

A Study on Youth Awareness of Crime in Social Media

Shrejith M.S

Department of Criminology and Forensic Science, Dr. MGR Educational and Research Institute
Chennai, Tamil Nadu

Corresponding Author: Dr. R. Thilagaraj

ABSTRACT: The quick development of digital technology has altered how people communicate, interact, and gain information; social media platforms are now an essential aspect of everyday life, particularly for young people. Despite all of its benefits, social media has also led to the emergence of new criminal activity that puts users especially young people at considerable risk. Investigating teenage awareness of several social media crimes, such as identity theft, online financial fraud, cyberbullying, and disinformation, is the goal of this study. Additionally, the study will look at how young people protect themselves online, how aware they are about laws and reporting procedures, and what sources of information they use to learn about crimes. The findings of this study will provide valuable insights into effectiveness of current awareness programs and highlights areas that require improvement. By promoting digital safety and increasing awareness about cyber threats, this research aims to contribute to the development of a safer virtual environment for all users, particularly youth, and inform recommendations for improving cyber security education, reporting mechanisms and overall awareness of social media crimes.

KEYWORDS: Social media crimes, youth awareness, cyber security, cybercrime reporting, digital safety, privacy protection.

Date of Submission: 25-04-2025

Date of acceptance: 04-05-2025

I.INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the way people communicate, interact, and absorb information. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and Snapchat have become an integral part of everyday life, particularly among youth. These platforms offer various benefits, such as instant communication, access to global news, entertainment, and educational resources. However, along with these advantages, social media has also given rise to new forms of crime that pose serious threats to users, especially young individuals who are highly active on these platforms. Social media crimes include cyber bullying, identity theft, online financial fraud, hacking, phishing, cyber stalking, online harassment, and misinformation. Many youths engage with social media without being fully aware of these risks, making them vulnerable to exploitation. Unlike traditional crimes, cybercrimes are often more challenging to detect and prevent because they happen in a virtual space where criminals can remain anonymous. Many offenders take advantage of young users' lack of awareness and cyber security knowledge to commit fraud, manipulate identities, or spread harmful content.

Another major issue is the lack of awareness about legal protections and reporting mechanisms. In India, various laws have been implemented to combat cybercrimes, such as the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, which provides legal guidelines for handling online offenses. The government has also established the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) and the Cyber Crime Helpline (1930) to assist victims in reporting cybercrimes. However, many young users remain unaware of these provisions, which prevents them from taking appropriate action when they encounter cyber threats. This research aims to evaluate the level of awareness among youth about different types of social media crimes, the precautions they take to protect themselves, and their knowledge of legal provisions and reporting mechanisms. It will also examine the sources from which young individuals receive information about cybercrimes, such as educational institutions, government campaigns, media, or personal experiences. By analyzing these factors, the study will provide insights into the effectiveness of current awareness programs and highlight areas where improvements are needed.

In today's digital world, where social media plays a crucial role in shaping opinions and interactions, it is essential that young users are well-informed about the potential dangers they may face online. Increasing awareness about cyber threats and promoting digital safety can help prevent crimes, protect personal information, and create a safer virtual environment for everyone. Through this study, valuable recommendations can be made to improve cyber security education, improve reporting mechanisms, and strengthen the overall awareness of youth regarding social media crimes.

1.Importance of youth awareness

Young people are some of the most active users of social media today. They use it not just for fun, but also to learn new things, stay connected with friends, and express their thoughts and feelings. However, because they spend so much time online, they are also more at risk of facing dangers on these platforms. Even though many young people know how to use technology well, they often do not fully understand the dangers that come with it.

That is why it is very important for young users to know about social media crimes. This knowledge helps them understand what is safe and what is not safe to share online. For example, posting personal details like their address, phone number, or school name can make it easier for cybercriminals to target them

Second, when young people know about common online crimes like identity theft, online scams, and cyber bullying, they can protect themselves from becoming victims. In addition, awareness can help young people take the right steps if something goes wrong. For example, if someone understands the signs of online abuse or fraud, they are more likely to report it or ask for help. Knowing how to report a crime on a social media app, where to get legal help, or how to contact cybercrime help lines (like India's 1930 or the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal) can really help in such cases. Sadly, many studies show that most young people do not know about these legal options or their rights.

Awareness is important because it helps prevent problems before they happen. If young people know how to stay safe online like using strong passwords, turning on two-step verification, and not clicking on suspicious links they can protect themselves from cybercrimes. To make sure more students learn these safety tips, schools and colleges should include online safety programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns as part of student life. Prevention is a major factor in the importance of awareness. Young people can prevent themselves from becoming victims if they are aware of digital safety measures including creating strong passwords, turning on two-step verification, and avoiding dubious links. To make sure that as many students as possible are aware of this crucial information, educational initiatives, workshops, and campaigns regarding online safety should be incorporated into school and college life.

2. Challenges in Reporting & Understanding Legal Rights

Young people face many problems when it comes to understanding and using their legal rights online. One big issue is that laws like the Indian Penal Code and the Information Technology Act are written in complicated language, which makes them hard for students or the general public to understand. Also, many government websites and online reporting systems are not easy for young people to use. These sites may not work well on mobile phones, may not be available in local languages, or may be too confusing to navigate. Another problem is that most students are never taught how to spot online crimes, collect proof, or report these issues properly. Most students are not taught how to spot online crimes, collect evidence, or report them properly. Because of this, many young people choose to ignore the problem or just block the person causing trouble instead of getting legal help. Some are also scared to report the issue, especially if the person bothering them is someone they know, like a classmate. Slow responses from the police or unclear steps for reporting can make them feel hopeless. Also, some youths don't tell anyone because they're afraid their parents will get angry or take away their internet access. To solve these issues, it is important to teach young people both digital skills and knowledge about their legal rights.

II.RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

2.1 Objectives

- To assess the level of awareness among youth about various types of crime prevalent on social media platforms.
- To explore the measures taken by youth to protect themselves from social media crimes.
- To identify the sources of information through which youth became aware of social media crime.
- To evaluate the level of awareness among youth about legal provisions related to social media crimes.

2.2 Research objective

1. What is the level of awareness among youth about different types of crimes on social media?
2. What measures do young individuals take to protect themselves from social media crimes?
3. What are the most common sources of information through which youth learn about social media crimes?
4. How aware are youth about the legal provisions related to cybercrimes, such as the IT Act, 2000?
5. Do young users know about official cybercrime reporting mechanisms like the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal and the Cyber Crime Helpline (1930)?

III.METHODOLOGY

3.1 Materials and methods

The study looks at how aware young people are of crimes on social media using a quantitative research method. A random sampling method was used to select 300 active social media users from different backgrounds. Data was collected through a structured online survey with both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to understand their awareness, opinions, and concerns about crimes on social media. The survey was shared through university mailing lists and various social media platforms and was kept open for three to four weeks to allow more people to take part. After collecting the responses, basic statistical methods like frequency and percentage analysis were used to study the data with the help of SPSS software.

IV.INDINGS

4.1 Demographic information

Out of 300 respondents, **54%** (154 people) are **male** and **45.3%** (136 people) are **female**. Their ages range from **18 to 60 years**. Most of them (**53.3%**) are between **19 and 22 years old**. About **27%** are aged between **23 and 36**, while the least respondents are from the **15 to 18 age group (8.3%)**.

4.2 Level of awareness about different types of cybercrime among youth

Ranks	
Types of Social Media Crimes Awareness	Mean Rank
Cyber bullying	4.56
Online fraud / scams	4.28
Identity Theft	4.66
Hacking & data breaches	4.40
Cyber stalking / harassment	4.54
Fake news and information	4.26
online sexual exploitation	4.49
Phishing attacks	4.81

Table 1. Level of awareness

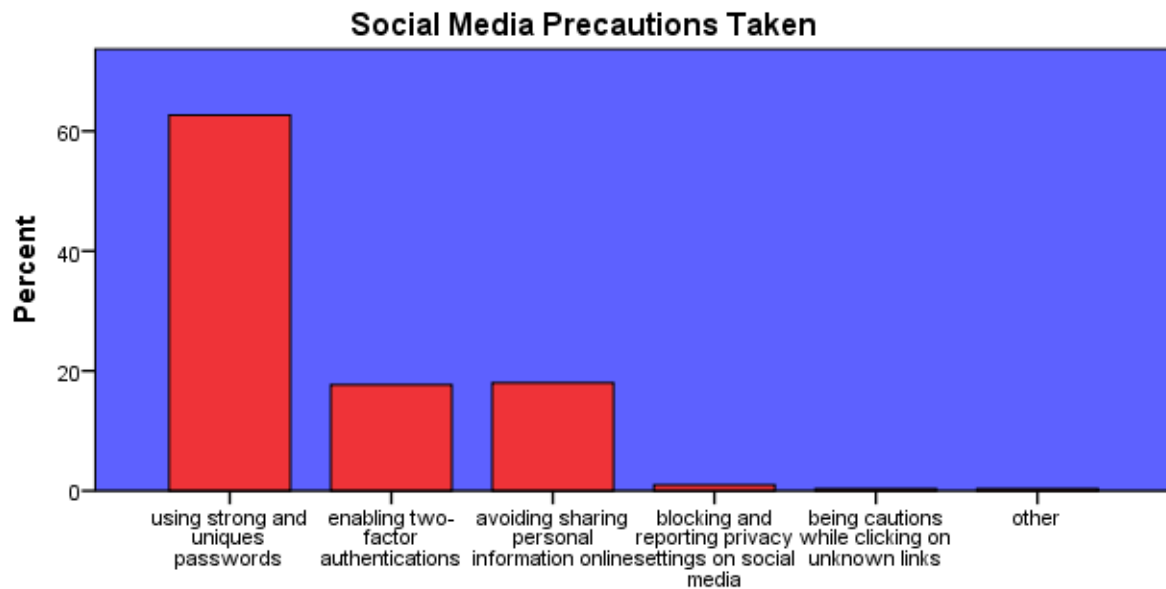
Phishing attacks are the most recognized crime, with the **highest average value (4.81)**, followed by **identity theft (4.66)** and **cyberbullying (4.56)**. **Cyberstalking/harassment (4.54)** and **online sexual exploitation (4.49)** are also quite well-known. However, awareness about **online fraud/scams (4.28)** and **fake news (4.26)**.

Test Statistics	
N	300
Chi-Square	73.221
Df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Table2. Friedman test

This test revealed a statically significant difference in the level of awareness about social media crime among the youth $\chi^2 (8) = 73.221$, $p < 0.001$.

4.3 Measures taken by youth to protect themselves from social media crime



Social Media Precautions Taken

Table 3. Precaution measures

79% of the youth were take a **precautions measure** among the **62.7%** of youth using a **strong and unique password**, **18%** of the youth were **avoid sharing personal information in online**, followed **17%** of youth enable **two-factor authentication**.

4.4 source of information through which youth become aware of social media crime

aware of social media crime	Mean
news websites/ TV	2.71
Social media posts / videos	2.79
Friends & family discussions	3.06
educational institution / seminars	3.06
Personal experience or victimization	3.38

Table 4. Source of information

Personal experience or being a victim (3.38) is the biggest way they become aware. **Talking with friends and family (3.06)** and **learning from schools or seminars (3.06)** also play an important role. **News websites/TV (2.71)** and **social media posts/videos (2.79)** have a smaller impact.

4.5 level of awareness among youth about legal provision related to social media crime

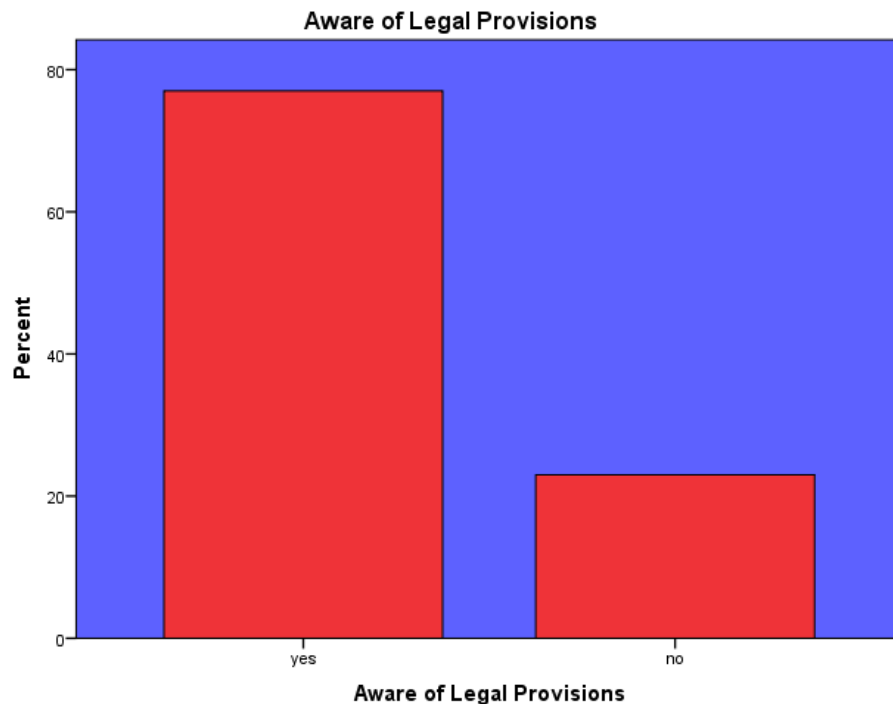


Table 5. Awareness of legal provisions

77% of youth were aware of legal provision against social media crime. 66% of youth were aware of IT act, 22% of youth were aware of IPC section related to cyber-crime, followed by 10% of youth were aware of protection of children from sexual offence.

1.6 Awareness of Cyber Crime Reporting Mechanism

Reporting mechanism	Percentage
National cyber-crime reporting portal	80.7
Cyber-crime helpline (1903)	70.3

Table 6. Reporting mechanism

80.7% (242 responders) were aware of National cyber-crime reporting portal. Whereas, 70.3% (211 responders) were aware of cyber-crime helpline (1903).

V.DISCUSSIONS

The present study aimed to assess youth awareness of crimes on social media platforms, their protective actions, sources of information, understanding of legal provisions, and familiarity with official cybercrime reporting mechanisms.

The findings showed that most young people are aware of different types of crimes happening on social media. The most recognized crimes were phishing attacks (4.81), identity theft (4.66), and cyberbullying (4.56). However, awareness of fake news (4.26) and online fraud/scams (4.28) was a bit lower. The chi-square test result ($p < 0.001$) confirmed that there were real differences in how much youth knew about different crimes. This meets the first objective by showing that while overall awareness is good, more efforts are needed to educate youth specifically about fraud and misinformation.

The study shows that many young people take steps to protect themselves from social media crimes. They use strong passwords, turn on two-factor authentication, and are careful about unknown contacts, showing they are proactive about their security.

When it comes to how they learn about social media crimes, the study found that personal experiences (mean rank 3.38) were the most common source, followed by talking to friends and family (3.06), and educational

seminars (3.06). News websites, TV, and social media posts/videos were less important sources of information. This shows that real-life experiences and discussions with others are more influential than passive media consumption.

Regarding awareness of legal protections, 77% of respondents knew about the laws that protect them online. Most were familiar with the IT Act (66%), while fewer knew about sections of the IPC (22%) or the POCSO Act (10%). This shows some awareness, but deeper knowledge of specific laws is still lacking.

This study looked into how well young people understand crimes that happen on social media, which is a growing problem in today's digital world. Social media has become a big part of everyday life, especially for young people, but it is also a place where different kinds of online crimes and misuse can happen. The main aim of the study was to find out how much users know about these crimes, what safety steps they follow, whether they are aware of legal protections, and where they get their information from about such issues. Since people in cities and semi-urban areas usually have good internet access and use social media often, collecting data online helped make sure the responses came from active users.

The results of the study show that most participants know that crimes can happen on social media. Many of them were able to identify different online dangers like identity theft, scams, cyber bullying, phishing, harassment, and the spread of fake news. This awareness may come from regularly seeing online content, hearing about viral news, and learning from friends' experiences or facing risky situations themselves. These results match earlier studies, which say that the younger people use digital platforms; the more there were exposed to online risks (Kumar & Sharma, 2021; Thomas et al., 2020). While previous research has often shown that young people are vulnerable to cybercrimes, this study supports that by showing that users are aware of these risks. However, knowing about the risks does not necessarily mean they are prepared to deal with them.

One of the most critical issues revealed in this study is the gap between knowing about cybercrimes and knowing how to legally respond or report them. While most participants were aware of online crimes, many did not know what to do legally or where to seek help. This lack of understanding about laws and reporting systems shows a concerning gap in cyber legal knowledge (Desai, 2018). Because of the lack of legal knowledge, many people may not know what to do if they or someone they know becomes a victim of cybercrime. Even though they are active online, they

remain at risk if they do not know where to report the crime or what their legal rights are. This is particularly worrying as cybercrimes are becoming more complex and harder to spot.

The study also found that many participants are trying to follow basic online safety tips. These include creating strong passwords, avoiding suspicious links, and setting privacy controls on their profiles. This shows that people are becoming more aware of their digital responsibilities, likely due to advice from friends, reminders in apps, or general media messages. However, these precautions often are not enough when it comes to targeted scams or complex cyber-attacks, which require legal help. Another important finding is the use of social media as a source of information. Participants said that the platforms where cybercrimes happen are the main place, they get information about them. While this can quickly spread awareness, it also allows for the sharing of false or incomplete information. So, relying only on social media for advice may not always provide accurate or reliable guidance on how to handle these crimes.

In conclusion, this study highlights a few important points. First, young users are aware of different types of cybercrime and are taking steps to protect themselves. Second, even with this awareness, many still lack the legal knowledge and confidence to deal with cybercrimes properly. Third, the current sources of information mainly social media are not enough to provide users with clear legal knowledge and practical steps to take. These findings highlight the urgent need for cyber safety education programs, especially for students, young professionals, and frequent social media users. Schools, universities, and digital platforms need to actively teach users about their legal rights, online ethics, and how to report crimes, along with general online safety. By bridging the gap between awareness and legal knowledge, users will be better prepared to deal with social media crimes

VI.RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Cyber safety education in school

Schools should introduce programs to teach students about the risks of social media crimes like identity theft, scams, and cyberbullying, helping them understand how to stay safe online.

2. Increase legal awareness

Young people should learn about their legal rights on the internet and how to recognize and report cybercrimes. Workshops or online resources should be available to help them understand internet laws.

3. Encourages trustworthy information resources

Social media platforms should work with reliable organizations to provide accurate, up-to-date information about online safety and crimes, helping to raise awareness and reduce the spread of false information.

4. Future research and community outreach

Future research should include people from rural or less represented areas to understand how awareness levels might differ in these communities. Outreach programs should be designed to address the specific needs of these groups.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study shows that young people are taking steps to protect themselves and generally understand the risks of social media. While they know basic safety, measures like using strong passwords and enabling two-factor authentication, their awareness of social media crimes is mainly shaped by their personal experiences and conversations with friends and family. Even though they are familiar with some legal protections, the study indicates that they have limited knowledge of specific laws and more complicated cybercrime issues.

Young people are also aware of where to seek help, as shown by their good knowledge of reporting channels like the Cyber Crime Helpline and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal. However, the study highlights the need for stronger education to improve their understanding of scams, fake news, legal rules, and better ways to report crimes.

In conclusion, while young people are taking steps to protect themselves and generally know the risks of social media, there is room for improvement in how they handle new cyber threats. Ongoing education and awareness campaigns can provide them with the tools they need to safely navigate the digital world.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Social Media and Youth Violence: Acknowledging the complexity. BIT. (2024, October 22). and young people? <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/under-the-influence-how-harmful-is-social-media>
- [2]. Bostic, B. (2015, December 14). Does social media perpetuate youth violence?. Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center. <https://yvpc.sph.umich.edu/social-media-perpetuate-youth-violence/>
- [3]. Ijlmh. (2020, December 20). Influence of social media and growth of Cyber Crimes – A Study. International Journal of Law Management & Humanities. <https://ijlmh.com/influence-of-social-media-and-growth-of-cyber-crimes-a-study/>
- [4]. Coyne, S.M.(2007).Does media violence cause violent crime? European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research, 13, 205-211. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10610-007-9044-5>
- [5]. Yar,M.(2012).Crime,mediaandthewill-to-representation:Reconsidering relationships in the new media age. Crime, media, culture, 8(3), 245- 260.<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1741659012443227>
- [6]. Rios, V. (2018). Media effects on crime and crime style. Department of Political Science Purdue University.https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/vrios/files/vrios_mediaeffectscrimestyle.pdf
- [7]. Erickson,R.V.(1991).Massmedia,crime,law,andjustice:Aninstitutional approach. The British Journal of Criminology, 31(3), 219-249.<https://academic.oup.com/bjc/article-abstract/31/3/219/326726>
- [8]. Garofalo,J.(1981).NCCDresearchreview:Crimeandthemassmedia:A selective review of research. Journal of research in crime and delinquency, 18(2), 319-350.<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/002242788101800207>
- [9]. Altheide, D. L. (2003). Mass media, crime, and the discourse of fear. The hedgehog review, 5(3), 9-26. <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA133101455&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=15279677&p=AONE&sw=w>
- [10]. Dowler,K.,Fleming,T.,&Muzzatti,S.L.(2006).Constructingcrime:Media, crime, and popular culture. Canadian journal of criminology and criminal justice, 48(6), 837- 850.<https://www.utpjournals.press/doi/full/10.3138/cjccj.48.6.837>
- [11]. Lurigio,A.J.,&Rosenbaum,D.P.(1991).Theeffectsofmassmediaon crime prevention awareness, attitudes, and behavior: The case of crime stoppers. American Journal of Criminal Justice, 15, 82- 105.<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/bf02885621>
- [12]. McQuail, D. (1977). The influence and effects of mass media. Mass communication and society, 70-94. https://www.academia.edu/download/6448808/the_influence_and_effects_o.pdf
- [13]. Klushina,M.R.Z.N.I.,Vasilkova,E.B.P.N.N.,&Dzyubenko,A.I.(2017). Modern media influence: mass culture–mass consciousness–mass communication. XLinguae, 10(4), 96- 105.https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Marina-Zheltukhina/publication/321027126_Modern_media_influence_mass_culture_-_mass_consciousness_-_mass_communication/links/5e204943458515ba208aefc/Modern-media-influence-mass-culture-mass-consciousness-mass-communication.pdf
- [14]. Crest Advisory. (2025a, April 3). Under the influence: How harmful is social media to children and young people? <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/under-the-influence-how-harmful-is-social-media>
- [15]. A brief study on Cyber Crime and cyber law’s of India. (n.d.-a). <https://www.southcalcuttalawcollege.ac.in/Notice/50446IRJET-V4I6303.pdf>
- [16]. Information technology act 2000. (n.d.-c). <https://www.meity.gov.in/content/information-technology-act-2000-0>
- [17]. General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance guidelines. GDPR.eu. (n.d.). <https://gdpr.eu/>
- [18]. Gupta, MR. R., & dubey, Dr. N. (2025). A Study of Cyber Crime Awareness Among the Youth. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention, 14(3), 97–100. <https://doi.org/10.35629/7722-140397100>
- [19]. Pepper, C., Perez Vallejos, E., & Carter, C. J. (2023). “I don’t feel like there’s enough awareness about the damage that social media does”: A thematic analysis of the relationships between social media use, mental wellbeing, and care experience. *Youth*, 3(4), 1244–1267. <https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3040079>