

# Youth Crime in The Age of Digital Influence and Peer Pressure

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## Abstract:

Juvenile delinquency has become a prominent societal issue in the modern digital age, when technical progress, social media engagement, and peer influence significantly impact behaviour. The increased availability of digital platforms has altered conventional teenage contact patterns, heightening exposure to illicit material, cyber delinquency, and peerinfluenced illegal acts. This research investigates the correlation between digital impact, peer pressure, and juvenile engagement in illegal behaviours. The study employs a quantitative methodology using survey techniques to examine behavioural trends among individuals aged 15 to 25 years. The results demonstrate that excessive social media exposure, online peer approval, and the digital normalisation of deviant behaviour substantially contribute to teenage criminality. The research underscores the need for enhanced digital literacy initiatives, parental oversight, and proactive legislative interventions to reduce juvenile delinquency in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Youth Crime, Digital Influence, Peer Pressure, Social Media Impact, Cyber Delinquency, Juvenile Behaviour, Online Exposure, Digital Environment.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 OVERVIEW

In recent years, social media has become an integral aspect of everyday life for adolescents. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat have gone beyond mere entertainment, influencing the cognitive processes, interactions, and worldviews of children and adolescents. Although these platforms provide chances for connection and self-expression, worries over their psychological impacts, especially those associated with hazardous and destructive behaviours, are increasing. Criminal psychology investigates the formation of cognitive processes that result in unlawful or detrimental conduct. As digital environments gain prominence, academics have begun an examination of whether social media influences young people's perceptions of crime, impulse regulation, and moral decision-making. Certain research has linked media exposure with violence, impulsivity, and less empathy. Nevertheless, most of the research has concentrated on minors, neglecting to differentiate between children and adolescents as distinct developmental phases. This research seeks to examine the impact of social media on criminal psychology in children and adolescents, emphasising the variations in ideas and actions.

To comprehend the psychological impacts of social media on adolescents, it is essential to define two terms: criminal psychology and social media use. These notions provide the basis for examining how the internet influences the values of youth. Criminal psychology is the study of the cognitive processes and thinking patterns of offenders. It relies on impulse control, comprehension of moral principles, and responses to danger in an individual. This discipline primarily examines the genesis of criminal thoughts or actions in youth and their evolution throughout time. These elements exhibit similarities and differences between children, who are in the developmental stage of acquiring ideas, and teens, who are in the phase of applying them to real-life situations. Adolescent social media use pertains to the way teens and children engage with internet platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This transcends mere amusement, as technology has become essential in their everyday communication, identity development,

and comprehension of society. Kuss and Griffiths assert that adolescents often exhibit a profound attachment to their online existence, use social media for validation, social acceptance, and self-expression. The authors indicate that excessive use may result in concerns such as distorted life values, mental health disorders, and an overwhelming need for validation. Young users often allocate many hours daily to internet activities, such as consuming information, viewing videos, or engaging in communication. Their reasons are multifaceted: they want connection, wish to articulate their views, and need validation. These platforms may affect their self-perception and societal evaluation, sometimes in harsh ways. Consequently, comprehending the characteristics of teenage social media utilisation is crucial for investigating the genesis of criminal ideation. By elucidating these two fundamental principles, individuals may effectively assess the influence of social media on the psychological development of youth and its contribution to illicit behaviours.

### **1.1.1 Effects of Social Media on the Criminal Psychology of Children**

Childhood is a critical phase in psychological development. During this phase, children are cultivating emotional regulation, comprehending norms, and establishing social connections. Their brains have begun to develop, particularly in areas associated with impulse regulation, empathy, and decision-making. Consequently, youngsters exhibit heightened sensitivity to internet information and are more susceptible to influence, which contributes to the development of criminal psychology. Social media profoundly impacts children's societal interactions, rule recognition, and behavioural management. Certain experts have raised concerns on the potential impact of extensive exposure to internet content, particularly violent or impulsive material, on the criminal psychology of youngsters. This research will elucidate the impact of social media on the behaviour of young children, focusing on impulsivity, aggressiveness, and the early onset of conduct problems. The research is predicated on four main studies, including extensive samples from the United States and China, investigating the correlation between screen time, media violence, and the emergence of criminal impulses.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Khostarina, Tina & Nasution, Nur & Safitri, Chayrina (2025).** Social media has become an integral aspect of everyday life, particularly among adolescents. Social media has significant possibilities for facilitating learning. With access to diverse educational materials. To investigate the impact of social media use and peer pressure on cybercrime, mediated by emotional intelligence and parental oversight. This research used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology to investigate the correlation among social media usage, peer influence, cybercriminal conduct in teenagers, emotional intelligence, and parental oversight. This research concludes that excessive social media use and peer pressure elevate the likelihood of cybercriminal activity in teenagers, with inadequate emotional intelligence as the primary catalyst. Emotional intelligence serves as a crucial mediator in mitigating the adverse effects of social media, while parental oversight may diminish the impact of peer pressure. The results underscore the need for cooperation among families, educational institutions, and governmental bodies in formulating educational initiatives that focus on emotional regulation and responsible social media use to deter teenage engagement in illicit online activities.

**Chen, Yu (2025)** This article examines the influence of social media on juvenile delinquency and strategies to enhance the online safeguarding of adolescents from several viewpoints. Adolescents are often swayed by their contemporaries and digital trends. Unrestricted comments on social media, the quest for likes and followers, and exposure to cyberbullying may push individuals to emulate detrimental habits or make unwise decisions, perhaps distorting their beliefs and leading to criminal conduct. This research, based on social learning theory, general strain theory, and the de-individuation effect, investigates how teenagers are prompted to replicate hazardous tasks, cope with stress via deviant behaviours, and engage in cyberbullying due to reduced personal responsibility. Empirical data, such as the coma challenge tragedy, social media-induced violent occurrences, and instances of cyberbullying, underscores the

significant psychological and legal consequences of these practices. Preventive actions may be implemented at the familial, educational, technological, legal, and societal levels to provide a pleasant online environment for adolescents, therefore mitigating these hazards.

**Cai, Yuyin (2024)** This study project investigates the impact of social media on adolescent criminal behaviour. The proliferation and rapid advancement of the Internet and social media have profoundly influenced the lives, social dynamics, and psychological conditions of teenagers. This study project investigates the possible impact of social media on teenage behaviour from a multidisciplinary viewpoint, including psychology, sociology, and communication. The research technique included an extensive literature review and a case study, used to compile and analyse a significant body of data about the correlation between social media usage and adolescent delinquency. Social media may contribute to youth misbehaviour while also providing a platform for information sharing, emotional support, and social engagement. The spread of disinformation, the incidence of cyberbullying, and the frequency of privacy violations on social media might adversely impact adolescents, consequently increasing their vulnerability to participating in delinquent behaviour. This article presents guidelines for the efficient administration of social media platforms within a corporate framework, aimed at avoiding and mitigating juvenile delinquency.

**Chaudhary, Neha & Jatal, Manika (2024)** This study aims to investigate teenagers' perceptions and attitudes regarding smoking, focusing on the variables that influence their perspectives and behaviours. This research collected data via questionnaires administered to teenagers aged 10 to 20, from diverse backgrounds. The findings reveal complex interactions among social, psychological, and environmental elements that influence teenage perceptions. Peer influence, media portrayal, and family perspectives arise as significant determinants. The study emphasises the need of targeted educational initiatives and policies designed to debunk misconceptions to decrease smoking initiation rates during this era. This section discusses recommendations for further research and interventions that would provide the basis for comprehensive anti-smoking initiatives pertinent to this very susceptible age group.

**Tc, Jincy & .A, Enoch (2022)** The digital era is transforming life, characterised by speed, creativity, and a critical condition. This conceptual research investigates cybercrime and safety concerns throughout adolescence. Adolescence is characterised by fervour, resulting in the unreserved adoption of new technology, often disregarding its potential dangers. This research used secondary data to examine cyber risks and safety among teenagers in terms of promotion, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation. This research sought to educate teenagers and society on the significance of responsible social media use to prevent cybercrime. It cultivates a new generation equipped with the discernment to use breakthrough technologies for global advancement.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the impact of digital influence and peer pressure on youth involvement in criminal and risky behaviours. The design helped in understanding behavioural patterns and analysing the relationship between social media exposure, peer influence, and youth crime.

#### **3.2 Area of Study**

The study was conducted in the city of combined cities of Hanamakonda and Warangal Districts of Telangana state, focusing on urban youth where access to digital technologies, smartphones, and social media platforms is widespread. Telangana was selected due to its rapid digital growth, increasing internet penetration, and active youth participation in online platforms.

#### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The target population comprised young individuals aged 15–25 years residing in city of combined cities of Hanamakonda and Warangal Districts of Telangana state, as this age group is highly active on digital platforms and more susceptible to peer influence.

Coming to the population in that age group, there is no direct published official census. We have 2011 census population records giving the number of general population of 6,15,998 for Warangal City and 7,53,438 for the urban agglomeration for the undivided erstwhile Warangal District. With this a reasonable estimate has been made from the available demographic data as follows:

The demographic age distribution dataset for Warangal Urban:

- Age group 15-19: 1,11,654
- Age group 20-24: 1,05,658

Accordingly, the total Age group is coming to 2,17,312 people. Since our sample consisting age group 15-25, adding roughly one year (19-25 years of age instead of 19-24 years of age) coming to a rough estimate of 2,35,000 - 2,40,000 people which is about 28-31% of the Urban population in the Warangal Urban in undivided erstwhile Warangal District.

### **3.4 Sampling Design**

- Sampling Method: Systematic Random Sampling method is employed to choose 15-25 years of age group young individuals from the general population. Sample Size: 150 respondents.
- The total number of 150 respondents has been chosen based on Cochran's estimated Sample size approach. According to this approach, at 95% confidence level, with an acceptable margin of error of approximately 8%, a minimum sample has been chosen, considering the time, cost and accessibility constraints while providing reliable estimates and maintaining practical feasibility.

● Selection Criteria: Youth actively using social media and digital platforms.

### **3.5 Sources of Data**

The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were gathered from books, journals, reports, websites, and previous research studies related to youth crime and digital influence.

### **3.6 Research Instrument**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect information regarding social media usage, peer pressure, exposure to online risky content, parental supervision, legal awareness, and involvement in risky or criminal activities.

### **3.7 Data Collection Method**

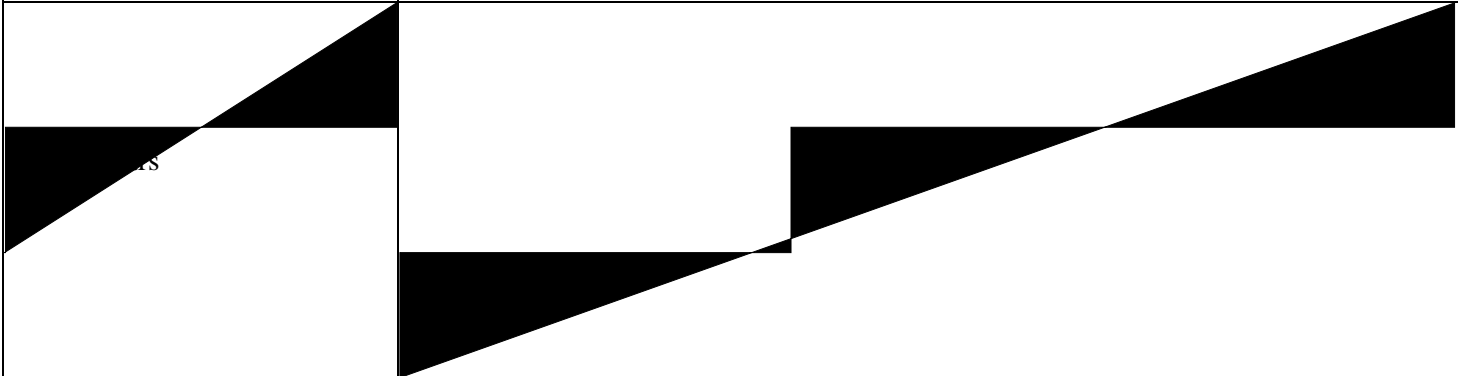
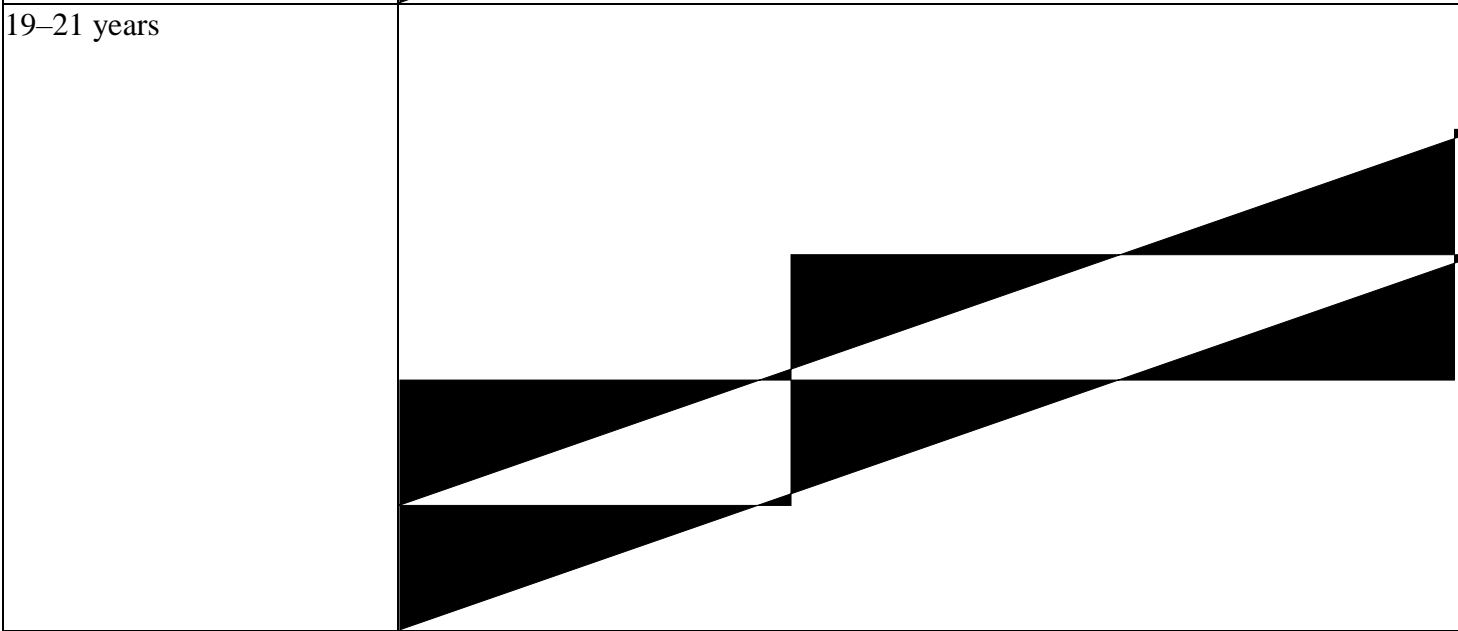
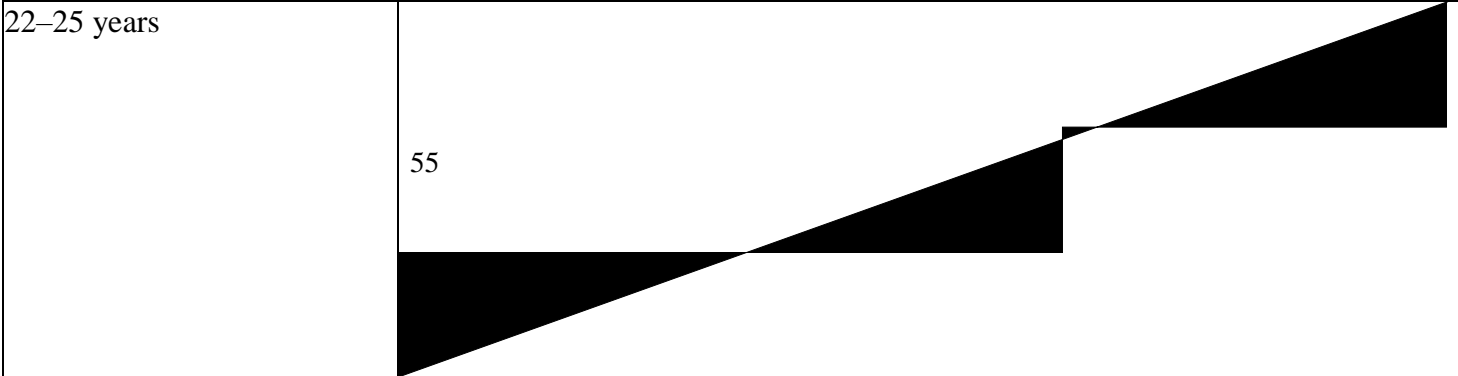
Data were collected directly from respondents through questionnaire surveys. Participation was voluntary, and confidentiality of responses was maintained.

### **3.8 Data Analysis Technique**

The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analysed using simple statistical tools such as frequency distribution and percentage analysis. The findings were presented in tables for interpretation and discussion.

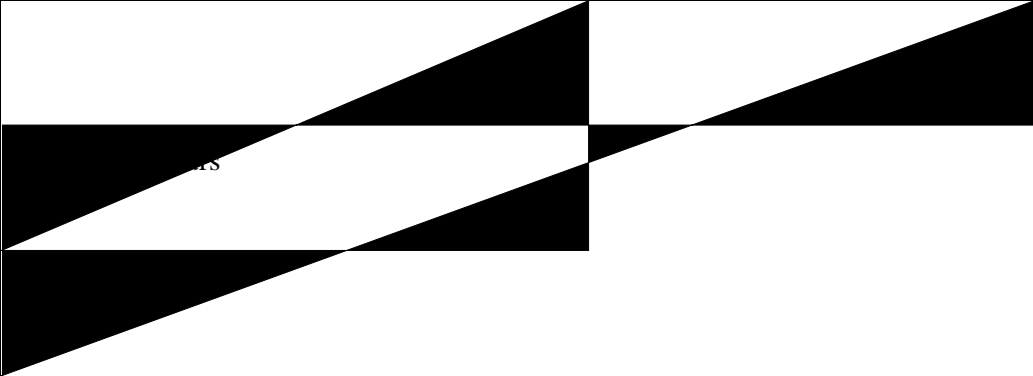
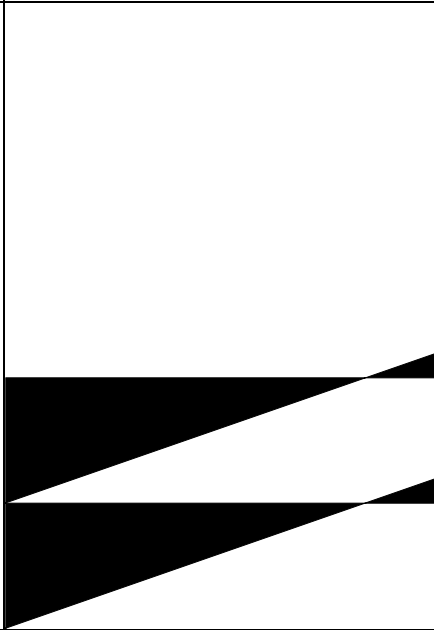
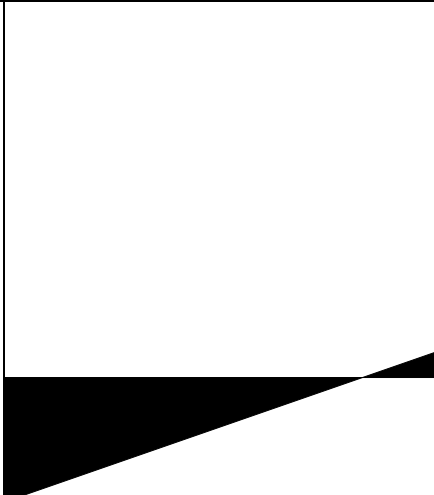
**IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

**Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents**

Age Group	Number of Respondents
18-21 years	
19-21 years	
22-25 years	
<b>Total</b>	150

Most respondents are aged 19–25 years, assuming that young people are more susceptible to digital platforms and peer influence, making them an important demographic for analysing adolescent crime trends.

**Table 2: Daily Social Media Usage**

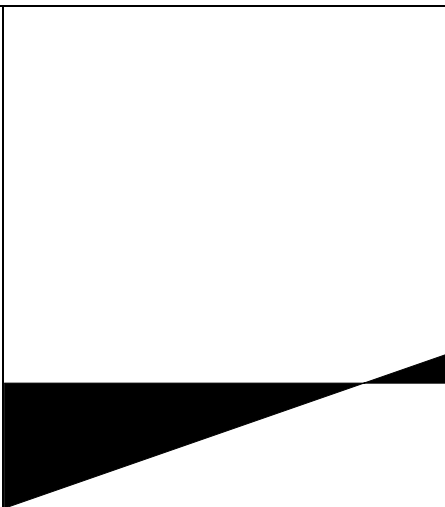
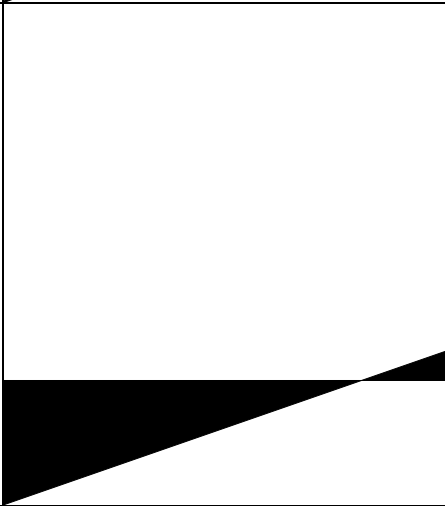

Time Spent Online	Respondents
	20
2–4 hours	
4–6 hours	

More than 6 hours	35
<b>Total</b>	150

A significant percentage of adolescents engage in over four hours of daily social media use, indicating substantial digital exposure that may affect behavioural patterns and heighten susceptibility to online criminal behaviours.

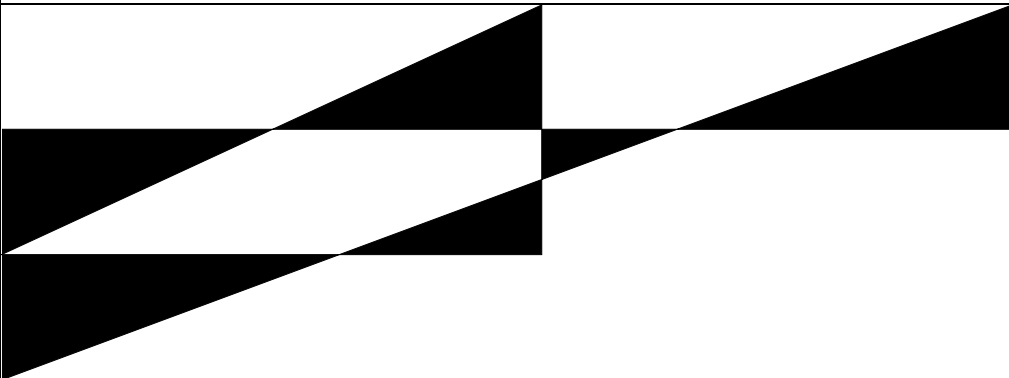
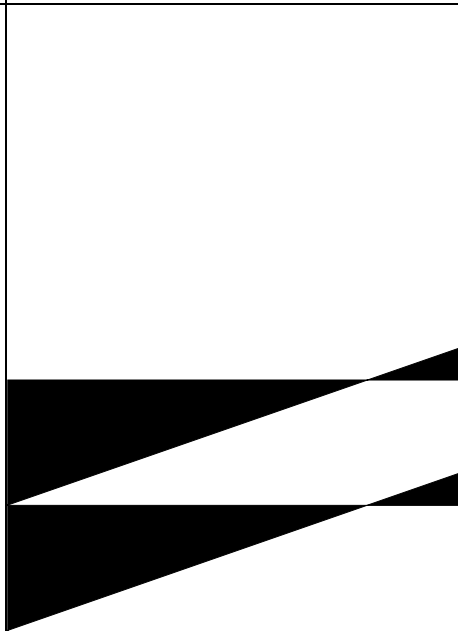
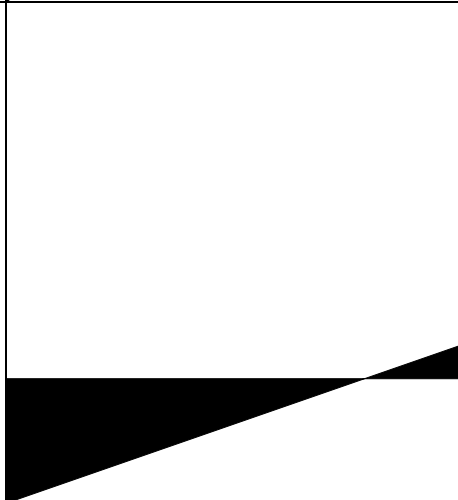
**Table 3: Influence of Peer Pressure on Behaviour**

Response	Respondents
	60
Agree	

Neutral	
Disagree	
Strongly Disagree	
<b>Total</b>	150

Seventy per cent of respondents when asked whether Peer-pressure is seen as a significant factor in affecting their actions, underscoring its substantial impact on teenage behaviour and possible criminal engagement.

**Table 4: Exposure to Online Content containing porn, violence and Risky Behaviours**

Exposure Level	Respondents
	65
Occasionally	
Rarely	

Never	10
<b>Total</b>	150

The majority of respondents 65 (43.3%) are being exposed frequently to harmful content suggesting that this kind of behavior is not uncommon among the sample respondents.

33.3% respondents indicated an Occasional exposure. It is inferred that more than (76.6% ) exposed either frequently or occasionally.

Coming to rare exposure, only (16.7%) respondents reported that they rarely view such content. There is very small proportion (6.7%) that they never had such exposure to such content.

The findings here suggest that high exposure to harmful content such as porn, violence, risky behavioural content online is very common among young population. This can be attributed to the increased use of social media, online gaming platforms, and entertainment applications.

**Key Findings:**

1. **High Prevalence of Exposure:** Out of every Ten respondents nearly Eight are exposed (76.6% ) to harmful online content, though for some it may be occasional. There is High Prevalence of exposure is seen.
2. **Domination of Frequent Exposure:** the highest percentage respondents are falling under the category “Frequently” indicates regular exposure to the potentially harmful content online
3. **No or less protection from Exposure:** There is a very small percentage of respondents 6.7% who were never exposed to such content, indicating ubiquitous availability of harmful content online without any restrictions to larger populations. This also suggest how difficult it is in today’s digital media environment.
4. **Implications on behaviour:** constant exposure may result in behavioural modification. Regular exposure to such content may lead to attitudinal change, influencing perceptions. Behavioural changes like aggression, risk-taking takes place. Further there will be a significant change in preferring social relationships as well. People chose the relationships based on the attitudinal preferences that are motivated and influenced by digital exposures.
5. **Need for Digital Literacy and Parental Guidance:** there is a great need to impart Digital literacy to youth so that they will be well aware of the consequences of the harmful digital content online. In most of the cases, a onetime exposure may lead to forever affair as hackers, online blackmailers drag the unprotected young people into a web of crime. Parental Guidance is the most important factor in dealing with the unprotected exposure. Parents must be well aware and should have healthy control on the online time of the children. However, as most of the young people falling in the age group of 19-25, they exercise lot of individuality and prefer personal space over shared time with parents. In such cases, parental guidance plays a vital role in averting impending danger.
6. **Institutional control:** In controlling human behaviour, social institutions play an indispensable role. Starting from Family to State control, proper socialization, internalization of values, punishment

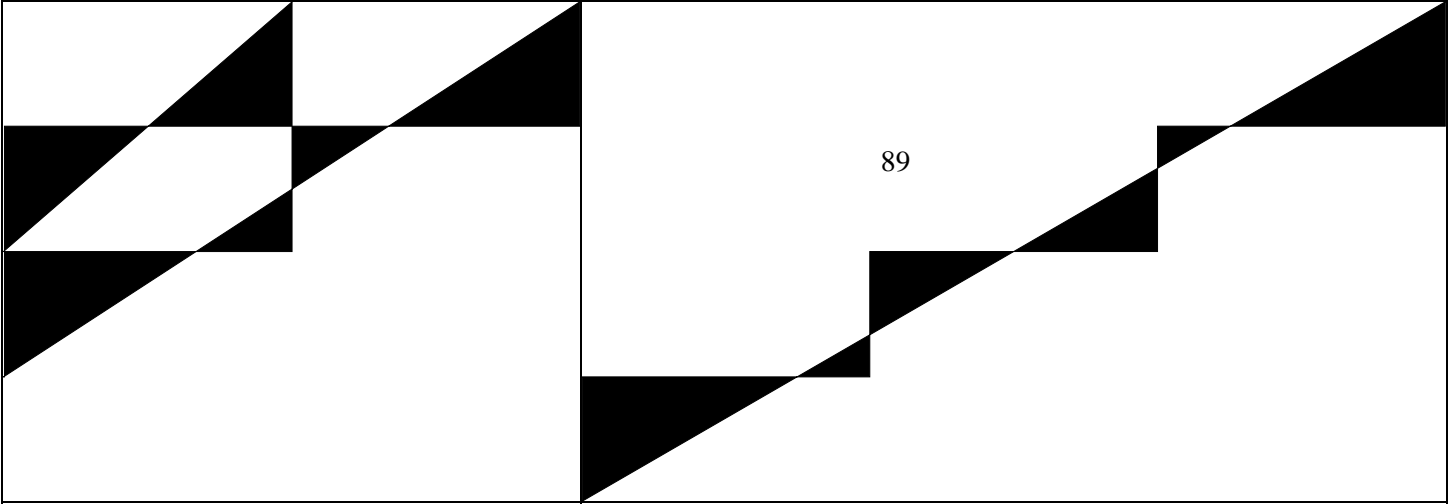
mechanisms, awards and rewards for good behaviour should be in place and coordinated well. Any disruption in any part of the institutions will disrupt harmony and functioning of the social system. This disharmony leads to anomie and crime. State should take responsibility in controlling unwanted, harmful content online that would prevent major disasters in future. A responsible citizenry are the treasure for the national development and well being.

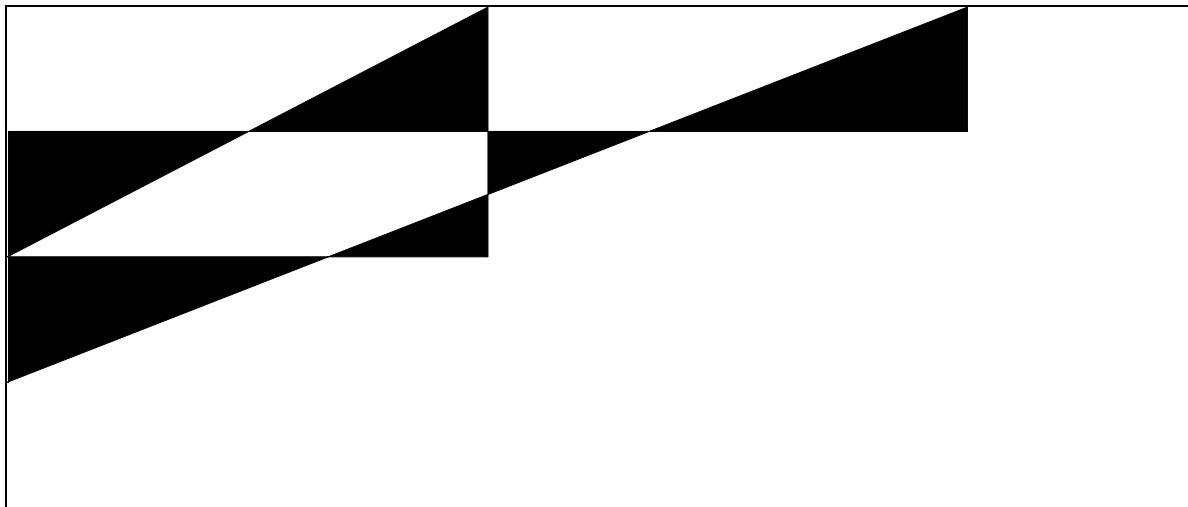
1.

**Conclusion**

These findings underscore the need for increased awareness, responsible internet use, content moderation, and educational interventions to help young individuals navigate online environments safely and critically. Most respondents indicated regular exposure to online information that advocates for dangerous or illegal acts, demonstrating how digital platforms may mainstream deviant behaviour.

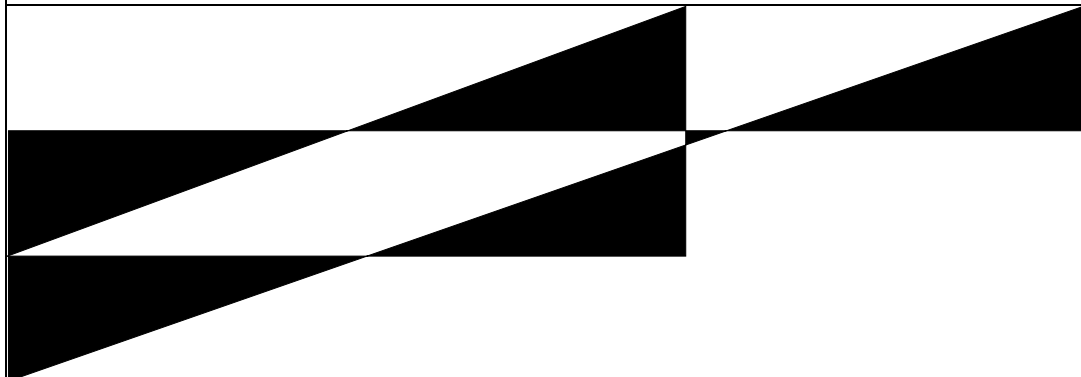
**Table 5: Involvement in Risky or Illegal Activities Due to Digital or Peer Influence**

Response	Digital Influence	P
	89	P
No	61	40
<b>Total</b>	150	100
Metric	Digital Influence	

	
No Rate	(61/150) 40.7%
Difference	-

From the above table it is observed that(94) 62.7% have agreed that there is peer influence while(89) 59.3% have responded that there is digital influence, with peer influence having 3.4% percentage point difference. This shows Peer influence is slightly more effective.

**Table 6: Purpose of Social Media Usage**

Purpose of Use	Respondents
	55



Communication with friends

Educational purposes

Following influencers

Other activities	10
<b>Total</b>	150

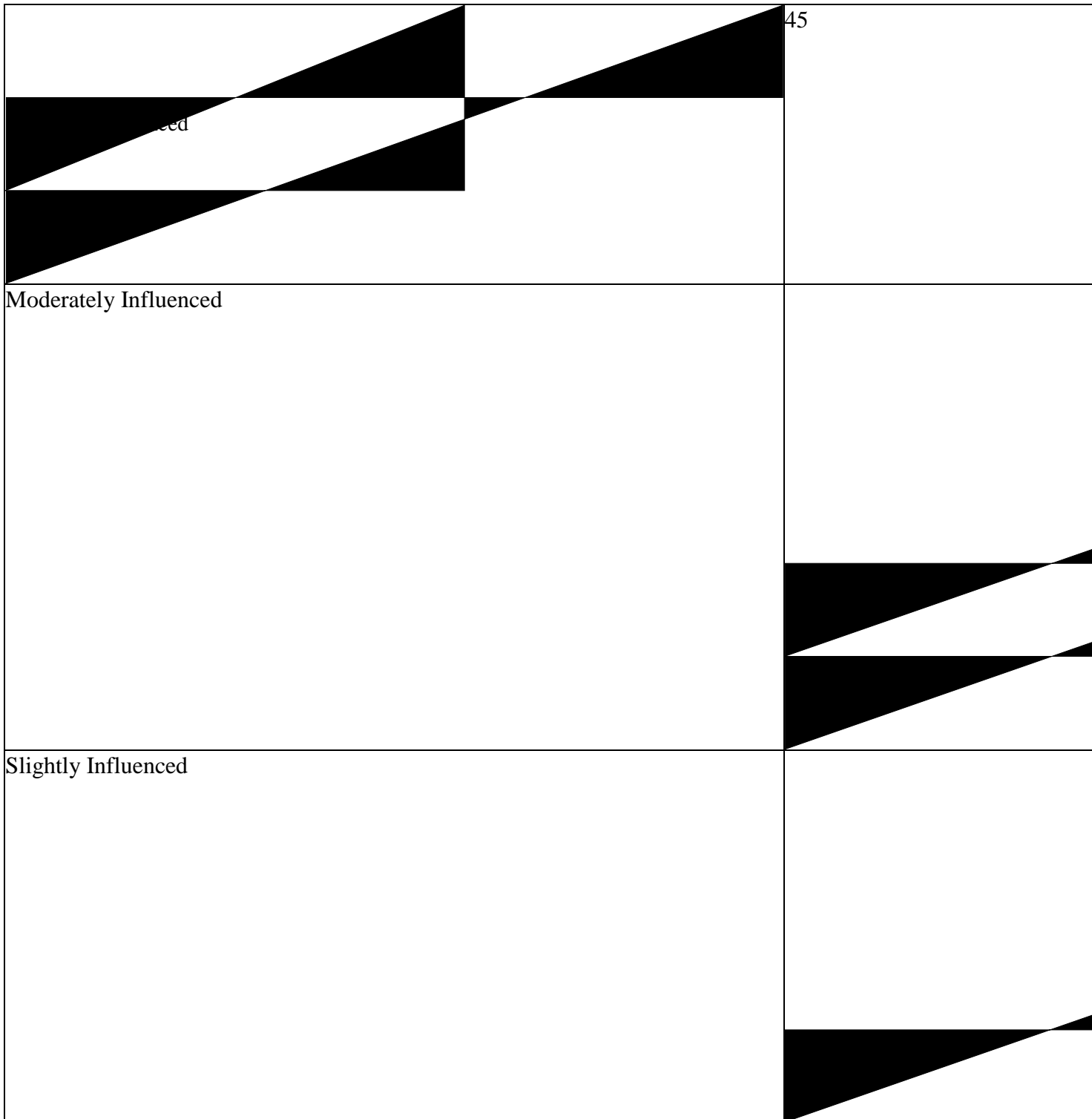
**Key observations**

It is observed that over one-third (36.7%) of respondents are using internet for entertainment only. Next comes communication with friends (26.7%) indicating the significance of peer group and social interaction online. Educational Use takes third posing but relatively low (13.3%) indicating the under usage for learning when compared with entertainment and interaction with friends. To increase educational use, efforts should be made, by identifying dedicated, discoverable educational channels or partnerships with educators, highlighting the learning content like playlists, certification programs etc. Another major threat to online users is social media influencers. They are categorically neither good nor bad. But following them blindly becomes hazardous for many young people without contextualizing and knowing the real situations. There is (16.7%) reporting the following of social media influences. This assumes higher place than the Educational use showing the preference over education. Therefore, to increase educational use, if properly motivated and engaged, influencers can help promote educational content and value based content. Other than the above activities are falling under other activities such as shopping, news, work etc. A minor (6.6%) reported other activities online.

Most respondents use social media mostly for enjoyment and conversation, rather than for educational objectives. This suggests that adolescents are increasingly exposed to informal digital information, perhaps heightening their vulnerability to deviant influences and dangerous behaviours.

**Table 7: Influence of Social Media Influencers on Behaviour**

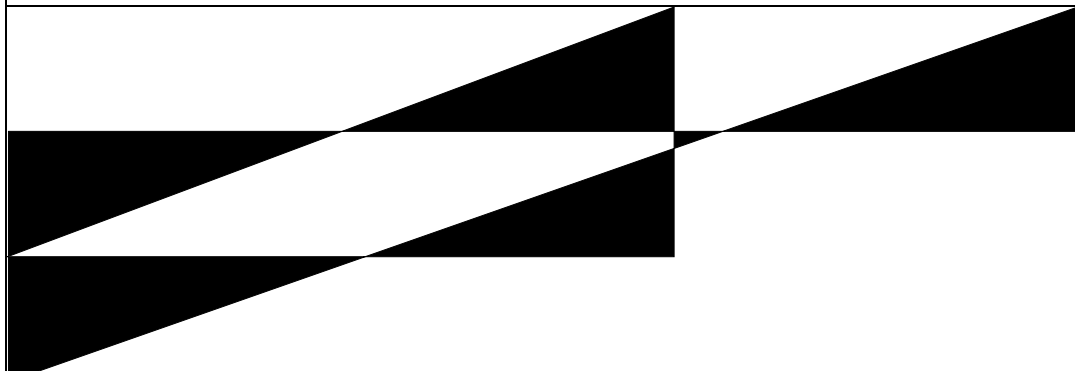
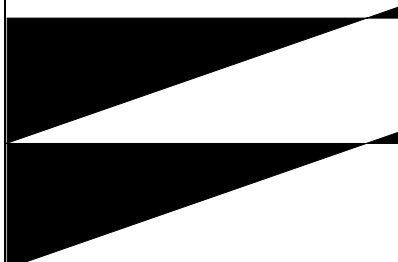
Response	Respondents



Not Influenced	20
<b>Total</b>	150

A substantial percentage of participants (70%) indicated being very or somewhat influenced by social media influencers. This indicates that digital figures significantly influence young attitudes and behaviours, especially propensity for risktaking.

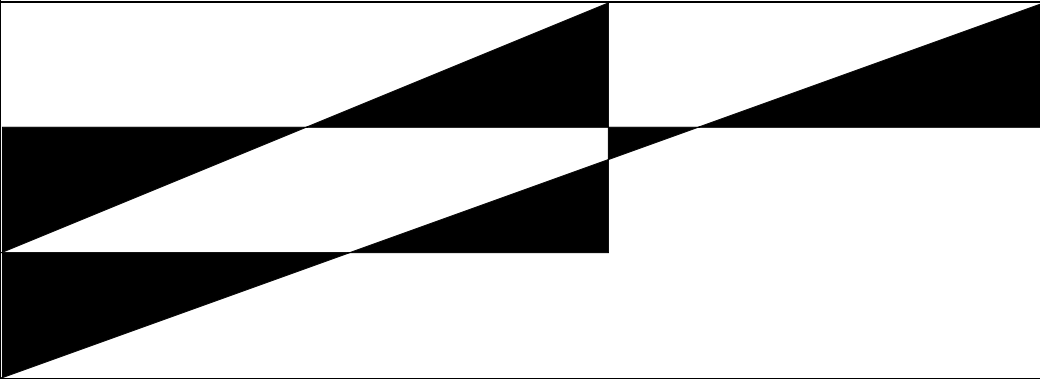
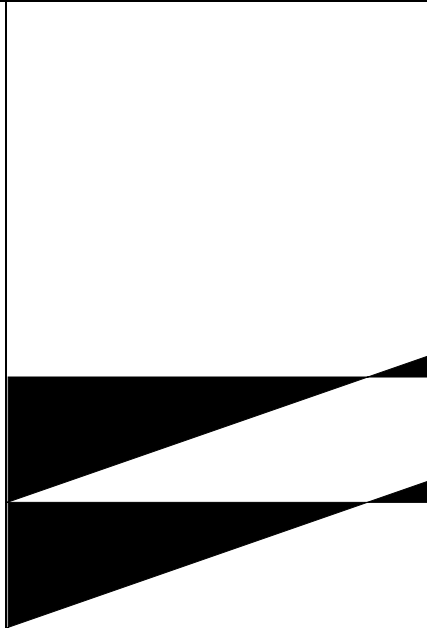
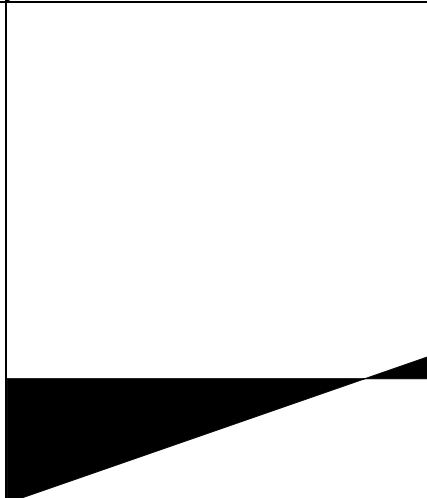
**Table 8: Types of Crimes Youth Are Most Exposed to Online**

Type of Crime	Respondents
	50
Online fraud/scams	

Violence-related content	
Substance abuse promotion	
Hacking activities	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

Cyberbullying and online fraud are the most prevalent digital offences among adolescents. This underscores the increasing prevalence of computer-related offences and emphasises the need for cyber awareness initiatives.

**Table 9: Level of Parental Supervision Over Online Activities**

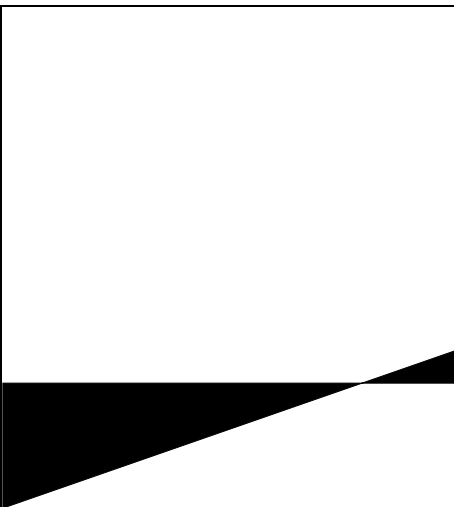
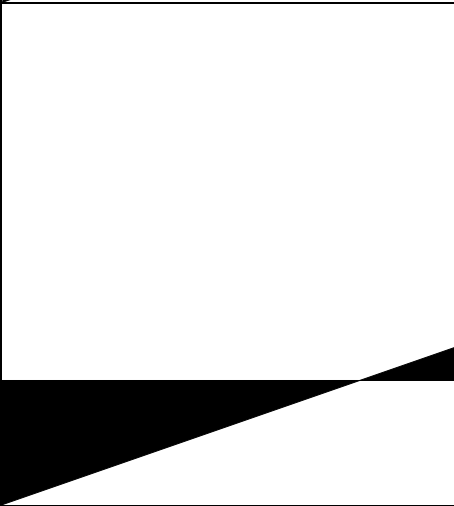

Level of Supervision	Respondents
	13
Moderate	
Low	

No supervision	58
<b>Total</b>	150

A significant number of respondents report little or absent parental supervision, suggesting insufficient oversight that may heighten juvenile susceptibility to detrimental digital effects and criminal exposure.

**Table 10: Peer Group Influence on Risk-Taking Behaviour**

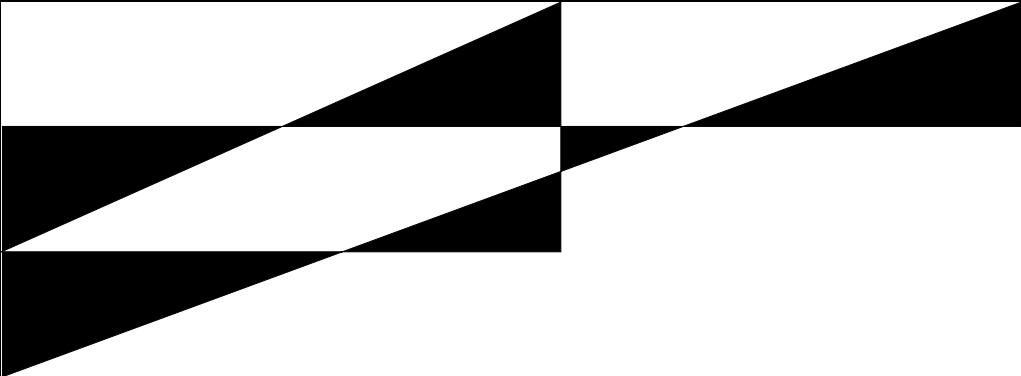
Influence Level	Respondents
	55
High	

Moderate	
Low	
Very Low	10 
<b>Total</b>	150

Over 60% of respondents indicated substantial peer impact on risk-taking behaviour, affirming that peer groups considerably affect teenage activities and may promote criminal inclinations.

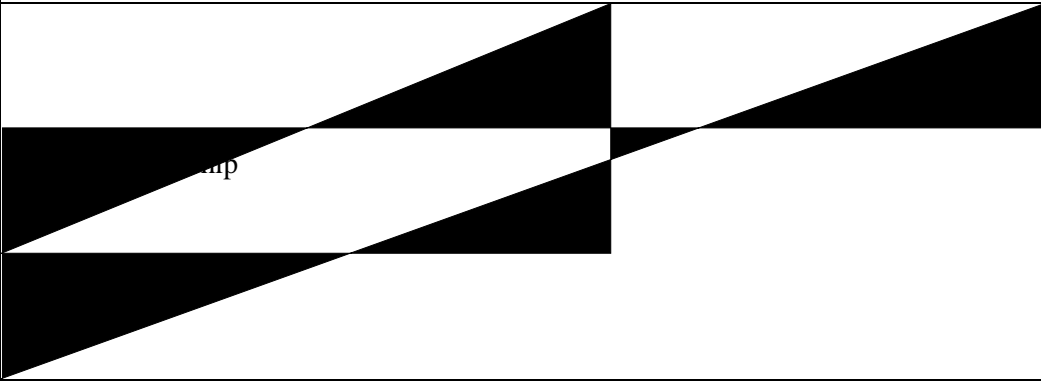
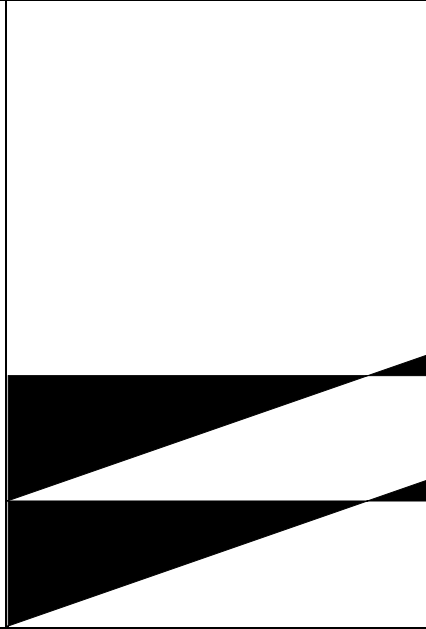
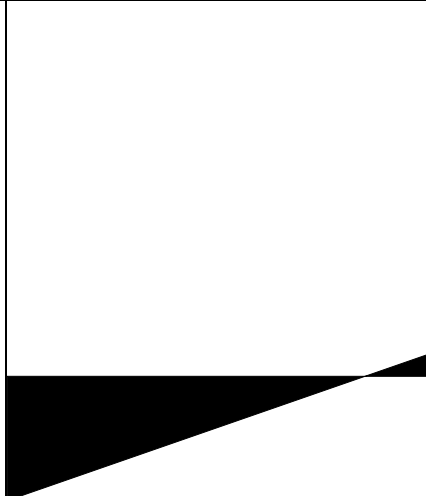
**Table 11: Awareness of Legal Consequences of Online Crimes**

Awareness Level	Respondents

	35
Partially aware	
Not aware	50
<b>Total</b>	150

A significant number of young individuals are unaware of the legal ramifications associated with internet offences. The deficiency in legal understanding may lead to heightened participation in cyber offences.

**Table 12: Relationship Between Social Media Use and Aggressive Behaviour**

Response	Respondents
	50
Moderate relationship	
Weak relationship	

No relationship	20
<b>Total</b>	150

Most respondents recognise a significant or moderate correlation between social media use and aggressive behaviour, suggesting that digital exposure may affect emotional and behavioural reactions.

**CONCLUSION**

The research suggests that juvenile delinquency in the digital age is profoundly affected by technology exposure and peer group interactions. The extensive utilisation of social media platforms has augmented access to detrimental material and enabled peer-influenced aberrant behaviour. The results indicate that internet impact and peer pressure significantly contribute to teenage engagement in criminal activities. Preventive strategies include digital literacy education, parental oversight, psychiatric counselling, and stringent cyber restrictions are crucial to tackle this problem. Policymakers, educators, and families must unite to foster appropriate digital conduct and mitigate child susceptibility to criminal influences. The research underscores the need of awareness and intervention techniques to promote good adolescent development in the digital era.

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