

# Effect of personality traits on cyber crime awareness of adolescents

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## ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to assess the 'effect of personality traits on cyber crime awareness of adolescents'. The study was based on 200 adolescents (*i.e.* 100 rural and 100 urban) in the age range of 16-18 years. The sample was randomly drawn from four Government Senior Secondary Schools purposively selected from rural as well as urban areas of Ludhiana district. Self structured general information sheet was prepared to collect the general information of the adolescents. Differential personality inventory by Singh and Singh (2014) and Cyber Crime Awareness Scale by Rajasekhar (2011) were used to assess personality traits and cyber crime awareness of the respondents respectively. Results revealed that in masculinity, responsibility, dominance, decisiveness, curiosity, hetero sexuality, ego strength, friendliness and overall personality traits had made a significant contribution towards cyber crime awareness of the adolescents.

## INTRODUCTION

Internet has been the revolutionary invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It has nearly shrunk the world into a much smaller place by bringing the nations and citizens closer together in terms of better communication and quick exchange of ideas and information. In addition to this, the internet has been the single most effective device in spreading its existence without being restricted even by the international boundaries (Saroja, 2014). In less than two decades, the internet has grown from a curiosity to a basic component of current life. It has entered in every one of the spheres of human life since the computerized

world appeared. The fields like education, corporate divisions, transportation, and correspondence are profoundly impacted by internet. Internet assumes indispensable part to make people agreeable in their standard life. India is one of the significant nations to get access to internet facility to carry its day-to-day transactions. Today email and sites have turned into the favoured method for correspondence. Organizations give internet access to their staff. By their exceptional nature, they encourage practically moment trade and generally spreading of information, pictures and assortment of material. This incorporates instructive and enlightening material as well as data that may be undesirable or hostile

to society. Internet utilize has developed gigantically to 566.4 per cent from the year 2000 to 2012.

The most successive online users are from age group of 18-34 years; while the grown-ups from 55 or more age group have fast developing users class (Pastore, 2000). Drastic changes have taken place in the way young generation chooses to communicate with each other. Technology has made it easy for people to meet a companion or communicate with people with just the click of a button through the advancement of technology and emergency of social networking sites (Mishna *et al.*, 2009). Technology has brought a change in the lives of many teenagers as it has become an integral part of their lives, they play video games, listen to music, fitness tips, entertainment and satisfying psychological urges/emotions or gather information for school work but overall socializing is one of the main reasons for working online (Rivers and Noret, 2010). Download, upload, share, Google it, Apps etc being functioned on the fingertips are some of the very common jargons used by the youth now days (Shah, 2016). During this age, adolescents are very much impressed by their friends and peers and they involve themselves in risky and anti-social behaviours. To fulfill their desires they take help of social platform/internet, as they can hide their own selves and do whatever they want to (Kaur and Kaur, 2016). Today, for some adolescent's online networking has turned out to be imperative piece of their life. Adolescents have a naive inclination towards technology but they do not always use technology in right ways (Ybarra, 2004).

According to council of Europe "Any criminal offence committed against or with the help of a computer network is identified as cyber crime". So computer or computation related device is an essential for cybercrime perpetration and victimization (Shabnam *et al.*, 2016). In simple words cyber crime includes phishing, credit card frauds, bank robbery, child pornography, blackmailing, illegitimate downloading, transactions fraud, kidnapping children via chat rooms, scams, cyber terrorism, spam, creation or spreading of viruses and so on. It also covers the traditional crimes in which computers or networks are used to enable the illegal activities (Gupta *et al.*, 2017).

Cyber crime is a term used broadly to depict criminal action in which computers are used as tool or a place of criminal movement and involve everything from electronic cracking to denial of service assaults. It is

likewise used to incorporate conventional violations in which PCs or systems are utilized to carry the unlawful action. Cyber crime predominantly comprises of unapproved access to PC systems, data modification, data demolition and theft of intellectual property. Cyber crime with regards to national security may include hacking, spying or data fighting and related exercises. "Cyber crime" has been utilized to depict an extensive variety of offenses, content offenses for example (spreading broadly child pornography), computer-related imitation and extortion, (for example, 'phishing'), including offenses against PC information and frameworks, (for example, 'hacking') and copyright offenses (for example, the spreading of pirated content) (Kumar and Dahiya, 2015).

These incidents provoked the cyber crime cells all over world to adopt defensive measurements towards unchecked data related to internet usage. This extensive use of internet provides a large platform of opportunities for those with criminal motives. Internet has become a medium for cyber criminals to carry out a number of illegal activities which altogether called as Computer Crimes or Cyber crime. Halder and Jaishankar (2011) defines Cybercrimes as: 'Offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly, using latest telecommunication networks such as mobile phones (SMS/MMS) and mainly Internet (emails, notice boards and chat rooms)'. The official website of the Cyber Crime Investigation Cell of Mumbai Criminal Investigation Department calls it as an 'invisible crime' as the real identity of a criminal is hidden. With the growing cases of cybercrime and to safeguard the internet users, professional help of criminologists, sociologists and psychologists is being consulted to build up a trustworthy or reliable profiles of hackers and other cyber criminals so as to improve the defensive strategies in this field (Saroha, 2014).

In India the Information Technology (IT) Act 2000, deals with the acts in which computer is used as a tool for carrying the unlawful act. The main objective of this Act is to create an enabling environment for commercial use of IT. Various offences having bearing on cyber-arena are also registered under the appropriate sections of the Indian Penal Code with the legal recognition of electronic records and the minor changes made in several sections

of the Indian Penal Code vide the Information Technology Act (Kumbhar and Gavekar, 2017). In India cyber crimes are registered under three broad heads, the Information technology (IT) Act, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and other State Level Legislations. Currently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has issued an advisory to the Union Territory Administrations and State Government on cyber crime. The State Government have been advised to put up adequate or/and improved measurements and technical capacity in handling cyber crime and trained manpower for find, registration, investigation and prosecution of cyber crimes (Dubudu, 2016).

Personality has been defined in an assortment of ways. 'Personality is a dynamic organization, inside the person, of psychophysical systems that create the person's characteristic pattern of behaviour, thoughts and feelings. 'Personality is defined as 'the more or less stable and enduring organization of persons of character, temperament, intellect and physique, which determine his unique adjustment to the environment' (Eysenck, 1959). Guilford (1967) believes that the individual personality, with all its uniqueness, surfaces from out of individual differences that exist. For him personality is 'an individual's unique pattern of traits. Maddi (1976) finds wider perspective for personality which, he says is 'Stable set of characteristics and tendencies that determine those commonalities and differences that have continuity in time and that may or may not be easily understood in terms of the social and biological pressure of the immediate situation alone.' A workable meaning of personality originates from Mischel (1986) – a noted personality theorist says, 'Personality usually reforms to the distinguish patterns of behaviour (including thoughts and emotions) that characterize each individual's adaptation to the situations of his or her life'.

Personality is an incorporated whole with certain solid and some conceptual dimensions. Every dimension has particular reason and a critical part to play in the totality of one's being. The maturation change as a result of chronological growth and the environmental interactions, which an individual has throughout largely, determine the extent to which his personality-potential shall be developed. Various aspects of personality are not only interdependent but also so preciously coordinated that what happens in one aspect has its relative effect on other domains. So for the purpose of comfort and better understanding personality is categorized into

physique, mind and intellect, emotionality and sociability (Shashirekha and Chengti, 2008).

Conklin (1981) showed that personality traits of offenders did differ from the general population, although, the differences were usually small. Zimbardo (1972) said that, there were some evidences that delinquents and criminals might be more emotionally disturbed than the general populations. Tenibiaje (1995) observed that the personality characteristics of juvenile delinquents and criminals were not similar in terms of extroversion, psychoticism and neuroticism.

Adolescence, the period of change from childhood to adulthood brings many changes in young one's ways of life. The progressions are because of advancement inside the adolescent himself and to demands put upon him by the way of life in which he lives. His social ideas and their controls offer ascent to new rationale of qualities, as he controls them inside the bigger setting of rights and obligations. The youthful years are, principally, a time of social improvement and alteration. Amid the pioneer years of adolescence there have been, no doubt, a start of socialization and some obtaining of principal social abilities. It is a period from youth until adult status has been achieved and a standout amongst the most interesting and complex moves in the life expectancy. In this period the adolescent moves from reliance to independency in his conduct and amid this move from youth to adulthood, the task of achieving of self-sufficiency has been considered as an imperative part of individual's personality. They are adapting more about 'this present reality' and attempting to take a stab at both freedoms from guardians and incorporation in social gatherings (Kaur and Sharma, 2014).

Utilization of internet is turning into an unavoidable instrument in immature life as it is the real wellspring of educating, learning and amusement for them. As per Goel and Garg (2015) teenagers and adolescents are among the top users who surf internet for learning, amusement and research. As they are among top users they additionally confront hazard components appended to it.

Jang *et al.* (2008) and Wang *et al.* (2011) said adolescents (also known as teenagers) generally have poor self-regulation and low self-control and cognition than adults, but the adolescents have the equal desire for independence as adults do. On the other side, in some colleges the use of computers was encouraged and made

mandatory for the adolescents. The use of the internet is logical and common even outside the classroom. Most of the school libraries and cyber cafe have internet access and that make easy for the adolescents to access the internet. In addition to this, parent exercise less control over adolescents than younger children. Therefore, adolescents are considered as the most vulnerable group to the attraction of the internet.

Knowing well that a person's attitude towards a stimulus can be used to predict his actual behaviour towards such stimulus, one of the best ways of preventing or controlling cyber crime is to observe how those adolescents think about cyber crime (Obi *et al.*, 2013). Hence, the awareness on cybercrime is very much needed for the adolescents. Lacks of awareness/knowledge on such issues often end up in a serious damage on financial, emotional, ethical or moral grounds. Therefore, besides tackling the cyber crimes there is an important need to be focused on higher priority of creating awareness on cyber crimes among the netizens (Shah, 2016). The present piece of work deemed it necessary looking at the influence different traits can have on cyber crime awareness. Keeping this in mind present research paper, 'gender and locale differences in cyber crime awareness among adolescents' have been planned.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

The present study was based upon a sample of 200 respondents aged between 16-18 years, studying in 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades drawn equally from rural and urban schools of Ludhiana district. The respondents were equally distributed according to their gender (100 boys and 100 girls). For selection of the sample, list of Government Senior Secondary Schools of Ludhiana district was procured from District Education Officer, Ludhiana. For rural sample: two Government Senior Secondary Schools were purposively selected from the two blocks *i.e.* block I and block II of Ludhiana district. For urban sample: one zone *i.e.* zone D was purposively selected from the Ludhiana district. Out of these selected rural and urban schools the required numbers of respondents were randomly selected for data collection.

Each subject was first administered the Differential Personality Inventory developed by Singh and Singh (2014) to assess the personality traits. It consisted of 150 items representing ten personality traits namely

decisiveness, responsibility, emotional stability, masculinity, friendliness, hetero sexuality, ego strength, curiosity, dominance and self-concept. The scale was translated into Punjabi language for the ease and clear understanding of the statements among adolescents. Each statement had two options *i.e.* true and false, and the students were asked to attempt to each item. For all the ten personality areas, total scoring was done with the help of the ten scoring stencils (scoring key) separately. When a response of an item matches with an item given in the scoring key, a score of 1(one) was given. In case response of an item does not match with the response given in the scoring key, a score of zero was given. If the scores on traits are high this indicates high possessiveness of the concerned trait and *vice-versa*.

The selected adolescents were then administered Cyber Crime Awareness Scale by Rajasekhar (2011) to assess their cyber crime awareness. The scale consists of 36 items related to different aspects of cyber crime awareness. The scale has 21 positive and 15 negative statements. An individual's score is the sum of the scores of the 36 items. The scale was translated to Punjabi so that adolescents could easily understand the statements. The minimum and maximum scores ranged from 104 to 168. High scores indicated as high cyber crime awareness and low scores indicated as low cyber crime awareness. Karl Pearson's co-efficient of correlation was used to analyze the data.

## OBSERVATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Table 1 highlights correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among rural respondents. A significant and positive correlation existed between traits of responsibility ( $r = 0.381, p \leq 0.01$ ) and masculinity ( $r = 0.309, p \leq 0.05$ ) among rural boys indicating that as responsibility and masculinity among rural boys increase, their awareness about cyber crime also increases. Among rural girls significant and negative correlation between masculinity ( $r = -0.305, p \leq 0.05$ ) existed highlighting that as masculinity in rural girls increases their awareness decreases. A significant and positive correlation between curiosity ( $r = 0.280, p \leq 0.05$ ) and dominance ( $r = 0.334, p \leq 0.05$ ) existed. This shows that with increase in curiosity and dominance, cyber crime awareness among rural girls increases.

Table 2 describes correlation between personality

traits and cyber crime awareness among urban respondents. A significant and positive correlation existed between traits of emotional stability ( $r = 0.298, p \leq 0.05$ ) and ego strength ( $r = 0.319, p \leq 0.05$ ) indicating that as emotional stability and ego strength traits increases cyber crime awareness among urban respondents also increases. Similarly a study conducted by Weijer and Leukfeldt (2017) showed that only those with higher scores on emotional stability were less likely to become a victim of cybercrime than traditional crime. A negative correlation between curiosity and cyber crime awareness ( $r = -0.322, p \leq 0.05$ ) among urban boys existed indicating that as curiosity increases their awareness about cyber crime decreases. Among urban girls a significant and negative correlation between hetero sexuality ( $r = -0.298, p \leq 0.05$ ) and cyber crime awareness existed which indicates that as hetero-sexuality increases cyber crime

decreases whereas a significant and positive correlation between responsibility ( $r = 0.403, p \leq 0.01$ ), friendliness ( $r = 0.351, p \leq 0.05$ ) and dominance ( $r = 0.441, p \leq 0.01$ ) was observed in case of urban girls, which shows that these three personality traits were contributing positively towards cyber crime awareness of urban girls. A significant and positive correlation also existed between overall personality traits ( $r = 0.303, p \leq 0.05$ ) and cyber crime awareness among boys which showed that as overall personality traits improve cyber crime awareness also improves.

Table 3 indicates a correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among total respondents. A significant and positive correlation existed between traits of responsibility ( $r = 0.277, p \leq 0.01$ ) and masculinity ( $r = -0.251, p \leq 0.05$ ) among boys demonstrating that as responsibility and masculinity increases, cyber

**Table 1: Correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among rural respondents**

Sr. No.	Personality traits	Boys (r)	Girls (r)
1.	Decisiveness	.047	.078
2.	Responsibility	.381**	.096
3.	Emotional stability	.022	.039
4.	Masculinity	.309*	-.305*
5.	Friendliness	.025	.221
6.	Hetero sexuality	-.137	-.219
7.	Ego strength	-.107	.144
8.	Curiosity	.240	.280*
9.	Dominance	-.096	.334*
10.	Self concept	.026	.061
11.	Overall personality traits	.161	.144

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at  $P=0.05$  and  $0.01$  level (2-tailed), respectively

**Table 2 : Correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among urban respondents**

Sr. No.	Personality traits	Boys (r)	Girls (r)
1.	Decisiveness	.273	-.050
2.	Responsibility	.150	.403**
3.	Emotional stability	.298*	-.042
4.	Masculinity	.188	-.090
5.	Friendliness	.260	.351*
6.	Hetero sexuality	.043	-.298*
7.	Ego strength	.319*	-.074
8.	Curiosity	-.322*	.276
9.	Dominance	.054	.441**
10.	Self concept	.112	-.076
11.	Overall personality traits	.303*	.151

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at  $P=0.05$  and  $0.01$  level (2-tailed), respectively

crime awareness improves. Among girls significant and negative correlation between hetero sexuality ( $r = -0.230$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), masculinity ( $r = -0.214$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and significant and positive correlation between responsibility ( $r = 0.209$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ), curiosity ( $r = 0.281$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), friendliness ( $r = 0.272$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and dominance ( $r = 0.366$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ) existed suggesting that as heterosexuality and masculinity increases cyber crime awareness decreases whereas as responsibility, curiosity, friendliness and dominance increases cyber crime awareness also increases.

Table 4 elucidates a correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among rural and urban respondents. A significant and positive correlation existed between trait of curiosity ( $r = 0.256$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and cyber crime awareness among rural respondents which portrays that as curiosity increases cyber crime awareness also

increases. Among urban respondents significant and positive correlation between responsibility ( $r = 0.276$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), friendliness ( $r = 0.302$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ), overall personality traits ( $r = 0.303$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ) and cyber crime awareness existed demonstrating that as responsibility, friendliness and overall personality traits increases cyber crime awareness among urban respondents also improved.

### Conclusion:

From the present study it could be concluded that differential personality traits namely masculinity, responsibility, dominance, decisiveness, curiosity, hetero sexuality, ego strength, friendliness and overall personality traits had made significant contribution towards cyber crime awareness of the adolescents.

**Table 3 : Correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among total respondents**

Sr. No.	Personality traits	Boys (r)	Girls (r)
1.	Decisiveness	.159	.022
2.	Responsibility	.277**	.209*
3.	Emotional stability	.131	-.004
4.	Masculinity	.251*	-.214*
5.	Friendliness	.150	.272**
6.	Hetero sexuality	-.076	-.230*
7.	Ego strength	.101	.060
8.	Curiosity	-.069	.281**
9.	Dominance	-.009	.366**
10.	Self concept	.093	.000
11.	Overall personality traits	.161	.144

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01 level (2-tailed), respectively

**Table 4 : Correlation between personality traits and cyber crime awareness among rural and urban respondents**

Sr. No.	Personality traits	Rural (r)	Urban (r)
1	Decisiveness	.032	.135
2	Responsibility	.194	.276**
3	Emotional stability	-.011	.139
4	Masculinity	-.080	.063
5	Friendliness	.129	.302**
6	Hetero sexuality	-.192	-.115
7	Ego strength	.014	.169
8	Curiosity	.256*	-.052
9	Dominance	.174	.192
10	Self concept	.055	.051
11	Overall personality traits	.161	.303*

\* and \*\* indicate significance of values at P=0.05 and 0.01 level (2-tailed), respectively

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