



Cyber Peace Foundation Secretariat: B-55,
MIG, Harmu Housing Colony, Birsa Munda
Rajpath, Ranchi, Jharkhand, 834002

Delhi Office: L-29 - L34, First Floor,
Connaught Place, New Delhi, 110001

Phone: +919570000265

THIRD REPORT ON INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE MATERIAL AND CHAT GROUPS

This report is a brief summary of an investigation conducted by Nitish Chandan from Cyber Peace Foundation into the proliferation and spread of CSAM through apps and chat groups. Third in this series of reports, we try to look at another popular app, Telegram and its use to disseminate CSAM.

Spam

Violence

Child Abuse

Pornography

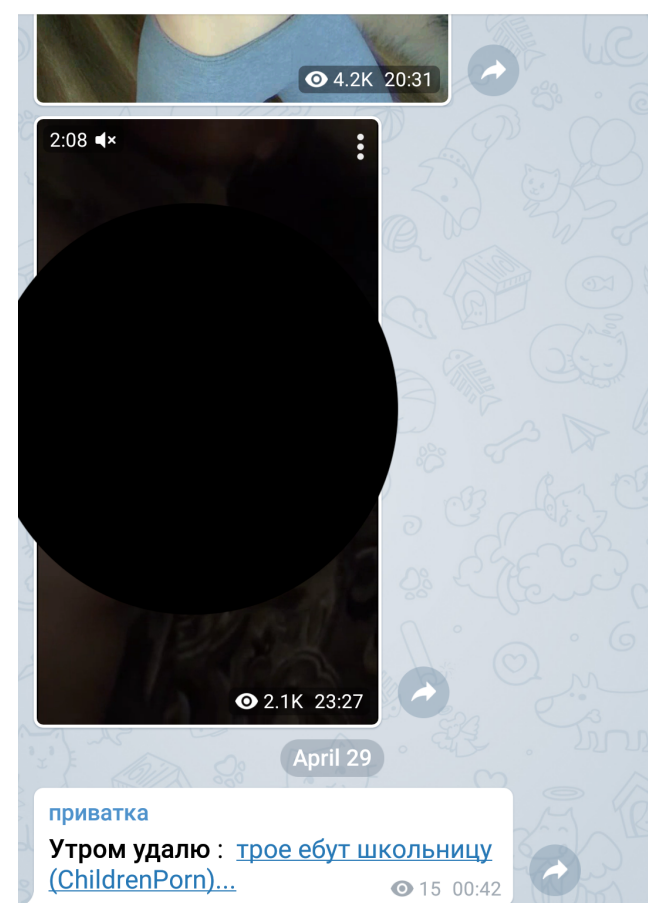
Other



INVESTIGATION INTO THE USE OF TELEGRAM CHANNELS AND GROUPS TO DISSEMINATE CSAM

Nitish Chandan (nitish.chandan@cyberpeace.net, +918394029559)

Over these last few months, we have come across some worrisome findings about the use of chat groups to disseminate Child Sexual Abuse Material. In this report, we try to analyse Telegram and content on the app. Not going into the details, Telegram and WhatsApp are principally different in the way that their groups and channels operate. Telegram offers groups (with a limit on the maximum number of members) and channels (unlimited members) to disseminate content unlike WhatsApp. The similarity, however, is that one can create similar group/channel invite links as WhatsApp's to get people to join them without any restriction.

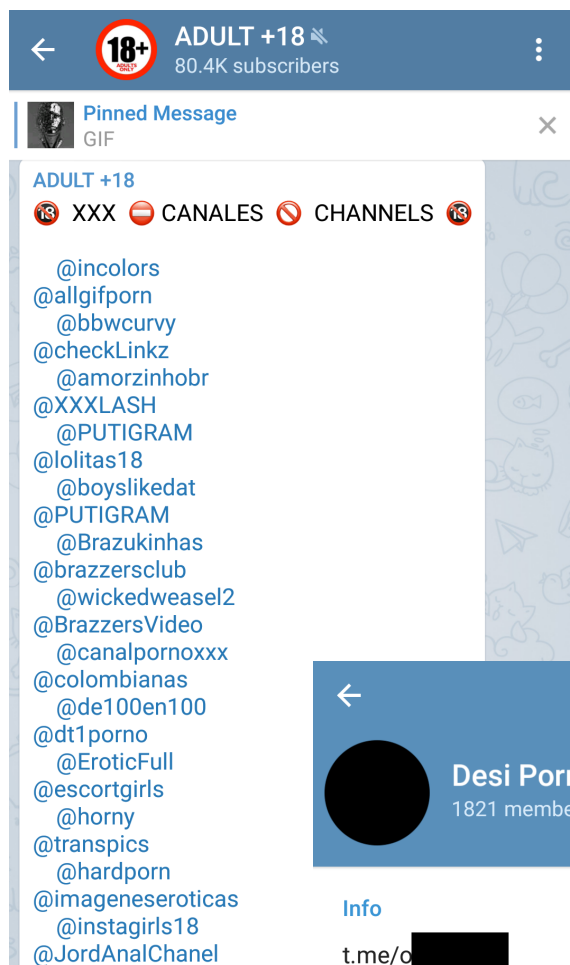


As of the day of writing this report, the Telegram website is inaccessible on my Jio connection, owing to an alleged ban. The app, on the other hand, can be downloaded and easily used without any need for a VPN like service.

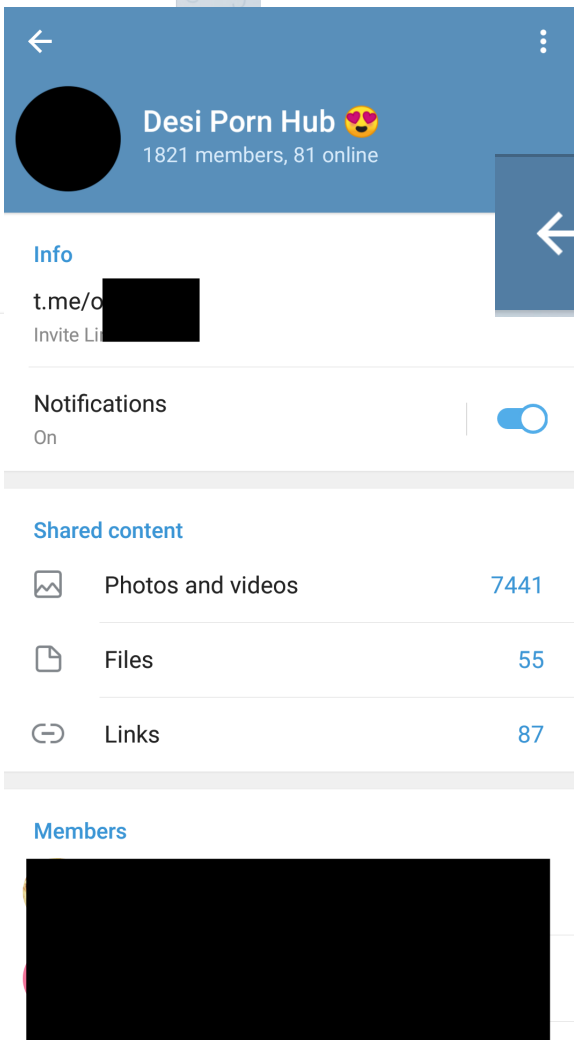
In the first phase of the investigation, I downloaded several apps that hosted links to join telegram groups (like in the case of WhatsApp). There were several links to join *adult groups* but none that particularly solicited CSAM. Fifteen such applications and tens of websites

were searched to identify any links.

An interesting finding at this point was that there were quite a few channels dedicated to pornography



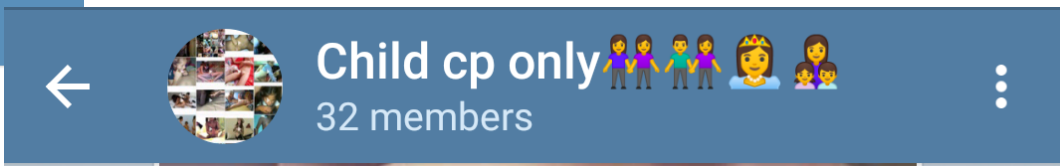
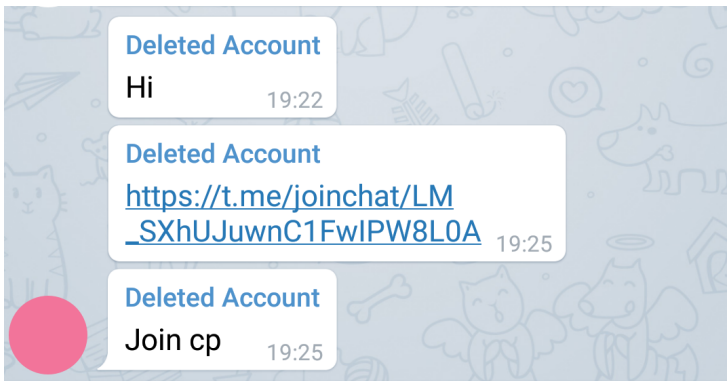
with region specific content from India. With the number of subscribers crossing 50,000 in some cases, no reporting



feature affected their operations.

To contextualise this better, unlike WhatsApp, Telegram offers the feature to report content under different heads. While pornography is one such head, child abuse has been given a separate reporting option.

To analyse the content further, these groups and channels were then observed. Out of the blue, on one such group, a user named X (redacted) posted another group's link and wrote a message saying "Join *CP (Child Pornography)*". Within seconds, people joined this group whose name read "Child CP Only". On further investigation, it was found that the user, X active on the group used to work at a famous multinational company.



I don't know for sure the model on which the offenders operate but this X specifically writes in a message "When the group hits 1000 members, I will add 2 videos per day. Whoever has 100+ CP will be promoted to be an admin. You can message X for premium access to a channel called X's kids." This same X also operates a CSAM exchange service and a link sharing arrange for \$10.

On the group are people from various countries and needless to say, a handful number of Indian users as well. These users actively appreciate content, ask for more and upload some as well. The content encountered on this group was way more traumatising and disturbing as compared to the last two investigations. There are hundreds of videos already uploaded on the group which are visible to anyone joining at any point of time

(unlike a WhatsApp group). The videos depict children in sexually explicit activities of forced abuse (Indian children as well).

Post documentation, this group was reported to Telegram for disseminating Child Abuse. All of this happened within a span of minutes and in another few minutes, the group was blocked. It is unclear, however, whether “X’s kids” is still active.

It was then that the original group where the link was posted, caught the eye. Unaware of the fact that one could actually see the content shared on the group or channel earlier, I had not looked at the media shared already. To my surprise, this group had 4000 images/videos uploaded amongst which was CSAM as well. This group was posted on one of the invite link sharing apps as an “adult group”. Posted by someone over a few months ago, I navigated to the original post and reported to Telegram. This group was also reported to Telegram. Days have passed since then and the content along with the group still exists.

PS- Screenshots due to the sensitivity of the content are redacted.

