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Generative AI and child sexual abuse material (CSAM): A novel risk to the Sri Lankan community

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Background: The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has made online child sexual abuse an emerging social problem. Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) is being produced using AI and includes stripping images of children, using text prompts to generate CSAM, and creating pedophile manuals. Though prior research has focused on online child sexual abuse, little attention is paid to the interplay between Generative AI and CSAM, especially in developing countries. Hence, the objective of this study was to analyze the potential risk Sri Lanka has on AI-generated CSAM and suggest working solutions based on the international response.

Method: Adhering to qualitative research design, a systematic review was conducted on papers concerning online child sexual abuse, local legislation, and eight British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) reports (Feb 2024 – Feb 2025) on AI-generated CSAM. Simultaneously, thematic analysis was performed to recognize the local risk and viable solutions.

Results: The study identified three risk factors for AI-generated CSAM in Sri Lanka, including the non-regulated use of Generative AI, lack of awareness, and increased amount of child sexual abuse in the post-pandemic period. Meanwhile, two international responses were identified concerning this issue. This includes the pledge from tech giants to crack down this via Safety by Design principles, and the UK's decision to outlaw AI-generated CSAM. Other than provisions on obscene publications, and child sexual abuse, no specific local provisions on AI-generated CSAM were identified. However, Sri Lanka's National Strategy on AI was found to be a foundation for extending specific solutions on demand.

Conclusions: Incorporating this concept into national policies on children and AI will foresee the danger ahead. While updating legislation, including the Penal Code and Computer Crime Act, with specific provisions for AI-generated CSAM, the regulation of Generative AI is recommended. Hence, promoting responsible digital usage will create a safer digital space for children.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, child sexual abuse material, generative AI.