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THE COVID-19 IMPACT ON CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE ONLINE IN WESTERN BALKAN

Abstract:

This paper aim is an analyze about how the COVID-19 pandemic is presently modifying the trends and threats of child sexual exploitation and abuse offences, which were already at high levels prior to the pandemic. The following modifications in environmental, social and economic factors are of specific consideration in this paper: the increased time children spend online for amusement, social and educational purposes; the closing of schools and consequent change to virtual learning environments; limited access to community support services, child care and educational personnel who habitually play a crucial role in detecting and reporting cases of child sexual exploitation.

Methodology/Concept:

The paper is managed by looking at current literature in academic journal databases and own research. Key findings and conclusions are drawn primarily from information provided by INTERPOL and EUROPOL member countries as well as from law enforcement, NGOs and Crimes against Children Unit.

Results/Conclusions:

Chat groups, contact through social networks (Facebook, Instagram) and educational applications became the important places for meeting between children and sex offenders in Western Balkans. Unsupervised time online also increased the risk that underage individuals could produce and distribute self-generated indecent material.

As technological advancements are continuously converting the global economy, they have directed to the appearance and increase of several cyber-enabled offences, containing online child sexual exploitation. Child sexual exploitation and abuse online is reportedly one of the crimes adapting most quickly to and capitalizing on the opportunities offered by technology.

Keywords:

child sexual exploitation, abuse, COVID-19, education, Western Balkans.