

# Correlation of Online Risks and Harm among Teenagers in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** This study explored the influence of four important factors: demographic, psychological, social and religiosity level upon two important aspects: online risks and harm among teenagers in Bangladesh. A total of 443 teenagers (203 boys and 240 girls) from 8 educational institutions in urban and rural areas participated in the survey that employed a 45-item questionnaire measuring the constructs on a 5-point Likert scale. The data were analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation tests. The results showed that age and Socio-Economic Status (SES) under demographic factors; low self-efficacy, risky behavior and practices under psychological factors; parents, teachers and peers under social factors and religiosity level are significantly correlated with online risks among teenagers in Bangladesh. In addition to that, age and Socio-Economic Status (SES) under demographic factors; low self-efficacy, emotional problems as well as risky behavior and practices under psychological factors; teachers and peers under social factors as well as religiosity level were also found significantly correlated with harm among teenagers in Bangladesh. However, gender under demographic factors was not found having any statistical significant difference regarding online risks and harm among teenagers in Bangladesh. The findings have important implications on what the authorities need to put in place to make the online environment safe for their children.

**Keywords:** Demographic Factors; Psychological Factors; Social Factors; Religiosity Level; Online Risks; Harm;

## I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of internet first became noticeable in the 1980s. The whole world is being affected since its presence. The process of learning and education has been facilitated through it in many ways. There is no doubt about it. But, one cannot deny its negative impacts as well. The people who are mostly affected by the positive and negative impacts of internet are the teenagers. Since, they are the most passionate and primitive users of internet [1]. Using internet for the sake of education, interacting with peers, entertainment, online games as well as shopping are the most productive uses of internet by teenagers found in the studies. On the contrary, the negative conducts mentioned in the literature are disturbing and abusing others, addiction to pornography as well as other bad habits [2-5].

Child abuse by internet predators is becoming very serious in developing countries, especially in Bangladesh. As a result of that, preventive measures must be introduced before the situation becomes out of control in this region [6, 7].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several factors were investigated regarding this aspect in a series of studies. At a glance, demographic factors can be mentioned among them firstly. Age and gender contributed a significant difference in the study of Livingstone, Kirwil, Ponte and Staksrud (2014) [8]. Older teenagers were found

more vulnerable to online risks in many studies [9-14]. Girls were found more victim of cyberbullying compared to boys in the study of Hasebrink, Görzig, Haddon, Kalmus and Livingstone (2011) [15]. They reported of experiencing more harm from online risks in a series of studies as well [9-14]. In the study of Haddon and Livingstone (2012), children with higher SES were found experiencing more bullying compared to ones with lower SES in France [16].

Psychological factors that were examined in this research are emotional problems, self-efficacy and risk-taking. Children suffering from psychological problems reported about experiencing more harm from online risks in the study of d'Haenens, Vandoninck and Donoso (2013) [17]. Their findings also revealed that children with higher self-efficacy were less vulnerable to online risks. They were also found taking proactive coping strategies more compared to those having lower self-efficacy [17]. Children in Denmark and Italy reported that their emotional problems compelled them engaging in excessive usage of internet. Whereas in Portugal, Belgium and Bulgaria, risky behavior and practices were reported as the most important predictors for excessive internet use in the study of Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011) [18]. Risky behavior and practices were also investigated by several researchers in their studies [9, 19].

Social factors that were examined in this research are parents, teachers and peers. The relationship of social factors with online risks and harm were investigated thoroughly in 33 countries of Europe such as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia,

Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom [16, 18, 20, 21]. In most of the cases, parental guidance and monitoring, teachers’ as well as peers’ role were found significantly related with online risks and harm among the teenagers. The more support they got from parents, teachers and peers, the more efficiently they dealt with these risks and successfully cope with the harm generated from the risks.

Influence of religiosity level upon online risks and harm among teenagers were successfully investigated in a series of studies conducted in Hong Kong and United States [22-24]. The findings revealed that teenagers having higher level of religiosity level were found less vulnerable to online risks and eventually less victimized by harm. From the review of past literature, it is expected that these factors may have significant influence upon online risks and harm among teenagers in Bangladesh.

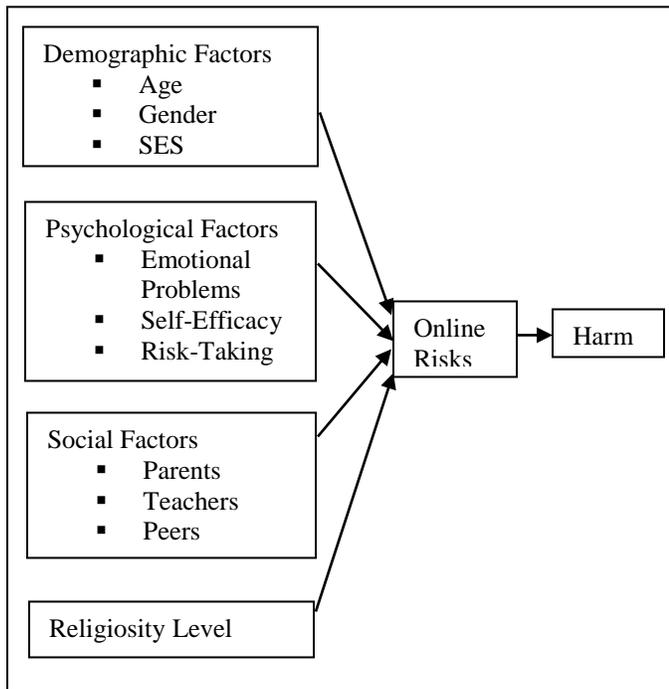


Figure 1. Research Model.

The relationship between online risks and harm (sensed by teenagers) varies by region in a complicated way [25]. Lobe, Livingstone, Ólafsson and Vodeb (2011) also reported, “Findings vary by child (for example, age, gender), country and risk type, so generalizations should be treated with caution” [18]. This fact was also supported by a series of studies [26, 27].

Internet usage on a regular basis is gradually increasing among the people in Bangladesh. Generally, internet is uninterruptedly available to the upper middle-class families. To maintain the status, norm, livelihood and lifestyle, both parents in these families are compelled to work from dawn to dusk. Consequently, their children are forced to live in their

houses alone only with their own devices. Due to lack of enough spaces and infrastructure, these urban children usually enjoy their leisure time by watching television and/or browsing internet alone [6].

Since, their addiction to internet is increasing day by day, they have started experiencing psychological problems as well as neglecting their duties. Due to excessive browsing internet, they cannot manage time for their studies, finishing homework, doing household activities etc. Even they fail to manage taking adequate food timely as well as having enough sleep properly. Consequently, their attitude is changing rapidly and miserably. Many have become isolated from their families, friends and societies cause of this [6].

The author reported several risky behavior and practices conducted by the teenagers in his studies. Feeling no hesitation about developing friendship online with the strangers, online dating, interacting with new people are mentionable among them. The researcher also mentioned that 49% of the respondents did not even care about people having false identities. In addition to that, 50% of the respondents reported of creating fake accounts to bother other people [6].

Finally, this issue has drawn so much attention to media that it has gained media coverage by the two prominent daily newspapers in Bangladesh – The Daily Star and The Daily Observer. According to their reports, around half of the teenagers in Bangladesh are facing cybercrime and they ultimately felt helpless while facing them [28, 29].

Hence, this study was designed with the aim of achieving two main objectives: (i) to explore the factors that are related to online risks among teenagers in Bangladesh and, (ii) to explore the factors that are related to harm experienced from online risks among teenagers in Bangladesh.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This section discusses the methodology the researcher employed to get the relevant results. Therefore, data collection and instrument, population and sample as well as analysis of data are presented chronologically in this section.

#### A. Data collection and instrument

The researcher conducted a survey in eight educational institutions from urban and rural areas in Bangladesh to explore the factors that are related to online risks and harm among the teenagers. Survey was administered personally by entering the classes of the institutions. Data were collected individually by the help of institutional authorities. 45-item questionnaire was used to explore the influence of demographic factors (3 items), psychological factors (12 items), social factors (12 items), religiosity level (4 items) on online risks (8 items) and harm (6 items). The items were adapted from several studies [18, 30-33]. The constructs such as psychological factors, social factors and religiosity level were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Highly True (5) to Highly Untrue (1). Whereas online risks and harm were measured by the scales ranging from Every day or almost every day (5) to Never (1) and Extremely Serious/upset/angry to Not at all Serious/upset/angry (1). Internal consistency indexes for the constructs were

measured by Cronbach’s alpha; which were found .625 for emotional problems, .734 for self-efficacy, .811 for risk-taking, .787 for parents, .864 for teachers, .808 for peers, .717 for religiosity level, .93 for online risks and last of all, .845 for harm.

**B. Population and sample**

The target population in this exploratory quantitative study are the internet using teenagers in Bangladesh aged between 13 and 18 years. It is mentionable that approximately all teenagers are familiar with cyber world in the developed countries. Hence, the teenagers who use internet are nearly same as the population of all teenagers in those countries. On the contrary, in the developing countries, for example in Bangladesh, this is not the case. In this region, all teenagers are not blessed with this facility. So, in this case, for whatever cause might be teenagers are not familiar with internet technology, teenagers who are using this (the population sampled for this study) are not same as all teenagers.

The questionnaire was distributed among 700 urban as well as rural teenagers in Bangladesh. Out of 700, 555 respondents returned the questionnaire back to the researcher. After screening out the incomplete responses and/or missing values, data from 443 participants were finally taken as usable responses. Hence, the response rate was 63.3%. 45.8% of the sample were male, while 54.2% were female. All the respondents were 13-18 years of old. For 16% respondents, their parents/guardians did not have even secondary level education, while for 33.6%, they had only secondary level education. For the rest (50.4%) of the respondents, their parents/guardians had comparatively higher level of education (minimum Bachelor or above).

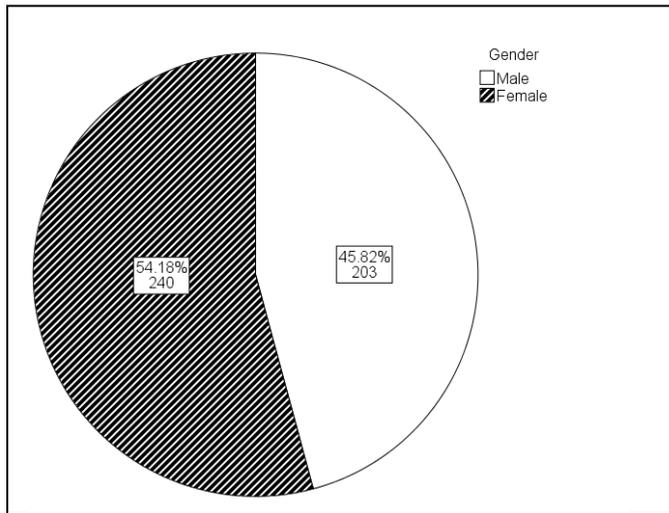


Figure 2. Pie chart of Gender demography.

**C. Data Analysis**

Three statistical procedures were employed to analyze the data. At first, descriptive statistics (percentages as well as frequency counts), pie charts and histogram were employed

with the aim of achieving research objectives. This provided the results visually and descriptively which in turn facilitated to grasp the main trends as well as patterns clearly. After that, respondents’ answers were averaged to derive a mean score each for psychological factors, social factors, religiosity level, online risks and harm. Finally, Pearson correlation procedures were conducted on these mean scores presenting online risks and harm with demographic factors (age, gender, SES), psychological factors, social factors and religiosity level to explore the relationships [34].

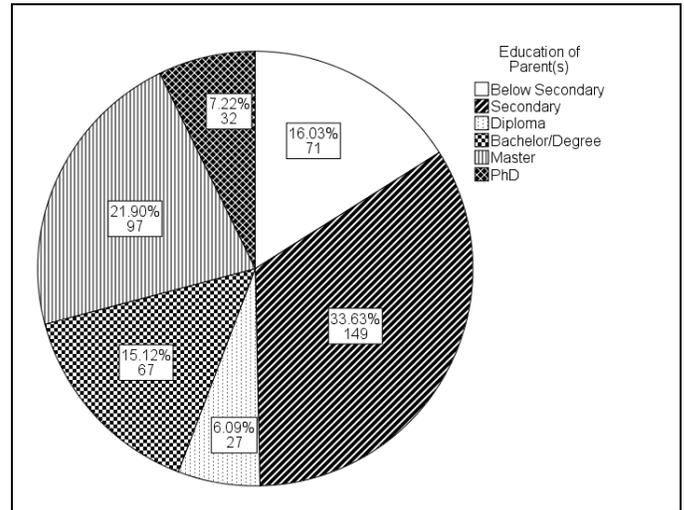


Figure 3. Pie chart of SES demography.

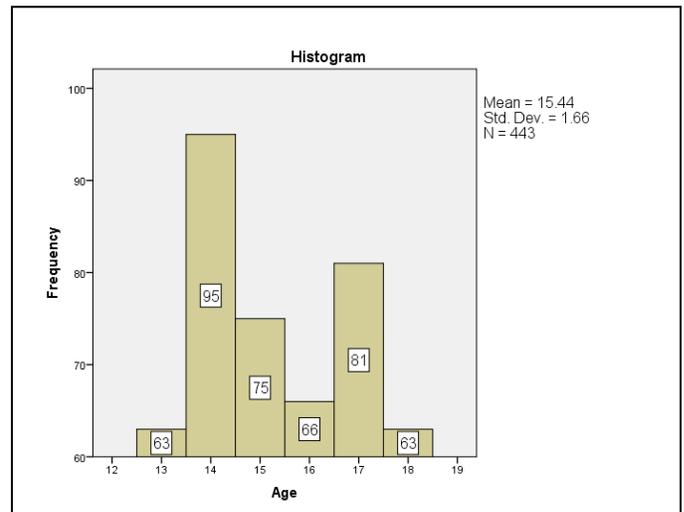


Figure 4. Histogram of teenagers’ Age demography.

**IV. RESULTS**

This section presents the findings of the study conducted by the researcher. Respondents’ agreement to psychological factors, social factors, religiosity level, online risks and harm are described at first. Consequently, the section ends with

exploring the relationships of online risks and harm with all other factors.

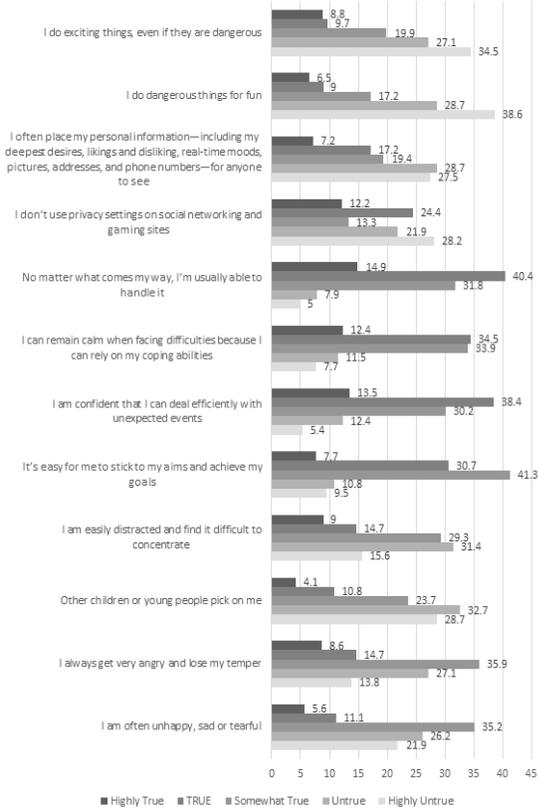


Figure 5: Respondents' Agreement to the items of Psychological Factors (%).

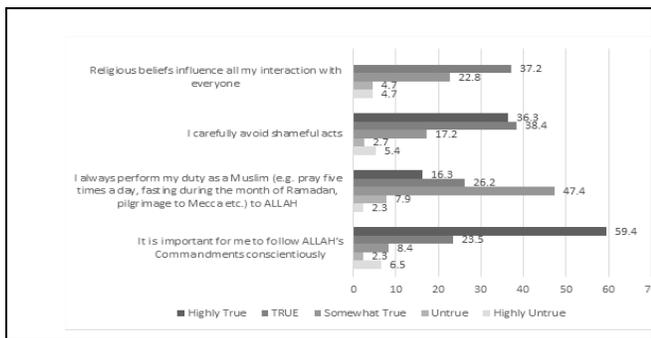


Figure 6: Respondents' Agreement to Religiosity Level Items (%).

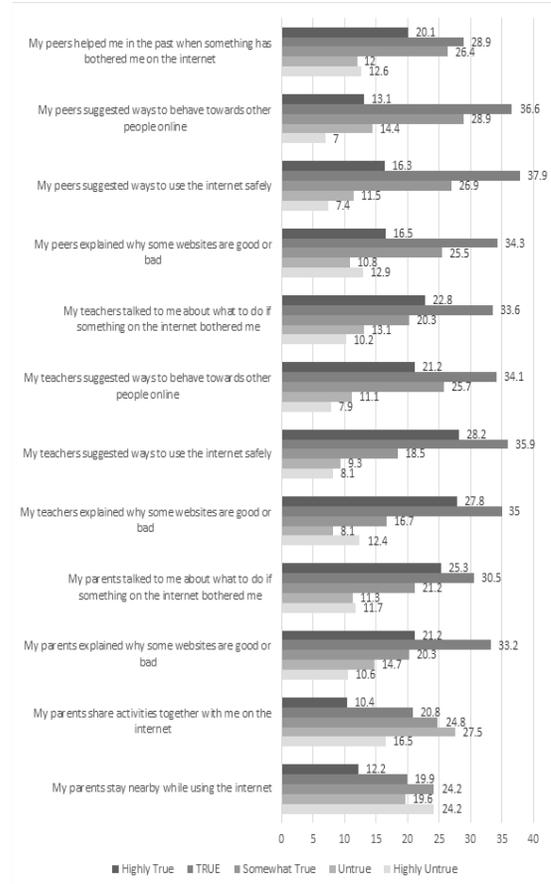


Figure 7: Respondents' Agreement to the items of Social Factors (%).

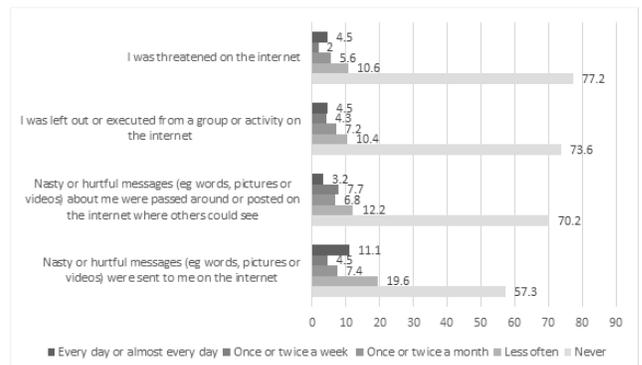


Figure 8: Respondents' Agreement (as role of victim) to Online Risk Items (%).

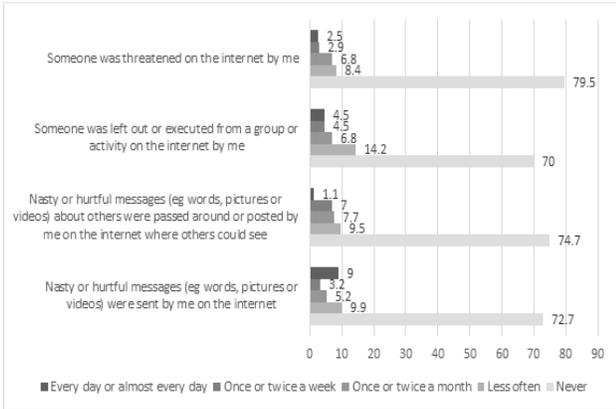


Figure 9: Respondents' Agreement (as role of predator) to Online Risk Items (%).

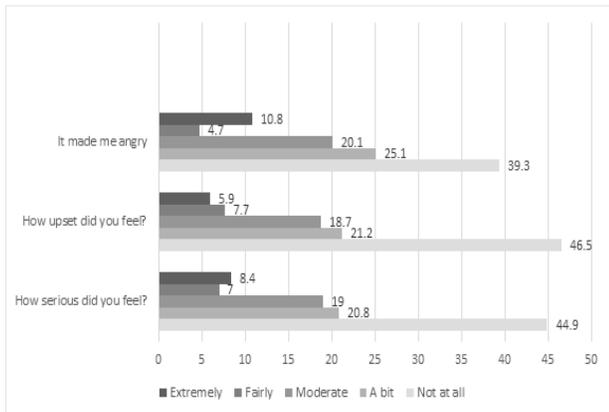


Figure 10: Respondents' Agreement to Harm (intensity) Items (%).

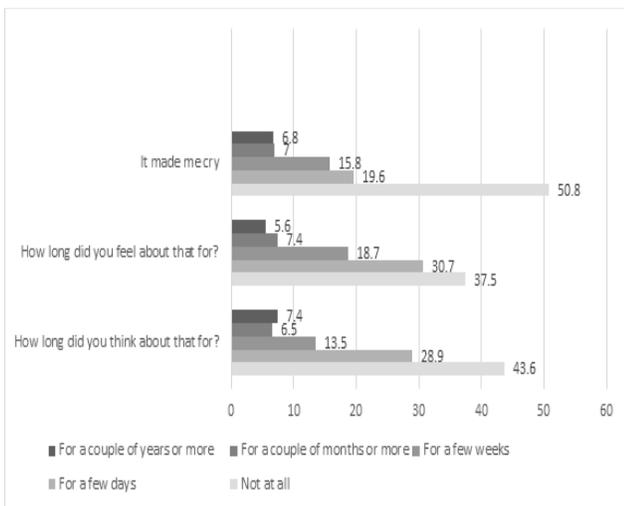


Figure 11: Respondents' Agreement to Harm (duration) Items (%).

**A. Psychological Factors**

The respondents' consent to the items of psychological factors is appeared in Fig. 5.

A greater part differs of doing exciting things, regardless of the possibility that they are unsafe (61.6%) and doing

hazardous things for entertainment only (67.3%). Still a larger part yet a lesser level of difference was watched for other kids or youngsters pick on them (61.4%). These things demonstrated a reasonable greater part of opposing. Item with a clear majority agreeing was no matter what comes their way, they are usually able to handle it (55.3%). The items that mostly received neutral response (somewhat true) were remaining adhere to their aims and accomplishing their goals (41.3%), getting exceptionally irate and losing temper (35.9%) and frequently being miserable, pitiful or sad (35.2%). The pattern of responses shows that most respondents were confident about how to deal and/or cope with their psychological problems, yet questioned of clinging to their aims and goals, getting exceptionally irate and losing temper as well as frequently being miserable, pitiful or sad.

**B. Social Factors**

Fig. 7 demonstrates the respondents' consent to the items of social factors.

All items received positive responses from the respondents, recording a percentage of agreement from 49% (receiving helps from peers in the past while something bothered them on the internet) to 64.1% (teachers showing them the way to use internet safely). Among them, two items received an overwhelmingly positive response from the respondents. They are their teachers demonstrating them the best approach to utilize web securely (64.1%) and in addition clarifying them why a few sites are great and some are awful (62.8%). The exceptions were parents share activities together with them and stay nearby while using the internet, which were supported by only 31.2% and 32.1% respectively. Around 44% couldn't help contradicting these two items. The pattern of respondents demonstrates that they are happy with the service they are receiving from their teachers while encountering internet threats. However, most doubted about their parents that they (parents) would have the capacity to help them if they (teenagers) are affected by online risks.

**C. Religiosity Level**

Fig. 6 demonstrates respondents' consent to the four religiosity level items. All items except for one got an overwhelmingly positive response from the respondents, i.e. religious beliefs influencing all their interaction with everyone (60%), carefully avoiding shameful acts (75%) and importance of following Allah's commandments conscientiously (82.9%). However, nearly half of the respondents (47.4%) responded neutral (somewhat true) about performing their religious duties properly. In general, as appeared by the outcomes, the greater part of the respondents had positive assessments about the religiosity level they are possessing by.

**D. Online Risks**

Fig. 8 and Fig. 9 demonstrate the respondents' consent to the eight online risks items. All items received an overwhelmingly negative response from the respondents, recording a percentage of disagreement from 76.9% (Nasty or hurtful messages were sent to me on the internet) to 87.9%

(Someone was threatened on the internet by me). By and large, as appeared by the outcomes, the greater part of the respondents reported negative responses about the online risks they are facing with.

**E. Harm**

Fig. 10 and Fig. 11 demonstrates the respondents' consent to the six harm items. All items received an overwhelmingly negative response from the respondents, recording a percentage of disagreement from 65% (making angry) to 72.5% (How long did you think about that for?). All around, as showed up by the results, most of the respondents were not bothered at all about the effect of harm generated from online risks.

**F. Relationship between the factors and Online Risks**

Pearson correlation procedures run to explore the relationships between the factors (Demographic, Psychological, Social and Religiosity Level) and online risks among teenagers in Bangladesh. Age and SES under the demographic factors; low self-efficacy and risky behavior and practices under the psychological factors; parents, teachers and peers under the social factors as well as religiosity level showed statistically significant relationships among them.

TABLE I. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACTORS AND ONLINE RISK

Relationship between Variables	Summary of Correlation Analysis Results between the Factors and Online Risk	
	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>P</i> value
Age and Online Risk	.206	.000*
Gender and Online Risk	-.086	.072
SES and Online Risk	.095	.045*
Emotional Problems and Online Risk	-.092	.054
Low Self Efficacy and Online Risk	.416	.000*
Risky Behaviour and Practices and Online Risk	.251	.000*
Parental guidance and monitoring and Online Risk	-.218	.000*
Teachers' advice and Online Risk	-.388	.000*
Peers' advice and Online Risk	-.351	.000*
Religiosity Level and Online Risk	-.211	.000*

\*. Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

The respondents' age was significantly and positively correlated with online risks they were facing in Bangladesh ( $r = .206, p = .000$ ). Statistically significant positive relationship also existed between SES of the respondents and the online risks they encountered ( $r = .095, p = .045$ ). However, as for online risks, no statistically significant gender differences were found ( $r = -.086, p = .072$ ). Gender differences were also found insignificant in a series of studies [25, 35].

Under psychological factors, low self-efficacy was found significantly and positively correlated with online risks ( $r = .416, p = .000$ ). Statistically significant positive relationship was also found between risky behavior and practices of the respondents and the online risks they experienced ( $r = .251, p = .000$ ). Nonetheless, as for online risks, emotional problem was found making no statistically significant differences ( $r = -.092, p = .054$ ). It was also found insignificant in another study [36].

Parental guidance and monitoring was significantly and negatively correlated with online risks that teenagers were encountering in Bangladesh ( $r = -.218, p = .000$ ). Statistically significant negative relationship also existed between teachers' advice received by the respondents and the online risks ( $r = -.388, p = .000$ ) as well as peers' advice and online risks ( $r = -.351, p = .000$ ).

Religiosity level was also found significantly and negatively correlated with online risks the teenagers are facing in Bangladesh ( $r = -.211, p = .000$ ).

**G. Relationship between the factors and Harm**

Pearson correlation procedures run to explore the relationships between the factors (Demographic, Psychological, Social and Religiosity Level) and harm teenagers in Bangladesh are experiencing from online risks. Age and SES under the demographic factors; emotional problems, low self-efficacy as well as risky behavior and practices under the psychological factors; teachers and peers under the social factors as well as religiosity level showed statistically significant relationships among them.

TABLE II. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FACTORS AND HARM

Relationship between Variables	Summary of Correlation Analysis Results between the Factors and Harm	
	Pearson's <i>r</i>	<i>P</i> value
Age and Harm	.161	.001*
Gender and Harm	.044	.353
SES and Harm	.136	.004*
Emotional Problems and Harm	.179	.000*
Low Self Efficacy and Harm	.234	.000*
Risky Behaviour and Practices and Harm	.237	.000*
Parental guidance and monitoring and Harm	-.078	.100
Teachers' advice and Harm	-.107	.024*
Peers' advice and Harm	-.127	.008*
Religiosity Level and Harm	-.117	.014*

\*. Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

The respondents' age was significantly and positively correlated with harm they were affected through online in Bangladesh ( $r = .161, p = .001$ ). Statistically significant positive relationship also existed between SES of the respondents and harm they experienced ( $r = .136, p = .004$ ).

However, as for harm, no statistically significant gender differences were found ( $r = .044, p = .353$ ). Gender differences were also found insignificant in a series of studies [25, 37].

Under psychological factors, emotional problem was found significantly and positively correlated with harm ( $r = .179, p = .000$ ). Statistically significant positive relationship was also found between low self-efficacy of the respondents and harm they experienced ( $r = .234, p = .000$ ). In addition to that, risky behavior and practices was found making statistically significant and positive relationship with harm as well ( $r = .237, p = .000$ ).

Statistically significant negative relationship existed between teachers' advice received by the respondents and harm they were affected by ( $r = -.107, p = .024$ ) as well as peers' advice and harm ( $r = -.127, p = .008$ ). However, parental guidance and monitoring was found making no statistically significant relationship with harm according to their response ( $r = -.078, p = .100$ ). It was also found insignificant in another study [38].

Lastly, religiosity level was also found significantly and negatively correlated with harm the teenagers are affected by in Bangladesh ( $r = -.117, p = .014$ ).

*H. Relationship between Online Risks and Harm*

Pearson correlation procedure was also employed to investigate the relationships between online risks and harm. A statistically significant and positive correlation was discovered between them as a result ( $r = .366, p = .000$ ).

TABLE III. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ONLINE RISK AND HARM

Relationship between Variables	Summary of Correlation Analysis Results between the Factors and Harm	
	Pearson's r	P value
Online Risks and Harm	.366	.000*

\*. Statistically significant at  $p < 0.05$

V. CONCLUSION

Under demographic factors, age and SES were found having significant impact on online risks and harm among teenagers in Bangladesh. With increase of age, more and more sophisticated technology and devices are approaching them, specially to the teenagers from higher SES family. Without proper monitoring and supervision, this may make them more vulnerable in the cyber world. Eventually, they become more affected by online harm.

Previously male and female children were treated differently by their parents in Bangladesh. Girls used to experience more restriction and control from their parents as well as their societies. But, day by day, gender differences are becoming less and less significant in this country. Girls are becoming more extrovert, more educated, more outgoing, having more freedom and so on [39, 40]. They are not left behind any more compared to boys. Both are enjoying the same level of privilege and access to the modern sophisticated technologies and devices. This might be one of

the reasons for gender issue having no significant impact on online risks and harm among the teenagers in this region.

With some exceptions and doubts, the pattern of the responses reveal that most teenagers were self-confident about dealing or coping with their psychological issues. Nonetheless, it is crucial to pay special attention to children with low self-efficacy and psychological difficulties in order to overcome their psychological problems and develop self-esteem.

Though the respondents were satisfied with their teachers' as well as peers' service while they were affected online, a greater part of them were doubted about their parental guidance and monitoring. This lack of satisfaction and confidence was echoed in the responses towards some items in the questionnaire. It is advisable to the parents to spend more time with their children and take proper care of them if they get affected online rather than focusing only on their career.

Finally, religiosity level of the respondents had significant impact on their approach towards other people online. Although it is a critical task without a doubt in this advanced secularized world, religious studies ought to be incorporated into expansion to typical educational curriculum so all understudies can profit by it.

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