ABSTRACT
The ordeal of woman victims in India has rightly been given the term – secondary victimization and its outcome in the form of deindividuation. Arguably, the positioning of a cyberstalking victim in the Indian patriarchal society only belittles her existence and leads to deindividuation. The fear of loss of reputation, poor social perception and fragility of her womanhood make her a sitting duck for any cyber stalker; and the case is the same for even a male victim. In view of the contextual realities, the present research sets itself to argue the fact that, ‘conservative beliefs, lack of awareness and the patriarchal outlook seem to curtail women’s sovereignty and choices; this seemingly engenders a secondary form of social punishment victims endure’. It goes on to argue why the guilt and the blameworthiness are for only the victim to endure and why the victim has to keep quiet and fall prey to negative stereotypes of the society. Most importantly, the research tries to fill the gap on existing work by finding an answer to - what can possibly prevent deindividuation and secondary victimization of Indian women based on regulation, mechanism and enforcements on the social side? The assessment would be based on an integrative contextual analysis of the contemporary realities of cyberstalking in India. A solution is sought with in the domain of behavioral studies based on - neutralization theory, sexual solicitation of the society methods of monitoring and Zero FIR for influencing the motivators of the cyber-stalkers.

KEYWORDS
Secondary Victimization, Loss of Reputation, Routine Activity Theory, Cyberstalking

1. INTRODUCTION
A Contemporary reality on cyberstalking and the notion of a traditional Indian woman are just as aloof entities as the sun and the moon. Practically, cyberstalking is just as big a crime in India as it is for the rest of the world, but it seems to get bigger given the social circumstances of the country. All the prominent authors have identified (or defined) cyberstalking as an obnoxious activity carried out via the digital medium to limit the freedom or privacy and harm the victim by doxing, trolling, abusive messaging and threatening (Mehta, 2012). In fact, the digital medium further acts as its propagating ground where it gives the stalker more opportunities, convenience and anonymity to indulge more in the activity. India, specifically, adds more dimensions to this scandalous behaviour by providing circumstances where the stalkers exploit disproportionately the victim’s ‘predicament’ of being a woman. One can see this with the fact that India ranks 2nd when it comes to sharing of sensitive private information between women on the online medium, but surprisingly it ranks exceptionally low in terms of the registered complaints on cyberstalking (New Delhi Television, 2017). This is despite the fact that the country shows a very high expected prevalence of stalking behavior (Thakur, 2016). The chief consultant of the cyber cell in India admits, ‘there is an ambiguity regarding the exact number of cases filed under cyberstalking as there is no stand-alone section under the Indian IT Act that defines online stalking as a crime’ (Times of India, 2021). What substantiates it further is the fact that Maharashtra, one of the progressive states in India, showed an exceptionally low conviction rate where only 56 of the 4500 plus detained offenders could be imprisoned (India Today, 2020). ‘No surprise that the numbers of cases on cyberstalking have increased by over 500% in the year 2020’, as what the chairperson of the National Commission for Women admits (Times of India, 2021). So, to say, there exists an anomaly in terms of the actual number of cases on cyberstalking in India and those which are truly registered. Compared to other countries, the social fabric of India can possibly be the factor which explains this anomaly more precisely than any other factor.
2. CONTRADICTIONS ON THE SOCIAL SIDE

2.1 Secondary Victimization and its Culmination into Deindividuation

Practically, the social and cultural attitudes and normative beliefs affect the way cyberstalking is addressed in India. A big section of the researchers tend to believe that the socio-cultural values have a limiting effect on the way cyberstalking should be approached (Gupta, 2012). In fact, it is the victim who gets to see the bad side of the crime practice and the actual perpetrators go scot-free. Similar assessments have been made by Roy (2015) who claims that most of the cyber-stalkers in India are not brought to book as most often no formal complaint is registered against them. Rozatkar and Gupta (2019) connect this with a flawed imagination of Indian women as ‘Maa Durga’ where every woman is given the status of a demigod and is credited with all the moral undertakings of the society. The accomplishments lie with her role of a ‘giver’ who keeps sacrificing herself for the betterment of her family, people, and the society at large. This positioning of a woman in the Indian patriarchal society only belittles her existence as an individual. The fear of loss of reputation, poor social perception and fragility of her womanhood make her a sitting duck for any cyber stalker (Roy, 2015). This ordeal of woman victims has rightly been given the term – secondary victimization. This eventually leads to deindividuation which signifies a state of alienation that comes out of reduced sense of personal identity, inhibition, and lack of self-awareness. In a state of isolation, the victim tends to sink further into his or her grief and distress. From a social perspective, the lack of sympathy or support from family and friends makes this further shocking.

2.2 Social Constrain

Nothing can be more satirical than a state where the woman victim is asked to marry her stalker just because the society feels that it was the woman herself who instigated the stalker and, owing to the incident, no one else is ready to marry the victim (Joshi, 2013). One can see a similar state of apathy when the parents asked their girl child to leave the college just because the stalker was the son of an influential politician and that he could tarnish the reputation of their family (Kashimiria, 2014). These are the cases which clearly highlight the fact where the liability is very easily placed on the female, and the male behaviour is largely excused. The fear of loss of reputation and social shame are so overriding on people’s mind that they tend to succumb to their fears and remain silent. Speaking of social contradictions, ‘conservative beliefs, lack of awareness and the patriarchal outlook seem to curtail women’s freedom and choices; this seemingly engenders a secondary form of social punishment victims endure’ (Kabra, 2013).

2.3 Looking for a Solution

The empirical studies have identified ‘habitual internet socialization’ as the most prominent factor on the recent rapid swell of cyberstalking (Rozatkar and Gupta, 2019). There are people who use the Routine Activity Theory (RAT) to conclude that minimization of internet socialization habits can possibly reduce the prevalence of this crime (Kalia and Aleem, 2017). However, the question that needs to be answered is why internet socialization should be proscribed among the women when the actual need is to identify the stalker and to convict them. The real action should ideally be to encourage women to use the internet productively and freely without observing any inhibitions on security breach and abuse of privacy. Apparently, the social scenario is to blame for, and one needs to find a solution within this complex mesh of social realities. A possible answer lies with behavioral studies that go deeper into what prompts ‘revenge porn’. Here, the elements of neutralization theory have the potential to trim down the rationalization of rule-breaking behaviour. Also, there are possibilities with sexual solicitation of the society towards accepting cyberstalking as a serious crime. Method of monitoring and Zero FIR are few such initiatives which might have its impact on the motivators of the cyber-stalkers.
2.4 Research Methodology to fill the ‘Gap’

Studying cyberstalking has already been done widely in the Indian context, but most of it has been on the technological and legal side. The problem is that the social realities are largely untouched or unaddressed. Given the studies, a significant effort has been made in highlighting the social realities that govern the patriarchal makeup of Indian society. There is a frequent mention of terms such as ‘reputational loss’, ‘secondary victimization’, ‘secondary effects’, ‘family shame’, ‘traditional Indian woman’ and most importantly, ‘social stigma’. This all points towards the ‘culpability’ of woman and the negative stereotypes in a complex mesh of things. However, there is no effort made in terms of finding a solution to the impending problem of secondary victimization or talking about social reforms so that woman (or the victims of cyberstalking) of the society gets to see some justice on equitable terms. This research tries to fill this gap based on an integrative contextual analysis of the contemporary realities of cyberstalking in India. An effort is being made to develop a classification of cyberstalking theoretically and to use this for predicting cyberstalking behaviour within the society.

The theoretical development of cyberstalking would be based on the theories: (1) rationale choice theory, (2) self-control theory, (3) neutralization theory, (4) self-control theory and (5) social learning theory. Together, the theories would be coupled with Lifestyle Routine Activities Theory (L-RAT) to explain deviant conduct under a sociological perspective. Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979) talked about repetitive tasks principle based on 3 key factors – a desirable target, driven criminals, and the lack of a competent guardianship. A collision of these 3 factors in time and space lead to crime. Hindelang (1978) explains this with Lifestyle Exposure Theory (LET) where victimization is believed to be an outcome to repetitive behaviours and habits where competent guardianship is very weak and empowered criminals are very strong. The proposed integrative contextual analysis would therefore aim to perform a meta-analysis of the theoretical and empirical data so as to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Broome, 1993). The strategy would be to take a step-by-step process: (1) Problem Formulation, (2) Literature Search, (3) Data evaluation, (4) Data analysis and (5) Presentation (Jackson, 1980). The challenge would be combine diverse data sources to address a specific issue.

3. CONCLUSION

This brings the discussion to a very important point – what can possibly prevent secondary victimization of Indian women based on regulation, mechanism and enforcements on the social side? The literature points out clearly that cyberstalking in India has serious secondary effects and it is very important for the country to focus on social reforms just as it did with its technological and legal framework. But the question is – how? Especially in the Indian context, it is very important to realize that it is a patriarchic society by nature and to curb cyberstalking is still a farfetched dream. The country might have all the technological and legal readiness to identify the perpetrators (offenders) and to put them behind the bars, but what if there is no formal complaint of FIR (First Information Report) lodged against the offenders. Most importantly, the notion of ‘the traditional Indian woman’ is a reality which puts the man of the society in absolute control of the things.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Studying ‘cyberstalking’ would not be possible without the contribution of the people who have either experienced or studied the social crime in its entire length. The present research is based entirely on the experiences of the victims who have given an exhaustive description to how they felt as a victim and what could have possibly been their guard to protect them in the first place. Similarly, a mention is obligatory about the researchers who have gone a step ahead to understand the social perspective on the problem and have alienated factors which have led to the proliferation of the crime.
REFERENCES


India Today (2020). Maharashtra: One woman stalked or bullied on social media every day, says data, available on https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/maharashtra-one-woman-stalked-bullied-social-media-every-day-data-1730199-2020-10-10


Joshi, D. (2013). India’s Criminal Law Amendment to Include Cyber Stalking, Harassment and Voyeurism, Centre for Internet and Society. (Online) Available at: http://www.medianama.com/2013/04/223-criminal-law-amendment-to-include-cyber-stalking-harassment-and-voyeurism-cis-india/


Zarina, V. et al. (2016), Toward the Adaptation of Routine Activity and Lifestyle Exposure Theories to Account for Cyber Abuse Victimization, Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, Vol. 32(2) 169–188