

Identity Theft—A Contemporary Threat

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Abstract

Identity theft has historically risen in frequency as information technology has advanced, and it has since been acknowledged as the world's fastest-growing crime. Identity theft is when someone else (usually a stranger) uses an individual's identity without their prior consent, permission, or knowledge. Such types of impressions are mainly committing fraud, which usually results in financial harm to the victim and illegal financial gain to the person who perpetrates it. However, the main issue with identity theft is that it is quite hard to detect and prevent. People who have used technology extensively, such as college students, children, and others, are also prone to or can even fall prey to identity theft. It has been a major challenge for societies in the digital age. Individual victims experience catastrophic psychological and financial losses, and the consequences for society as a whole are immense. The major topics on identity theft reviewed in this research are the definition and meaning of identity theft, statistics of identity theft, its types and stages, recording and reporting of identity theft, law enforcement issues and responses, effects, prevention, and defenses of identity theft. The research further found that access to personal information about potential victims, as well as the anonymity provided by the Internet, are significant facilitators of identity theft. In addition, the research has focused on the practices and operational environments of document-authenticating organizations that provide offenders with access to identification data. The researcher has followed the doctrinal and analytical methods of research and, at last, the inductive method, which helped to arrive at a certain conclusion. Within the research, the first chapter is the Introduction based on which the whole research is created. The next two succeeding chapters consist of an Operational Introduction, and Law Enforcement Issues and Response, which also includes an analysis of important international and national cases. The final chapter of the research consists of the Suggestions & Recommendations, and Conclusions. The researcher has concluded that people must be informed that not only is it unlawful to exploit others' data, but it is also illegal to obtain personal and sensitive information about others. Identity thieves must understand that peeping into someone's personal life is just as detrimental as peering into someone's restroom. Nothing in this world is more unsettling than someone professing to be someone they are not.

Keywords: Identity theft, information technology, fastest-growing crime, unlawful exploitation, impersonation, illegal financial gain, detection and prevention, technology users, societies of the digital age, doctrinal method

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INTRODUCTION

“Identity is the qualities, beliefs, personality traits, appearance, and/or expressions that characterize a person or group” [1].

A person's quiddity is his or her identity which is a unique attribution of that person which creates a distinctive oneness from the other person. In the modern Internet era identity means separate distinct characters, numbers, or digits. Any two individuals in the technological Internet era shall hold a similar identity; it is just like an approbation that is made by themselves.

From a legal standpoint, identification refers to the formal recognition of an individual on government documents and records, which may include items like Voter ID, Aadhar Card, Passport, and similar official documents. Identity theft which is also known as Identity Fraud is when the personal identity of an individual is used by someone else (commonly, a stranger) without prior consultation, permission, or knowledge of that individual. These types of impressions are mainly used to commit the crime of fraud which usually results in financial harm to the individual and unlawful financial gain to the offender.

In a study named “Personal Data Protection Law No. 9887 Dated 2008” published by UNCTD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), a series of semi-structured interviews were used as the main tool for data collection. Twelve undergraduate students (six men and six women) at Flinders Business School participated in this study. The interview was designed as a face-to-face interview. Research—The results of current research show that even students have less knowledge of the specific problems associated with identity theft. Researchers in the study found that students were unable to take the necessary steps to reduce their risk of theft because of their limited knowledge or misconceptions about a topic students showed misconceptions about who criminals usually target when stealing personal information or who the thief is looking for.

Significance/Relevance: The discoveries made through this research add to our comprehension of students’ awareness of criminal activities. Furthermore, they hold valuable implications for government agencies and various stakeholders, including financial institutions and educational providers. These insights can assist in raising awareness among individuals regarding situations that could render them susceptible to identity theft [2].

While taking other countries into forethought, there are 15% of countries where there is no legislation present on data protection, some other 5% of countries in the world which do not provide any data or record about the enactment or presence of proper legislation, around 71% of the countries are there which have provided the data of proper legislation enactment. While there is other 9% of countries that provide data of drafted legislation present for data protection. Proceeding further with the report provided by the UNCTD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development), There are now 194 different countries in the world, with the UN (United Nations) reporting that only 128 possess some type of Data Privacy Legislation or Regulations. This leaves 66 countries with no Legislative Data Privacy Protection for their citizens. These include some of the major countries with fast-growing Internet use as well as established commercial centers. Among those on the list of countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, Botswana, and others [3].

Statistics in Developed Countries

As per “The Identity Theft Research Centre (ITRC) Annual Data Breach Report, 2022 [4]” report published by ITRC (Identity Theft Research Centre), the United States had the second-highest number of data breaches in a particular year which impacted around 442 million individuals. According to “Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book 2022 [5]” by FTC (Federal Trade Commission) recorded over 5.1 million reports in the year 2022 where 46% of cases were of fraud and 21% were of identity theft, in which credit card fraud accounted for 43.7% of identity theft. Also, in “Number of Digital Fraud Cases in Russia 2021” [6] published by SRD (Statista Research Department) on March 21, 2023, provided that in 2021, 249.2 thousand cases of internet fraud were reported in Russia. 117.7 thousand cases of the provided statistics were committed in the first half of the year in which nearly 150 billion Russian rubles were estimated to have been lost. According to research “Spam and Phishing [7]” by Kaspersky, it was provided that France is the sixth most prominent source of spam, it was responsible for 3.57% of spam in the world in 2021. Whereas, Russia was the largest source with a figure of 24.77% of all spam present in the world.

According to “Japan Cybersecurity Statistics [8]” in the past 5 years Japan has faced many notable cybersecurity cases, from the WannaCry ransomware assault in 2017 to the theft of cryptocurrency of

Japan (Coincheck) in 2018, it was noticed that the country's digital security is impassive. In 2022, there were 429 cases of breach of the Japanese Act on prohibited computer access, where 235 offenders were arrested. In September 2021, 97.1% reported some sort of cybersecurity issues and adopted measures.

Developing Countries

As per the "Breach Level Study Index [9]" conducted by the digital security firm Gemalto in 2017, it was reported that approximately 3.24 million records in India were either stolen, compromised, or lost. Notably, in that year, *identity theft* accounted for 58% of all data breach incidents. According to a report titled "Number of online identity theft offenses reported across India in 2021, by leading state [10]," published by Tanushree Basuroy on October 14, 2022, it was revealed that in 2021, Karnataka, a southern state in India, had the highest number of registered cases of *online identity theft*, totaling around 1.7 thousand cases reported to the authorities. The same report also indicates that in October 2022, the country witnessed an increase, with over four thousand cases of *online identity theft* reported.

In the report "Number of Internet violations reported in China March 2021 [11]" published by Lai Lin Thomala on February 23, 2023, there were around Five Thousand cases of cybersecurity (Identity Theft) and online gambling in China, Making up approximately 34% of all 11,594 Internet infraction instances. In the report "China data breach likely to fuel identity fraud, smishing attacks [12]" by Eileen Yu published on July 5, 2022, it is stated that there is a spike in Smishing attacks and *identity theft*, same report stated that the personal data of One billion residents of the country has been put up for sale online. Offenders purporting to have access to databases holding the personal information and data that have been offered out for sale on an online platform that is specialized in trading stolen datasets. Personal information including place of birth, National Identity Number, cell phone number, and was sold at 10 Bitcoins (\$197,376) for 24TB of data.

Types of Identity Theft

Identity theft manifests in various forms, each of which can inflict harm upon victims, affecting their credit, finances, and reputation. Here are some common types of identity theft:

1. **Financial Identity Theft:** Financial theft occurs when a person obtains and uses the personal data of another person to obtain some unlawful financial gains. This is the most common form of identity theft. It may involve any account that an offender opens and uses without the consent of the victim, for which he or she will be financially liable. Identity thieves target various accounts, including credit cards, subscriptions, insurance policies, loans, and more. Typically, they obtain this information through data breaches or acquire it on the dark web.
2. **Child Identity Theft:** Child identity theft happens when someone unlawfully obtains and exploits a minor's personal information to engage in fraudulent activities and gain unlawful benefits. This perpetrator can be a family member, acquaintance, or even a stranger who specifically targets children and misuses their personal details for fraudulent purposes. Children's social security numbers are desirable simply because they have no information associated with them, as generally offenders can exploit a child's identity to open new credit accounts, gain driving licenses, and even can purchase a property in their name. Since most youngsters do not realize the problem for years, this deception can continue unnoticed for years. This type of identity theft is quite rampant as studies suggested that it has become more prevalent in recent years.
3. **Medical Identity Theft:** Medical identity theft occurs when an offender often poses as another person to obtain health care services. This entails obtaining prescriptions for drugs, accessing medical services, and obtaining medical devices and supplies under the victim's name by stealing personal information such as your health insurance or medical records. This type of identity theft results in the victim having bills for prescriptions, services, or devices that were not availed by the victim. An inaccurate medical record can make it harder for him or her to get the care needed in the future and even affect insurance coverage [13].
4. **Criminal Identity Theft:** Criminal identity theft takes place when an individual who has been cited or arrested for a crime pretends to be someone else by using that person's name and personal

details. This is typically done to evade legal actions such as summons, the detection of a warrant issued under their actual name, or to avoid having an arrest or conviction record linked to their true identity. The offenders could be potentially adept to get away with charges and procedures by making a false identity or utilizing a stolen identity card, such as someone else's driving license, to show the cops. This form of identity theft is difficult to identify until the repercussions, such as receiving a court summons, a bench warrant issued for the arrest of the victim, or a background check is issued against the victim.

5. **Tax Identity Theft:** Tax identity theft is an aspect of financial identity theft that occurs when your tax returns and related information are compromised. The perpetrator uses your social security number and other information to submit a false tax return in the hopes of receiving a refund from the organization of income tax. Some perpetrators will also try to obtain a refund from the state in which the victim resides. The victim of this type of identity theft is often unaware of the fact until they file a tax return.
6. **Identity Cloning:** Identity cloning is such type of identity theft where the imposter continues to exploit someone else's personal information to develop their new identity and conceal their own true identity over the long term. The perpetrators often commit this type of identity theft to avoid scrutiny over their past criminal convictions or bankruptcy. It is among the most difficult types of identity theft to track down since the offender gets the impression to be living a normal, law-abiding life.

STAGES OF IDENTITY THEFT

What?

Identity theft transpires when an individual acquires another person's personal or financial information with the intention of assuming their identity for illicit purposes, such as engaging in fraudulent activities, unauthorized transactions, or purchases. True identity theft occurs when the perpetrator steals information about a person's identity, such as their name, address, phone number, date of birth, Social Insurance Number (SIN), driving license number, or health card number, and then impersonates the victim, effectively stealing their identity.

Where?

Identity theft is a crime that may occur in a virtual or even in a physical form, as the instances of identity theft are evolving as technologies advance and thieves get more creative. Although users are storing more and more information online, reports revealed that a stolen wallet or pocketbook is still one of the leading causes of identity theft. An average person's wallet includes a plethora of sensitive personal information, such as credit cards, driver's licenses, and, in certain cases, Social Security Numbers, through which fraudsters may establish new credit lines, rent or purchase a property, use to charge purchases or apply for loans. Of course, a wallet is just one of the physical resources an identity thief can leverage, but considering other sources like digital devices (mobile, laptop, tablets, etc.), mail, trash, insecure online data, unsafe connections, insecure websites, password security (easy-to-guess passwords), phishing, doxing, and many more [14].

When?

The phrase "identity theft" is a modern term for a centuries-old phenomenon. This crime has evolved and so have the methods to commit it. The history of identity theft extends backward to the first times that some form of verification of identity was used. Since this type of crime certainly dates back to ancient times, the sorts of identity theft seen back then were most likely the most rudimentary, simple impersonation and lying. But as more contemporary varieties of identity theft are thought to have started with the introduction of credit cards and the increasing number of identity verification processes in government. Identity theft has become more prevalent as there are fewer chances for identity verification [15].

Why?

Identity theft is an intentional exploitation of another person's identity to acquire monetary advantages or get credit and other benefits and inflict loss on another person. Identity theft occurs for many causes such as opening new credit cards or other lines of credit using someone else's identity information, making unauthorized purchases by using existing credit or debit cards of another person, filing a tax return using someone else's Social Security Number to claim the refund, to get medical care by using someone else's health insurance, to pass an employment background check or to rent or purchase a property on someone else's name and financial standing [16].

How?

Fraudsters are always looking for new ways to commit identity theft to obtain some unlawful gain. Some of the common ways in which identity theft happens are as follows:

1. **Phishing:** Phishing refers to the practice of gathering personal information and data through the use of fraudulent email messages sent to the target, where the receiver is persuaded in such a way that the email was sent by an authorized and legitimate source or that it is the one required by the recipient. For instance, a bank or a corporation where the receiver works [17].
2. **Pharming:** Pharming is a type of online fraud similar to phishing, in which the traffic on a website is controlled and personal information is stolen. It is essentially the unlawful practice of creating fake websites and then diverting users to them. The attacker employs desktop redirection or popups to present the phishing website in a camouflaged link. In short, it is a practice of presenting fake, fraudulent, and data-grabbing websites as legitimate and trusted ones.
3. **Skimming:** Skimming, also known as Credit Card Theft, occurs when small devices, also known as skimmers, are illegally installed on ATMs (Automated Teller Machines), POS (Point of Sale) terminals, or fuel pumps to capture data or record cardholders' PINs (Personal Identification Number). These collected data are often used by fraudsters to create fake debit and credit cards and then steal from victims' accounts [18].
4. **Data Breaches:** Data breaches may lead to exposing your passwords or sensitive data, it occurs when offender often hackers break into services that you are availing of and might steal your stored information. This could include your name, email, address, passwords, credit and debit card numbers, and even your social security number. To perpetrate this form of deception, hackers frequently employ advanced technical tactics or manipulate an organization's employee into clicking on a link that opens the door for exploitation. Regardless of the method employed, a single data breach has the potential to expose the Personal Identification Information (PII) of countless unsuspecting individuals all at once [19].
5. **Lost or Stolen Wallets, Phones, or Digital Devices:** Lost or stolen wallets (or purses) are often a good source of personal information for fraudsters, and it is a general practice that people carry their credentials like a credit card, identity card, or driver's license in their wallet or purse, that is enough for a criminal to steal and utilize victim's identity. Also, lost or stolen phones or other digital devices are a golden ticket for identity thieves, as with access to victims' phones cybercriminals could make unauthorized payments and purchases by using their credit line or might break into personal data like photos, videos, or sensitive information stored in the device [20].

RECORDING AND REPORTING IDENTITY THEFT

Cybercrimes are at an all-high in India at present days, since demonetization boosted online transactions, these crimes escalated. The surge in these criminal activities led to the establishment of the "Cyber and Information Security Division (C&IS)," which focuses on matters related to cybersecurity, cybercrime, the National Information Security Policy and Guidelines (NISPG), and the execution of NISPG, among other responsibilities. Within the C&IS, a department called the "Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems" (CCTNS) was formed in 2009. This initiative gained approval from the Cabinet Committee and was designed to establish a comprehensive nationwide network infrastructure for an IT (Information Technology)-based system to track criminals and manage crime detentions [21].

Laws Enacted In India That Are Related To Identity Theft Are As Follows

1. ***Indian Penal Code, 1860:*** Identity theft is not simply a cybercrime; it may also be committed physically, such as when someone steals another person's wallet (or purse), which may include documents consisting of PII (Personal Identification Information) that can be readily utilized to perpetrate identity theft. As a result, it may be determined that identity theft incorporates both theft and forgery and so the provision in the Indian Penal Code, 1860 for forgery can be used to prosecute identity theft. The following provisions under the Indian Penal Code, of 1860 govern such practices:
 - (a) Section 416: Cheating by personation
 - (b) Section 463: Forgery
 - (c) Section 464: Making a false document
 - (d) Section 469: Forgery for purpose of harming reputation
 - (e) Section 471: Using as genuine a forged document or electronic record
2. ***Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008:*** The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 is the primary governing legislation for cybercrimes in India. However, its primary goal was to recognize e-commerce in India, it did not define cybercrime. In Section 3A the Act defines "electronic signature," which "mandates a technologically neutral threshold of 'reliability' that must be met for the Central Government to notify a new type of electronic signature under Schedule II." The following sections of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008 governs such practices:
 - (a) Section 66: Computer-related offense
 - (b) Section 66C: Punishment for identity theft
 - (c) Section 66D: Punishment for cheating by personation by using computer resource
 - (d) Section 74: Publication for fraudulent purpose

However, the Act ensures to protect personal and private data from infringement, it is not as effective as one might think. The statute also specifies particular challenges and standards that must address the scope of identity theft and may necessitate immediate amendment. The Act does not define what constitutes an identifiable characteristic, which is at the heart of "identity theft." However, the "Information Technology Rules, 2011" has stated a definition of "Sensitive Personal Information." Each of these terms sounds similar, but they are not interchangeable and cannot have the same meaning. Therefore, it is the desecration of the court by using interpretation statutes to determine what exactly it is.

EFFECTS OF IDENTITY THEFT

Identity theft is much worse than anyone could assume, everyday new news reports explaining new techniques of how fraudsters have stolen someone's personal information, as well as warnings about big data breaches that make the sensitive information available to hackers on the dark web are seen.

On an Individual

The negative effects of identity theft are often financial, but there can also be emotional repercussions one could face. For instance, if an offender commits a crime under your name and police identify you as the offender, which is known as criminal identity theft, you can depict the stress and disruption to your life until the matter is addressed. The effects of identity theft that can be faced by an individual are as follows:

- Financial damage
- Emotional damage
- Social damage

On a Business

Business identity theft occurs when someone impersonates an organization rather than an individual to execute malicious schemes. This can illustrate itself in a variety of ways, including Acquiring

company-related data via stealing business ID documents/credentials, filing false business paperwork to get refundable business credits or to begin personal identity theft, or sending fraudulent messages/emails in the name of the firm to get under wrapped personal or business information [22].

On Society

Identity theft is an emerging criminal offense that has serious ramifications in our society. Its victims lose their identity in a matter of seconds, irrevocably altering one's future. The established nature of modern electronic payment methods simplifies crime. In today's global economy, sellers of commodities and services are driven to offer their goods and services in exchange for money. The crime is both harrowing and traumatic as it has long-term consequences for individuals, governments, and the economy. The consequences also affect business, the government, and society as a whole.

Preventions for Identity Theft

Identity theft may take years to become apparent and much longer to clean your reputation and credit rating, so prevention is paramount. Some steps to protect yourself from identity theft:

1. **Use strong passwords and PINs:** People commonly use their birthdate, phone number, or physical address as their passwords and pin codes. This information is significantly vulnerable to being used for identity theft. If your friend or near ones can guess your pins, a hacker can, too. It is advisable to look for a password generator to generate a random password, or get a creative and strong password (using a combination of letters, numbers, and symbols) [23].
2. **Be defensive with sensitive information:** Submitting sensitive information by email, social media, or text message is not an ideal approach. These procedures might not be secure as any hacker can obtain them by illegally entering your account. One should look for warning signs that a website is safe and legitimate before entering your sensitive information, it is preferable to make sure the site URL (Uniform Resource Locator) begins with https (Hypertext Transfer Protocol) here, "s" stands for secure and displays a locked padlock. Monitor Bank Statements
3. **Boost your computer's security:** In usual practice, hackers are unable to acquire your computer or mobile devices if you use antivirus software. According to Federal Trade Commission (FTC), you might be a victim of malware, which includes viruses, spyware, and other unwanted software. To reduce the risk of cyberattacks, it is crucial to regularly update all software, including your web browser, with automatic updates, as criminals often find it easier to exploit vulnerabilities in outdated software. You should never turn off the firewall protection of your computer.
4. **It's just not digital:** Keeping in mind that tangible papers are still widely exploited in identity theft, given the prevalence of phishing scams and internet breaches, dumpster diving may appear to be an archaic method of collecting personal information, yet thieves persist to use it. It is preferable that you should shred or burn documents containing personal information before disposing of them and should store copies of important documents.

Case Laws on Identity Theft

- ***In Re Zappos.com, Inc, Theresa Stevens and Others appeal against Zappos.com, Inc (2018) [24]:*** In this appeal, the plaintiff claimed that there was an imminent risk of identity theft or fraud resulting from the Zappos data breaches. They defined identity theft and identity fraud based on the definitions provided by the USGAO (United States Government Accountability Office), which encompass a range of criminal activities. This includes situations where Personal Identification Information (PII) is utilized for fraudulent purposes, such as credit card fraud, phone or utility fraud, bank fraud, and government fraud. The plaintiffs argued that the information obtained during the Zappos breach could potentially be exploited for identity theft, particularly by heightening their susceptibility to "phishing" and "pharming" techniques. These methods allow hackers to leverage the information they already possess to obtain additional PII (Personal Identification Information). Plaintiffs also claim that their credit card details were among the data stolen in the breach.

The United States Courts of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit determined that the Zappos data breaches indeed contained information that could be exploited for identity theft and identity fraud. Consequently, they reversed the district court's judgment regarding the standing of the plaintiffs and remanded the case for further proceedings.

- ***President Balochistan High Court Bar Association against Federation of Pakistan & Others (2012) [25]***: In this case, a group of 8 people was alleged of committing kidnapping for ransom and activating unregistered SIM cards by stealing the personal information of others by committing identity theft.

It was held that implementing the directive dated May 21, 2012, regarding the issuing of 5 SIMs per citizen solely for the Province of Balochistan would not serve the objective of reducing the illegal use of mobile phones in crimes. A person who desires to use mobile phones in any criminal activity can obtain SIM cards from another province that can be utilized throughout the country. In a case of kidnapping for ransom of Doctor Saeed, the Quetta of police, in coordination with the Bahawalpur police, apprehended a group of three people involved in illegally activating unregistered SIMs through identity theft using data taken from voter's lists.

- ***In Steven Bassett's appeal against AMB Parking Services, Inc. and others, (2018) [26]***: When Steven Bassett used his credit card at an AMB parking garage, he received a receipt that included the full expiration date of the card—a breach of the rule that companies redact some credit card information from printed receipts, which is a common warning sign of identity theft. The question that arrived before the McKeown, Circuit Judge was: “Is receiving an overly revealing credit card receipt—unseen by others and unused by identity thieves—a sufficient injury to confer Article III standing?”
- ***In the State of Tamil Nadu's appeal against Suhas Katti (2004) [27]***: The Suhas Katti case is the first in India to set a precedent in the field of cyber-harassment. A lady filed the complaint after receiving filthy texts about her. The case involves online stalking and harassment of a lady. It was filed in February of 2004, and the Chennai cybercrime unit concluded the process of conviction [28]. This case involved a complex identity theft and impersonation scheme where the accused created fake social media profiles and impersonated the victim to defame her. The court ruled that impersonation with the intent to harm someone's reputation constitutes an offense under the Information Technology Act, of 2000.
- ***In Sanjay Jha against State of Chhattisgarh (2014) [29]***: In this case, the second bail application was filed by the petitioner as the first application was dismissed on merits as the co-accused was released on bail by the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India on grounds that she was a young girl of 21 years and was pursuing her first-year studies in a legal context, the accused individuals are alleged to have created counterfeit documents from the Internet. They purportedly employed fabricated letterhead bearing the signature of the railway minister, organized a mock medical examination, fabricated a medical report, and subsequently secured a payment of Rs 20 Lakhs from the complainant. The petitioner's request for bail was denied by the Hon'ble High Court.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After the study, the researcher humbly submitted some recommendations regarding Identity Theft—A Contemporary Threat to law and policymakers. As only stating problems and not recommending solutions for them, defeats the purpose of the research.

- While several countries can prosecute certain components of identity theft-related offenses under standard rules such as fraud or forgery, only a handful have established explicit legislation criminalizing identity theft as a separate offense. This suggests that the need for such solutions is not universally recognized.
- Governments might encourage awareness camps, seminars, capacity-building programs, or dedicated cybersecurity subjects in schools, colleges, and undergraduate programs to educate students about such threats and how to prevent them.
- Currently, there is a need for some technologies that would provide a new “Three-step Authentication and Protection” (similar to parental control) for devices primarily used by

children to prevent their vulnerability to data breaches or information theft, which would lead to cybercrimes such as identity theft.

- Firewalls with identity theft protection should be developed and installed in every device, which would immediately notify the offender's unauthorized access to the victim's devices and personal information.
- With a spike in the number of frauds and cyber-related crimes, the government should come up with stringent legislation to protect the public's interest and prevent mishaps on the Internet.
- To ensure the protection of sensitive personal data held by intermediaries and service providers, it is imperative to enact laws that guarantee data protection and privacy. Shortfalls in the information in the Information Technology (Amendment) Act of 2008, although the Act helps to protect personal and private data from misuse, it is not as strong as one might think. The statute additionally lays out specific hazards and standards that must address the scope of identity theft and may necessitate immediate amendment. Section 66C, which protects an individual's "Unique Identity Feature" in digital space, has not been stated in the statute. The Act does not define what constitutes an Identifiable attribute, which is at the heart of "Identity Theft."
- Identity-related information is essential in social life. A particular method to criminalize identity theft should allow the legislator to respond to the rising relevance of identity-related information by enacting a criminal law provision that will focus on this information as the object of legal protection [30].
- The construction of legislative frameworks to criminalize identity theft is scheduled to take place only on a national scale. As of yet, no international organization dealing with criminal law concerns has established a unique identity theft legislation with criminalization measures for related offenses. Notwithstanding the lack of universally applicable criminal law norms, international and regional organizations have expanded their pursuits in this area [31].

CONCLUSION

Identity theft is defined as a person portraying another person without their consent or knowledge to engage in illegal or personal-advantage acts. It cannot be accepted like any other minor offense. A person might be forgiven for losing everything, but losing their identity is like losing themselves since any culpability that comes during identity theft lies on the individual who has been duped.

Information and identity theft may appear less complex and risky compared to traditional crimes like robbery and extortion. Nevertheless, whether it's a single incident or repeated occurrences, online identity theft should be treated with similar severity as physical identity theft in the eyes of the law. Every offense, regardless of its frequency, should be subject to appropriate legal consequences, as an offense remains an offense.

The researcher has examined the topic "Identity Theft: A Contemporary Threat," its meaning, statistics, legal parameters, types, stages, recording and reporting, effects, preventive measures, and case laws in this study. Since it has grown into a widespread and increasing threat in recent years as technological advancement, as the number of victims grows, it is prudent to take precautions to avoid malicious actors using your personal information and wreaking havoc on your personal and financial life. This sort of crime may result in substantial and long-term ramifications for the victim, such as money losses, credit score deterioration, and the need to spend time and resources recovering their identity.

People must be informed that not only exploiting others' data is illegal, but also gathering personal and sensitive information about others is illegal. People will not even attempt to acquire access to the private information of others if they are aware of this. Identity thieves must realize that looking into someone's personal life is as detrimental as peering into someone's lavatory. Nothing is creepier in this world than someone claiming to be someone they are not.

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