

A MODEL FOR ONLINE RISKS AMONGST
TEENAGERS IN BANGLADESH

BY

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ABSTRACT

Although the Internet is benefiting the young generation especially teenagers in many ways, such as doing home work or assignment, gaining knowledge, online shopping, etc., gradually they are experiencing more online risks. This is happening all over the world including in a developing country like Bangladesh. Realising this problem, the researcher decided to conduct a study on why teenagers in Bangladesh are experiencing online risks and how this issue can be resolved. This study employs an explanatory sequential mixed method approach which allows collecting and analysing quantitative data at the first phase followed by in-depth qualitative interviews with a smaller sample. A survey was conducted among 443 teenagers in the quantitative phase, and later, semi-structured interviews were arranged involving 10 participants in the qualitative phase. To understand the characteristics of the survey respondents, several types of descriptive analyses were performed initially in the quantitative phase. A series of complex analyses such as reliability and validity of the reflective measurement model, path coefficients for the structural model, evaluation of effect sizes (f^2), etc. were conducted serially. The purpose of quantitative analysis was to develop a general understanding of the phenomenon. In the qualitative phase, data was first organised before analysis due to the production of a large volume of data. Consequently, data were analysed using the Thematic Analysis approach. Finally, the quantitative results and qualitative findings were synthesised to reach the outcome. The empirical results show that psychological factors, social factors, and perceived religiosity significantly influence online risks among teenagers. The results reveal that teenagers are experiencing online risks due to their emotional problems and low self-efficacy. These results are supported and explained by the findings of the qualitative analysis. The results of this study suggest that social factors and perceived religiosity can help to reduce online risks among teenagers. The findings of interviews support these results and explain further how parents' support, teachers' support, and peer pressure among the social factors along with their (teenagers') religiosity helping them to successfully encounter online risks. Findings of both quantitative and qualitative studies are expected to assist the family members, educators, and policymakers to take necessary steps to protect teenagers from online risks in the future.

خلاصة البحث

على الرغم من الفوائد العظيمة والإمكانيات الهائلة التي توفرها شبكة الإنترنت للشباب خاصة المراهقين منهم - مثل أداء الواجبات المنزلية، والوظائف المدرسية، واكتساب المعارف، والتسوق عبر الإنترنت - فإنهم في الوقت نفسه يتعرضون بسبب هذه التكنولوجيا لمزيد من الأخطار والأضرار، وهذه ظاهرة عمت العالم بأسره، بما فيه من الدول النامية؛ مثل بنغلاديش. ولقد أدرك الباحثون هذه المشكلة تمام الإدراك؛ فأجروا من أجل ذلك أبحاثاً ودراسات حول موضوع: لماذا تعرّض الشباب في بنغلاديش لمخاطر الإنترنت؟ وكيف يمكن تحليل هذه المشكلة؟ وتستخدم هذه الدراسة منهج التصميم التفسيري المتتابع، وهو منهج يعتمد على جمع بيانات البحث الكمية وتحليلها في المرحلة الأولى، ويلبها جمع البيانات الكيفية وتحليلها الوصفية في المرحلة الكمية، كذلك التحليلات المعقدة - مثل موثوقية وصلاحيّة نموذج القياس الانعكاسي، ومعاملة المسار للنموذج الهيكلي، وتقييم حجم الآثار - بشكل متعاقب. والهدف من التحليل الكمي إنما الوصول إلى فهم عام للظاهرة، ويتمّ بناء التصميم الكيفي على أساس نتائج التصميم الكمي، ولا يمكن بناء الكيفي قبل معرفة نتائج الكمي، ويأتي التصميم الكيفي لتفسير ما جاء في النتائج الخاصة بالتصميم الكمي، وأخيراً تُجمع النتائج الكمية والكيفية للوصول إلى النتائج النهائية. وتشير النتائج التجريبية - وتؤكدّها نتائج التحليل الكيفي السابق - إلى أن العوامل النفسية، والاجتماعية، والدينية تؤثر إلى حد كبير في تعرض المراهقين لمخاطر الإنترنت، إضافة إلى وجود المشاكل العاطفية لديهم وانخفاض كفاءتهم الذاتية. وتؤكد هذه الدراسة على أن مساندة الآباء والمعلمين، وضغط الأقران، ومستوى التدين لدى هؤلاء المراهقين من بين العوامل الاجتماعية التي تساعدهم على مواجهة مخاطر الإنترنت بنجاح. ومن المتوقع أن تساعد نتائج الدراسات الكمية والكيفية جميع أفراد الأسرة والمعلمين وأولياء الأمور على اتخاذ قرارات لازمة لحماية المراهقين من مخاطر الإنترنت في المستقبل.

APPROVAL PAGE

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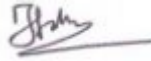
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DECLARATION

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The impact of the Internet is affecting the whole world since its presence in the 1980s. No doubt it has facilitated the process of education and learning in many ways but, conversely, its negative impacts cannot be denied as well. The use of the Internet has positive and negative impacts on users, especially teenagers. This is because research has found that teenagers are the most vulnerable group in the age of demography since they are the most emotional users of information and communication technologies (ICT) (Deleuze et al., 2018; Livingstone, 2011a; Manchiraju & Sadachar, 2018; Neverkovich et al., 2018). Studies have found that among the negative conducts engaged by youngsters include cyberbullying, pornography, sexual victimisation, addiction and even becoming an accidental outlaw due to unthinkable postings on these sites (Albert & Grabbe, 2008; Lenhart et al., 2008; Lenhart et al., 2007; Abdul Ml ok et al., 2015; Thomas, 2009). They use the Internet for educational purposes, maintaining social interaction with their friends, and for entertainment purposes, such as playing online games (Albert & Grabbe, 2008; Lenhart et al., 2008; Lenhart et al., 2007; Thomas, 2009).

There were reported cases about the negative impacts of the Internet on teenagers. A university student in Malaysia became an accidental outlaw when he posted on his Facebook page that he wanted to bomb the helicopter of a prime minister (Abdul Ml ok et al., 2015; The Star, 2012). Another example can be mentioned in this regard. One teenage girl in Malaysia accepted a friend request on Facebook from another girl of her age. Afterward, when she went to meet her, she found the person was

neither a girl nor of her age. Rather than, the person was much older and surprisingly a man. The guy took her to a palm oil plantation by car and raped her there by five people (Cyber Security Malaysia, 2014; Abdul Mok et al., 2015). Another case was reported about the suicide of another Malaysian university student. She almost killed herself due to continuous bullying by her seniors through Facebook. Her seniors used to harass her frequently out of jealousy because she was elected as the netball captain by defeating her senior (Cyber Security Malaysia, 2014; Abdul Mok et al., 2015).

In Singapore, the majority of the teenagers were found being bullied online and this rate was increasing at a sharp rate. Practically in most of the cases, they never shared their experiences with their parents when they were bullied. Sadly, this phenomenon is still being tackled in that region by a culture of inaction as well as silence at present (Paulo & Lokajaya, 2018).

However, in western countries like Australia, the cases are similar as well. Cyberbullying has become very popular among teenagers in that region (A Foster, 2018). It has become so prominent now in these days that they are not accepting it as a bully. The problem has become so serious that more than 4000 schools in this region were encouraged to participate in the National Day of Action against bullying and violence (NDA) to initiate crucial steps against those crimes (A Foster, 2018).

In New Jersey, United States, a 12-year-old girl took away her life due to continuous harassment online by her classmates (Rosenblatt, 2017). The family sued the school district due to its failure in the prevention of the harassment towards their daughter (Rosenblatt, 2017).

This chapter presents the core elements of the thesis. The discussion is started with the description of the research background as well as the motivation of research, which is followed by the problems addressed from the relevant literature. Subsequently,

the scope and boundary of the research will be presented. In addition to that, this introductory chapter highlights the significance of the research and the questions that the research tries to get the answers to. Last, of all, the concluding part of this chapter briefly summarises the overview of the research design and thesis structure.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the last decade, teenagers (under 18 years of old) in developed countries rapidly increased the usage of the Internet and mobile phones. Though they are getting many benefits from such use, they are not free from online risks. In addition to that, Livingstone and Smith (2014) investigated whether these risks led to sexual or aggressive harms or not. Children, adolescents as well as young people who are growing up from these technologies and innovations from the very beginning of their lives are called digital natives (Myers & Sundaram 2012; Prensky, 2001; Wang et al., 2013). These natives are using different communication landscape, which is continuously evolving, partially realized and after all, no one knows when and where it will end (Myers & Sundaram 2012; Prensky, 2001; Wang et al., 2013). This is the result of a 'techno-microsystem' (Johnson, 2010). Teenagers and even younger children are becoming habituated to the use of smartphones and social networking sites. Internet and mobile technologies have brought tremendous opportunities to them. They are also used as a medium of pleasure and fun, enjoyment and excitement, knowledge sharing and exchange (Livingstone & Smith, 2014).

Before the 21st century, literacy was defined as the capability of a person about how to read and write. However, now in these days with these newly invented and modern technologies, the definition of literacy has even been changed to a wider meaning (Jones & Flanagan, 2006). In this new age, literature is mainly defined by a person's capability

to effectively manage and perform various tasks through digital medium, comprehend, utilise and exploit information from a variety of digital sources and assess the novel knowledge obtained from the digital world (Glster, 1997). Critically assessing the information gathered from online sources has become an essential portion related to the concept of digital literacy.

More youths are engaging in social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram continually due to the spread of mobile technology and progressively organised cyberspace. Though adolescents are receiving a lot of benefits from social media, they are at the same time becoming exposed to new online risks from this type of website (Livingstone & Smith, 2014). A lot of alarming cases already have been reported locally as well as internationally. Some of them were engaged in cyberbullying, contact with strangers, sexual messaging ('sexting'), sexual victimisation, addiction, and pornography. In extreme cases, because of ridiculous posts on these sites, some of them have accidentally become outlaws which have already been discussed earlier (Abdul Mok et al., 2015). These issues have gained serious public concern periodically. Especially at the professional level, clinicians, educators, and at the family level, even parents became worried about this because of intensification by the mass media (Ling & Haddon, 2008; Livingstone & Smith, 2014; Vandebosch et al., 2013).

Some special journals had been established over the past two decades to develop a better realisation of this phenomenon as well as support new and multidisciplinary field of research - Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking (1998-), Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace (2006-), International Journal of Cyber Society and Education (2008-), Journal of Computer-

Mediated Communication (1996-), New Media & Society (1999-) are prominent among them (Livingstone & Smith, 2014).

Other journals are shifting their focus as well to online risks related to children such as Computers in Human Behavior (1984). In addition to that, special issues of some journals that majored in various disciplines such as computing sciences, education, media studies, psychology, and sociology are shifting their focus. The US by the Pew Research Center, the Games Against Children Research Center, and the Berkman Center for Internet & Society, and by the EU Kids Online network in Europe, and COST Action IS0801 on cyberbullying in Europe and Australia are the major organisations that researching this field (Livingstone & Smith, 2014).

The growing research on this trend indicates the severity and impact of this issue. From the above discussion, it is obvious that the researchers are becoming more concerned about the problem. In their studies, they already discussed what is known about the phenomenon, what is still unknown, and what the other future researchers should do while investigating this issue. Bearing the suggestions in mind, the researcher is encouraged to proceed with the investigation of the phenomenon.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Teenagers are encountering online risks all over the world. This problem is severe in developed countries such as in the UK (Livingstone & Görzig, 2014; Livingstone et al., 2014), US (Boyd, 2008; Boyd & Ellison, 2010; Boyd & Hargittai, 2013), Canada (Young & Quan-Haase, 2009, 2013) and Australia (Ey & Genn Cupit, 2011; Green et al., 2011). Following this trend, although acute child abuse is not happening online in developing countries such as Bangladesh, the situation is gradually becoming worse (Al-Jubayer, 2013; Akhi, 2015; Islam & Hossain, 2016; Soron & Chowdhury, 2016).

Before reaching the alarming stage, preventive measures should be taken in these regions. Therefore, it is crucial to develop a model to reduce online risks to teenagers. The purpose of this mixed-method study is to explore the experiences of teenagers in Bangladesh regarding online risks. Hopefully, this study will provide new interesting findings on how several factors are influencing online risks among teenagers (O'Neill, Grehan et al., 2011a). It is expected that this study will derive a new understanding in the research area, especially from an Islamic perspective (Abdul Moloek et al., 2015; Bakri & Aziz, 2014).

The researcher used risk theory in the study because risk theorists observed the problem through a particular lens and thus set the boundary of the research. Risk theory not only guided the researcher in the way of data collection but also helped in the analysis and discussion part to draw research implications that are important for policy and practices. To the best knowledge of the researcher, the current study is considered the first research that develops a model to reduce online risks to teenagers in Bangladesh. Thus, the study fills the gap in the literature by exploring reasons why teenagers are experiencing online risks in Bangladesh and how this problem can be solved. Hopefully, the study findings will help the policymakers to ensure a safer online environment for teenagers which will grant easy access to information and gather knowledge.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the target of addressing the problems mentioned above, below are the research questions that this study attempts to answer:

1. What are the factors that influence online risks to teenagers?
2. Why are teenagers experiencing online risks?

3. What are the factors that can help to reduce online risks affecting teenagers?
4. How are teenagers encountering online risks?

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the factors influencing online risks to teenagers.
2. To explore the teenagers' online risk experiences.
3. To develop a model to reduce online risks among the teenagers.
4. To explore the teenagers' coping strategies while encountering online risks.

1.6 DEFINING INTERNET

Internet was originally invented in the 1960s. At that time the United States launched a program of research with the target of developing fault-tolerant and robust networks whose purpose was to provide easy interaction through computers (“Reading: The Internet | ITE 115 Introduction to Computer Applications,” n.d.). At the root, the Internet is a collection of multiple networks whose scope ranges from local to global. A variety of networking devices and technologies are connected using either public or private connections. The aim is to develop a global communication system that will bring worldwide billions of scattered people, devices, and resources close together (Suci et al., 2015).

Most of the traditional media used for mass communications such as newspapers, paper mails, radios, telephony, as well as televisions, are becoming obsolete continually cause of the Internet. Their places are being occupied by electronic newspapers, emails, Internet calls, Electronic Medias, digital music, and live videos gradually. All these current and new services originated from the Internet and most of

them are completely free (“What is internet,” 2018). Books, Newspapers, and other print media are disappearing. Blogs and online news feeds are taking their place. Through online forums, instant messaging apps, and social networking sites, the Internet is creating new platforms of communication (“What is internet,” 2018). Besides this, the marketing world is being owned by the Internet continually. Online shopping is becoming popular among both giant merchandisers and small entrepreneurs. So, they can sell and/or buy products and services online completely as well as can make huge transactions online very easily. In this way, their presence of “brick and mortar” is extended to a large extent with a greater purpose of serving a large market. Supply chains are being affected by financial as well as business-to-business services on the Internet across entire industries (“What is internet,” 2018).

1.7 DEFINING TEENAGERS

Large (2005) reported that defining adolescents, children and young adults using concrete terminology is not so easy. If all the elastic conceptualizations of youth are considered, the categorization would be growing continuously. However, Ahn (2011) defined adolescents as the people of 12–18 years of age considering a wide range of studies. Moreover, the adolescents, teenagers, and youth – these terms were used interchangeably throughout the article of the author (Ahn, 2011). Lenhart et al. (2010) mentioned that the ages between 12 and 17 years are often considered as teenage years in National studies. Whereas people of 15 to 24 years of old were defined as a youth by the United Nations (Definition of youth, n.d.).

Ito et al. (2009) also realized that adolescents, children, young adults, etc. - these terms are labelled culturally and socially. In their case studies about youth and media, they define children as less than 13 years of age, teenagers, and adolescents as between