Online Sexual Offenders

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**Introduction**

When people manipulate someone into doing something sexual over the internet, they become online sexual offenders**.** These offenders can either gain trust and exploit it or blackmail or threaten people to get them to do something for them. The excessive use of technology has led a lot of people to use technology as a source of manipulation or fulfill their illegal and unfair aims. Technology has opened many doors for cyberstalking, bullying, blackmailing, hacking, unwanted surveillance, copyright infringement, identity theft, pornography, and sextortion. Over the last few years, a vast number of population is indulged in online sexual offenses. This increasing rate of sex offenders has directed attention to the formulation of representative terms that can exhibit either this act should be counted in offense or not. After a series of researches and analysis, it was proven that online bullying and talking is included in the sexual offense, but the difference is, it belongs to the world of virtual reality. (Yung, 2019).

It is significant to note that sexual offending is an international problem that intersects with geographical, political, and legal complexities as well. There are a number of child pornography sites that are actually located in the United States where laws may differ substantially. In accordance with the information collected from International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, it is found that although laws related to the sexual offense are found in about 196 countries, none of the countries has a specific law for child abuse and pornography. There are a number of countries in which, child pornography is prohibited under the connotation of general obscenity laws, but in a number of countries there are no justified legal prohibitions. The stance of prohibition also varies, where the United States has only prohibited visual illustration of children, while in other countries like, Canada fictional children such as anime or other nonvisual depiction are prohibited. (Yung, 2019).

Laws have been made and enacted by federal legislatures to protect people from any tragic incidents. Public policy and laws on online sexual offenses are constantly being reformed with the passage of time. Public fear, outrage, and reaction again such crimes define the legislature and sanctions for sex offenders. It's hard to estimate and maintain a record of online sexual offenses because laws vary from state to state. (Yung, 2019). There is no basic education about the prevention of tragic incidents related to cybercrime. With the invention of new technologies, sexual crimes are increasing day by day, and it's a huge challenge to deal with them and stop them. It is significant to press on these issues in order to bring awareness in public.

**Statement of Problem**

The cases of an online sexual offense are increasing day by day, and there is a dire need to develop a cybersecurity strategy that could help to deal with online sexual offenders.

**Purpose of the study**

Cybercrime branch received hundreds of complaints in the past decade, and most of them were related to illegal production and dissemination of pornography and online solicitation attempts leading to rape and sexual assaults every month. The purpose of this study is to evaluate online sex offenders so as to help Florida State Government establish a cybercrime prevention strategy.

**Literature Review**

A research of the psychological literature was conducted, and according to that, 587 registered sex offenders in the U.S. are impacted greatly by the aftermath of the crime they committed. Their lives took a 180-degree turn, and their families were affected as well. Babchishin and VanZuylen (2015) conducted a study, and by looking at their criminal history and personality traits, they suggested that online sexual offenders were less antisocial than contact sex offenders and they had more access to the internet. (Jorgensen, 2015)

In accordance with the information that was collected in a meta-analysis, it was found that there are few characteristics that are actually common in sex offenders. It was proved that the sex offenders were involved in certain social and interpersonal problems that led to particular issues such as isolation in society, lack of effective communication skills and problems and hurdles in their intimate relationships. This study revealed certain deficits in the personality of sex offenders such as empathy deficit. It was found that the offenders lack empathy, and then it was asserted that the offenders were actually more concerned with their victims. Moreover, it was found that the literature about sex offenders have proven that offenders lack self-management skills. There is a lack of effective coping and management skills that made it hard for them to get control of their emotions and manage them. One of the significant points to note is, there are a number of sex offenders who are found to be re-offenders. In a simplified form, the offenders are actually reoffending others because they have been offended at some stage of their life. (Yung, 2019).

In accordance with a research that was conducted with the help of psychometric instruments, it was found that online sex offenders have a long history of mismanagement in terms of both public and private life. Although little attention was paid to the criminal history that highlighted that offensive behavior is the representative of any past behavior. It was asserted that the psychological reestablishment of online sex offender is distorted with an imbalance of emotions. (Yung, 2019).

A research study of Brian Westwood suggested that a young adult who has committed an online sexual offense is not very likely to do it again as he grows older. One of the reasons is the special conditions they are often subject to after serving their sentence. In 2016, federal law enforcement agencies in the United States conducted a survey. Findings stated that 503 arrests were for online sex crimes. Offenders use social media to communicate with the victim. There were a number of cases where the offenders attempted to contact the victim's peers to distribute the recorded videos during the assault. (Lenhart, 2015). In accordance with another study that was conducted by the researchers by utilizing and decoding transcripts, certain brutal realities were revealed. The coding of about 100 transcripts was made that were meant for victim characterization, dynamics of communicating, and offender’s characteristics. It was found that usually, offenders are male. It was also proven that the intention of such offenders was to get in touch with the females who are adolescents. The analysis of the content revealed sexual intentions taking into account the fact that they contact with people for a comparatively longer time span that may range from a week to nearly one year. In many of the cases, it was also found that the offenders aim at arranging personal meetings as well and try to get in touch with the victim on the telephones. (Yung, 2019).

**Methodology**

In order to evaluate the essence of online sex offenders, cybercrime profiling analysis was used. In order to know about the facts and figures that are associated with the sex offenders and the number of notifications and cases traced, the cybercrime department of the Florida State Government was used to collect data. It is important to note that the data included, case studies, data regarding a number of cases, and the ways in which offenders have approached the victim. Initiatives were also made to understand and analyze the accurate school of thought that is associated with the criminal act, either it is something psychological, or the entire code of criminal conduct is relying on the mere intention to achieve sexual desires. Moreover, the court's cases were also included in order to analyze the decision that is made for the offenders and justify if the same kind of punishment is given to all the offenders. Special attention was given to analyze the time span in which the offenders were punished and captured in the jails.

**Sampling**

The study included a sample of online offenders. Data was collected with the help of Cybercrime branch of Florida State. It is important to note that the collection of the sample was highly specific in the context so as to collect information that can help to overcome and analyze major concerns regarding online offenders.

**Results**

In accordance with the evaluation of the data that is collected from the Florida State Cybercrime Centre, some significant results were gathered. The analysis of seven case studies revealed that one of the major reasons behind sexual offense is the freedom of access. Easy andlack of accountable access to internet platforms have made the offenders make use technology in a manipulative way that resulted in such cases. Moreover, lack of check and balance in youth and the bold interest of peers have made children and youth use internet to express feeling and seek satisfaction by using internet as a source of entertainment. All the cases registered in the crime branch that are reviewed for the study suggest that online sexual offenders are antisocial and have some specific common traits that could be identified, and the crime could be prevented. Most of the offenders are from age 16-23, have no social life, friends, or acquaintances, so they prefer using the internet to fill that void and exploit it. Moreover, it was found that sex offenders have some particular interests, taking into account the intentions behind each act. It was found that sex offenders are always looking for ways through which they can get themselves involved in sexual contact with the children. They are more dominant in the expression of their expression, such as imposing will against the will of other people. Moreover, the coding of the internet transcripts revealed that the offenders are more involved in watching acts of violence or other visuals that portray physical aggression. (Hanson, 2015). It was also found that most of the offenders have criminal records as well, as criminals fail to maintain and establish intimate relationships, they use internet as a source of fulfilling sexual desires.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

An evaluation of the research material and the collection of research data reveals that online sexual offenders are the product of a society where gadgets are given more importance than real-time relationships. It would not be wrong to say that there is a strong relationship between online and offline offense, moreover online offense encourages and paves the way for the offline offense. It is found that internet is a central platform that has both encouraged and discourage offenders, encouragement was imparted with open resources of sexual material without any check and balance while on the same platform offenders are discouraged because of repetitive check and balance by cybercrime authorities, taking into account the role of media in maintaining safe searches. Online sex offenders can be prevented by educating youth about their pros and cons. It is important for parents to keep an eye on their kids while they use the internet because it's very easy to lose the track and get involved in criminal activities. (Kelly, 2019). Keeping up to date about the latest software and security innovations is essential to avoid any tragic incident of cybercrime. In a nutshell, it was found that online offense is a social dilemma that is not confined to virtual reality only in fact it is a stance that can compromise the life of both Youngers and elders. It is a dilemma that can only be overcome by paying attention to the activities of youth as well as elders who are using internet, taking into account the analysis of specific traits that are found in the personality of an offender. (Kelly, 2019).

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