Syllabus subtopic: Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the survey and its findings: limitations and recommendations

News: In an attempt to assess the pattern of Internet use and online safety, an NGO — Child Rights and You (CRY) — conducted a survey in collaboration with Forum for Learning and Action with Innovation and Rigour (FLAIR).

About the survey

It was conducted among 630 adolescents aged between 13-18 years from eight schools in Delhi-NCR. The study involved students filling up a test form and answering a questionnaire.

Key findings of the study

• One in every three adolescents exposed to the Internet are victims of cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse and nearly half of the users display some level of addiction.

• Adolescents had easy access to the Internet with 93% of them using it in their homes. There was a clear gender disparity in access to personal devices with 60% boys and 40% girls owning a device.

• Thirty percent of adolescents had a negative experience online. When broken down across different categories of abuse, it is found that 10% of adolescents experienced cyberbullying, 10% had either their profile misused or account hacked and 23% had seen a morphed image or video online. Only half of these instances were reported by the teenagers.

• There was also a lack of awareness among the students on the Internet safety guidelines developed by the NCERT with only 30% respondents being familiar with them. Nearly 48% of students were found to be either
mildly or moderately addicted to the Internet, while 1% were found to be severely addicted. For this exercise, the students were made to take an Internet Addiction Test.

Is internet accessibility really harmful?

- Access to the Internet is not all harmful as 40% of the respondents said they used it to take help in their studies such as through online search for words or information, tutorials and access to their school’s online education programme.

- The same ratio of children also used the Internet for extra-curricular activities such as for music, painting or sports. As many as 50% of students used the Internet for both studies as well as extra-curricular activities.

Limitation of the study

One of the limitations of the study is that it was not able to record instances of sexual abuse in cyberspace as it was conducted in a controlled environment.

Recommendations made in the study

- The study recommends familiarity with Internet safety rules and the skill to use them for reporting to be built into the school curriculum as well as the need to modify the Central government’s child protection scheme to build infrastructure to deal with cybercrimes against children.

- It also presses for schools to recognise an increase in online crimes against children and develop strategies on prevention, reporting and redressal.