

## **Capability of Internet in Reducing Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka**

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Internet, which is rapidly spreading throughout the world, has at present become an essential item for the public in Sri Lanka. The majority is considering internet as something which has unnecessary influences. But what is proved by this research was regarding the virtuous usage of internet. The major issue of the research named Capability of Internet in Reducing Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka was, “Can internet be used to reduce child sexual abuse in this country? If so, how can it be used?” Accordingly, the main goal of the study was to seek the possibility of using internet to reduce child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka. The prologue of the research became that internet can be used as a productive mass media to reduce child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka.

Also four research methods have been mainly used to collect data related to the research. Those are questionnaire method, interview method, case study method and having connection through internet. Data collected through those methods were analyzed through SPSS database.

Accordingly, proving the prologue of the research, the major decision taken was that, “Internet can be used as a productive mass media to reduce child abuse in Sri Lanka”. Here it is adequately proved that information related to awareness of children how to get protected from child sexual abusers and awareness of adults to protect the children from them can be socialized using sources such as news websites and other popular websites, Facebook, Tweeter, Youtube, ‘popup’ notifications, web radio, web television, Skype, Viber, blog, FTP, electronic mail etc. It can be mentioned very clearly that general public as well as the responsible state mechanism should act to reduce child sexual abuses in Sri Lanka using technical methods mentioned above. In an era where the entire social opinion is built up regarding the misuse of internet, this research, which logically sought its good abilities, is a very important research done in the field of the said subject.

Major words – sexual abuse, internet, ability, law, children

## 2. **Introduction** (including the goals of the research)

It is internationally accepted that those who are under the age of 18 years as children. However abusing children is a danger that spread secretly within the society throughout centuries. But identifying it as a severe social parasite, an attention which is sufficient to protest against it is drawn only from a recent few decades. By mid eighties physical punishment in Sri Lanka was identified as an offence and in early nineties child sexual abuse was identified as a severe offence. From then onwards, to act regarding short term as well as long term ill effects of child abuse and to take measures against various violence and brutalism done to children, Sri Lanka also joined hands with United Nations' Child Rights Convention. Considering as a whole, four basic varieties of child abuse can be identified.

1. Physical abuse
2. Mental abuse
3. Sexual abuse
4. Negligence

If by a certain act, the child gets serious injury or pain, feebleness, disability or death, such act is considered as a physical or bodily abuse. If as a result of a certain act or a statement, a child gets a mental pressure or trauma, such act is considered as a mental abuse. Sexual abuse is considered as the most serious abuse that can happen to a child. Child sexual abuse can occur by touch, getting contacted with the body and also without happening so. It is also seen that there is a rapid increase in child sexual abuse at present.

There are a few common features which can be identified according to the complaints reported to the National Child Protection Authority regarding child abuse from 2010 to 2017. Especially there is also a regular increase in the complaints related to child sexual abuse. When considering according to districts, the highest number of complaints is reported from Colombo district throughout the last 07 years. Apart from that highest number of complaints are reported also from districts such as Gampaha, Galle, Kurunegala and Anuradhapura etc.

On the other hand, mass media also gets a considerable work load in reducing child sexual abuses that happen in the country. Similarly, in the present social area where media such as television, radio, newspapers etc. are very close to the public, there is a rapid increase in the usage of internet media. This is reflected considering the usage of

internet and email in Sri Lanka from the year 1996 to year 2017 according to the reports of Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka.

The main objective of the research is to seek the ability of using internet to reduce child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka. In addition to this main objective, there are a few other objectives as well.

- Studying about the laws enforced in Sri Lanka to reduce child sexual abuses
- Identifying websites functioned in Sri Lanka
- Inquiring how internet affects to change the public view
- Inquiring how to reduce child abuse through internet
- Seeking possibilities of functioning internet to be suitable for the child
- Creating a wide social agreement regarding child protection

### 3. **Method of Research**

Four research methods have been used for this research named “A Study about the Capability of Internet in Reducing Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka” are given below:

- Questionnaire method
- Interview method
- Case study method
- Having connection through internet

Under the questionnaire method, the questionnaire was given to 500 persons between the ages of 14 - 65 years. Sample was selected in five ways, namely school basis, university basis, internet communication centre basis, civil organization basis and general public basis and hundred (100) persons from each of them. Male and female were selected proportionately when selecting them.

Interview method also was used for the research and a lot of very important information was discovered through obtaining views of various persons on the subject.

Case study method also can be shown as a very important research method used for this research. Obtaining information through nine case studies was done with regard to the capability of internet media in reducing child sexual abuse in Sri Lanka.

Similarly, a new research method called having connection through internet was successfully used in this research. Measures were taken to socialize the necessary opinion to protect the children from child sexual abuse by keeping connection with facilities in internet such as websites, Facebook, Tweeter, LinkedIn, YouTube, email, Skype, Viber etc. Methods related to this research can be mentioned as given above.

#### 4. **Results**

Results of the research namely, “A Study about the Capability of Internet in Reducing Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka” is summarized and given below:-

- Majority of the people living in society has an understanding who a ‘child’ is. 77% out of the sample has identified it correctly.
- Majority of the people living in society is aware of the difference between child harassment and child abuse. 80% out of the sample has identified this difference.
- Children are vulnerable for sexual abuse at any place. 98% out of the sample has confirmed it.
- Condition of child sexual abuse has increased at present. Similarly, reporting of child abuse also shows an increase.
- Community should be made more and more aware regarding the hotline 1929 Sri Lanka Child Telephone Service which is dedicated for informing child abuses.
- Law enforced in Sri Lanka against child sexual abusers is not sufficient. 73% of the sample has agreed to this opinion. View of some persons was that even the law against child sexual abusers existing in Sri Lanka at present is not executed properly.
- There is a connection between the activation of mass media and the increase of child sexual abuses.
- Internet usage of people living in the present society remains at a high level. 90% of the sample uses internet.
- Majority of those who use internet in the country have Facebook accounts. Most of them use Facebook during night time. Majority of Facebook users have released their photographs to it. Comments have been exchanged even with people whom they do not know and good as well as bad friends have been met through it.
- Internet exerts an influence in changing people’s opinion. 97% of the sample has agreed to this and the reality which is experienced in the society is also the same.

- A national policy should be formulated with collaboration and agreement of all the institutions that act related to children, to reduce child sexual abuses. The state policy also should be the same and before everything, that policy should be implemented from the concept of ‘child’.
- Internet can be used as a productive media to reduce child sexual abuses in Sri Lanka.

## 5. Discussion

A summary about the basic results related to the research or a short description about the findings / discoveries is shown here. While a majority of the society has a knowledge regarding child abuse, majority of victims of sexual abuses are girls. While reporting of child sexual abuses seems to have increased at present, the law implemented in this regard is not sufficient. While the usage of internet by people in Sri Lanka has reached a high level, it could be used as a positive media to reduce child sexual abuses.

## 6. Decision

The main decision taken in this research called “A Study about the Capability in Internet in Reducing Child Sexual Abuse in Sri Lanka” is that internet can be used as a productive media to reduce child abuse in Sri Lanka.

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