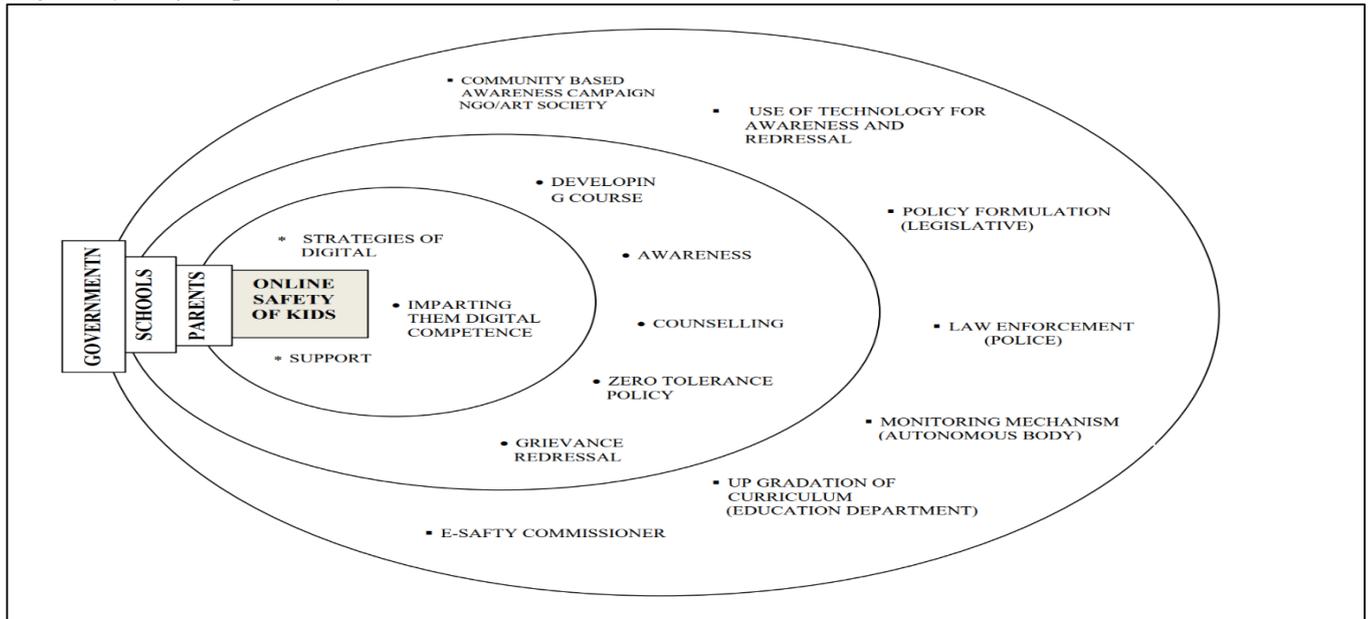
The total phase including (ii), (iii) and (iv) is the phase of Cyberspace Acculturation lag, when the individual has to undergo turmoil due to contact with cyberspace culture. This phase will be of longer

duration if the acculturation process is taking place naturally, and it varies from person to person. The effort of individual and the state should be taken consciously to reduce this phase to minimum, and that will save many from psychological sufferings. Since natural acculturation will create lot of damage to mental health of teenagers, parents and caregivers are not in position to help in acculturation process due to lack of knowledge, the State should take the responsibility to act as catalyst to give pace to the acculturation process and reduce the lag.

RECOMMENDATION

Strategies to accelerate cyberspace acculturation process:

Fig 3: Layers of Responsibility: stakeholders and their role



Cyberspace acculturation intervention strategies can be broadly classified into three level: - (i) State level (ii) Schools and Civil Society level and (iii) Parenting level interventions

i. Interventions at School:

Developing good practices in cyber education and online safety and aims with a long-term goal of securing cybercrime resilient future citizens and safer environment for children. Few suggestions are:

- a. Developing age-appropriate cyber awareness syllabus and making every child from class 5 to 10 aware about the threats & abuse of social networking sites.
- b. Formation of cyber clubs/societies. Inclusion of cyber topic in every activity of the school for instance in every intra and inter-school competitions, elocution, essay writing, plays, drama, painting etc.
- c. Imparting awareness to all parents about the dangers & risks of internet and social networking sites, through PTA and schools.
- d. Providing them a platform for grievance and assistance in coping with the problem.

ii. Intervention at Society level:

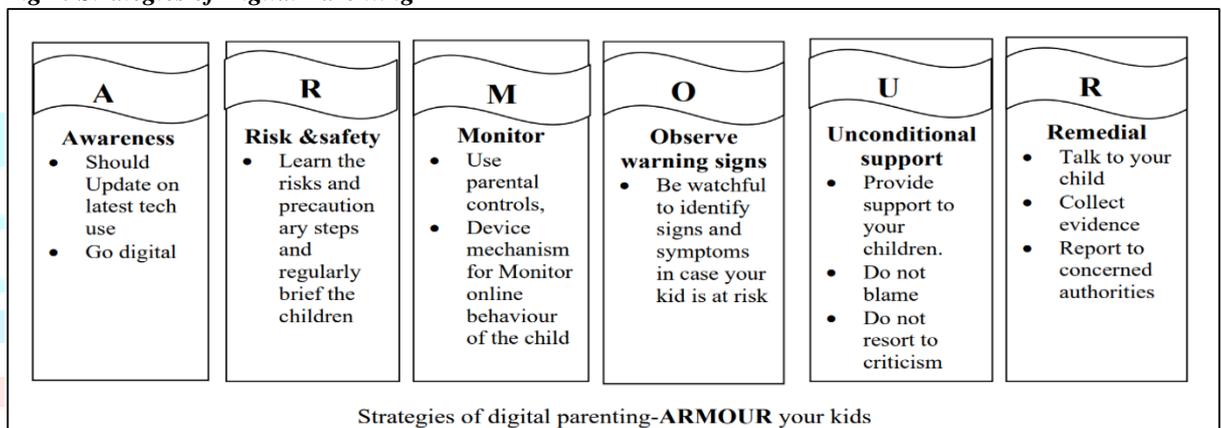
Everyone should understand that every connected device can be the source of the cyber-attack. In the present generation viewing cyber security in isolation will be a foolish thought. It is equally important to pay attention to improve the knowledge about the basic security measures to the citizens of the country. Government should start extensive community based cyber security awareness approach program covering NGOs, all establishments, private and public sector, citizens, businesses, and public sectors. Some form of reward and punishment should be instituted to encourage the program.

iii. Intervention by State:

- a. Formulating age-appropriate standard cyber safety content for awareness across the nation.
- b. Introducing Cyber safety in school syllabus as one paper.
- c. Including various courses on cyber safety, giving weightage in opportunities who have completed cyber safety courses.
- d. Instituting awards at different level for cyber safety performances.
- e. Declaring Cyber-Safety Day and organising various activities aggressively.
- f. Nation should have a practical and enforceable well established legal framework, and enforcing the national cyber laws will have a deterrent effect of the criminal activities.
- g. Creation of e-Safety commission to monitor every activity and cases related to cyber safety.
- h. Making a law within limited jurisdiction will less effective over cyber-crimes committed from foreign land. Hence government should bring up local laws that is pragmatic and effective enough to prevent, detect and convict the criminals across the borders also.

iv. Digital Parenting-ARMOUR your child

Fig 4: Strategies of Digital Parenting



The responsibility for inculcating a culture of disciplined online behaviour among their children to prevent them from becoming victims lies foremost with the parents. It is hence highly important that parents themselves understand the latest dangers associated with the internet, new forms of harassments, exploitations, and the remedial measures. They should make conscious efforts to be well informed about how technology is changing our lives of children and they can follow ARMOUR strategy to keep their children safe online.

CONCLUSION

The findings from the current exploratory study revealed that significant percentage of Indian teenagers are facing psychological distress, due to negative experiences in cyberspace. The teenagers who have acclimatized themselves with the culture of cyberspace by developing digital resilience and competence are less vulnerable to cyber abuse and in turn less prone for psychological distress. Study revealed that the way teenagers handle the activities in cyberspace is very important for their online well-being and it totally depends on their skills, competence, media literacy, self-control, and digital resilience. All these factors are determined by acquiring the digital skills through acculturation process.

The accelerating change of technology in the cyber space is much faster than the time taken to imbibe the culture of the corresponding technology. If the cyber acculturation process takes place naturally and only by the learnings from individual experiences, then there will always be a delay/time lag. More the acculturation lag higher will be the probability of individual getting victimised and has to undergo corresponding psychological mental distress. Unless the pace of acculturation process is increased, by induced and conscious effort by the State, the teenagers will always be at risk. Hence to ensure online safety and digital well-being of Indian teenagers, Indian government should formulate strategies and policies as recommended in this paper to accelerate the cyber acculturation process.

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