

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION No. 3434**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 09.08.2023

**ADVERSE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA**

**3434. SHRI PRINCE RAJ:**

Will the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology be pleased to state:

- (a) whether social media is adversely affecting children's emotions, cognitive development and social development and if so, the details thereof;
- (b) whether there has been a spurt in the incidence of depression, anxiety, instability, loneliness and suicide among teenagers according to several researches and if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to bring stringent law for social media and if so, the details thereof; and
- (d) the efforts made so far to prevent the adverse effects thereof?

**ANSWER**

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ELECTRONICS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
(SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR)

(a) and (b): The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights has informed that a study was conducted on "Effects (Physical, Behavioral and Psycho-Social) of using Mobile Phones and other devices with internet accessibility by children". As per this, 23.80% of children use smart phones while they are in bed, before going to sleep, which increases with age, and 37.15% of children always or frequently experience reduced levels of concentration due to smart phone use. Study also shows that there is a direct relationship between age and having a social media account, as with the increase in age near proportional increase in number of children having social networking accounts was witnessed. While about 30-50% children having the social media accounts are falling between age group of 13-15 years, about 50-70% children having the social media accounts are between age group of 15-18 years. The study is available on the Commission's website (<https://ncpcr.gov.in>).

(c) and (d): The Government's objectives are to ensure an Open, Safe & Trusted and Accountable Internet for Digital Nagrik or citizens.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 ("IT Act") and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 ("IT Rules, 2021"), together, have made a framework which cast obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence and provide that if they fail to observe such due diligence, they shall no longer be exempt from their liability under law for third-party information or data or communication link hosted by them.

The IT Rules, 2021 casts specific obligations on intermediaries to observe due diligence vis-à-vis what kind of unlawful information is not to be hosted, displayed, uploaded, published, transmitted, stored or shared. Such due diligence also include that the intermediaries are required to make reasonable efforts by itself to cause the users not to host, display, upload, modify, publish, transmit, store, update or share, among others, information which is obscene, or paedophilic, or pornographic, or is invasive of another's bodily privacy, or is harmful to child, or impersonates another person, or violates any law. Intermediaries are also required to remove any information violative of any law for the time being in force as and when brought to their knowledge either through a court order or through a notice by

appropriate government or its authorised agency. In case of failure to follow diligence as provided in the IT Rules, 2021, by intermediaries, they shall lose their exemption from liability under section 79 of the IT Act and shall be liable for consequential action as provided in such law. Further, in case an intermediary is a significant social media intermediary (an intermediary having more than 50 lakh registered users in India), to additionally observe due diligence in terms of appointing, in India, a Grievance Officer, a Chief Compliance Officer and a nodal contact person for 24x7 coordination with law enforcement agencies. As per the IT Rules, 2021, the Chief Compliance Officer is responsible for ensuring compliance with the IT Act and the rules made thereunder.

Keeping in view complaints regarding action or inaction, on the part of the social media intermediaries and other intermediaries on user grievances regarding objectionable content or suspension of their accounts, the Central Government has also established three Grievance Appellate Committees (GACs), as provided for in the said IT Rules, 2021 to enable users to appeal against the decisions taken by Grievance Officer of intermediaries on user complaints.

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