



## General Studies-3; Topic: Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security.

### Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV)

#### Introduction

- Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) is a growing problem affecting young women across India.
- A survey found that a staggering 60% of women experienced some form of TFSV compared to only 8% of men.

#### Factors contributing to the rise of TFSV

- The widespread availability of the internet and smartphones.
- Online anonymity allows perpetrators to hide their identities.
- Cyberbullying and peer pressure can contribute to the perpetuation of TFSV and online abuse in educational institutions.
- Lack of Digital Literacy and Awareness.
- Privacy and security issues related to the sharing of personal information online can lead to incidents of TFSV.
- Perpetrators may use online platforms to groom and exploit students, taking advantage of their trust and vulnerability.

#### Consequences

- Many survivors experience depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts.

- Loss of academic or career prospects, social isolation, and violence and ostracisation by one's own family.
- Accessing the Internet is obstructed by TFSV— the replication of a patriarchal system that disempowers women.
- Widespread violence on the Internet has serious implications for women's role in society.

## **Concerns / Challenges**

- India's IT Act of 2000 criminalises some forms of TFSV, but ambiguities in the law can deter survivors from reporting.
- India has the most Facebook users in the world, yet Meta has not optimised its platforms for an Indian context.
- Meta's safety moderation algorithms are trained mostly in American English, so abusive content in Indian languages is less likely to be detected.

## **Crucial intervention point**

- Institutions of higher education (IHEs) are another crucial intervention point for online harassment of students.
- IHEs must have Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) to investigate incidents of sexual harassment.
- Many institutions struggle to form, train, and manage these ICCs.
- Even if an ICC finds a student guilty of sexual harassment, there is no guarantee that higher authorities will hold them accountable.
- Students reported low awareness and utilisation of ICCs in their academic institutions.
- IHEs must conduct gender sensitisation programmes and empower students to engage their community.

## **Way Forward**

- With the upcoming Digital India Act, the government has an opportunity to strengthen its regulations for technology platforms and compel social media companies to take accountability.
- Schools should provide
  - anonymous helplines and reporting options,
  - mental health services from trained counsellors,
  - hosting regular workshops, safety training and discussions.
- Openly discussing TFSV without shaming or blaming survivors is an essential step.
- Implementing targeted cyberbullying prevention initiatives can help reduce instances of TFSV and online abuse.
- Involving parents and the broader community in addressing TFSV and online abuse can create a supportive environment and promote responsible online behaviour.
- Strengthening laws related to online harassment and TFSV and ensuring effective enforcement can act as a deterrent and provide justice to victims.