

The Unsafety Net: Making Women Feel Welcome, Respected, and Safe

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Abstract:

Social media has fundamentally changed how people interact, live, and do business. However, because of the ongoing evolution brought on by contemporary technological progress, it might be a double-edged sword. For women throughout the globe, this couldn't be true: despite their struggles with access, language challenges, and safety concerns, social media affords them social, economic, and political strength. This paper examines how gender problems and social media overlap in India. It describes how social media has changed and questions if it has gotten more aware of gender representation in the last ten years. It explores the reasons why women are unable to fully benefit from social media and assesses the country's present policies on online safety. It makes detailed suggestions on how to improve the safety and inclusivity of social media for women in the nation.

Introduction

Social media has fundamentally changed how people interact, live, and do business. However, because of the ongoing evolution brought on by contemporary technological progress, it might be a double-edged sword. For women throughout the globe, this couldn't be more true: despite their struggles with access, language challenges, and safety concerns, social media affords them social, economical, and political strength. This essay examines how gender problems and social media overlap in India. It describes how social media has changed and questions if it has gotten more aware of gender representation in the last ten years. It explores the reasons why women are unable to fully benefit from social media and assesses the country's present policies on online safety. It makes detailed suggestions on how to improve the safety and inclusivity of social media for women in the nation.

Women and girls are disempowered by cyber abuse, which also jeopardizes their fundamental rights

In the majority of the nations and territories in Europe and Central Asia, violence against women and girls continues to be a prevalent violation of fundamental rights. Since the start of the COVID-19 epidemic, gender-based violence has increased by up to 65 percent in certain areas of this region, with more women and girls experiencing abuse at home during protracted periods of lockdown.

The COVID-19 pandemic, which was the first significant epidemic of the social media era, has increased the incidence of online and technologically aided violence. Internet use surged between 50% and 70% as a result of self-isolation rules and quarantine measures as individuals continued to use the internet for both work and enjoyment. Due to this increased usage, women and girls are now more vulnerable to sexual harassment and abuse, making cyberviolence a worldwide epidemic of worrisome proportions.

By restricting their freedom of speech and diminishing their self-confidence and self-esteem, cyber violence hurts women and girls. According to a Plan International research, 50% of females say they experience more online abuse than on the street. Women and girls are prevented from developing in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) due to online harassment, which is one of the main reasons of the gender digital gap internationally.

Women and girls are more commonly exposed to online violence than males are, showing that cyberviolence is not gender-neutral. 38 percent of women worldwide have personally encountered internet abuse. Women between the ages of 18 and 24 are thought to be more vulnerable to all types of cyberviolence.

Sadly, this tendency has been spreading across Europe and Central Asia and takes many different forms, including physical threats, cyber bullying, cyber stalking, grooming for sex, and online abuse.

More work is required

Violence against women and girls on social media has not received enough attention. The majority of domestic legislation that have been established in this regard nevertheless have common flaws. Some nations only partly address the problem through the eyes of children's rights and Internet safety, while others just pay attention to certain types of cyber violence. Instead of placing it in the context of a continuum of violence affecting women and girls in all spheres of life and failing to capture other effects of such acts, such as the social, economic, psychological, and participatory harm, the recognition and sanctioning of the harm perpetrated against women and girls online mainly focuses on protecting the person's safety, reputation, or property.

Furthermore, the important players in the judicial system and other professional groups, such the medical industry and teachers, who lack adequate training, are not sufficiently aware of the extent of the issue. Additionally, law enforcement authorities may not always have access to the specialized knowledge and technological means needed to assure the collecting of evidence. Law enforcement officials often downplay the danger posed by internet threats and sometimes choose not to look into them. The removal of offensive information from websites and social media platforms is not always successful. These sites shouldn't be locations where internet abuse spreads unchecked. Additionally, private businesses need to do more to fight these internet campaigns to silence women. The fight against violence against women and girls in the digital sphere calls for systematic and all-encompassing solutions from all parties concerned.

Impunity has fatal consequences. It encourages abusers to do more damage by sending the notion that women and girls may be abused online without suffering any repercussions from the law. As a result of impunity, women and girls lose faith in the national authorities and stop reporting threats and acts of violence against them because they don't believe they will get appropriate support or because they are afraid of being judged and re-victimized.

Suggestions and Concluding Remarks

When a cybercrime is perpetrated online, it has a negative impact not only on the victim, but also on the victim's surrounds, as friends, coworkers, and the media exaggerate the pain. During the course of this project's investigation, it was determined that victim women seldom get the necessary help from authorities, and incidents with the potential to cause bodily damage are often not handled seriously. When offenders have many accounts on a social networking site, banning is ineffective. In addition, the

present legal system does not reflect the realities on the ground. A holistic and effective strategy is sought. Social Media platforms must tighten their privacy policies in order to combat crimes committed against minority sexualities or genders. As the right to privacy is enshrined in Article 21 of our Constitution, social networking services must take measures to respect this basic right. Networking Platforms may also engage local employees, such as grievance officers who are fluent in the local language and cultural norms, to guarantee that women's concerns are promptly addressed. Women need to be strongly encouraged to speak up when their rights are abused online. The government must also verify that the program to prevent cybercrime against women and children is operating effectively. Additionally, the complainant's privacy must be safeguarded. In order for women to report abuse to the authorities without fear of judgment, insecurity, job loss, or other negative consequences, society as a whole must provide a safe atmosphere for them.