
E32 Dating Apps and Their Implications on Child Sexual Abuse: A Discussion of One Such Case

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Learning Overview: After attending this presentation, attendees will be aware of the various issues that arise in cases of apps and online dating profiles and child sexual abuse.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing insight into the socio-demographic profile of the perpetrators as well as the social and legal implications when dealing with child sex abuse cases.

With the advances in technology, children and young people can communicate freely and are in touch with people with whom they would otherwise not interact. Children and young people who are involved in internet-related child sexual abuse and exploitation are unlikely to tell someone that they have been harmed. They are often discovered accidentally by parents. The ease of communication, without barriers or monitoring, has enabled not only positive interactions but negative ones as well. There is also a lack of inhibition in young peoples' online behavior as a contributing factor and the dangers of misinterpretations of facts and personal information by either party.

For the scattered Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer or Questioning (LGBTQ) community, the best bet to find likeminded people is on the internet. Hence, the third most common group that is at risk are young people exploring their sexual orientation seeking appropriate relationships but not having a healthy or positive way to do so offline who go online for acceptance and find themselves caught up with perpetrators. An annual survey reveals that young males are now using online dating apps to explore their sexuality and meet local men who are willing to engage in sexual activities. The darker side is far from the rosy idea of finding a perfect match.

Section 377 was struck down by the Supreme Court of India on September 6 to make all types of consensual sex between "adults" legal. Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) 2012 protects children against all types of sexual abuse. Children of all genders are protected under this act. Under POCSO and Section 377, the adult is liable for prosecution. Under POCSO, even sending nude pictures to minors and encouraging minors to send nude pictures is a crime. Physical contact is not required.

The safeguarding of children and young people brings with it new considerations of children's rights, such as right to privacy alongside the right to protection. The present case discusses one such disturbing incidence and the various measures which can be taken to combat such issues. It also discusses the responsibility and accountability of members and of dating platforms to verify the information of its members to restrict children and juveniles from access.

Dating Apps, Child Sexual Abuse, Child Rights