

On Safer Internet Day 2016, the Telenor Group revealed studies conducted in Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh to demonstrate the importance of understanding online behaviour of students. School students between the ages of 12 – 18 years were interviewed in each of the markets, with respondents concentrated in key cities. The study covered 1,510 pupils in Bangladesh, 1,896 pupils in Malaysia and 1,336 pupils in Thailand. Quoting a section of the outcome of same research —The study findings proved that among the three countries surveyed, 49% of school students in Bangladesh have experienced either 'being bullied or disturbed online' or 'being bullied by the same person both online and offline' or they have actually engaged in the act of bullying others online per the anonymity of the Internet. In contrast, 37% of Malaysian and 33% of Thai students had encountered, or been involved with cyber bullying.

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Part Four: Terror in the machine

Global statistics still show that maximum bullying incidents take place in schools. The very classrooms and playgrounds that we deem safe for our children can cause untold miseries for them at the hands of none other than their peers. Even though the perpetrators can be anyone from teachers to staff, in most cases the bullies are children themselves. With the rising popularity of social media children, even adults, are accessing the Internet as a popular source for information, entertainment and breaking news. We cannot live in isolation, and hence we must acknowledge the treat of bullying in online platforms and act accordingly.

The bullies of this day and age no longer keep their cruel intentions within the confines of the school playground. They have ominously crept well into the lives of the children in all aspects of their every life.

Cyber bullying is the fastest growing 'dark side' of the Internet and the number of children and adults falling prey to it worldwide is astounding. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Whatsapp etc., are some of the popular social networking sites and instant messaging apps which when used correctly have the power to inspire people and save lives, but if misused they can have adverse affects that one should make every effort to avoid.

Often termed as cyber harassment, cyber bullying encompasses all sorts of negative acts taken against someone in a repetitive manner. Harmful behaviour can include posting rumours, threats, sexual remarks, a victims' personal information, or hate speech.

It can happen in many different ways.

Some cyber bullies send offensive and malicious messages to an individual repeatedly in order to harass them. They

make humiliating comments on a post, or uploaded photographs of a person. They often spread rumours about particular people across chat platforms, or social networking sites. On many instances they deliberately use offensive language to start online fights or arguments, simply to cause distress to their victim.

Cyber bullies are known to hack into a person's e-mail or social networking accounts, and post or send objectionable material to people on

cyber bullying where guileless children are sometimes matched against bullies who use abusive language and instigate fights on the game's chat platform or spread rumours about the children in the gaming community.

Cyber bullying is phenomenon which has already exposed enough evidence to show that its demon like grasp is felt by most people whenever they access the Internet, even if they themselves never engage in the act. It is time that we take proactive measures to protect vulnerable

It helps to keep a record of their offensive comments, or conversations as proof so that if they do not back off, you can show them to others to make your case. Take screen-shots or print-outs and keep a record of all the content.

If you are being harassed by texting or through SMS, then block and report the number to your network provider so that they can monitor and take appropriate action. If the messages are coming from more than one number, report all of them.

Love can often make us want to do crazy things, but sometime those moments of irrationality can come back to bite us. Despite the amount of trust you share, never ever send objectionable pictures of yourself to your partner. Similarly never request one of their's. Even though they might not have a malicious intent, mistakes can and do happen — cell phones get lost, and accounts can get hacked giving a total stranger access to intimate details.

ROLE OF PARENTS

Parents of today harbour a major misconception that if they are not tech savvy, they will not be able to keep their children safe from cyber bullies. I believe parents really do not need to be tech savvy; they need only to have basic knowledge of social media. More important than being tech savvy is knowing your child well; knowing their friends, their interests, their likes and dislikes.

"Spending sufficient time with them will help you know them well enough to gauge a crises situation in their life and understand when and what kind of support they require from you. This is the basic guidance for a parent to keep their child safe in real life as well as online," said Laila Khondkar, Director, Child Rights Governance and Child Protection, Save the Children in Bangladesh.

Photo: Collected



their victim's friends list. At times they steal their victims' online identity and share details to tarnish the victims' reputation. Alternatively many trouble makers create fake profiles on social networking sites impersonating their victims with the same aim.

Internet polling is another method by which people especially children get bullied. The bully creates a poll, asking derogatory questions targeting the victim and other children respond to the poll by giving an answer or clicking on yes or no.

Interactive games are another hub for

children from being victims of cyber harassment, as victims or as perpetrators.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CYBER BULLIES

Isolate, if not simply block! No matter how upsetting or heartbreaking it can be, detaching yourself from the bully is the first positive step towards the battle against him/her. That is by far the best and most effective way of dealing with bullies online. Even if it is a class mate, a friend, an ex-lover or a relative you are better off without them.