

## **Profiling a Cyber Criminal**

**Rashmi Saroha**

*Department of Psychology, University of Delhi, New Delhi, India.*

### **Abstract**

Cyber Crime is a disturbing new trend emerging on the scene alongside the massive proliferation of cyber use. The advent of computers facilitated a number of human functions and necessities. Internet surfaced as a magical instrument with a wide reach not even restricted by the international borders. The possibility of sharing data and information on such a colossal scale provided a new modus operandi to the criminals, broadly referred to as cyber crime. This was a new approach of manifesting criminal tendencies on a large scale without even using a weapon. Cyber crime impacts millions of people at any given time. It is extremely dangerous owing to the swiftness of its line of action as well as its ability to harm enormous proportions of users simultaneously. The irony of this trend is that the criminal does not even have to use his muscle power or even leave his house to execute felonious plans. The sheer magnitude of its impact makes it imperative for the psychologists and other social scientists to identify the key personality characteristics of cyber criminals and to outline a behavioural profile from the same. The present paper makes an effort to do the same. A sample of 20 students with academic background in social sciences was chosen and extensively interviewed by the researcher through unstructured/ open-ended interview format. The aim was to identify common themes emergent in their responses with respect to the personality characteristics of cyber criminals. They were probed by the researcher to tap into their beliefs about what identifiable traits conjure up a cyber criminal. Different viewpoints were collated into a number of common themes which were then used to arrive at the behavioural profile of a cyber criminal.

**Keyword:** Cyber Crime; Criminality; Behavioural Profile; Personality Traits.

## 1. Introduction

Internet has been the revolutionary invention of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It successfully shrunk the world into a much smaller place by bringing the citizens and nations closer together in terms of enhanced communication and prompt exchange of ideas and information. Not only this, the internet has been the single most effectual device in spreading its existence without being restricted even by the international boundaries. Keeping aside its advantages, internet has also raised numerous security concerns which found place in highest levels of official and governmental discourses. Numerous untowardly instances like identity thefts, online frauds, breach of privacy, copyright infringement, financial theft, and cyber stalking accounted for a lack of trust among people. These instances forced the security agencies worldwide to adopt a defensive stance towards unchecked internet usage. This rampant use also provided a broad platform of opportunities for those with unkind motives. Internet began to be exploited by criminals to carry out a number of crimes which collectively came to be called as Cyber Crimes or Computer Crimes. Dr. Debarati Halder and Dr. K. Jaishankar (2011) defines Cybercrimes as: "Offences that are committed against individuals or groups of individuals with a criminal motive to intentionally harm the reputation of the victim or cause physical or mental harm to the victim directly or indirectly, using modern telecommunication networks such as Internet (Chat rooms, emails, notice boards and groups) and mobile phones (SMS/MMS)". The official website of the Cyber Crime Investigation Cell of Mumbai Criminal Investigation Department calls it an 'invisible crime'. As this type of crime is increasing, professional help of psychologists, sociologists and criminologists is being sought to construct reliable profiles of hackers and other cyber criminals so as to boost the defensive strategies. The present study has made an effort to profile the traits of cyber criminals from the viewpoint of students with academic background in social sciences.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Sample

For the present study, a total of 20 participants were chosen from Delhi and NCR. They were students with academic background in Social Sciences, primarily in Psychology and Sociology. The age range of the participants was from 18 to 25 years. Care was taken to include balanced number of participants from both genders. The respondents chosen for the research were the ones who had at least some understanding and appreciation of cyber crime. They were active cyber users, and hence capable of contributing as per the purpose of this research.

### 2.2 Procedure

The present research aimed at tapping the viewpoints of students of Social Sciences (Psychology and Sociology) for constructing a profile of cyber criminals. For doing so, the participants were extensively interviewed by the researcher through the open-ended interview format. They were specifically asked to identify those characteristics which, in their opinion, were inherent in cyber criminals and which might be understood as

precursors of criminal behaviour. The interviews were mostly unstructured to facilitate free flow of information sharing and to keep open the option of deeper probing as and when required by the researcher. They were asked to make use of their academic knowledge as well as personal experience to come up with the characteristics of cyber criminals. After all the participants were interviewed, their responses were collated by the researcher and the common themes emerging from all the responses were identified. These were then classified under common heads, and finally a profile was constructed.

### 3. Results

A profile is a description of a criminal’s characteristics made without knowing the identity of the criminal. It is a psychological assessment of defined characteristics that are likely to be common in a particular kind of criminals. It is especially useful in narrowing down the field of suspects. The combined analysis of the responses enabled the researcher to infer the general pattern in the responses of the participants. The responses were first clubbed together so as to identify common themes under which the characteristics stated by the respondents could be classified. Then on, the themes which emerged were suitably titled as the major categories contributing to the final profile. Thus, all the characteristics stated by the respondents were classified under four heads:

- i. **Technical know-how:** Factors associated with the degree of technical knowledge of software and snooping devices which equips them to carry out a cyber crime
- ii. **Personal Traits:** Traits inherent within the person psychological make-up of an individual which predispose them to take up criminal activities
- iii. **Social Characteristics:** Factors dealing with the influence of their social settings in shaping up a criminal mind
- iv. **Motivating Factors:** Various factors which motivate them to become cyber criminals

The final profile has been tabulated below:

**Result Table 1:** Showing the profile of a Cyber Criminal under four major heads.

<b>TECHNICAL KNOW-HOW</b>	<b>PERSONAL TRAITS</b>	<b>SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>Motivating Factors</b>
Sharp (intelligent)	Impatient	Anti-establishment	Monetary Gain
Focussed	Determined	Lack Social skills	Greed (easy, quick money)
Well-trained	Insensitive	Inferiority complex	Political beliefs
Strategic planners	Secretive	Low self-worth	Emotions
Bully	Aggressive	Marginalised	Disregard for law
Resourceful	Strong-willed	Radical	Intolerance
Goal oriented	Passionate	Mass-destruction	Thrill-seeking

Well-networked	Insensitive	Misguided	Risk tolerance
Well-organized	Chaotic state of mind	Brain-washed	Manipulate others
Well trained	Inhuman Psyche	Anti-social	Need to Control others
Creative	Vengeful	Anti-state	Concealed existence
Smart	Coercive	Unlawful	Political support
Skilful	Coward	Rebellious	Religious fundamentalism
Opportunists	Selfish	Reinforcement available	Experimentation
	Immoral/ Unethical	Intolerance to diversity of opinion	No fear of punishment
	Risk-taker	Need to outsmart others	Curiosity
	Loner	Rationalization	Revenge
	Incited	Social dissatisfaction	Anger
	Gullible	Broken homes/families	Lust
	Conviction in Violence	Socially inept	Plain boredom
	Emotional	Insufficient social support	Enhancing self-worth
	Control freak		
	Psychologically Deviant		
	Psychiatric conditions		
	Identity crisis		

#### 4. Implications

Although the field of profiling cyber criminals is still in its nascent phase, it is nevertheless looking up and growing with leaps and bounds. The present study is a small step in the direction of its complete emergence. Since this research has included the opinion of only students and not the professionals, its use is limited to research purposes. It is an effort to provide a base for further studies. Profiling a cyber criminal is just the first step in the much longer and harder process of finally apprehending the wrong-doers. Irrespective of this, it is an important step. It will help the authorities in narrowing down their search, which allows them to focus the other available resources in intensive search activities. While technology remains the main defence against cyber attacks, a better understanding of the psychological, criminological, and sociological aspects of the bigger picture can supplement the protective efforts and catch a criminal before he goes the distance.

## **References**

- [1] A. K. Shrivastav & Dr. E. (2013), ICT Penetration and Cybercrime in India: A Review, *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering* A. Sen (2013), Linking Cyber Crime to the Social Media: A Case Study of Victims in Kolkata, *Scientific Committee of Reviewers*, 378.
- [2] D. Halder, & K. Jaishankar (2011), *Cyber crime and the victimization of women: laws, rights and regulations*, Information Science Reference.

