AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON INTERNET ACCESS AND SEXUAL OFFENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

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ABSTRACT :

The association between pornography and sexual crime is controversial, with various researchers finding positive, no, or negative associations. Recent evidence suggests that there may be a specific association between child pornography, which is easily available on the Internet, and sexual offences against children. Using methodology similar to an earlier study from India, we obtained official statistics on sexual offences against children, namely rape and procurement of minor girls, for the period 2000-2012 from the National Crime Records Bureau. We analysed the association between the rates of these crimes and Internet access, measured by the number of users per 200 people.Even after correcting for population growth, we found significant linear associations between Internet availability and the rates of both these offences against children. However, there was no correlation between the growth rate of Internet access and the rate of increase of these crimes. While the association between pornography and the rape of adults is still under debate, My results provide indirect evidence of a possible Q association between Internet availability and sexual crimes against children. Regulation of the Internet to suppress access to child pornography may prevent at least some of these crimes. Child sexual abuse is a growing social concern. Today, online communication chiefly facilitates access to vulnerable children and increases cases of child sexual abuse. The current article also aims to highlight digital platforms' role in prevailing online child sexual abuse worldwide.

KEYWORDS :
Pornography, paraphilias, child rape, sexual abuse and online grooming.

INTRODUCTION :

In recent years, the pervasive growth of the internet has revolutionised the way society communicates, learns, and interacts. While the digital age brings about numerous advantages, it also raises concerns regarding the potential for misuse, particularly in the realm of child safety. This empirical study aims to investigate the complex relationship between internet access and the occurrence of sexual offences against children, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics that contribute to these alarming incidents. The digital landscape has become an integral part of children's lives, offering unprecedented opportunities for education, socialisation, and entertainment. However, this increased connectivity also exposes them to potential risks, with cyber threats such as online grooming, exploitation, and child pornography posing significant challenges to their well-being. As technology continues to evolve, it is crucial to understand how internet access influences the prevalence and nature of sexual

offences against children, identify the specific online platforms or activities associated with such offences, and explore the role of parental supervision and digital literacy in mitigating risks. By employing a robust empirical approach, encompassing surveys, interviews, and data analysis, we seek to provide evidence-based insights that can inform policy-making, intervention strategies, and public awareness campaigns. This study also recognizes the importance of ethical considerations and sensitivity in researching such a delicate subject. Ensuring the privacy and well-being of the participants, particularly the victims, is of utmost priority. Additionally, the findings of this research endeavour to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on child protection in the digital age, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges posed by internet access in the context of sexual offences against children.

OBJECTIVES:

- To Determine the Correlation Between Internet Access and the Incidence of Sexual Offences
- To Identify High-Risk Online Platforms and Activities
- To Analyze Demographic and Socioeconomic Factors

LITERATURE REVIEW :

Shaik and Rajkumar 2015, The association between pornography and sexual crime is controversial, with various researchers finding positive, no, or negative associations. Recent evidence suggests that there may be a specific association between child pornography, which is easily available on the Internet, and sexual offences against children. Methods: Using methodology similar to an earlier study from India, we obtained official statistics on sexual offences against children, namely rape and procurement of minor girls, for the period 2000. **Howitt 1995** This book is an investigation of people who sexually offend against children. It argues that paedophilia forms a focus for the numerous ideological battles which structure how offenders are understood, and discusses the wide variety of perspectives on adult–child sexual contacts. The book concerns the activities of professionals involved in treating and researching sex offenders as well as those of the offenders themselves. **Men convicted of sexual offences** the investigation described in this paper originated from a short, descriptive study of certain sexual offenders undertaken at Bristol prison in 1956 to satisfy local internal inquiries. Information on a number of men convicted of sexual offences against children was recorded and an attempt was made at a psychological classification. In 196o the opportunity arose to obtain follow-up data, in the shape of subsequent criminal convictions, on these men and it was decided to enlarge the original investigation to cover these reconviction data. **Bunting 2008**, This paper uses data provided by the Police Service for Northern Ireland (PSNI) to compare the characteristics and outcomes of reported sexual offences involving child and adult victims and explore the factors associated with case outcomes. PSNI provided data on 8,789 sexual offences recorded between April 2001 and March 2006. Case outcomes were based on whether a case was recorded by police as having sufficient evidence to summon, charge, or caution an offender. **Shannon 2008**, The expansion in Internet use since the mid-1990s has created a completely new and largely unmonitored forum for contacts between adults and children. The anonymity provided by Internet communications has been viewed as creating favourable conditions for adults wishing to develop manipulative relationships with children, and there has been a growing concern about the way the Internet may be used by adults intent on sexually exploiting and abusing young people. **wortley 2007**, Explanations of

sexual offending against children have traditionally focused on the intrapsychic forces that are assumed to drive the offender's deviant behaviour. The situational crime prevention perspective, on the other hand, examines the immediate behavioral setting to identify factors that encourage or permit sexual abuse. Empirical evidence increasingly indicates that sexual offences against children are significantly mediated by opportunities and other environmental conditions. **Coulthard and Johnson 2010**, Significant developments in police interviewing practice in the UK have been fuelled by psychological research. Studies have acknowledged the coercive and oppressive features of the traditional adversarial police interrogation (Shepherd 1991; Mortimer 1994; Moston and Stephenson 1993; Williamson 1993) and given rise to the ethical PEACE investigative interview, the rationale for which is outlined in A Practical Guide to Investigative Interviewing. **Angelides 2008**, A controversy erupted in Australia over the issue of gender bias in the judicial treatment of sexual offenders and victims. It was sparked by the sentencing of Karen Ellis, a then 37-year-old physical education teacher, who pleaded guilty to the 'sexual penetration of a child under the age of 16 years'. The 'child', one of her students* Ben Dunbar* was three months shy of his 16th birthday and the general age of consent at the time of the offences. **Paul 1977**, this paper consist of Sexual, or pseudosexual, assault against children is not a new phenomenon, but unfortunately there is little written work available to assist the practising clinician when he is called upon to examine the very young victim of such assaults, and to assist in the interpretation of the findings of such examinations. Because of the revolting nature of many of the acts alleged, and because of the very high degree of emotional tension and hostility such allegations are bound to generate**. Police-reported sexual offences again**, Sexual violations against children and youth1 are a pressing concern, both in Canada and internationally (Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights 2011). Not only do these offences have immediate negative physical, emotional, and psychological impacts, they can also have damaging long-term effects on the children and youth who are the victims of these crimes. In addition, as part of Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill introduced in 2011 by the Canadian government, a number of amendments to the Criminal Code. **Walden and Wasik**, Access to the internet is increasingly recognised as being "as indispensable as electricity, gas or water". 1 As we have become dependent on the internet for our work, rest and play, constraints placed over our access to and use of this resource have become politically charged. The Digital Economy Act 2010 continues to be the subject of much heated debate over provisions that could allow the suspension of a subscriber's internet access service for reasons of copyright infringement2; while, conversely, the Coalition Government. **Meridian Hannah L et al. 2009**, The review presented in this paper provides some descriptive findings regarding Internet Sex Offenders (ISOs) in comparison to contact sex offenders. In general, Internet Sex Offenders are found to be Caucasian, male, relatively young, highly educated, intelligent, and well-employed. ISOs also appear to be highly sexualised, in both their current lifestyle as well as childhood experiences as victims. ISOs can also be classified into several subgroups, such as child pornography offenders, who again are a heterogeneous group. **Shannon 2008**, the expansion in Internet use since the mid-1990s has created a completely new and largely unmonitored forum for contacts between adults and children. The anonymity provided by Internet communications has been viewed as creating favourable conditions for adults wishing to develop manipulative relationships with children, and there has been a growing concern about the way the Internet may be used by adults intent on sexually exploiting and abusing young people. **Choo 2009**, This article considers the dominant structure and patterns of policing as related to Internet-based sex offences. It is argued that the policing of Internet sex offences occupies an anomalous position, as compared to other forms of online offending. One the one hand, the policing of Internet sex offences partakes of a wider trend towards the dispersed and pluralised governance of crime, a trend that is in many ways typified by responses to Internet crime. **Yar 2013**, There is an ongoing public debate about internet sex offenders: do they progress to contact offences, or are their deviant interests sufficiently satisfied through downloading indecent images of children? Also, do such individuals accept that they create victims in the absence of direct physical contact with children? This paper presents an analysis of the accounts offered by individuals convicted of internet-based sexual offences involving the downloading and viewing of images of children. **Winder**

and Gough 2010, In recent years there has been a debate as to whether access to the internet can now be considered a human right. If internet access is a human right then this would raise the question as to whether it is possible to ever restrict an individual's internet access or make it subject to limitations. One area where individuals are currently the subject of limitations is child sex offences where some internet offenders have access to the internet either prohibited or subject to significant limitations. **Gillespie 2011**, Within the literature individuals who use the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a minor are generally classified as being fantasy or contact driven. Classification is based upon the intended location for sexual climax: fantasy driven individuals aim to reach sexual climax online, whereas contact driven individuals target minors to achieve physical sex offline. This review systematically investigates whether there is an empirical basis for the distinction between these two proposed discrete types. **Broome et al. 2018**, This study analyzes 74 preadult victims' accounts of sexual assault and 137 convicted child offenders' accounts of sexual assault. Two types of child assault were identified: sex-pressure, which was achieved by offender enticement and/or entrapment of the child into sexual activity; and sex-force, where the victim was forced to submit to the assault through exploitation, intimidation, and/or aggression. Life issues of dominance, power, authority, control, aggression, and sadism were present in varying degrees of intensity in the assault. **Groth and Burgess 1977**, This series of Bulletins summarises findings from the Second National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children. The main purpose of the series is to provide a clear picture of how many children become missing-and why. Bulletins in the series offer national estimates of missing children based on surveys of households, juvenile residential facili-ties, and law enforcement agencies.

METHODOLOGY:

The current study is based on the researcher's original data gathering as well as secondary data from publications and online sources. Because the population was too large, the current study used a straightforward sampling strategy to pick samples. A total of 200 respondents in the age range of 18-60 years were chosen at random and sent the analysed question online at random. The data obtained 200 samples from respondents using the random sampling method, also known as the easy sampling method. For this investigation, both primary and secondary data were employed. The data gathered through statistical measurements was analysed using SPSS Software. SPSS software was used to analyse and show the data from the frequency table, cross tabulation, chi-square tests, and ANOVA , ANALYSIS OF DATA.
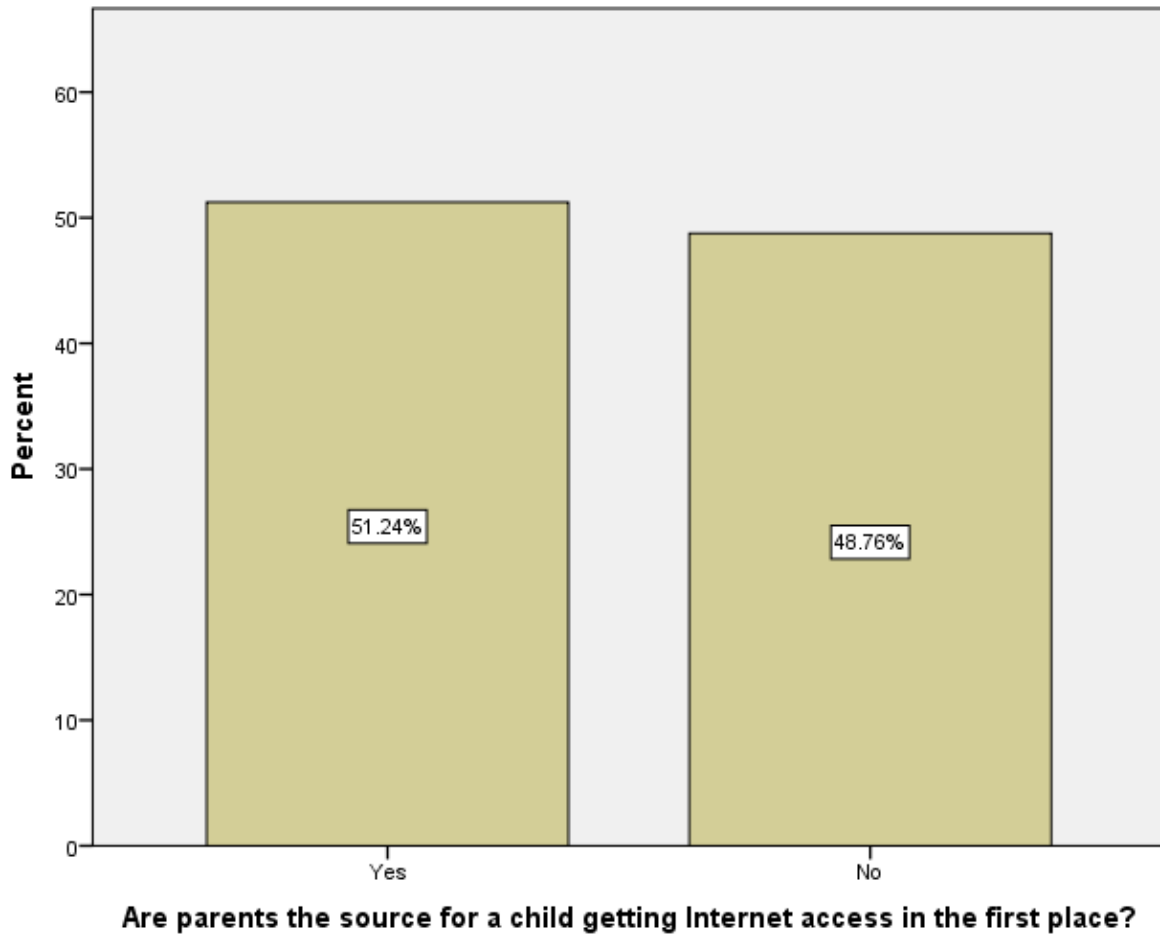
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Null Hypothesis (H0): There is no significant difference between gender and age towards study on internet access and sexual offences against children

Alternative Hypothesis (HI): There is a significant difference between gender and age towards study on Internet access and sexual offences against children
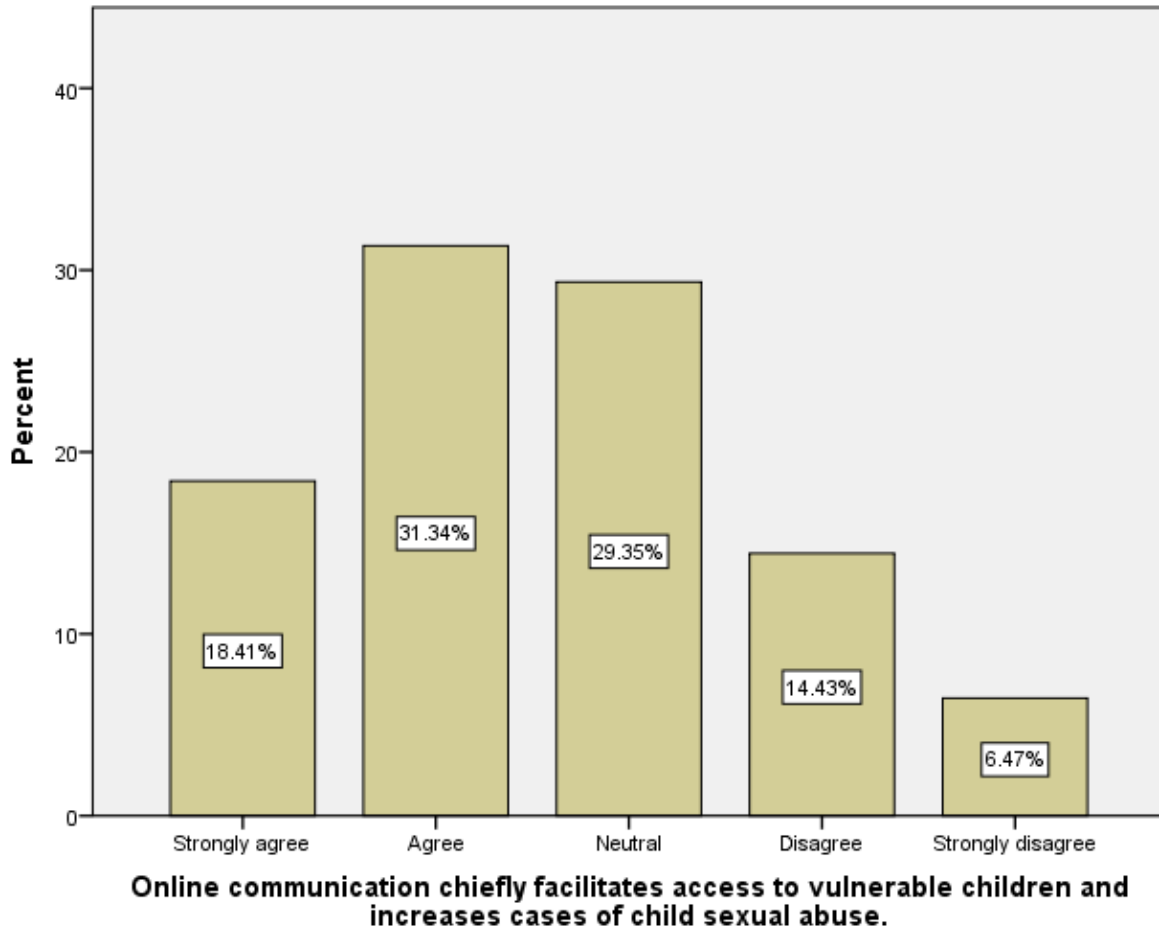
DATA ANALYSIS

Fig 1

Are parents the source for a child getting Internet access in the first place?

LEGEND:

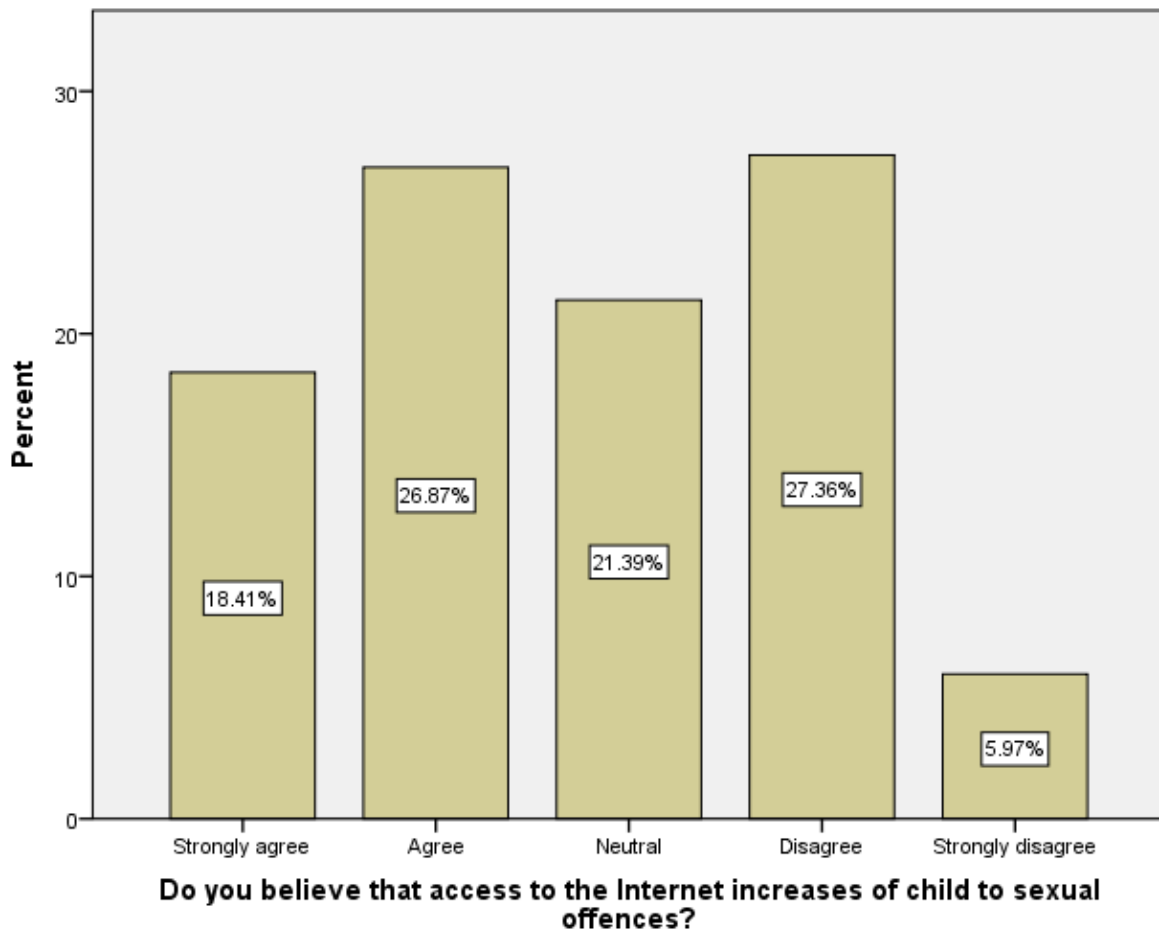Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table yes-51.24%, no-48.76%

Fig 2

Online communication chiefly facilitates access to vulnerable children and increases cases of child sexual abuse.

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table strongly agree-18.41%, agree-31.34%, neutral-29.35%, disagree-14.43 and strongly disagree-6.47%.
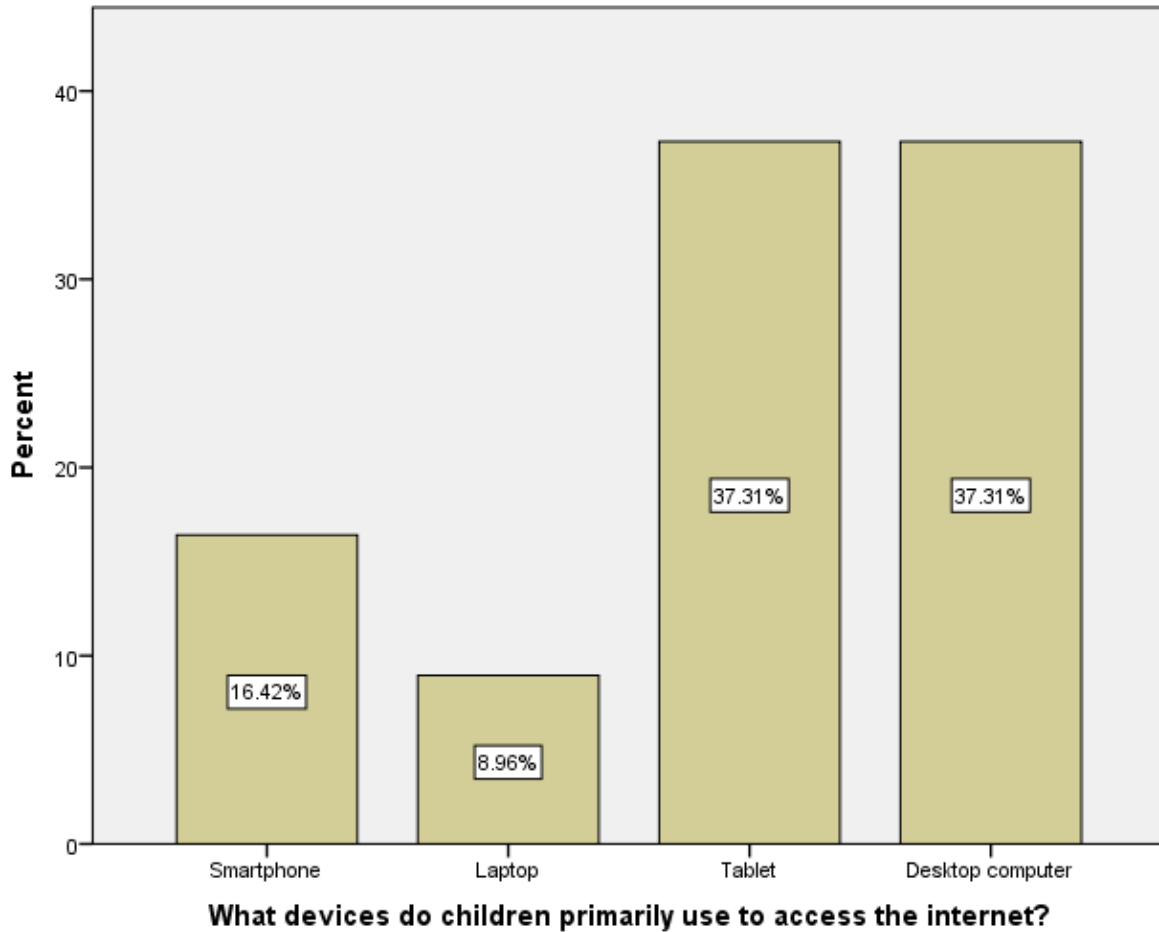
Fig 3

Do you believe that access to the Internet increases of child to sexual offences?

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this tables strongly agree-18.41%, agree-26.87%, neutral-21.39%, disagree-27.36% and strongly disagree-5.97%.

Fig 4

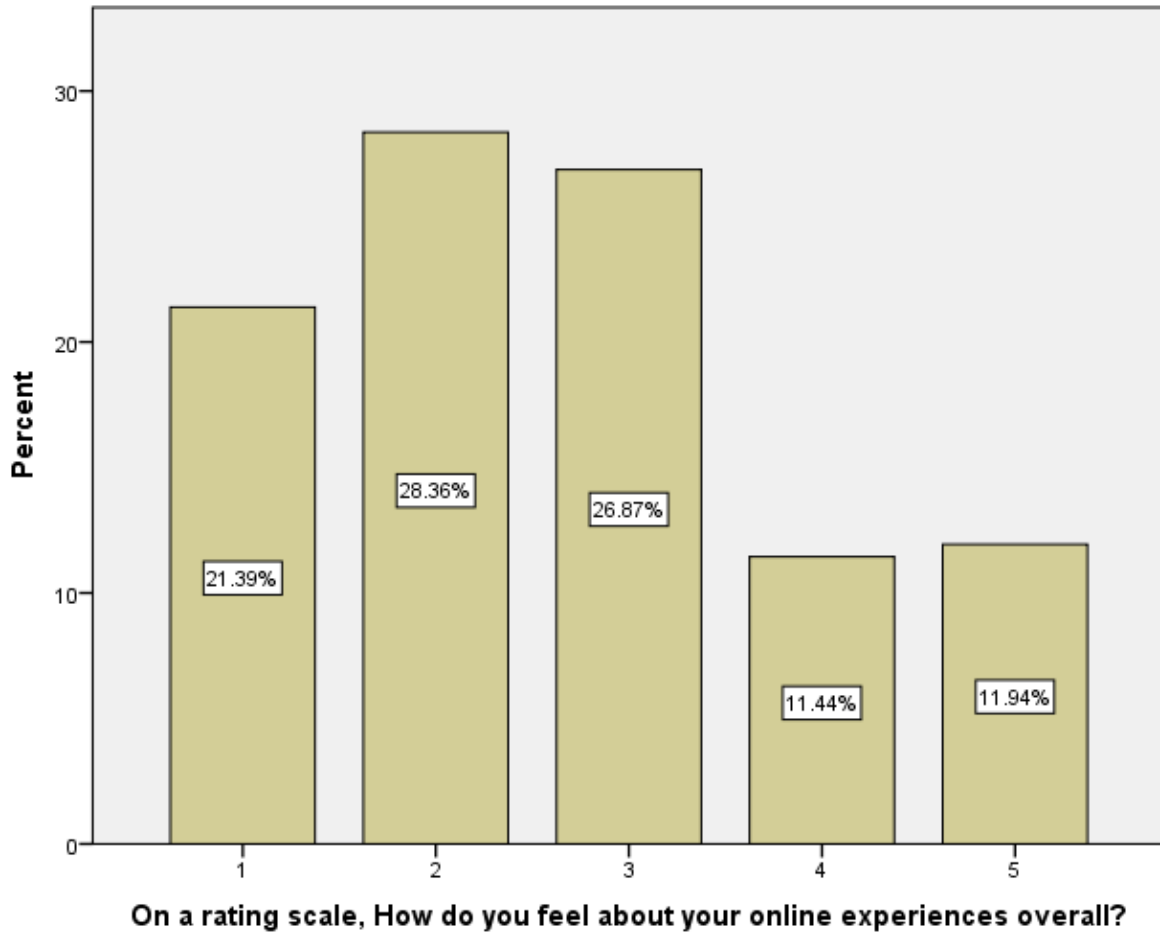**What devices do children primarily use to access the internet?**

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table, smartphone-16.42%, laptop-8.96%, tablet-37.31% and desktop computer-37.31%.
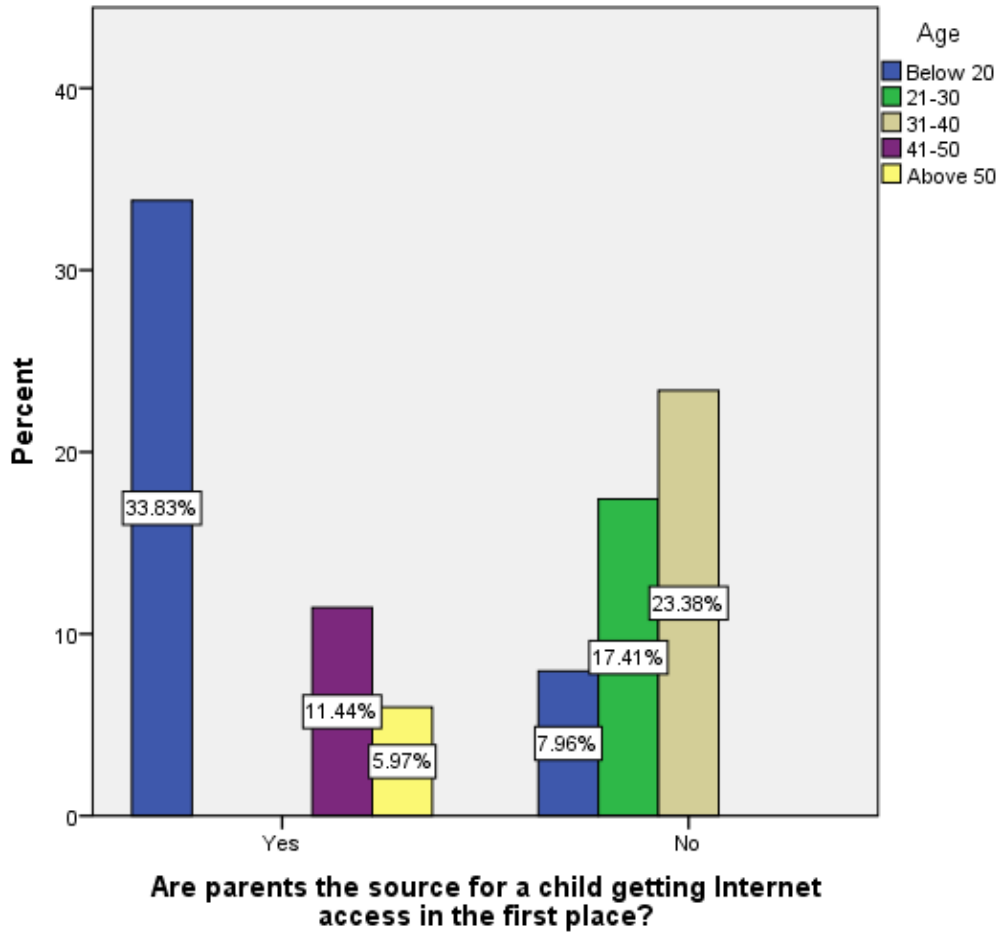
Fig 5

On a rating scale, How do you feel about your online experiences overall?

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this tables 1-21.39%, 2-28.36, 3-26.87, 4-11.44% and 5-11.94%.
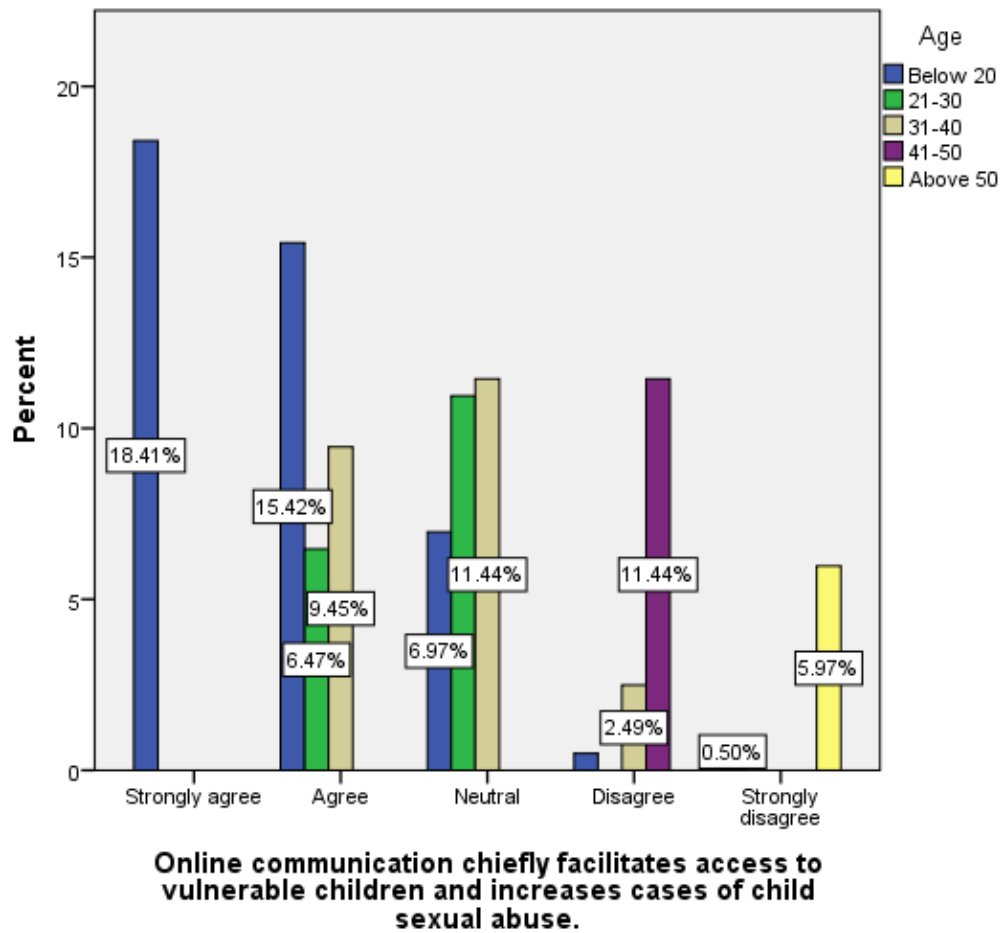
Fig 6

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table yes-33.83%;11.44%;5.97%, no-7.96%;17.41%;23.28%.
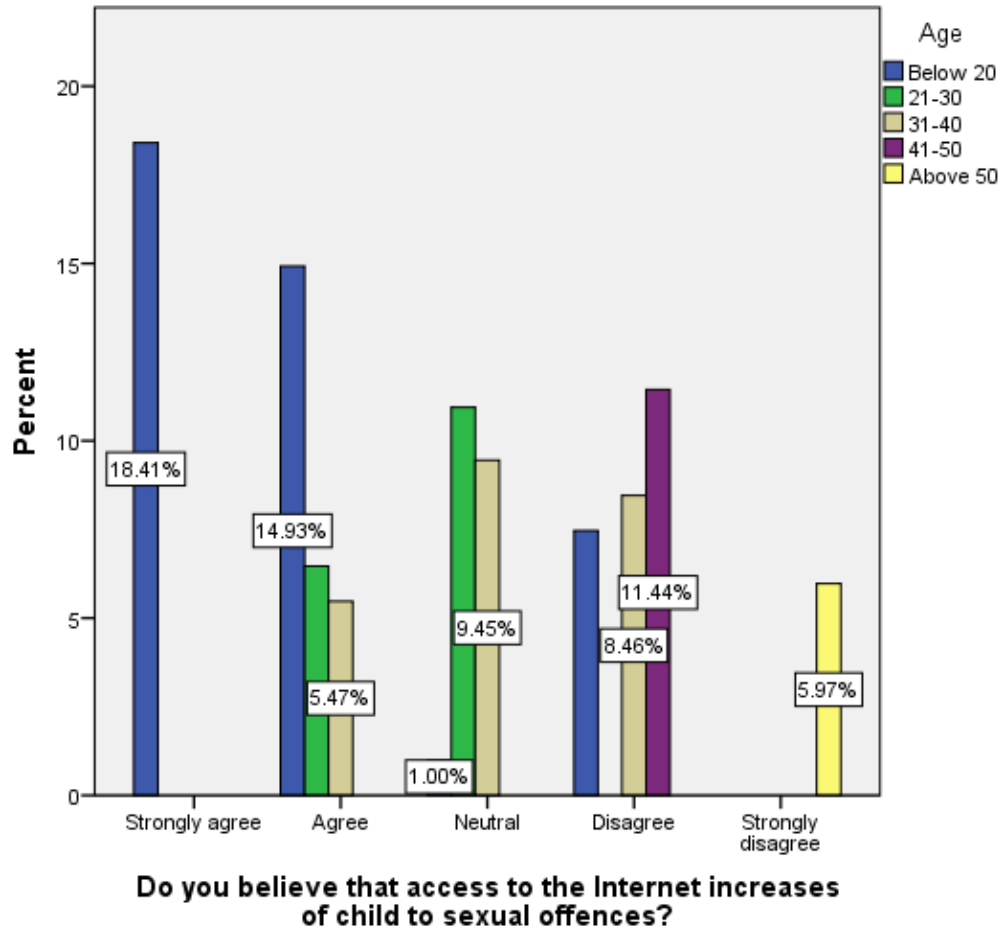
Fig 7

Online communication chiefly facilitates access to
vulnerable children and increases cases of child
sexual abuse.

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table strongly agree-18.41%, agree-15.42%;6.47%;9.45, neutral-11.44%;6.97%, disagree-2.49%;11.44% and strongly disagree-5.97%.
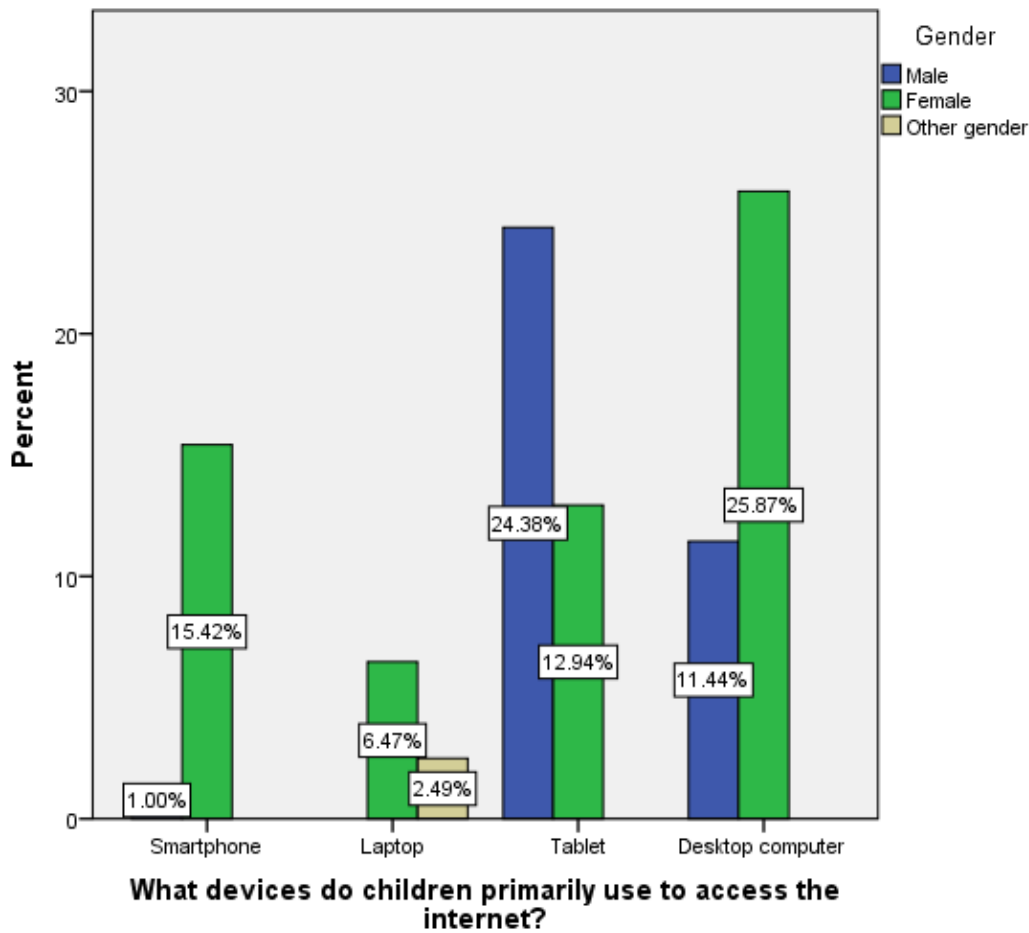
Fig 8

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table strongly agree-18.41%, agree-14.93%;5.47%, neutral-1%;9.45%, disagree-8.46%;11.44% and strongly disagree-5.97%.
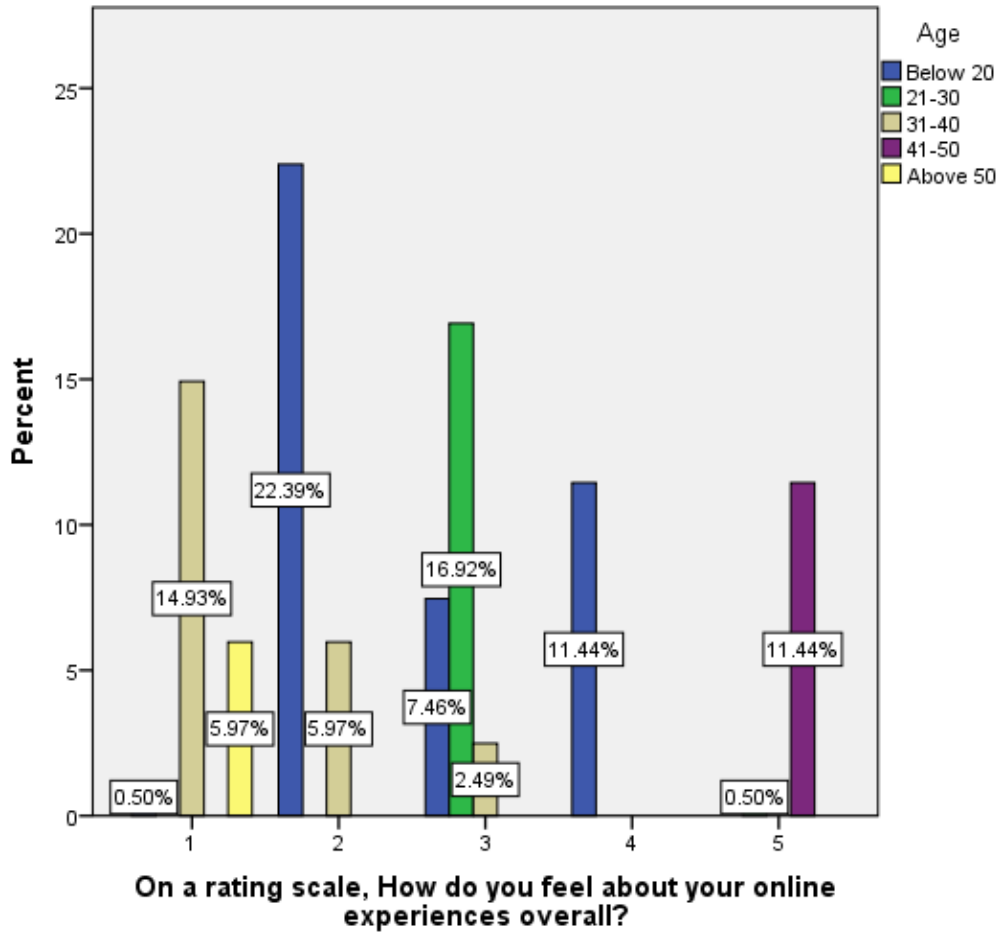
Fig 9

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table smartphone-1%;15.42%, laptop-6.47%;2.49%, tablet-24.38%, desktop computer-11.44%;25.87%.

Fig 10

LEGEND:

Totally 200 responses were collected from the general people for analysis. In this table 1-0.50%;14.93;5.97%, 2-22.39%;5.97%, 3-7.46%;16.92%,2.49%, 4-11.44 and 5-0.50%,11.44%.

RESULT:

Fig 1 status that most of the people have answered yes-51.24%, **Fig 2** status that most of the people have answered agree-31.34, **Fig 3** status that most of the people have answered agree-26.87%, **Fig 4** status that most of the people have answered tablet and desktop-37.31%, **Fig 5** status that most of the people have answered 2-28.36%, **Fig 6** status that most of the people have answered yes-33.83%;11.44%;5.97%, **Fig 7** status that most of the people have answered strongly agree-18.41%, **Fig 8** status that most of the people have answered strongly agree-18.41%, **Fig 9** status that most of the people have answered desktop computer-11.44%;25.87%, **Fig 10** status that most of the people have answered 2-22.39%;5.97%.

DISCUSSION :

Fig 1 status that most of the people have answered yes because they think parents are indeed the primary source for a child gaining internet access. Parents typically play a crucial role in introducing their children to the digital world and facilitating their access to the internet, **Fig 2** status that most of the people have answered agree because today, online communication chiefly facilitates access to vulnerable children and increases cases of child sexual abuse. The current article also aims to highlight digital platforms' role in prevailing online child sexual abuse worldwide, **Fig 3** status that most of the people have answered agree because Even after correcting for population growth, we found significant linear associations between Internet availability and the rates of both these offences against children, **Fig 4** status that most of the people have answered tablet and desktop because while tablets are favored for their portability and interactive capabilities, desktop computers provide a more comprehensive internet experience suitable for academic tasks and shared family use. Parents can choose devices based on their children's age, needs, and the desired level of supervision and control, **Fig 5** status that most of the people have answered 2 on a scale assessing overall online experiences typically indicates a very negative sentiment. It suggests that the people as had predominantly unfavourable or distressing encounters while navigating the online space. **Fig 6** status that most of the people have answered yes because they think parents are indeed the primary source for a child gaining internet access. Parents typically play a crucial role in introducing their children to the digital world and facilitating their access to the internet, **Fig 7** status that most of the people have answered agree because today, online communication chiefly facilitates access to vulnerable children and increases cases of child sexual abuse. The current article also aims to highlight digital platforms' role in prevailing online child sexual abuse worldwide, **Fig 8** status that most of the people have answered agree because Even after correcting for population growth, we found significant linear associations between Internet availability and the rates of both these offences against children, **Fig 9** status that most of the people have answered tablet and desktop because while tablets are favored for their portability and interactive capabilities, desktop computers provide a more comprehensive internet experience suitable for academic tasks and shared family use. Parents can choose devices based on their children's age, needs, and the desired level of supervision and control, **Fig 10** status that most of the people have answered 2 on a scale assessing overall online experiences typically indicates a very negative sentiment. It suggests that the people have had predominantly unfavourable or distressing encounters while navigating the online space.

LIMITATION :

This research was collected by the general public through a convenience sampling method . My research response is 201 responses. It was collected in Chennai. I prioritise ethical considerations and ensure that the study design incorporates safeguards to protect the well-being and confidentiality of participants, especially given the sensitive nature of the topic. Additionally, collaboration with experts in child psychology, criminology, and cybersecurity can enhance the study's depth and credibility.

CONCLUSION :

In conclusion, this empirical study has shed light on the intricate relationship between internet access and sexual offences against children. Our findings reveal a significant correlation between the level of internet access and the prevalence of sexual offences targeting minors. Specific online platforms and activities, often associated with increased risks, have been identified, emphasising the need for targeted interventions. Demographic and socioeconomic factors were found to play a role in influencing the dynamics of online sexual offences against children, underscoring the importance of considering these variables in preventive strategies. Additionally, our analysis of technological facilitators highlights the need for continued efforts in developing and enforcing robust online safety measures. The study has unveiled alarming patterns of online grooming, emphasising the urgency of enhancing awareness and education initiatives. The psychological impact on child victims, as explored in our research, underscores the importance of comprehensive support systems for those affected. While existing online safety measures have shown some effectiveness, our evaluation suggests the necessity for continuous improvement and adaptation to evolving online threats. Policymakers are urged to consider the evidence-based recommendations proposed in this study to strengthen legal frameworks and enhance collaborative efforts between law enforcement, online platforms, and educational institutions.

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