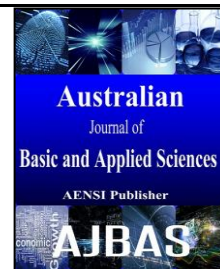




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### Online Risks and Safety Among the Muslim Teens in Malaysia and Bangladesh

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#### ABSTRACT

The most rapidly increasing and influential segment in the internet user population (as well as most vulnerable) are teenage internet users. Though many studies have been conducted in the western world from their viewpoints, this is not the case for developing nations. This study aims to offer the intensity to the knowledge base regarding online risks and safety toward teenagers in Malaysia and Bangladesh. Thorough analysis of the studies conducted in these two regions, the risky practices and perceptions of the youths fallen in this age group are considered and explored. It is expected that this study should help to develop a secure atmosphere in which they can be trained and become useful members of the society.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Internet predators often target teenagers for seduce using Chat rooms and social networking websites such as Facebook®, MySpace™, Twitter© etc. Personal information is often placed by Teenagers in these sites that predators often exploit to persuade them into an unethical relationship. This upcoming social environment is rising not only in the United States, but also globally. It has become an integral part into the day to day activities of most teens (Alexander, 2012).

Internet Threats upon teenagers is a growing crisis for society. It needs realizing the type of satisfaction that teenagers achieve from using the Internet and how to stop the searching of that satisfaction from leading to dangerous effect. New methods are desirable to stop the growing threats against teenagers on the Internet. Prevention approaches must be taken into consideration for implementing a safe environment for teens such as personal information protection, and the control of personal relations on the World Wide Web (Alexander, 2012).

An extensive review of the literature assisted to establish that the current available research work is lacking to offer satisfactory information to educators, parents, mental health professionals, law enforcement and policy makers especially in the

developing regions. The strategy is also inadequate when training 13 to below 18 year-olds on how to avoid predators, intruders, attackers on the Internet (Alexander, 2012). The rationale for the study is to enrich the realization of the world of online predators roaming internet to seduce the Muslim teenagers of Malaysia and Bangladesh in cyberspace.

#### Background To The Study:

Now-a-days nobody can think without Internet for a single day. It has become an integral part of our lives; it is present in the majority of households in most of the countries. But, simultaneously it is also becoming a new site for predators, offenders, intruders etc. Van Manen (2010) reported that distribution of personal information through online may be unpredictably risky—in part because sexual predators and pedophiles victim on unsuspecting social network users. Sites such as chat rooms and other online social gathering places are becoming extremely dangerous where child predators meet 13 to 17 year olds in order to seek them for sex. According to Wolak, David, Mitchell and Ybarra (2008), the Internet is arriving as a gradually more and more dangerous site for children.

Over and above this lacking of realization of the problem, there is a lack of realization of how the World Wide Web has become an integral part of the lives of students across the nations. Whereas the

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Internet has altered the lives of adults in the U.S., the case is not the same for the children of today (Palfrey and Gasser, 2013). The Internet did not transform their lives at all; they have no experience of passing life without it (Kowalski, Limber and Agatston, 2008). Children born later than 1980 can be considered as digital natives (Palfrey and Gasser, 2013). The digital native has experience of travelling the Cyber World and accessing to other networked digital technologies from the very beginning, and they are very much expert of using them (Palfrey and Gasser, 2013). The rest of the population may be considered as the digital immigrants (Palfrey and Gasser, 2013). According to Palfrey and Gasser, the digital immigrant is "a person who adopted the Internet and other digital tools effectively". It is this division that produces added complexities for the elder generations that are responsible for creating laws and guidelines to protect humanity (Palfrey and Gasser, 2013). Technology has become a double-edged sword now. It can provide incredibly useful space for education and learning; as well as powerful avenue for destruction simultaneously. Technology is used by teens to search solutions for their homework; keep in touch with their friends; listening music; playing video games; online shopping. On the other hand, it is exercised by them to bully classmates, upload false information, sexually explicit photos and videos, too (Albert and Crabbe, 2008; Lenhart *et al.*, 2008; Lenhart, Madden, Macgill and Smith, 2007; Thomas, 2009).

#### **Perspective Of Developing Nations:**

Though some studies have been conducted in this sector for developed nations, this is not the case for developing nations. Specially, in the cases for Malaysia and Bangladesh, further research is deadly needed.

As the part of Muslim Communities and the citizens of Islamic developing countries, leaving our children alone at home with the doors open should not be dreamt of by us. But, how many of us will hesitate to leave our children alone with our mobile devices which are not "locked" (protected)? (Azizan, 2013)

This might be multiply more devastating, mentioned from security firm Symantec Malaysia. Since, an unprotected mobile device is analogous to one which has all its doors open to cyber criminals. Symantec's latest global cybercrime study and the 2013 Norton Report have revealed that around 65% of those most probably to be Internet assault victims are parents with children aged between eight and seventeen (Azizan, 2013). According to the Norton Online Family Report 2010 released by the American antivirus software company, an average of 19 hours a week are spent online by Malaysian children – eight

hours more than their parents' estimation (Foresight, 2010).

On the other hand, the project of developing digital Bangladesh has been initiated by Bangladesh government. However, the exercise of internet is inadequate in various sectors of this country. Internet is mainly used for educational purpose by the people here. Bangladesh is a secure place for a person performing a cyber-crime. All of the formats of cyber-crime have been increased significantly - from viruses (a self-replicating program that is multiplied by opening infected files and exploits available memory), Trojans (malware camouflaged as genuine software, such as a game), spamming, piracy, hacking (accounts), theft (of data or pin numbers) to pornography. Hence, how important the matter is beyond our questions for Bangladesh at the growing moment of Internet technology (Kamal, Chowdhury, Haque, Chowdhury and Islam, 2012).

The findings from the research of Kamal *et al.* (2012) show that the maximum users of Internet in their community are student. And, they use it for their study purpose. In addition to that, the Internet users are very limited in the student community of Sylhet. Since, to become an Internet user, one must be knowledgeable about computer operation (Kamal *et al.*, 2012).

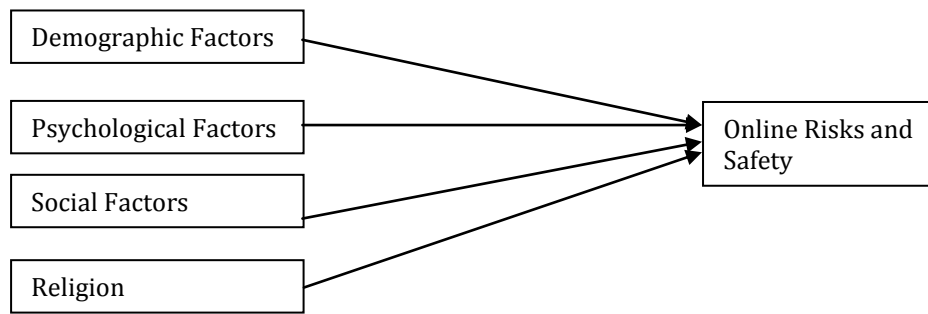
According to them, most of the users are not so conscious about the internet threats. Most of them do not possess sufficient knowledge about cybercrime. Hence, they are ignorant of their position in Cyber world. At present, third world countries are more preferable to Internet Predators. Because, cybercrimes can easily be performed here by them. If the effect of internet threats in our country can be reduced, that will be a great achievement; not only for the people, but also for the whole nation. This is the right time to go forward and enter into digital era with full protection and security (Kamal *et al.*, 2012).

#### **Objective:**

The study is designed to achieve four straight-forward objectives: (a) to find out the risk level on the internet among the teenagers in Malaysia, (b) to find out the risk level on the internet among the teenagers in Bangladesh, (c) to find out the safety level on the internet among the teenagers in Malaysia and (d) to find out the safety level on the internet among the teenagers in Bangladesh.

#### **Conceptual Framework:**

In order to operationalise this model, a number of variables are required to measure each aspect of the consolidated model. These research variables can be categorized as follows: (a) Demographic Factors, (b) Psychological Factors, (c) Social Factors, (d) Religion.



**Fig. 1:** Research Model.

#### **Demographic Factors:**

O'Neill, Grehan and Ólafsson (2011) worked on three demographic variables: (1) Age; (2) Gender and (3) Socio-economic status (SES). From the study of the researchers, more girls were bothered by internet compared with boys (13% vs. 9%); more older teens victimized compared with younger children (16% vs. 9%); and slightly more high SES than medium or low SES (16% vs. 7% and 10% respectively). Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011) examined these three factors, too. According to their findings, older children were encountering more online risks but, at the same time, they were better equipped to deal with them comparing with the younger ones. It was also revealed that girls generally more likely to be upset by the risks they experienced though girls and boys differed a little in their reporting of overall bitter online experiences. Children from lower SES homes were more likely to be bothered or upset by online sexual or pornographic content and by receiving nasty or hurtful online messages. Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011) also worked on these three factors. The researchers found child's gender contributing significance in the risk of watching sexual images, receiving sexual messages and being bullied online. In a few countries, the most noteworthy anticipator of the risk of watching sexual images, receiving sexual message and meeting new people online was child's age. Since these three demographic factors have been thoroughly validated by O'Neill, Grehan and Ólafsson (2011), Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011), Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011), it is appropriate that they are adopted for use in this research.

#### **Psychological Factors:**

Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011) offered the three psychological factors such as: (1) emotional problems, (2) self-efficacy and (3) risk-taking. These three variables were also used in the subsequent study of Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011). As a result, these variables can be readily used as they have already been validated by the studies of Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig

and Ólafsson (2011); Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011).

#### **Social Factors:**

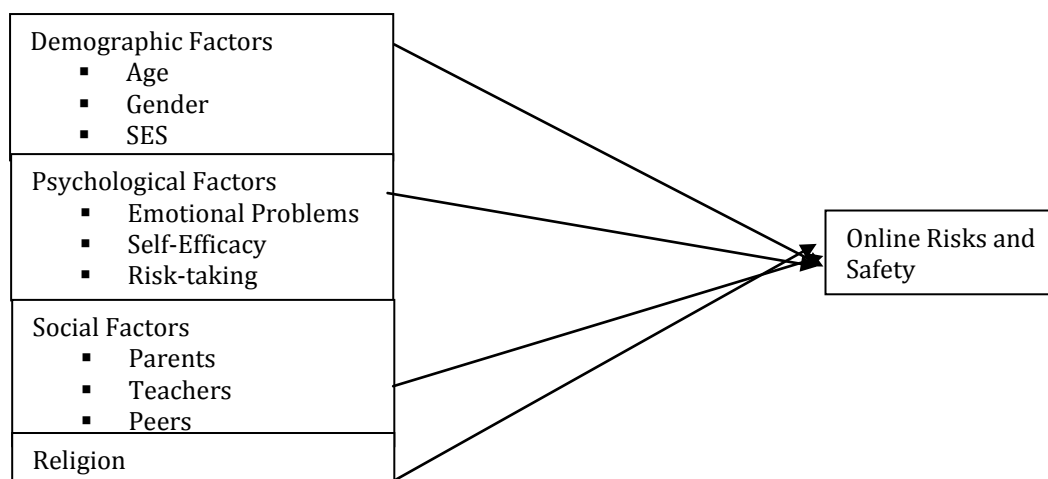
O'Neill, Grehan and Ólafsson (2011) used three social factors: (1) Parents, (2) Teachers and (3) Peers. The researchers identified internet safety advice received mostly from parents (72%), then teachers (68%), and, after that peers (28%). These three factors were also experimented by Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011). According to the findings of the researchers, the children those who encountered internet threats, in most of the cases, parents were ignored about it. Most of the parents interacted with their children about their activities on the net (70%); remained close during the child's presence in online (58%). On the contrary, one in eight parents (13%) did not care of any type of mediation to their children. From the viewpoint of near about half of children, teachers are directly connected to their (children) online activity. 73% children reported about the active mediation of their teachers towards them. 44% of children stated their acceptance of receiving some guidance regarding online safety from their friends, as well as, 35% also advised their friends on the other hand. Comparing across the sources of online safety advices, the most from parents (63%), then teachers (56%), then peers (44%) were found in the study of Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011). Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011) also included these three social factors in their consequent study. Since these three social factors have been thoroughly validated by O'Neill, Grehan and Ólafsson (2011), Livingstone, Haddon, Görzig and Ólafsson (2011), Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011), it is appropriate of adopting them directly in this research.

#### **Religion:**

Very recent, Murray (2014) conducted a quantitative study which was carried out by online survey to investigate the practices and perceptions of students in a Catholic high school about using internet. According to the author, there was no national clearinghouse for statistics regarding online

usage by Catholic students up to the completion time of this research. It was also mentioned that most studies focused on randomly chosen individual teenagers rather than focusing on specific school communities. An online survey was carried out by the researcher to collect data from 483 students of a Catholic high school employing 1-to-1 technology. From the survey data, the author came into conclusion that teenagers went to online everyday and 96% employed social media. Privacy settings were exercised to protect their information by eighty percent. And, lastly, near about 8 out of 10 were aware that information posted online might have an effect on their future negatively. From this study, a potential variable is explored and that is religion (Murray, 2014). It can be assumed that teens practicing religious activities may be more cautious about and less subjective to cyber victim. This fact is

also supported by the study of Stack, Wasserman and Kern (2004). The researchers explored and established an inverse relationship between church attendance and internet pornography use. The authors generated a theory that church attendance generated a social bond which discouraged people from involving in internet pornography (Stack, Wasserman and Kern, 2004). Abell, Steenbergh and Boivin (2006) also conducted a study about internet pornography usage among the college students. According to their study, the persons associated with greater levels of religiosity were found less involved with behaviors regarding to sexual addiction. Lastly, Hoffman (2009) identified and established an inverse relationship between the practice of Christian spiritual disciplines among Christian male college students and internet pornography usage, too. (Hoffman, 2009).



**Fig. 2:** The Enhanced Research Model.

### Conclusion:

Internet Threat is a problem that knows no boundaries and the victims are faced with reliving their pain over and over again. It will continue unless stakeholders come together to build up and employ an efficient anti Internet Threat policy. Teens rely on educationalists, school administrators, counselors and parents to guide them and to defend themselves. This study will optimistically present information to stake-holders that will open their eyes about what is really happening in their areas. Lack of Data is not an option. Lack of Research is not an option. Lack of action is not an option. The only viable option is to listen to them when they tell their stories and take appropriate steps according to their stories.

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