

**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

Dark web exploitation of women and children: Understanding the phenomenon and combating its impact

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Abstract

The hidden nature of the dark web makes it easier to exploit vulnerable groups, particularly women and children. This research explores how they are exploited on the dark web, including what causes it, common ways it happens, the difficulties law enforcement encounters, and steps to prevent and address it. By combining existing research, case studies, and expert opinions, this work aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue and suggest practical solutions. While the internet has brought positive changes, its hidden parts, like the dark web, pose significant risks to vulnerable people. This study sheds light on the dangers women and children face online, such as human trafficking, child exploitation, and cyberbullying. Its goal is to safeguard their online safety and well-being by promoting prevention and policy adoption.

Keywords: Dark web, Exploitation, Human trafficking, Child pornography, Women, Children, Law enforcement, Prevention, Intervention, Technology.

Introduction

Women and underage girls are often subjected to sexual exploitation on the dark web, a part of the internet that lets people stay anonymous and hold their secrets. Sadly, it is also used for unlawful things like human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and making and sharing pornography. The dark web has become more common lately, making it even riskier for women and children who can be exposed to terrible things online. Because of the anonymity on the dark web, it's easy for criminals to exploit vulnerable people without getting caught.

The dark web facilitates the trafficking and abuse of women and children, with the highest risk being forced to participate in it. They may have been offered money or jobs

and then become trapped in dangerous conditions. One of the major issues with the dark web is human trafficking, which involves compelling individuals to perform labor or sexual services. Innocent children were harmed to appease criminals and that is a punishable serious crime.

Combatting the exploitation of women and children online involves many interventions. Police face challenges as the dark web is difficult to infiltrate and criminal activities are well hidden. We must also act in a constructive manner: through information, solidarity and international cooperation to combat these crimes. Can make the internet safer for everybody by proving that light on the dark web dangers and fighting against it. In order to truly prevent the exploitation of people, we must address their underlying vulnerability factors, such as poverty, lack of education, or social exclusion. They also need to protect against online exploitation.

The system should create a support structure for survivors so they can receive help, like medical assistance (if necessary), psychological aid and legal counseling, safe places to live, education/capacitation facilities (job training), etc. Fundamentally, it is important that the survivors get to take their power back and regain control of their lives so they can return to long-term recovery. Even though technology can support us in combating dark web exploitation, it also comes with its reverse side.

Artificial intelligence, blockchain and data analytics can help with the identification of online exploitation networks. But, the system must also tread cautiously in taking full

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advantage of these tools while ensuring there is robust protection over individual privacy and security rights. The responsible use of technology and collaborative efforts can serve as a powerful strategy to curb the exploitation through the dark web while ensuring the rights and dignity of its victims.

Literature Survey

A study of “hotspots” in Metro Manila offers insights based on research into the OCSEA general trend among the Filipino community. In the (Laurie S. Ramiro 2019) study, older men were found targeting the most impoverished families’ vulnerable daughters online. Studies suggest that these activities are virtually normal among the youth, and most people associate it with an easy income; however, it has been shown to be lethal. More shocking is that community acceptance encourages underreporting, and the trends deter any action against the activities. OCSEA has devastated the host communities and requires enlightening, support, and regulation to prevent further harm to the Filipino community.

Both before and after the outbreak of COVID-19, international law enforcement bodies reported an increase in child sexual exploitation on the dark web. In (Woodhams *et al.* 2019) analyzed the usage patterns of unidentified Dark Web online strangers engaged in sexually oriented forums that are suspected of child sexual exploitation (CSE) (2021). The study thus sheds some light on what suspects look/sound like, as well as their motives/offending styles/security findings/preferences/connections within the dark web community. Theoretical, practical and future research implications of the study are concluded.

The researchers gave an overview about scarcity of Livestreaming of Child Sexual Abuse (LSCSA) research, in most cases from the Philippines and counting on case reviews and law enforcement statistics (Drejer *et al.*'s 2024). Inconsistent terminology, methodologies, and populace criteria impede information LSCSA's worldwide incidence. The Covid-19 pandemic worsens the difficulty by means of boosting net use, emphasizing the need for deeper insights. LSCSA lacks a legal definition, hindering prosecution and sufferer help. Older offenders, privacy issues, and restrained psychological impact studies similarly complicate efforts to fight LSCSA.

Human trafficking, by using (Reid *et al.* (2020)), stays challenging to hit upon and fight due to efforts via traffickers, customers, and victims to hide it, exacerbated by means of the darknet, anonymous forex, and the normalization of online exploitation, especially of minors. Law enforcement faces significant hurdles in prevention. However, initiatives like Operation Cross Country XI underscore the value of collaboration and technology. Addressing demand and enhancing prevention efforts, including accountability for

sex buyers, holds promise. Yet, more resources and focus on survivor recovery and treatment are imperative. Increased funding for survivor services is positive, but greater action is necessary to confront this reprehensible crime's digital expansion. Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers must actively engage in combating human trafficking.

The authors highlight the multifaceted nature of communication within networks, serving functions from validation to access of illicit materials (Kloess and van der Bruggen's 2023). Trust-building in the hazardous dark web environment emerges as crucial, with users grappling with managing threats and limited information. Implications for future research and intervention strategies are discussed, offering insights into combating online child exploitation effectively.

Armiwulan's (2021) study explores gender-based cyber violence's pervasive impact in Indonesia, hindering gender equality efforts. It reveals women and girls commonly endure cyberbullying, undermining their dignity and perpetuating inequality. Such violence inflicts social, physical, psychological, and economic harm, breaching equality principles. The study urges Indonesian government policy interventions integrating prevention measures with a commitment to equality and freedom of expression. Civil society organizations are encouraged to lead awareness campaigns, educating women and girls on their rights to safety and privacy, emphasizing collective action against cyber violence.

The researcher emphasizes the widespread occurrence of gender-based violence in digital forms, frequently targeting women regardless of their social status (NadjibaBadi, 2018). The author explores the motivations of perpetrators, which range from immaturity to deeply entrenched societal attitudes. Understanding this violence in the context of power dynamics and patriarchal norms highlights the necessity of addressing its underlying causes. Despite women employing various strategies to combat cybercrimes, victim blaming continues to prevail, sustaining a culture of resignation and acceptance even among the victim's acquaintances.

The rapid technological progress, as noted by Amit Singh (2022), has brought numerous benefits but also introduced significant challenges, with cybercrime against women being a prominent issue. The internet's widespread use has fueled the evolution of cybercrime, leading to various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable targets due to perceived weaknesses. This violence transcends digital boundaries, affecting physical spaces like streets, workplaces, and homes. The pervasive nature of cybercrime spans diverse platforms such as social media, messaging apps, emails, and dating platforms, necessitating a holistic approach to address both online

and offline aspects, utilizing technological innovations to protect women's well-being.

The darknet, facilitated by The Onion Router (TOR) browser since 2008, offers anonymity by routing traffic through a global server network, attracting diverse users including journalists, dissidents, and criminals (Gannon, C 2023). Many forums within the darknet focus on the exchange of child sexual abuse materials (CSAM), fostering international communities with minimal detection risk. Administered by key individuals, these forums play a crucial role in CSAM transactions. Effective interventions to deter CSAM site membership are lacking, emphasizing the need for collaborative efforts among law enforcement, academia, tech providers, and NGOs.

Overview of Dark Web Exploitation of Women and Children

Various forms of exploitation aimed at women and children on the dark web include terrible activities such as human trafficking and the sharing of child pornography. Traffickers frequently exploit the anonymity of the dark web to promote and trade victims for forced labor, sexual abuse, or even the harvesting of organs, causing unimaginable suffering to these vulnerable individuals. A few of them are:

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a big problem on the dark web. Traffickers use the secrecy of the dark web to buy and sell people, especially women and children, for different reasons. Victims are often tricked or forced into situations involving labor exploitation, sexual slavery, or organ harvesting, enduring severe physical and psychological harm. It's hard for the police to stop because the dark web hides who's doing it. Victims suffer a lot physically and mentally.

Child Exploitation and Child Pornography

The dark web is a breeding ground for child exploitation, especially the production and dissemination of child pornography. Exploitation of innocent children takes place on the dark web and perpetuates the victimization of children. Encrypted forums and marketplaces are used by criminals to share illegal images and videos of sexual abuse of children. The anonymity of the dark web allows criminals to hide their activities from detection and law enforcement, exacerbating the trauma of their victims. In order to combat child exploitation, the use of the dark web requires advanced technology, international collaboration, and proactive steps to protect children from harm.

Sex Trafficking

The recruitment, transportation, and exploitation of people for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation is known as "sex trafficking," which is a subset of human trafficking. On the dark web, where traffickers advertise and seek clients for criminal activities, women and children are more susceptible

to becoming victims of sex trafficking. Victims are robbed of their autonomy and dignity, pushed into prostitution or the creation of pornography, and subjected to psychological and physical abuse. Comprehensive victim support, intervention, and preventive strategies are needed to combat sex trafficking on the dark web. Tight law enforcement measures are also necessary to hold offenders accountable.

Sale of Intimate Content and Personal Information

The dark web makes it easy to sell private photos, videos, and personal information, often taken without permission or through threats. Women and children are often victims, with their private data used for blackmail, harassment, or exploitation. The anonymity of the dark web lets offenders make money from invading their victims' privacy, causing ongoing harm.

Trafficking for Forced Labor

Apart from sexual exploitation, the dark web is also a platform for trafficking people, including women and children, to force them into labor. Victims might be tricked or threatened and then forced to work in tough conditions in industries like farming, building, housework, and manufacturing. The hidden nature of the dark web lets traffickers advertise and arrange these deals, making it hard for the authorities to stop them.

Organ Trafficking

On the dark web, organ trafficking is another way people are exploited, where individuals might be forced or tricked into selling their organs for transplants. Women and children are often targeted because traffickers take advantage of their desperate situations or lack of money to make a profit. The dark web's secrecy makes it easy for this illegal trade to happen, making it hard for the authorities to stop it.

Illegal Adoption and Surrogacy Services

The dark web is also used for illegal adoption and surrogacy services, where people looking to adopt or arrange surrogacy might encounter exploitative practices. Women, especially those in financial difficulty or vulnerable situations, may be forced or tricked into participating in these illegal schemes. This might involve trafficking children or exploiting women as surrogates without proper legal protection or payment.

Forced Begging and Street Performances

The dark web may also facilitate the exploitation of women and children through forced begging and street performances, where victims are coerced or forced to beg or perform in public spaces for the financial gain of traffickers or exploiters. Women and children, particularly those living in poverty or vulnerable circumstances, may be trafficked or exploited for forced begging or street performances, enduring physical and psychological harm as a result. The anonymity of the dark web enables traffickers and exploiters

to recruit and coordinate the exploitation of victims, making it challenging for authorities to intervene. Efforts to combat forced begging and street performances on the dark web require enhanced law enforcement efforts, victim support services, and public awareness campaigns to address the root causes of exploitation and provide alternatives for vulnerable individuals.

Table 1: Statistics of dark web exploitation of women and children

Trends	Cases
Reports	87% surge in reporting Child Sexual Abuse Material since 2019
	Staggering 7,200% increase in financial, sexual extortion targeting children (2021-2022)
	360% rise in 'self-generated' sexual imagery of 7-10 year olds (2020-2022)
	25% increase in 'self-generated' imagery of boys (2021-2022)
Victim demographics	129% increase in reports related to imagery of children aged 7–10 tricked/groomed into performing sexual acts on camera (since 2021)
	93% of detected child sexual abuse material depicts girls
	98% of publicly shared first-hand accounts of sexual extortion victims are males
Internet usage and exposure	Up to 20% of children in Eastern and Southern Africa and Southeast Asia are subjected to child sexual exploitation and abuse online.
	97% of children aged 3–17 went online in 2022
	64.6% of the world's population are active internet users (April 2023)
Online safety concerns	75% of people aged 15–24 were online in 2022
	54% of US teens first saw online pornography at age 13 or younger
	58% of US teens aged 13 or younger encountered pornography accidentally
Dark web and criminal activity	Private messaging apps and gaming platforms by 7–10 year-olds
	A single dark web forum post related to child sexual abuse amasses 1.3 million views in 47 days.
	94% of members from six different dark web forums download child sexual abuse content
Gender and ethnicity disparities	38% of dark web survey respondents seek online contact with a child after viewing child sexual abuse material
	Almost 75% of child sexual exploitation and abuse victims in the US are females
Impact of COVID-19	79% of 18-year-old respondents from ethnic or racial minorities experienced sexual harm during childhood
	100 million children pushed into multi-dimensional poverty by COVID-19
	Increased working from home heightens the risk of spread of child sexual abuse material, according to 70% of senior IT professionals.

Sex Tourism and Travel Exploitation

The dark web is used for sex tourism and the exploitation of travelers, where people, including women and children, are exploited for sex in different countries. Traffickers might advertise travel packages that include access to vulnerable people for sex, pretending its part of normal tourism. Victims might be promised jobs or education but end up trapped in sexual exploitation abroad. Because of the dark web's anonymity, traffickers can work across borders, making it hard for the police to catch them. To stop sex tourism and exploitation on the dark web, we need countries to work together, police to cooperate, and support for victims to stop this exploitation and punish the people responsible.

Addressing dark web exploitation demands improved technological capabilities, international collaboration, and proactive measures to dismantle criminal networks and ensure the safety of individuals online.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Online Statistics

The 2023 Global Threat Assessment underscores a troubling trend: a rise in online exploitation targeting both children and women. Instances of CSAM dissemination and the utilization of online grooming techniques have notably increased. Vulnerable demographics, such as children and women, are especially susceptible to exploitation across various digital platforms like social media, messaging apps, and online gaming platforms. Predators often exploit the anonymity afforded by the internet to engage in harmful activities, resulting in a surge in instances of online coercion and extortion. Moreover, the dark web serves as a central hub for disseminating CSAM and facilitating illicit activities, further aggravating the threat landscape. The statistics related to dark web exploitation of women and children reported by (global threat assessment 2023) is shown in Table 1.

INTERPOL has reported that the volume of online child sexual abuse has reached a peak level, particularly worsened by the increased internet usage during the COVID-19 pandemic. These statistics underscore the urgent need for coordinated efforts between the public and private sectors to protect children from online sexual exploitation and abuse.

Case studies - Criminal activities against women and children

Table 2 represent a few examples of law enforcement efforts to combat criminal activities on the dark web. They highlight the challenges posed by online anonymity and the global nature of cybercrime, as well as the importance of international collaboration in addressing these issues.

These case studies underline the importance of international collaboration, advanced technological tools, and continuous development of legal frameworks to combat the exploitation of women and children on the dark web.

Table 2: Case studies - Criminal activities on the dark web against women and children

<i>Case</i>	<i>Details</i>	<i>Nature of cybercrime</i>	<i>International collaboration</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Welcome to video	The «Welcome to Video» case exposed a large dark web platform in 2019 for trading child sexual abuse material (CSAM). This South Korean-based platform, operational from 2015 to 2018, functioned as a massive marketplace for trading CSAM. Led by Son Jong-woo, it amassed over 250,000 videos and 1.2 million members internationally, becoming the largest of its kind discovered at the time.	Child sexual abuse material trading on a dark web platform.	International collaboration between law enforcement agencies led to the takedown of the platform, rescue of victims, and arrest of perpetrators.	Over 300 individuals arrested, at least 23 victims rescued
Playpen takedown	The «Playpen Takedown» of 2017 marked a significant operation in dismantling a dark web marketplace for child sexual abuse material (CSAM) called «Playpen.» Led by the FBI with international collaboration.	Distribution of child sexual abuse material on a dark web marketplace.	The FBI led the operation with international collaboration, demonstrating joint efforts to combat child exploitation and rescue victims.	Nearly 900 arrests globally, nearly 300 children rescued and a 30-year sentence for the founder
Operation pacifier	Operation Pacifier, initiated in 2015, targeted the dark web platform known as «Playpen,» a notorious hub for the dissemination of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Rather than immediately shutting down the site upon its discovery in 2014, the FBI opted to seize control of Playpen's servers. This strategic move allowed them to continue operating the site from a government facility while gathering crucial evidence against its users and administrators.	Online dissemination of child sexual abuse material and related activities.	The FBI coordinated with international law enforcement agencies to target and dismantle the platform, emphasizing the global nature of cybercrime.	Identification and arrest of numerous individuals, courts upheld operation's legality
Boystown takedown	In 2020, German authorities uncovered and dismantled «Boystown,» (Connolly K (2021)) a dark web platform dedicated to the distribution and exchange of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). With over 400,000 registered users, «Boystown» operated as a hub for the dissemination of explicit material involving children.	Distribution of child sexual abuse material on a dark web platform.	Collaboration between German authorities and international partners facilitated swift action and coordinated efforts to address the issue.	Swift action leading to arrests and prosecutions
Silk road	The Silk Road case (Greenberg et.al 2019), a watershed moment in the realm of online crime, unfolded in 2011 with the emergence of a dark web marketplace known as Silk Road. Founded by Ross Ulbricht under the pseudonym «Dread Pirate Roberts,» Silk Road operated as an anonymous platform accessible only through the Tor network, facilitating the trade of illicit goods and services using Bitcoin.	Illegal online marketplace facilitating the sale of drugs and other illicit goods.	Cooperation between multiple law enforcement agencies worldwide, including the FBI, led to the arrest and conviction of the founder.	Ross Ulbricht found guilty on all charges, sentenced to life in prison
Alphabay	The AlphaBay case, a landmark event in the battle against online crime, unfolded in 2017 with the takedown of one of the largest dark web marketplaces to date.	Illicit online marketplace facilitating the sale of drugs, weapons, and other illegal goods.	International law enforcement cooperation contributed to the takedown and dismantling of the AlphaBay marketplace, highlighting collaborative efforts to combat cybercrime.	Alexandre Cazes arrested, AlphaBay shut down
Operation artemis	Operation Artemis (Rutazibwa, Olivia U 2023), launched in 2019, represented a multinational effort to combat online child exploitation. Operation Artemis targeted individuals across various roles within online child exploitation networks, including producers, distributors, and consumers of CSAM.	Online child exploitation, including production, distribution, and possession of child sexual abuse material (CSAM).	Collaborative efforts among law enforcement agencies from various countries, such as the United States, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom, aimed at disrupting online child exploitation networks.	Hundreds of arrests and prosecutions worldwide, sending a clear message that online child exploitation will not be tolerated

Dark web exploitation of women and children: Law enforcement, challenges, and preventive measures

Combating dark web exploitation of women and children involves law enforcement working hard to stop these crimes, but they face big challenges because of secrecy tools like Tor. Operations like the FBI's "Operation Cross Country" have rescued many victims and shut down trafficking rings. But, it's tough to catch offenders due to complex international laws and sophisticated online activities. To prevent these crimes, law enforcement uses tactics like fake websites and international teamwork. Advanced technology helps track criminals, but it's important to use it ethically to protect privacy.

Existing law enforcement

Current law enforcement endeavors aimed at countering the exploitation of women and children on the dark web incorporate a blend of proactive strategies, investigative methods, and global cooperation.

- They employ advanced surveillance techniques and collaborate with international partners to track down offenders.
- Stringent laws and regulations are enforced to deter illegal activities, with severe penalties imposed on perpetrators.
- Authorities work closely with technology companies to identify and remove harmful content promptly.
- Ongoing efforts aim to combat dark web exploitation, protect vulnerable individuals, and ensure a safer online environment for women and children.
- Specialized task forces and units within law enforcement agencies are dedicated to investigating cases of dark web exploitation involving women and children.
- International cooperation and information-sharing networks are established to facilitate the exchange of intelligence and enhance investigative efforts.
- Training programs are conducted for law enforcement officers to enhance their skills in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting offenders involved in dark web exploitation.
- Legal frameworks are continuously reviewed and updated to address emerging trends and challenges in combating online exploitation.
- Community outreach and awareness campaigns are organized to educate the public about the dangers of the dark web and how to report suspicious activities.
- Law enforcement agencies employ sophisticated technological tools, such as digital forensics and data analysis software, to gather evidence and build cases against perpetrators.
- Cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups specializing in child protection and human rights further strengthens law enforcement efforts.

- Undercover operations and sting operations are conducted to infiltrate dark web networks and apprehend individuals engaged in exploitation.
- Task forces may collaborate with other agencies, such as customs and border protection, to intercept illicit materials being trafficked across borders *via* the dark web.
- Legislative measures may include the introduction of specific statutes targeting dark web exploitation alongside efforts to harmonize laws internationally to facilitate prosecution and extradition of offenders.

Despite these efforts, dark web exploitation of women and children remains a persistent and evolving challenge for law enforcement. Continued investment in technology, training, international cooperation, and victim support services is essential to effectively combating this form of online exploitation and ensuring the safety and well-being of vulnerable populations.

Challenges for law enforcement

Law enforcement faces numerous challenges in combating dark web exploitation of women and children. Some of the challenges are

- Anonymity and encryption technologies on the dark web make it difficult to track and identify perpetrators of exploitation.
- Jurisdictional challenges arise when illegal activities span multiple countries, requiring coordination between law enforcement agencies across borders.
- Limited resources and funding constraints may hinder the ability of law enforcement to effectively combat dark web exploitation.
- Rapidly evolving technologies and tactics used by offenders necessitate continuous training and adaptation by law enforcement personnel.
- The decentralized nature of the dark web and the existence of underground communities make it challenging to infiltrate and dismantle illicit networks.
- Legal hurdles, such as privacy concerns and data protection laws, may complicate efforts to gather evidence and prosecute offenders.
- The stigma associated with reporting exploitation and the fear of retaliation can deter victims from coming forward, making it harder for law enforcement to intervene.
- Disinformation and misinformation campaigns on the dark web can obscure the truth and impede law enforcement investigations.
- Bureaucratic barriers and differing priorities may hinder collaboration and information sharing between law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders.
- Encryption and anonymization tools used on the dark web hinder the ability of law enforcement to intercept communications and track illegal activities.

- The constantly evolving nature of the dark web requires law enforcement to stay ahead of emerging trends and technologies, which can be resource-intensive.
- Lack of international cooperation and differences in legal frameworks between countries can impede efforts to effectively address cross-border dark web exploitation.
- The sheer volume of illicit content on the dark web can overwhelm law enforcement agencies, making it challenging to prioritize and investigate cases.
- Sophisticated tactics employed by criminals, such as money laundering and cryptocurrency transactions, pose additional challenges for law enforcement in tracing and seizing assets.
- Limited public awareness and understanding of the dark web can hamper efforts to gather intelligence and encourage reporting of suspicious activities.
- Corruption and infiltration of law enforcement agencies by criminal elements can compromise investigations and undermine trust in the justice system.
- The underground nature of dark web communities and forums makes it difficult for law enforcement to gain access and gather actionable intelligence.
- Balancing the need for online privacy and security with law enforcement efforts to combat exploitation on the dark web presents ethical and legal dilemmas.

Preventive measures and intervention strategies

Here are preventive measures and intervention strategies for combating dark web exploitation of women and children, listed in points:

- *Education and awareness*
- Conduct campaigns to educate individuals about dark web risks.
- Teach children, parents, and caregivers safe internet practices.
- Provide resources for navigating the internet securely.
- *Law enforcement efforts*
- Enhance monitoring and investigation of dark web activities.
- Collaborate with international partners and utilize advanced technologies.
- Apprehend perpetrators engaged in illegal activities.
- *Legislation and Regulation:*
- Enact strict laws to deter illegal behavior on the dark web.
- Impose severe penalties for offenders.
- Hold dark web platforms accountable for facilitating illegal activities.
- *Technology solutions*
- Implement robust security measures on online platforms.
- Utilize advanced algorithms to detect and remove harmful content.
- Protect user data and privacy through encryption.

- *Victim support services*
- Establish help lines and counseling services for victims.
- Provide safe shelters and resources for recovery.
- Collaborate with organizations to offer comprehensive support.
- *Collaboration and partnership*
- Foster collaboration between government agencies, law enforcement, tech companies, and nonprofits.
- Share resources and information to strengthen prevention efforts.
- Develop innovative strategies to combat dark web exploitation collectively.

By adopting these preventative measures and intervention tactics, stakeholders can collaborate to reduce risks and safeguard the online safety and welfare of women and children.

Conclusion

The dark web exploitation of women and children is a deeply concerning issue necessitating urgent action. Enabled by advanced encryption tools and cryptocurrencies, perpetrators operate with impunity, leveraging anonymity to engage in human trafficking, sexual exploitation, and child pornography dissemination. Combating this requires a multifaceted approach, understanding both technological innovations and ethical considerations. While privacy is vital, it must not impede efforts to protect victims and hold offenders accountable.

A collaborative effort is essential, involving technology developers, law enforcement, policymakers, psychologists, social workers, and victim support organizations. Prevention efforts should utilize AI tools to monitor the dark web, while intervention strategies must disrupt exploitation infrastructure and prosecute perpetrators. Victim-centered support services, including counseling and legal aid, are crucial for empowerment and recovery. Effective policy and regulation, both nationally and internationally, are imperative to address this global issue comprehensively. By embracing a multidisciplinary approach and prioritizing the well-being of victims, we can strive to eradicate dark web exploitation and create a safer world for all.

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