

An Investigation of Online Harassment among the Young Population in Sri Lanka: Development of a National Strategy to Combat Online Harassment

Project brief and Objectives

With the increasing use of information and communication technologies and the internet in Sri Lanka, the reported incidents of online harassment too have been on the rise. The true extent and the nature of such harassment in Sri Lanka, however, are unclear due to the lack of comprehensive research in this area. Furthermore, there is lack of targeted legislation and proper policies, strategies and mechanisms for addressing online harassment in Sri Lanka. This demonstrates the importance and the necessity of investigating online harassment in Sri Lanka. Thus, this research aims to fill the above gaps by uncovering the true nature of online harassment among youth in Sri Lanka through an empirical study and by proposing a national strategy for Sri Lanka to effectively combat online harassment.

The primary objective of this study is to 'develop a national strategy for effectively addressing online harassment in Sri Lanka'. Specifically it is designed to (a) investigate the nature and extent of online harassment among young population in Sri Lanka; (b) identify the socio-cultural and economic barriers to combatting online harassment in Sri Lanka; (c) assess the adequacy of the current Sri Lankan legal framework in addressing online harassment; (d) conduct a comparative study of the Sri Lankan legal framework with the national frameworks of the UK, US, Australia, India and Singapore for identifying the lessons that Sri Lanka can learn; and (e) propose a comprehensive national strategy for addressing online harassment in Sri Lanka

Methodology

This research adopts a mix-methods methodology that consists of three phases. Phase one investigates the extent and the nature of online harassment among the young population in Sri Lanka using quantitative and qualitative data collected through an island-wide survey and interviews/focus group discussions. The target population of the research is young people between the ages of 17 to 30 studying at schools, government and private universities and vocational training institutes. Statistical tools will be used for data analysis. Phase two is about assessing the adequacy of the current Sri Lankan legal framework in addressing online harassment, and conducting a comparative study of the laws, policies and strategies in the UK, US, Australia, India and Singapore to combat online harassment. The purpose of this exercise, which will be carried out based on available literature and expert consultations, is to identify the

lessons that Sri Lanka can learn from these jurisdictions. In Phase three, the research findings of the empirical study and the comparative study will be used along with feedback from public consultations to develop a national strategy for addressing online harassment in Sri Lanka with appropriate policy recommendations being made to the government of Sri Lanka.

Expected Contribution:

- 1) Revealing the true nature, extent and effect of online harassment among young people in Sri Lanka (This is unclear at the moment due to a lack of comprehensive studies)
- 2) Assessing the adequacy of the current legal regime in Sri Lanka in relation to online harassment
- 3) Identifying the lessons that Sri Lanka can learn from the law, policies and strategies of other countries
- 4) Developing a national strategy for effectively combatting online harassment in Sri Lanka

Team Members

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