CCTV Cameras and Security Guards: Why Traditional School Security is Inadequate

Summary

The number of sexual assaults on children in India every year are skyrocketing. According to the National Study on Child Abuse, conducted in 2007 with a sample size of 12,447 children across 13 states, 49.92% of children in schools have faced sexual abuse. The National Crime Records Bureau's 2016 figures show that 36,022 cases were registered under the PoCSO Act, with many incidents likely having not been reported at all.

Media coverage of these incidents indicate that as overall numbers increase, the percentage of incidents occurring at schools is also increasing. Unfortunately, despite greater reporting of assaults on children at their schools and calls for better security measures from parents and society alike, schools in India remain dependent on human security and human-reliant technologies, leaving them vulnerable to crimes on campus.

This paper will examine the safety measures that are presently recommended, why the current security infrastructure of CCTV cameras and security guards are inadequate, and why advanced technology is the solution to bridging the gaps in school safety.

Introduction

The number of sexual assaults on children in India every year are skyrocketing. According to the National Study on Child Abuse, conducted in 2007 with a sample size of 12,447 children across 13 states, 49.92% of children in schools said they had faced sexual abuse[1]. A decade later, National Crime Records Bureau's 2016 figures show that 36,022 cases were registered under the PoCSO Act[2], with many incidents likely having not been reported at all.

Media coverage of these incidents indicate that as the overall numbers increase, the percentage of incidents occurring at schools is also increasing. While this rise in documented number might be due to greater awareness and reporting of incidents by victims' families, it can be safely inferred that children are becoming more at risk of becoming victims of attack.

Unfortunately, despite greater reporting of assaults on children at their schools and calls for better security measures from parents and society alike, schools in India remain dependent on human security and human-reliant technologies, leaving them vulnerable to crimes on campus.

In this paper, we shall discuss the safety measures that schools are currently following, what the state laws and guidelines are in this area, why these measures are inadequate, and why advanced technology must be used to bridge the gap in safety needs.

What are Schools Doing Right Now?

Despite rising awareness, a lack of uniformity in approach and execution renders schools vulnerable to incidents. In addition to the dangers posed to the students, and the resulting trauma, current laws ensure that school management and owners are also held liable for incidents that take place on their premises, irrespective of their personal involvement in the crime.

Let us consider the measures that schools are implementing, under the law and of their own volition:

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[1] *Study on Child Abuse: India 2001*, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India. Found on Page 75, https://www.childlineindia.org.in/pdf/MWCD-Child-Abuse-Report.pdf

[2] *Crime in India - 2016*, National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. Found on Pg 192, http://ncrb.gov.in/StatPublications/CII/CII2016/pdfs/NEWPDFs/Crime%20in%20India%20-%202016%20Complete%20PDF%20291117.pdf

Measures Mandated by Government and Authorized Bodies

While the Ministry of Human Resource Department, Government of India has put forth general guidelines regarding school safety in line with existing Indian and international laws[3], the specifics of implementing security measures falls within the purview of individual states. This has resulted in some states mandating CCTV cameras and the appointment of security guards at schools, while schools in other states implement similar measures voluntarily rather than under the law.

In September 2017, in light of rising incidents of child abuse at schools, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) put forth an additional set of security guidelines to be implemented at educational institutions across the country. These measures however merely extend the guidelines of the Ministry, making it mandatory to perform police verification and psychometric evaluation of staff members, install CCTV cameras in vulnerable areas, perform security audits, sensitize staff members, constitute the necessary committees, etc[4].

While failure to implement these measures could result in derecognition, the extent of monitoring for compliance by schools is unclear. Of equal concern is the matter of unregulated schools (such as play schools, nurseries, kindergartens), which do not fall under the ambit of state regulations and, as such, are possibly unaware of and not obligated to follow school security guidelines.

Soft Measures Introduced by the Schools

In addition to improving the safety infrastructure and policies, many schools voluntarily conduct sessions for students of all ages to educate them on what constitutes sexual harassment and assault, how to distinguish between good touch and bad touch, and the importance of speaking up if they are victims of or are witness to such incidents.

Similarly, they conduct workshops for teaching and non-teaching staff members, educating them on the laws governing student safety and sensitizing them to understand their obligation to the students, recognize the signs of assault, and offer counselling and support to the affected student(s).

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[3] *RTE Safety Guidelines*, Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 11.09.2017. Found on
http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/upload_document/rte_guidelines_safety.pdf
[4] *Circular Safety in School 12.09.2017*, Central Board of Secondary Education. Found on
http://cbse.nic.in/newsite/circulars/2017/Circular%20Safety%20in%20School%2012.09.2017.pdf

Why aren't Current Measures Enough

As mentioned above, whether by law or done proactively, school safety measures usually extend only as far as installing CCTV cameras and appointing security guards. Both of these have significant shortfalls however, as evidenced by each case of reported assault.

CCTV Cameras

The greatest drawback of CCTV cameras is that, unless they are constantly monitored by dedicated personnel (government guidelines mandate only require "regular monitoring"[5]), they are ineffective as a deterrent to crimes. At best, they can be used to view the footage of the incident after the fact to establish what happened, thus rendering them a purely reactive form of security.

Another concern is that these cameras require a high degree of maintenance to ensure that they remain in working condition and that footage of incidents is available for viewing by school authorities, the police, and other legal bodies, as required. Several media houses have reported cases with claims that while CCTV cameras were installed at the schools where an assault took place, they were not working[6] or were switched off[7] during the period in question.

There are also no clear guidelines regarding how long camera footage should be stored; at the school's discretion (and depending on the type of camera / software being used), it can be stored for as little as 15-30 days. Given the fear and discomfort that most children feel in reporting an assault, the likelihood of footage being available for checking reduces as more time elapses between the assault and the child informing a trusted adult about it.

Security Guards

Most schools appoint security guards to monitor their campus; depending on the size of the school, they may be individually appointed through a placement agency or a security company may be appointed and their personnel deployed on campus. As they take guard over the school

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[5] *Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools*, National Commission for Protection of Child Rights. Found on Pg 8, http://ncpcr.gov.in/showfile.php?lang=1&level=1&sublinkid=1343&lid=1550

[6] *Two-year-old boy Allegedly Sexually Assaulted in Kolkata Playschool During Doctor's Day Programme*, News18, 05.07.2018. Found on https://www.news18.com/news/india/two-year-old-boy-allegedly-sexually-assaulted-in-kolkata-playschool-during-doctors-day-programme-1802185.html

[7] *Kolkata: Class 2 girl Molested by Teacher in Carmel Primary School, Parents Stage Protest*, India Today, 09.02.2018. Found on https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/carmel-primary-school-class-2-student-molested-dance-teacher-kolkata-1165803-2018-02-09

and its students, these security guards need to be monitored themselves, for benign reasons as well as potentially dangerous ones.

As human beings, each of these guards are prone to human error despite their best intentions. They may be away from their post or unavailable to provide assistance for reasons like having fallen asleep, being ill and therefore not being completely alert, or taking a quick visit to the bathroom facilities. They may also have more harmful habits, possibly undetected at the time of employment, that render them unfit for the job and potentially harmful to the school and its students - alcoholism, drug addictions, etc.

In a more serious circumstance, the guards need to be monitored as they may be predators themselves. Frequent media reports indicate that, given their unquestioned access to the school and their familiarity to the students, there are many who have taken advantage of their circumstances and perpetrated a sexual crime[8].

Advanced Technology is the Answer

Technology has long been the solution to bridging the gap between what is and what should / can be. Across the world, all major domains have been quick to incorporate technological advances in their processes to achieve greater efficiency and overall improvement.

Schools are utilizing technology to augment their educational offerings, but they are yet to capitalize on the opportunities it offers on the security front. Artificial Intelligence especially has tremendous value to offer in an area as crucial as the safety of children.

What can Artificial Intelligence do that People may Not?

Artificial Intelligence technology has advanced to the point where facial recognition is an expected aspect, and potential high-risk behavior and situations are identifiable based on instructed parameters such as an adult-child pair in a secluded area, possibly violent actions, etc.

When an event that falls within these established parameters occurs, the technology will identify the situation and carry out the prescribed response without the necessity of human intervention. This is especially useful as it does not take societal bias (the preconceived notion that all perpetrators of sexual crimes are men) into account and it removes the possibility of a crime

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[8] *Class 2 Student Sexually Assaulted near Kolkata, School Guard Arrested*, NDTV, 21.02.2018. Found on https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/student-of-class-2-sexually-assaulted-in-bengal-school-employee-detained-1815363

going unseen because the victim has not come forward, whether out of fear or shame, or just not realizing that they have become a victim of sexual assault.

While this new technology does not remove the need for the existing infrastructure, it does plug the gaps that are very evidently there and keeping school security from being as effective as it needs to be.

In today's day and age, Artificial Intelligence technology, such as that provided under the VeriHelp Secured Schools program, is the best answer to the question of how schools can be made safer for its students.