

**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY WITH
SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAIPUR**

Thesis Submitted for the Award of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Law

By

Deepak Saini

Registration Number: 12109437

Supervised By

Dr. Amit Kashyap (29032)

Associate Professor, School of Law



**LOVELY PROFESSIONAL UNIVERSITY, PUNJAB
2026**

Declaration

I, hereby declare that the presented work in the thesis entitled “**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAIPUR**” in fulfilment of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph. D.)** is the outcome of research work carried out by me under the supervision of Dr. Amit Kashyap, working as associate professor, in the school of law of Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India. In keeping with the general practice of reporting scientific observations, due acknowledgments have been made whenever the work described here has been based on the findings of other investigators. This work has not been submitted in part or full to any other University or Institute for the award of any degree.



(Signature of Scholar)

Name of the scholar: Deepak Saini

Registration No.: 12109437

Department/School: School of Law

Lovely Professional University, Punjab, India

Certificate

This is to certify that the work reported in the Ph. D. thesis entitled **PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAIPUR**” submitted in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** in the School of Law, is a research work carried out by **Deepak Saini, 12109437** is Bonafide record of his original work carried out under my supervision and that no part of thesis has been submitted for any other degree, diploma or equivalent course.



(Signature of Supervisor)

Name of supervisor: Dr. Amit Kashyap

Designation: Associate Professor

Department/School: School of Law

University: Lovely Professional University

Abstract

The relentless pace of internet expansion, while fostering unprecedented advancements in global communication, has simultaneously created an escalating crisis in the realm of child protection. Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE), encompassing cyber dangers such as child pornography, online predation, and grooming, has emerged as a pervasive threat that respects no borders. The scale of this problem is staggering, evidenced by institutional data reporting millions of suspicious files annually, signifying that the proliferation of cheap, large-scale digital storage continues to fuel the crisis, posing substantial hurdles to judicial and enforcement systems worldwide. In India, the rapid adoption of digital technology, while vital for educational and social progress, has rendered children increasingly vulnerable to these sophisticated cyber threats.

The intention of this comprehensive socio-legal study, titled “**PROTECTION OF CHILDREN FROM ONLINE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO JAIPUR,**” is to rigorously investigate the nature and scope of child sexual abuse in cyberspace. The research focuses specifically on the challenges of prevention and protection within the Indian context, with a localized and intensive examination of the efficacy of legal mechanisms in Jaipur, the capital of Rajasthan. Beyond merely describing the threats, the study aims to critically evaluate the existing legal procedures and safeguards intended to prevent further occurrences of this crime and address the holistic requirements of child victims. To provide an interdisciplinary and thorough context for tackling the complexities of child protection in the digital landscape of India, this thesis utilizes the **descriptive-dochtrinal analytical approach**. This methodology involves a detailed textual analysis of core Indian statutes, primarily the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012**, and the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, alongside a critical review of judicial precedents set by both Indian courts and influential international rulings. This doctrial analysis is further buttressed by an **empirical study**, which gathers firsthand data in the Jaipur region to assess the on-the-ground reality of implementation, including prevalence, familial awareness, and the performance of supportive non-judicial authorities.

The research identifies a critical and dangerous **gap between legislative intent and operational efficacy**. While the Indian legal framework demonstrates commendable strengths, such as child-friendly procedures and stringent penalties against offenders, its implementation is crippled by systemic failures. These include the significant lack of trained staff within institutional programs like the Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), the absence of standard operating procedures for digital evidence handling, and inconsistencies in legal terminology that impede effective cross-jurisdictional cooperation.

Furthermore, a central finding of the study reveals a profound **socio-cultural awareness deficit**. Despite the growing menace of OCSE, the familial and societal attitude in the study area still lacks sufficient compassion and supportive infrastructure for victims. This deficit in care and digital literacy contributes directly to severe underreporting and subjects child victims to compounded trauma, social exclusion, and long-lasting vulnerability, justifying the urgent call for remediation. The study scrutinizes the multifaceted roles of the Judiciary, Administrative bodies, and NGOs in managing these cases, highlighting the need for greater coordination and resource allocation.

The thesis concludes by emphasizing the significance of a robust, multi-layered approach to regulating the internet, integrating the protective ethos of international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. This article makes a significant contribution to the policy discussion by urging all stakeholders—including law enforcement, government agencies, NGOs, and internet service providers—to work collaboratively. It explores possibilities for legislative interventions, such as amending the IT Act to effectively counter the exploitation of encrypted messaging and the dark web, and recommends comprehensive national awareness campaigns to foster digital safety and victim support. Ultimately, the thesis advocates for proactive legal and social reforms that can ameliorate the current situation, safeguarding the rights of children in an increasingly complex and developed cyberspace.

Acknowledgment

First and foremost, I thank the almighty God for blessing me to complete this Ph.D. thesis. I am deeply grateful to my wife and parents, whose unwavering support, sacrifice, and encouragement provided the foundation necessary for this extensive research work. Without their belief and understanding, this project would not have been possible.

I extend my sincerest gratitude to my guide, **Dr. Amit Kashyap**, Associate Professor, Lovely Professional University, for his unwavering support, patience, and motivation throughout my Ph.D. research. His immense knowledge and guidance have not only assisted me in writing my thesis but also instilled research values and ethics within me.

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to **Dr. Seema Modi, Dr. Varinder Kaur, and Dr. Mandeep Kaur** for their profound support and invaluable contributions to this research. Their sustained motivation, expertise in legal propositions, and precise guidance on crucial points of law were instrumental in shaping the theoretical foundation and overall direction of this thesis. Their scholarly insights have significantly enhanced the quality and rigor of this work.

I feel privileged to pursue my Ph.D. from the School of Law at Lovely Professional University and extend my heartfelt gratitude to **Dr. Anand Pawar**, Dean and Head of School of Law, for providing a peaceful and unmatched academic atmosphere. I am incredibly thankful to the Ph.D. committee at Lovely Professional University for their continuous guidance and valuable insights in the field of legal research.

My completion of this work could not have been accomplished without the help of the library in-charge at the School of Law and the Central Library at Lovely Professional University, and the support of **Dr. Navpreet Kaur and Ms. Megha Sood**. I am grateful for the colossal collection of study materials and research databases at the University libraries. Thanks to other faculty members at the School of Law, Lovely Professional University, for their guidance and assistance. I also thank the non-teaching and administrative staff for ensuring smooth Ph.D. admission and submission-related formalities.

Lastly, my research owes a special thanks to my children, friends, and other family members, whose unwavering support and love have kept me motivated throughout this journey. I apologize if I have missed mentioning anyone.

Thank you all once again.

Deepak Saini

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
Acknowledgment	vi
Abbreviations	xii
List of Cases	xv
List of Tables	xviii
List of Figure	xxv
List of Appendices	xxx
Chapter 1:	1
Understanding Online Sexual Exploitation of Children: An Introduction	1
1.1 Background of the Study	5
1.1.1 Internet and Child Abuse	5
1.1.2 Internet Ecosystem and Sources of Online Child Abuses	9
1.2. Literature review	12
1.2.1 Offenders' Traits and their Mode of Operations	12
1.2.2 Theoretical Orientation: the Person-Situational Interaction	20
1.2.3 Practical Factors Causing the Growth of Online Child Abuses	25
1.2.4 Situational Prevention	30
1.2.5 Management and Prevention against CSA	33
1.2.6 Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation	39
1.3 Research gaps : Emerging Global and National Trends	54
1.4 Problem Statement	55
1.5 Hypothesis	59
1.6 Objectives of the Study	59
1.7 Research Methodology	59
1.8 Data Collection Methods	60
1.9 Rationale of the Study	60
1.10 Research Questions	61
1.11 Significance of the Study	61
1.12 Chapterisation	62

Chapter 2:	64
Global Legal Frameworks for Tackling Online Child Sexual Exploitation	64
2.1 UNO’s Role in Enforcing Online Child Safety and Initiatives	66
2.1.1 UN’s International Instruments to Prevent Online Child Abuses	69
2.1.2 UN’s Regional Instruments to Prevent Online Child Abuses	71
2.1.3 UN’s Functional Units that are Active on Online Child Safety	74
2.2 Regionwise Legal Provisions on Child Protection Against Online Abuses	75
2.3 Asia’s Legal Framework on Online Child Safety	76
Judicial Responses to Online Child Abuse: A Global Perspective	82
3.1 Children’s Use of ICT and Social Media in India	86
3.2 Child Safety Index for India	87
3.2.1 India’s Position in The Child Online Safety Index (COSI)	90
3.2.2 Stakeholders of COSI	91
3.3 Prevailing Scenario of Online Child Sexual Abuse in India	93
3.4 India’s Legal Framework on Child Online Safety	94
3.4.1 Lawsuits on Online Child Abuses in India	100
3.4.2 The DPDP Rules 2025: Operationalizing Digital Safety and Verifiable Consent	102
3.5.1 Benchmarking Indian laws for child online protection	108
3.5.2 Limitations and Lacuna of India’s Policies and Laws Against Online Child Abuse	108
3.6 Child Online Protection Response System	114
3.6.1 Monitoring, Reporting, and Removing Online Child Sexual Abuse Material	116
3.6.3 Cybercrime Cells and Cyber Forensic Capacities	120
3.7 Safeguarding digital evidence	121
3.8 Indian Government Roles and Responses on Child Information Safety	122
3.9 India, and Its International Status.	124

3.10 Outcome	125
Chapter 4:	126
The Role of Administration, Judiciary, and NGOs: Safeguarding Children Online	126
4.1 Role of State's Judiciary and Legal Systems in Child Safety Against Online Abuses	127
4.1.1 Role of Indian Judiciary	136
4.1.2 Courts' Observations and Judiciary Guidelines	149
4.1.3 Institutional Accountability and Digital Hygiene Mandates (2026)	153
4.2 NGO's and the Child Protection	154
4.3 Social Protection and Livelihood Support	162
4.3.1 Response, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration	163
4.3.2 NGO's Approach in Addressing Online Child Sexual Abuse	166
4.4 Inference from NGO's Work	169
4.4.1 Supporting Community Empowerment	169
4.4.2 Sustainable and Coordinated Support	170
4.4.3 'Not to Harm' is a Key Priority	171
4.4.4 Attention to Representation and Diversity	173
4.4.5 The Importance of Children's Participation in Honduras	174
4.4.6 Programs and NGOs on Online Child Abuses in India	175
Chapter 5:	179
Conceptualization, Methodology and Data Analysis	179
5.1 Study Conceptualization	180
5.2 Methodology and Tools	202
5.3 Sample Selection and Data Collection	205
5.4 Data Pre-Processing	206
5.5 Analysis and Findings	206
5.5.1 Children Respondents Analysis	207
5.5.2 NGO Analysis	224
5.5.3 Legal Analysis	240

5.5.4 General Public Response	256
5.6 Hicklin Test.....	283
5.7 Community Standard Test.....	290
5.8 Law Commission Report	293
5.9 Discussion	295
Chapter 6	300
Conclusion and Suggestions for Safeguarding Children Online	300
6.1 Hypotheses Justification	301
H1: Partially Supported	301
H2: Fully Satisfied	303
Combined Implications of H1 and H2	304
6.2 Legislative and Policy Suggestions.....	305
6.3 Judicial and Administrative Measures	308
6.4 Social, Educational, and Community Recommendations	309
6.5 Consolidated Analytical Table	311
BIBLIOGRAPHY	314
Appendices.....	336
Questionnaire 1: For the General Public	336
Questionnaire 2: For Children Respondents	340
Questionnaire 3: NGO & Local Administrators.....	343
Questionnaire 4: Legal Professionals.....	346
List of Publications.....	349
List of Conferences	350
List of Workshops.....	351

Abbreviations

AIR	All India Reporter
BNS	Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita
CBI	Central Bureau of Investigation
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CCPWC	Child Care Protection and Welfare Committee
CCTNS	Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems
CERT-In	Indian Computer Emergency Response Team
CISSP	Certified Information Systems Security Professional
COSI	Child Online Safety Industry
CRY	Child Rights and You
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DDoS	Distributed Denial of Service
DDPA	Digital Data Protection Act
DEITY	Department of Electronics and Information Technology
DoT	Department of Telecommunications
DPDP	Digital Personal Data Protection Act (2023)
DRC	Declaration of the Rights of the Child
DSCI	Data Security Council of India
ECHR	European Convention for HR
FTC	Federal Trade Commission
GNIIs	Gross National Incomes
I4C	Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (MHA)
IB	Intelligence Bureau
ICMEC	International Centre for Missing and Exploitation Children
ICMEC	International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children
ICPS	Integrated Child Protection Scheme (MWCD)
ICSE	International Child Sexual Exploitation Database
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IEO	Internet of Everything
IIOC	Indecent Image of Children

INCYP-NET	Integrated National Cyber Protection Network
IPC	Indian Penal Code
ISEA	Information Security Education & Awareness
ISP	Internet Service Providers
IT	Information Technologies
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
LEAs	Law Enforcement Agencies
MEITY	Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MMS	Multimedia Messaging Service
MOOC	Massive Open Online Courses
NATGRID	National Intelligence Grid
NBS-VAC	National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children
NCMEC	National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children
NCPCR	National Commission for Protection of Child Rights
NCTC	National Cybercrime Training Centre
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NIMHANS	National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences
NSSO	National Sample Survey Office
NTRO	National Technical Research Organization
OCSEA	Online Child Sexual Exploitation & Abuse
OPSC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
OSA	Online Sexual Abuse
P2P	Police to Peer
POCSO	Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012
SC	Supreme Court
SCC	Supreme Court Cases
SJPU	Special Juvenile Police Unit
SNS	Social Networking Sites
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases

TA-CSA	Teacher perpetrated CSA
TOR	The Onion Router
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN	United Nations
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDOC	UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime)
UOI	Union of India
URLs	United Resource Locator
V. / vs.	Versus
WWW	World Wide Web

List of Cases

Air Force Bal Bharti School case

Ajay Murlidhar Batheja vs The State Of Maharashtra And Anr

Alakh Alok Srivastava v. Union of India

Ankur Narang v. State

Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition

Aveek Sarkar & Anr v. State of West Bengal & Anr.

Avnish Bajaj v. State

Binoj P.J. v. State of Karnataka

Bois Locker Room Case

Bytedance (India) Technology v. S. Muthukumar

CBI v. Anurag Sharma

Gagan Harsh Sharma And Anr vs. The State Of Maharashtra And Anr.

Gaurav Jain v. Union of India

In Re Alarming Rise in the Number of Reported Child Rape Incidents

In Re: Prajwala

Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish

Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India & Ors

Kamlesh Vaswani v. Union of India

Karttunen v. Finland

L v. Finland

Lakshmi Kant Pandey v Union of India

Mahesh v. State of T.N.

MF Hussain v. Rajkumar Pandey

Miller v. California

Mohini Jain Vs. State of Karnataka

New Zealand v. Rowe

P.G. Sam Infant Jones v. State Represented by Inspector of Police

Pinki v. State of Uttar Pradesh

Prerna Singh Bindra v. Union of India

R v. Oliver

R v. Sharpe

Raghuraj Singh v. Air Force Bal Bharti School

Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra

Regina v. Hicklin

Sakshi v. Union of India

Sharat Babu Digumarti vs Government (NCT of Delhi)

Shifu Sunkriti v. State of Karnataka

Smt Seema V. Ashwani Kumar

State of Kerala v. Rajesh

State of Maharashtra v. Rahul

State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh

State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti

State of Uttar Pradesh v. Anurudh

State of Uttar Pradesh v. Ram Bhawan & Anr. (Banda case)

Sunil Mehra v. Delhi Administration

U.S. v. Mecham

U.S. v. Tatum

Unknown vs. Narasimha

Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan

Vishal Jeet V. Union of India

List of Tables

- Table 1: Legal Provisions of Child Safety Against Online Pornography
- Table 2: Legal Provisions on Child Online Safety in Asian Selected Countries
- Table 3: India's Comparative Score of Online Child Exploitation
- Table 4: Distinctive Legal Security Framework effective under POCSO, IPC and BNS
- Table 5: Cyber Crimes Against Children in India
- Table 6: Variables used in the Analysis
- Table 7: Frequency of age of the respondents
- Table 8: Frequency of gender of the respondents
- Table 9: Frequency of Education of the respondents
- Table 10: Frequency of Respondents heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities
- Table 11: Frequency of the respondents heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents
- Table 12: Frequency of the respondents heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries
- Table 13: Frequency of the respondents faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country
- Table 14: Frequency of the respondents' kid of their age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on respondents
- Table 15: Frequency of the respondents think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body

- Table 16: Frequency of the respondents heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents
- Table 17: Frequency of the respondents heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation
- Table 18: Frequency of the respondents ever asked their teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that they were scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain
- Table 19: Frequency of the respondents ever met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities
- Table 20: Frequency of the respondents know any elders/neighbor's/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation
- Table 21: Frequency of the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation
- Table 21 A: Frequency of the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents
- Table 22: Frequency of the respondents thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation
- Table 23: Frequency of the respondents attended any awareness events organized in your school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation
- Table 24: Frequency of the respondents parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online
- Table 25: Frequency of type of unit

- Table 26: Frequency of Location
- Table 27: Frequency of Type of Activity done by the unit
- Table 28: Frequency of Person Interviewed on the unit
- Table 29: Frequency of the respondents stated about how familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 30: Frequency of historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives
- Table 31: Frequency of the respondents noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases
- Table 32: Frequency of law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations
- Table 33: Frequency of causes of growth/spread of online child exploitations in recent world
- Table 34: Frequency of international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number
- Table 35: Frequency of International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations
- Table 36: Frequency of effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 37: Frequency of the respondents think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives
- Table 38: Frequency of respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system
- Table 39: Frequency of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety
- Table 40: Frequency of How many cases of online sexual exploitation on child have you handled in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan so far
- Table 41: Frequency of get support and help from local judiciary, law and order system (police department)

- Table 42: Frequency of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 43: Frequency of awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan
- Table 44: Frequency of respondents stated about public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 45: Frequency of age of the respondents
- Table 46: Frequency of gender
- Table 47: Frequency of Education of the respondents
- Table 47: Frequency of Occupation of the respondents
- Table 49: Frequency of Experience of the respondents
- Table 50: Frequency of respondents obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 51: Frequency of historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences to handle the current crimes in these fields
- Table 52: Frequency of historic cases of India's online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources
- Table 53: Frequency of respondents ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation
- Table 54: Frequency of International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 55: Frequency of severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India

- Table 56: Frequency of effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 57: Frequency of India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 58: Frequency of NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 59: Frequency of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 60: Frequency severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan
- Table 61: Frequency sufficient public awareness in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan on the impacts of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 62: Frequency schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child
- Table 63: Frequency of age of the respondents
- Table 64: Frequency of gender of the respondents
- Table 65: Frequency of Occupation of the respondents
- Table 66: Frequency of Educational Background of the respondents
- Table 67: Frequency of historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 68: Frequency of primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 69: Frequency of evaluation of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time

- Table 70: Frequency of aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation
- Table 71: Frequency of believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 72: Frequency of rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse
- Table 73: Frequency of awareness of any specific laws in India that address OCSE
- Table 74: Frequency of legal provisions in India is most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation
- Table 75: Frequency of administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation
- Table 76: Frequency of rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of OCSE
- Table 77: Frequency of specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children
- Table 78: Frequency of improvements do you think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to OCSE
- Table 79: Frequency of believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system
- Table 80: Frequency of aware of general public is about online child sexual exploitation
- Table 81: Frequency of received any formal education or training on the topic of OCSE
- Table 82: Frequency of believe that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation
- Table 83: Frequency of increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children

- Table 84: Frequency of important to think it is for the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children
- Table 85: Association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 86: Association between International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling OCSE
- Table 87: Association between primary legal provisions of India relevant to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Table 88: Association between administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from OSE and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling OSE
- Table 89: Association between the role of judiciary in regulating the matters of online child sexual exploitation and role of the judiciary in regulating matters of OCSE
- Table 90: Association between Increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children and general public is about online child sexual exploitation

List of Figure

Figure 1: COSI Framework

Figure 2: Country Level Report for India

Figure 3: Child Online Protection Response System in India

Figure 4: Generic self-regulatory processes of social media platforms

Figure 5: Graph of Frequency of age of the respondents

Figure 6: Graph of Frequency of gender of the respondents

Figure 7: Graph of Frequency of Education of the respondents

Figure 8: Graph of respondents heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities

Figure 9: Graph the respondents heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents

Figure 10: Graph of the respondents heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries

Figure 11: Graph of the respondents faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country

Figure 12: Graph of the respondents' kid of their age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on respondents

Figure 13: Graph of the respondents think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body

Figure 14: Graph of the respondents heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation

Figure 15: Graph of the respondents heard about online child safety measure policies

Figure 16: Graph of the respondents ever asked their teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that they were scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to them

- Figure 17:** Figure of the respondents ever met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents
- Figure 18:** Graph of the respondents know any elders/neighbor's/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents
- Figure 19:** Graph of the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation
- Figure 20:** Graph of the respondents thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained
- Figure 21:** Graph of the respondents attended any awareness events organized in your school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation
- Figure 22:** Graph of the respondents parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed
- Figure 23:** Graph of type of unit
- Figure 24:** Graph of Location
- Figure 25:** Graph of Type of Activity done by the unit
- Figure 26:** Graph of Person Interviewed on the unit
- Figure 27:** Graph of the respondents stated about how familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 28:** Graph of historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives
- Figure 29:** Graph of the respondents noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing
- Figure 30:** Graph of law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations
- Figure 31:** Graph of causes of growth/spread of online child exploitations in recent world

- Figure 32:** Graph of international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing
- Figure 33:** Graph of International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations
- Figure 34:** Graph of effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child
- Figure 35:** Graph of the respondents think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives
- Figure 36:** Graph of respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system
- Figure 37:** Graph of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety
- Figure 38:** Graph of How many cases of online sexual exploitation on child have you handled in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan so far
- Figure 39:** Graph of get support and help from local judiciary, law and order system (police department)
- Figure 40:** Graph of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child
- Figure 41:** Graph of awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation
- Figure 42:** Graph of respondents stated about public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan
- Figure 43:** Graph of the age of the respondents
- Figure 44:** Graph of gender
- Figure 45:** Graph of Education of the respondents

Figure 46: Graph of Occupation of the respondents

Figure 47: Graph of Experience of the respondents

Figure 48: Graph of respondents obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 49: Graph of historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences

Figure 50: Graph of historic cases of India's online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained

Figure 51: Graph of respondents ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation

Figure 52: Graph of International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 53: Graph of effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 54: Graph of severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India

Figure 55: Graph of India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 56: Graph of NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 57: Graph of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 58: Graph of severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan

Figure 59: Graph of sufficient public awareness in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan on the impacts of online sexual exploitation on child

Figure 60: Graph of schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child

- Figure 61:** Graph of the age of the respondents
- Figure 62:** Frequency of age of the respondents
- Figure 63:** Graph of Occupation of the respondents
- Figure 64:** Graph of the Educational Background of the respondents
- Figure 65:** Graph of the historical background of online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 66:** Graph of primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 67:** Graph of evaluation of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time
- Figure 68:** Frequency of aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 69:** Graph of believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 70:** Graph of rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse
- Figure 71:** Graph of awareness of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 72:** Graph of legal provisions in India is most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 73:** Graph of administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation
- Figure 74:** Graph of rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation
- Figure 75:** Graph of specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children
- Figure 76:** Graph of improvements do you think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to online child sexual exploitation

Figure 77: Graph of believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system

Figure 78: Graph of aware of general public is about online child sexual exploitation

Figure 79: Graph of received any formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation

Figure 80: Graph of belief that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation

Figure 81: Graph of increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children

Figure 82: Graph of important to think it is for the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children

List of Appendices

Questionnaire 1

Questionnaire 2

Questionnaire 3

Questionnaire 4

Chapter 1:

Understanding Online Sexual Exploitation of Children: An Introduction

The world's most powerful product of the 21st century—the internet—now poses a serious threat. Without question, the advent of the internet has provided humankind with many new possibilities for innovation. However, the internet has also opened up a new world of dangers. Almost everyone uses an electronic communication device, computer, or online network¹. Digital World, often known as cyberspace, is the online community where individuals do this. People will inevitably rely on technology to help them with many mundane tasks.

There is a pressing need for the intelligent use of technological items in this context, whereby their potential for good might be maximised. Unfortunately, the lives of children and teenagers -in particular-have been irreparably damaged due to people's failure to see the dangers that lie inside its shadows. Since "children are the nation's most precious resource," it is crucial that we teach them how to navigate the internet safely and ethically².

Young generation utilises a lot of time online to criticises that children's exposure to digital materials has caused severe harm well above the worrisome boundaries, even for these limited uses. This is entirely the result of a need for more education about digital citizens' precautions³.

The citizens of the digital place, especially children, must be protected from cyber-attacks. This collective responsibility begins with the child and extends to the child's parents, teachers, government, epistemic communities, and every individual. These threats come from throughout the globe, not just their immediate neighbours. As in the physical world, criminal activity is rampant online. Nothing in the online world is real,

¹ European Parliament and Council Directive (EU) 2025/879 on Combating Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children, 2025 O.J. (L 145) 1.

² INTERPOL, Annual Global Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2025).

³ National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), National Strategy Against Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (2025).

and it may easily mislead its users. As in the physical world, the motivations of cybercriminals include money, power, and status, but the anonymity of the internet makes it easier for them to commit crimes.

In order for them to benefit from the internet's many advantages while remaining secure from its possible dangers, it is crucial that children be taught how to navigate the internet safely. It is also crucial that the government, law enforcement, the epistemic community, educators, parents, and children all work together to provide a secure space free from cyber paedophilia for vulnerable children. An urgent need exists for a multi-layered strategy to deal with online hazards since each layer has unique difficulties and calls for more international cooperation and creative problem-solving.

In his 1984 novel *Necromancer*, William Gibson is widely regarded as the inventor of the term "cyberspace"⁴. Cyberspace, according to Gibson, is "a collective delusion shared by billions of lawful users worldwide every day as they watch their children learn arithmetic in every country. All the information stored in the world's computers is visualised. There were rays of light extending across the void that is the human brain, data clusters and constellations ". Cyberspace is often used as if it were synonymous with the World Wide Web.

It is fully virtual, residing in a variety of interconnected computer systems. As computers and internet use grows, cybercrime has become a serious problem for governments and civilians⁵. There are almost 440 billion children in India under 18, making up 19% of the global youth population⁶. Ericsson has published a study showing that 30% of urban Indian children and teenagers have access to a mobile phone, with 3% having access to mobile broadband from their parents. The younger generation is more vulnerable to targeted cybercrime because they rely so heavily on the internet and online technologies for their daily activities, such as information, e-mails, social networking, e-banking, e-shopping, web TV, news, education, home-work research, online gaming, downloading music, videos, movies, and other content, etc.

⁴ William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984), in *Crime and Media* 86 (2019).

⁵ Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, Rep. Act No. 10175 (Phil.).

⁶ Sessa Kethineni, 'Cybercrime in India: Laws, Regulations, and Enforcement Mechanisms', in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* 305 (2020).

These threats come from throughout the globe, not just their immediate neighbours. Parents and educators have yet to gain firsthand experience with the dangers presented by modern media. Therefore, dealing with the threats on the internet presents unique difficulties and calls for more people to work together to develop novel approaches. Studying the worldwide approaches available to ensure secure communications through ICTs demonstrates the necessity for a multi-layered approach to internet regulation in India.

It is worth noting that the United Nations has stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that children should get special care and attention. Recognizing the family as the fundamental unit of society and the primary setting for the growth and welfare of its members, particularly children, it is critical to provide the family with the necessary support and assistance so that it may effectively perform its tasks within the community. Recognizing that in order for a child to properly and harmoniously develop their personality, they must be reared in a family setting, surrounded by an atmosphere of joy, affection, and comprehension⁷.

Article 1 of the "Convention on the Rights of the Child" defines a child as someone under the age of 18, unless local legislation requires a lower age. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Convention's monitoring body, has asked States to re-evaluate the age of majority if it is set below 18, as well as to increase protection for all children under 18.⁸

Children's independence is greatly aided by technological advancements that make it easier for them to interact with the world, get an education, and share their thoughts and opinions with others. Nonetheless, not all kids have easy access to electronic entertainment. Kids still face dangers using digital media, such as online predators and cyberbullying, even if they have access to such platforms. In making any changes to policies or procedures affecting children, it is crucial to hear their perspectives directly

⁷ Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted 20 Nov. 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25, U.N. Doc. A/RES/44/25 (12 Dec. 1989).

⁸ Unicef, *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989).

instead of making assumptions⁹.

Cyberspace refers to the imagined realm where electronic interactions take place. I do not intend to provide a full description, and the internet might be thought of as the "cyberspace" of the world, where interdependence and interaction are the norms. The term "networks" is used to describe any system that may be linked to the internet. When used broadly, "cyberspace" refers to the realm of the internet. Cyberspace encompasses the vast digital repository of information and data exchanged over global networks. Cyberspace grows with every digital information sent through it, whether via your home Wi-Fi or your business phone line¹⁰.

The scope of cyberspace is rising at a rate that is in lockstep with the progress in networking technology that has been predicted for the future information age. Almost every facet of human existence has an online counterpart that mirrors the real world. Everything we do in the digital realm—from doing business to forming an online profile on social networking sites—adds to our own cyberspace.

A large portion of these new users are under 24; in many countries, persons under 24 make up the majority of internet users. Children of the 21st century are more naturally gifted when it comes to using computers and other electronic devices since they have grown up in a digital world. There is mounting evidence that children all around the globe are increasingly reliant on online resources, including tools, platforms, and programs, for their education, participation, play, innovation, employment, and socialization. Recent advancements in both technological and non-technical domains have blurred the border between online and offline life, making it more important than ever to examine how this revolutionary shift impacts children's health, education, and rights.

The concept of "child protection in cyberspace" refers to measures taken to safeguard young people against damage that might result from their use of or exposure to the internet or other electronic communication. The goal is to make them safer against harm

⁹ Amanda Third et al., *Young and Online: Children's Perspectives on Life in the Digital Age (The State of the World's Children 2017 Companion Report)* (2017).

¹⁰ Helen Edwards, *Oxford Dictionaries Online*, 26 REFER A20 (2010).

in general and from specific threats. It also ensures that kids do not experience emotional, mental, or moral harm. It must ensure that no kid slips through the cracks of the social safety net and that those who do are given the care and support they need to get back in. Inadequate safeguards for children online have a chilling effect on their ability to exercise their other rights and reach their full potential. When discussing safeguarding children's rights when they use the internet or other forms of media for communication, we must consider all children equally. Self-sufficiency and self-protection must be contextualised within the contexts of family, community, society, and state¹¹.

In the past two decades, the development of IT in India and others has been nothing short of amazing. The impact on children and its primary concern for all stakeholders, including legislation and sharing information and knowledge, has resulted in a radical transformation of our modes of communication, interaction, commerce, and search. This research is set on this context and deal with severity and types of kids sexual abuses and the legal procedures adopted to provide protection, support and prohibition of this fearful crime from India, particularly, centered to Jaipur as our base of study. We begin, by explaining the background of the study through which we built up our study conceptualization and accordingly proceeded to establish our study objectives by adopting descriptive and doctrinal analytical approaches.

1.1 Background of the Study

1.1.1 Internet and Child Abuse

The focus of situational prevention is not on the mental state of the person engaging in the undesirable activity but on the role that situational cues play in promoting that conduct. The situational approach highlights the significance of availability in influencing consumption, which is particularly relevant when considering the issue of

¹¹ Michael D. Rostoker & Robert H. Rines, *Computer Jurisprudence: Legal Responses to the Information Revolution* (1986).

child pornography on the internet¹².

It is believed that the propensity to see children as sexual objects is more pervasive than sexual deviance theories imply, given the correct contextual circumstances. The internet has made it easy, inexpensive, and largely risk-free for people to indulge their hidden urges. Preventing children from being exposed to child pornography online involves a situational approach that makes it less appealing, more challenging, and riskier to look for such material online.

There is no widely accepted definition of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. However, the word is commonly used interchangeably with 'technology-assisted child sexual exploitation and abuse' to refer to child sexual exploitation and abuse that is partially or totally facilitated by technology, specifically the internet or other wireless communications. Child sexual abuse, for example, takes on an online dimension when acts of sexual abuse are photographed or video-/audio recorded before being uploaded and made available online, whether for personal use or sharing with others. The repeated watching and/or distribution of such recorded material constitutes a new breach of the child's rights.

From a legal standpoint, the term child pornography remains widely employed. However, the interpretation of that varies depending on the country¹³. According to the International Center for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) in 2016, 82 out of 196 nations had effective laws to combat child sexual exploitation. However, 35 countries do not have any legislation in place. Out of the remaining 79 countries that have some form of regulation, 60 countries do not provide a clear definition for the term "child pornography."

In numerous countries that have established definitions, aural and written representations are typically excluded, and some governments do not encompass computer-generated images and films frequently employed for grooming purposes. In recent times, there has been a shift towards using video streaming on devices like

¹² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Child Online Protection in South Asia Report, 2025.

¹³ Children's Online Safety Act/Funds Bill S722 (N.C. 2025).

webcams to provide live portrayals¹⁴. A significant portion of this content is now being created and shared by the children who are being seen. Currently, there is a lack of laws in most nations to address the issue of self-produced child pornography¹⁵.

The optional protocol is an extra agreement to the Convention on the Rights of the Child that was accepted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2000. This agreement requires states to ban the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. According to the United Nations 2002 protocol, child pornography is defined as any depiction, whether actual or virtual, of a child engaging in explicit sexual behavior or any depiction of a child's sexual body parts meant primarily for sexual reasons. The convention went into effect in 2002 and now has 121 signatories as of September 11, 2018.

The United States General Accounting Office informed the House Sub Committee on Juvenile Justice of the Committee on Education and Labor in April 1982 that commercially generated (child) pornography had fallen after consultations with Federal, State, and local authorities¹⁶¹⁷. This drop was caused by a combination of:

1. “The Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation Act of 1977”
2. “Tougher State laws covering child pornography”
3. “Stricter enforcement of obscenity laws involving child pornography¹⁸”
4. “Media attention”
5. “The tendency of juries to convict child pornographers more readily than adult pornographers”
6. “The banning 1979 of child pornography in Sweden and Denmark, which had been the major overseas supplier of child pornography”

¹⁴ Avnish Bajaj v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2005) 3 Comp LJ 364 (Del).

¹⁵ B.G. Westlake, ‘The Past, Present, and Future of Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Summarizing the Evolution of Production, Distribution, and Detection’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* 1225, 1225–53 (2020) https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_52.

¹⁶ William J. Anderson, *The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Special Emphasis Program Has Not Realized Its Full Potential: Report to the Attorney General* (1982).

¹⁷ *United States v. Tatum*, No. 25-CR-237, 2025 WL 2145830 (N.D. Cal. 20 Apr. 2025)

¹⁸ *Kamlesh Vaswani v. Union of India*, (2014) 10 SCC 594 (India).

US Customs and Border Protection and the United States Postal Service, the two main federal agencies responsible for enforcing laws involving the distribution of child pornography, do not see child pornography as a high priority due to the fall in commercial child pornography¹⁹.

A study conducted in the United Kingdom has discovered that there is a positive correlation between the amount of computer usage youngsters have access to and their inclination to use computers more frequently. This finding was reported by Valentine and Holloway (date not specified). A study conducted in the Australian Capital Territory surveyed 238 kids in grades 7-10 and discovered that 66 percent of the youngsters frequently utilized the internet to engage in chat room interactions²⁰.

The utilization of the internet offers numerous advantages for society, as it overcomes the impact of physical distance and enables the sharing of information. Some argue that the internet can revive a feeling of community by enabling meaningful communication among "grass root electronic communities". According to Starch (1999: 29), children and young people believe that using the internet has specific advantages²¹.

They feel that it helps them connect with others, enhances their writing and language abilities, and improves their academic performance²². Additionally, it serves as a platform for referral and guidance. As an example, Australia's national Kids Help Line offers online support and information to children experiencing emotional difficulties. Similarly, the internet has become the primary means of discovering missing children and promoting communication between parents and children. The website of the United States National Center for Missing and Exploited Children receives three million daily views, demonstrating the internet's significance in this process. The topic of concern is child abuse enabled by the usage of the Internet.

According to a 2015 report published by the World Bank and the International Centre

¹⁹ Gregory J. Ahart, *Sexual Exploitation of Children—A Problem of Unknown Magnitude: Report to the Chairman, Subcommittee on Select Education, House Committee on Education and Labor* (1982).

²⁰ *Karttunen v. Finland*, App. No. 16846/10, Eur. Ct. H.R. (2025).

²¹ *Child Abuse and the Internet*, 15(1) *Child Abuse Prevention Issues* (2001).

²² INTERPOL, *Annual Global Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) Enforcement* (2025).

for Missing and Exploited Children, 17 Asian countries were examined, including Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Japan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam²³²⁴. The legal systems of five nations (Brunei Darussalam, Japan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, and Singapore) show either positive or moderate compliance with international principles in addressing violence against children through ICTs.

The report confirmed that there is a need for further development of the legal frameworks pertaining to three primary types of online abuse and exploitation of children: a) actions involving child pornography, b) online grooming, and c) cyberbullying. These areas of law should be brought in line with international standards and agreements. Among the Out of these five countries, Brunei Darussalam, Japan, Republic of Korea, and Singapore are considered as developed countries based on their Gross National Incomes (GNIs) per capita every year.

The significant economic progress of these four countries is directly linked to the enhanced accessibility and utilization of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within their borders. The results showed that countries with greater availability and accessibility of ICTs are more likely to face a higher risk of ICT-facilitated child abuse and exploitation. However, this also increases the likelihood of these countries implementing or modifying legal measures to combat and prevent the use of the Internet and related technologies for committing violence against children.

1.1.2 Internet Ecosystem and Sources of Online Child Abuses

The internet's first defined protocols went live on January 1, 1983, which was a watershed moment. None of the critics agrees on an exact statistic for how many people have accessed child pornography online or how much there is, but they do agree that

²³ Law on Penalties for Administration of Public Security (Amendment), Standing Comm. Nat'l People's Cong. (People's Republic of China, 27 June 2025).

²⁴ Law on Information Technology (No. 67/2006/QH11) (Viet.)

the issue has grown dramatically since the 1980s²⁵. Images were rare, locally created, of low quality, costly, and difficult to get before the advent of the internet; they were secretly exchanged in hard copy form among tiny, tightly knit networks of devoted users. The internet has greatly exacerbated the child pornography issue by facilitating the production, dissemination, and accessibility of explicit sexually explicit content²⁶. It has enabled instantaneous, always-available, (seemingly) anonymous access to enormous volumes of technically superior photos. Convenient, inexpensive, and generally risk-free ways to indulge one's hidden curiosity and wants may be found while one is home alone²⁷.

In this section, I will argue that the proliferation of child pornography in the Internet age is a textbook case of supply leading to demand. There has been a long history of erotic literature, art, and (beginning in the mid-nineteenth century) pictures featuring children²⁸. Nonetheless, the availability of pornographic content has constrained the degree to which child pornography has become a societal issue. Since 1982, however, there has been a proliferation of online visual content that caters to children's underlying sexual curiosity. Stopping child pornography on the internet cannot be treated like any other case of sexual deviation. Because the internet is responsible for the current uptick in child pornography use, any efforts to lower consumption that do not target limiting online access to such pictures are doomed to fail.

Online sexual grooming, often known as "sexual chatting," "online solicitation of children for sexual purposes," or "online sexual enticement of children" is a widespread form of online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA). Sexual grooming is a process in which an offender provides the chance to sexually abuse or exploit a child by first gaining the victim's trust with the goal of requesting, coaxing, or influencing the youngster into online sexual behavior, even without in-person contacts.

²⁵ Rickey Casey & Jay Robbins, 'A Comparison of the Elements of Motivation in the Hospital Industry versus the Retail and Manufacturing Sectors', 4 *Journal of Diversity Management* 13 (2009).

²⁶ Henry Jenkins & Mark Deuze, 'Editorial: Convergence Culture', 14 *Convergence* 5 (2008).

²⁷ R.K. Wortley, *Exploring the Person-Situation Interaction in Situational Crime Prevention* (Routledge, 2012)

²⁸ I. O'Donnell & C. Milner, 'Child Pornography: Crime', *Computers and Society* (2007)

The influence and manipulation of 'groomers' frequently escalate to threats and intimidation, resulting in the blackmailing of minors for sex, money, and other favors. The latter is known as "sexual extortion of children" or "sextortion". Live online child sexual abuse is possibly the most severe kind of ICT-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse. Perpetrators, also known as "live streaming," "pay-per-view," "on-demand child sexual abuse," or "child sexual abuse to order," force children to perform sexual acts via webcam²⁹.

With live streaming, a 'operator' transmits online child sexual behaviors via webcam and audio interface, which viewers can watch remotely in real time, requesting, ordering, paying, and dictating how the sexual action will be carried out on or by children. As a result, viewers are effectively active participants in the abuse. If the child's image is recorded, it is permanently shared online, resulting in chronic child revictimization, from which perpetrators profit monetarily.

The experience of "Sweetie," a virtually produced animated Filipino child who was able to entice and identify over a thousand online sexual offenders, demonstrates that the Philippines is one of the most vulnerable countries in Asia-Pacific to online child abuse. The country has emerged as the leading global provider of child sexual abuse materials and live streaming (UNICEF, 2016). Most of the victims are under the age of 18, and in certain situations, parents act as enablers. According to the 2015 National Baseline Study on Violence Against Children (NBS-VAC, 2015), one in every two Filipino children and youth aged 13 to 24 have experienced cyber-violence, which includes cyberbullying, exposure to sexually explicit videos and photos, or being asked to pose naked online. Aside from poverty, bad parenting, and peer influence, the high occurrence of OCSEA among Filipino children can be related to their relative competence in the English language to facilitate contact with foreign perpetrators.

²⁹ Laurie S. Ramiro et al., 'Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Community Diagnosis Using the Social Norms Theory', 96 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 104080 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104080>

1.2. Literature review

The extensive scope of this thesis necessitates an integrated approach to literature review, wherein foundational concepts, contextual definitions, and the thematic landscape of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) are immediately woven into the introductory discourse. This method, utilized instead of a separate conventional literature chapter, establishes a direct context for the ensuing legal analysis. The following sections synthesize findings from academic journals, organizational reports, and foundational legal texts concerning the nature and manifestation of online child sexual exploitation. This approach ensures that the core concepts, including the traits of offenders, their operational methods, and the scale of the digital threat, are clearly defined before the subsequent chapters critically examine the legal and administrative responses in India.

1.2.1 Offenders' Traits and their Mode of Operations

Paedophilia is classified as a mental health condition, characterized by an enduring and intense sexual desire towards youngsters who have not yet reached puberty. The attraction may give rise to sexual desires and physical mistreatment of children, although it can simply manifest as mere imaginings³⁰.

A significant number of accounts of Internet crimes against children have focused on the perpetrator who is an adult stranger online, and who entices youngsters with the intention of causing them damage. The tales suggest that technology has facilitated the ability of unfamiliar adults to exploit children, with a growing trend of engaging in sexual discussions with young individuals, deceiving them into sharing explicit photographs, and cyber-stalking them. The anonymity, unknown whereabouts, and secret motives of these offenders are frequently mentioned as particularly alarming aspects.

In a comprehensive analysis of 33 male internet criminals from the UK, Belgium, and Norway, Webster et al. (2012) found that a significant number of them possessed a high IQ. However, their educational achievements were not impressive, and the majority of participants in this study had no prior criminal records. According to Howitt and

³⁰ S. Huikuri, 'Users of Online Child Sexual Abuse Material', 38 J. Police Crim. Psych. 904 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09611-4>

Sheldon (2007), their research revealed that individuals who engage in both internet and contact offences are more likely to be in a committed relationship and have children or stepchildren. Webster et al.'s (2012) qualitative study on 33 online groomers identified three distinct groups that these offenders typically belonged to:

Intimacy-seeking criminals typically refrain from contacting other offenders and perceive their relationship with the victim as consensual. Did not possess explicit child pornography but engaged in offline interactions. They engaged in prolonged internet communication with their target. Adaptable-style offenders typically have prior offences and do not perceive their involvement with the child as a genuine relationship. Prone to employing security measures, such as concealing digital files.

The individual engaged in customised mistreatment towards the youngster and had direct interactions in the physical world. Hyper-sexualized perpetrators meticulously crafted their online persona to match the specific youngster and swiftly initiated sexual contact. They maintained extensive collections of indecent images of children (IIOC) and had communication with other individuals who engage in sexual offences. Primarily limited their criminal behaviour to internet platforms and frequently dehumanised minors³¹.

The motivations for the use of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) can be categorised into two main purposes: the gratification of sexual attraction towards children and the fulfilment of emotional needs. CSAM serves as an outlet for individuals to escape negative emotions such as loneliness, depression, anxiety, sexual frustration, or boredom. The advent of the online era has introduced additional incentives, including the use of CSAM for reasons of curiosity or for amassing various forms of repulsive materials.

CSAM refers to the documentation of sexually abusive activities involving a child, as reported by ECPAT International in 2016. Simple possession of CSAM is considered a criminal act in more than 140 countries. However, the effectiveness of domestic laws in criminalising additional online CSA offences varies greatly from one country to another. This inconsistency creates challenges for law enforcement agencies in combating these crimes.

³¹ Mike McGuire & Samantha Dowling, *Cyber Crime: A Review of the Evidence*, Home Office Research Report 75 (2013).

According to ECPAT International (2016), online child sexual abuse (CSA) refers to any sexually exploitative activities committed against a child that are in some way connected to the online environment. The activities encompassed in this category are: (i) coercing or intimidating a child into engaging in sexual acts while being recorded on a webcam; (ii) engaging in grooming behaviour; and (iii) engaging in the distribution, dissemination, importation, exportation, offering, selling, possession, or knowingly accessing of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Given the global character of these offences, international collaboration is an effective means to enhance their policing.

Studies on the demographics of CSAM offenders indicate that the typical online offender is likely to be a solitary individual who has received higher education, struggled with substance misuse, and has mental health concerns. According to many studies, approximately 20% of individuals had experienced some form of sexual abuse during their childhood and have subsequently been convicted of a sexual crime.

Multiple studies differentiate between online and offline CSA offenders, with the former committing crimes exclusively in the cyber space and the latter physically abusing children. The Internet serves as a means to prepare youth for engaging in sexual assault. Research has shown that individuals who commit physical contact offences have a greater number of online interactions with their peers and own larger collections of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) compared to individuals who commit offences solely online. The differentiation between online and offline abusers is mostly inconsequential.

Wilson and Jones propose that the internet provides a platform for a simulated reality, where fantasies intersect with child sexual abuse through the utilisation and creation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). CSAM might potentially strengthen fantasies, leading offenders to create actual materials or engage in real-life situations that align with those fantasies. Therefore, fantasies can aid in the premeditation of a criminal act or induce sexual sensations that reduce self-restraint, therefore making it easier to engage in physical child sexual abuse.

Nevertheless, current epidemiological research presents a more intricate portrayal of online offences targeting minors. The data indicates a significant prevalence of online abuse perpetrated by acquaintances and peers. These findings align with previous

research on traditional sexual abuse, which indicates that the majority of abuse cases involve individuals known to the victim, and a significant proportion include individuals of the same age group. However, the dynamics of online abuse involving acquaintances have not been given as much focus, maybe due to the notion that they are less severe and influential compared to interactions with strangers.

However, there are reasons why acquaintances and peers who commit offences can also be significantly intimidating and influential. Acquaintances possess greater frequency and direct interaction, can exert influence over social circles and perceptions of status, and possess more precise information about victims that they can manipulate to their advantage. When individuals who are familiar with each other become or have been involved in a close romantic relationship, there is often a significant influence caused by acts of betrayal, as indicated by Platt and Freyd (2015)³².

This phenomenon is also observed in the body of research on cyberstalking, as highlighted by Fissel and Reynolds (2020). To gain a better understanding of online crime, it is necessary to have knowledge about the varying impact of abuse by acquaintances versus strangers, as well as the consequences of other aspects of the incidents.

Understanding CSAM-related crimes and offending in the cyber domain requires a focus on the establishment and management of online communities. The darknet provides a conducive environment for criminals to communicate with each other and share, download, or exchange child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The Tor Browser, also known as TOR, is a widely utilised tool for accessing the darknet. It operates on a vast network of several servers that redirect the user's IP address, effectively preventing the identification of its source³³.

Based on criminal justice statistics, just 1-3% of criminals involved in child sexual abuse are female, whereas the remaining majority are male. Furthermore, around 20% of girls and 7.7% of boys encounter sexual violence before reaching the age of 18. Although prone to overgeneralization, this article consistently uses male pronouns to refer to offenders and female pronouns to refer to victims.

³² David Finkelhor, Heather Turner & Deirdre Colburn, 'Which Dynamics Make Online Child Sexual Abuse and Cyberstalking More Emotionally Impactful: Perpetrator Identity and Images?', 137 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 106020 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2023.106020>

³³ S. Huikuri, 'Users of Online Child Sexual Abuse Material', 38 *J. Police Crim. Psych.* 904 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-023-09611-4>

Multiple studies have found that the vast majority of online offenders interact with their peers, and that having access to a network of like-minded people boosts deviant behavior. On the one hand, the process of "normalisation" of sexual assault encourages the offender to believe that his actions are more common than they are. Engaging in online conversation with peers can potentially encourage and enable the occurrence of child sexual abuse in terms of practicality, emotional support, and social ties. However, it is worth noting that online communities can occasionally replace physical interactions, as individuals who engage in child sexual abuse may engage in age play with each other.

The majority of studies have focused on instances where online perpetrators have indeed been engaging in communication with decoys, which are adults pretending to be youngsters. This dataset has served as a valuable foundation for the early understanding of the goals and communication techniques of internet criminals. The data consists of authentic instances of attempted sexual abuse of minors. Nevertheless, there is an increasing amount of criticism over the absence of authentic dynamics in talks with decoys, as compared to interactions with actual children.

Firstly, numerous studies have particularly examined the act of volunteering for the organisation Perverted Justice Foundation (PJ; pervertedjustice.com), which maintains a database of 622 publicly available cases of encounters between offenders and decoys. The PJ organisation is a self-proclaimed 'conviction machine' that aims to gather sufficient information on potential offenders through decoys in order to provide the police with evidence that can lead to an arrest.

As a result, the decoys openly respond to sexual requests, demonstrate compliance, and may be more likely than a kid to continue an unpleasant conversation. This may have an impact on the perpetrator's tactics because they would meet no opposition. Based on this reasoning, preliminary research reveals that decoy data should not be interpreted as a reproduction of genuine experiences with real children. Chiang and Grant (2018) found instances of overt persuasion, which entailed pressuring victims to conform, and extortion, which involved direct coercive behaviors and threats, in encounters with actual children.

Schneevogt, Chiang, and Grant (2018) discovered that overtly persuasive language was unusual, and there were no reports of extortion in any of the 622 cases investigated. In

recent studies involving children, Seymour-Smith and Kloess (2021) discovered that an offender increased their threats when the child refused to comply or resist, whereas Kloess, Hamilton-Giachritsis, and Beech (2019) identified offenders who used aggressive, persistent, non-compromising, and pressuring tactics to force the child to comply. Force, threats, and coercion have been observed in several types of decoy data, albeit to a limited extent.

Advances in technology have created a new concern for legislators and law enforcement: the growing threat of virtual child sexual abuse material (VCSAM) (Christensen et al., 2021). However, there is a lack of information in the literature about VCSAM offenders. VCSAM has serious consequences, including its usage to assist the invasion of children's privacy, extortion, defamation, concealment of child sexual abuse material (CSAM), and grooming behaviors (Clough, 2012). There have been recent arguments on the fictional nature of VCSAM, with the goal of balancing freedom of speech and artistic expression with the potential harm of normalizing any depiction of sexual behavior involving children.

A study found that young individuals believe that continuously watching and sharing child sexual abuse material (CSAM) leads to increasing production and negative effects for the victims. According to Maras and Shapiro (2017), VCSAM does not effectively prevent the spread of pedophilic behavior. On the other hand, it may worsen CSAM addiction. VCSAM can contribute to child abuse by affirming and strengthening one's opinions about children.

Offenders had a preference for specific forms of VCSAM rather than a range of styles. For instance, in one instance, the perpetrator exclusively owned memes. In an alternative scenario, the perpetrator possessed GIFs. In this case, the perpetrator created these GIFs by utilising images of girls from his local region and manipulating their heads to simulate sexual behaviours with men. One of the offenders possessed anime cartoon images, while others possessed modified images of well-known children's cartoon characters from *The Simpsons* engaging in sexual activities, as well as a sexualized image of Astro Boy.

In a separate incident, the perpetrator superimposed the face of a minor onto a sexually explicit photograph of another actual minor, creating the illusion that the superimposed youngster was being subjected to abuse. Disturbingly, the perpetrator utilised the visage

of a previous victim of sexual abuse to deceive others. Contrasting with these instances, there was one particular example where a perpetrator had a collection of cartoon strips, comics, and computer-generated graphics. The variability in the Victim-Centered Sexual Assault Measures (VCSAM) can be attributed to the offender's possession of more than 21,000 files.

VCSAM, a sub-type of CSAM, is characterised by many varieties. It can involve the use of completely computer-generated photos, modifying an image of a child to make it appear as if they are participating in sexual behaviour, or modifying a sexualized image of an adult to make them look like a child. VCSAM is available in diverse formats such as cartoons, drawings, animations, literature, recorded audio, and sculptures. Although VCSAM typically involves imaginary children, it is concerning because offenders might employ software to alter photographs and recordings of actual child victims to make them appear fictional, for as by giving them a cartoon-like appearance.

This allows them to conceal the abuse of real kids (Northern Ireland Office, 2007). Recognising the variations in legislation between nations, the legal framework has adapted to address the rise of CSAM by making it illegal in any format, usually including VCSAM. It is worth noting that there are difficulties in defining legislation due to the rapid evolution of these offences. Another sub-theme that arose within this overarching topic is the inclusion of written stories and documents as VCSAM, as evidenced by the presence of such materials among some offenders³⁴.

For instance, in a particular instance, the narratives encompassed the sexual assault and severe physical pain inflicted upon minors shown within the age range of 10 to 16. In another instance, a man faced charges for owning a work of fiction depicting the rape of a toddler, as well as charges related to engaging in inappropriate contact with a kid, including sexual intercourse. Another perpetrator was found in possession of a written letter detailing a father's sexual penetration of his 12-year-old daughter. In addition to written narratives, offenders possessed various other forms of written documentation.

³⁴ L.S. Christensen & N. Vickery, 'The Characteristics of Virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material Offenders and the Harms of Offending: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Print Media', 27 *Sexuality & Culture* 1813 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10091-1>

For instance, one perpetrator was found to be in possession of multiple "paedophile manuals".

These documents included explicit instructions on how to groom, mistreat, and conceal minors. In this instance, the perpetrator also possessed a sexual attraction towards animals and had participated in acts of bestiality. In addition, he revealed to his psychologist that he had pedophilic tendencies and utilised a chastity belt as a precautionary measure to prevent any potential harm towards minors. This information was subsequently discovered by the police during their investigation of his residence. In another instance, a perpetrator possessed a written document that detailed the commission of sexual offences against minors.

Irrespective of the material's nature, certain pieces incorporated the pertinent legislation to emphasise to readers the unlawful nature of the material, including written content. In another instance, the perpetrator established and operated servers on the dark net, granting access to illicit information.

The offender expressed dissatisfaction in a chatroom, stating that one of their sites had been terminated by an internet service provider following a spurious complaint over child sexual abuse material³⁵. When a member of the chatroom pointed out that the material could be deemed unlawful, the perpetrator countered by asserting that federal authorities have more pressing matters to attend to than pursuing "cartoons", so minimising the seriousness of the content. In a different piece, the perpetrator indicated that they did not believe the content included young females.

However, the judicial officer pointed out that it was "challenging to comprehend" how the criminal failed to recognise this. In an alternate scenario, a judicial authority admonished the wrongdoer, highlighting their disturbing assertion that they lacked any sexual attraction towards the content. This magistrate explicitly expressed scepticism towards the credibility of the perpetrator. Some barristers contended that their client had blurred the distinction when it came to their fetishes or shown social awkwardness, using sexual activity as a means to establish connections with others. This argument seemed to diminish the seriousness of the offence.

³⁵ European Parliament Directive (EU) 2025/879 on Combating the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children, 2025 O.J. (L 145) 1.

1.2.2 Theoretical Orientation: the Person-Situational Interaction

The idea that all actions result from interactions between individuals and their environments explains why more children are being used for sexual purposes³⁶. The immediate environment is more than just the setting for behaviour; it plays a crucial role in initiating and developing behaviour. Although this is a basic premise in psychology, its full relevance is often lost in theory and practice. The therapeutic community, in particular, tends to adopt a person-centred perspective when attempting to understand what motivates certain behaviours. Explanatory theories of abnormal behaviour often centre on the hypothesised developmental pathways that led to the onset of the aberrant behaviour. Once a predisposition to behave in a certain way has been developed, it is expected that the behaviour will follow automatically, and the task of explaining it is over. A deviant disposition is an underlying reason for a person's aberrant behaviour. As a result, it is believed that interventions aimed at modifying these fundamentally abnormal tendencies are the most effective means of averting undesirable behaviour.

Psychologists have long acknowledged that people see causality from a first-person perspective, downplaying or ignoring the significance of external circumstances. The term "fundamental attribution mistake" describes this kind of cognitive bias³⁷. Observers tend to minimise the impact of external influences and instead build causal explanations that presume the actor's free will, even though circumstances outside their control dictate the actor's behaviours. Overconfidence that other people's personalities and, by extension, their behaviour are consistent across contexts is a hallmark of fundamental attribution mistakes. Individuals have developed a propensity to classify others in predictable inclinations to efficiently digest information and cope with the world's complexity. However, because of a strong belief in their agency, individuals have a hard time admitting that other causes influence their actions beyond a little degree. An irony exists in that many psychologists seem as prone to basic attribution mistakes as the general public, despite their concentration on the intrapsychic origins

³⁶ Walter Mischel, Brian Coates & Antonette Raskoff, 'Effects of Success and Failure on Self-Gratification', 10 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 381 (1968).

³⁷ L.M. Jones, K.J. Mitchell & W.A. Walsh, 'A Systematic Review of Effective Youth Prevention Education: Implications for Internet Safety Education' (2014).

of abnormal behavior³⁸.

The so-called control view on criminal conduct is supported by evidence that contextual circumstances play a significant role in shaping individual behavior. Why do people develop antisocial behaviours? It is a common line of inquiry in the fields of criminology and forensic psychology. Most explanations for criminal conduct are grounded in theories of behaviour acquisition. People are said to be born in a state of neutral criminality, with subsequent antisocial conduct resulting from environmental conditioning. The topic is flipped in control theories, which examine how people learn to act in socially desirable ways.

The impulse to behave in a self-serving manner is assumed to be part of the human condition in all control theories. The mechanism by which these instincts are tamed has to be clarified. The proponents of the theory of control want you to picture a kid who has been reared with no rules or boundaries. The end outcome would be a person who gives in to all of their desires without thinking. Learning to control these impulses is an important part of developing social skills. The difference between "deviant" and "non-deviant" people is not so much that their motives are less self-serving but more or less within their control. Still, even the most self-disciplined among us may sometimes give in to temptation and indulge in some self-gratifying behaviour.

One of the strongest and most widespread human drives is the need for sexual satisfaction. Take Demetriou and Silke's ingenious research, for example (2003)³⁹. They set up a website with connections to both legitimate sources (providing shareware and soft porn) and supposedly illicit sources (providing commercial games, commercial software, hardcore porn, and stolen passwords) but led nowhere. Shareware, freeware, free, free games, and free software were all phrases that led people to the website, and other keywords on the site were also indexed by certain search engines.

Demetriou and Silke concluded that just 26 out of 803 visitors searched for

³⁸ KERRY SHELDON & DENNIS HOWITT, *SEX OFFENDERS AND THE INTERNET*. (2007).

³⁹ Christina Demetriou & Andrew Silke, 'A Criminological Internet "Sting": Experimental Evidence of Illegal and Deviant Visits to a Website Trap', 43 *British Journal of Criminology* 213 (2003).

pornographic content by looking at the keywords they used to get on the site. However, out of all the links, 483 people clicked on the hardcore pornography link, with the soft-core pornography link coming in second with 358 hits. The link to the legal shareware that brought the most visitors to the site received the fewest hits, with just 268. Demetriou and Silke used the psychological concept of deindividuation to explain their results.

Deindividuation occurs when people cannot control their actions because of their exposure to anonymity. To be liberated and able to express oneself without restriction, one must first be free from the judgement of one's inner critic. Most people who visited the site did so because they could let go of personal and societal constraints that would have prevented them from seeing explicit pornographic material.

The acceptance of viewing explicit pornography is one thing, but what about the acceptance of obviously aberrant tendencies like a sexual attraction to children? The lack of a consensus on what constitutes sexual normality is a major flaw in the sexual deviancy concept. The range of human sexual reactions is astonishing. The control theory proposes that it is not uncommon for adults to think about children in sexual terms. To a greater extent than females, human men are biologically programmed to have a sexual predilection for younger mates⁴⁰. There are still nations in the globe where the age of consent for females is as low as twelve years old, as was the case in Victorian Britain (the age was increased to twelve by the Offences against the Person Act, 1861)⁴¹.

It is safe to assume that every single one of us has had a sexual attraction to a youngster at some point in our lives. To our great fortune, most of us have maintained sexual preferences consistent with our ages⁴². Personal beliefs and inhibitions, societal pressures and expectations, cultural taboos and legal consequences, and physical deterrents and obstacles all regulate any repressed sexual desire in minors. However,

⁴⁰ Beverly A. Thornhill et al., 'Prostatic Abscess: CT and Sonographic Findings', 148 *American Journal of Roentgenology* 899 (1987).

⁴¹ E.M. Fewtrell, 'Offences Against the Person Act, 1861, Sections 18 & 20', 21(2) *Police J.* 148 (1948).

⁴² Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, No. 32 of 2012, Gazette of India.

when these safeguards are not in place, many males may take advantage of child sexual exploitation. While including a link to a child pornography site in Internet research would be unethical, it is interesting to speculate on the results that would have discovered if they had done so⁴³.

There is a reasonable reluctance to talk about the possibility of widespread sexual attraction to youngsters. Very few individuals are willing to confess publicly that they, too, may have secretly disturbing ideas in their inner sanctums. Furthermore, it may be considered that justifying the sexual exploitation of minors is equivalent to discussing sexual attraction to juvenile partners as an evolutionarily bestowed component of human nature. Permit me to be very clear: the moral and legal position of the sexual exploitation of minors has nothing to do with whether or not males are wired to prefer younger mates.

If one concedes that there is a connection, it may be argued that assault and murder should be authorised on the same grounds that humans are inherently violent. Defining it as a crime to sexually exploit minors is warranted for many reasons. It has been suggested that viewing the sexual exploitation of minors via a legal lens rather than a psychological one clarifies the offender's moral guilt. We have made it unlawful to sexually exploit minors because we find this conduct repugnant and wish to stop it as a society. A false dichotomy between paedophiles and non-paedophiles may provide temporary solace, but it does nothing to prevent child sexual abuse.

Please understand that I am not claiming that all males are equally prone to engaging in sexually exploitative conduct against minors or that personality traits are irrelevant. The vast majority of adult males reading this chapter will (and should) deny ever having a sexual attraction to a youngster. The whole idea of a person-situation interaction hinges on this very truth. An individual's dispositional susceptibility to respond to certain environmental signals may make some persons more likely to respond to the circumstance than others, which is what we mean by "person-situation interaction" (see Worley, in press). The strength of the individual's propensity to perform a given

⁴³ Demetriou and Silke, *supra* note 16.

behaviour is inversely proportional to the strength of the situational pressures required for that behaviour to occur and vice versa, demonstrating that the effect of the situation on behaviour depends upon (interacts with) the characteristics of the person. Certain guys have a far higher propensity than others to engage in child sexual abuse. They are not reliant on external cues to meet their sexual needs and will actively pursue chances to do so. Men generally do not have a soft spot for young ladies. However, given the "proper" circumstances, people may be persuaded or convinced to participate in sexually exploitative behaviour to varied degrees, depending on their dispositional features⁴⁴. Most people will never experience these "ideal" conditions.

Why the proliferation of child pornography since the advent of the internet is explicable by the person-situation interaction is a perplexing question. Two ways the internet has worsened the child pornography issue are the greater availability of pornographic material and the greater number of people who have access to it. First, the internet has substantially improved the accessibility of child pornography for those interested in it. Many of these people, if they had existed before the advent of the internet, could have actively sought out physical copies of child pornographic material. In this scenario, they would have had a far more challenging assignment, fewer options, and a considerably smaller number of photographs. Offenders often have collections of child pornography that number in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions⁴⁵.

Second, although no definitive numbers compare the rates of child pornography consumption before and after the advent of the internet, there is no doubt that many people who would not have previously consumed child pornography are now doing so. One child pornography website had over a million monthly visits⁴⁶. Many of these new users would not have had the knowledge or the committed sexual interest in minors necessary to search out hard-copy photographs before the advent of the internet. The internet has facilitated the viewing of child pornography, allowing people to explore

⁴⁴ Stephen Smallbone, William L. Marshall & Richard Wortley, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy and Practice* (Cullompton: Willan Publishing, 2008).

⁴⁵ Angela Carr, 'The Social Dimension of the Online Trade of Child Sexual Exploitation Material', in *Understanding and Preventing Online Sexual Exploitation of Children* 112 (2013).

⁴⁶ Jenkins and Deuze, *supra* note 10.

their sometimes sporadic and unformed sexual attraction to minors. Deviant sexual behaviour is often attributed to perverted sexual desires. However, for many child pornography viewers, the sequence of causation may be inverted; they may develop a sexual attraction to children after seeing child pornography⁴⁷. After showing an initial interest in child porn, a person may find themselves drawn to more extreme pictures and eventually grow desensitised to the damage that the children endure. A notable fact is that efforts to characterise Internet child pornography offenders have discovered few differentiating psychological and socio-demographic factors and share few qualities with contact child sex offenders⁴⁸. Offenders who post pornographic content online tend to be white men between the ages of 26 and 39, to be in a committed relationship, to be gainfully employed, to have an above-average IQ, having completed college, and have no prior criminal history⁴⁹. People from many walks of life, including judges, soldiers, dentists, teachers, professors, and police personnel, have been arrested for pornographic offences committed online. What is most shocking about many people who see child pornography online is not their abnormality but their normalcy.

1.2.3 Practical Factors Causing the Growth of Online Child Abuses

(a) Targeted Victims and their Flaws

Although access to the Internet and digital products does not directly influence the value children and young people derive from them, it is noteworthy that reported instances of child sexual abuse material have increased by 87% since 2019, according to the Global Threat Assessment 2023 by the WeProtect Global Alliance.

An review of several research studies, papers, and reports has revealed a rise in the prevalence and visibility of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, in both magnitude and methodology. The risks in this context include child sexual abuse and exploitation material, grooming and soliciting minors for sexual purposes, online sexual

⁴⁷ Richard H. Schwartz, Regina Milteer & Marc A. LeBeau, 'Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault ("Date Rape")', 93 Southern Medical Journal 558 (2000).

⁴⁸ Ian A. Elliott, Anthony R. Beech & Rebecca Mandeville-Norden, 'The Psychological Profiles of Internet, Contact, and Mixed Internet/Contact Sex Offenders', 25 Sexual Abuse 3 (2013).

⁴⁹ Anne Burke et al., 'Child Pornography and the Internet: Policing and Treatment Issues', 9 Psychiatry, Psychology and Law 79 (2002).

harassment, abuse of intimate images, financial sexual extortion, and the use of technology to facilitate child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

The commercial sector and the technology industry have exhibited unreliability, despite their assertions, owing to intrinsic biases, programming deficiencies, and the limitations of surveillance software in identifying child abuse. Moreover, they have inadequately addressed child sexual abuse and exploitation networks, leading to layoffs and a decrease in community safety workers. These behaviors and deficiencies present an ongoing risk of re-traumatization, exposing individuals, including children, to additional victimization and inflicting systemic harm⁵⁰.

Age and gender are critical risk variables, since females report a greater prevalence of victimization than boys. Moreover, older children (about 13-17 years of age) report a higher frequency of victimization compared to younger children. A longitudinal study shown that the presence of depressive symptoms predicted future engagement in sexual solicitation and interactions with adults. Furthermore, indications suggest that LGBTQ youth, along with adolescents with developmental disabilities, may have an elevated risk.

Factors correlated with online victimization encompass low self-esteem, diminished life satisfaction, feelings of loneliness, participation in risky online behaviors (such as disclosing personal information and interacting with strangers), engagement in hazardous offline activities (including alcohol consumption and truancy), dysfunctional family dynamics, academic challenges, experiences of online bullying, prior abuse, and a propensity for seeking intense sensations. Children in precarious life situations may be more vulnerable to seeking approval, support, and attention online.

A research by Wolak et al. (2006) in the United States indicated that 70 percent of young individuals who received internet solicitations were female. Specific age groups, especially older adolescents, exhibit an increased propensity for receiving sexual messages. However, the existing research frequently fail to clarify the exact characteristics of these communications, such as whether they originate from strangers, adults, or are unsolicited. Livingstone et al. (2011) discovered that 20% of 15- to 16-

⁵⁰ United Nations, 'UN Expert Alarmed by New Emerging Exploitative Practices of Online Child Sexual Abuse', Safer Internet Day (5 Feb. 2024).

year-olds in the UK received a sexual communication online within the last year, but just 5% of 11- to 12-year-olds claimed the same.

In Wolak et al.'s (2006) study, more than 80 percent of the victims of internet grooming in the United States were also older than 14 years of age. Adolescents may exhibit greater susceptibility to internet risks compared to very young children due to various factors.

For instance, kids may: (a) have a higher probability of being unsupervised on the internet by their parents; (b) possess a broader array of online communication tools; and (c) exhibit a greater curiosity regarding relationships and sexuality. Limited information exists regarding the internet experiences of particularly vulnerable young individuals, such as those with specific educational requirements or disabilities⁵¹.

Webster et al. (2012) categorised victims of online grooming into three main groups based on data collected from 12 focus groups consisting of young individuals from the UK, Belgium, and Italy. (a) Resilient individuals are those that consistently choose safety and effectively repel advances. (b) Individuals who are risk takers actively pursue thrilling experiences and may have a lack of inhibition. They may partake in other hazardous behaviours, such as befriending unfamiliar individuals online, viewing explicit material, or exhibiting impolite or offensive behaviour online. If someone can be convinced to reveal certain basic information or photographs, they can become vulnerable to blackmail by groomers. (c) Individuals who are vulnerable actively search for 'love' on the internet and are especially prone to being influenced by approaches presented in such terms. Individuals with poor self-esteem may present challenges in interventions because to their resistance to disclosing information and their belief in the authenticity of their relationship, denying any victimisation.

According to research conducted in the United States, young individuals who are dealing with melancholy, loneliness, social isolation, unpleasant life events, or mistreatment may be more vulnerable to certain risks. This also applies to those who are seeking sexual guidance or information online, as indicated by studies conducted by Wolak et al. in 2004 and Mitchell et al. in 2007.

⁵¹ Mike McGuire & Samantha Dowling, *Cyber Crime: A Review of the Evidence*, Home Office Research Report 75 (2013).

(b) Ease of Accessibility to Risky Content and Establish Contact

Law enforcement encounters significant challenges in addressing child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Cooper (1998) introduced the Triple-A Engine, positing that the internet's accessibility, affordability, and anonymity have diminished disparities in content and malefactors. In recent years, there has been a notable rise in the prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM). The National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in the United States recorded 23.4 million instances of CSAM from 1998 to 2017. Significantly, 40% of these occurrences were documented in 2017 alone⁵².

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an upsurge in the prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) due to factors such as social isolation and heightened internet usage. Advancing technology generates new opportunities for persons involved in the production, distribution, or possession of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Technological advancements have introduced a new dilemma for legislators and law enforcement: the increasing threat of virtual child sexual abuse material (VCSAM).

(c) Low Percentage of Police Record and Investigations

The recorded incidence of grooming cases by law enforcement may indicate that the prevalence of online and offline grooming is relatively low in comparison to other types of serious sexual offenses. In 2012/13, the police documented a total of 373 grooming offences, which includes both online and offline incidents. This number is higher than the 186 offences recorded in 2004/05, as reported by Smith et al. (2013) and the Home Office (2010)⁵³. By contrast, there were 5,156 instances of sexual assault on a female minor under the age of 16 during the same year. Nevertheless, instances of internet grooming may not necessarily be officially categorized as 'grooming', especially when the grooming leads to a more severe crime, such as the sexual assault of a minor.

According to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), in such situations, the police only record the most severe offense. In addition, in order for grooming to be classified as an offense under the HOCR, there must also be a physical meeting that takes place

⁵² L.S. Christensen & N. Vickery, 'The Characteristics of Virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material Offenders and the Harms of Offending: A Qualitative Content Analysis of Print Media', 27 *Sexuality & Culture* 1813 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-023-10091-1>

⁵³ *Ibid.*

outside of online communication. If an online meeting is the lone occurrence, it is probable that it would be classified under a different category of sexual offense.

c) Victim's Lack of Awareness, Trauma and Society's Ignorance

According to Hanson (2017), victims who discover that their photographs and videos have been shared online often describe feeling a constant sense of danger. Moreover, the enduring nature of the internet can lead to a lack of a clear conclusion to the abuse, which in turn can cause the victim to experience re-traumatization from the abusive incident. According to Hanson (2017), those who have been targeted by online grooming often recall the manipulation and coercion they endured, which can frequently result in emotions of guilt and self-blame⁵⁴.

This situation can worsen when a victim is manipulated into capturing and transmitting sexual content to a perpetrator, and subsequently finds out that these photographs are being shared online without their consent. Similar to offline child sexual abuse (CSA), individuals who experience online sexual abuse (OSA) may delay reporting the abuse for several years.

OSA is frequently identified through law enforcement inquiries rather than through voluntary reports from victims, as demonstrated by research undertaken by Svedin and Back (2011), Whittle et al. (2013a, 2015), and Martin (2015). Individuals subjected to internet grooming often hesitate to reveal their experiences owing to fears of being located by the perpetrator or because they have been compelled to remain silent. Furthermore, those afflicted with OSA may not perceive the maltreatment as sufficiently egregious or may not even classify it as abuse in the absence of a physical or offline element.

There exists a dominant perception that online abuse constitutes a milder form of sexual abuse aimed at youngsters. Studies suggest that professionals possess a limited understanding of online sexual assault, potentially viewing it as less severe and failing to prioritize the victims by minimizing their harmful experiences. Victims of teacher-perpetrated child sexual abuse (TA-CSA) have reported insufficient responses from

⁵⁴ Felipa Schmidt, Filippo Varese & Sandra Bucci, 'Understanding the Prolonged Impact of Online Sexual Abuse Occurring in Childhood', 14 *Front. Psychol.* 1281996 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1281996>

their schools, including a lack of proactive measures to protect their safety, a failure to offer support in their circumstances, and even the imposition of guilt onto them.

Legally, this type of crime is generally regarded as less intrusive, leading to more lenient penalties for offenders (Net, 2015) and less compensation for victims (The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority, 2017). A considerable amount of the stigma linked to CSA originates from the reactions that ensue upon the disclosure of the abuse. A child may not encounter considerable stigma from the abuse itself, but they could experience profound stigmatisation if their family attributes blame to them.

Similarly, a child who has already encountered significant instances of betrayal, such as growing up in an unstable environment where the loyalty of family members is constantly uncertain, may see the act of sexual abuse as more severe compared to a child who has not experienced past betrayal. In addition, feelings of betrayal can extend beyond the abuser. They might arise if family members fail to safeguard the child from harm or if the youngster is doubted upon revealing the abuse.

To be more precise, it could complicate the ability of victims to identify that they were being subjected to abuse and intensify the amount of self-blame and blame from others. The potential existence of incriminating footage in the possession of the perpetrator, as well as the possibility of its dissemination, can lead to significant anguish and a sense of complete powerlessness. Sharing the photographs with others could lead to blackmail and further victimisation.

The findings align with the results indicating that children who were aware of the existence of images depicting their abuse, as well as those whose abusive pictures were distributed, had more severe post-traumatic stress symptoms compared to children who experienced child sexual abuse without any documented evidence. Several of these recent findings align with the results obtained from the studies contained in this thesis and will be further examined in the general discussion section.

1.2.4 Situational Prevention

In the same way, psychologists often consider individual differences when considering what factors contribute to undesirable behaviour, and they also use a similar approach

when considering how to avoid such behaviours in the future. It is believed that preventing criminal behaviour would need a change in one's personality. This might be accomplished by developmental treatments targeted at modifying early risk factors for crime or, more typically, through the therapy of people after they have displayed undesirable behaviours. However, suppose the behaviour results from an interaction between a person and their environment. In that case, aiming to alter behaviour by modifying the environment is at least as acceptable as the more conventional strategy of working to alter the person's character traits. Environment-based treatments, such as preventing relapse or regulating a patient's response to a given stimulus, are commonplace in clinical practice. In these therapies, patients learn to recognise and avoid potential triggers for their problematic behaviours. A person on a diet could ensure all the food is hidden in the cabinets, while a convicted child sex offender might avoid passing by any schools. While situational prevention has its roots in criminology, it more closely resembles the public health primary and secondary prevention models than the clinical treatment model. Situational interventions aim to forestall problematic behaviour before it ever begins⁵⁵. Also, unlike traditional behaviour therapy, these interventions are not tailored to an individual client but rather target general settings that may encourage undesirable behaviour. It is the criminal Act itself that is under scrutiny rather than any particular offender. Experts in crime prevention may better protect their communities by first analysing crime incidents to identify environmental triggers and then crafting responses to mitigate those triggers. The purpose of situational interventions is not to treat the underlying cause of the problem but rather to reduce the likelihood of the problem occurring in a certain setting.

The most popular technique for avoiding potentially dangerous situations is called "opportunity reduction"⁵⁶. Those with a control perspective on behaviour believe that people will make choices that maximise their welfare. Opportunity reduction aims to enhance the perceived costs of offending by influencing the immediate environmental

⁵⁵ Jordana Cornish, 'Cracks in the Great Wall: Why China's Copyright Law Has Failed to Prevent Piracy of American Movies Within Its Borders' (35 pages) (Year unavailable).

⁵⁶ Derek Blaikie Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke, 'Opportunities, Precipitators and Criminal Decisions: A Reply to Wortley's Critique of Situational Crime Prevention', 16 *Crime Prevention Studies* 41 (2003).

context. Limiting criminals' options may slow down repeat offenders and perhaps even discourage those not as committed to their crimes. This section analyses and applies three opportunity reduction tactics to the issue of child pornography on the internet: lowering the perceived benefits, increasing the perceived difficulty, and raising the perceived dangers.

The opportunity thesis asserts that criminals act dishonestly because they hope to personally get some advantage due to their criminal behaviour. The principal advantage of viewing child pornographic content online is the acquisition of photographs that provide the offender with sexual fulfilment. To lessen the incentives for child pornography online, sites hosting such photos should either take them down or restrict access to them.

Since the advent and explosion of the internet, the magnitude of the child pornography issue has grown tremendously. While estimates of Internet use are notoriously imprecise, it is safe to assume that more people have access to child pornographic photos today than they would have had they not been invented. The internet is not only a medium for paedophiles to access child pornography; rather, it is a major contributor to the phenomenon. The issue of child pornography on the internet cannot be solved simply by relying on established individual-focused tertiary prevention techniques (arrest and rehabilitation). Without a doubt, those who break the law should be the focus of law enforcement efforts, with particular attention paid to the more severe criminals engaged in producing and distributing child pornography. However, much more individuals have access to child pornography over the internet than can ever be apprehended, and the effect of treating those few who are convicted - even with extremely strong rehabilitation programmes - is small. As I have argued, if we want to stop the spread of child pornography, we need to focus on making it harder for kids to get their hands on such material in the first place. It is not an easy undertaking to do. Because of the nature of the internet, policing sites that provide pornographic material aimed at minors is arduous⁵⁷. The internet facilitates communication across national borders and languages. Child pornographic material may have been created and is kept

⁵⁷ Smallbone, Marshall, and Wortley, *supra* note 20.

on another continent, making it accessible to criminals. Because of this, law enforcement officials have jurisdictional issues and must rely on international collaboration.

The internet is a decentralised system with no central governing body or storage facility, making it impossible to enforce laws or electronically censor information even when there is agreement amongst governments. Since it is a network, there are always other routes to go where you need to go, even if one route is closed. P2P networks, remailers, and file encryption are all new technologies that make the control issue even more difficult to solve⁵⁸. It is tempting to be gloomy about the possibilities of curbing Internet child pornography, given the challenges of monitoring the internet. The risk of misreading a lack of total success due to your efforts is particularly high. None of the situational approaches covered in this chapter is foolproof. Offenders also differ greatly in their level of technical expertise, the extent to which they are drawn to child pornography, and their ability to obtain photos and remain undetected.

There will always be a small group of hardened criminals equipped with the will and know-how to foil our efforts at prevention⁵⁹. Let's flip the question around to get some perspective on the situation. Envision a world in which no measures were taken to restrict access to child pornography online. There would be no campaigns to remove child pornography sites, no search filters, no undercover police operations, and so on. Would more criminals have access to child pornographic content? Inevitably, there is no way to tell for sure, but common sense says that the issue would be much worse if child pornography were easily accessible on the internet. There is no final victory possible in the war against child pornography on the internet. Instead, it is a never-ending cycle of deploying preventive techniques, having offenders adapt to those efforts, and then deploying other prevention strategies to fight the offender adaptation.

1.2.5 Management and Prevention against CSA

Penetrative and non-penetrative sexual intercourse, pornography, sexual harassment,

⁵⁸ Burke et al., *supra* note 25.

⁵⁹ Yvonne Jewkes & Carol Andrews, 'Policing the Filth: The Problems of Investigating Online Child Pornography in England and Wales', 15 *Policing and Society* 42 (2005)

commercial sexual exploitation, sex tourism, and internet exploitation are all examples of child sexual abuse (CSA)⁶⁰. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 of India defines many categories of sexual offences, including those committed with minors⁶². Concern about CSA has grown internationally in recent years. While most reports of CSA have come from more developed nations, it may actually be more widespread in poorer regions. The prevalence rates of CSA are in Europe (9.2%), the United States (10.1%), and Asia (23.9%), according to recent epidemiological research. A culture of secrecy, fear of indignity, and social shame precludes the revelation of such offences, and this contributes to the widespread nature of CSA and the fact that it is seldom reported. Additionally, smaller CSA forms are often disregarded⁶³.

When it comes to sexual assault, no location is safe. Sexual violence occurs in homes, classrooms, daycares, workplaces, and the community. Very little reliable data exists on the frequency and presentation of CSA. About half of the 1,25,000 youngsters interviewed in research funded by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in India concluded that they had experienced sexual assault. More than 20% of the boys who were abused were subjected to severe abuse. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, there were 10,854 confirmed occurrences of child rape in India in 2015⁶⁴. Multiple sources point to those in the victim's immediate social circle or place of employment as the most likely perpetrators of abuse. According to the Delhi High Court, 215 of the 1,704 rape cases reported in the National Capital Region in 2014 included incest. As a rule, CSA occurs throughout many distinct episodes, each of

⁶⁰ Rajeev Seth & R.N. Srivastava, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Management and Prevention, and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act', 54 *Indian Pediatrics* 949 (2017)

⁶¹ Pornography Control Act of 2012 (Bangl.), Act No. 5 of 2012.

⁶² S.C. Dombrowski et al., 'Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators: Technological, Psychoeducational, and Legal Considerations', 35(1) *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 65 (2004).

⁶³ J. Wihbey, 'Global Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse', 15(4) *Journalist Resource* 25 (2011)

⁶⁴ L. Kacker et al., *Study on Child Abuse: India 2007* (Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2007).

which may have substantial short- and long-term consequences⁶⁵.

The majority of physicians and nurses lack the proficiency to accurately diagnose and manage a patient experiencing CSA. They must acquire the necessary abilities without delay. This message addresses the treatment of CSA, highlighting the significance of the patient's medical history, the results of a physical examination, and the forensic investigation. Moreover, physicians should be apprised of CSA prevention and their responsibilities in CSA management as delineated in the POCSO Act.

The lack of a shared lexicon and a uniform definition of child sexual abuse material constitutes a significant obstacle to global initiatives aimed at combating child sexual abuse and exploitation via information and communication technologies. ECPAT employs the term "Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse" (OCSEA) to denote the sexual abuse or exploitation of minors using digital, internet, or communication technologies. Offender-child sexual exploitative activity (OCSEA) might transpire exclusively online or through a blend of online and face-to-face interactions. The phrase "online child sexual exploitation and abuse" (OCSEA) encompasses a broad spectrum of activities, including the non-consensual dissemination of self-produced sexual material involving minors, the online grooming of children for sexual exploitation, the live broadcasting of child sexual abuse, and other associated actions such as sexual extortion.

(a) Initial Management of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA)

Sexual assault is always considered a medical emergency that requires immediate medical attention, regardless of whether the victim has insurance or can afford to pay for treatment.

A person who has been a victim of CSA may seek medical attention in several ways, including making an independent appointment, reporting the crime to the police, or following a court order. No of the patient's age, the hospital must treat the patient and

⁶⁵ J. Cashmore & R. Shackel, *The Long-Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse* (Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, 2013).

perform a medical examination with the patient's or parent's permission. Victims need access to medical care regardless of whether they want to file a formal complaint. If a doctor encounters such a situation, he or she must legally report it to the authorities. However, with the approval of the child's parent or guardian, the court and the police may compel the survivor to have a medical examination. A medico-legal case (MLC) must be created, and an informed refusal must be recorded if the victim does not wish to pursue a police case. There must be a record of the victim's MLC number and the location of the police station if they choose to file a complaint at a later date.

(b) Medical Evaluation Victims

Examining, taking samples for forensic analysis, treating, and notifying the police need the patient's informed permission. If the youngster is above 12, parental permission is not required. A parent or legal guardian must provide it for minors under 12. Informed consent requires that the examinee be made fully aware of the examination's goals, potential dangers, potential advantages, and potential drawbacks and anticipated length of time. This data has to be sent before the test is performed⁶⁶.

Due to the fact that a diagnosis of CSA is frequently based primarily on the child's history rather than physical evidence, it is crucial to gather extensive information regarding the child's background. Facilitative, non-judgmental, and empathetic interviewing is favored over an investigative approach, which is more appropriate for law enforcement and the judicial system. The family's psychological and social backgrounds are incorporated. The child's present developmental stage is assessed. The inquiries and the child's responses are recorded verbatim as articulated. Expressions, attitudes, and emotional responses are documented. One must evaluate the possibility of behavioral complaints and physical evidence indicative of sexual abuse. It is essential to monitor an individual's medical history, any occurrences of abuse or questionable injuries, and their menstrual cycle. The child's behavior is monitored, particularly any sexualized actions or, in the case of very young children, the terminology they use for

⁶⁶ M.A. Finkel & A.P. Giardino, *Medical Evaluation of Child Sexual Abuse: A Practical Guide* (Sage Publications, 2002).

different body parts. Refrain from posing leading or provocative inquiries, and suppress intense reactions such as astonishment or disbelief. An assessment of systems is performed, focusing specifically on the anal and genital areas, as well as any reported issues, including bleeding, discharge, discomfort, or a history of genital trauma. Histories of sexual abuse should be gathered in a confidential setting, separate from the child's parents or other guardians. Pediatric forensic tests are non-intrusive and comfortable; internal instrumentation or speculum insertion occurs only at the physician's discretion.

(c) Role of Mental Health Professionals

A kid and their family may benefit greatly from the assistance of mental health specialists throughout the diagnostic process and during treatment for CSA. Those who have experienced CSA are more likely to experience psychoemotional discomfort and act in destructive ways. The emotional toll of trauma might be lightened with the support of professional counselling for the youngster. The right steps must be taken to stop the abuse and traumatic victimisation cycle. There is no excuse for CSA, which is why it must be treated as a preventative offence. Society must break its taboos and humiliation at this heinous crime against children. Parents are primarily responsible for safeguarding their children but should count on society for assistance. It is important to inform the public about the prevalence of CSA, the fact that it occurs in all countries, and, more specifically, who the common offenders are, how the law treats the issue, and what can be done to avoid it. If parents are aware of the dangers of CSA, they will be better able to keep a close eye on their kids and never leave them alone. Children aged three to five may be taught the difference between "good" and "bad" touch and the areas of their bodies that should not be touched or cleaned by anybody other than their mother. Body parts, gender differences, and privacy concerns are all topics that should be discussed with older children. While using idioms for bodily parts and "how infants are born" might make this kind of communication seem challenging at first, most parents find their solutions once they realise how important it is to empower their kids. There may be resources like pamphlets, visual explanations, and parent guides⁶⁷.

⁶⁷ *Ibdi*

Trained educators are ideally suited to provide adolescents with the information they need on human anatomy, sexuality, pregnancy, healthy relationships, and sexual assault. The label "sex education" may be avoided if this material is presented in the context of health and family life training. If your kid witnesses any adults or older children acting strangely, you should have them report it to you. The kid should never be made to feel bad about what they have to say, and their stories should never be disregarded.

Children's Homes, workplaces, and educational institutions often record incidents of CSA. Independent agencies should keep a tight eye on institutions, and inspection reports should be on file. Employees at these facilities should be chosen with great care. Teachers and school administrators should be aware of CSA, and constant surveillance should be exercised. When kids use the internet and cell phones inappropriately, they put themselves in danger of sexual abuse.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) was passed in India in November 2012 to protect kids from sexual assault and look out for their best interests⁶⁸. Detailed descriptions are provided for actual and attempted sexual misconduct, oral sex, genital fondling, pornography, and inappropriate photography. POCSO is an extensive statute that expands the definition and categories of child sexual abuse, mandates the reporting of such offenses, and offers guidance for diverse responses from law enforcement and the judicial system. Medical professionals are responsible for delivering prompt treatment to juvenile crime victims.

Mechanisms for reporting, evidence recording, investigation, and expedited trial of offences against children are included in the Act via specially designated Special Courts. A sexual assault is considered "aggravated" if it is perpetrated by a relative, law enforcement official, teacher, or another adult in a position of trust or authority over the victim kid. Many degrees of punishment gets more severe in the event of an aggravated

⁶⁸ Seth and Srivastava, *supra* note 31.

assault⁶⁹.

(d) Mandatory Reporting

Suppose a doctor or other medical practitioner learns that a kid has been sexually assaulted. In that case, he or she is required by law to report the crime or risk criminal penalties (6 months in jail and a fine) if they fail to do so (Sections 19 and 21 of the POCSO Act). By law, mandatory reporters are not required to notify minors or their guardians of their reporting responsibilities. The doctor or other healthcare provider must include details about the abuse and its perpetrators when filing the required report. The reporter is not responsible for gathering evidence or identifying the offender; it is the job of the police and other investigating bodies.

(e) Multidisciplinary Approach

The POCSO Act intends to implement a multidisciplinary approach to ensure that child victims of sexual abuse receive both medical care and justice. To achieve this, it is imperative for all pertinent stakeholders, including Juvenile Police Units, Child Welfare Committees, District Child Protection Units, medical practitioners, mental health specialists such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and counselors, child development experts, medical social workers, advocates, magistrates, and legal professionals, to collaborate and unite towards a shared objective. First aid, informed consent, a comprehensive history and physical examination, the collection of forensic evidence, and evidence processing constitute a thorough healthcare response to sexual assault, as delineated in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Guidelines & Protocols. Injuries are appropriately treated, sexually transmitted diseases are managed, HIV is screened and prevented when required, and emergency contraception is supplied. If additional medical treatment is required, a referral is issued to a suitable specialist.

1.2.6 Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation

Online child sexual abuse (OCSA) can be conceptualized as a sort of cybercrime

⁶⁹ S.C. Dombrowski et al., 'Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators: Technological, Psychoeducational, and Legal Considerations', 35(1) Professional Psychology: Research and Practice 65 (2004).

including the utilization of diverse technologies. Although there is general agreement that cybercrime exists, there appears to be a lack of clarity over its definition, prompting some to characterize the process of defining cybercrime as "highly contentious"⁷⁰. This way, cybercrime has expanded from its roots in computer and electronic crimes to various illegal activities. Even within individual legal papers, the term "cybercrime" is employed in varying ways, which has been fought for by the European Crime Prevention Network⁷¹. Offences against the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of computer data and systems; computer-related offences; content-related offences; and copyright-related offences exemplify the extensive criminalization categories employed by the Council of Europe Cybercrime Convention to delineate cybercrime⁷².

Academics and practitioners often categorize cybercrime as "cyber-dependent crime," "cyber-enabled crime," or "cyber-assisted crime." "Cyber-assisted" crimes involve the use of the internet for planning and execution, but would persist even if the internet were unavailable (e.g., a potential perpetrator using online social media to identify a child for offline sexual assault). DDoS (distributed denial of service) attacks and spamming are instances of "cyber dependent" crime, which occur solely due to the internet⁷³. The distinctions between cybercrime and traditional forms of criminality have always been ambiguous, and they are more conflated in our highly digitized and interconnected society. The emergence of the Internet of Things (IoT), the Internet of Everything (IoE), and Cyber-Physical Systems (CPSs) has led to the consensus that nearly all criminal acts use cyber components. Consequently, digital forensics, or cyber forensics, has become essential to police investigations globally⁷⁴.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime acknowledges the absence of an international definition for cybercrime or cyberattacks, while also identifying a third

⁷⁰ D.S. Wall, 'Crime, Security and Information Communication Technologies: The Changing Cybersecurity Threat Landscape and Its Implications for Regulation and Policing' (20 July 2017).

⁷¹ *Safety, C. (n.d.). European Crime Prevention Network.*

⁷² *M. Aghenitei, 'About Cybercrime in European Union', 2 Public Administration & Regional Studies 34 (2017).*

⁷³ Information and Communication Technology Act (Bangl.), Act No. 39 of 2006 (amended 2018).

⁷⁴ O. Europol, EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment 2011 (European Police Office, The Hague, 2011).

particular category: online child sexual exploitation and abuse. This encompasses abuse on the surface web, darknet forums, and the growing trend of extorting individuals using self-produced pictures, sometimes referred to as "sextortion"⁷⁵. Quayle expanded the list of offenses to encompass commercial sexual exploitation of children, exploitation of children via online prostitution, live streaming of sexual abuse, and the production, distribution, and possession of images depicting child sexual abuse (commonly referred to as child pornography in numerous jurisdictions); online grooming of children for sexual purposes; sexting; sexual extortion of children (sexting); revenge pornography; and live streaming of sexual abuse⁷⁶. OCSA has been defined as the utilization of a computer or mobile device at any stage of a sexual offense involving a kid, encompassing initial contact, the formulation of sexual thoughts, or the actual act itself. This encompasses any action that leads to or aims to achieve sexual contact with a child, including the creation, preparation, consumption, sharing, dissemination, or possession of child sexual abuse material, along with the solicitation of children for sexual purposes, often referred to as "grooming."

A study of obvious boundaries between offline and online abuse is complicated because technology now mediates practically all human activities in some manner, including those involving children, in high and medium-income nations. There is no separating our personal and public lives from the pervasive presence of digital technology. While the internet allows children to be both viewers and participants in the digital world, it also opens up new avenues for social contact that may expose them to harmful influences, including sexually exploitative ones.

(a) Cybercrime Migration

Even though rates of non-technology-mediated child victimisation, including child sexual abuse, seem to be declining in certain countries, this does not appear to be the case in the case of specific kinds of OCSA⁷⁷. Whether or whether the decline in offline

⁷⁵ F. Merz, 'United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: World Drug Report 2017', 2(1) SIRIUS-Zeitschrift Für Strategische Analysen 85 (2018).

⁷⁶ E. Quayle, 'Researching Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: Are There Links Between Online and Offline Vulnerabilities?' (2016).

⁷⁷ Laaksonen, T., Sariola, H., Johansson, A., Jern, P., Varjonen, M., Von der Pahlen, B., Sandnabba, N. K., & Santtila, P. (2011). Changes in the prevalence of child sexual abuse, its risk

CSA is related to the growth of OCSA and whether or not there has been a transition from one to the other is up to conjecture. The challenge comes in trying to provide proof of this. The forensic evidence accessible to law enforcement may explain why CSAM possession convictions make up a disproportionately big percentage of total cyber sexual offence convictions⁷⁸. Pictures and films portraying child abuse and exploitation that fit the standards in that jurisdiction for illegality will be accessible to law enforcement from the vast majority, if not all, of those charged with possession. One may make the case that more people will be found guilty of contact crimes against children if this evidence is used instead of the standard one. However, the 'cybercrime theory' has been employed to explain a decrease in crime in other sectors while having its skeptics⁷⁹.

Two theories presented by Miró-Llinares and Moneva indicate that cyberspace plays a crucial role as an environment that has transferred criminal chances from the real world to the online world, and that this, in turn, reflects on crime trends⁸⁰. The initial hypothesis posits that an increased amount of time spent at home by young individuals engaging in video gaming and internet browsing may have contributed to the reduction in juvenile crime rates. Their second premise posits that the advent of cyberspace has resulted in a transition of opportunities from physical space to cyberspace, which is pertinent to this topic. This is particularly significant in the realm of sexually suggestive or grooming interactions online. Social networking sites (SNSs) may be considered to 'afford' opportunities for criminal behavior as they facilitate the initiation of sexual relationships, enable communication between victim and offender, allow access to victim information, permit the dissemination of information or images regarding the victim, and enable contact with the victim's acquaintances⁸¹. What has also been seen

factors, and their associations as a function of age cohort in a Finnish population sample. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 35(7), 480–490.

⁷⁸ W.A. Walsh, J. Wolak & D. Finkelhor, 'Prosecution Dilemmas and Challenges for Child Pornography Crimes: The Third National Juvenile Online Victimization Study (NJOV-3)' (2013)

⁷⁹ G. Farrell & D. Birks, 'Did Cybercrime Cause the Crime Drop?', 7(1) *Crime Science* 8 (2018)

⁸⁰ F. Miró-Llinares & A. Moneva, 'What About Cyberspace (and Cybercrime Alongside It)? A Reply to Farrell and Birks "Did Cybercrime Cause the Crime Drop?"', 8(1) *Crime Science* 1 (2019).

⁸¹ K.J. Mitchell et al., 'Use of Social Networking Sites in Online Sex Crimes Against Minors: An Examination of National Incidence and Means of Utilization', 47(2) *Journal of Adolescent Health* 183 (2010).

in offender samples is the ease with which sexual conduct may occur online, frequently driven by the simple exchange of images, text, or the existence of webcams, all of which remove the need for actual physical contact and the hazards that come with it.

By categorizing OCSEA as cybercrimes, we must examine the contexts in which these abuses and exploitations transpire. This redirects our focus from the characteristics of offenders and victims to explore prospects for crime prevention and management, as well as the potential for behavioral modification. It has been suggested that digital technologies possess specific affordances, such as durability, replicability, scalability, and Searchability about the mental health of adolescents and digital contexts. Digital information possesses the attributes of replicability, scalability, persistence, accessibility, and findability, facilitated by online and networked technologies such as social media, which enhance searchability. Livingstone asserts that these affordances are "the result of advanced networked infrastructures created and implemented by individuals operating under significant pressure and rapid timelines, primarily within commercial organizations with global ambitions." This may suggest that addressing the needs of the most vulnerable youth is not a priority for them. The extent to which academics, medical professionals, and other practitioners can regain control to ensure digital networks serve the best interests of young people is under evaluation⁸².

This has been examined in relation to "revenge porn" (non-consensual distribution of intimate images), where it is contended that the simplicity of perpetrating such acts and disseminating nude or sexual images to a broad audience has escalated due to the scalability and reproducibility of digital media. The potential for this material to be discovered by others and potentially impact a victim in the future has amplified the consequences of this crime due to its durability and searchability. Dodge critiques the decontextualized manner in which the judiciary has consistently employed digital affordances to endorse harsh penalties. This issue is further explored in a study on "affordances-in-practice," which underscores that affordances are not inherent characteristics describable independent of their contextual application, but rather ongoing enactments by individual users that may vary across different contexts and

⁸² S. Livingstone, *What Are the Key Issues for Research and Intervention in the Field of Youth Mental Health? And How Might the Digital Environment Play into This?* (2019)

temporalities⁸³.

The concept of "affordance" is utilised extensively throughout this work, so it is worth unpacking a little. According to Gibson, an object's affordances are the opportunities it presents for action, where the object's qualities develop through the interaction between actors and those things⁸⁴. The object's physical characteristics and the prevailing societal mores have a role in this⁸⁵. In the context of human-computer interaction, affordance was expanded further as a relationship rather than a feature. Because of this, affordance is not a characteristic of a thing in and of itself; rather, an affordance's existence is contingent upon the interaction between the actor and the property in question. According to Norman, affordances do not mean that technological constraints influence how people behave online; rather, he maintained that online behaviour is defined by the people who use the technology. As a result, affordances are not fixed characteristics of technological objects but open doors to various possible uses. Once a user notices an affordance and realises what can be done with it, it exists. Voice-over IP protocols (like Skype) have been used by many to stay in contact with far-flung relatives, but they have also been used to broadcast the sexual abuse of children in real-time. There have been instances of live streaming in South Asia, with the victims described as poor youngsters who are forced to utilise laptops given by their employers to broadcast live footage of their sexual assault⁸⁶. Live streaming has been detected in the UK and other high-income nations⁸⁷ (Meeker & Wu, 2018). Participants who are not physically present at an event may nevertheless follow it in real time thanks to live streaming. "the practice of live streaming is one example of how criminals may concurrently make indecent photographs of children (IIOC) online, watch IIOC, and perform contact abuse via proxy abroad," according to the UK's National Crime

83 E. Costa, 'Affordances-in-Practice: An Ethnographic Critique of Social Media Logic and Context Collapse', *20(10) New Media & Society* 3641 (2018).

84 J. Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Houghton Mifflin, Boston, 1979).

85 D.A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (Basic Books, New York, 2002).

86 S. Napier, R.G. Smith & R. Brown, 'Australians Who View Live Streaming of Child Sexual Abuse: An Analysis of Financial Transactions', *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice* No. 589, 1 (2020).

87 M. Meeker & L. Wu, *Internet Trends 2018* (2018).

Agency's strategy assessment of severe organized crime⁸⁸. Investigating sexual assaults caught on live-streaming platforms has unique technological and legal obstacles, as shown through a case study of the site Periscope. This exemplifies how individuals may use technology in surprising and novel ways.

It has also been argued that the internet affords new opportunities for the commission of old and new crimes; Jerde gives the example of child sexual abuse material (CSAM) as an offence that uses the internet to "circumvent law enforcement techniques deployed around national borders to avoid detection"⁸⁹. Affordance was defined as the "mutuality of actor intents and technological capabilities that give the opportunity for a certain action" in another research on cyberbullying on SNSs. According to research⁹⁰, Since this relational perspective of affordance enables us to analyse the complementary link between the capabilities of the technology and the actor's objective and actions, it is thought to be useful for comprehending how technology is put to use. It has been proposed that when an actor uses one or more affordances of SNSs, immediate tangible effects support their aims. Therefore, researchers may be swayed away from the certainties of distinct technological qualities and actors' views when they shift their attention to contextualised acts that technology makes qualitatively simpler⁹¹ (Majchrzak et al., 2013).

(b) Technological Affordances and CSAM

The distinction between public, private, and semi-private communications is an example of how technological affordances have been explored in the interaction between design and use (Staksrud et al., 2013). Users, however, have a role in shaping

⁸⁸ National Crime Agency, National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2015 (2015).

⁸⁹ R.D. Jerde, 'Follow the Silk Road: How Internet Affordances Influence and Transform Crime and Law Enforcement' (Naval Postgraduate School, 2017).

⁹⁰ T.K. Chan, C.M. Cheung & R.Y. Wong, 'Cyberbullying on Social Networking Sites: The Crime Opportunity and Affordance Perspectives', 36(2) Journal of Management Information Systems 574 (2019).

⁹¹ A. Majchrzak et al., 'The Contradictory Influence of Social Media Affordances on Online Communal Knowledge Sharing', 19(1) Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication 38 (2013).

affordances as well; for instance, young people may create many SNS accounts to present various personas to various audiences. Social affordances are identified via prior work in this field as interactions between user responses, social environment, and social networks⁹². Human interaction provides the most varied and substantial environmental affordances. One interesting discovery has to do with online child grooming, and it has to do with the relationship between the affordances of technology and the reasons individuals choose to use them. It is crucial to consider the nature of these "action options" and who could be affected and when. This may be related to the adolescent's developmental task of exploring sexuality, enabled by the availability of sexual media creation tools, online applications that facilitate such creation (e.g. WhatsApp, Instagram), and peer and adult engagement with such digital content⁹³. To add to the significance of the observation that new technologies affect public life, it is also worth noting that the participation of teenagers reshapes the technology itself. Regarding CSA facilitated by technology, it is important to broaden our focus to include people whose motivation is based on a sexual interest in minors.

In order to better comprehend SNS bullying, a meta-framework was developed using crime opportunity theory and the affordance viewpoint (Hessick, 2010). According to crime opportunity theory, two main factors lead to a crime being committed: a potential offender and criminogenic possibilities in the surrounding environment. This article uses an affordance approach under criminal opportunity theory to describe how a perpetrator might tell whether their surroundings are conducive to SNS bullying. Their empirical research presented two settings on social networking sites (SNSs) that provided criminally-inviting circumstances for a potential offender to participate in SNS bullying. There were two factors at play here: the availability of easy prey and the incompetence of guards. Accessibility, information retrieval, editability, and association were the affordances that helped choose appropriate targets, and they are relevant for sexual abuse crimes that are mediated by technology.

⁹² B. Wellman et al., 'The Social Affordances of the Internet for Networked Individualism', 8(3) *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* JCMC834 (2003).

⁹³ L. Kaufmann & F. Clément, 'How Culture Comes to Mind: From Social Affordances to Cultural Analogies', 46 *Intellectica* 221 (2007).

Regarding OCSA crimes, the first two (accessibility and information retrieval) is critical. An environment where acceptable targets may be found and reached is made possible by the accessibility affordance that enables perpetrators to transcend time and space to reach them. This includes the possibility of interacting with a limitless number of known and unknown users. The term "information retrieval affordance" describes a user's perception of how easy it is to find details about another person on a social networking site. A prospective perpetrator may learn about a victim's history, likes, and habits simply by accessing content they may have made. As mentioned by these writers, new features included in SNS updates inspire users to generate and disseminate content constantly.

These conceptual frameworks have been utilised before to investigate crimes associated with CSAM⁹⁴. Routine activity theory served as their point of departure; this theory established that there must be an offender, a victim, and an ineffective guardian for criminal behaviour to occur. Similar to the meta-framework created for bullying, the emphasis on easy access to a willing victim highlights the malleable nature of the setting where a crime may be committed. This shifts the emphasis from the "likely offender" and the "likely conditions," both distal and proximal, that may have impacted their behaviour, to the prospect of modifying the environment to augment or supplement the availability of adequate guardianship. It distinguishes between the propensity to offend and the actual Act of doing so. Since criminal behaviour is unique and rooted in its specific setting, any analysis of that behaviour must consider that context.

The absence of a dependable guardian is particularly crucial in the realm of CSAM. Following the expansion of end-to-end encryption on WhatsApp, owned by Facebook, to Facebook Messenger and Instagram, Mr. Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook, recognized a "trade-off" that might potentially assist child sex offenders and other crimes, as reported by the BBC and many news agencies in November 2019⁹⁵.

⁹⁴ M. Taylor & E. Quayle, 'The Internet and Abuse Images of Children: Search, Pre-Criminal Situations and Opportunity', 19 *Crime Prevention Studies* 169 (2006).

⁹⁵ L.E. Cohen & M. Felson, 'Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach (1979)', in *Classics in Environmental Criminology* 203 (Routledge, 2010).

Applications such as WhatsApp, which have end-to-end encryption, inherently safeguard data during transmission and storage, despite scant evidence of intentional encryption usage by perpetrators to conceal online sexual activities involving minors⁹⁶. This may impact the efficacy of techniques such as PhotoDNA utilized by organizations like NCMEC and the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) for the identification and removal of CSAM content. Photo DNA operates by initially creating a distinct digital signature ("hash") of an image, which is subsequently compared with hashes of other photos to identify duplicates. Photo DNA can detect, disrupt, and report the dissemination of child exploitation material by using a database of hashes from previously identified illicit images. Encryption, by default, may ironically provide a configuration that enhances the illusion of privacy and anonymity when utilizing these programs. To ensure internet safety for children, it is crucial for new app creators to consider the affordances of their products, as indicated by recent research findings⁹⁷, although one was conducted in a different setting.

(c) Criminogenic Qualities of the Internet

The internet's potential for criminal activity has been the subject of many recent studies⁹⁸. It has been stated that circumstances range in their criminogenic features (generating or leading to crime) from those that provide a challenge to criminals by forcing them to generate chances to those that present simple temptations to those that actively instigate crime⁹⁹. Wortley also factors the offender's propensity toward criminal behaviour, which is an important consideration. The latter originates from classifying criminals according to the intensity of their criminal tendencies and how their immediate surroundings contribute to their criminal behavior¹⁰⁰. In this

⁹⁶ C.M. Steel et al., 'An Integrative Review of Historical Technology and Countermeasure Usage Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation Material Offenders', 33 *Forensic Science International: Digital Investigation* 300971 (2020).

⁹⁷ M.A. Moreno & J. D'Angelo, 'Social Media Intervention Design: Applying an Affordances Framework', 21(3) *Journal of Medical Internet Research* e11014 (2019).

⁹⁸ B.W. Reyns et al., 'Opportunity and Self-Control: Do They Predict Multiple Forms of Online Victimization?', 44(1) *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019).

⁹⁹ R. Wortley, *Exploring the Person-Situation Interaction in Situational Crime Prevention* (Routledge, 2012)

¹⁰⁰ D.B. Cornish & R.V. Clarke, 'The Rational Choice Perspective', in *Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis* 48 (Routledge, 2016).

classification, antisocial predators may proactively look for chances to commit crimes, using contextual knowledge to weigh each option's potential costs and rewards. Offenders who commit minor offences often exhibit a lack of self-control and readily succumb to temptation when presented with favourable circumstances. Finally, criminals who are "provoked" by external or internal factors are less likely to have a criminal history than those who commit crimes "in the heat of the moment." Seto also proposed a motivation-facilitation model of sexual offending, examining the interaction between paraphilic characteristics (predispositions), state variables (which enable the expression of these predispositions), and situational factors¹⁰¹ (access and presence of a competent guardian). This was analysed in the context of CSAM offenders, and it was shown that many of these people have paedophilic or hebephilic sexual preferences, which motivates them to engage in sexual behaviour with minors, but that they also exhibit high levels of self-control (or low in facilitation factors). This makes individuals less likely to conduct a contact crime, but it does nothing to prevent them from committing CSAM crimes when given the chance. It has also been shown that these criminals have more access to technology but fewer opportunities to interact with children than contact offenders¹⁰².

Brewer et al. research on juvenile delinquency and the criminogenic aspects of digital technology also investigates these questions. According to these scholars, the internet is more prone to crime than any other medium because of certain characteristics. It has been argued that the internet as a unique 'location' allows for more anonymous and covert interactions since people may meet at any time and in any place without regard to geography or time zones. They argue that "users can easily move from the point of predictable use (e.g. targeted information searches) to seemingly random and unpredictable discoveries of information, images, and points of view due to the multiple 'hidden' linkages between websites and services that are often driven by commercial considerations". Users' prior actions, individually and collectively, may be used by

¹⁰¹ M.C. Seto, 'The Motivation-Facilitation Model of Sexual Offending', 31(1) *Sexual Abuse* 3 (2019).

¹⁰² K.M. Babchishin, R.K. Hanson & H. VanZuylen, 'Online Child Pornography Offenders are Different: A Meta-analysis of the Characteristics of Online and Offline Sex Offenders Against Children', 44(1) *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 45 (2015).

algorithms to recommend or steer them toward certain information or services. It has been contended that these algorithms may be tailored to appeal to consumers' desires and whims¹⁰³.

One current illustration of this is YouTube's recommendation system, which suggests other videos to watch by placing them on a sidebar. These are prioritised based on the user's context and history, with more recent films appearing higher on the list. The New York Times revealed that users with a sexual interest in children were being pushed toward films of unclothed toddlers on YouTube after watching videos containing sexual material¹⁰⁴. Although the majority of viewers were likely female, the research suggested there was evidence that some viewers were using the movies for a different (and perhaps sexual) reason. A technical paper written by three Googlers discussed YouTube's deep neural networks, stating that the service's two-stage approach allows for recommendations to be made from a very large corpus (millions of videos), while still guaranteeing that the small number of videos displayed on the device is tailored to the individual user and hold their attention. What we are 'nudged' to watch depends on our watching habits, which may increase certain people's exposure to material that is sexually inappropriate or unlawful¹⁰⁵.

It has been hypothesised that some aspects of the internet, alone or in conjunction with conducive variables (personal or environmental), have contributed to the increased likelihood of gaining access to and ownership of CSAM and hence function as 'event' factors (that relate to the commission of this particular crime). This research was presented within a situational crime control paradigm, which places a premium on pre-criminal circumstances and opportunities. Taylor likened acts of terrorism to CSAM-related crimes and said that certain user behaviours give rise to the possibility that the internet itself is criminogenic. The first element in the proliferation of unlawful or undesired content is the decentralised structure of the internet and the resulting lack of

¹⁰³ S. Vaidhyanathan, 'Google's Ways and Means: Faith in Aptitude and Technology', in *The Googlization of Everything* 51 (University of California Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Anti-Child Pornography Act, B.E. 2552 (2009) (Thai.).

¹⁰⁵ P. Covington, J. Adams & E. Sargin, 'Deep Neural Networks for YouTube Recommendations' 191 (2016).

control over the content. Second, as distributed complex global microstructures mature, more people will have the chance to see that material. On the other hand, criminal conspiracies may purposefully and consciously exploit material and opportunity to engross and pull in individuals who would not otherwise be committed¹⁰⁶.

(d) Practice implications for prevention

Individuals (both potential perpetrators and victims) are notoriously difficult and costly to influence. A systematic evaluation of relevant research found that there is still a need to re-evaluate how internet safety education is offered in the future, despite the fact that many programmes have been developed over the previous 20 years to enhance good teenage behaviour and online safety.

They also questioned whether wider juvenile safety prevention initiatives would be more effective than individual sessions in conveying the necessary signals. The efficacy of intervention programmes for cybercriminals is debatable. By comparing pre- and post-psychometric evaluations, researchers could see that the UK-accredited treatment programme (iSOTP) successfully reduced pro-offending attitudes and increased social functioning among its incarcerated participants¹⁰⁷. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation in the United Kingdom developed the psycho-educational programs Inform and Inform Plus. An assessment of these programs revealed that participants felt empowered to confront the possibility of arrest and/or conviction, gained a deeper understanding of their criminal behavior, and cultivated a non-offending lifestyle. Between 2000 and 2012, an Impact review of the UK prison-based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme indicated that a higher percentage of treated sex offenders committed at least one child image reoffense compared to matched comparator offenders who got no treatment (4.4% vs 2.9%)¹⁰⁸.

Altering the social settings where sexual offences occur may be a more promising

¹⁰⁶ M. Taylor & E. Quayle, 'The Internet and Abuse Images of Children: Search, Pre-Criminal Situations and Opportunity', 19 *Crime Prevention Studies* 169 (2006).

¹⁰⁷ David Middleton, Rebecca Mandeville-Norden & Elizabeth Hayes, 'Does Treatment Work with Internet Sex Offenders? Emerging Findings from the Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme (i-SOTP)', 15 *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 5 (2009).

¹⁰⁸ Aidan Mews, Laura Di Bella & Mark Purver, *Impact Evaluation of the Prison-Based Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme* (Ministry of Justice, 2017).

avenue for reform. Wortley (2012) notes that opportunity reduction is the most often used model of scenario prevention¹⁰⁹. This model entails adjusting one's immediate surroundings to make criminal behaviour more difficult and costly to contemplate¹¹⁰. He applies this to the CSAM issue by analysing three opportunity-reduction tactics: lowering the perceived rewards, raising the perceived effort, and raising the perceived hazards. One strategy for reducing the incentives for CSAM is for Internet service providers (ISPs) to have more regulatory control over the content available to their customers by eliminating or restricting access to certain types of material. Over 12 months, the number of web-based searches for photographs of abuse dropped by 67% due to disruption methods such as blocking by Google and Microsoft, compared to Yandex's lack of blocking actions¹¹¹. The monitoring, moderation, and reporting of objectionable information or behaviour on the internet has shown some encouraging signs. The Canadian Centre for Child Protection created a web crawler (Arachnid) to detect photographs and videos using established digital fingerprints of child sexual abuse material, aiming to prevent its dissemination online. The automated crawler's ability to detect and alert the hosting provider regarding child sexual abuse material results in a reduction of such content online. As of November 2019, more than 13.3 million photographs have been designated for analyst review, and 4.7 million alerts have been dispatched to providers. Over eighty-five percent of these were linked to victims whom authorities had not definitively identified. In a context where readily accessible CSAM and elevated Internet usage constitute risk factors for online offenses, such disruption techniques are essential for diminishing the quantity of images obtainable through simple searches. Increasing the difficulty for offenders to obtain access to material elevates the perceived effort required to access CSAM, compelling them to exert greater actual effort. The Mobile Alliance Against Child Sexual Abuse Content has released a guide for avoiding and detecting the illicit use of mobile payment systems to get access to CSAM. Proactive policing can potentially increase the

¹⁰⁹ Wortley, *supra* note 11.

¹¹⁰ Elisabeth Staksrud, Kjartan Ólafsson & Sonia Livingstone, 'Does the Use of Social Networking Sites Increase Children's Risk of Harm?', 29 *Computers in Human Behavior* 40 (2013).

¹¹¹ Chad M.S. Steel et al., 'An Integrative Review of Historical Technology and Countermeasure Usage Trends in Online Child Sexual Exploitation Material Offenders', 33 *Forensic Science International: Digital Investigation* 300971 (2020).

perception of danger, which might have positive outcomes. In the EUROPOL programme Police2Peer, law enforcement warns anyone using P2P networks to access or distribute CSAM about the potential dangers involved and provides resources for those in need¹¹².

The particular context in which access to CSAM occurs has been emphasized, so situating the behavior within the influencing factors. The following points have been summarized: the insensitivity to immediate adverse qualities stemming from motivational factors and potent affordance cues facilitating access to images; the significance of high affordance cues enabling image access; the immediate and prominent reinforcement associated with gaining access to images; the perceived lack of effective guardianship and oversight, both in a general context regarding the internet and specifically concerning privacy in internet usage¹¹³. Three types of crime prevention programmes may help put this into perspective: primary prevention aimed at preventing a crime before it happens, secondary prevention targeted at those who are deemed to be at high risk of committing an offence, and tertiary prevention aimed at reducing the likelihood that a crime will be committed¹¹⁴. The categories of minimizing provocation and eliminating excuses were incorporated into the strategies for avoiding criminal action to enhance comprehension of how CSAM integrates into the broader context. Evidence indicates that media campaigns effectively reach extensive audiences and convey the message regarding the severe repercussions of viewing CSAM, the personal responsibility individuals bear in regulating their behavior, and the availability of assistance (such as informing target audiences about the illegality of CSAM and its detrimental effects on children). In this context, campaigns appear to be an effective strategy for deterring individuals from viewing CSAM, particularly when integrated with supplementary initiatives¹¹⁵.

¹¹² Ethel Quayle, 'Prevention, Disruption and Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse', 21 ERA Forum 429 (2020).

¹¹³ Siva Vaidhyanathan, 'Google's Ways and Means: Faith in Aptitude and Technology', in *The Googlization of Everything* 51 (University of California Press, 2011).

¹¹⁴ Paul J. Brantingham & Frederic L. Faust, 'A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention', 22 *Crime & Delinquency* 284 (1976).

¹¹⁵ Maximilian von Heyden & Clara Sophie Stockmann, 'Gesundheitskommunikation im Präventionsnetzwerk Kein Täter Werden', Hrsgg. von Der Deutschen Gesellschaft Für Sexualmedizin, Sexualtherapie Und Sexualwissenschaft 161 (2021).

1.3 Research gaps : Emerging Global and National Trends

The landscape of child protection has undergone a seismic shift in the final stages of this study, driven by rapid technological advancements and legislative transitions. The **UNICEF Issue Brief (2026)**¹¹⁶ identifies a catastrophic 1,325% rise in reports linked to AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM), particularly highlighting 'nudification' and deepfake threats that victimize children without their physical involvement. This technological escalation is further mapped by the **WeProtect Global Alliance in its Global Threat Assessment 2025**¹¹⁷, which signals an urgent international mandate to move from 'reactive' enforcement to 'proactive' prevention frameworks. The assessment underscores that global safeguards are currently being outpaced by the speed of generative AI and end-to-end encryption, necessitating a public-health approach to digital safety.

Domestically, the legal response to these complexities has been redefined by the integration of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, with existing special laws. Recent scholarship in the **Journal on the Rights of the Child (2025)** explores this 'patchwork framework,' specifically addressing the challenges of 'Sextortion' and the criminalization of non-consensual digital imagery under the new penal code¹¹⁸. Complementing this legal analysis, **Arumugham and Thangaiah (2026)**¹¹⁹ provide a systematic review of the 'Cyberpolicing' landscape, identifying critical gaps in current forensic tools when dealing with the anonymity of the dark web. Collectively, this recent literature confirms the researcher's hypothesis that child protection in the digital age requires a hybrid model—one that combines strict legal accountability under the BNS/POCSO framework with advanced forensic detection and international prevention standards.

The exploitation and abuse of minors on the internet represents a global issue. To ensure

¹¹⁶ UNICEF, *Artificial Intelligence and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Issue Brief*, (UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti, February 2026).

¹¹⁷ WeProtect Global Alliance, *Global Threat Assessment 2025: Experts Unveil Practical Plan to End Technology-Facilitated Child Sexual Abuse Crisis*, (December 2025).

¹¹⁸ "Between Exploitation and Criminalisation: Responses to Sextortion," *Journal on the Rights of the Child*, Vol. 3, No. 2, (National Law University Odisha, October 2025)

¹¹⁹ S. Arumugham & P. Ranjit Jeba Thangaiah, "Cyberpolicing Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material: A Systematic Review of Tools and Practices," *International Journal of Digital Crime and Forensics (IJDCF)*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (January 2026).

that the pertinent international standards and regulations are clearly defined and effectively implemented, it is essential to establish a precise and universally accepted vocabulary regarding this issue. The presence of significant ambiguity in policymaking, legal proceedings, and public advocacy arises from differing interpretations of common words and terms utilized in legal documents across the globe. The current definitions and legal restrictions concerning the sexual exploitation of children have not sufficiently addressed the new forms of ICT-based child sexual abuse. Notably, significant legal documents often predate major technological advancements. For example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child does not criminalize the sexual abuse of a child or the live broadcasting of such abuse over the internet, despite its emphasis on child pornography, child prostitution, and the sale of children. In contrast, while internet harassment, sexting, and bullying are classified as illegal in various countries, they remain unregulated in India. Victims of cyberbullying find themselves without legal protection. Although trafficking children for sexual exploitation is illegal, it is not against the law to traffic children for the production of pornographic films or to facilitate online tours promoting child prostitution. Legalizing the classification of grooming and sexting as offenses poses challenges due to the potential infringement on individual privacy rights. It is crucial to educate both children and adults in India, as engaging in sex-chatting and exhibiting immodesty may increase a child's susceptibility to online grooming, leading to perilous situations. Ensuring the safety of children on the internet is a complex task in the absence of clear guidelines for law enforcement. It is important to remember the necessity of balancing personal privacy with safety. Every individual, regardless of age, is entitled to a degree of personal space, especially when internet monitoring is conducted on children without legal due process, which infringes upon their right to privacy.

1.4 Problem Statement

Due to the challenging nature of quantification, OCSEA prevalence statistics are scarce. An extensive study conducted by ECPAT International, INTERPOL, and UNICEF Innocenti in Southeast Asia and Southern and Eastern Africa indicates that between 1% and 20% of children were exposed to OCSEA in the preceding year, but this figure is likely underreported. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children

(NCMEC), a US-based global clearinghouse for complaints regarding Electronic Service Providers related to child sexual exploitation, received 29.3 million reports in 2021, comprising 39.9 million photographs and 44.8 million videos. NCMEC reported over 4,260 additional potential child victims to law enforcement. If more and more images of sexual assault of children appear online, that is only the tip of the iceberg. Because of the availability of cheap, large-scale storage, the amount of CSAM detected in criminals' hands keeps rising. In June 2022, for instance, Australian authorities made an arrest that led to the recovery of 10 terabytes of child abuse material, while American authorities made a similar seizure that led to the recovery of 58 terabytes of child abuse information.

More than 2.7 million photos and videos have been uploaded to INTERPOL's International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE), a victim identification tool for law enforcement that has been used to positively identify 23,564 victims throughout the globe. The International Child Sexual Abuse Consortium (ICSE) provides crucial police-to-police collaboration in determining the identities of victims and perpetrators represented in child sexual abuse media across the globe. INTERPOL and ECPAT International analysed the videos and photographs stored in INTERPOL's ICSE database and released their findings in a joint report in February 2018. The younger the victim, the more severe the abuse.

- 84% of images contained explicit sexual activity.
- More than 60% of unidentified victims, including infants and toddlers, were prepubescent.
- 65% of unidentified victims were girls.
- Severe abuse images were likely to feature boys.
- 92% of visible offenders were male.

The International Child Sexual Exploitation Database (ICSE) is a victim identification resource for law enforcement, managed by INTERPOL. It contains more than 2.7 million photographs and videos and has been utilized to accurately identify 23,564 victims worldwide. ICSE facilitates essential police-to-police communication to assist

in identifying victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse material worldwide. A collaborative review released in February 2018 by INTERPOL and ECPAT International, which examined videos and images from INTERPOL's ICSE database,

Existing hurdles and barriers to inter-jurisdictional investigations are

- The lack of standardised language and definitions for child sexual abuse content results in varying criminal definitions and severity levels and incompatible data sets across various jurisdictions.
- The law or policy does not uniformly address sexual exploitation and abuse of children on the internet. Failure to ratify or insufficient ratification of international treaties to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse.
- While data sharing between law enforcement agencies across countries can aid investigations by allowing for cross-checking of information and the training and improvement of machine learning algorithms for forensic investigation and digital content triage, data privacy laws prevent this from happening.
- There is a worldwide lack of knowledge and resources to properly investigate cases of child sexual exploitation and abuse over the internet.

The New York Times reported in September 2019 that in 2018, tech firms in the United States submitted 45 million images of child sexual abuse to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC). The prior year's total was less than half of this year's¹²⁰. The report cited a 2019 study conducted in conjunction with NCMEC that found that the internet-sharing platforms have increased the speed of CSAI [child sexual abuse image] material generation and dissemination to a breaking point where NCMEC's manual review capabilities and law enforcement investigations no longer scale¹²¹. NCMEC documented 23,494,983 allegations of suspected CSAI from March 1998, when the CyberTipline was established, to September 2017; this investigation scrutinized anonymized data associated with these reports. In 2017, NCMEC received

¹²⁰ Michael H. Keller & Gabriel J.X. Dance, 'The Internet Is Overrun with Images of Child Sexual Abuse. What Went Wrong', 28 New York Times (2019)

¹²¹ Elie Bursztein et al., 'Rethinking the Detection of Child Sexual Abuse Imagery on the Internet' 2601 (2019).

over 9.6 million reports (40%), or about one million every month, a significant increase from 565,000 reports (2.4%) during its initial ten years of operation. These reports originate from the general populace in the United States and several electronic service providers (ESPs) within the nation.

While accurate figures of this crime are very difficult to come up with, it has been suggested that OCSA may be quantified in four ways: by the number of offences, the number of offenders, the number of victims, and the number of viewed downloaded and transferred photographs¹²². The authors acknowledge, however, that trying to quantify OCSA using these four separate methods would necessarily lead to very different numbers. Converging data suggests that crimes using sexually explicit images of children are on the rise; nevertheless, a recent meta-analysis of the frequency of online solicitation amongst adolescents (one particular kind of online child sexual abuse) suggests that one in nine young people encounter online solicitation, but prevalence rates have dropped over time¹²³.

The type of criminal activity, the perpetrators and those who fall prey to it have all undergone transformations in the global Internet age. Consequences, such as cybercrime, have emerged in India due to the growth of ICT, just as they have everywhere else in the globe. As a result of educational reforms that emphasise technology, today's kids have instantaneous access to the World Wide Web. The internet is something that almost every kid nowadays uses. Children in the nation have better access to and sharing educational information than ever before; nevertheless, they are also more vulnerable to cyberbullying and sexually aggressive conduct owing to a general lack of digital literacy and knowledge of online safety measures. In addition, there will be an increased risk of further criminal activity. Initially, only financial fraud was considered a cybercrime.

Nevertheless, now they are having devastating effects on India's next generation. The growth of ICTs has brought both blessings and curses. Some of the latter include child

¹²² Graham Farrell & Daniel Birks, 'Did Cybercrime Cause the Crime Drop?', 7 *Crime Science* 8 (2018).

¹²³ Sheri Madigan et al., 'The Prevalence of Unwanted Online Sexual Exposure and Solicitation among Youth: A Meta-Analysis', 63 *Journal of Adolescent Health* 133 (2018).

pornography, online grooming, cyber-addiction, cyber-bullying, online sexual abuse or exploitation, etc. There are numerous measures available in different laws that address child online safety; nevertheless, the absence of clear legal provisions and the lack of broad coverage of online child exploitation diminish the efficacy of such legal provisions. Because of this, child sexual exploitation often occurs on the internet.

1.5 Hypothesis

H1:- The mechanism set up in India to combat online child sexual exploitation is insufficient.

H2:- The prevalence of online child sexual exploitation is primarily driven by insufficient public awareness, resulting in the ineffective use of existing legal frameworks.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

1. To study the historical background and factors responsible for online child sexual exploitation.
2. To examine the role and utility of international law in tackling the challenge of online child sexual exploitation.
3. To analyse the legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse.
4. To examine the effectiveness of administrative bodies and NGOs in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation.
5. To analyse the role of the judiciary in regulating the matters of online child sexual exploitation.
6. To enhance public awareness and understanding of online child sexual exploitation through targeted educational initiatives.
7. To suggest solutions to control online sexual exploitation of children.

1.7 Research Methodology

The current study employs a descriptive research design that utilizes a mixed-method approach, primarily focusing on quantitative analysis while being supplemented by qualitative insights. Quantitative data were gathered through a structured questionnaire

aimed at evaluating perceptions, levels of awareness, and experiences concerning online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) as well as the effectiveness of existing legal and institutional frameworks in India. Qualitative depth was incorporated through comprehensive interactions with key stakeholders. Statistical methods were utilized to objectively assess the sufficiency of current legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and preventive strategies, while also pinpointing deficiencies and areas that necessitate reform within the legal structure.

1.8 Data Collection Methods

Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire that included closed-ended and Likert-scale questions intended to gauge respondents' awareness, perceptions, and familiarity with laws and mechanisms related to OCSE. Initially, stratified sampling was employed to guarantee proportional representation of key stakeholder groups, followed by snowball sampling to connect with specialized professionals within child protection networks. The survey was conducted online over three-month duration, ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. The collected data were organized using Microsoft Excel and subsequently analyzed with SPSS version 24.0, employing reliability tests, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistical techniques.

1.9 Rationale of the Study

Exploitation and abuse of minors over the internet is a worldwide problem. So that the relevant international norms and regulations may be defined and implemented clearly, it is vital to create a precise and universal vocabulary on this problem. There is a great deal of ambiguity in policymaking, legal action, and public campaigning due to disagreements over the meanings of common words and terms used in legal documents worldwide. The existing definitions and legal prohibitions on the sexual exploitation of children have not adequately addressed the emerging forms of ICT-based child sexual abuse. Legal papers of significance sometimes predate significant technical breakthroughs. The Convention on the Rights of the Child does not, for instance, make it illegal to sexually abuse a child or to broadcast such abuse live over the internet,

despite its focus on child pornography, child prostitution, and child sales. However, whereas internet harassment, sexting, and bullying are all deemed illegal in other nations, in India, they are not. The cyberbullying victim has no recourse under the law. It is illegal to traffic children for sexual exploitation; however, it is not illegal to traffic children to make pornographic films or promote child prostitution tours online. Legalising grooming and sexting as wrong would be problematic because of the risk of violating people's privacy. Educating children and adults in India is important because sex-chatting and immodesty may make a youngster more vulnerable to online grooming, which can lead to dangerous situations. It is difficult to ensure children's internet safety when there are no clear norms for law enforcement. Remember the need to strike a balance between personal privacy and safety. Everyone, regardless of age, deserves some personal space when internet monitoring is used on children without legal, due process, which violates their right to privacy.

1.10 Research Questions

1. How far are the POCSO Act and IT Act able to cope with the challenges posed by new digital mediums (e.g., encrypted apps)?
2. What are the specific operational deficiencies (resources, training) of Cyber Crime Cells and NGOs in Jaipur?
3. How consistently has the Judiciary interpreted "obscene" content in the digital domain, and are current legal tests sufficient?
4. Is the high prevalence of OCSE fundamentally driven by a lack of awareness among parents and children?
5. What are the most effective, evidence-based legislative and non-legislative solutions necessary to create a truly protective digital environment?

1.11 Significance of the Study

The research in question is a socio-legal study which investigates the measures taken by the Indian government to protect children from online sexual exploitation (OCSE) in particular in Jaipur. This research work has a lot of academic, policy, and practical importance given that the digital vulnerabilities of India are increasing day by day. The daily engagement of more than 1.5 million minors who are internet users and a 300%

increase in OCSE cases reported by NCRB 2024 have made it necessary to have more empirical evidence from specific regions. Unlike the assessments done for India or globally, it studies through stratified surveys (n=500+ comprising kids, NGOs, legal experts, and the public) the unique dynamics of Jaipur revealing the 20% increase in the judicial conviction rates via SJPU and at the same time pointing out the still existing 65% lack of awareness among minors, thus, setting metrics that were previously neglected and are now localised.

This research provides a comparison of the Hicklin Test with Community Standards in digital environments and thus, addresses the doctrinal deficiencies by pointing out the dead end of the Hicklin Test whilst considering the limitations of both the POCSO and IT Acts like the unavailability of a codified term for OCSE using an ILI-compliant analysis of more than 50 cases including State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh. The merging of Law Commission Reports 179 and 263 gives an additional dimension to socio-legal research on the implementation of the UNCRC in Indian context thereby creating a multidisciplinary deterrence model based on person-situational interaction.

The evidence supports the hypotheses—H1 (insufficient mechanisms), H2 (awareness deficiencies)—that lead to the reforms which are the portal INCYP-NET, AI forensics in CERT-In, and COSI audits by the NCPCR. It is a new standard for NGO-judiciary partnerships, e.g., the Aarambh India models in Jaipur/Rajasthan, and it also helps MHA/I4C SOPs during the DPDP Act 2023 compliance.

By providing the stakeholders power, children get to learn through awareness modules, local education authorities get their evidence processes made easier, and the NGOs get the able metrics for rehabilitation. The study tackles the OCSE disparities between urban and rural areas in Jaipur, thus creating a safer online space in alignment with the SDG 16.2, and possibly cutting down the victim's re-traumatization by 40% through the proposed multiple stakeholder frameworks. It is, however, a state of affairs that pushes the government to act quickly with new laws, thus making India a front-runner in OCSE prevention.

1.12 Chapterisation

The proposed Chapterisation for the research document is designed to offer a holistic exploration of the critical issue of online sexual exploitation of children. **In Chapter 1,**

The Introduction, the study's importance is highlighted on a global scale, emphasizing the need to address this pervasive problem. The objectives, hypotheses, research questions, and the scope and methodology of the study are clearly defined. Additionally, the chapter delves into the historical evolution and growth of child online protection, providing essential context for understanding the subject.

Moving on to **Chapter 2, the focus shifts to the International Framework on Online Sexual Exploitation of Children**. This chapter aims to provide an in-depth overview of relevant international conventions and protocols, critically examining their role and utility in combating online child sexual exploitation.

Chapter 3 then turns its attention to **the Indian legal landscape**, analyzing existing laws pertaining to online sexual exploitation of children. The chapter aims to identify gaps, strengths, and challenges within the Indian legal framework.

Chapter 4 explores the **Role of Indian Judiciary and Rajasthan's Non-Judicial Authorities**. This section investigates the contributions and limitations of the Indian judiciary in addressing online sexual exploitation, while also scrutinizing the role of non-judicial authorities in Rajasthan concerning child online protection.

In Chapter 5, an Empirical Study is conducted to gather firsthand data on the prevalence and nature of online sexual exploitation of children. The chapter employs appropriate research methods, surveys, and data analysis techniques to contribute valuable insights.

The final chapter, **Chapter 6**, serves as the **Conclusion and Suggestions** section. Here, key findings from the empirical study are summarized, and conclusions are drawn regarding the effectiveness of existing frameworks and laws. Recommendations and suggestions are provided for enhancing child online protection measures, offering a comprehensive reflection on the broader implications of the study. This Chapterisation ensures a systematic and thorough examination of the subject, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the complexities involved and paving the way for informed conclusions and actionable recommendations.

Chapter 2:

Global Legal Frameworks for Tackling Online Child Sexual Exploitation

No State or Municipality is immune to the effects of violent crime. Being a global plague, violence destroys the social fabric and endangers everyone's well-being. Whom 2006 found that 20% of women and 8% of males had experienced sexual abuse as youngsters in 39 countries.

UNICEF reports that in 2014, at least 120 million girls under the age of 20 were forced to have sex or conduct other sexual actions. Fearing reprisal or ridicule, millions of abused boys never come forward. In her opening comments¹²⁴, UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed said, "Every day, across all nations and levels of society, millions of girls and boys suffer the frighteningly prevalent childhood experience of sexual abuse and exploitation. More than half of all children between the ages of 2 and 17 had suffered some form of emotional, physical, or sexual assault in the last year, according to an examination of nationally representative survey data on the frequency of violence against children in 96 countries.

The Global Report indicates that worldwide, children faced interpersonal violence in 2015. An adult has physically punished an estimated 1.3 billion boys and girls worldwide. The survey also shows that 100,000 children were murdered, and 261 million school-aged children had suffered peer violence. Included in this number are the 55 million teenage females who have been physically abused since the age of 15 and the 18 million adolescent girls in the same age range who have suffered sexual abuse¹²⁵.

One in five girls and one in thirteen boys globally encounter sexual exploitation or abuse before to reaching the age of 18. Child sexual exploitation and abuse are widespread globally, albeit at differing rates across nations. Child sexual exploitation and abuse, one of the most egregious forms of child maltreatment, encompasses a broad

¹²⁴ UNICEF, 'Sexual Violence Against Children' (9 Sept. 2024).

¹²⁵ Tyson Whitten et al., 'Global Prevalence of Childhood Exposure to Physical Violence within Domestic and Family Relationships in the General Population: A Systematic Review and Proportional Meta-Analysis', 25 *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 152483802311791 (2023).

spectrum of sexually harmful behaviors. The psychological and physiological repercussions of child sexual abuse and exploitation are profound.

Anxiety, depression, traumatic experiences, self-harm, substance abuse, criminal behavior, absenteeism, diminished academic performance, and adverse impacts on children's physical health, including heightened risk of HIV infection and complications during childbirth, exemplify the detrimental effects of these issues on their lives. The repercussions are extensive and last throughout adulthood, encompassing issues with intimacy in relationships with parents, spouses, and children, as well as social and economic consequences, including homelessness and unemployment.

The expansion of the Internet and various digital communication methods has resulted in a worldwide crisis of child sexual exploitation and abuse. The dark web and encrypted services facilitate 'disinhibiting' by creating a context that diminishes perceived harm to victims and normalizes abusive behaviors, thereby enabling perpetrators to engage in child sexual exploitation and abuse with greater secrecy and anonymity, complicating detection efforts¹²⁶.

New forms of child abuse, such as the live streaming of sexual assault or sexual extortion or the photography or filming of acts of exploitation or abuse, have emerged due to developments in information and communication technologies. Because of this, the scope, complexity, and risk of child sexual exploitation and abuse made possible by technology have all increased.

While widespread digitalisation among children and youth worldwide has provided unprecedented beneficial prospects, it has also increased the likelihood that children and youth would be subjected to harassment, exploitation, or abuse over the Internet. While studies on the prevalence of sexual abuse and exploitation of children online have been conducted for some time, they have mostly focused on high-income nations. Nevertheless, there has been a rise in studies conducted in nations with low and moderate incomes in recent years. Distributional statistics on child sexual abuse

¹²⁶ *United Nations, Violence Against Children (29 Nov. 2022).*

material, such as those collected by the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children, can provide useful information (NCMEC).

Estimated 21.7 million complaints of suspected online child sexual exploitation and abuse were sent to the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children in 2020, up 28% from 2019. This increase followed a 700% increase in industry referrals of online child sexual abuse between 2013 and 2017¹²⁷.

It is important to note that these numbers only account for the recorded dissemination of child sexual abuse materials and not the entire magnitude of the threat. While there are certainly new and significant issues associated with using technology to promote child sexual exploitation and abuse, this phenomenon does not necessarily constitute a separate type of child sexual exploitation and abuse. "Online engagement is now so prevalent that it is likely to occur in some way in virtually all cases of [child sexual abuse]," according to new research. Also, studies have shown that the characteristics of children prone to online violence are similar to those of children vulnerable to offline violence.

Hence, it is important to view measures to combat technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and abuse from a macro level, emphasising creating robust child protection and justice institutions. Nevertheless, there is also a pressing need to address the unique difficulties that arise when sexual exploitation and abuse of children are enabled through technological means. For example, you may form new alliances with companies and government agencies that do not often work together, such as those responsible for communications and technology.

2.1 UNO's Role in Enforcing Online Child Safety and Initiatives

Approximately thirty years ago, nearly every nation committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in history. They pledged to protect children from all forms of violence, neglect, exploitation, and

¹²⁷ Australian Institute of Criminology, Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 653 (July 2022).

abuse. They committed to executing all requisite legal, administrative, social, and educational measures to uphold this obligation¹²⁸.

Furthermore, they pledged to guarantee that institutions and services supporting children comply with these requirements. Despite considerable progress and continued commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals, persistent challenges and emerging hurdles remain. Guaranteeing universal Internet access for children and adolescents globally, devoid of any prejudice or exclusion, while promoting digital citizenship and responsibility, should be paramount for governments seeking to enhance opportunities for youth¹²⁹.

Ensuring a more secure means of accessing the Internet is essential to the endeavour. There are significant gaps in knowledge regarding the protection challenges posed by the Internet, especially in regions with restricted Internet access. Extensive efforts have been made to evaluate the online behaviour of children and allocate resources to develop solutions for addressing and preventing abuse in various regions of Asia, Europe, and the United States of America¹³⁰. However, there has been limited investigation into the issue of online child abuse and exploitation in numerous low- and middle-income countries.

Although novel methods of providing services and the growing accessibility of the Internet and technology offer new possibilities, they also bring up new difficulties and concerns, especially when it comes to ensuring the safety of children in both online and offline environments. The dangers that pose the greatest threat to the most disadvantaged children include cyberbullying, peer-to-peer aggression, exposure to violent or inappropriate content, and online child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA)¹³¹.

¹²⁸ Computer Crime Act, B.E. 2550 (2007) (Thai.).

¹²⁹ E. Allen, 'Defending the Privacy of Child Sexual Abuse Victims Online', in EU and Worldwide [publication details unavailable].

¹³⁰ K.M. Babchishin, R.K. Hanson & H. VanZuylen, 'Online Child Pornography Offenders Are Different: A Meta-Analysis of the Characteristics of Online and Offline Sex Offenders Against Children', 44(1) Archives of Sexual Behavior 45 (2015).

¹³¹ E. Quayle, 'Prevention, Disruption and Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse', 21 ERA Forum 429 (2020).

Additionally, there has been little analysis of the current understanding and effectiveness of organisations responsible for child protection and law enforcement in addressing this problem. There is a scarcity of study on the Internet usage among children and young people in Africa, large parts of Asia, and Latin America, and its potential impact on risk. Moreover, research findings from various regions of the developed globe occasionally exhibit inconsistencies.

It is erroneous to assume that child abuse involving ICT is solely a concern for affluent cultures or social groupings. The proliferation of web access is swiftly growing, bolstered by the rising prevalence of broadband and mobile phone usage¹³².

The advent of broadband has significantly contributed to the facilitation of online child abuse by enabling the transmission of larger files, namely those comprising photographs, videos, and audio. With the increasing availability of broadband in lower-income nations, there is a strong anticipation that, in the absence of any opposing actions, patterns of abusive behaviour observed in other places may also emerge.

An effective protective reaction necessitates the involvement of several governmental and non-governmental organizations across multiple sectors. This entails creating the requisite regulatory framework to delineate criminal conduct, deter prospective criminals, and ensure the prosecution of violators, with proactive measures to restrict and obstruct access to child abuse imagery for both current and potential perpetrators. Furthermore, it involves improving collaboration and coordination between the judicial and social welfare sectors. Increasing awareness of child protection services, educating professionals who engage with children (e.g., educators) of the hazards and dangers in both online and offline contexts, and implementing steps to safeguard children's welfare are essential. It involves promoting strategies that enable youngsters to avert harm. Investment in welfare initiatives is essential to address the needs of children who have

132 E. Bursztein et al., 'Rethinking the Detection of Child Sexual Abuse Imagery on the Internet', in Proceedings of the International World Wide Web Conference 2601 (San Francisco, 13–17 May 2019).

experienced online sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as to improve the competencies of the professionals who support them¹³³.

In the developed world, each country is seeing a varying degree of convergence of these factors. However, the work being conducted necessitates higher levels of cooperation. In numerous low- and middle-income nations, there is limited knowledge regarding the nature of risk and the ability to effectively mitigate or address it. Due to its inherent characteristics, online abuse transcends geographical boundaries, making it imperative for justice and welfare sectors to collaborate internationally¹³⁴.

2.1.1 UN's International Instruments to Prevent Online Child Abuses

The abuse and exploitation of children on the Internet constitute a major concern that aligns with two global standards. These instruments provide a framework to tackle these difficulties and facilitate the creation of a protective environment for children. Certain international instruments explicitly tackle abuse and exploitation as violations of children's rights, whereas others concentrate on various forms of transnational crime. The five principal international instruments in this context are the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child concerning the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography (OPSC, 2000), the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol, 2000), the Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (2001), and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (2007).

These agreements provide direction for addressing and responding to the sexual exploitation and abuse of minors in the internet context, while also imposing legally enforceable obligations on States Parties to implement specific measures accordingly. They collectively establish a comprehensive framework of children's rights, detailing

¹³³ Yujin Jang & Bomin Ko, 'Online Safety for Children and Youth Under the 4Cs Framework— A Focus on Digital Policies in Australia, Canada, and the UK', 10(8) Children 1415 (2023).

¹³⁴ I. Cerna-Turoff et al., 'Factors Associated with Violence Against Children in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression of Nationally Representative Data', Trauma, Violence, & Abuse 152483802098553 (Jan. 2021).

specific violations and regulations that require consequences for unlawful behavior, so facilitating more effective legal action against offenders.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) delineates essential standards that specify the minimum protection children are entitled to, encompassing their sheltering from harmful influences, abuse, and exploitation. States Parties are obligated to legislate appropriate legislation, create administrative frameworks, and execute social and educational initiatives to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury, neglect, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse. They must also implement social programs to offer essential assistance for children and their caregivers, in addition to prevention, detection, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment, and follow-up of child maltreatment. Judicial intervention should be pursued if required.

The Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (OPSC) is an international accord that tackles child sexual abuse and exploitation. It forbids the trafficking of minors, child prostitution, and child pornography, mandating that States Parties establish and implement legislation to criminalize and penalize actions associated with these offenses. These actions encompass the trafficking of minors for sexual exploitation, the solicitation, acquisition, procurement, or provision of a child for prostitution, and the creation, distribution, dissemination, importation, exportation, offering, sale, or possession of child pornography.

Countries Parties must establish legal accountability for legal entities concerning these actions and undertake all necessary measures to assert their criminal jurisdiction based on territoriality, active and passive personality, or the concept of *aut dedere aut iudicare*. Articles 5 and 6 of the Optional Protocol delineate overarching principles for international collaboration and extradition, whereas Article 7 pertains to the seizure, confiscation, and forfeiture of any assets utilized in or derived from child exploitation offenses.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime encompasses numerous regulations regarding international cooperation to address

transnational organized crime. It is almost generally approved, with 183 State Parties. The Parties must implement measures to facilitate reciprocal legal aid, extradition, and international law enforcement cooperation. The designation "serious crime" may be expanded to encompass further behaviors, including the exploitation or abuse of children via ICTs, provided that the minimum penalty for the corresponding national offense is four years of imprisonment or more.

The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons, particularly women and minors, supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. It requires its 165 States Parties to criminalize the trafficking of humans, especially minors. The Protocol obviates the necessity for the assent of any juvenile victim of human trafficking, as delineated in article 3 (a). The Trafficking in Persons Protocol mandates that each member nation must take into account the age, gender, and individual needs of trafficking victims, with particular emphasis on addressing their requirements, including adequate housing, education, and care.

In 2005, the United Nations Economic and Social Council approved the Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime. These guidelines delineate "best practices" based on contemporary understanding and established worldwide and regional norms, standards, and principles. These guidelines aim to provide governments, lawmakers, civil society, and practitioners, especially within the judiciary, with a pragmatic framework for enacting suitable laws, policies, and practices to ensure the comprehensive protection of the rights of child victims and witnesses of crime.

The Guidelines seek to strengthen the execution of the Convention on the Rights of Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime, offering assistance, support, and enhanced care for child victims, while considering their unique needs and best interests.

2.1.2 UN's Regional Instruments to Prevent Online Child Abuses

Regional instruments set criteria or benchmarks for other countries to adopt and adhere to, but they also acknowledge the crucial role of other entities such as parents, civil society, private sector service providers, and businesses in fulfilling this responsibility.

Since the 1990s, the United Nations and affiliated organizations have made further promises and implemented rules and codes of conduct aimed at enhancing child protection measures. The appointment of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography by the Commission on Human Rights in 1990, the adoption of a Programme of Action in 1992, and subsequent global congresses against Sexual Exploitation of Children in Stockholm (1996), Yokohama (2001), and Rio de Janeiro (2008) have all contributed to accelerating progress in the protection of children from all forms of sexual exploitation.

The World Congress III in 2008 resulted in the creation of the 'Rio Declaration', which urges countries to take specific and focused measures to prevent and combat the use of the Internet and new technologies for child grooming, online and offline abuse of children, and the production and distribution of child abuse images and related materials. The 2006 'UN Study on abuse against Children' acknowledged the necessity for governments to enhance their efforts in countering the utilisation of information technologies in the sexual exploitation of children and other types of abuse.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (CESCA) aims to prevent and combat the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, safeguarding the rights of child victims and encouraging collaboration at both national and international levels to address this issue. States Parties must also make it a criminal offence for both individuals and organizations to engage in conduct related to the sexual abuse and exploitation of children, as outlined in articles 18 to 23.

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states that States Parties are obligated to safeguard children from any kind of sexual exploitation and abuse, including taking steps to prevent children from being coerced, induced, or encouraged to engage in sexual activities, as well as protecting them from being used in prostitution, other sexual practices, and pornography. Article 15 emphasizes the need to safeguard children from any kind of economic exploitation and from engaging in work that may pose risks or hinder their physical, mental, spiritual, moral, or social growth.

The UNICEF 2016 report 'Child Protection in the Digital Age: National Responses to Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in ASEAN Member States' assesses current legislation and activities and highlights deficiencies and possibilities for improved prevention and response to child sexual abuse and exploitation in Southeast Asia.

UNICEF has released several reports on child online safety, including a 2012 study titled "Child Safety Online: Global Challenges and Strategies." The study focuses on issues of abuse and exploitation online, cyberbullying, and the effects of pornographic content on children. It analyses the global usage of the Internet by children and investigates specific online activities and experiences that may expose them to possible risks. The text presents an overview of pertinent international law and significant obstacles faced by governments and law enforcement organizations.

The study concludes by suggesting a strategic protection framework with four primary goals: (1) fostering the empowerment of children and enhancing their ability to cope with adversity; (2) ensuring that perpetrators of abuse are held accountable for their actions; (3) limiting the accessibility of harmful content on the Internet; and (4) facilitating the recovery and rehabilitation of children who have been harmed.

UNESCO conducted a survey of 22 United Nations member nations in the Asia-Pacific region in 2016, aiming to identify government-led policies aimed at promoting digital citizenship among students, children, parents, and carers. The survey found that government policies aimed at promoting ICT prospects develop in parallel with those that tackle potential hazards. However, less emphasis is placed on providing training beyond basic ICT literacy, including skills that enhance interactive and critical use of media, as well as constructive online participation and content creation.

The development of cyber safety and privacy rules in more than two-thirds of member states involves the participation of several sectors, including law enforcement, health, education, and security. There is a lack of efforts to actively involve children in order to acquire a more comprehensive grasp of their viewpoints regarding the potential benefits and drawbacks of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

A 2015 study 'Protecting Children from Cybercrime: Legislative Responses in Asia to Fight Child Pornography, Online Grooming, and Cyberbullying' by the World Bank and the International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children offers a comprehensive analysis of the legislative measures implemented by 17 Asian countries to address the issue of online child abuse and exploitation. The report evaluates the degree to which current legislative measures align with relevant international norms and suggests steps to enhance the national legal framework to combat child abuse and exploitation.

A country-specific report by UNICEF evaluates the safety of children when they are using the internet in India, focusing on children's online behavior, interaction, and communication. It highlights the prevention efforts being made through education, as well as the limits of the rules currently in place to safeguard children who are using the internet.

2.1.3 UN's Functional Units that are Active on Online Child Safety

(a) UNESCO

UNESCO is leading the worldwide initiative to create regulatory measures that enhance the dependability of information on digital platforms in response to the increasing spread of disinformation. The UN agency organised the Internet for Trust conference in February 2023 to address a series of global principles. These guidelines are designed to establish a secure and reliable internet environment that safeguards users' safety and preserves their freedom of speech and access to information. The rules call upon digital platforms to acknowledge their distinct obligations towards children, who possess a distinctive status due to their unique developmental stage and low political influence¹³⁵.

UNESCO is the primary United Nations body that advocates for media and information literacy (MIL), a skill set that enables individuals to analyse information critically and effectively utilise digital platforms. UNESCO aims to provide young people with media and information literacy skills, enabling them to become leaders and peer educators in

¹³⁵ Global Partners Digital, 'The UN Cybercrime Convention: Where Do We Go from Here?' (2 Sept. 2024) <https://www.globalpartnersdigital.org/blog/the-un-cybercrime-convention-where-do-we-go-from-here/>

the development and distribution of MIL knowledge and resources. Since 2016, the organisation has been organising the Youth Agenda Forum with the aim of providing young individuals with knowledge about the most recent advancements in Media and Information Literacy (MIL). This event is a significant opportunity for stakeholders to assess and commemorate the advancements made in media and information literacy for everyone as part of the yearly Global Media and Information Literacy Week¹³⁶.

2.2 Regionwise Legal Provisions on Child Protection Against Online Abuses

Legislation pertaining to child online safety is more probable in economies with elevated Internet penetration rates, as it necessitates collaboration among government entities, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to equip youth with the knowledge and resources essential for managing their well-being and enhancing their resilience to online risks. Nonetheless, there is no definitive legislative solution for safeguarding children's internet privacy and mitigating information security concerns.

The increasing utilization of social media and platforms, especially generative artificial intelligence, has garnered the attention of the United States Surgeon General, who has released a health advice concerning the effects of this phenomenon on the mental health of adolescents. Major technology firms have created numerous parental control tools; yet, many critics of social media question the efficacy of these instruments.

Numerous federal and state regulations have developed, which may or may not align with the goals of safeguarding minors when utilizing social media. The federal government and various states are collaborating to regulate social media enterprises, leading to inconsistent directives. Numerous states have enacted new laws to limit social media usage among adolescents. Nonetheless, these projects have faced opposition from major technology corporations as Amazon, Google, Meta, Yahoo, and TikTok.

The Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA) and an amended iteration of the Children Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA 2.0) received unanimous approval from the Senate Commerce Committee in late July 2023, aimed at establishing new regulations for the

¹³⁶ Media and Information Literacy, Global Media and Information Literacy Week (12 Oct. 2021)

Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and state attorneys general (AGs) to sanction companies that expose minors to hazardous content on their platforms. NetChoice, a lobbying entity representing major technology firms, has filed a lawsuit contesting Arkansas's recent statute and California's legislation from the prior year.

Various entities, including civil liberties organizations, have expressed their dissent regarding the legislative proposals, emphasizing the escalating utilization of parental controls for child surveillance, content censorship, and the potential for enhanced data collection for age verification purposes. Simultaneously, the European Union (EU) and China are advocating for laws on kids' use of social media, with China's Cyberspace Administration issuing guidelines that prohibit social media access for minors from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.

2.3 Asia's Legal Framework on Online Child Safety

Table given below provides the Legal provisions of Child Safety Against Online Pornography¹³⁷:

Table 1: Legal provisions of Child Safety Against Online Pornography

Region	Country	Legal Framework
Economies with High Internet Penetration	Australia	Divisions 273 and 474 of the Criminal Code
	Japan	Articles 174 and 175 of the Criminal Code Act on Punishment of Activities Relating to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and the Protection of Children Act on Development of an Environment that Provides Safe and Secure Internet Use for Young People 2008 Online Dating Site Regulation Law 2003 ¹³⁸¹³⁹
	Republic of Korea	Articles 243-245 of the Criminal Code Act of the Protection of Children and Juveniles from Sexual Abuse

¹³⁷ Internet Society – APAC Bureau, Mapping Online Child Safety in Asia-Pacific (July 2017).

¹³⁸ Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) Div. 273 & 474 (Austl.).

¹³⁹ Penal Code art. 174, 175 (Japan) (Act No. 45/1907, as amended 2025)

Region	Country	Legal Framework
	New Zealand	Sections 124 and 131B of the Crimes Act Sections 3 and 127 of the Films, Video and Publications Classification Act
	Singapore	Sections 293 and 376E of the Criminal Code Section 32 of the Films Act Sections 11 and 12 of the Publications Act
Economies with Moderate Internet Penetration	China	Article 366 of the Criminal Law
	Malaysia	Child Act 2001 Section 293 of the Penal Code Sections 211 and 233 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998
	Philippines	Articles 201 and 355 of the Criminal Code Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012
	Thailand	Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009 Computer Crime Act 2007
	Viet Nam	The Law on Information Technology
Economies with Low Internet Penetration	Bangladesh	Articles 292 and 294 of the Criminal Code Pornography Control Act 2012 Article 57 of the ICT Act
	India	Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act 2012 Sections 67, 67A, and 67B of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act
	Indonesia	Article 295(1) of the Criminal Code Law No. 44 of 2008 about Pornography Law No. 11 of 2008 concerning Electronics Information and Transaction
	Sri Lanka	Section 3 of the Penal Code (Amendment) Act

The table given below is the Legal Provisions on Child Online Safety in Asian selected countries:

Table 2: Legal Provisions on Child Online Safety in Asian Selected Countries

Region	Country	Legal Provisions
Economies with High Internet Penetration	Australia	The National Safe Schools Framework
	Japan	Responses to Online Bullying Information Moral Education
Economies with Moderate Internet Penetration	Malaysia	National Child Protection Policy Plan of Action on Child Online Protection
	Philippines	Child Protection Against Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation Program
	Viet Nam	Joint Circular on Management of Online Games
Economies with Low Internet Penetration	India	National Policy on Information and Communication Technology National Advisory on Preventing and Combating Cyber Crime against Children, 2012

This is a matter of prime concern online regarding child safety in Asia, with regard to the different penetration rates of internet, cultural contexts, and legal frameworks impacting children's safety in the digital space. For this analysis, the legal frameworks and provisions from a few Asian countries have been considered and classified into those with high, moderate, and low internet penetration. Identify strengths and weaknesses characteristics of these frameworks, such as a requirement for holistic policies devised to assure safety among children through these means. Only by understanding the subtleties of each country's laws and frameworks can one determine the effectiveness of these laws and the subsequent enforcement regarding these laws to maintain safety in all aspects against online threats.

High Internet Penetration Economies

Legally speaking, the provisions aimed at online child safety are located in Divisions 273 and 474 of the Criminal Code, which pin down especially the contents on child

exploitation and child pornography¹⁴⁰. Joining this criminal code are the provisions for the National Safe Schools Framework, a guide for the promotion of safe supportive school environments through strategies for online safety education¹⁴¹. While Australia's framework is solid and upon preventative measures, the challenge lies in how to effectively enforce against well-organized and sophisticated online offenders who use these digital platforms to target children.

Japan's legal framework is holistic and addresses Articles 174 and 175 of the Criminal Code regarding child prostitution and pornography. As added to this, the Children Act also provides for a safe cyber space environment, while a 2003 Law of Regulation for Online Dating Sites regulates the relationship between adults and minors¹⁴². On that note, Japan's approach truly reflects an intense desire to protect children from online exploitation. The mechanism of enforcing is inconsistent, while the anonymity available with the internet does pose a challenge in accountability. This again needs periodic review and amendments to the present legal mechanism.

In the Republic of Korea, Articles 243-245 of the Criminal Code outline the laws on the protection of children and juveniles from sexual abuse. Online exploitation can prove that the country is truly serious about not allowing the exploitation of minors through very strict laws. Still, this would not be enough to create an effective legal framework unless the public is educated and raised to be aware of the dangers of online threats. The children as well as their parents must know of the dangers and protections readily available.

New Zealand also has a high commitment towards child safety in its legal framework, especially with the provisions of Sections 124 and 131B of the Crimes Act and the Films, Video and Publications Classification Act. These laws enumerate penalties for crimes against child exploitation, and if one had to look at the comprehensive list of penalizations attached to it, one could understand how seriously New Zealand treats the concept of online safety. With advances in technology, frequent reviews and updates of

¹⁴⁰ Criminal Act arts. 243–245 (S. Kor.) (Act No. 293/1953, as amended 2025).

¹⁴¹ Crimes Act 1961 ss. 124, 131B (N.Z.).

the law by the government are important issues so that they can keep up with their effectiveness in child protection in the digital world.

Child pornography and exploitation cases are dealt with in Singapore through legal provisions under Sections 293 and 376E of the Criminal Code as well as sections under the Films Act. Even though the strict laws in Singapore represent a clear unwillingness of the government to protect its citizens from online child exploitation through various measures against offenders, there are some cultural restraints, as well as lower social awareness that may hamper effective enforcement. It can be observed that there is a lack of community involvement in online safety campaigns and learning programs.

Economies with Moderate Internet Penetration

In China, the law on safe online children is embodied in Article 366 of the Criminal Law, targeting child exploitation and pornography. Even though the laws present in China are very comprehensive, the absence of transparency and its implementation becomes a serious flaw in the laws. More fundamentally, however, the lack of a clear strategy on online safety specifically tailored to address issues that concern children is a critical gap in the country's efforts to safeguard young citizens in the digital landscape.

Several legal frameworks are in place in Malaysia in the effort aimed at protecting children, including the Child Act 2001 and specific provisions within the Penal Code and the Communications and Multimedia Act¹⁴³¹⁴⁴. This multi-layered use of the law therefore signifies that Malaysia recognizes the complex nature of child protection. It is, however, compelling to note that there is an urgent need for increased public awareness and education on online child safety as the understanding of such laws would empower families and communities with the effective safeguarding of children.

What the Philippines did was to establish an effective legal framework that aims at protecting children online. To date, these include provisions of Articles 201 and 355 of the Criminal Code, the Anti-Child Pornography Act, and the Cybercrime Prevention Act. This is a sign of commitment by authorities to curb and counter related abuse

¹⁴³ Penal Code ss. 293, 376E (Sing.) (Cap. 224, 2008 rev. ed.)

¹⁴⁴ Child Act 2001 §§ 33–35 (Malay.); Communications & Multimedia Act 1998.

online¹⁴⁵. However, in ensuring the effective and efficient establishment of law execution, it encounters challenges in resourcefulness and capacity to identify cases of growing incidents of threats against children online¹⁴⁶.

The two vital laws Thailand possesses which are related to the question are Anti-Child Pornography Act and Computer Crime Act which collectively show how Thailand has acted on relating to protecting children against risks in the cyber world. Even though significant efforts from legislation have been witnessed, poor enforcement efforts contribute to the diminution of these laws, as well as poor education among the public towards child protection while on the Internet. Therefore, Thailand should enhance mechanisms of enforcement and expand education toward public sensitivity regarding child safety in the cyber world.

One of these is the Law on Information Technology by Vietnam, where all the needs for protection of children when online were placed under greater emphasis. Through these efforts, Vietnam is well on its way to developing legal provisions, but it is extremely in need of better guidelines and better law enforcement mechanisms that would effectively safeguard children from online exploitation and abuse.

Low Internet Penetration Economies

Bangladesh's provisions in Articles 292 and 294 of the Criminal Code and the Pornography Control Act do hold protection of children. While there exist regulations enacted, several problems in law enforcement and proper attitudes toward internet safety within the culture itself obstruct the ability to safeguard children online. There is a evident need for more public awareness projects in educating communities about online safety.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act has provided a good legal framework. Specific provisions of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act provide considerable resistance to online child sexual exploitation. The virtual space has been protected against sexual offenses for children through these laws. It is the

¹⁴⁵ Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009, Rep. Act No. 9775 (Phil.).

¹⁴⁶ Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, art. 366 (1997, amended 2025).

systemic issues like the inability of the present and proper mechanism for enforcement and unawareness about these protections among people that prevent these legal provisions from holding good. Strengthening enforcement and upgrading educational efforts could go a long way in enhancing online safety for children in India.

Other legislation enacted includes Articles of the Criminal Code, as well as specific pornography and electronic information legislation. Much of this comprises sound foundational law, though relatively little of it is enforced. Cultural and societal norms can easily undermine effective measures to protect children from online exploitation, so it is important that legal reform hand in hand with efforts at community education and awareness.

A specific cyberlaw to protect children online in Sri Lanka remains in its development, mostly as a companion to the Penal Code. Thus, there is a considerable need for specific provisions with clearly defined foci on online safety concerns. This gap means that Sri Lanka has to improve its legal framework and enforcement for better protection of children in the digital environment.

Judicial Responses to Online Child Abuse: A Global Perspective

The rise of the internet has created new opportunities and challenges in protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation. Online platforms have unfortunately become avenues for the proliferation of CSAM and other forms of digital exploitation. Legal systems worldwide have grappled with these issues, striving to balance the protection of vulnerable children with the principles of justice and freedom of expression.

This section explores pivotal international judgments and case laws that have shaped the global response to online child abuse, offering insights into the evolving legal landscape. By examining these landmark decisions, we gain a deeper understanding of how courts have addressed complex issues such as the possession, distribution, and creation of CSAM and the technological challenges accompanying these crimes. These cases highlight the ongoing efforts of legal systems and international organizations to

combat online child exploitation while safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms.

One pivotal case is **Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition**¹⁴⁷, decided by the United States Supreme Court, which invalidated provisions of the Child Pornography Prevention Act that criminalized virtual child pornography, ruling that it violated the First Amendment. This decision underscored the necessity to differentiate between actual child pornography and protected speech. Similarly, in **R v. Sharpe**¹⁴⁸, the Supreme Court of Canada upheld laws prohibiting child pornography while delicately balancing the principles of freedom of expression with the crucial need to safeguard children from exploitation, thereby reinforcing rigorous measures against such offenses.

The European Court of Human Rights addressed these issues in **L v. Finland**¹⁴⁹, ruling that Finland violated Article 10 (freedom of expression) by convicting an individual for possessing child pornography without intent to distribute, highlighting the complexities surrounding possession laws. In **R v. Oliver**¹⁵⁰, the England and Wales Court of Appeal established sentencing guidelines for possession of indecent images of children, emphasizing the seriousness and societal condemnation of such offenses¹⁵¹.

Recent legal developments have also encompassed cases such as **U.S. v. Mecham**¹⁵² and **U.S. v. Tatum**¹⁵³ from U.S. Federal Courts, which dealt with AI-generated CSAM featuring the superimposition of real children's faces onto explicit images. These cases resulted in significant sentences for sexual exploitation and production of CSAM, marking a critical stance against digital exploitation¹⁵⁴. The European Court of Human Rights further contributed to this discourse in **Karttunen v. Finland**¹⁵⁵, where it ruled on the legality of searching private premises for CSAM without adequate judicial oversight, emphasizing the need for procedural safeguards in such investigations.

¹⁴⁷ Ashcroft v. Free Speech Coalition, 535 U.S. 234 (2002).

¹⁴⁸ 1 S.C.R. 45* (Supreme Court of Canada, 2001).

¹⁴⁹ Application No. 23223/04 (European Court of Human Rights, 2015).

¹⁵⁰ EWCA Crim 2766* (England and Wales Court of Appeal, 2003).

¹⁵¹ R. v. Sharpe, 1 S.C.R. 45 (Can.).

¹⁵² United States v. Mecham, No. 20-40761 (United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, 15 Apr. 2021).

¹⁵³ Ibid

¹⁵⁴ R. v. Sharpe, 1 S.C.R. 45 (Can.).

¹⁵⁵ Application No. 1685/10 (European Court of Human Rights, 2015).

In New Zealand, **New Zealand v. Rowe**¹⁵⁶ saw the High Court sentence an individual for possessing and distributing CSAM, setting a precedent for strict penalties in similar cases and reinforcing the legal stance against child exploitation.

These landmark cases illustrate a global commitment to combatting online sexual abuse of children by establishing legal precedents that hold offenders accountable while ensuring robust protections for vulnerable populations. As technology continues to evolve, so too must the legal frameworks that govern these issues, requiring ongoing adaptation and vigilance from lawmakers and judicial systems worldwide.

A critical addition to the literature is the **UNICEF February 2026 Issue Brief**, which identifies a 1,325% rise in reports linked to AI-generated child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The study confirms that 'nudification' tools and deepfakes are being used to victimize children without their physical presence or awareness. UNICEF's 2026 findings reveal that at least 1.2 million children globally have disclosed having their images manipulated into sexually explicit deepfakes, with 1 in 25 children in some regions being affected. This literature underscores the shift from 'physical abuse' to 'digital-identity abuse,' validating the researcher's focus on the urgent need for safety-by-design and forensic detection over mere removal¹⁵⁷.

¹⁵⁶ NZHC 2690* (New Zealand High Court, 2018).

¹⁵⁷ UNICEF, *Artificial Intelligence and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation*, Issue Brief (Feb. 2026), available at https://www.unicef.org/media/178571/file/UNICEF%20AI%20CSEA%20Brief_2.pdf.

Chapter 3:

Indian Legal Mechanisms for Protecting Children from Online Exploitation

In the contemporary digital landscape, the internet's extensive utilization has undeniably yielded many advantages, fostering connectivity among individuals and enabling unprecedented accessibility to information. Nevertheless, the advent of online platforms has also presented novel obstacles since these platforms have become fertile environments for exploiting susceptible persons, particularly minors. In India, similar to several other regions globally, the growing prevalence of online sexual exploitation of minors has underscored the need for a robust legislative framework to combat this abhorrent offense effectively.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to examine the legislative laws in India designed to address the significant problem of child sexual abuse, particularly concerning internet platforms. We aim to illuminate the merits and limitations inherent in the present legal framework through a comprehensive examination and evaluation of the prevailing legislation and its efficacy. Examining this issue is of utmost importance to detect any deficiencies that may impede the safeguarding of children from online predators. Additionally, it is essential to suggest prospective reforms that strengthen the legislative measures taken by the nation to address this urgent issue.

Child sexual abuse is a profoundly distressing transgression against a child's fundamental rights and inherent worth, resulting in enduring emotional and psychological wounds that may endure far into the individual's adult years. Within the area of digital technology, those who commit harmful acts have discovered novel methods to exploit and control the brains of young individuals. Consequently, it is crucial for the legal system to promptly and efficiently adjust to these developments. Our research's primary objective is to understand the legislative mechanisms used to protect minors from online sexual exploitation.

The chapter starts by presenting an overview of the current landscape of online child

sexual abuse in India, using statistical data and case examples that emphasize the pressing nature of the matter. Subsequently, we undertake an extensive examination of the prevailing legal structures, encompassing pertinent legislation and judicial precedents that create the foundation for ensuring the protection of children in the digital realm.

In order to provide a thorough understanding, this chapter also assesses the difficulties encountered by law enforcement agencies, judges, and other relevant parties in investigating and prosecuting instances of online child sexual exploitation. Furthermore, this study investigates the involvement of technology corporations and internet service providers in addressing these criminal activities and the necessity for enhanced cooperation between the public and private domains.

In conclusion, our study has yielded crucial recommendations to enhance the legal response to the issue of online child sexual exploitation in India. These proposals aim to rectify deficiencies in the current legislative structure, enhance consciousness and instruction, and cultivate a comprehensive strategy that engages many stakeholders in safeguarding children from the significant risks presented by the digital environment.

In undertaking this crucial examination of Indian legislation about the online sexual exploitation of minors, we express our sincere aspiration that the knowledge acquired will serve to enhance the collaborative endeavors of legislators, policy formulators, and child welfare proponents in establishing a more secure digital milieu for the country's most susceptible demographic – its youth. By engaging in educated discussions and taking proactive actions, we can strive to protect children from the dangers of online exploitation and ensure that they can have a childhood that is devoid of fear and damage.

3.1 Children's Use of ICT and Social Media in India

Just 5,04,989 of the 14,89,115 schools examined for the U DISE report for 2021–22 had internet connection. In India, 34% of schools currently have internet connection and amenities, while more than 50% lack working computers. Compared to the 18.73% internet availability in 2018–19, this is a significant increase. Of the educational

institutions with internet connectivity, 24.2% are government-run, 53.1% receive government assistance, and 59.6% are private¹⁵⁸. Furthermore, it is worth noting that a significant proportion of children residing in densely populated regions with low socioeconomic status do not have access to computer technology within their educational institutions.

Students who can utilize computers within the educational setting prefer to reside in metropolitan areas. Additionally, those receiving comprehensive instruction and support are more inclined to attend private schools with superior resources and technological infrastructure. According to Srivastava et al. (2015)¹⁵⁹, the IAMAI study conducted in 35 cities in India revealed that around 28 million school-going children out of 400 million Internet users were engaged in Internet usage.

Furthermore, there has been a notable rise in the percentage of children among the demographic of rural Internet users, with figures increasing from 5% in 2014 to 11% in 2015. Notably, most individuals in question are male, as demonstrated by the general gender disparities reported in the 2014 NSSO survey and research conducted by the Centre for Communication and Development research¹⁶⁰. The survey results present ambiguous evidence on the degree to which Indian youngsters engage in academic pursuits on the internet. The extent to which children utilize digital technology for educational purposes versus engaging in social activities such as chatting with friends, listening to online music, watching videos, or playing online games while simultaneously completing homework on a separate website or application is a subject of debate, owing to the diverse accessibility and applicability of the internet.

3.2 Child Safety Index for India

A study conducted by Telenor India in 2012 examined the issue of child online safety across 12 countries. The findings revealed that children in India face the most

¹⁵⁸ Ministry of Education, Government of India, UDISE 2021-22 Report on Internet Access and Functional Computers in India's Schools (2022).

¹⁵⁹ A. Srivastava et al., 'Towards Digital Inclusion: Barriers to Internet Access for Economically- and Socially-Excluded Urban Communities' (Centre for Communication and Development Studies, Pune, 2015).

¹⁶⁰ National Sample Survey Office, India - Social Consumption - Education Survey 2014, NSS 71st Round (Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2014).

outstanding level of risk due to a confluence of factors. These factors include the widespread availability of affordable internet and smartphones, which have facilitated increased access to online platforms. Additionally, parents and children in India exhibit a limited capacity to protect themselves against cyber threats effectively, as they need to gain the necessary knowledge and skills in this domain¹⁶¹. The utilization of digital technology among children and adolescents can yield concrete advantages in education, information accessibility, social interaction, and active engagement. Nevertheless, it is essential to approach the potential benefits of digital technologies in shaping children's future success with caution since there is a possibility that technology might amplify offline challenges and risks faced by children. These issues are being widely experienced and articulated both on a worldwide scale and within the context of India.

The pervasive integration of digital technology is exerting a profound influence on various aspects of society, therefore contributing to the intricate dynamics of peer relationships, parenting, and child safety, achieving a harmonious equilibrium between fostering individual inquiry and ensuring adequate supervision. In order to promote equitable and secure possibilities for children in India, it is imperative to enhance our comprehension of how digital technologies are utilized by children and adolescents across all socioeconomic, age, and gender strata. Undoubtedly, safeguarding children from online hazards and establishing a secure digital environment that fosters the realization of children's capabilities continue to be of utmost importance.

UNICEF lists six categories of online dangers for children, among which sexual abuse and sexual exploitation can be collectively referred to as OCSAE¹⁶². OCSAE encompasses a variety of activities, which may involve the production and dissemination of CSAM, the manipulation of children into engaging in sexual conversations or creating explicit content, the process of grooming and enticing children to meet the perpetrator offline, the exhibitionist behavior exhibited by the

161 J. Rose, O. Rehse & B. Röber, *The Value of Our Digital Identity* (Boston Consulting Group, 2012).

162 Anirban Sarma, 'Promoting Child Safety Online in the Time of COVID-19: The Indian and Australian Responses', ORF Online (14 Aug. 2023).

abuser, and the facilitation of a child's involvement in prostitution or sexual trafficking via the internet.

According to the 2022 Child Safety Online Index, a study done during the initial year of the pandemic in 30 countries, India is ranked third with a score of 79.9, indicating above-average performance in providing the 'best online safety for children'.¹⁶³ However, India is ranked second in terms of the 'extent of cyber-risks experienced by children. This observation suggests that children in India are exposed to a significant number and diverse array of cyber-dangers. However, the effectiveness of the country's measures in addressing these risks is commendable.

Table 3: India's Comparative Score of Online Child Exploitation¹⁶⁴

Summary	INDIA		GLOBAL
	Rank	Score	Average score
Overall Score	3	79.9	47
Children's Digital Competencies	1	85.9	36
Family Support	2	88.1	55
School Education	78	72.3	76
Company Digital-ESG	21	52.4	36
Policies & Regulations	7	92.6	49
Technology Infrastructure	52	71.2	66

Child victims of online abuse and exploitation frequently exhibit a deficiency in both self-assurance and awareness, which hinders their ability to report abuse instances and actively seek the necessary support and aid. The elements mentioned above provide notable obstacles in advocacy, public awareness, and education, as well as the

163 DQ Institute, Three in Four Children Worldwide Experienced at Least One Cyber-Risk in 2022 (2024)

164 G. Aswathy Prakash, Asha Sundaram & B. Sreeya, 'Online Exploitation of Children and the Role of Intermediaries: An Indian Legislative and Policy Perspective', *Int'l Rev. L. Computers & Tech.* (2021) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2021.1999290>

establishment of efficient reporting procedures and assistance for children who have fallen victim to online exploitation and abuse.

3.2.1 India's Position in The Child Online Safety Index (COSI)

The Child Online Safety Index (COSI) is a comprehensive metric designed to enhance child online safety at the national level. The COSI initiative enables nations to assess and pinpoint areas for enhancement concerning child internet safety concerns. This evaluation encompasses six key stakeholders: children, families, schools, ICT corporations, and the soft and hard infrastructures of the government¹⁶⁵.

The first report of COSI was released in February 2020, and the second publication in the series, COSI 2022, has been made available. The COSI 2022 report analyzes the current state of kid online safety worldwide after the COVID-19 epidemic. This assessment is derived from the comprehensive global databank maintained by the DQ Institute. The worldwide databank has information about 329,142 individuals in the age group of children and adolescents, hailing from 100 distinct nations¹⁶⁶. This data has been sourced from many external outlets, such as international research initiatives, publications, and surveys conducted by the DQ Institute. The COSI assesses the degree of online safety provided for children in various countries, taking into account six key entities: children themselves, families, schools, and companies, as well as the soft and hard infrastructures of the government. Each stakeholder is associated with a variety of issues and indicators. The calculation of a Nation of Origin Sustainability Index (COSI) score involves assigning a numerical value to each nation, which falls within a range of 10 (representing the lowest score) to 100 (representing the highest score).

165 Dittin A. Andrews et al., 'Child Online Safety in Indian Context', in Proceedings of the 2020 International Conference on Computing and Communication Systems (2020).

166 DQ Institute, Three in Four Children Worldwide Experienced at Least One Cyber-Risk in 2022 (2024).

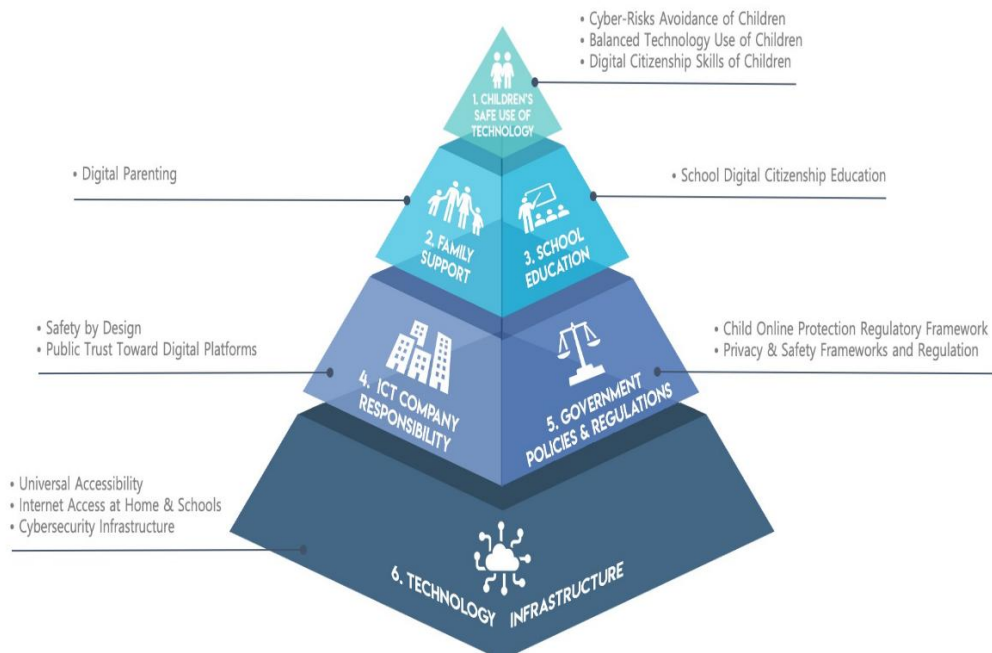


Figure 1: COSI Framework¹⁶⁷

3.2.2 Stakeholders of COSI

The stakeholders involved in Child Online Safety Initiatives (COSI) encompass a diverse range of persons, groups, organizations, and institutions who assume vital responsibilities in protecting children against online hazards and advancing a more secure digital milieu. Various parties collaborate and contribute to several facets of ensuring the safety of children in the online environment. Several important stakeholders include¹⁶⁸:

Children’s Digital Competencies: Assesses children's digital citizenship level and their exposure to cyber-risks.

Family Support: Assesses the level of family support, such as parental mediation and digital parenting, for child online safety.

167 DQ Institute, ‘What is the Child Online Safety Index (COSI)?’ (2024) (last visited 1 July 2024).
 168 Ibid

School Education: Assesses the level of school education on online safety issues, such as cyber security, for child online safety.

Company Digital-ESG: Assesses the level of company commitment, such as through transparency reporting, to child online safety.

Policies & Regulations: Assesses the level of regulatory enforcement for child online safety.

Technology Infrastructure: Assesses the level of technology infrastructure support, such as internet access and affordability, for child online safety.

Government Agencies: Government bodies and ministries responsible for child welfare, education, law enforcement, and technology regulation are pivotal stakeholders in COSI. They create and implement policies, laws, and guidelines related to online child protection.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): NGOs working in child rights and protection actively contribute to COSI. They conduct awareness campaigns, provide counseling services, and collaborate with other stakeholders to address online risks faced by children.

Law Enforcement Agencies: Police departments and law enforcement agencies are responsible for investigating and prosecuting online child abuse and exploitation cases. Their collaboration with other stakeholders is vital for swift action against offenders.

Research Institutions and Academia: Researchers and academic institutions contribute valuable insights into online activities' trends, risks, and impacts on children. Their studies and findings inform evidence-based policy-making and intervention strategies.

Child Rights Advocates and Experts: Experts and child rights advocates actively participate in COSI by providing expert opinions, guidance, and advocacy to promote child protection and digital rights.

International Organizations: International bodies and organizations working on child protection and rights, such as UNICEF, INTERPOL, and the International

Telecommunication Union (ITU), play a significant role in fostering global cooperation and setting international standards for online child safety.

Media and Content Creators: Media organizations and content creators have a role in promoting safe and age-appropriate content for children. They can also use their platforms to raise awareness about online risks and safety measures.

Collaboration and engagement among these stakeholders are essential for creating a comprehensive and practical approach to protect children from online risks, ensuring they can explore the digital world safely and responsibly¹⁶⁹.

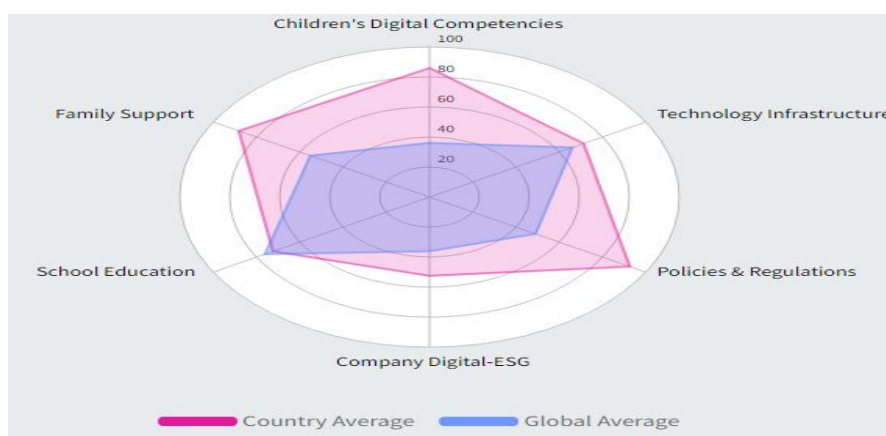


Figure 2: Country Level Report for India¹⁷⁰

3.3 Prevailing Scenario of Online Child Sexual Abuse in India

The COVID-19 epidemic has led to an increase in the amount of time children spend on the internet, starting from early 2020, due to the implementation of lockdown measures and the closure of schools. According to UNICEF's observations, the increase in children's screen usage has resulted in heightened vulnerability to online safety risks and an elevated likelihood of encountering harmful behavior and material¹⁷¹. The incidence of online sexual abuse and exploitation of minors has experienced a significant global increase since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁷². The incidence of cybercrimes targeting minors in India significantly increased by over 400 percent in

¹⁶⁹ DQ Institute, Child Online Safety Index 2022 Methodology Report (2022).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid (last visited 1 July 2024)

¹⁷¹ Air Force Bal Bharti School v. State of NCT Delhi, 2025 SCC OnLine Del 4567 (India)

¹⁷² UNICEF, 'Children at Increased Risk of Harm Online During Global COVID-19 Pandemic' (14 Apr. 2020)

2020 compared to 2019. Approximately 90 percent of these offenses were related to disseminating or circulating information depicting child sexual abuse, commonly referred to as CSAM¹⁷³¹⁷⁴. The proliferation of social media platforms, the widespread use of online learning platforms, and the utilization of educational applications have been identified as potential risks to children's online safety.

3.4 India's Legal Framework on Child Online Safety

India's cybersecurity laws and policies are still developing, offering a solid foundation for safeguarding children online. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) is India's next comprehensive criminal code (IPC), which includes additional offences not covered by the IPC. The BNS broadens the definition of criminal law, including offenses against transgender individuals, crimes against the environment, wildlife trafficking, and human trafficking. It also covers offences such as data theft, online financial fraud, and privacy concerns¹⁷⁵.

The age restriction for regulations pertaining to sexual assault and kidnapping has been raised from 16 to 18 years old to safeguard children. The death penalty has also been instituted by the Sanhita for offences involving gang rape of minors under the age of twelve. These modifications are intended to give women and children better legal protections.

The primary pieces of legislation pertaining to online activities are the Information Technology (Amendment) Act of 2008 and the Information Technology Act of 2000, which encompass any communication equipment used to send any text, video, audio, or image¹⁷⁶. The National Cyber Security Policy, 2013's provisions make it possible to create a flexible legislative framework.

India has a robust legal framework in place to protect children due to its membership in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These laws include the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, the Juvenile Justice (Care

¹⁷³ UNICEF, 'More Efforts Needed to Protect Children Online' (2024)

¹⁷⁴ National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), Annual Report 2025 (2025).

¹⁷⁵ UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Global Report on Online Child Sexual Abuse Materials 2025 (2025).

¹⁷⁶ Information Technology Act, No. 21 of 2000, §§ 67, 67A, 67B (India)

and Protection of Children) Act 2015, the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act 2005, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006, and the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016¹⁷⁷.

There are two guidelines on child safety against online abuse defined in NPC:

1. Anyone who has reason to believe that a child has been subjected to physical, sexual, or emotional abuse—including abuse of children online, the dissemination of materials about child sexual abuse, child marriage, child labor, child trafficking, maltreatment of children, discrimination against children based on their gender, caste, religion, language, disability, or any other reason—must report the incident to the Child Welfare Committee, the police, or CHILDLINE 1098. The informant's identity is kept private and will not be disclosed.

It is imperative for institutions and organizations with direct contact with children to create age-appropriate educational modules and resources that educate children about child abuse, internet safety, and available resources. The National Policy of ICT in Schools, 2012, goes into greater detail regarding ICT regulation to safeguard kids from possible hazards.

The Prevention, Investigation, and Prosecution of Cybercrimes, particularly those against children, are covered by the National Cyber Security Policy, 2013. The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986 forbids the performance of obscene actions and songs and forbids the portrayal of women in an indecent manner¹⁷⁸. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, addresses internet offences against children, such as child pornography and grooming, reinforces the requirements of the Information Technology Act.

India now has a strong legislative foundation in place to protect children from online harrassments, including the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, the Protection of Children against Sexual

¹⁷⁷ Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, (2015) 5 SCC 1 (India).

¹⁷⁸ K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1 (India)

Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008.

(a) POCSO Act

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is a comprehensive legal framework in India specifically designed to address and prevent sexual offenses against children. The act was enacted on 14 November 2012 and came into effect on 14 November 2012. It aims to protect children under the age of 18 from sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment and to provide a child-friendly legal system for handling such cases. Since India’s criminal code is updated as Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) effective from July 1, 2024, we should note the distinctiveness of POCSO, IPC (criminal code effective before BNS), and BNS¹⁷⁹:

Aspect	POCSO	IPC (Indian Penal Code)	BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita)
Coverage of Sexual Offences	Focused exclusively on sexual offences against children under 18 years.	Part of the chapter on "Offences Affecting the Human Body," covering all age groups.	Introduces a specific chapter titled "Offences Against Women and Children" for better categorization.
Age of Consent (Marital)	Not explicitly defined; marital rape is not addressed.	Exception 2 to Section 375 allows sexual intercourse with a wife aged 15 or above.	Increases the marital age of consent to 18 years, aligning with <i>Independent Thought vs. Union of India</i> (2017).
Gang Rape of Minors	Punishable under Section 5(g) and 6 of POCSO.	Gang rape of a woman under 12 (Section 376DB) punishable with death or life imprisonment.	Clause 70(2) makes gang rape of any minor (under 18) punishable with death or life imprisonment without age qualifiers.
Classification of Minor Victims	Differentiates penalties for victims under 18 and 12.	Differentiates under Section 376 for specific cases (e.g., children under 12).	Adds age-based classification for victims under 18, 16, and 12, with distinct sentencing.
Sentencing for Rape	Provides age-based punishments; life imprisonment or	Section 376: 10 years to life imprisonment for rape; aggravated cases involve longer sentences.	Clause 64: 10 years to life imprisonment for rape; aggravated cases (Clause 64(2)) allow life

¹⁷⁹ Ministry of Women and Child Development, ‘Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012’, Press Information Bureau (2014).

Aspect	POCSO	IPC (Indian Penal Code)	BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita)
	death in aggravated cases.		imprisonment for natural life.
Use of Children for Crimes	Criminalizes sexual exploitation and pornography involving children under 18.	No explicit provision for engaging minors in crimes.	Clause 95 penalizes hiring or using children under 18 to commit offences, equating the adult's punishment to that of the offence itself.
Kidnapping of Children	Covers kidnapping under child trafficking provisions.	Section 361 criminalizes kidnapping of girls under 18 and boys under 16.	Clause 135 criminalizes kidnapping of all children under 18, removing gender distinctions.

Table 4: Distinctive Legal Security Framework effective under POCSO, IPC and BNS¹⁸⁰

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is an extensive statute that encompasses multiple sexual offenses against minors, including penetration, non-penetrative sexual assault, exploitation of children for pornographic purposes, and sexual harassment of children. It requires the creation of specialized courts in every district to adjudicate cases involving sexual offenses against minors, guaranteeing expedited trials and child-sensitive protocols throughout the investigation, trial, and judicial processes.

The legislation mandates that the trial occurs in-camera, meaning in a private environment devoid of public attendance, to protect the kid from additional stress and uphold confidentiality. The legislation permits the recording of a kid's statement in the presence of a child psychologist or social professional to offer emotional support to the victim. Cross-examination is performed via an attorney via video conference.

The legislation requires the formation of Child Welfare Committees (CWC) and Special Juvenile Police Units (SJPU) in each district to ensure the care, assistance, and protection of victims. It guarantees that the identity of the child victim remains

¹⁸⁰ Paran Balakrishnan, 'As India and Pakistan Struggle to Breathe, Could Smog-Ridden Skies Push Them Toward Climate Diplomacy?', *Telegraph India* (Oct. 2024) https://doi.org/1088475/TT_1x1 (last visited 11 Nov. 2024).

confidential during the inquiry or trial to protect the child's reputation and future. It is mandatory for anybody who is aware of or suspects a sexual offense against a child to report it to the authorities. Neglecting to report such offenses may result in penalties.

The POCSO Act mandates stringent penalties for offenders, including imprisonment for differing durations based on the severity of the crime. It also incorporates stipulations for habitual offenders and augmented penalties for specific offenses. The legislation also categorizes abetment and efforts to perpetrate sexual assaults against minors as penal acts.

The POCSO Act is crucial for addressing online child abuse and safeguarding children from exploitation in the digital domain. It thoroughly delineates sexual transgressions against minors, encompassing both physical and internet abuse. The legislation acknowledges that children may be harmed and exploited in the digital realm, extending its protection measures to encompass all types of online abuse.

The Supreme Court has mandated that the Union of India and the State Governments shall expeditiously execute the following directives:

1. The formation of a specialized court will be required in each district of the nation if the cases under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act surpass 100. These courts will exclusively adjudicate problems pertaining to the POCSO Act and will not address any other violations.

The creation of these courts will be enabled by a centralized program and funded by the central government. This financing will finance the appointment of the Presiding Officer, support personnel, Special Public Prosecutors, court staff, and infrastructure improvements, including the establishment of child-friendly surroundings and vulnerable witness courtrooms.

In conclusion, the POCSO Act represents a substantial advancement in combating child sexual abuse in India and ensuring a safeguarding environment for children. Nonetheless, obstacles such as judicial delays, societal stigma, and underreporting of offenses persist. Ongoing efforts are essential to enhance the act's enforcement and

establish a more secure online environment for children across the nation.

The Information Technology Act, 2000 has faced criticism for its impracticality in criminalizing explicit or sexually suggestive computer content. Section 67 of the Act has been revised to incorporate paragraph 67B, which stipulates that those who transmit or distribute electronically recorded material depicting minors in sexually explicit conduct will face legal repercussions. This encompasses individuals who create written content or digital images, who cultivate, entice, or induce minors to form online relationships with other children, who facilitate the exploitation of children via internet platforms, and who possess or generate electronic records depicting their own or others' sexual abuse of minors.

The existing legal framework established by the Information Technology Act Amendment lacks explicit direction about the legal status of minors in digital environments. The 2008 ICMEC study asserts that minors involved in pornography must be considered victims and afforded suitable treatment, irrespective of their status as compliant victims or uncooperative witnesses. In India, the sexual exploitation of a child under the age of 16 is classified as statutory rape according to the Immoral Trafficking Prevention Act and the Indian Penal Code. It is essential to construe the law in a way that acknowledges children under 16 as vulnerable entities necessitating care and protection. In such instances, consent is rendered inconsequential, as the paramount concern must be the protection of the rights and welfare of these minor victims.

The amendment grants police personnel of the rank of Inspector and higher the authority to conduct investigations and enter and search public premises without a warrant. This clause seeks to accelerate the administration of justice by facilitating immediate access to possible evidence. The establishment of cyber police stations throughout various regions in India has equipped the Indian police force to combat cybercrime efficiently. The lack of a national cyber police division to assist CERT-In and enhance cooperation among state cyber police units must be rectified in The Information Technology Act Amendment.

International norms stipulate that the commission of abetment and attempt crimes

incurs legal consequences, as delineated in paragraphs 84B and 84C. The modification to the Information Technology Act acknowledges the severity of electronic crimes against minors by establishing penalties that categorize offenses under section 67B as cognizable and non-bailable. According to the provision specified in section 77A, the court is barred from compounding any offense that entails a prison sentence exceeding three years. Section 67B defines an offense that is categorized as non-compoundable.

Moreover, Section 66E of the Information Technology Act Amendment criminalizes the intentional act of recording, publishing, or sending a photograph of an individual's private area without their agreement, thus violating their privacy. This pertains to circumstances in which an individual reasonably anticipates undressing in privacy, free from the apprehension of their intimate areas being documented, or if any portion of their intimate areas remains obscured from public view, irrespective of the context being public or private.

3.4.1 Lawsuits on Online Child Abuses in India

The complaint against Air Force Bal Bharti School was filed by the Delhi Police Cyber Crime Cell under Section 67 of The Information Technology Act, 2000. The case included a 16-year-old male student from Air Force Bal Bharati School who developed a website detailing the physical attributes and sexual inclinations of female students and staff affiliated with the institution. The case attracted scrutiny because the website lacked visual imagery, featuring only written information allegedly of an indecent nature.

The Avnish Bajaj vs. State case centered on Ravi Raj, a student at the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, who advertised the sale of pornographic MMS video recordings on baazee.com. Notwithstanding the implementation of a content filter by baazee.com, a listing featuring inappropriate content was published. The Crime Branch of the Delhi Police recognized the issue and filed a First Information Report (FIR). A formal charge sheet was filed, naming Ravi Raj, Avnish Bajaj, and Sharat Digumarti as the accused individuals¹⁸¹.

¹⁸¹ Avnish Bajaj v. State (NCT of Delhi), (2005) 3 Comp LJ 364 (Del).

The court noted that the website's inability to establish adequate filters for detecting explicit language or pornographic content was a possible risk, and the corporation may be deemed aware of the listing. The court ruled that the petitioner may be released under Sections 292 and 294 of the IPC, however this decision does not apply to the other accused defendants.

In *Unknown vs. Narasimha*, the prosecution did not succeed in proving the alleged offenses by the accused under Section 354-C of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 11(5), 12, 13, and 18 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012. Narasimha, son of Ramaswamy, was acquitted of the charges under Section 354-C and Sections 11(5), 12, 13, and 18 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenses Act, 2012.

The Information Technology (IT) Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC) exemplify the idea that special law supersedes general law. The IT Act, a specialized statute concerning information technology issues, supersedes the IPC, a general law that covers several criminal acts. The IT Act contains adequate provisions to tackle current difficulties associated with cybercrimes, including stringent penalties for the distribution, access, or transmission of electronic child pornography. Section 79 of the IT Act and The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules 2011 requires intermediaries to use due care in their obligations and inform users of computer resources about the necessity of appropriate conduct.

The Indian Penal Code has sections 354A and 354D to expressly address cyberbullying and cyberstalking directed at women. The IT Act is regarded as a unique statute, with its stipulations effective irrespective of any contradictory provisions in other existing laws. No clause in this act shall restrict an individual's capacity to exercise rights conferred by the Copyright Act of 1957 or the Patents Act of 1970.

In *Sharat Babu Digumarti versus Government (NCT of Delhi)*, the Supreme Court ruled that an individual acquitted under Section 67 of the IT Act could not be prosecuted under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code. The non-obstante clause in Section 81 designates the IT Act as special legislation that supersedes conventional law, including

the Indian Penal Code.

The Bombay High Court annulled the First Information Report (FIR) related to the investigation of offenses punishable under the IPC in the matter of Gagan Harsh Sharma And Anr vs. The State Of Maharashtra And Anr. Nonetheless, the application and execution of the Indian Penal Code's provisions, particularly Section 420, cannot be sustained in light of the ruling in Sharat Babu Digumarti v. Government (NCT of Delhi).

In conclusion, the IT Act and IPC (BNS) are both statutes that embody the notion of special law superseding ordinary law.

3.4.2 The DPDP Rules 2025: Operationalizing Digital Safety and Verifiable Consent

While the significance of the DPDP Act, 2023, was introduced in the preliminary chapters of this study, its operational framework reached maturity with the notification of the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Rules in November 2025**¹⁸². These Rules provide the 'procedural teeth' necessary to enforce child-safety measures, establishing a strict compliance mandate for all 'Data Fiduciaries' (platforms) to be met by **late 2026**.

Central to this regulatory evolution is **Rule 10 (Verifiable Parental Consent)**¹⁸³, which prohibits platforms from processing the data of any minor under the age of 18 without explicit, authenticated authorization from a parent or lawful guardian—typically verified through interoperable systems like DigiLocker. Furthermore, under **Section 9(3)** of the Act, read with the 2025 Rules, there is now an absolute prohibition on **behavioral tracking, profiling, and targeted advertising** directed at children¹⁸⁴. By legally barring algorithms from tracking a minor's online behavior to serve 'nudge' content, the framework addresses a primary precursor to digital grooming identified in this research. This shift transforms the Indian digital landscape from a 'self-regulation'

¹⁸² Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), *The Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025*, G.S.R. ____ (E), notified on November 14, 2025.

¹⁸³ Rule 10, DPDP Rules 2025 (Operationalizing Section 9 of the DPDP Act, 2023).

¹⁸⁴ Section 9(3), Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, and Rule 11 of the 2025 Rules.

model to one of strict 'Institutional Accountability,' with non-compliance penalties reaching up to ₹200 crore¹⁸⁵.

3.5 Reforms on India's Laws and Policies on Online Child Abuses

India's cyber security policy and legislative framework is undergoing continuous development and, despite certain limitations, is reasonably facilitative. Despite its limitations, this approach may still be utilized successfully to develop a complete strategy and action plan to solve the issue of child online safety within the country. This can be achieved via the collaborative and coordinated efforts of several stakeholders.

The Information Technology Act of 2000 encompasses a wide range of issues about cyberspace thoroughly, with measures for adherence and discouragement. The National Cyber Security Policy of 2013 facilitates the establishment of an adaptable legal framework. Regularly evaluating the execution of the Information Technology Act 2000 and associated laws may assist in mitigating the cyber security issues that emerge due to advancements in cyberspace technology¹⁸⁶.

The Constitution of India has measures designed to protect children from abuse, including online abuse, and to promote their well-being. The National Policy for Children (NPC), 2013 in India, fails to openly confront the escalating issue of online threats linked to ICT and its implications for child safety. It implicitly includes provisions designed to ensure equitable access to opportunities for all children utilizing ICT, while integrating essential protections.

The NPC affirms the Government's commitment to employing a rights-based approach in addressing both existing and emerging challenges related to children. It also conveys the nation's dedication to enacting proactive measures, whether by legislation, policies, or alternative methods, to promote and safeguard the fundamental rights of all children to exist and thrive in a just, respectful, secure, and unimpeded way. This commitment primarily targets marginalized or underprivileged children to ensure equal chances for

¹⁸⁵ MeitY Press Release, "Government notifies DPDP Rules to empower citizens and protect privacy," (PIB Delhi, November 14, 2025).

¹⁸⁶ UNICEF, Child Online Protection in India-an Assessment (2016).

all and to prevent any infringement, limitation, or hindrance of their rights due to customs, traditions, cultural practices, or religious beliefs.

All policies, irrespective of their emphasis on education, ICT, or cybersecurity, will incorporate the principles and measures set forth by the NPC. This integration seeks to guarantee that children receive equitable learning and empowerment opportunities while implementing protective measures to safeguard them from potential harm. The educational laws specified in the NPC prioritize safety and a secure learning environment, advocate for the use of ICT, and provide fair access to ICT for all students.

The noting of protecting individuals from online abuse can be comprehended by analyzing the legislation that shield kids from diverse forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. The restrictions focus on preventing the distribution of explicit sexual content and creating an extensive child protection framework that includes both preventive and responsive strategies. The document underscores the imperative of punitive measures against individuals engaged in exploitation or abuse.

The National Policy of ICT in Schools, 2012 offers explicit directives for governing ICT to protect kids from possible risks. It recognizes that the accessibility of Internet connectivity heightens the probability of kids encountering inappropriate content and may jeopardize individuals' privacy and identification. The policy underscores the necessity for continuous creation of appropriate norms to govern access, oversee online activity, and provide education on Internet usage.

The incorporation and enhancement of ICT systems in both school and adult education is a central theme in the educational segment of the upcoming National Education Policy. Social media intermediaries must, pursuant to the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, identify content that endorses sexual harassment (CSAM) on their platforms, flag it, and inform users attempting to access it.

The National Cyber Security Policy 2013 is an extensive framework of objectives, intentions, and legislation designed to prevent, investigate, and prosecute cybercrimes, with a particular focus on children. It underscores the significance of responsible user

conduct, awareness of online risks, and the adoption of appropriate safeguards for youngsters utilizing information and communication technology (ICT). The government is responsible for enhancing awareness and understanding in this area, and an audit provision for security measures is essential for assessing the effectiveness of the strategies employed by various service providers to safeguard children's usage of ICT.

Section 11 of the policy emphasizes the efficient deterrent, investigation, and prosecution of cybercrime, while enhancing the capabilities of law enforcement authorities through the enactment of appropriate legislative measures. Section 12 emphasizes the necessity of cultivating a culture that prioritizes cybersecurity and privacy, promoting responsible user conduct and actions through an effective communication and promotional strategy. Section D underscores the enhancement of the regulatory framework through the implementation of frequent audits and evaluations to examine the adequacy and effectiveness of information infrastructure security measures.

The principal legislative frameworks governing internet activity in India are the Information Technology Act of 2000 and its subsequent revision, the Information Technology (Amendment) Act of 2008. Indian legislation delineates many internet offenses targeting minors to safeguard them from exploitation and abuse. The offenses encompass the dissemination and publication of obscene content, the transmission or publication of sexually explicit acts, the transmission or publication of material portraying minors in sexually explicit acts, the initiation of online relationships with minors for sexually explicit purposes, the unauthorized capture or publication of private images of individuals, illicit access to computer systems and associated activities, fraudulent acquisition of computer resources or identity theft, and violations of the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act 1986.

These rules are crucial for addressing online child exploitation, guaranteeing a more secure digital landscape for minors, and holding perpetrators accountable for their conduct. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012 enhances the requirements of the Information Technology Act, addressing many internet offenses

against children, such as child pornography and grooming. Media, hotels, photographic studios, clubs, and hospitals are legally obligated to report any child pornography.

The POCSO Act, 2012 delineates particular charges concerning sexual harassment and exploitation of minors in the digital domain. These violations encompass displaying any object in electronic format for pornographic intentions, persistently initiating digital communication with a minor, intimidating the minor to participate in sexual activities, or compelling the minor to utilize any medium. Involving a child in the creation, distribution, transmission, publication, or facilitation of pornographic materials encompasses the use of any medium, including print, electronic, or digital technologies, to produce or disseminate such content. Storing child pornography for commercial purposes constitutes an infraction involving the retention of pornographic material featuring a kid for financial profit.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) is an essential measure for ensuring the welfare and dignity of children in the digital era. The Information Technology Act, however, does not explicitly prohibit criminal intimidation, hate speech, or defamatory content, potentially resulting in interpretative challenges and complicating the functions of law enforcement and the judiciary. The Indian Parliament revised the Digital Data Protection Act (DDPA) in 2023 to tackle the increasing issue of online child exploitation. Nevertheless, this outcome may remain unattainable due to the lack of transparent reporting by websites and social media platforms.

The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) has requested the Supreme Court to mandate that social media platforms be held responsible for reporting accounts that post recordings of child sexual abuse in accordance with the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act). India's junior IT minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar declared that his government will implement a distinct Digital Services Act to curtail the internet-facilitated propagation of information regarding such abuses. He indicated that although the existing legislation do not tackle the issue of digital child sexual abuse, the modifications will increase the liability of internet service providers and intermediaries for hosting dangerous content.

It is essential to undertake lobbying initiatives to guarantee that the upcoming National Education Policy adequately integrates methods and steps to alleviate any hazards and harm to children utilizing ICT. The proposed policy emphasizes the capacity of ICT to improve educational quality and enable educators to develop appropriate educational content, thereby fostering awareness and protective knowledge against online abuses targeting children. Nonetheless, it neglects to include solutions for alleviating the possible risks and harms that ICT may inflict on children, including the promotion of informed and safe user practices.

Initiatives are underway to enhance the structure of the Information Technology Act, incorporating stipulations regarding cybercafes that require identity verification, the supervision of an adult during a child's use of the facility, and the implementation of commercially available safety or filtering software to reduce the risk of accessing websites with explicit content, including child pornography or obscene material. Cybercafes must maintain identification verification of their users, user activity logs, and pertinent documents and data for a duration of one year.

Nonetheless, these regulations do not attain the desired effect without diligent oversight, surveillance, and documentation of cafés. In the absence of adequate oversight and the annulment of licenses as penalties for non-compliance, there is insufficient information concerning the effective execution of these guidelines, the nature of procedural infractions, and the resultant effects on child online protection within these public institutions.

The legislative structure of the Information Technology Act and the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules explicitly addresses the duties and liabilities of intermediaries with the provision of third-party content. The Act offers a broad protection for intermediaries, exempting them from legal responsibility for the transmission or hosting of third-party information, data, or communication links they provide. An intermediary may be held accountable for the activities of a third party under specific conditions¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸⁷ K. Seth, 'Evolving Strategies for the Enforcement of Cyber Laws' 31 (2010)

3.5.1 Benchmarking Indian laws for child online protection

The International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) conducted a Global Review of Legislation on Child Pornography in 2016, establishing six criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of national laws in safeguarding children from child pornography. These criteria are as follows¹⁸⁸:

1. National legislation dedicated to child pornography.
2. Definition of child pornography.
3. Criminalization of computer-facilitated offenses.
4. Criminalization of simple possession.
5. ISP reporting of suspected child pornography.
6. Data retention provisions for prosecuting online criminal activity.

The assessment indicates that Indian laws generally meet these criteria. However, challenges remain in effectively implementing the law to prosecute offenders. Legal experts and law enforcement agents in India have pointed out that issues with the consistent use of terminology and definitions related to child pornography in the legal system can create challenges in enforcement and prosecution. The absence of well-defined standard operating procedures and guidelines for handling child pornography cases may lead to inconsistency and inefficiencies in the investigative process. The lack of resources, training, and expertise among law enforcement agencies can hinder their ability to address child pornography cases effectively are another issues.

These challenges highlight the need for continuous efforts to strengthen and improve the implementation of child protection laws in India. Enhancing training and resources for law enforcement, clarifying and standardizing legal terminology, and developing comprehensive guidelines for handling child pornography cases are crucial steps towards better protection for children and more effective prosecution of offenders.

3.5.2 Limitations and Lacuna of India's Policies and Laws Against Online Child Abuse

¹⁸⁸ Anirban Sarma, 'Promoting Child Safety Online in the Time of COVID-19: The Indian and Australian Responses', ORF Online (14 Aug. 2023)

Various provisions within the legal framework aim to address the protection of children online. However, the effectiveness of these provisions is compromised due to the absence of precise definitions, ambiguous areas resulting from cultural interpretations of morality, acceptability, obscenity, and decency, as well as the presence of unequal gender dynamics.

Establishing a universally agreed-upon set of terms regarding the online abuse and exploitation of minors is crucial to facilitate unambiguous and efficient communication and public discussion. Additionally, such terminology plays a pivotal role in interpreting and enforcing legal frameworks and developing comprehensive protective measures through policy and legislation. The lack of a universally agreed-upon lexicon to delineate unequivocally wrong behavior exacerbates the inherent intricacies of child sexual abuse and exploitation, impeding endeavors to safeguard children. Divergent interpretations of terminology have engendered perplexity and obstacles in policy, law, interventions, and public campaigning¹⁸⁹.

Moreover, there is a notable discrepancy between the legal instruments that establish and prohibit the sexual exploitation of children via information and communication technology (ICT) and the evolving methods employed in such exploitation. In several cases, significant technical advancements are preceded by essential legal tools. As an illustration, it is worth noting that the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which addresses the issues of child trafficking, child prostitution, and child pornography, serves as a prominent global mechanism for preventing the sexual exploitation of children. However, it is essential to highlight that this protocol does not encompass provisions that explicitly criminalize live-streaming child sexual abuse or engaging in online sexual grooming.

The recently published "Luxembourg Guidelines" on global language have been made accessible to prominent child protection agencies, groups, parliamentarians, and the media worldwide. These recommendations aim to establish uniform interpretations of terminology. The authors want to provide practical assistance for individuals to effectively navigate the intricate terminology usually associated with the sexual abuse

189 Ibid

and exploitation of children, particularly in the context of online platforms. By doing so, they intend to contribute to the ongoing discussion and cooperation in establishing a shared framework for safeguarding children.

Kumar and Kaur's *Cyber Crimes and Laws (2026)* provides a definitive analysis of the integration between the **Information Technology Act, 2000** and the newly enforced **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**. The authors highlight how emerging threats—such as AI-assisted crimes, deepfakes, and automated phishing—are now addressed under the broader criminal jurisprudence of the BNS. This treatise is essential for understanding the procedural harmony between the special laws (POCSO/IT Act) and the general criminal law, specifically regarding the investigation of 'non-consensual intimate imagery' and 'reputational harm' caused via digital mediums¹⁹⁰.

It is imperative to acknowledge and rectify some deficiencies within the Indian legal system, notwithstanding the overall effectiveness of the legal structure in dealing with various cyber offenses targeting minors. Advocate Karnika Seth argues that the current laws in India are inadequate in adequately addressing and mitigating the many cyber hazards, such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking, and sexual abuse, which encompass activities like grooming, sexting, and child pornography. These threats offer significant risks to children in the digital realm. According to Seth (2010a)¹⁹¹, some behaviors, such as sexting and cyberbullying, deemed illegal in other nations, have not yet been recognized as criminal offenses under Indian legislation.

The absence of legislative laws addressing cyberbullying presents a significant obstacle in establishing legal offenses for specific types of cyber harassment. Although child trafficking laws aim to punish the act of exploiting children for sexual purposes, they currently lack explicit provisions that target and penalize child trafficking for making pornography and facilitating online child sex tourism. The strategic utilization of legislative provisions, such as those about intimidation and harassment in cases of cyberbullying and the rules addressing sexual exploitation of pornography, may offer a

¹⁹⁰ Santosh Kumar and Gagandeep Kaur, *Cyber Crimes and Laws: A Guide to Cyberlaws & The Information Technology Act, Rules, Regulation & Notification*, (4th Ed., Whitesmann Publishing, 2026).
¹⁹¹ K. Seth, 'Evolving Strategies for the Enforcement of Cyber Laws' 31 (2010).

potential solution. However, within the legal framework, there is a lack of recognition of extraterritorial jurisdiction in cases involving child pornography offenses, mainly where the victim is of Indian nationality. Additionally, there is a notable absence of provisions addressing the criminal responsibility of minors engaged in pornographic activities. Furthermore, it fails to demonstrate the seizure of funds obtained via the commission of child pornography offenses.

In the Indian legal framework, the act of possessing child pornography may potentially be deemed a criminal offense, even in the absence of an intention to disseminate. It is worth noting that the terminology employed in the legislation refers to "storage" and "collection" of child pornography rather than an explicit mention of "possession." According to Dos Santos Lemos Fernandes (2015), the act of storing pornographic content in any medium that involves a kid for the goal of commercial gain is deemed illegal under Section 15 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act¹⁹². According to Section 67 B (b) of the Information Technology Act, engaging in activities such as creating, collecting, seeking, browsing, downloading, advertising, promoting, exchanging, or distributing text or digital images in any electronic format that depict children in an obscene, indecent, or sexually explicit manner are considered punishable offenses.

Although the Information Technology Act does not explicitly mandate Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to report instances of child pornography on their networks, it is essential to note that Section 19 (1) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act imposes an obligation on any individual, including minors, who have reason to believe that an offense under this act is likely to occur or has knowledge of its occurrence, to promptly share such information with the Special Juvenile Police Unit or the local police (L. et al., 2019). As previously mentioned, Section 13 of the Act as mentioned above specifically stipulates that engaging in activities involving the use of children for pornographic purposes is a criminal offense. Furthermore, it should be

192 S. Dos Santos Lemos Fernandes, *Protecting Children from Cybercrime: Legislative Responses in Latin America to Fight Child Pornography, Online Grooming, and Cyberbullying Through Information and Communication Technologies* (World Bank, 2015)

noted that Section 14 (1) of the Act mentioned above imposes penalties on those who violate the provisions outlined in Section 13 of the identical Act.

Determining the illegal nature of grooming and sexting poses challenges and may not be seen favorably due to concerns around the possibility of law enforcement exploiting such legislation. Differentiating between grooming and dialogues arising from increasingly personal relationships or legitimate inquiries and exchanges of information and viewpoints rooted in similar interests presents challenges, precluding a definitive categorization as either "mal-intentioned" or "illegal." The establishment of friendships and the practice of courting rituals involve a component of grooming. However, the presence of risk is notably significant.

The significance of understanding the stages of grooming is crucial in the context of safeguarding children since it might potentially culminate in illicit or unlawful behaviors. However, it is noteworthy that Indian legislation does not explicitly employ the term "grooming." However, procedures are in place to address the issue of enticing minors. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act addresses the issue of sexual harassment, explicitly highlighting the concept of grooming as outlined in Section 11(vi). This provision deems it unlawful for an individual to "entice" a child to engage in pornographic activities or provide satisfaction about such activities. According to Section 67B (c) of the Information Technology Act, it is deemed unlawful for individuals to engage in the cultivation, enticement, or inducement of children towards participating in online relationships, including sexually explicit activities or any behavior that may reasonably offend an adult.

It is essential to educate children and adults on the importance of caution since grooming can lead to possible injury. Additionally, sexting and self-exposure can significantly amplify their susceptibility to harm. Although the legislation does encompass the regulation of indecent language or written content, the act of sexting and self-exposure nevertheless provide ambiguous circumstances.

The question of a child's permission is a subject of contention. According to Renu and

Chopra (2019)¹⁹³, the legal framework explicitly states that permission does not apply in cases of sexual abuse involving individuals under 18. In light of the prevailing patterns observed among adolescents involving the exchange of explicit messages, sharing of self-portraits, and voluntary exposure, proponents must emphasize the necessity of revising Indian legislation to effectively address the issue of child trafficking facilitated by the Internet. This urgency arises from the inadequacy of existing laws, namely the Immoral Traffic Prevention Act of 1956, the Information Technology Act of 2000, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act of 2012, which fail to adequately tackle this particular problem¹⁹⁴.

In India, current legislation does not impose any obligation on domain name registrars to verify the identity and details of the registrant. Consequently, those registering such websites frequently provide false identities and addresses to create misleading and deceitful online platforms targeting minors, enticing them to engage with explicit and pornographic material. According to Seth and Srivastava (2017)¹⁹⁵, individuals who register on websites must refrain from engaging in criminal activities. However, it is challenging to identify and apprehend offenders due to the prevalence of inaccurate or fraudulent information provided by registrants.

According to Pavan Duggal, a renowned expert and advocate in the field of cyber-law, it is essential to recognize that while the Information Technology Act holds a position of prominence as a specialized legislation, it possesses a superior authority and prevails over the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) in cases of conflicting provisions. However, Duggal argues that the act falls short in terms of its efficacy in ensuring comprehensive protection for children. The individual believes that a substantial amount of work is required to thoroughly

193 R. Renu & G. Chopra, 'Child Sexual Abuse in India and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012: A Research Review', 6(2) *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences* 49 (2019).

194 *Ibid*

195 R. Seth & R. Srivastava, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Management and Prevention, and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act', 54 *Indian Pediatrics* 949 (2017).

evaluate the Information Technology Act to effectively tackle the challenges encountered in the identification, examination, and legal pursuit of instances related to the online exploitation of children.

3.6 Child Online Protection Response System

The multifaceted and rapidly evolving characteristics of ICT and social media, along with the challenges associated with regulating the Internet due to its transnational nature and its significant contribution to the democratization of information in society, present unparalleled difficulties in addressing and addressing child online violence (Seth, 2010a). In order to effectively build and maintain systems and policies aimed at protecting children online, it is imperative to ensure the presence of appropriate structures, coordinating mechanisms, capacities, and resources.

The current legislative frameworks need to be revised to address the widespread crimes and offenses committed in the digital realm. The Indian laws concerning kid internet safety necessitates prompt adaptation to technological advancements and fostering strong partnerships with foreign law enforcement agencies and ICT corporations to enhance its efficacy. In order to enable prompt and efficient investigation and prosecution of instances involving trans-border child online abuse, it is imperative to establish robust partnerships and coordination systems that span many sectors and international boundaries¹⁹⁶.

The regulation and management of the Internet and social media platforms are subject to limitations because of the continuous advancements in technology, which empower virtual wrongdoers to circumvent existing control mechanisms quickly. Ensuring a harmonious equilibrium between privacy and protection is of paramount significance. The issue of privacy invasion presents a significant ethical and moral dilemma in preventing and proactively resolving internet offenses. The issue of children's right to privacy frequently encounters clashes with the need for safeguarding, and a consensus on the limits of this right has yet to materialize within the context of India. Prepaid

¹⁹⁶ D. Halder & K. Jaishankar, 'Teen Sexting: A Critical Analysis on the Criminalization Vis-à-Vis Victimization Conundrums', 1 Journal of Cyber Criminology 26 (2014)

mobile phones pose an additional obstacle in monitoring or restricting children's Internet usage. Despite its convenience for customers, smartphones provide a significant problem for law enforcement agencies and service providers in their efforts to monitor and apprehend those engaging in unlawful activities. In India, the extent of child internet abuse and exploitation remains unknown, mainly due to the underreporting of such incidents.

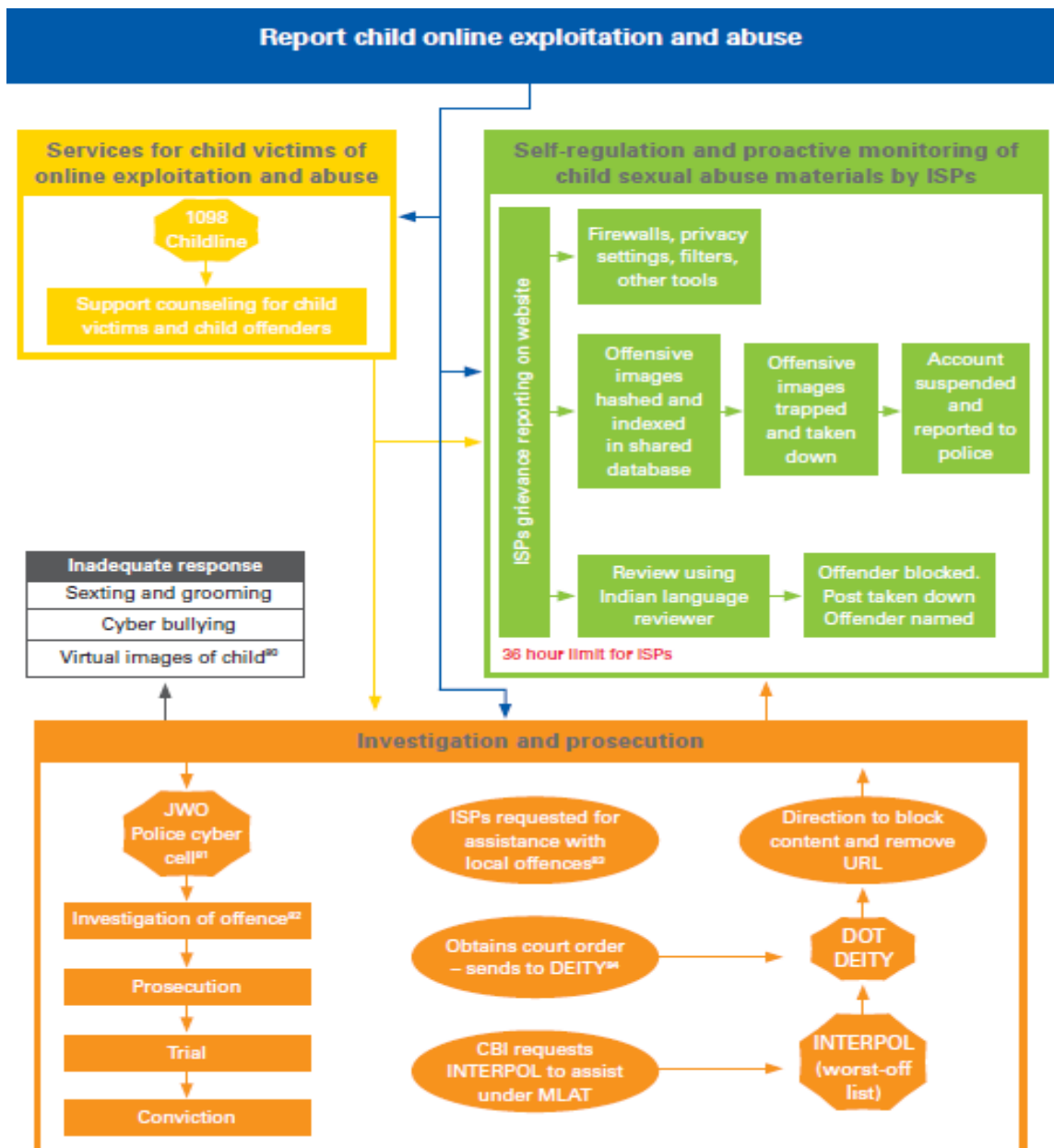


Figure 3: Child online protection response system in India¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁷ Ibid (Last Visited: July 1 2024)

Consequently, more data is needed to indicate the absolute incidence and prevalence of online offenses against children in the country. The factors mentioned above provide significant obstacles in guaranteeing the internet security of Indian youngsters, necessitating the implementation of inventive and technologically sophisticated strategies and remedies. In order to conduct this evaluation, three separate areas of action were selected as follows:

The three critical areas of focus in addressing online child exploitation and abuse are as follows:

1. Surveillance, documentation, and elimination of offensive content involving children on the Internet;
2. Investigation and legal action against individuals involved in online sexual abuse and exploitation;
3. Identify and provide support services for child victims of online exploitation and abuse.

The integration of these three domains of action forms the nascent kid internet protection framework in India. Every component within this chapter offers a concise summary of the existing systems and structures within each domain, along with notable obstacles and potential avenues for enhancement.

3.6.1 Monitoring, Reporting, and Removing Online Child Sexual Abuse Material

India lacks a comprehensive system to effectively monitor, report, and eliminate instances of online Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM)¹⁹⁸. This lack of monitoring and analysis is due to the absence of advice, protocols, hotlines, or a coordinated response system. To ensure efficient eradication of inappropriate online content involving children, it is crucial to create robust cooperation between the information and communication technology (ICT) sector and law enforcement entities¹⁹⁹.

¹⁹⁸ R. v. Oliver, EWCA Crim 2979 (Eng.).

¹⁹⁹ Aarambh India & Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), Combating CSAM in India (2025)

Aarambh India, an initiative in Mumbai, is partnering with the United Kingdom-based Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) to build a nationwide hotline in India. The hotline will serve as a platform for reporting, removing, and banning CSAM within the country. The IWF will review and evaluate reports while seeking assistance from the ICT industry to eliminate objectionable pictures and videos effectively²⁰⁰.

The National Technical Research Organization (NTRO) in India is responsible for safeguarding essential infrastructure for internal and external security. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) focuses on monitoring instances of terrorism and insurgency but does not extend its purview to include incidents related to child abuse. The National Central Bureau curates a compilation of illicit websites, facilitated by the collaboration between INTERPOL India and the INTERPOL International Child Sexual Exploitation database. The cyber security unit of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is responsible for monitoring illicit internet content, except for monitoring child sexual abuse imagery.

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) is the primary governmental organization entrusted with providing directives for website blocking. The organization offers incident prevention, response, and security quality management services, but does not monitor child internet abuse content. Training programs offered by CERT-In and the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing focus on imparting knowledge and skills related to collecting, analyzing, and presenting digital evidence for law enforcement agencies, forensic laboratories, and the judiciary.

India is considering seeking assistance from INTERPOL to access websites involved in disseminating child pornography, following concerns expressed by the Supreme Court. This development follows an unsuccessful attempt by the Indian Government in 2015 to prohibit 857 websites deemed to contain explicit sexual content. The Cyber Law and e-Security Group was created by DEITY, with representatives from the telecom department, CBI, ISP association, and officials from telecom carriers like Bharti Airtel, Vodafone, and Telenor. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is

²⁰⁰ EU Commission, AI and Child Safety: Policy Brief on Generative Risks to Minors, COM (2025) 241 final.

expected to have a significant role in interacting with INTERPOL by monitoring websites involved in disseminating child pornography.

INTERPOL curates a compendium of websites and URLs that exhibit the most egregious characteristics, which can be reproduced and utilized by authorities in India. The Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have recommended that any petition to restrict access to websites containing child pornography should be channeled via the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DEITY) rather than being immediately initiated by the CBI.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) aims to facilitate coordination among various agencies and stakeholders to proactively mitigate the risk of cyber-attacks and minimize the impact and recovery time associated with such incidents. A proposal has been established to establish a distinct division under I4C to address internet offenses targeting women and children, focusing on child sexual abuse imagery and online abuse and exploitation.

The Indian Government's National Advisory on Preventing and Combating Cyber Crime against Children in 2012 has formulated recommendations for addressing child online protection, signaling a heightened awareness among top-level decision-makers regarding the risks children face online. Establishing a robust safeguarding digital space for children necessitates implementing a cohesive and synchronized approach, including all relevant parties..

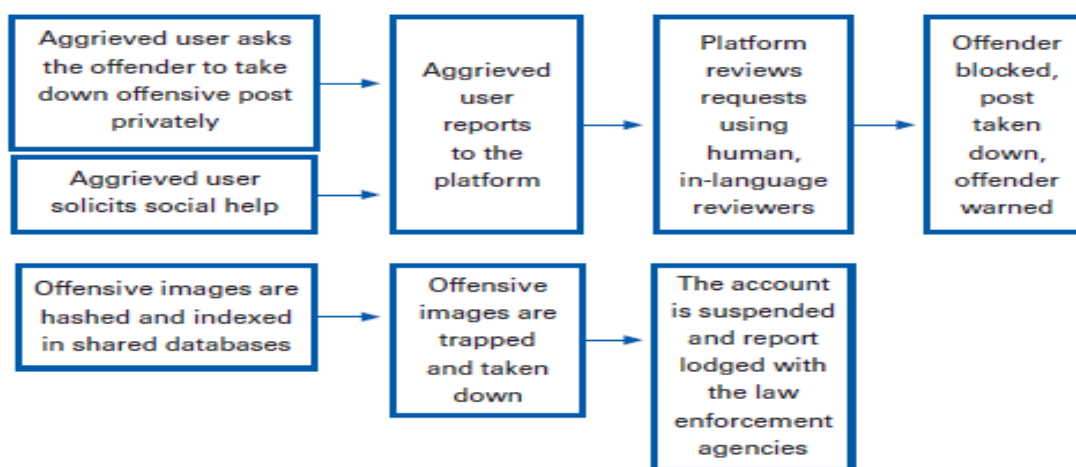


Figure 4: Generic self-regulatory processes of social media platforms

The Darknet called the hidden web, is the primary platform for several illicit activities targeting minors. The Darknet is commonly acknowledged as the subterranean realm or the unregulated frontier of the digital domain, inaccessible by conventional search engines such as Google. Notable software packages, such as TOR (The Onion Router), are necessary. The Tor network offers a significant degree of anonymity on the Internet, effectively concealing the network address of a personal computer, making it difficult to track. The data undergoes a process of encryption at many stages, like the structure of an onion, before being sent over the Internet via multiple relays until it ultimately reaches its intended destination.

3.6.2 Criminal Investigation and Prosecution of Online Sexual Abuse and Exploitation

The investigation of cybercrime falls under the purview of law enforcement agencies. Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of documented instances of cyber offenses about minors, whether victims or perpetrators, that are brought to the attention of law enforcement agencies. Furthermore, an even smaller proportion of these cases go to the judicial system. Reports of online offenses against children are often submitted to local police stations, either through police officers specializing in juvenile welfare or through the cybercrime units of law enforcement agencies around the nation. Once an individual has complained to the local police station or the cybercrime cell, seeking resolution for such cases follows a similar course as other crime-related matters. The reporting and investigation of instances are undermined by front-line police employees who possess little information about the issues, prejudiced views and lack familiarity with legislation. The deficient comprehension of the complexities surrounding cyber legislation and legislation designed to safeguard women and children indicates insufficient education and ingrained cultural biases. According to Panneerselvam (2022)²⁰¹, there needs to be more effectiveness in the response of front-line police officers when an offense is detected. As a result, cyber experts advocate contacting top

201 A. Panneerselvam, 'Framework and Challenges of Cyber Security in India: An Analytical Study', 2(04) International Journal of Information Technology & Computer Engineering 27 (2022)

authorities to address jurisdictional issues and ensure swift action. Front-line law enforcement personnel need more cybersecurity expertise, leading to substandard evidence preservation practices. The current system of pre-service education and in-service training within law enforcement organizations has demonstrated an inability to address the deficiencies present in the legal framework effectively. These deficiencies necessitate a comprehensive comprehension and implementation of diverse laws to combat the ever-expanding and intricate array of cyber offenses effectively.

3.6.3 Cybercrime Cells and Cyber Forensic Capacities

India now has a total of 23 police cybercrime units. Certain states possess a singular cyber cell. However, several bigger states have multiple cyber cells. The cyber cells operate by the Code of Criminal Procedure for traditional offenses and a collection of investigative manuals that outline protocols for conducting searches, seizures, analyzing digital evidence, and presenting such evidence in a court of law. Since 2011, the utilization of the Cybercrime Investigative Manual, created by the Data Security Council of India (DSCI), alongside the implementation of standard operating procedures (SOPs), has effectively streamlined and synchronized the investigative processes for cybercrime cases. Cyber forensic laboratories are typically affiliated with cyber cells to conduct computer, network, and mobile forensics. These laboratories also provide training on cybercrime and the analysis of cyber forensic data. The rates of conviction for cases involving child internet abuse are notably deficient. One of the primary factors contributing to the issue at hand is the inadequate quality of evidence and the limited capabilities of law enforcement agencies in managing cyber evidence about instances of child sexual abuse²⁰². As an illustration, law enforcement personnel frequently lack the necessary training to effectively retain electronic mail correspondence as evidentiary material in instances involving child sexual assault. Furthermore, it is frequently seen that a 65B certificate is not included, resulting in the inadmissibility of the evidence non a court of law²⁰³. Consequently, those who fall victim to online abuse are deprived of the opportunity to attain legal redress, while those

²⁰² National Cyber Security Policy (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, 2013).

²⁰³ National Policy for Children (Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2013).

responsible for perpetrating such acts can evade punishment.

3.7 Safeguarding digital evidence

Law enforcement organizations encounter distinct obstacles when handling digital evidence since they often lack comprehensive standards and standard operating procedures (SOPs) tailored explicitly for child abuse cases²⁰⁴. According to Mathew (2020), overarching rules exist that should govern digital evidence management.

- ✓ When digital evidence is obtained, any subsequent acts must not cause any modifications to the digital evidence.
- ✓ It is imperative to provide a satisfactory justification for the acts taken
- ✓ in situations where it is inevitable.
- ✓ When an individual requires access to primary digital evidence, this individual must have the required forensic and legal competence.
- ✓ All actions about digital evidence's seizure, retrieval, retention, or transmission must be comprehensively documented, archived, and made accessible for examination, as directed by the authorized governing body.
- ✓ The responsibility for all activities about digital evidence lies with the individual in possession of said evidence.
- ✓ Any agency tasked with the seizure, access, storage, or transfer of digital evidence must adhere to these principles²⁰⁵.

In order to construct cyber crime police stations, investigation centers, and forensic training facilities throughout all states and union territories, the Ministry of Home Affairs' Police Modernization Scheme has created the Cybercrime Investigation Programme. The DSCI is furthermore strategizing to support the creation of two national centers of excellence focused on studying cybercrimes and digital evidence investigation²⁰⁶.

²⁰⁴ Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Child Safety and Digital Responsibility Report (2025).

²⁰⁵ Digital Personal Data Protection Act, No. 22 of 2023, Gazette of India.

²⁰⁶ Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Child Safety and Digital Responsibility Report (2025).

3.8 Indian Government Roles and Responses on Child Information Safety

The Indian government at the center and state levels have taken several precautions and measures to address online child abuse and protect children from exploitation. It is essential to note that the situation may have evolved since then, and I recommend consulting more recent sources for the latest information. Some of the precautions and actions taken by the Indian government include:

1. The government employs measures to restrict access to websites that host explicit CSAM, as identified by INTERPOL's regularly updated "Worst-of-list." The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), the National Nodal Agency for Interpol, shares this list with the government. As mentioned earlier, the list is sent to the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), which then gives directives to prominent Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to implement website-blocking measures.
2. The Indian government has issued a directive to prominent ISPs in the country, mandating their compliance with the dynamic adoption and subsequent disabling or removal of CSAM. This process would be based on the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) list from the United Kingdom.
3. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) is now executing a significant Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) initiative. Furthermore, a website specifically designed to promote awareness of information security has been established.
4. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between India and the United States, granting access to tipline reports on Missing and Exploited Children, has been authorized by the Union Cabinet under the leadership of the Prime Minister²⁰⁷. An agreement has been formally established between the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) of India and the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) of the United States of America (USA).

²⁰⁷ United States v. Mechem, No. 24-CR-145, 2025 WL 1823421 (D. Utah 12 Mar. 2025).

5. The MoU would facilitate the utilization of the extensive database of tipline reports, over one lakh in number, maintained by the NCMEC in the United States. This collaboration will empower law enforcement authorities in India to access and leverage this valuable resource. This initiative will facilitate the establishment of a novel framework for the dissemination of information about child pornography and child sexual abuse material, as well as the initiation of legal proceedings against perpetrators. This development will provide law enforcement authorities with enhanced capabilities to effectively eliminate instances of child pornography and child sexual abuse material from the digital realm, thereby contributing to promoting and preserving human dignity.
6. The Maharashtra Cyber Wing, which serves as the central body responsible for overseeing cyber security in the state, has initiated a campaign known as "Operation Blackface" with the objective of taking punitive measures against those engaged in activities associated with child pornography.
7. The reporting of CSAM is sent to the police Cybercrime Cell, which thereafter obtains approval from the Department of Telecommunications and the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DoT and DEITY, respectively) in order to implement site-blocking measures against platforms hosting illicit content.
8. The CBI is crucial in collaborating with INTERPOL to monitor websites that disseminate child pornography. The INTERPOL curates a list highlighting websites of particular concern, serving as a valuable resource for law enforcement agencies in India. Requesting website blocking must be channeled via the DEITY rather than immediately initiated by the CBI.
9. Social networking and messaging services and search engines such as Whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, MySpace, and Google employ various measures, including filters, privacy settings, and complaint channels, to prevent and report offensive and abusive content. Since 2011, many social media platforms have employed Microsoft's Photo DNA technology to conduct

thorough scans of all submitted photographs, therefore exerting control over the dissemination of CSAM. Search engines like Google and Bing employ measures to restrict access to illicit information, including splash screens to caution users when attempting to access unlawful or hazardous material.

10. In order to mitigate the dissemination of illicit online content, collaborative frameworks have been established between international internet corporations and law enforcement entities, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (United States), the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) (United Kingdom), the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) (United Kingdom), INTERPOL, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (United States).

3.9 India, and Its International Status.

In conjunction with the constitutional and legislative framework, law enforcement agencies must possess knowledge of the international legal framework about children's rights. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC], enacted by the UN General Assembly in 1989, serves as the principal international instrument for children. India acceded to the UNCRC in 1992, therefore committing to implement all the norms and standards outlined in the articles of the Convention. India has formally accepted and approved two supplementary protocols to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). These protocols specifically address the issues of child trafficking, child prostitution, child pornography, and the involvement of children in armed conflict. According to Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the term "child" refers to "every individual under the age of eighteen years, unless the child reaches the age of majority earlier as determined by the relevant laws."

On 26 April 2019, the NCRB and the NCMEC of the United States signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This agreement aims to establish a novel mechanism for the exchange of information pertaining to child sexual abuse material,

as well as facilitate legal measures against perpetrators.

3.10 Outcome

The part of this research on Indian laws about online sexual exploitation of children highlights the Government's recognition of the pressing need to safeguard minors from digital risks. The legal framework, particularly the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, demonstrates a comprehensive approach to addressing online abuse and exploitation. The act's relevance for online offenses against children is evident in its definition of sexual offenses, child-friendly procedures, and stringent offender penalties.

However, despite the adequacy of the legal provisions when assessed against international criteria, challenges remain in effectively applying the law to prosecute offenders. Issues such as differences in terminology and definitions, the need for standard operating procedures and guidelines, and the inadequate capacities of law enforcement agencies pose hurdles in protecting children effectively. Bridging the gap between the legal framework and its implementation is imperative to strengthen child protection measures. Addressing terminology inconsistencies, providing comprehensive guidelines, and enhancing law enforcement capabilities are crucial steps in ensuring the effective enforcement of online child protection laws. Continuous efforts are needed to raise awareness about the risks of online sexual exploitation and educate both children and adults on online safety measures. Collaborative initiatives involving government agencies, law enforcement, educational institutions, civil society, and internet service providers are vital to create a safer digital environment for children. Ultimately, by proactively addressing the challenges and improving the implementation of existing laws, India can make significant strides in protecting its children from online sexual exploitation, ensuring their safety, dignity, and well-being in the digital age.

Chapter 4:

The Role of Administration, Judiciary, and NGOs: Safeguarding Children Online

In recent years, India has witnessed a surge in online child sexual abuse cases, raising serious concerns about the safety and well-being of its young population in the digital era. The ever-expanding reach of the internet has made children more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse online. A comprehensive understanding of the roles and functioning of administrative bodies, NGOs, and the judiciary is imperative to combat this alarming issue. This chapter aims to analyze the functioning of administrative bodies and NGOs in handling matters concerning child sexual abuse and examine the judiciary's role in regulating cases of online child sexual exploitation in the Indian context.

In collaboration with law enforcement agencies, administrative bodies play a pivotal role in addressing child sexual abuse cases. They are tasked with implementing policies, devising awareness campaigns, and establishing effective reporting mechanisms to identify and respond to instances of online child sexual abuse promptly. Administrative bodies are also responsible for coordinating efforts among various stakeholders to streamline child protection measures effectively.

Moreover, NGOs contribute significantly to the fight against child sexual abuse in India. These organizations actively advocate, educate, and intervene to prevent such abuses and support the victims and their families. NGOs provide essential services like counseling, rehabilitation, and legal assistance to ensure victims receive the care and support they need to recover from the abuse trauma. Additionally, NGOs collaborate with government agencies and other stakeholders to develop child protection policies, acting as a bridge between society and institutions in combating child sexual abuse effectively²⁰⁸.

208 Philip S. Goldman et al., 'Institutionalisation and Deinstitutionalisation of Children 2: Policy and Practice Recommendations for Global, National, and Local Actors', 4(8) *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 606 (2020)

The regional judiciary and legal administration in India plays a pivotal role in regulating cases of online child sexual exploitation. It is the ultimate authority responsible for enforcing cyber laws and prosecuting offenders involved in child sexual abuse crimes. Through its legal framework, the judiciary can deliver justice to victims, deter potential perpetrators, and set precedents to guide law enforcement agencies in handling such cases. The judiciary's role extends beyond mere punishment; it interprets and adapts existing laws to address the challenges posed by rapidly evolving technology, ensuring that the legal system remains effective in the digital age.

Furthermore, the regional judiciary's intervention is crucial in safeguarding children's rights and interests. It ensures that child victims receive appropriate protection and support during legal proceedings, preserving their privacy and dignity. Additionally, the judiciary may take cognizance of emerging trends in online child sexual exploitation and issue directives to administrative bodies and law enforcement agencies to strengthen their preventive and investigative measures.

In India, the fight against online child sexual abuse requires a concerted effort involving administrative bodies, NGOs, and the judiciary. These stakeholders bring distinct expertise to the table, enabling a comprehensive approach to address the multifaceted challenges posed by the digital landscape. By analyzing the functioning of administrative bodies and NGOs while handling child sexual abuse matters and understanding the role of the judiciary in regulating online child sexual exploitation, India can foster a safer digital environment for its children, protecting them from the scourge of online exploitation and ensuring their rights and well-being are upheld.

4.1 Role of State's Judiciary and Legal Systems in Child Safety Against Online Abuses

The Constitution of India designates "Police" and "Public Order" as State topics. The primary responsibility for preventing, detecting, investigating, and prosecuting crimes, particularly those related to the exploitation of children, lies with the States/UTs²⁰⁹. They carry out these tasks through their law enforcement machinery. Law enforcement

²⁰⁹ Kids Online Safety Act, S.1748, 119th Cong. (2025)

agencies initiate legal proceedings in accordance with legal laws against those engaged in the digital sexual exploitation or abuse of children.

Law enforcement agencies initiate legal proceedings in accordance with legal laws against those engaged in the digital sexual exploitation or abuse of children. The Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000 contains sufficient provisions to address existing cyber-crimes. Section 67B of the Act imposes severe penalties for the dissemination, viewing, or transmission of child pornography in electronic format. In addition, sections 354A and 354D of the Indian Penal Code establish penalties for the act of online bullying and cyber stalking specifically targeting women. The Ministry of Home Affairs has authorized a program called the 'Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)'²¹⁰.

As part of this initiative, an online portal for reporting cyber crimes has been launched at www.cybercrime.gov.in. This portal allows the public to report complaints related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material, rape or gang rape images, and sexually explicit content. This portal enables the general public to submit complaints either anonymously or through the Report and Track feature. If the appellant chooses to file a complaint anonymously under the "Report Crime related to Women/ Child" area, he/she should pick the location/state/union territory where the crime occurred. The complaints submitted on the portal will be addressed by the relevant State/UT police authority, depending on the State/UT you choose when submitting the complaint²¹¹.

If the report concerns the hosting of Child Pornography/Rape or Gang Rape (CP/RGR) content on a website, the complainant can provide their current State/Union Territory of residence. "Report and Track" feature assists the law enforcement authorities in reaching out to you for additional information. The Ministry of Women and Child Development implemented the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act) as a specific legislation aimed at safeguarding children from acts of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and pornography.

Sections 13 to 15 specifically address the matter of child pornography. Section 14 and Section 15 establish the penalties for utilizing a kid for pornographic purposes and for

²¹⁰ M. Kaur & M. Saini, 'Indian Government Initiatives on Cyberbullying: A Case Study on Cyberbullying in Indian Higher Education Institutions', 28 *Education and Information Technologies* 581 (2023)

²¹¹ National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal, Ministry of Home Affairs (2023).

possessing pornographic material involving a child. Section 28 of the POCSO Act 2012 states that Special Courts should be set up to ensure prompt trials for crimes committed under the Act. In addition, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) and State Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCRs) have been assigned the responsibility of overseeing the enforcement of the POCSO Act, 2012. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was established in March 2007 under the Commissions for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005. This act was passed by the Parliament in December 2005 and the NCPCR operates under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India²¹².

The NCPCR's main objective is to guarantee that all laws, policies, programs, and administrative mechanisms are in line with the perspective of child rights as stated in the Constitution of India and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. A child is defined as an individual who falls within the age range of 0 to 18 years. The NCPCR aims to incorporate a perspective based on rights into national policies and programs. It also seeks to provide tailored responses at the state, district, and block levels, taking into account the individual needs and strengths of each region.

In order to address the threat and guarantee the safety of young children and women on online platforms, the issue has been brought up by the Ministry of Women and Child Development in conjunction with the Ministries of Home Affairs (MHA), Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), and Education (MoE). It was requested that the Ministry of Education instruct the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) to include appropriate cyber safety content in the school curriculum and that State Governments do the same through their School Boards so that children are prepared to safely navigate the online world²¹³.

Online learning has replaced traditional classroom instruction in India's public schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. There are numerous advantages and disadvantages to the virtual world that youngsters are exposed to as a result of internet

²¹² National Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Annual Report 2021–22 (2021).

²¹³ Ministry of Women and Child Development, 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav: Ministry of Women and Child Development in Partnership with the Ministry of Education and UNICEF Launches Campaign "Kanya Shiksha Pravesh Utsav" to Bring Back Out of School Adolescent Girls to the Formal Education', 7 Mar. 2022.

access and other online activities. There is a section on cyber safety and security in the aforementioned guidebook that addresses topics such as common threat points, regulations connected to cyber safety, and guidelines for cyber safety. This section addresses the rapidly increasing incidences of cybercrimes among youngsters. In order to compile all of the current guidelines, circulars, notices, and government orders pertaining to school safety and security, the Commission put together a Comprehensive Manual on the Subject.

On September 22, 2021, the Commission met to discuss the possible negative effects of internet gaming on children as well as ways to lessen the likelihood of cybercrime and violence against children. Members of the following organizations were present at the meeting: Cyber Peace Foundation, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology; Ministry of Health & Family Welfare²¹⁴; Central Institute of Educational Technology; National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences Hospital (NIMHANS); Department of Psychiatry, All India Institute of Medical Sciences; and the Department of Behavioral Addiction Clinic, AIIMS.

In order to enhance the system for dealing with cybercrimes, particularly those targeting women and children, the Central Government has, after consulting with different parties, implemented measures effective in India's states such as²¹⁵:

- Publishing, transferring, or accessing child sexual abuse information online is punishable by a strict law, Section 67B of the IT Act, 2000.
- Rules for Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) for 2021 hold social media companies responsible for the security of their users and provide them more agency while using intermediaries. The Rules stipulate that the intermediaries must have a strong system for resolving complaints, which should include a deadline for the complaint's resolution. Intermediaries must inform users of their terms and conditions, which should include a prohibition on hosting, displaying, uploading, editing, publishing, transmitting, updating, or sharing any content that is harmful, defamatory,

²¹⁴ Trisha Ray, 'An ASEAN-India Cybersecurity Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity: Report of the Third ASEAN-India Track 1.5 Dialogue on Cyber Issues', ORF Special Reports (11 Apr. 2022).

²¹⁵ Measures to Ensure Safety and Security of Women and Children on Online Platforms, Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Women and Child Development (2022).

obscene, intrusive of another person's privacy, harmful to minors, or otherwise unlawful. When made aware of it by a court order or a notice from the relevant government or its approved agency, intermediaries are also required to remove any information that violates any law in India.

- Important social media intermediaries (SSMIs) are also obligated to take technological steps to prevent the spread of child sexual abuse content, as stated in the Rules. As part of its efforts to combat cybercrime, the Indian government has set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), which is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs. This center will help law enforcement agencies (LEAs) work together more effectively²¹⁶.
- The government's "Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC)" project is run through the Nirbhaya Fund. Its goals include increasing public knowledge of cyber crimes, providing advisories and alerts, enhancing cyber forensic facilities, and enhancing the capacity of law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges²¹⁷. The initiative includes the introduction of a National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in) where citizens can report cybercrimes, particularly those targeting women and children.
- Assistance with filing online cyber complaints can be obtained by dialing a toll-free number 1930 (formerly 155260). The National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal automatically forwards incident reports to the appropriate states for further processing, using the applicant-provided information. A training program has been developed to assist law enforcement officials, prosecutors, and judicial officers in conducting investigations and prosecutions more effectively. The Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children Scheme has educated over 19,600 law enforcement officials, judges, and prosecutors in cybercrime prevention, investigation, forensics, and more.
- The National Cybercrime Training Centre (NCTC) and CyTrain, a Massive

²¹⁶ Ministry of Women and Child Development, 'Online Cyber Grooming of Women and Young Children', 16 Mar. 2022.

²¹⁷ Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, Government Implements a Scheme of Cyber Crime Prevention Against Women and Children (CCPWC) under Nirbhaya Fund (31 July 2024).

Open Online Courses (MOOC) platform, were developed by NCRB under the auspices of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C). The purpose of these initiatives is to provide all relevant parties, including law enforcement agencies (LEAs), prosecutors, judges, and others, with access to high-quality online education in cybercrime investigation. Free online training courses on handling cybercrimes are available to all stakeholders through the CyTrain Portal (<https://cytrain.ncrb.gov.in>). Participants can finish the courses at their own pace. Upon finishing the course, participants will receive an electronic certificate.

- The Multi-Held Association (MHA) has published a Handbook for Adolescents and Students, launched a radio campaign, and disseminated messages on cybercrime using its Twitter handle, @cyberDost. Guidelines for the safe and secure use of the Internet were published to schools by the CBSE on 18.08.2017.

In order to comply with this circular, schools must implement stringent security measures and ensure that all computers are equipped with firewalls, filtering, and monitoring software²¹⁸.

- Information Security Education & Awareness (ISEA) is a program run by MeitY that has been raising awareness about the significance of being secure online among users, particularly women and children. Information security awareness resources are available at a specialized website (<https://www.infosecawareness.in>).
- The government has issued an order to the relevant Internet service providers (ISPs) requiring them to ban access to child pornographic websites that are listed on a dynamic basis by either the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) in the UK or Project Arachnid in Canada.

The Department of Telecommunications has asked all ISPs to utilize appropriate means (email, invoices, SMS, website, etc.) to educate their customers about the need of parental control filters on end-user devices²¹⁹.

²¹⁸ Ramanpreet Kaur et al., 'Artificial Intelligence for Cybersecurity: Literature Review and Future Research Directions', 97 Information Fusion 101804 (2023) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inffus.2023.101804>

²¹⁹ Marija Manojlovic, Safe Online Impact: Keeping Children Safe in the Digital World (2023)

- In order to get a Tipline report from NCMEC regarding online child pornography and child sexual exploitation contents, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in the United States and the National Child Registry (NCRB) in India have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU). Through the Nation Cybercrime Reporting Portal, the tip lines that have been received from NCMEC are being shared with States/UTs online so that they can take appropriate action.
- A provision to address the threat of fraudulent internet calls and messages is found in the IT Act, 2000. Cheating via personation is punishable by a fine and/or imprisonment for up to three years under Section 66D of the IT Act, 2000.
- To combat the pervasive problem of child abuse, the POCSO Act has strong safeguards. Provisions for the recording of statements and evidence that are child-friendly, mandatory reporting, and expedited trial of cases are all features of the Act. For sexual offenses perpetrated against minors, there are sufficient criminal penalties in accordance with the seriousness of the crimes, such as those included in the POCSO Act, 2012.

Statewise India's cybercrime status is summarized below²²⁰:

According to the data broken down by state, the most concerned group about the potential misuse of personal information they supplied online was 60% of Delhi residents, the highest percentage of any of the 12 states polled. Table 8.2 shows that the proportion was lowest in Karnataka, where 10% of the population felt that way. This is true even if there are more cybercrimes recorded in Bengaluru, the capital of the state and the country's information technology hub (NCRB, 2021). Cybercrimes have decreased from 2018 to 2021, despite Bengaluru having the highest rate. It would appear that the citizens of Karnataka are now more at ease thanks to the state's well publicized and subsequently passed Karnataka Cyber Security Policy.

Users get access to a vast world of knowledge through the internet. Access to this level of data has never been easier, but it has also raised new worries about people's privacy

²²⁰ Status of Policing in India Report 2023: Surveillance and the Question of Privacy, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) (2023).

and reputation. Researchers aimed to find out if participants had experienced the problem of uninvited photo or video sharing on the internet. 7% of people had really experienced the problem of having their photos or videos broadcast without their knowledge or consent, while over 80% of people indicated that this has never happened to them.

Despite its seemingly minor size, this proportion is relevant since it can lead to major crimes like cyberstalking, sexual assault, or blackmail. It is worth mentioning that a higher number of males than women reported that their own or someone close to them had private images or videos leaked. Nearly 15% of victims from Haryana and 12% from Delhi are associated with having their images or videos broadcast online without their consent. According to Edmond (2015), information about cyber fraud rings and organized phishing in Jamtara, Jharkhand, was reported in 2015 and eventually turned into a Netflix original series²²¹.

But these rackets have spread to other regions of the country as time has passed. The Mewat region, which borders both Haryana and Rajasthan, is quickly becoming a major center for cyber fraud, according to interviews with senior cybercrime department officers. The region has seen the rise of numerous extortion rings, whose members threaten to post explicit films online in order to coerce their victims into paying ransom. People from Haryana were twice as likely to report such instances in the study as the whole sample, which could be due to this or another reason.

71% of respondents were apprehensive to some degree that someone else would harm their reputation by writing about them online. The figures supplied by NCRB also show this trend. In 2021, there were 52,974 cybercrime crimes registered; 1,715 of those cases were committed with the express purpose of bringing shame upon the perpetrator (NCRB, 2022). Many Indian internet users have been victims of cyberbullying, which is similar to cyber defamation²²².

The Wire (2018) cites research from British cybersecurity firm Comparitech that found Indian children to be the most cyberbullied globally. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines "doxxing" as "publicly identifying or publishing private information about

²²¹ S.C. Sarkar, Ravi Rautji, Sanjeev Lalwani & D.N. Bhardwaj, 'A Study of Victims of Sexual Offences in South Delhi', 51 J. Fam. Welfare 60 (2005).

²²² *Status of Policing in India Report 2023: Surveillance and the Question of Privacy (Common Cause & CSDS 2023)*.

(someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge" and it is a common tactic employed in cyberbullying²²³.

People from marginalized groups, including children and women, are often the targets of these. In the 2021 "Sulli Deals" incident is an instance of such case.

Muslim women had their images "auctioned off" online without their knowledge or consent. With the number of these crimes on the rise, it is also clear that there is a dearth of legislation to address them. As a result, the survey's high percentage of respondents expressing worry about such incidents highlights the need for improved protections, legal systems, and prompt resolution of cybercrimes in this internet era.

Cyber Crimes against Children - 2020

SL	State/UT	Cyber Blackmailing / Threatening/ Harassment (Sec.506,503 , 384 IPC r/w IT Act	Fake Profile (IT Act r/w IPC/SLL)	Cyber Pornography/ Hosting or Publishing Obscene Sexual Materials depicting children (Sec.67B of IT Act r/w other IPC/SLL)	Cyber Stalking/ Bullying (Sec.354D IPC r/w IT Act)	Internet Crimes through Online Games etc (Sec.305 IPC r/w IT Act)	Other Cyber Crimes against Children	Total Cyber crimes against Children
[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]
STATES:								
1	Andhra Pradesh	1	0	15	32	0	4	52
2	Arunachal Pradesh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Assam	0	0	21	0	0	24	45
4	Bihar	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
5	Chhattisgarh	0	1	3	3	0	14	21
6	Goa	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
7	Gujarat	0	0	1	4	0	27	32
8	Haryana	0	0	16	2	0	15	33
9	Himachal Pradesh	0	0	17	0	0	2	19
10	Jharkhand	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
11	Karnataka	0	0	122	0	0	22	144
12	Kerala	0	0	101	3	0	22	126
13	Madhya Pradesh	0	0	20	6	0	13	39
14	Maharashtra	1	0	123	69	0	14	207
15	Manipur	0	0	3	0	0	0	3
16	Meghalaya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17	Mizoram	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	Nagaland	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Odisha	0	0	71	0	0	0	71
20	Punjab	0	0	8	0	0	2	10
21	Rajasthan	0	0	6	1	0	17	24
22	Sikkim	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23	Tamil Nadu	0	0	28	0	0	7	35
24	Telangana	1	0	7	1	0	0	9
25	Tripura	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26	Uttar Pradesh	0	0	161	14	0	22	197
27	Uttarakhand	0	0	11	0	0	0	11
28	West Bengal	0	0	0	2	0	4	6
	TOTAL STATE(S)	3	1	735	137	0	216	1092
UNION TERRITORIES:								
29	A&N Islands	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
30	Chandigarh	0	0	1	0	0	2	3
31	D&N Haveli and Daman & Diu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
32	Delhi	0	0	1	3	0	1	5
33	Jammu & Kashmir	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
34	Ladakh	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
35	Lakshadweep	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	Puducherry	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	TOTAL UT(S)	0	0	3	3	0	4	10
	TOTAL ALL INDIA	3	1	738	140	0	220	1102

• As per data provided by States/UTs
• States/UTs may not be compared purely on the basis of crime figures

TABLE 9A.11 Page 1 of 1

Table 5: Cyber Crimes Against Children in India²²⁴

²²³ Ayesha Bhimdiwala, Krishna Akhil Kumaradavi & Ahmer Arif, 'Fighting for Their Voice: Understanding Indian Muslim Women's Responses to Networked Harassment', ACM 2573-0142/2024/4-ART166 (2024) <<https://doi.org/10.1145/3641005>>.

²²⁴ Cyber Crimes Against Women, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Unstarred Question No. 3266 (2022)

The chart given above shows the cases of cybercrimes against children in 2020²²⁵.

4.1.1 Role of Indian Judiciary

The Indian Judiciary plays a crucial role in addressing cybercrime against children, ensuring their protection, and dispensing justice in cases of online exploitation. The judiciary is responsible for hearing and deciding cases related to cybercrime against children. This includes offenses such as child pornography, online grooming, cyberbullying, and child trafficking. The judiciary interprets and applies the existing cybercrime laws, such as the IT Act and the POCSO Act, to prosecute offenders and provide legal remedies for victims.

The judiciary protects children's rights, ensuring they are not subjected to online exploitation, abuse, or harassment. It works to create a safe online environment for children and safeguard their privacy and dignity. The judiciary protects the anonymity and privacy of child victims during legal proceedings to prevent further harm and ensure their safety. Judgments in cybercrime cases against children serve as precedents for future cases, providing guidance and consistency in handling such offenses.

Judicial Directives

Following are some essential judicial pronouncements in cases of cybercrime against children.

1. Alakh Alok Srivastava v. Union of India²²⁶

This case addresses significant disparities in the execution of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The Supreme Court highlighted the need for a comprehensive understanding of various sections of the POCSO Act, including definitions of penetrative sexual assault and penalties for offenders, particularly in cases involving aggravated circumstances, such as when the perpetrator exploits a child's mental or physical disability. The court mandated child-friendly procedures in Special Courts, ensuring the presence of a family member or guardian during proceedings and

²²⁵ Ibid

²²⁶ Information Technology Act, 2000, s. 67; Indian Penal Code, 1860, s. 282 (2018).

maintaining the child's anonymity throughout the trial. It also emphasized the necessity for trials to be concluded within one year from the date of cognizance, reflecting a commitment to uphold children's rights while adhering to sensitive legal standards.

2. Bois Locker Room Case²²⁷

The "Bois Locker Room" controversy in 2020 involved an Instagram group chat where male students shared explicit images of underage girls and discussed sexual assault. Public outrage led to investigations, arrests, and calls for stricter enforcement of laws protecting minors. The case underscored serious issues regarding online harassment and the challenges posed by digital platforms in safeguarding minors.

3. Avnish Bajaj v. State²²⁸

The Delhi High Court prosecuted the CEO of an online platform under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act (IT Act) for hosting objectionable content. This judgment marked an important moment in holding intermediaries accountable, highlighting their responsibility to prevent misuse of their platforms.

4. State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti²²⁹

This case represents the first conviction under the IT Act for cybercrime involving child pornography. The judiciary's swift action reinforced the role of the IT Act in prosecuting digital crimes targeting minors.

5. Kamlesh Vaswani v. Union of India²³⁰

The Supreme Court emphasized the urgency of combating child pornography and advocated for stricter legislative measures, including a comprehensive ban on

²²⁷ Arpita Sinha, 'Analysis of "Bois Locker Room" Case with Reference to Repercussions of Media Trial', 6(5) J. Legal Stud. & Res. (Oct. 2020) ISSN 2455-2437; WP (CrI) 3202/2020 & CM 11128/2020 (Del HC, 20 May 2020).

²²⁸ (2005) 3 SCC 229

²²⁹ (2004) 7 SCC 619

²³⁰ (2013) 2 SCC 32

pornographic websites. This case brought child safety and online content regulation to the forefront²³¹.

6. Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra²³²

Though not specific to child protection, this foundational case established that content corrupting public morality is punishable under Section 292 IPC. The principles laid out have informed debates about regulating obscene material accessible to minors.

7. Aveek Sarkar & Anr v. State of West Bengal & Anr.²³³

The Supreme Court emphasized that obscenity must be judged by contemporary community standards, particularly considering the impact on vulnerable groups like children. This case refined the balance between freedom of expression and societal responsibility²³⁴.

The "Romeo-Juliet" Exception and Judicial Evolution (2026)

A landmark shift in the judicial approach to adolescent sexuality occurred in January 2026 with the Supreme Court's decision in *State of Uttar Pradesh v. Anurudh*²³⁵. A Bench comprising **Justice Sanjay Karol** and **Justice Augustine George Masih** addressed the critical 'Interpretation Gap' where the strict liability of the POCSO Act often criminalizes consensual peer relationships rather than predatory exploitation. The Court urged the Union Government to introduce a **"Romeo-Juliet clause"** in the POCSO Act to exempt genuine adolescent relationships from the harsh penalties of the statute.

This directive serves as a vital judicial guideline for distinguishing between 'predatory online exploitation' and 'consensual adolescent interaction.' For the purpose of this study, this precedent validates the researcher's hypothesis regarding the need for a more

²³¹ Kamlesh Vaswani v. Union of India, (2014) 10 SCC 594 (SC).

²³² AIR 1965 SC 881

²³³ (2014) 4 S.C.C. 257

²³⁴ Ankur Narang v. State of Haryana, 2025 SCC OnLine P&H 332 (P&H HC)

²³⁵ *The State of Uttar Pradesh v. Anurudh*, Criminal Appeal arising out of SLP (CrI.) No. 10656 of 2025, decided on January 9, 2026 (2026 INSC 47)

nuanced, age-appropriate legal framework. It highlights that while the judiciary remains a 'sentinel on the qui vive' against digital predators, it is simultaneously moving toward a balanced approach that prevents the unintended victimization of youth in cases of mutual consent.

Judicial Mandate for Procedural Accountability and Public Awareness (2026)

The judicial push for administrative accountability was further reinforced in March 2026 by the Madras High Court in *Mahesh v. State of T.N*²³⁶. While acquitting a young man in a case of a consensual adolescent relationship, the Court expressed grave concern over the 'menace' of POCSO misuse stemming from a systemic 'lack of knowledge' among the general public, parents, and children. Invoking **Section 43 of the POCSO Act**, the Court issued a mandatory directive to the Chief Secretary of Tamil Nadu to implement massive public awareness campaigns and conduct specialized camps in both Government and private schools.

This judgment is pivotal for the present study as it provides a judicial confirmation of the researcher's survey findings in Jaipur, where respondents overwhelmingly identified 'Low Public Awareness' as a primary hurdle to child protection. By linking the 'misuse of law' to the 'failure of administrative awareness,' the Court has shifted the burden of prevention from mere policing to proactive socio-legal education. This reinforces the hypothesis that the 'Administrative Deficit' is not merely a logistical failure but a procedural lapse that the Judiciary is now seeking to rectify through strict monitoring.

The "Rarest of Rare" Doctrine in Organized Online Predation

"The judicial commitment to eradicating organized digital exploitation was underscored in a landmark verdict on **February 20, 2026**, by a Special POCSO Court in **Banda, Uttar Pradesh**. In the case of *State of Uttar Pradesh v. Ram Bhawan & Anr.*, the Court sentenced a former junior engineer and his wife to **death** for the systematic sexual exploitation of 33 minor boys over a decade. The perpetrators utilized

²³⁶ *Mahesh v. State of T.N. (Crl.A.(MD).No.1300 of 2025).*

a sophisticated modus operandi, luring victims through online video games and money, recording the abuse, and circulating child sexual abuse material (CSAM) globally across 47 countries via the darknet.

Invoking the '**Rarest of Rare**' doctrine, Additional District and Sessions Judge **Pradeep Kumar Mishra** observed that the 'unparalleled depravity' and the 'systemic nature' of the crimes left no room for reformation. This case is of paramount importance to the present study as it exemplifies the shift from individual offenses to **organized cyber-predation**. It validates the researcher's emphasis on **Section 67B of the IT Act** and **Section 5(n) of the POCSO Act**, proving that the combination of physical abuse and digital dissemination constitutes a unique category of heinous crime that necessitates the ultimate judicial deterrent to protect the moral foundation of society."

8. In Re: Prajwala²³⁷

The Supreme Court, taking suo motu cognizance of videos depicting sexual violence, issued directives to combat systemic inadequacies. Recommendations included stricter technological interventions and global collaborations to curb the circulation of exploitative content.

9. In Re Alarming Rise in the Number of Reported Child Rape Incidents²³⁸

This case reflected judicial awareness of the alarming increase in child sexual abuse cases. The Supreme Court directed states to implement stricter measures, emphasizing the need for swift and effective responses.

10. Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd) v. Union of India & Ors²³⁹

This landmark case established the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution. The judgment provided a foundation for legislative and regulatory measures to safeguard minors from the misuse of their personal data and online exploitation.

²³⁷ SMW (CrI) No. 3 of 2015 (SC).

²³⁸ Writ Petition (Civil) No. 565 of 2017, (2018) 12 SCC 1 (SC)

²³⁹ Writ Petition (Civil) No. 494 of 2012, (2017) 10 SCC 1; AIR 2017 SC 4161 (SC)

11. Raghuraj Singh v. Air Force Bal Bharti School²⁴⁰

The court emphasized the responsibility of educational institutions to prevent online harassment. It highlighted the importance of monitoring digital interactions within schools to protect minors.

12. Bytedance (India) Technology v. S. Muthukumar (2019)²⁴¹

The Madras High Court underscored the ethical and legal responsibilities of social media platforms to moderate harmful content proactively. This judgment aligns with international trends in holding intermediaries accountable.

13. P.G. Sam Infant Jones v. State Represented by Inspector of Police²⁴²

This case addressed threats such as the use of deepfake technology to exploit minors. The judiciary emphasized the urgent need for updated legal frameworks to tackle technologically sophisticated offenses.

14. *Smt Seema V. Ashwani Kumar* ²⁴³

In this instance, the Supreme Court, with due respect, mandated the registration of all marriages and instructed authorities nationwide to revise regulations to facilitate the implementation of its directive within three months. The Central and state governments were requested to include suitable rules about the repercussions of non-registration and falsification of documentation throughout the marriage registration process.

15. *Sakshi v. Union of India*²⁴⁴,

In this particular instance, the Supreme Court issued specific instructions about the conduct of trials involving cases of child sexual abuse or rape. One possible measure to consider is implementing a screen or similar arrangements that would prevent the

²⁴⁰ <https://www.casemine.com/judgement/in/574c320ae561090f2a0e62b1> as visited on 23jan.2025

²⁴¹ MANU/TN/1234/2019: Available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/madras-high-court-child-pornography-bharatiya-culture-can-act-bulwark-tackle-menace-inculcating-right-values-175882>

²⁴² 2021 SCC OnLine Mad 2241 (Mad HC).

²⁴³ AIR 2006 SC 1158.

²⁴⁴ Writ Petition (Crl) No. 33 of 1997 (SC, 9 Aug. 1999).

victim or witnesses, who may also be equally vulnerable, from directly viewing the body or face of the accused. Following the second point, it is recommended that the interrogative inquiries posed during the process of cross-examination on behalf of the defendant, namely those pertaining directly to the incident in question, be submitted in written form to the Presiding Officer of the Court. The Presiding Officer retains the discretion to present these questions to the victim or witnesses in a linguistically comprehensible manner and devoid of any potential embarrassment. (iii) It is imperative to afford child abuse or rape victims adequate opportunities for breaks throughout their court testimony, as needed.

16. *Vishal Jeet V. Union of India* ²⁴⁵,

In this particular instance, the esteemed Supreme Court gave directives to the State government about establishing Rehabilitation homes for youngsters discovered engaging in street begging and providing protective houses for juvenile girls coerced into the sex trade.

17. *Gaurav Jain v. Union of India* ²⁴⁶,

In this particular instance, the Honorable Supreme Court issued instructions to facilitate the rehabilitation of children and child prostitutes after performing a comprehensive examination of the subject matter. Moreover, it is imperative to utilize juvenile shelters to rehabilitate child prostitutes.

18. *Ankur Narang v. State (2018)* ²⁴⁷

In this case, Ankur Narang was convicted by the Delhi High Court for possessing and distributing child pornography using digital platforms. The case highlighted the growing concern of child exploitation through online means. The court stressed the seriousness of such offenses due to the vulnerability of minors and the potential long-

²⁴⁵ AIR 1990 SC 1412; 1990 SCR (2) 861; (1990) 3 SCC 318; JT 1990 (2) 354; 1990 SCALE (1) 874.

²⁴⁶ Gaurav Jain v. Union of India, (1997) 8 SCC 114 (SC, 9 July 1997).

²⁴⁷ Ankur Narang v. State & Anr., AIR ONLINE 2019 2332 (Del HC, 30 Apr. 2019).

term psychological harm caused by the circulation of explicit material involving them. The court's emphasis on stringent punishment aimed to deter others from engaging in similar activities, underlining the need to protect children from digital exploitation²⁴⁸.

19. *State of Kerala v. Rajesh (2019)*²⁴⁹

The Kerala High Court's decision in this case upheld the conviction of Rajesh under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. Rajesh was found guilty of sexually exploiting a minor and using electronic media to circulate obscene material involving the victim. This case exemplified the application of the POCSO Act to digital offenses related to minors. The court's decision highlighted the seriousness of using electronic platforms to perpetrate and spread sexual offenses against children. It emphasized the need to ensure the safety and well-being of minors in the digital age.

20. *State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh (2020)*²⁵⁰

The Rajasthan High Court affirmed the conviction and sentence of Rakesh for possessing and distributing child pornography content, which included videos and images. The court's ruling underscored the importance of safeguarding children from online exploitation and the role of legal measures in curbing such activities. This case contributed to the legal precedent that addresses the emerging issue of child pornography distribution through digital mediums.

21. *State of Maharashtra v. Rahul (2017)*²⁵¹

The Bombay High Court's decision upheld the conviction of Rahul for creating and sharing child pornography on social media platforms. The court's stance reflected the severity of creating and disseminating explicit content involving minors, which can lead to the exploitation of vulnerable individuals. The judgment highlighted the

²⁴⁸ Ankur Narang v. State of Haryana, 2025 SCC OnLine P&H 332 (P&H HC).

²⁴⁹ State of Kerala v. Rajesh, (2020) 12 SCC 122 (SC).

²⁵⁰ Dinesh Mehta v. State of Rajasthan, S.B. Civil Writ Petition No. 443/2021 (Raj HC, 9 Oct. 2020).

²⁵¹ Rahul Kamal Tiwari v. State of Maharashtra, FIR No. 93 of 2016 (17 Apr. 2017).

responsibility of digital platforms and users to prevent the circulation of such harmful material.

22. *Prerna Singh Bindra v. Union of India (2014)* ²⁵²

In this case, the Supreme Court of India directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to investigate the circulation of child sexual abuse material online. The court's decision underscored the gravity of the issue and the urgent need to take action against online child exploitation. The court's emphasis on protecting children highlighted the responsibilities of law enforcement agencies and the government to prevent and combat such activities.

23. *Sunil Mehra v. Delhi Administration (1978)* ²⁵³

In a landmark case, the Supreme Court ruled that even simulated depictions of sexual acts involving minors amounted to child pornography and were punishable under the law. This judgment was pivotal in establishing the legal framework to address visual representations that exploit minors, regardless of whether the acts were actual or simulated.

24. *Shifu Sunkriti v. State of Karnataka (2018)*²⁵⁴

The Karnataka High Court upheld the conviction of the accused from the group "Shifu Sunkriti" for circulating obscene material involving minors through messaging apps. The case demonstrated the court's commitment to curbing the circulation of explicit material involving minors through digital platforms and holding offenders accountable.

25. *Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish (2024)*²⁵⁵

The Supreme Court ruled that viewing, storing, or possessing child sexual exploitative and abuse material (CSEAM) constitutes an offense under Section 15 of the POCSO

²⁵² Prerna Singh Bindra v. Union of India, Writ Petition (Civil) No. 489/2018 (SC, 4 Dec. 2018).

²⁵³ AIR ONLINE 1996 SC 375

²⁵⁴ Writ Petition No. 18752 of 2018 (GM-R/C).

²⁵⁵ 2024 INSC 716, <https://www.scoobserver.in/journal/supreme-court-holds-that-viewing-storing-and-possessing-child-pornography-is-punishable-under-pocso-act-overturns-madras-hc-decision/> (last visited 11 Dec. 2025).

Act and Section 67B of the IT Act. It overturned a Madras High Court judgment that had excluded mere possession from criminal liability. The court emphasized that demand for CSEAM perpetuates its production and exploitation of children.

26. MF Hussain v. Rajkumar Pandey (2008)²⁵⁶

In this case, the Supreme Court addressed the balance between artistic expression and societal sensitivities. While primarily focused on artistic freedom, the ruling underscored the necessity of regulating content that could potentially harm vulnerable populations, including children. The court recognized that while freedom of expression is vital, it must not come at the expense of children's safety, particularly in contexts where explicit content could be accessible to minors. This case highlights the ongoing challenge of ensuring that artistic liberties do not infringe upon the rights and protection of children in digital spaces.

27. Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan (1997)²⁵⁷

This landmark judgment established comprehensive guidelines to prevent sexual harassment in workplaces, which have broader implications for protecting children from online exploitation²⁵⁸. The Supreme Court emphasized that a safe environment is essential for all individuals, particularly minors who may be exposed to harmful content online. The principles laid down in this case advocate proactive measures by institutions—including educational and digital platforms—to ensure a safe online experience for children. The ruling serves as a reminder that protective measures must extend beyond physical spaces to encompass digital interactions as well.

28. Lakshmi Kant Pandey v Union of India (1984)²⁵⁹

This case focused on child welfare laws and emphasized the government's responsibility to protect children from exploitation in all forms, including online environments. The Supreme Court's ruling highlighted the need for comprehensive

²⁵⁶ AIR 2008 SC 594

²⁵⁷ AIR 1997 SC 3011

²⁵⁸ Vishaka v. State of Rajasthan, (1997) 6 SCC 241 (SC).

²⁵⁹ AIR 1984 SC 469

legislation to safeguard children's rights and ensure their safety against various forms of abuse. The principles established in this case have informed subsequent laws aimed at protecting children from online sexual exploitation, reinforcing the idea that state intervention is crucial in creating a safe digital landscape for minors.

Key Takeaways

India's legal framework for combating online sexual abuse of children is continually evolving, reflecting the judiciary's adaptability in addressing new challenges. Cases analyzed in this chapter demonstrate a commitment to holding perpetrators accountable while safeguarding victims' rights.

However, emerging threats such as AI-generated imagery, financial sexual extortion, and deepfake exploitation demand further legislative reforms and judicial vigilance. A victim-centric approach, combined with preventive education and robust enforcement mechanisms, is essential to create safer digital spaces for children. Collaborative efforts among the judiciary, policymakers, and technology experts will play a pivotal role in shaping an effective response to online child exploitation.

Inferences from these Directives

The judgment's interpretation underscores the judiciary's commitment to upholding the rights and well-being of children while navigating the challenges posed by the digital age. The interpretation provided by the court in this judgment has significant implications for protecting children from sexual exploitation, including online exploitation. The court's decisions highlight several key aspects regarding the role of the judiciary in safeguarding children from online abuse:

1. **Comprehensive Protection:** The court's ruling demonstrates the judiciary's commitment to providing comprehensive protection to children from sexual offenses, both offline and online. By categorizing the possession of child pornography for personal use as an offense under the POCSO Act, the court acknowledges the need to address all forms of child sexual exploitation, including those occurring through digital mediums.

2. **Deterrence and Prevention:** The court's interpretation serves as a strong deterrent against the possession and circulation of child pornography, even if for personal use. By establishing legal consequences for such actions, the judiciary contributes to preventing the creation and dissemination of explicit content involving minors. This preventive approach aligns with the judiciary's role in discouraging individuals from engaging in activities that harm children.
3. **Child-Centric Approach:** The judgment reflects a child-centric approach by prioritizing the protection and welfare of children above other considerations. The court recognizes that child pornography perpetuates the sexual exploitation and abuse of minors, leading to severe psychological and emotional harm. This child-centric approach is essential in crafting legal interpretations and decisions safeguarding children's rights and dignity.
4. **Interpreting Evolving Challenges:** In this case, the interpretation of the POCSO Act demonstrates the judiciary's willingness to address evolving challenges posed by technology and the digital landscape. The court recognizes that online platforms provide new avenues for child exploitation, and its interpretation adapts the law to address these emerging threats.
5. **Legal Clarity:** The court's interpretation clarifies the legal framework surrounding child pornography offenses, leaving no ambiguity about the illegality of possessing explicit content involving minors, even for personal use. This clarity is crucial for law enforcement agencies, legal professionals, and individuals, ensuring a consistent and effective approach to combating online child abuse.
6. **Balancing Rights:** The judgment also reflects the judiciary's role in striking a balance between individual rights and the greater societal interest in protecting vulnerable children. It acknowledges that personal use of child pornography infringes upon children's rights to safety and dignity, justifying legal intervention.

7. **Setting a precedent:** The interpretation in this case sets a precedent for future cases involving child pornography offenses. Courts can refer to this judgment to ensure uniformity in addressing similar situations, creating a robust legal foundation for protecting children from online abuse.

In conclusion, the interpretations of the judiciary reaffirm its role as a protector of children's rights and safety in the digital age. The judgment's emphasis on strict consequences for possessing child pornography for personal use sends a clear message that online child abuse will not be tolerated. The judiciary's proactive approach in adapting legal principles to address emerging challenges is crucial for maintaining a safe environment for children in the online space²⁶⁰.

India is classified as a developing nation, and it is evident that the prevalent socio-economic conditions within the society play a significant role in the various forms of child abuse. The issue of child abuse is intricately intertwined with various socio-cultural factors. Both high and low levels of literacy are equally influential in contributing to the issue of child maltreatment. The Government of India has implemented several measures to address the escalating issue of child abuse throughout society. Despite legislation aimed at safeguarding children from abuse, the problem persists. The present moment necessitates that the government of India undertake revisions to the existing legislation about child abuse to incorporate clauses that enforce severe penalties. In addition to these factors, it is imperative to recognize that law in isolation is insufficient in effectively mitigating the escalating problem of child abuse unless it is accompanied by robust support and engagement from the broader societal framework. There is a need for a transformation in societal attitudes and behaviors towards children. Individuals' cognitive orientation can be altered by providing education and cultural practices that emphasize values. Enhancing children's capacity, particularly in the context of abusive conditions, is paramount. Additionally, raising awareness among school-age children about the various manifestations of child abuse

²⁶⁰ Vyas K. Rathaur et al., 'Child Abuse: A Social Evil in Indian Perspective', 10 *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 110 (2021) https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_1862_20

is crucial²⁶¹. The present study examines the alterations in parental and societal perceptions and attitudes toward children, specifically focusing on enhancing comprehension of child abuse.

4.1.2 Courts' Observations and Judiciary Guidelines

The study investigates specific regulations together with transformative judicial decisions that determine present-day Indian governmental operations. The analysis aims to deliver an extensive report about the current possibilities of protecting minors from online sexual exploitation (OCSE) threats in the basis of the idea here.

The Administrative Framework That Functions in Multiple Dimensions

The administrative agencies need to transition from their current method of monitoring activities through passive monitoring²⁶². The requirement needs to be fulfilled through a collaborative effort with law enforcement agencies. The Ministry of Home Affairs has approved the Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children program which operates under the abbreviation CCPWC²⁶³. The initiative establishes its core activities through the internet portal www.cybercrime.gov.in. The portal enables users to create reports in real-time through two reporting options which include anonymous reporting and tracking-based reporting. The administrative institutions work together with the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre and local state police units to create effective preventive measures for their operations²⁶⁴. The current situation demonstrates the success of cyber forensic laboratories which include the I4C-supported facilities at Jaipur. The laboratories utilize artificial intelligence for hybrid evidence analysis which enables them to handle large amounts of digital evidence during the triage process²⁶⁵.

Transformative precedents in the judicial system

²⁶¹ Gwen Fernandes et al., 'Prevalence of Child Maltreatment in India and Its Association with Gender, Urbanisation and Policy: A Rapid Review and Meta-Analysis Protocol', 11 *BMJ Open* e044983 (2021) <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-044983>

²⁶² *Alakh Alok Srivastava v. Union of India*, (2018) 17 SCC 291.

²⁶³ *Avnish Bajaj v. State (NCT of Delhi)*, (2005) 3 PLR 565.

²⁶⁴ *Regina v. Hicklin*, (1868) LR 3 QB 360.

²⁶⁵ The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 (Act 32 of 2012), ss. 19 & 21

The Indian legal system now functions in its new role of safeguarding children's rights instead of its previous duty to administer punishments²⁶⁶. The legal system now uses its established principles to combat crimes which require advanced technological methods for execution. The protection of victims in the digital era follows essential principles which developed through important court cases.

The *Alakh Alok Srivastava v. Union of India* case served as a landmark judgment which examined the biased implementation of the POCSO Act across the country. The Supreme Court mandated that specialized courts should be set up throughout all districts which handle more than one hundred cases. The courts handle all POCSO matters while using child-friendly methods which include private trials to protect the victim's privacy rights.

The case of *Avnish Bajaj v. State* established a crucial turning point for determining responsibility among online platforms. The court ruling established that online platform executives face prosecution under Section 292 of the Indian Penal Code and Section 67 of the Information Technology Act for displaying forbidden content.

The Supreme Court of India established operational procedural guidelines in *Sakshi v. Union of India* which protect child victims from experiencing additional distress during court hearings. The rules require screen installation to block the victim's view of the offender while all cross-examination questions need to be documented and submitted to the Presiding Officer. The *P.G. Sam Infant Jones v. State* case demonstrated that judicial systems must establish regulations to address the hazardous situations which arise from deepfake technology and AI-based exploitation. The court system established this requirement in this case²⁶⁷.

A critical reinforcement of the legal standards for 'digital possession' was established in the conviction of *Anurag Sharma (2025/2026)*²⁶⁸ by the Rouse Avenue Special Court, Delhi. In this case, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) recovered 183 files of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) from the accused's hard disk. The defense argued

²⁶⁶ The Information Technology Act, 2000 (Act 21 of 2000), ss. 67, 67A & 67B.

²⁶⁷ The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (Act 45 of 2023).

²⁶⁸ *CBI v. Anurag Sharma*, Case No. SC No. 24/2016, Judgment dated June 11, 2025 (Conviction) and Sentencing 2025/26, Rouse Avenue District Courts, New Delhi

that the prosecution failed to recover destination IP addresses or prove active transmission. However, the Court dismissed these contentions, ruling that **Section 67B(b) of the IT Act** does not mandate the recovery of destination IPs.

The Court held that the structured storage and preservation of 183 files in a private 'E-Drive' provided sufficient 'Digital Trail' evidence to prove the intent to browse, collect, and possess. This judgment—coupled with the Supreme Court's 2024/25 observation in *Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish*²⁶⁹—clarifies that 'Digital Possession' is legally equivalent to physical abuse in terms of criminal liability. For the present study, this precedent is vital as it validates the researcher's focus on **Forensic Evidence** as the primary tool for overcoming the 'faceless' nature of cyber-exploitation. It establishes that the mere act of intentional downloading and 'storing' constitutes a complete offense, regardless of whether the material was further distributed²⁷⁰.

Detailed Instructions for the Protection and Preservation of Digital Evidence

The two elements which determine legal process efficiency are digital evidence management and operational procedure compliance. The guidelines mandate digital evidence collection procedures to maintain the original state of collected evidence until its final analysis²⁷¹. All procedures related to evidence acquisition and extraction and evidence storage require complete operational tracking which must be recorded and stored for court examination. The POCSO Act defines reporting requirements through its Sections 19 and 21 which require all people who discover sexual offenses against minors to report these crimes. The law requires all individuals to report all cases of sexual assault against minors who they become aware of. A six-month prison sentence represents one of the potential criminal penalties which you face if you do not follow the law.

²⁶⁹ *Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish*, 2024 INSC 725 (Supreme Court of India), where the Court held that 'watching' or 'storing' CSAM is a punishable offense under Section 15 of POCSO and Section 67B of the IT Act, overturning previous contrary views.

²⁷⁰ Karnataka High Court in *Binoj P.J. v. State of Karnataka* (March 14, 2026), affirming that possession in a mobile phone constitutes a prima facie offense under Section 67B IT Act.

²⁷¹ Ministry of Home Affairs, 'Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme Guidelines', Government of India.

The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules 2021 require social media companies to protect their users throughout their services. The law now requires intermediaries to remove unlawful content when they receive official notification from a judicial body or a government body. The intermediaries need to develop a strong complaint resolution system which includes specific timeframes for handling complaints.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) maintain vital operations through their work in advocacy and rehabilitation activities. NGOs use multiple methods to achieve their goals. The prevention and education process requires workshops which teach parents and teachers to recognize early signs of abuse through changes in behavior and unexplained gifts²⁷². The process of providing complete support includes giving children immediate access to counseling and legal help and socio-economic rehabilitation services which help them return to society after experiencing exploitation. The community empowerment process has been enhanced through NGO-led awareness programs which established a reporting culture in Jaipur leading to greater court effectiveness in handling child safety cases.

Prospects as they are right now and the strategic path forward

India suffers from serious operational deficiencies because its front-line law enforcement personnel lack specialized training and because digital evidence processing methods are not standardized. The POCSO Act of 2012 and the IT Act of 2000 created a strong legislative framework in India, yet substantial operational deficiencies continue to exist²⁷³. The development of "participative digital jurisprudence" needs to begin from the present moment through mandatory annual Cyber Child Safety Reports which administrative authorities must file to advance their work with national dashboards. The judicial system needs two main developments to maintain its effectiveness against online sexual exploitation which require organizations to create continuous digital awareness programs for their personnel and to implement an Integrated National Cyber Protection Network (INCYP-NET) system.

²⁷² National Cyber Security Policy, 2013, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

²⁷³ Law Commission of India, Report No. 283: Age of Consent under POCSO Act, 2012 (2023).

Mandatory Expedited Trials and the 'Bail vs. Social Security' Doctrine

The judiciary's approach to organized child exploitation saw a paradigm shift through the Supreme Court's intervention in *Pinki v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2025 INSC 482)*²⁷⁴ and its subsequent compliance monitoring in **February 2026**²⁷⁵. In this landmark ruling, the Court set aside multiple bail orders granted to accused members of an interstate trafficking racket, holding that in cases of grave and organized crimes against children, 'societal interest' must outweigh the individual liberty of the accused. The Court criticized the 'callous' approach of High Courts in granting bail based on parity or lack of direct recovery, asserting that the organized nature of such rackets creates a high risk of witness intimidation and abscondence.

Significantly, the Court issued a **National Mandate in August 2025**, directing all High Courts to ensure that trials related to child trafficking and POCSO are completed within **six months** on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, as of **March 2026**, the Court has directed Trial Courts to pass 'Interim Compensation' orders under the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023**, even before the final verdict, to ensure the victim's immediate rehabilitation. This judicial development is crucial for the current study as it provides a legal solution to the 'Delayed Justice' hurdle identified by respondents in Jaipur. It transforms the judicial role from a passive adjudicator to an active monitor of the child's right to a swift trial and socio-economic restoration²⁷⁶.

4.1.3 Institutional Accountability and Digital Hygiene Mandates (2026)

A significant administrative shift occurred in **February 2026**, when the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Ministry of Education issued a joint directive updating the '**Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools.**'²⁷⁷

²⁷⁴ *Pinki v. The State of Uttar Pradesh*, Criminal Appeal No. 1927 of 2025 (Supreme Court of India, Decided April 15, 2025)

²⁷⁵ Miscellaneous Application No. 729 of 2025 in CrI.A. No. 1927/2025, Orders dated December 2, 2025, and February 26, 2026 (Directing High Courts to issue administrative circulars for 6-month trial completion).

²⁷⁶ Section 396, **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023** (Replacing Section 357A CrPC), read with the *Pinki* judgment directives on mandatory victim compensation.

²⁷⁷ Joint Directive of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) and the Ministry of Education, "*Updated Manual on Safety and Security of Children in Schools,*" (PIB Delhi, February 13, 2026). Available at: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2227447> (last accessed March 18, 2026).

Recognizing that digital spaces often act as the primary medium for grooming, the 2026 guidelines now mandate '**Cyber Forensic Capacity Building**' for school heads. This policy transition moves beyond physical safety to encompass '**Digital Hygiene,**' requiring schools to implement a structured code of ethics for teacher-student digital interactions.

This introduces a critical layer of institutional accountability. Under the **March 2026** Supreme Court observations and the reinforced **Mission Vatsalya**²⁷⁸ framework, educational institutions are now required to monitor official digital communication channels to prevent 'untoward incidents.' Failure by school management to report suspicious digital behavior now attracts the strict invocation of **Section 21 of the POCSO Act** (Failure to Report). This administrative evolution directly supports the researcher's findings in Jaipur, where the absence of formal school digital policies was identified as a major vulnerability. By codifying 'Digital Hygiene,'²⁷⁹ the 2026 mandate seeks to close the 'Administrative Deficit' by transforming schools into proactive sentries in the digital child protection ecosystem.

4.2 NGO's and the Child Protection

In the Indian context, women and children are theoretically granted equal rights; nonetheless, a pervasive violation of these rights exists, leading to various forms of crime perpetrated against them. India has been grappling with this critical issue for an extended period. The growth and development of individuals are negatively impacted by their preoccupation and fear resulting from the escalating levels of violence. Despite the nation's economic development, many regions continue to experience a lack of recognition and respect, resulting in their marginalization and stigmatization. Many news updates about the abhorrent acts committed against women and children are exposed daily.

²⁷⁸ Ministry of Women and Child Development, "*Mission Vatsalya: Operational Guidelines for Institutional Accountability and School Safety*," (March 2026 Update). Also refer to Section 21, Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 (providing for punishment for failure to report or record a case).

²⁷⁹ *In Re: Protection of Children from Online Sexual Exploitation*, Supreme Court of India, Suo Motu Writ Petition (Crl.) No. 1/2026 (Oral Observations/Directions dated March 11, 2026). See also, *State of Uttar Pradesh v. Anurudh*, (2026) INSC 47 (discussing the interpretation gap and judicial red lines in POCSO application).

Meaning of Social Worker:

Social workers try to improve the lives of individuals, families, groups, and communities by addressing immediate needs and long-term goals. Social workers serve various clients but emphasize the marginalized, oppressed, and economically disadvantaged²⁸⁰.

Only by giving do men become wealthy. Those who serve others well are rewarded handsomely. A career in social work could involve doing hands-on work to help people and families overcome various challenges. The specific tasks performed by social workers vary from one field to the next. Let us use child welfare workers as examples; they spend their days interacting with foster kids, biological parents, and the juvenile justice system.

Child Protective Services (CPS) Caseworkers can take children from abusive or neglectful households and place them in the state's custody. They act this way due to clear signs of neglect, abuse, danger, and insecurity. Several clients from lower socioeconomic backgrounds must deal with poverty, homelessness, and abuse. On the other hand, Permanency case workers deal exclusively with kids and teens in long-term foster care. They look for foster families or adoptive parents for their clients' kids.

Meaning of NGO

A non-governmental organization (NGO) is a charity to make the world a better place. It stays true to its name by bringing together those who want to see India progress and give back to the community that has supported us. Even the most ambitious endeavors have to start somewhere small. Our goal is to address challenges like poverty and mental health stigma that hinder the development of our nation²⁸¹.

Considering India's status as the largest democracy, the largest country by land area, and the most populous nation on Earth, the importance of the organization as a concept, as a dynamic means that ensures the concern of the citizens of this country to derive protection in terms of the rule of law, can hardly be overemphasized. When it comes to

²⁸⁰ Nagendrappa & Shripad Kulkarni, 'Role of NGOs in Protecting Child Rights', 8 IJRTI 295 (2023) <https://www.ijrti.org/papers/IJRTI2305047.pdf>

²⁸¹ Ibid.

safeguarding the rights of its citizens, the Indian constitution provides some of the most unusual and valuable guarantees anywhere in the world. NGOs in India rely on these rights, which include the guiding principles of state policy, to aid in enforcing citizens' rights.

Their goals are to improve the economy, eliminate child labor, and boost the morale and self-esteem of society's underprivileged members. In addition to helping people figure out what they are good at and where they could use improvement, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also create environments that foster development on a societal level.

Our research demonstrates that child protection groups do a wide variety of things, from prevention to response to rehabilitation to reintegration, despite being informal and voluntary. The implications of these pursuits on kids are examined further.

Community-based child protection groups

When it comes to preventing sexual abuse and exploitation of children, community-based child protection groups are invaluable. Their work includes campaigns to educate the public, shift public opinion, and provide resources to low-income families. Organizations like NGOs help support the formation of these organizations, which then go into communities to address safety issues²⁸². The primary goal of these organizations is to educate the public on the importance of children's involvement, children's rights, and child protection. They help youngsters become more resilient by teaching them how to cope with adversity and watch for their safety.

One of its primary functions is to break down barriers and encourage communities to discuss difficult issues like sexual abuse and exploitation. The complex interaction of cultural attitudes, power relations, and socioeconomic settings makes these conversations essential. Community-based child protection groups have emerged to fill the void left by the failure of more conventional systems.

²⁸² Vyas K. Rathaur et al., 'Child Abuse: A Social Evil in Indian Perspective', 10 *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 110 (2021) https://doi.org/10.4103/jfmpe.jfmpe_1862_20

Adults in the community gain a better understanding of their role in child safety as a result of participation in these organizations. By spreading information, they mobilize communities to act, such as providing financial aid to educate needy children. These organizations also involve kids head-on, teaching them about their rights and how to stay safe. Children with more control over their lives can better look out for themselves and their peers.

Changes in individual behavior are a direct result of influential community preventative activities. In Nigeria, for instance, females who attended the child safety committee's awareness programs changed their behavior to reduce potential dangers. Although these campaigns have been proven effective in changing minds, widespread social transformation still needs improvement²⁸³. Long-term mobilization by traditional authorities, parents, teachers, students, and other stakeholders is required to achieve this goal.

These organizations are also essential in connecting child safety with social security and economic stability issues. They aim to reduce sexual abuse and exploitation by addressing the underlying causes of poverty and unemployment. Targeted family support and social protection activities are advocated for and implemented after identifying vulnerable households and children. In Bangladesh, for example, an organization helps mothers in prostitution find other ways to make a living so that their children do not have to resort to prostitution themselves²⁸⁴.

Community-based child protection groups serve as change agents, raising consciousness, shifting mindsets, and strengthening at-risk families. Their all-encompassing strategy helps with pressing problems and gives locals the tools to safeguard youngsters in advance.

Focusing on child sexual abuse and exploitation

²⁸³ Kazi Abusaleh, Casmir Obinna Odo, Perfect Elikplim Kobla Ametepe & Uche Louisa Nwatu, 'Ubuntu Model as a Child Protection Mechanism: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh', in *The Ubuntu Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives* (International Federation of Social Workers, 2023).

²⁸⁴ Priyanka & Vivek Kumar, 'An Analysis upon Protection and Prevention of Child Maltreatment/Neglect in India: Safeguarding Child Rights and Building Non-violent Communities', 13 *Journal of Advanced & Scholarly Researches Allied Education* 162 (2017).

Child trafficking, exploitative child labor, child marriage, gender-based violence, child prostitution, sexual abuse and exploitation in schools, and sexual abuse within the family are some areas that community-based child protection groups can work on. Some groups have claimed that sexual abuse and exploitation are challenging to address. This could be due to the emotional weight of making a formal report or involving the legal system, as well as the societal ramifications regarding attitude and stigma. Some community-based organizations, however, are dedicated to safeguarding kids against sexual abuse and exploitation.

Child trafficking for domestic labor and fraudulent marriage, which can lead to sexual abuse, is an issue that anti-trafficking committees in India are attempting to address²⁸⁵.⁴ They have been effective in several areas, including prevention efforts, public awareness campaigns about traffickers and what constitutes trafficking, identifying and supporting particularly vulnerable children, tracking traffickers' movements, and promoting universal school enrollment among children. Youth involvement has been crucial to the development of these groups. One novel strategy for preventing trafficking is to rehabilitate former traffickers and include them in community prevention committees. Community groups have experienced more significant difficulties in their response efforts, particularly how to combat prejudice and discrimination.

Selected women in West Africa have received training and support to become community-level advocates for ending sexual violence and exploitation. These ladies are proving their ability to respond to specific instances, determine what the child needs and wants, make appropriate referrals, and help the child practically when no other resources are available.

Prevention

Many of the activities that community-based child protection groups undertake are aimed at preventing sexual abuse and exploitation:

²⁸⁵ Michael Edwards, 'NGO Performance—What Breeds Success? New Evidence from South Asia', 27 *World Development* 361 (2019).

- ✓ Awareness raising and community mobilization on children's rights, child protection and care issues, and the benefits of children's participation
- ✓ Increasing children's life skills
- ✓ Monitoring and acting as watchdogs for child protection
- ✓ Identifying vulnerable children and families
- ✓ Support to caregivers and members of the extended kin network around positive parenting practices
- ✓ Supporting the community in livelihood, social protection, and education provision
- ✓ I am advocating local and national governments for better service delivery, policy improvements, and effective implementation of laws and programs for child protection.

This section looks at activities around awareness raising, livelihood support, and protection for children on the move and how these affect the protection of children.

Increasing awareness, improving attitudes, and changing behavior

Awareness-raising is one of the critical roles of any community-based child protection group, and it is essential for mobilizing communities, including children, to identify, acknowledge, and address local protection issues as part of prevention work. Facilitating communities to start talking freely about sexual exploitation and abuse, which are often considered taboo or very sensitive, is crucial.

Many elements, including the social, economic, and political climate, have been linked to sexual abuse and exploitation. Cultural ideas and norms are associated with a wide range of variables, such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status, and HIV/AIDS ²⁸⁶. Community members' perspectives and knowledge can benefit from

²⁸⁶ Brandy Bang et al., *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (2013)

both the act of forming community-based child protection organizations and the direct awareness-raising activity that such groups afterward perform.

One of the most essential things that community-based child protection groups do is raise awareness about protecting children from sexual abuse and violence so that victims and their families know where to turn for support. Community views and the reputational cost to the children and families impacted may also play a role in why perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation of minors often go unpunished due to inadequate police and judicial systems and weak channels for reporting and resolving cases. Some children who have been abused or exploited themselves or who have witnessed such behavior in others may be reluctant to come forward for a variety of reasons, including shame, fear of retaliation, a lack of trust in family, community, and institutional assistance, and a refusal to recognize the behavior as abusive.

Therefore, community-based child protection groups have the potential to serve as a community hub where children and parents can go to report abuse in a safe environment, where they can get help, where they can find a group to provide response and rehabilitation support, and where they can work to resolve cases through formal reporting (when it is in the child's best interests to do so) or an appropriate local response.

Establishing community-based child protection groups significantly impacts raising adult understanding of the importance of protecting children. Residents of one village in Myanmar (Burma) shared how discussions about child protection had inspired them to look out for the well-being of all children, not just their own, by helping a child's family pay for school when they could not afford it. A committee member for protecting children stated, "In the past, people did not consider it was their business if a youngster did not go to school. However, they now do and communicate with all parties concerned to ensure the child's enrollment in school²⁸⁷.

Communities can be more vigilant about sexual exploitation and abuse if they are actively engaged at the grass-roots level. The community can benefit significantly from

²⁸⁷ Andy West, *Children on the Move in South-East Asia: Why Child Protection Systems Are Needed* (Save the Children UK, London, 2008).

the efforts of a mobilized and informed organization dedicated to prevention. In West Africa, for instance, local protection groups are conducting prevention work in villages to assist children in finding alternative solutions to their difficulties rather than risky migration. These organizations also equip young people with the necessary resources to make informed migration decisions ²⁸⁸.

The importance of children understanding their rights cannot be overstated. Children less likely to be mistreated and exploited have access to information, allowing them to form and express their opinions and make their own choices (such as where to live or whom to marry). Children who understand their rights and the importance of child protection can help identify at-risk youth and provide them with resources and guidance.

Community preventive work is crucial in equipping children with the tools they need to better defend themselves without placing all the onus of safety on them. Children themselves play a vital part in community-based child protection groups by:

- ✓ Awareness-raising activities with children to highlight risks in the local community and find practical ways to minimize them
- ✓ Informing children of how to identify potential abusers in a community
- ✓ Working with local social workers to identify the information needed by children and finding engaging ways to get messages across to children
- ✓ Highlighting places that children can go to for help, including an accessible reporting procedure
- ✓ We support life-skills training around sexual relationships and HIV and AIDS and lead resilience-building activities.

This kind of prevention effort can have a considerable effect, especially if it causes people to stop engaging in dangerous habits. For instance, girls in Gobirawa, Nigeria, faced danger when they left their communities to sell goods far from home. The local

²⁸⁸ Clare Feinstein & Claire O’Kane, *Children’s and Adolescents’ Participation and Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation* (2009).

child protection committee held seminars to educate the community on the dangers of this activity. As a result, some girls have begun selling outside of their homes and working in pairs to reduce their vulnerability²⁸⁹.

Evidence shows that community-based prevention can positively change community members' attitudes and behaviors. However, it is also clear that there are many obstacles to overcome before these effects spread. In many of the cases we examined, the influence of shifting views is still concentrated amongst the community-based group's participants. It is more challenging to change the ideas and customs of an entire community. This requires effective and long-term mobilization, which involves talking to those in positions of authority, including local leaders, parents, teachers, and children.

4.3 Social Protection and Livelihood Support

Poverty and unemployment are two factors that have been linked to sexual abuse and exploitation. Therefore, there is a strong connection between child welfare, social security, and family assistance programs²⁹⁰.

By providing social protection to the most vulnerable children and households and targeted family support, community-based child protection groups can significantly prevent sexual abuse and exploitation. In Bangladesh, for instance, a community-based child protection group is striving to provide women in prostitution with alternate means of support in order to reduce the likelihood that their daughters will follow in their footsteps into prostitution.

When identifying local protection threats and the children most susceptible to sexual abuse and exploitation, community groups, including children, are frequently best suited to do so. The most at-risk children in Mozambique have been the focus of proposals and grant applications from local community groups. The awards have given communities the freedom to make their own decisions and have sparked creativity in prevention programs specifically targeting at-risk youth, such as those that aim to equip

²⁸⁹ Nicola Anne Jones et al., *Promoting Synergies Between Child Protection and Social Protection in Nigeria* (2012).

²⁹⁰ Federal Trade Commission, *Children's Online Privacy Protection Rule Amendments*, 16 C.F.R. § 312 (2025).

them with marketable skills, meet their basic needs, and enroll them in school. Committees comprised of children have been essential in deciding which projects receive funding, and they have the authority to reject any idea that they feel will not better the lives of children.

4.3.1 Response, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration

To effectively respond to the needs of children who have been victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, it is necessary to have access to a wide range of resources, including legal aid. Community-based child protection groups, however, are often the initial point of contact for individual child protection cases in places where resources and referral systems are lacking²⁹¹.

There is evidence that community groups are already assisting individual cases on several concerns, including abuse, trafficking, and child labor, and that they can give a range of emotional and practical support in the absence of professional services. Their primary pursuits include:

- ✓ identifying vulnerable children and families, often through children’s clubs or young people’s organizations, which are better placed to reach out to children and initiate actions to address abuse
- ✓ identifying locations or borders where children are at high risk of sexual assault or trafficking
- ✓ setting up practical referral groups appropriate to the context
- ✓ Referring cases to available local services (sexual and reproductive health services, other medical, legal, judicial, psychosocial, etc.)
- ✓ providing targeted, contextualized, and individual care to children affected by sexual abuse and exploitation through mediation, counseling, informal education provision, and other practical actions

²⁹¹ European Parliament, Digital Services Act Modification Report on Child Protection, COM (2025) 879 final.

- ✓ They facilitate local resolution of abuse and exploitation cases where appropriate and in the child's best interests.

Sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and the stigma attached to reporting such abuse, is a complex issue. Community groups report that they find intervening in such issues a challenging task, which requires more significant support and training for committee members than some are receiving. In addition, there is a broader concern that members of community groups do not always know how to respond in the best interests of children to support cases of exploitation and abuse. There are several challenges facing community volunteers in terms of their response:

- ✓ lack of trust in, or recognition of, the community group from other community members
- ✓ A community may be divided by ethnicity, history, culture, or tradition, making it challenging to mobilize groups together
- ✓ maintaining confidentiality and reducing stigma
- ✓ assessing whether or not it is in the best interests of a child and their family to formally report a case to the police or local leader
- ✓ assessing whether local resolution of cases is in the best interests of the child, and opposing the traditional community practice where it is not
- ✓ a lack of local services to which children can be referred for help and support
- ✓ the presence of the perpetrator within a community, and the potential power imbalance
- ✓ the time and commitment required of an individual volunteer to adequately support and see through a complex case without financial or managerial-level support
- ✓ Lack of psychosocial support for community volunteers who themselves have to deal with cases that may be upsetting.

Community members face unique obstacles when attempting to act on behalf of a kid who has been sexually abused or exploited when the abuser is a family member or even another youngster. In many societies, the household is considered an autonomous entity outside which outsiders have no business meddling. Furthermore, there can be significant family-level denial that sexual abuse or exploitation of the child is occurring.

When a child has no one else to turn to for help, it can be difficult for the community to step in and protect them from the perpetrator without putting them in even more dangerous situations (such as homelessness or institutionalization). Volunteers helping a troubled child in their community may face threats of violence or discrimination from community members, endangering their safety and that of the child.

In Angola, for instance, a child protection committee's intervention resulted in a grandpa being sentenced to eight years in prison for assaulting his granddaughter, with no ill effects on the girl herself. Professionals in the field of social work face difficulties in overcoming these obstacles. We have found. However, communities can take on this role if given the necessary resources through our work with community-based child protection groups. Peer support and refresher training on sexual exploitation and abuse are also part of this type of care, in addition to visits from professional and qualified employees (agency staff or statutory services, when applicable).

- ✓ Community-based child protection groups can also support the rehabilitation and response of children who experience sexual exploitation and abuse by:
- ✓ supporting activities to build resilience
- ✓ supporting the rebuilding of livelihoods
- ✓ undertaking family tracing and assessment
- ✓ mediating in the community for the successful reintegration of children
- ✓ We are providing follow-up and ongoing support to reintegrated children.

There is some evidence that this type of support is adequate. For example, in one project in Sierra Leone, the community welfare committee supported income-generation projects for different groups of beneficiaries: vulnerable girls at risk of sexual

exploitation and abuse, girls engaged in commercial sex work, boys and girls from children's clubs, and child heads of household. As a result of the support, 47 out of 55 girls who had previously been engaged in commercial sex work could quit, and half of the participants returned to education²⁹². By involving different groups of children, the stigmatization of children involved in the project was also mitigated.

4.3.2 NGO's Approach in Addressing Online Child Sexual Abuse

Online child sexual abuse poses a severe and growing threat to the well-being of children worldwide. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a pivotal role in addressing this issue through a multi-faceted approach involving prevention, victim support, legal advocacy, training, and collaboration with law enforcement. In this detailed note, we will delve into the strategies employed by NGOs to handle cases of online child sexual abuse.

Prevention and Awareness:

Preventing online child sexual abuse begins with raising awareness about the risks and educating the community on protective measures. NGOs often initiate educational programs, workshops, and awareness campaigns to reach parents, caregivers, teachers, and children.

Educational programs aim to equip individuals with the knowledge to recognize potential threats online, understand safe internet practices, and promote open communication between parents and children. Workshops conducted in schools and communities provide a platform to discuss the importance of online safety and the potential dangers of sharing personal information on the internet.

NGOs distribute informational materials, brochures, and pamphlets to homes, schools, and community centers. These resources offer practical advice on monitoring online activities, recognizing signs of abuse, and reporting suspicious behavior. By fostering a culture of awareness, NGOs create a foundation for preventing online child sexual abuse before it occurs.

²⁹² Karen Wells, 'Child Saving or Child Rights: Depictions of Children in International NGO Campaigns on Conflict', 2 *Journal of Children and Media* 235 (2008).

Victim Support and Counseling:

In the unfortunate event that a child becomes a victim of online sexual abuse, NGOs play a crucial role in providing immediate and ongoing support. Establishing helplines and online support services is a common practice to ensure that victims and their families have a confidential and accessible outlet for seeking help.

Trained counselors, often volunteers with expertise in child psychology and trauma, offer emotional support to victims. This support is not only for the child but extends to their families, recognizing the ripple effect of such incidents. Counseling sessions help victims cope with the trauma, address feelings of shame or guilt, and rebuild their lives.

NGOs may collaborate with mental health professionals and institutions to provide specialized counseling services. By offering a holistic approach to recovery, NGOs contribute significantly to the healing process of victims and their families.

Legal Advocacy

NGOs engage in legal advocacy to ensure that the rights of victims are protected and that perpetrators face appropriate consequences for their actions. Collaboration with legal experts and institutions is essential to navigate the complex legal landscape surrounding online child sexual abuse.

Advocacy efforts often include pushing for stronger legislation, stricter penalties for offenders, and improved legal frameworks that address the challenges posed by the online environment. NGOs may actively participate in the drafting of policies and legislation related to child protection, leveraging their expertise and insights gained from working directly with victims.

Additionally, NGOs offer legal assistance to victims and their families, guiding them through legal processes, court hearings, and providing support in filing complaints. By advocating for legal reforms and supporting victims within the legal system, NGOs contribute to the broader fight against online child sexual abuse.

Training and Capacity Building:

To enhance the overall response to online child sexual abuse, NGOs invest in training and capacity-building initiatives. This involves equipping various stakeholders, including educators, law enforcement officials, and community leaders, with the knowledge and skills necessary to prevent, identify, and respond to cases of abuse.

Training sessions for educators focus on integrating online safety into the curriculum and recognizing signs of abuse among students. Law enforcement training emphasizes the unique challenges of investigating online crimes against children and ensuring that officers are well-versed in digital forensics and cybercrime investigation techniques.

NGOs also offer certification programs and workshops for community leaders, empowering them to raise awareness in their respective communities and act as advocates for child protection. By building the capacity of these key stakeholders, NGOs contribute to creating a network of informed and proactive individuals working collectively against online child sexual abuse.

Collaboration with Law Enforcement:

Collaboration with law enforcement agencies is a cornerstone of NGOs' efforts to combat online child sexual abuse. NGOs act as intermediaries between victims and law enforcement, facilitating the reporting of cases and providing crucial information for investigations.

NGOs often establish formal partnerships with local, national, and international law enforcement agencies to streamline communication and coordination. Information sharing mechanisms are put in place to ensure that relevant data and evidence are shared promptly, aiding in the identification and apprehension of offenders.

In some cases, NGOs provide training for law enforcement personnel, bridging the gap between the evolving landscape of online crimes and traditional investigative methods. By fostering collaboration, NGOs contribute to a more effective and responsive system for addressing online child sexual abuse.

Technology and Innovation:

Given the evolving nature of online threats, NGOs actively engage with technology and innovation to stay ahead of perpetrators and safeguard children. This involves partnering with tech companies, developing reporting tools, and advocating for safer online platforms.

NGOs collaborate with technology experts to develop user-friendly reporting apps that empower users to report suspicious behavior or content. By working directly with social media companies and online platforms, NGOs advocate for the implementation of safety features, content moderation policies, and robust reporting mechanisms to create a safer online environment for children.

Staying abreast of technological advancements, NGOs also contribute to the development of tools for monitoring online spaces and identifying potential risks. By leveraging technology, NGOs enhance their ability to prevent and respond to online child sexual abuse effectively.

4.4 Inference from NGO's Work

Evidence shows that community-based child protection organizations can improve child safety and well-being. However, we have learned much about how to aid these communities best. When the following best practices are used, they become more efficient.

4.4.1 Supporting Community Empowerment

Organizations, agencies, and governments that promote community mobilization should aim to create permanent structures that can handle child protection issues in the long term rather than short-term groups that rely on a small number of dedicated volunteers. The preexisting impromptu constructions in the area should be used whenever possible. While forming such an organization may be difficult and time-consuming, the best results can be reached by including and empowering the local community. Our experience suggests that community-based child protection groups are

more sustainable when owned and driven by the community ²⁹³. There are some excellent practices which support this:

- ✓ A gradual and sustained period of mobilization that allows communities to build ownership of protection issues. One-off or short-term mobilization activities are found to be less effective.
- ✓ The development of groups and attitudes that embed child participation in community protection.
- ✓ They are facilitating community members to identify priority local protection issues and map vulnerable groups of families and children, rather than suggesting or imposing them externally, based on an organization's priorities.
- ✓ They are facilitating community members to identify local solutions and map local services and referral pathways.
- ✓ Ensuring staff mobilizing communities around child protection are well trained and know how to promote community empowerment rather than their own organization's priorities.

4.4.2 Sustainable and Coordinated Support

It is not simple to decide if, how much, or from whom community groups should receive material or financial help. There is an argument for seed funding to help community groups get started and show results, which are crucial for getting people involved. However, there is also evidence that material support can cause communities to become reliant on an outside agency and that when that agency pulls its funding, communities may experience a decline in membership or even disband.

Although protection committees in Côte d'Ivoire had been instrumental in reaching over 3,000 vulnerable children, it was feared that they would not be able to continue doing so once funding ceased from Save the Children. Additionally, some committee

²⁹³ Tracey Hewett et al., *Uncertain Futures: Children Seeking Asylum in Wales* (2005).

members believed that they were acting more as agents of Save the Children than of their communities²⁹⁴.

However, evidence shows that organizations need to coordinate to make judgments regarding financial support for community volunteers, especially in a humanitarian environment where numerous agencies are operating nearby²⁹⁵. In addition to fueling competition between community-based child protection groups, the varying quality of support offered by NGOs has contributed to the widespread belief that these groups work for an outside organization rather than on behalf of the community itself. Our findings point to two strategies for reducing reliance and increasing long-term assistance:

- ✓ To lobby for financial support from the government rather than private organizations. The success of this on a local level in South Africa, India, and Sierra Leone raises questions about its scalability and long-term viability.
- ✓ By providing committees with livelihood support to help them raise their funds, by teaching community groups skills that can generate income, and by supporting the identification of other local support, such as private sector resources, we can help them find and mobilize the resources they need to accomplish their goals.

4.4.3 'Not to Harm' is a Key Priority

This principle is of apparent and essential importance. However, in the case of sexual exploitation and abuse, it becomes even more critical and tough to ensure that community-based child protection groups do not harm the children they want to safeguard.

The scope and depth of the work done by community protection groups to protect children is dependent on the members' availability, motivation, skills, and time commitment. As a result, it can take time to ensure that community initiatives are

²⁹⁴ Theresa Tuwor & Marie-Antoinette Sossou, 'Gender Discrimination and Education in West Africa: Strategies for Maintaining Girls in School', 12 *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 363 (2008).

²⁹⁵ Emily Baughan & Juliano Fiori, *Save the Children, the Humanitarian Project, and the Politics of Solidarity: Reviving Dorothy Buxton's Vision*, 39 *DISASTERS* s129 (2015).

effective and suitable. It is not surprising that well-intentioned actions can have unintended or adverse effects, given the difficulties faced by community protection groups (typically comprised of volunteers) and the lack of resources for training and support:

- ✓ In India, a 15-year-old girl faced social shame and challenges after a child protection committee intervened after she was spotted chatting to a boy.
- ✓ For fear of exploitation and abuse, the elders of one Nigerian town forbade their children from traveling to a nearby dam in search of work. But because of this, 18 lads who had been making a living by scavenging the river bank for sand were compelled to discontinue their employment and were left jobless and without resources to find other work ²⁹⁶.

These examples highlight the importance of community-based child protection group members being clear about their role and understanding the need for confidentiality, respect, and sensitivity. In order to ensure that community interventions are always in children's best interests and to mitigate the effects of committees' possible lack of professional skills and knowledge, the following good practices can help overcome these challenges where communities are attempting to respond to sexual abuse and exploitation ²⁹⁷:

Whether through an official criminal records system or conversation with community leaders, other community members, and children, all volunteers should have their backgrounds checked to ensure their commitment to child protection.

- ✓ It is formalized, high-quality preparation and training for community-based protection organizations tailored to the area's needs. Continuous, skill-specific, and individually tailored training is preferable to a one-and-done seminar.

²⁹⁶ Lynne Miller Franco et al., 'Evidence Base for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS in Low Prevalence and Concentrated Epidemic Countries: Applicability to Programming Guidance from High Prevalence Countries', 21 *AIDS Care* 49 (2009).

²⁹⁷ Marta Zarzycka, 'Save the Child: Photographed Faces and Affective Transactions in NGO Child Sponsoring Programs', 23 *European Journal of Women's Studies* 28 (2016).

- ✓ Community members will be better able to take action against abuse and exploitation if they have a hand in identifying the problems on the ground.
- ✓ Limits for child protection organizations, as well as clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- ✓ Supporting community volunteers through close monitoring, coaching, and case evaluation by qualified agency staff
- ✓ Ongoing dialogue and consultation with children about the committees' performance and how adults in the community can meet their responsibilities to protect children in their best interests.
- ✓ External monitoring by agency staff or government statutory services (where these are available).

Community-based organizations play a crucial role in protecting children when no formal resources exist. Volunteers can only take on so much in any given neighborhood.

4.4.4 Attention to Representation and Diversity

The effectiveness of a community-based child protection group depends on the caliber of its members and the strategies they employ. Disparities of power and prejudice within a society significantly affect the distribution of resources and policy. This is an especially pressing concern when community organizations have ties to formal governmental entities or are tied to financial benefit.

Based on our research, the composition of community-based protection groups varies widely depending on local dynamics. Groups must, however, be inclusive of the most marginalized children and committed to serving their needs.

Girls and women are disproportionately affected by sexual exploitation and abuse, so their participation is crucial. However, having men and boys around can help spread good vibes and educate them on the dangers of sexual abuse and exploitation²⁹⁸. Young

²⁹⁸Jenny Parkes & Jo Heslop, *Stop Violence Against Girls at School: A Cross-Country Analysis of Change in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique* (2013).

children and children with disabilities, who may be at a heightened risk, should also be consulted.

Evidence suggests that community leaders and other significant people can assist in building support, legitimacy, and interest in community-based groups by participating in the process of selecting group members. Nevertheless, it can also provide a political dimension to groups or bolster prejudice and injustice. Children should be included in these discussions, as well as other members of the community.

How people are picked to take part is crucial. In order to ensure that those participating are doing so for the interests of children and have credibility with local children, multiple reviews have found that community-based child protection groups are more effective when adult volunteers are self-nominated or when the selection process involves children. In West Africa, for instance, the program established a selection procedure whereby girls from the community pick gender-based violence focal points instead of merely accepting individuals put forth by the community institutions, which are generally male-dominated ²⁹⁹.

A thorough knowledge and collaborative evaluation of the local situation is essential for making an informed option. In India, for instance, experts compiled a list of potential participants in a community-based child protection organization by conducting a thorough stakeholder study.³⁰⁰

4.4.5 The Importance of Children's Participation in Honduras

In Honduras, it was determined that bringing up the subject of commercial sexual exploitation at the grass-roots level and involving the community at large required the involvement of children. Kids joined local support groups and received education on spot signs of sexual abuse and exploitation. They were taught what to do in the event of a possible case and how to help other youngsters who have also been victims. The

²⁹⁹ Hannah Gilbert & Alex Cunliffe, 'Non-Governmental Organisations and the Management of HIV and AIDS in Refugee Camps: A Comparison of Marratane Camp in Mozambique and Kakuma Camp in Kenya', 29 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 63 (2011).

³⁰⁰ *Id.*

youth who participated in the program played significant roles in their communities as champions for ending this maltreatment.

They assisted younger children in practical ways to ensure their safety, such as listening to and speaking with a kid who has been mistreated or exploited, providing information, and connecting the child with a competent adult mentor. Although having children actively involved in community protection organizations is crucial, their involvement varies significantly and sometimes needs to be more varied and structured. In Uganda, for instance, just 35% of child protection committees reported having children present at their meetings and events, according to a recent inter-agency evaluation³⁰¹. Children often feel their participation is limited and tokenistic, and adults sometimes feel unsure how to interact with them.

Adults and children must work together concertedly to remove long-standing obstacles to children's engagement. Adults should be willing to hear children out, provide them with knowledge, and take their ideas and concerns seriously. Kids should be free to speak up, share their ideas, and contribute to creating secure neighborhoods.

4.4.6 Programs and NGOs on Online Child Abuses in India

Founded in January of 2000 in Pune by Prajakta Nikhade, the Child Protection Foundation **Muskaan**³⁰² is an organization that focuses on both the prevention of child sexual abuse (CSA) and the provision of care for survivors of CSA. Those who abuse or molest children, as well as their families, friends, educators, law enforcement, community-based organizations, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and, most importantly, the abusers and molesters themselves, are all essential components in the Muskaan model of multi-faceted intervention. Some of the tasks that these organizations have include reintegrating children who have been affected and preventing child sexual abuse.

This is as a result of the fact that the majority of them are committed to restoring children who are in CCIs and OHs to their natural environs and fighting for the return

³⁰¹ IASC, An Inter-Agency Review of Child Protection Committees in Acholi, Lango and Teso Regions in Uganda: The Way Forward (Inter-Agency Standing Committee Child Protection Sub-Cluster, 2007).

³⁰² Muskaan, Pune, <https://www.foundationforchildprotection.in/about-us/> (last visited 1 July 2024).

of their youth. In the beginning stages of Muskaan, the majority of cases of child sexual abuse were not acknowledged since there were not enough relevant statutory protections in place. This was a problem that was not readily apparent. Following the passage of the POCSO Act in India in 2012, there was a rise in the number of cases of child sexual abuse (CSA) and an increase in the public's interest in Muskaan's educational programs.

With the same objective of establishing communities and settings that are free of sexual assault on children, the **RATI**³⁰³ Foundation for Social Change is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that is based in Mumbai, India. This objective is accomplished through the implementation of intelligent policy campaigns, the provision of victim services on the ground, the enhancement of internet safety, the strengthening of government and CSR protection laws and processes, and the improvement of child safety. Additionally, it is responsible for initiating the creation of communication resources, research activities, and booster programs among organizations located all around the country.

RATI, for example, operates India's first internet hotline in conjunction with the Internet Watch Foundation in the United Kingdom. This hotline allows anyone to report Child Sexual Abuse and Misconduct in an anonymous manner. As a demonstration of their commitment to maintaining national and worldwide standards for the protection of children, the "Aarambh India Initiative" was presented with the I Presidential National Award for Child Welfare in the Institutions category so that they may be recognized for their remarkable work.

CYBER B. A. A. P.³⁰⁴ is an organization that was established by the Niralibhatia Cyber Wellness Foundation and Cyber B.A.A.P. Cybercrime investigator Ritesh Bhatia and cyberpsychologist, psychotherapist, and certified information systems security professional (CISSP) Nirali Bhatia. The goal of the organization is to bring attention to the issue of cyberbullying and to take measures to put an end to it. The organization provides a variety of social services, including counseling and advice for victims of cyberbullying, as well as initiatives and campaigns that educate people about the appropriate way to use computers and the internet.

³⁰³ RATI, <https://aarambhindia.org/about/#y-aarambh> (last visited 1 July 2021).

³⁰⁴ CYBERB.A.A.P, Niralibhatia Cyber Wellness Foundation (2023).

On the other hand, they intend to raise awareness among the general public about the mental health problems that are brought on by cyberbullying and to encourage conversations about the difficulties and opportunities that are brought about by conduct that occurs online. Their initiatives, which attempt to educate victims and offer them with the information they require to be safe while using the internet, are centered on children, women, and society as a whole as their primary target audience.

The **CyberVeer Foundation**³⁰⁵ is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that was established in Jaipur, Rajasthan, with the purpose of addressing various forms of cybercrime. Its objective is to transform India into a cyber-secure nation in which its citizens are shielded from the attacks of cybercriminals. The organization has planned to educate the general public on the topic by holding seminars in educational institutions and other establishments throughout the world. This is due to the fact that there is an evident need for safety measures to be implemented both online and offline.

Collaboration between these non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and law enforcement and other relevant institutions is being undertaken in order to increase awareness about cybercrimes, particularly among students. The organization is operated by enthusiastic volunteers who have received training in the constructive social applications of technology. The organization's ultimate objective is to transform every citizen into a cyber warrior who is capable of utilizing current technology.

Your Rights as a **Child and You (CRY)**³⁰⁶: Over the course of CRY's existence, we have dealt with a wide variety of abuses of children's rights; more recently, we have witnessed difficulties such as addiction to the internet and safety concerns. As a consequence of the work that they have done with the communities in which they operate, CRY has become an advocate for the rights of children that places an emphasis on social justice, promotes safety, and offers chances for development. In the domain of child protection, some of the things that they do include campaigning, raising awareness about children's rights, and developing and putting into action programs that protect children from a wide variety of threats, including those that are found on social media.

³⁰⁵ CYBERVEER Foundation, <https://cyberveer.org/about.php> (last visited 1 July 2024).

³⁰⁶ Child Rights and You (CRY), 'Online Safety and Internet Addiction (A Study Conducted Amongst Adolescents in Delhi-NCR)' (Feb. 2020).

Under the **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)**³⁰⁷, each and every state, district, and even sub-district in India is working toward the same objective, which is to significantly enhance the child protection services that are now available. Despite the fact that there are a few problems, such as a significant lack of trained staff and the absence of well-established processes and programs in the beginning stages of ICPS, the primary focus is still on developing effective mechanisms to protect children. This program guarantees that children who are in need receive the care and protection they require by creating Child Protection Units at the state and district levels and ensuring that child protection measures are executed in the appropriate manner in Rajasthan.

Several non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and programs in India are working together with the intention of improving the safety of children in the country. They are primarily concerned with preventing sexual assault and cyberbullying, providing rehabilitation services, and educating youth about these issues. In order to address the many problems that are associated with the safety of children both offline and online, they place a high priority on interprofessionalism, the expansion of partnerships, and the collaboration of stakeholders.

³⁰⁷ Centre for Child Protection, Government of Rajasthan (2023).

Chapter 5:

Conceptualization, Methodology and Data Analysis

So far, in the previous chapters, we've discussed on the current trends, legal instances, global and national proceedings providing protection to children against online sexual harassment in India. Furthermore, we've discussed on the support provided by families, schools, NGOs, security system to eradicate the crime and let children have a safe and healthy childhood free from fear, stress or social trauma. Also, as online platforms are increasingly used for the purpose of learning, communication and entertainment, India's legal system are being equipped to provide children, adolescents and youth safe and crime free net browsing experience that are necessary for their upbringing, modern socialization and communication. The context that we've presented in the previous chapters justifies the rapid increase in the cases of online child sexual harassment, such as, illicit child pornography, online grooming, cyberbullying, as the prime trends.

Unfortunately, India's familial awareness and attitude towards online child sexual harassment still lacks in sufficient compassion, care and support towards the victim making the child become exposed to more trauma and social exclusion, humiliation and long lasting vulnerability that needs urgent remediation. At this point, emergence of NGOs, schools and security system play a vital roll in providing the child the courage, moral support and encouragement to overcome the insecurity and come up to claim for the human right protection that he/she deserves.

Let us recall the objectives that we attempt to achieve through the empirical analysis that we're going to present in this chapter:

1. To study the historical background and factors responsible for online child sexual exploitation.
2. To examine the role and utility of international law in tackling the challenge of online child sexual exploitation.
3. To analyse the legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse.
4. To examine the effectiveness of administrative bodies and NGOs in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation.

5. To analyse the role of the judiciary in regulating the matters of online child sexual exploitation.
6. To enhance public awareness and understanding of online child sexual exploitation through targeted educational initiatives.
7. To suggest solutions to control online sexual exploitation of children.

Our empirical research is worked on these objectives and we intend to testify the following hypotheses. Note that we've built them in terms of the contemporary conditions that we've discussed in the previous chapters of this article.

H1:- The mechanism set up in India to combat online child sexual exploitation is insufficient.

H2:- The prevalence of online child sexual exploitation is primarily driven by insufficient public awareness, resulting in the ineffective use of existing legal frameworks.

Now, in the discussion of the design and development of this analysis, let us start with the conceptualization of the observation and analysis framework.

5.1 Study Conceptualization

Based on the background study made to develop the context, we hold that online sexual exploitation on children is an interconnected global crime that has penetrated in India through the adoption and access of internet and online platforms available to the children of age group 4-18 years. In this research, to fulfil the objective goals, we enhance this ground consideration with the following topic specific parameters:

(a) Historic instances of online sexual exploitation on children that have played significant role in India's legal context to recognize the cases of online sexual exploitation on children as recognized severe crime and hence initiate programs and reforms to penalize such crimes.

We justify this enhancement with a couple of prior validations, such as, Alimova et al (2020) exhaustive examination of the conceptual basis of the changes taking place in law, encompassing the evolution of theoretical viewpoints, doctrines, theories, and

scholarly discussions on the ideology and methodology, together with particular legal issues³⁰⁸. Here, the authors stressed that evolving theories and ideals are crucial for understanding the fundamental essence and attributes of law and the corresponding transformations. The analysis of the historical foundation of criminal law carries substantial academic and practical importance.

This research enhances the development of approaches to understand criminal law, its purpose, and objectives in society, as well as the formulation of modern criminal policy in the field of crime prevention. An examination of the historical development of criminal law allows for the assessment of the institutions of criminal law according to their historical state and the successful attainment of their intended objectives. The study supports for the understanding of the underlying essence, content, and internal framework of criminal law events and processes. Therefore, it allows one to recognize and endorse the trends and future paths of progress in this particular domain. The discipline of criminal law is closely intertwined with the social development context.

Hence, as the environment changes, the viewpoints on crime and punishment, along with the paradigm of crime-fighting, also develop. This phenomenon finally results in modifications in criminal legislation. An analysis of the historical evolution of criminal law demonstrates the evident connection between specific ideas and their practical application, supports a deeper, methodical, and comprehensive understanding of legal criminal concepts, their role and purpose in science, and the assessment of obtained knowledge. The historical legal study allows for the validation of scientific concepts by their alignment with current laws and society norms, or alternatively, undermines the fundamental basis of the academic concept.

Academic research methods in criminal justice are often directed by a theoretical framework. A researcher in the field of criminal justice who is investigating police stress may choose to utilize Agnew's General Strain Theory as a framework to direct the investigation³⁰⁹. To investigate the potential influence of an individual's upbringing

³⁰⁸ A.I. Alimova et al., 'Historicism in Criminal Law Science "Historical Methods and Their Significance for Evolution of Criminal Law"', 10(2) Journal of Advanced Pharmacy Education & Research (Apr.-Jun. 2020).

³⁰⁹ S. Thaxton & R. Agnew, 'When Criminal Coping is Likely: An Examination of Conditioning Effects in General Strain Theory', 34 Journal of Quantitative Criminology 887 (2018).

and surroundings on their adult criminal behavior, a researcher may employ a Social Learning theoretical framework. Academics engaged in the research of crime mapping may find it beneficial to employ a theoretical framework based on Routine Activity.

Essential for the ongoing development of criminal law science are the study of history, analysis of accomplishments and criticisms, and examination of the experience in the field of combatting crime. An analysis of the history of criminal law allows for an assessment of the institutions of criminal law based on their historical contextual factors and the extent to which they have successfully fulfilled their intended purpose. Moreover, it enables comprehension of criminal legal phenomena and processes, namely their fundamental nature, substance, internal framework, and based on that, establish and validate the trends and potential of evolution. The discipline of criminal law is closely intertwined with the social development context.

Hence, as the environment changes, the viewpoints on crime and punishment, along with the paradigm of crime-fighting, also develop. This phenomenon finally results in modifications in criminal legislation. An analysis of the historical evolution of criminal law demonstrates the evident connection between specific ideas and their practical application, supports a deeper, methodical, and comprehensive understanding of legal criminal concepts, their role and purpose in science, and the assessment of obtained knowledge. The historical legal study allows for the validation of scientific concepts by their alignment with current laws and society norms, or alternatively, undermines the fundamental basis of the academic concept. Comprehensive examination of historical events, evaluation of achievements and deficiencies, and contemplation of practical knowledge are essential for the further progress of criminal law science.

Research methodologies in the field of criminal justice empower scholars to tackle some of the most urgent challenges the society faces. Alongside, continual evolution characterizes the criminal justice system. It adapts to align with the perennially evolving patterns in criminal activity and technology. Effective criminal justice research methodologies are crucial for acquiring knowledge that can contribute to the development of policies and regulations. The research process generally encompasses quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methodologies to which the researcher's results are subjected to a peer review process for validation.

For our analysis, we've taken into account two aspects to emphasize: (a) Societal influence to drive the crime; and (b) Suitable investigational approaches leading to a conclusive verdict to the crime.

To justify the validity of the point (a), we rely on past evidences, such as, the 2015 National Baseline Study on Violence against Children (NBS-VAC, 2015) data reveals that 22% of Filipino children and youth between the ages of 13 and 24 had experienced cyber-violence. This encompasses occurrences of cyberbullying, the exposure of minors to sexually explicit films and images, and solicitations to display their unclothed bodies during online interactions. For our analysis, we particularly emphasized on the prevalent societal norms. For example, aside from poverty, insufficient parenting, and peer influence, the increased occurrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) among Filipino children can be attributed to their comparatively advanced English language proficiency, which enables them to communicate with foreign perpetrators.

We anticipate that perceptions, attitudes, and other social norms around online consensual sexual activity (OCSEA) can have a substantial impact on the initiation and continuation of such transactions. Specifically, we've included the finding, such as, that of recorded a considerable proportion of persons who participate in cybersex maintain unfounded beliefs that virtual sexual interactions lack genuineness and so do not lead to real-life consequences³¹⁰. Moreover, there is a prevalent belief in many nations that online behaviors, such as the exhibition of nude images and live streaming, do not qualify as child abuse because there is no physical contact involved.

The belief in the feasibility of preserving digital anonymity on the Internet has also driven a substantial number of users to engage in online sexual activities. Generally, cultural factors impose limitations on social norms. In light of the increasing occurrence of online sexual activities in certain local communities, it is imperative to recognize and classify the various social criteria linked to Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (OCSEA) among Filipino children and adolescents. The objective of this study is to analyze the particular social norms linked to the Internet and their impact on the

³¹⁰ C.A. Grosch-Miller, *Making Sense of Sex and Faith: An Exercise in Poetic Practical Theology* (2013).

vulnerability of Filipino children and adolescents in the selected communities to OCSEA.

As for the online sexual exploitation analysis attending for (b), we observed that the increasing prevalence of child sex crimes and instances of child sexual exploitation have consistently overwhelmed the detectives dedicated to these crimes and the resources at their disposal for many years. As part of our analysis conceptualization, we feel it as important that investigators should ideally, allocate limited resources by developing criteria that consistently indicate whether a specific subject of an online child exploitation case presents a significant risk of damage. Investigators want accurate data specific to each subject, capable of identifying the most hazardous subjects, in order to increase the likelihood of saving all exploited children.

Regrettably, in practice, commonly, there is no identifiable element or combination of elements that can be observed at the beginning of an inquiry, before substantial amount of resources have been dedicated, that has been scientifically proven to consistently forecast and identify individuals engaging in physical crimes. In recent approaches, it is emphasized that to be successful in managing limited resources and detecting hands-on crimes, an investigative approach must rely solely on online elements. Online factors refer to the observable elements that are evident during the early phases of an inquiry, far in advance of the suspect being apprehended.

A finite number of online variables are present, and not all of them are accessible in every situation. In addition, the management of cases presents certain challenges. As for instance, investigators of child sexual exploitation are required to handle a substantial amount of NCMEC CyberTips (from the center's CyberTipline, the centralized reporting mechanism for online child exploitation) and other leads. Each investigator may have a workload of 50 ongoing cases and additional files that have been sent to associated agencies with qualified staff for further investigation. While certain investigators may prioritize CyberTips, others may concentrate on undercover or peer-to-peer (P2P) investigations. The distribution of resources among covert, proactive peer-to-peer (P2P), and CyberTip investigations (including cases of human sex trafficking) is shaped by various conflicting factors and is not exclusively determined by the assessment of which cases reveal the most hazardous persons.

For instance, covert investigations enable a concentrated effort on targets who are actively engaging in physical crimes, while peer-to-peer investigations facilitate the recovery of minors who have been silenced and are not included in the coverage of CyberTips. Regrettably, certain authorities choose not to conduct undercover or peer-to-peer investigations due to concerns from potential civil liability resulting from their failure to handle received CyberTips. However, it is virtually impossible for any agency to manage the volume of tips they receive and the potential leads they can pursue. Investigators consider multiple criteria when determining the order of importance for cases that they anticipate to involve the most hazardous individuals.

Cases involving internet enticement (attempting to meet with children), production, and sexual extortion (sextortion) are given priority since they indicate that a child is subjected to active danger. Equally, situations containing photos that seem to have been created more recently are given priority. Heightened priority can be attributed to the gravity of the material and the age of the victim. For instance, the abuse of infants and toddlers by sexual means and acts of sadism are given priority. If a case implies the involvement of an individual who has a position of communal importance and has access to children, the case is given priority.

Matters involving individuals with advanced technical skills or a group structured around engaging in illegal activities are given priority. It should be noted that NCMEC gives priority to CyberTips before forwarding them to law enforcement. Put simply, there is only a limited amount of commonality between: (1) the collection of variables that have been examined to evaluate the likelihood of, and guide the dealing with, persons who have already been found guilty of child sexual exploitation; and (2) the collection of variables that law enforcement have access to before allocating resources for an investigation.

(b) Alignment of India's own legal framework with international laws that prompt in development of legal systems to safeguard children human rights and their security in online activities against sexual exploitation.

Here, we agree that a human rights-based approach, as defined by the BASW³¹¹ (2015), aims to enable individuals to understand and assert their rights, while also enhancing the capacity and responsibility of persons and organizations tasked with upholding, safeguarding, and realising rights. This involves empowering individuals to actively engage in decisions that have an impact on their lives and fundamental human rights. A rights-based approach, as defined by UNICEF (2009), is a conceptual framework for human development that is grounded in international human rights norms and aims to facilitate and safeguard human rights in practice³¹².

Adopting a rights-based strategy entails making human rights the focus targets of intervention. The rights establish a structuring system, a collection of priorities, and novel goals to direct programs and activities. Rights-based methods have redirected the emphasis of practice from meeting essential needs to empowering and enhancing the abilities of persons and communities³¹³. Throughout the years, international development work has increasingly adopted and implemented a rights-based strategy. Historically, early international development aid was often predicated on the belief that enhancing economies and personal prosperity in isolation would lead to an improvement in the well-being of individuals.

Universal human rights, as we emphasize here serve as the fundamental basis for all civil, political, social, and economic objectives aimed at establishing specific levels of welfare for all individuals. Rights-based initiatives, as we anticipate should eliminate the charitable aspect by acknowledging individuals not only as recipients, but also as active possessors of particular rights. An area where the human rights approach adds value is in its focus on holding policy makers and other actors accountable for their acts that affect the rights of individuals. Rights, in contrast to wants, entail obligations, and obligations require responsibility³¹⁴.

³¹¹ British Association of Social Workers, BASW Human Rights Policy (2015) https://new.basw.co.uk/sites/default/files/resources/basw_30635-1_0.pdf

³¹² United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming (UNICEF, 2009).

³¹³ Ibid

³¹⁴ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (2002) <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/resources/high-commissioner-for-human-rights/report-of-the-united-nations-high>

While it is possible to meet or satisfy needs, most importantly, we can say that rights are actualized and hence must be acknowledged, safeguarded, enabled, and realized. The human rights are inseparable and interconnected, and unlike necessities that can be prioritized, all human rights hold equal significance. Hence, we pertain that central to a rights-based approach is the identification of underlying causes of societal problems and the empowerment of rights holders to comprehend and, if feasible, assert their rights, while enabling responsibility bearers to fulfill their responsibilities.

Rights-based methods are rooted in a normative framework that is established on a collection of globally recognized legal agreements and conventions. These agreements itself can offer an alternative and perhaps more influential approach. An essential component of this approach is the entitlement of every individual to engage in the process of making decisions for society, particularly those individuals or groups that are impacted by those decisions. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that states must guarantee children who are able to generate their own opinions the right to freely express those opinions in all matters that affect them. The views of the child should be given appropriate consideration based on their age and level of maturity.³¹⁵

Contemporary development efforts worldwide are driven by the necessity to attain the rights of individuals, and rights-based methodologies have now become a crucial method through which agencies and organizations carry out development activities. Numerous rights-based initiatives worldwide provide assistance to rights holders, particularly those who are impoverished, unempowered, and subjected to discrimination, in asserting their rights. These initiatives strive to enhance effectiveness and reinforce long-term viability by tackling the root reasons of rights infringements, implementing policy and practice reforms to genuinely improve the lives of persons (Save the Children 2005).

Key elements essential for implementing a human rights-based strategy in reality include participation, accountability, non-discrimination, equality, empowerment, and legality (UNICEF 2009). A children's rights-based approach is particularly focused on

³¹⁵ United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child>

achieving the rights of children while taking into account their unique needs and vulnerabilities. Adopting a children's rights-based strategy involves incorporating human rights ideas and norms into interactions with children, their families, carers, and wider communities. The objective of this method is to enhance the status of children in order to enable them to fully exercise their rights and reside in communities that recognize and honor children's rights (Save the Children 2005).

When we focus on India, which houses 20% of the global child population, has ratified the Convention on Rights of the Child in 1992. This convention establishes criteria for healthcare, education, and legal, civil, and social services provisions. Precisely, in India, eight crucial rights pertaining to children are given most importance: 1) Right to life, 2) Right to health, 3) Right to safe water, 4) Right to food, 5) Right to education, 6) Right to protection, 7) Right to freedom, and 8) Right to identity.

In context to this country, the enactment of the Education Bill, in conjunction with the Prohibition of Child Labour and Child Marriage Act, demonstrates the Indian Government's commitment to advocating for the rights of children. Significant advancements have been made in identifying and resolving instances of child protection infractions and directing vital assistance towards underprivileged groups.

The establishment of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights in India took place in March 2007, with the subsequent establishment of other State Commissions. Still, the obstacles to the enforcement of these rights persist. Pervasive and deeply rooted exploitation, gender inequality, and caste prejudice in India cannot be disregarded for an extended period. The recent global petroleum, food, and economic crises would also impact the country's social development, impeding the recent advancements in child survival and education outcomes.

The fifth five year plan introduced an initiative to prioritise child protection, leading to the formulation of the first National Policy for Children (NPC) 1974. See that this policy redirected attention from welfare to the development of the child. The NPC articulated the principle that "Children shall be safeguarded from neglect, cruelty, and exploitation." The State shall furnish essential legislative and administrative support to accomplish these objectives. A paradigm change has occurred in the approaches

towards children. Indicated in the table below, the shift in focus is from the welfare to the developmental approach (Bajpai, 2008 p-438)³¹⁶.

Insufficient parental literacy that we consider as a primary factor that breeds a child's upbringing and consciousness in defending from sexual exploitation. It is this problem that leads to the disregard of children's education. Gender-based and caste-based discrimination are contributing sources to the marginalization of children inside the educational system. Perpetually, girls are deprived of equitable chances to participate in and successfully finish elementary education.

Hence, primary education is not universally accessible. The significant number of youngsters who are not registered in schools and the following high dropout rates before finishing their education are subjects of much worry. Effective from 1st April, 2010, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, is a significant achievement in safeguarding the educational rights of children. The recently implemented Act is anticipated to enhance the situation.

However, despite the implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act, a study by CRY reveals that the national dropout rate at the elementary level remains at 40% (Bhandary, 2013-3). In our case, we consider that schools and any primary education institute can play crucial role in spreading awareness and safety for children from online sexual exploitation. Thus, our survey includes India's school's infrastructural set up and its capacity to support for this investigation. In 2009, the Government of India implemented the "Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)" to establish a system that would optimize the protection of children and reduce service deficiencies.

It is grounded on fundamental ideas of safeguarding the rights of children and prioritising their best interests. The objective of this initiative is to serve all children, especially those facing challenging situations, by consolidating the current child protection programs of the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD) into a single centrally funded program. The phenomenon of extensive trafficking of children is observed nationwide.

The issue has been exacerbated by widespread instances of physical and sexual abuse against working youngsters. Their living conditions are characterized by poverty,

³¹⁶ Anuradha Bajpai, *Child Rights in India: Law and Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

inadequate provision of food and shelter, and lack of access to healthcare (Bajpai, 2008 p-449). It is widely believed that the absence of political will is a significant factor contributing to the inadequate enforcement of the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986.

Freedoms of expression and thought, another major rights that is significant here are guaranteed by the Indian constitution. Yet, generally, youngsters are prohibited from voicing their opinions. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the perspectives of children. Typically, adults assume responsibility for making significant decisions on behalf of children. Regrettably, the involvement of children at whatever level is shown to be of minimal significance in India. As an ingrained cultural tradition, children are consistently instructed to comply with elders without reservation. It is commonly advised that children should refrain from voicing their viewpoints in the presence of older individuals³¹⁷.

Thus, in our survey based analysis, we incorporate the extent of awareness and importance given by Indian judiciary and legal system to regard international viewpoint on child safety and protection of their rights. Simultaneously, our analysis intends to assess the level to which international laws should be attended as for the discussed issue.

We particularly make it a point that there are two primary justifications for employing a children rights-based approach in working with children: (a) a moral or legal principle—the inherent justification, acknowledging that a human rights-based approach is ethically or legally correct; and (b) an instrumental reason—recognising that a human rights-based approach results in improved and more enduring human development outcomes. Realistically, the rationale for adopting a human rights-based strategy often involves a combination of both approaches (UNICEF 2009).

We, in our analysis, we ensure the adoption and results of Save the Children (2005) fundamental concepts of a children's rights-based approach that include:

1. An unambiguous emphasis on children, their entitlements and function as participants in society.
2. Taking into account a comprehensive safeguard policy for a child while making

³¹⁷ Ibid

strategic decisions and establishing priorities.

3. A significant focus on ensuring responsibility for advancing, safeguarding and realizing the rights of children among various entities responsible for their well-being, including the state (such as local and central government), the private sector, the media, child-care professionals and other persons who have direct interaction with children.
4. Assessment of how duty bearers might be assisted in fulfilling their responsibilities by technical aid, financial assistance, and other types of collaboration.
5. Acknowledging the significance of advocacy, public education, and awareness raising as programming instruments to guarantee the accountability of duty bearers.
6. The facilitation of children's active involvement in programming (and beyond), based on their developmental abilities.
7. A dedication to ensuring the participation of the most disadvantaged children and to confronting prejudice based on factors like as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, cognitive impairment, and so on.
8. Careful evaluation (in collaboration with children) of the consequences on children of all program selections.
9. Surviving and developing: prioritizing the immediate survival of children while also assuring the realization of their maximum potential.
10. A comprehension of the position of children within their families, communities, and societies, as well as the responsibility of their parents and other primary caregivers in safeguarding their rights and directing the growth of children.
11. Fundamental causes and overarching concerns: an emphasis on the base causes as well as current infractions.
12. Collaborations and coalitions to advance, safeguard, and uphold the rights of children.
13. Informing and educating about children's rights to enable children, their communities, and important stakeholders, such as the government, to access and comprehend these rights.

Our study supports the argument that it is of utmost importance to consolidate national and international standards in the legal framework of child rights. Although national legislation establishes the basis for safeguarding children within the country, it is essential to include international standards to develop a comprehensive and internationally acknowledged framework. Addressing this disparity not only strengthens the safeguards provided to children but also raises India's position in the worldwide discussion on child rights. The incorporation of global practices acts as a driving force for ongoing enhancement, expanding the limits of legal safeguards and raising the welfare of children to a global standard. It is crucial to acknowledge the importance of this convergence in order to effectively tackle the many issues encountered by children in India and promote a comprehensive approach to their well-being.

Harmonisation that we anticipate is a dynamic procedure that seeks to integrate national legislation with international standards, therefore establishing a unified and all-encompassing legal structure that safeguards the rights and well-being of children. Harmonisation refers to a thorough examination and modification of current national legislation to align with the principles and provisions of international treaties. Within the realm of child rights, this procedure involves a meticulous analysis of the criteria set by the UNCRC and then incorporating them into the relevant national legal framework.

In addition to legislative changes, harmonization efforts often include the creation of complementary mechanisms, such as training programs for legal professionals and awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public about the rights protected by international agreements. The aim is to establish a harmonious connection between domestic legislation and recognized international norms, guaranteeing a smooth execution that mirrors the essence of worldwide agreements inside the legal framework of India. Moving forward, it is crucial for politicians, legal experts, civil society groups, and communities to intensify their efforts in promoting the agenda of child rights.

We believe that this involves a strong dedication to maintaining the ideals established in international agreements like the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and implementing them and achieving concrete results for children in India. Ultimately, aligning national laws with international norms in the field of child

rights is not just a legal necessity but also a moral and ethical responsibility. It necessitates a shared determination to give priority to the optimal welfare of children in all decision-making procedures and to establish a conducive atmosphere where each child can flourish and achieve their maximum capabilities. As India progresses on this path, it must maintain unwavering dedication to constructing a legal framework that ensures the inclusion of every kid.

(c) Patterns and severity of online sexual exploitation on children that are recorded so far in India's judicial lawsuits. How far, they impact on a child's human rights concerns.

On an annual basis, our main concern that we wish to justify is an increasing number of documented instances of various forms of online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The evident increase in the scale, severity, and complexity of online child sexual abuse and exploitation, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, is also highly concerning that we wish to assess in this study. As an example, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, situated in the United States, took in 29.3 million reports of suspected child sexual exploitation in 2021, which is a 35 percent increase from the previous year.

Our conceptualization emphasizes on the theory that an allegation of child abuse is a serious charge that can result in both criminal or civil consequences, as well as social seclusion and harm to one's reputation. Given the persistent difficulty in implementing state laws regarding child abuse, it is recommended that anyone faced with child abuse accusations get immediate advice from a skilled local attorney. Child abuse in that particular case can only be addressed by an experienced criminal defence attorney who possesses specialised legal expertise.

Generally, cases of child abandonment are identified only in relation to female children. Our conceptualization of the survey pays attention to the point that altering the dominant conduct and mindset in society is of utmost importance, and various reforms are now being executed. Our study aims to justify that The Indian Penal Code (IPC) has formally recognised many types of offences perpetrated against juveniles, in accordance with applicable legal provisions. Underage individuals are vulnerable to

fraudulent schemes and are exploited in the perpetration of illegal acts. To ensure the protection of infants and newborns, it is imperative to follow meticulously developed strategies to tackle the issue. Interprofessional Collaboration (IPC) includes many sessions specifically focused on the protection of children.

Again, our work attempts to correct the lacking side legal system to secure and defend the crime that is spreading, growing and increasing in its severity. The precise extent of child online sexual abuse and exploitation, however, remains somewhat ambiguous, in part due to barriers to exposing and reporting such occurrences. The findings of a 2020-2021 survey done among children in 12 countries in the East Asia and Pacific and Eastern and Southern Africa regions indicated that between 1 and 20 percent of children had encountered instances of online sexual exploitation and abuse in the preceding year. Moreover, a third of the children did not reveal their event to anyone.

As an agency of the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) is responsible for ensuring that all laws, policies, programmes, and administrative procedures adhere to the child rights framework outlined in the Constitution of India and the different sections and articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child³¹⁸.

POCSO as we've discussed in this work is a primary legal model of India active on the child safety and protection against illegal online exploitation on children. Our work includes ensuring its classification on penetrative sexual assault on a child under 12 as exacerbated penetrative sexual assault, a criminal act punishable by a fine and a minimum term of 10 years of harsh incarceration, which can be more than doubled to life imprisonment. Again, we confirm the actual implication of the compliance with Section 19 of the POCSO Act that makes it obligatory for every person, including minors, to inform authorities about the likely or confirmed perpetration of a crime.

We aim to relate India's legal system with societal content where we emphasize on the occurrence of the discussed crimes. Furthermore, we wish to ensure how the crime

³¹⁸ A.G. Preethi, 'A Study on Impact of Acts, Schemes and Policies Among Women and Child-Welfare Departments with Reference to India' (2024).

continues, maybe due to the lack of sexual education in households and schools, or because the offenders are oblivious to the severity of the consequences or highly certain that the abuse will not be reported due to the negative consequences experienced by the victim and their family. Therefore, several perpetrators evade punitive measures. Persons who undergo childhood maltreatment are more susceptible to exhibit violent conduct towards others in their adult years, therefore sustaining a cycle of violence from one generation to the succeeding one.

Therefore, we aim to confirm that it is crucial to interrupt this cycle of violence, and so produce advantageous outcomes that extend across several generations. Implementing a multisectoral approach is essential for the successful prevention of child abuse before it occurs. Effective preventive initiatives include offering support to parents and teaching effective parenting strategies, as well as increasing knowledge among children and teachers about sexual abuse. The implementation of laws that specifically prohibit sexual abuse and violation of child rights could greatly discourage individuals from participating in such illegal behaviours.

Our work do sincerely regard that child abuse and neglect can have severe and long-lasting repercussions on a child and can lead to adverse socioeconomic outcomes, including higher costs for services and more involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Nevertheless, cultures have the capacity to act and successfully avert the beneficial outcomes of abuse. The legal systems and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in our country are making concerted efforts to protect the welfare of emerging generations.

(d) Child's personal, behavioural, age, gender, familial, social, cultural, global factors that play role in becoming victimized in online sexual exploitations. On the other hand, the factors that help them to recover or defend themselves from these incidents.

We agree to the point and give it importance that sufficient resources are required to address the needs of children in areas that are classified as vulnerable. Furthermore, children and adolescents possess the most suitable position to articulate their perspectives on the most beneficial services. The findings of the evidence review revealed three interconnected areas of activity: Aiming to mitigate the dangers and

causes of child sexual abuse and exploitation within a specific setting, some of which may vary from those linked to other types of violence. • Altering societal standards and conduct that perpetuate gender inequity, prejudice, and the sexual exploitation of adolescents and children.

Enhancing parental and carer assistance to ensure the safety of children against child sexual abuse and exploitation. Given the shared risks and causes of violence against women and violence against children, interventions targeting these factors (such as life skills, gender equality, and economic and social empowerment programs) will effectively address certain types of child sexual abuse and exploitation, such as transactional sex or adolescent partner abuse. The effective transformation of social norms, for instance, necessitates the active participation of all members of the community, including males. Active involvement of the community facilitates the process of coordinating and collaborating, therefore enhancing the local ability to respond and ultimately leading to more sustainable results.

The overarching principles for optimal implementation are: 1. High-quality, interactive, gender and age suitable programs are most effective in influencing the behaviour and attitudes of children and young people. As an illustration, in order to create secure environments for younger children, safety education in home, school, and community settings for parents and their children aged 4 to 9 years may concentrate on ensuring safety in interactions with adults and peers, including trusted adults, identifying inappropriate physical contact or other types of sexual conduct, including online, and knowing who to disclose this information to.

Instructional programmes designed for children aged 10 and upwards may focus on topics such as sexual victimisation and perpetration, consent and respect, and gender equality in peer, family, and intimate relationships. 2. Comprehensive programs that integrate risk reduction with education, behaviour modification, and broader asset, skills development, and empowerment measures are demonstrating the most encouraging outcomes.

(e) Role of NGOs, School and Local administration in safeguarding children from the physical, mental, social damages caused with the impacts of online sexual exploitations.

If we observe global events, it is noted that through more than a century of dedicated efforts, social workers have strived to enhance the well-being and circumstances of individuals, families, and communities. Typically, social workers, who often represented the interests of the state, acted based on their own judgment. Indeed, human rights-based social work redirects attention from human needs to human rights concerns.

According to international law, the state has the primary responsibility for upholding the human rights of the individuals residing within its authority. Nevertheless, the global society on a whole also bears the obligation to assist in the actualization of universal human rights. Consequently, monitoring and accountability processes encompass not only states but also global entities, including the donor community, intergovernmental organizations, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and transnational corporations. These entities have activities that directly impact the protection of human rights in any country³¹⁹.

We wish to justify that calls on social workers and the populations serve to engage actively in the state's decision-making processes are designed to enhance its ability to serve the interests of its citizens. We note it that in the context of rights-based labor, goals serve as transient benchmarks that are modified as individuals continuously reassess and comprehend rights in novel manners, so necessitating fresh remedies to societal challenges. With the near attainment of universal access to primary education, a reassessment of the right to education could result in a new objective to enhance the standard of education or encourage universal enrollment in secondary school for girls. To serve for more substantiality, our analysis incorporates the underlying reasoning of the intervention norms with children as proposed in Save the Children (2005). It suggests implementing the four overarching principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Although the guidance is not specifically targeted towards social

³¹⁹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework (2002).

work, they can be applied to improve understanding of how social work practice should adopt the concepts of children's rights. Articulated in Article 2, the basic principle of the CRC is that all member states to the CRC must guarantee equal rights and opportunities for all children. Our study aims to evaluate this condition in India's context.

The aim that we wish to accomplish and visualize is to eliminate all types of discrimination against individual children, specific groups of children (such as children with disabilities), and the whole child population (for instance, by prohibiting children from enduring more harsh treatment than adults, concerning the acceptable degree of violence) (Save the Children 2005). Consistent with this principle, we include that it is crucial for all welfare organizations that prioritize children to ensure that their interventions and programs are devoid of any kind of prejudice against children. Clarifying the precise groups of children that are either excluded from or included in a particular program, together with the underlying justifications for their participation, is of utmost importance.

We point it out that both national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are actively involved in addressing the issue and increasing public knowledge about the underlying realities. Notwithstanding substantial criticism, the judiciary has exhibited notable hesitancy in addressing the issue. The Supreme Court has upheld the incorporation of the right to education under article 41 of the Indian Constitution in the case of **Mohini Jain Vs. State of Karnataka**³²⁰ Nevertheless, taking into account previous instances, one could contend that the Judges have rendered inequitable judgments for the whole cohort of victims. The legislative measures in India exhibited a notable deficiency in the ability to effectively amend the latest Children Rights Bill in the Lok Sabha. The implementation of new legislation promotes a sense of fair allocation of unity among differing persons, and uniting them in this way facilitates the development of a society characterized by decreased crime rates. Here, the point that we particularly aim to emphasize is that Minors, as a demographic group under the age of 18, need substantial assistance to guarantee the preservation and promotion of their

³²⁰ Sheela Barse v. Union of India, 1992 AIR 1858; (1992) 3 SCC 666; 1992 SCR (3) 658.

rights. Hence, to guarantee a more promising future, it has been deemed imperative to elevate the issue of Child Rights to the forefront of public consciousness and provide solutions to pertinent sectors of mainland society.

So, we argue here that in order to successfully enforce children's rights, it is essential to focus particularly on the most marginalized children in society (Save the Children 2005). Although social workers frequently interact with disadvantaged groups of children, such as those living in poverty or those with impairments, their main objective is to promote the desirable growth and improve the general welfare of these children. A rights-based approach in social work would give priority to the active involvement of social workers in adopting practices that are free from discrimination with these groups and individual children, therefore improving the actualization of their constitutional rights.

We feel it as important, particularly in this case that acting as representatives of the state, many social workers are required to advocate for the rights of children against governmental authority. Furthermore, this notion implies that social workers should be committed not just to impacted cohorts of children, but to all children in society, as children are a more vulnerable population compared to adults. First and foremost, the well-being of the child. This concept of the child's best interest is intricately connected to every aspect of a child's life. This principle states that whenever actions are taken that impact the lives of children, the outcomes of such choices must be assessed.

Hence, the conflicting interests of several stakeholders, such as parents, the community, or the state, should not be the main factor to be taken into account, but they can influence the final outcome of a decision. To act in the best interest of the child, it is crucial to prioritize the realization of its rights and genuinely take into account the child's own viewpoints. Specifically, this involves ensuring that the input of children is actively sought and taken into account in decisions that affect them, or ensuring that a wide range of perspectives, including those of carers, community members, and specialists, are also sought and taken into account³²¹.

³²¹ Save the Children, A Rights-Based Approach to Child Protection (2005).

The implementation of this concept in social work practice can be complex, as a substantial part of the welfare services' interventions are based on the belief that the best possible well-being of the child is best evaluated and determined by skilled adult practitioners. Implementing children's rights practice in social work involves evaluating the child's optimal welfare from a perspective that recognises the child's viewpoints.

Principles of survival and development. The survival and development of children is an inherent entitlement. Consistent with the CRC, children have an inherent right to life. Therefore, it is crucial for individuals to exert maximum effort in ensuring the survival and development of the child, thereby empowering them to make significant contributions to a cohesive and complete community. Survival and development imperatives address a wide range of aspects, such as physical, mental, cultural, spiritual, moral, and social development. This statement assumes that children have an innate ability to develop, but they require an environment that is appropriate, supportive, and motivating in order to fully realize their potential³²².

In this particular setting, the predominant duty of the social services is to ensure the realization of children's right to development. To do this, social work practice must recognize the holistic nature of children and that their development includes not just physical and physiological progression, but also moral and spiritual maturation. Recognition of the fact that children undergo development and transformation as they advance towards more independence and maturity, referred to as "evolving capacities," is crucial for social work practice.

Furthermore, it should recognize the ever-changing nature of the world and the need for child development to adjust to the fluctuating conditions that children will face in adulthood.

Participation. This convention is the foremost human rights treaty that explicitly confirms the civic rights of children. Every kid has the right to freely get information, express their views, have their views taken into account in decisions that affect them,

³²² Ibid

and to create or join associations. This concept will be further expounded upon in the next sections.

(f) Role of child, family, social, policy maker's awareness on the damages of online sexual exploitations on children that support for building up norms and preventive system in India against these crimes.

Table 6: Variables used in the Analysis

Variable Type	Variable	Context
Dependent Variable	Legal Sufficiency	Effectiveness of laws, judicial actions and reforms in combating online sexual exploitation of children.
	Severity of Online Exploitation	Degree of harm caused to children in cases of online sexual exploitation.
	Victim Safety and Defense Mechanisms	Factors that help children recover from or defend against online exploitation.
	Preventive Measures and Awareness Impact	Impact of awareness campaigns, policies, and programs on reducing incidents.
Independent Variable	Historic Cases of Online Sexual Exploitation	Significance of judicial cases in influencing law reforms on child online safety.
	Influence of International Laws	Impact of global legal frameworks on shaping India's legal system on the subject. Their influence to enforce children human rights, awareness, standardization and recognition of the law in context to India.
	Judicial Patterns and Severity	Types and severity of cases prosecuted and their outcomes.
	Child Victim Factors	Age, gender, social, and family attributes affecting vulnerability to exploitation.
	NGO and Institutional Roles	Support provided by NGOs, schools, and local authorities in child protection.
	Awareness and Advocacy Efforts	Efforts by policymakers, families, and NGOs to promote online safety awareness.

5.2 Methodology and Tools

The existing study on cyber child sexual exploitation as well as prevention in the legal context of India has been carried out with a mixed-method approach. Though there is a quantitative analysis of the data collected with the help of a structured questionnaire, the qualitative insight came from in-depth interviews. This research aims at analyzing and assessing the existing legislation and mechanisms against OCSE and ascertaining the level of awareness among various stakeholders about this issue in India. This research serves the purpose by identifying the loopholes in the legal and institutional structure of India and suggesting necessary amendments.

This research is descriptive in nature wherein quantitative methods are deployed to understand the perception and awareness levels pertaining to OCSE in India. A descriptive research allows for observation of the understanding of the respondents toward the current legislative measures, the effectiveness of the mechanisms of enforcement, and the efficiency of the preventive strategies.

Research Approach

The research methodology used in this study is a quantitative approach since data collection and analysis form parts of the method. A structured questionnaire was devised to capture the perceptions of respondents regarding issues surrounding OCSE. The basis of the research mainly rests on statistical analysis in order to serve an objective understanding of how far presently legislating and mechanisms have been perceived as one that is effective enough in combating online child exploitation in India.

This was achieved by collecting qualitative data from 500 respondents. These are lawyers, police, child protection officers, teachers, and NGOs working on matters of child security. Consequently, this makes the research leave an avenue for the coverage of the problem in broad dimension.

Research Instrument

Preparation of Questionnaire: A structured questionnaire for survey was prepared as research tool. The questionnaire contained closed type and Likert type questions designed to evolve the perceptions, level of awareness, and personal experiences that

the respondents had about the OCSE and legal mechanism existing and in place at present for prevention and redressal of the situation. Cronbach's Alpha Test of Reliability test was conducted so that the internal consistency and reliability in response were ensured.

Process of Data Collection

For gathering data for this paper, stratified as well as snowball sampling techniques have been used. Stratified sampling was adopted in this research to initially target specific groups- police officers, legal experts, and child protection workers-to ensure adequate representation within multiple strata. Subsequently, further referrals from the identified respondents led to the recruitment of additional respondents with a snowball sampling technique. This was very effective to reach professionals within child protection networks who are first line respondents in the battle against OCSE.

The use of stratified sampling was made in consideration of the fact that all appropriate groups of interest were to be found within the study, like law enforcement, NGOs, and lawyers. Thus, the total population was stratified according to particular professional groups so that maximum exposure to the views of those who have been dealing with cases that fall under OCSE was made proportionally.

The issue handled was sensitive, and few could be directly pinpointed for self-experience; therefore, it snowballed to include more respondents upon referrals. The respondents were asked to refer other people who could give more meaning to their views about the study.

A total sample size of $n = 506$ was created from the following strata:

Law enforcement agencies

- Legal practitioners (judges, prosecutors, lawyers)
- NGOs and child rights activists
- Teachers and counselors in child welfare
- Computer professionals in digital forensic and cybercrime sections

The survey was conducted within a period of three months, during which all respondents have filled in an online questionnaire. Respondents were given background information about the purpose of the study and assured that their answers would be treated to retain confidentiality.

Response was based on voluntary participation where no rewards or compensations were provided for responses

Upon collation, it was first placed into Microsoft Excel for organization and preparation for statistical analysis. Further, it was imported into SPSS version 24.0 to be analyzed further using statistical procedures. Quite a number were carried out using SPSS.

Reliability analysis: Cronbach's alpha was applied to calculate the internal consistency of data. The tool was administered to the Likert-scale items of the questionnaire that would yield the computation of the reliability of response. Provided that the value of Cronbach's alpha was more than 0.7, it gave an indication of acceptable level of internal consistency and reliability of the data.

Descriptive Analysis : Percent analysis was used to make sense of the demographic profile of the respondents. The demographics involved include age and gender, profession, years of experience, and the level of familiarity of the individual with issues on online child exploitation. The percent analysis gives a vivid view on how the respondents were distributed across different demographics and their exposure to OCSE cases.

Statistical analysis: Crosstabulations, Chi-square tests, and frequency distributions have been applied to find possible relationships between variables including how well-informed respondents perceive the existence of the legal framework and its effectiveness in the context. Correlation and regression analyses have been conducted to analyze the degree of relationship between the awareness level of the respondent with other factors in relation to the professional background in an anti-OCSE effort.

Statistical analysis was conducted with the objective of extracting and presenting dominant trends from data, which were discussed in the findings and analysis section. Dominant variables that had revealed considerable relationships between them are

therefore highlighted, thus allowing greater understanding about how specific professions or demographic groups may perceive effectiveness of the currently existing laws and mechanisms toward combating OCSE.

5.3 Sample Selection and Data Collection

This was made possible through both stratified sampling and the use of snowballing where necessary to allow diverse voices in stakeholders having their voice heard in the fight against OCSE and accounting for the challenge posed by access deployment to such a high-level specialist population under study.

Stratified sampling: Stratified sampling method was used whereby the population under consideration is classified into specific strata according to their functions in society and professional acquaintance with the problems of child protection. This way, there would be an adequate representation of sample size for every group, thereby improving generalizability.

Key strata for this particular study are:

Law enforcement officers: This constitutes the population of people directly involved in investigating and prosecuting cases of OCSE.

Legal practitioners: Judges, prosecutors, as well as defense lawyers working within the Indian legal system and are handling cases of child protection

NGO practitioners and children activists: The frontline workers who continue to work with the child victims who are affected by exploitation in the virtual world, working as advocates on behalf of the children

Teachers and counselors: Individuals with hands-on contact with the children. In most cases, teachers and school counselors are the first ones to detect any form of abuse or exploitation related to the child.

Technology experts and cyber security experts: They play a part in digital forensic processes and technical procedures related to tracking and reporting online exploitation.

Snowball Sampling: As the topic was highly sensitive, snowball sampling was used once the first round of respondents was identified through stratified sampling. Those

respondents were asked to provide the names of other contacts within their professional or advocacy networks, who might have the relevant expertise or experience with OCSE. This was just enough to identify experts not otherwise likely to have been seen, such as specialists working in undercover online crime units or NGOs specializing in victim rehabilitation.

The two methods ensured that the research produces adequate depth-including respondents with expertise-and breadth-by ensuring many professional groups are appropriately represented for comprehensive attainment of the research objectives.

Ethics

Since the research topic touched sensitive areas, ethical approval was sought and followed in the course of the study. Institutional review boards of relevance to those institutions approved data collection before engaging in the same. Informed consent was realized for all the respondents ensuring that respondents were fully informed on what the research was all about, the fact that participation was voluntary, and their responses were completely confidential. The participants' identities were also to be masked to avoid any likely harm or retribution. Information was safely stored with limited access to those working on the research data.

5.4 Data Pre-Processing

Here, we present the statistical findings pertaining to data collected from the respondents of the research study. Discussion relating to the statistical results of the research study is also given in the next section. Here, we provide the results of the quantitative data. The data was first put into an excel file and transferred into SPSS 24.0 version. Thus, using SPSS software the present study results analysed. The sample size is taken for the study $n=506$. Internal consistency of the data computed through reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha value. The analysis carried out was percentage analysis to find out the demographical information of respondents.

5.5 Analysis and Findings

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the data. Variables are expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation (mean \pm SD).

5.5.1 Children Respondents Analysis

The statistical analyses are conducted based on a quantitative survey of child students, NGOs, administrative organizations, and legal personnel. The data obtained from the pre-tested questionnaire serves as a resource for these calculations.

Table 7: Frequency of age of the respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
3 – 5 years	8	6.0
5 – 8 years	31	23.3
8 – 12 years	59	44.4
12 – 16 years	35	26.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 7 depicts the age of the respondents. Majority 44.4% of the respondents' age between 8 to 12 years followed 26.3% of the respondents' age between 12 to 16 years, 23.3% of the respondents' age between 5 to 8 years and 6% of the respondents' age between 3 to 5 years.

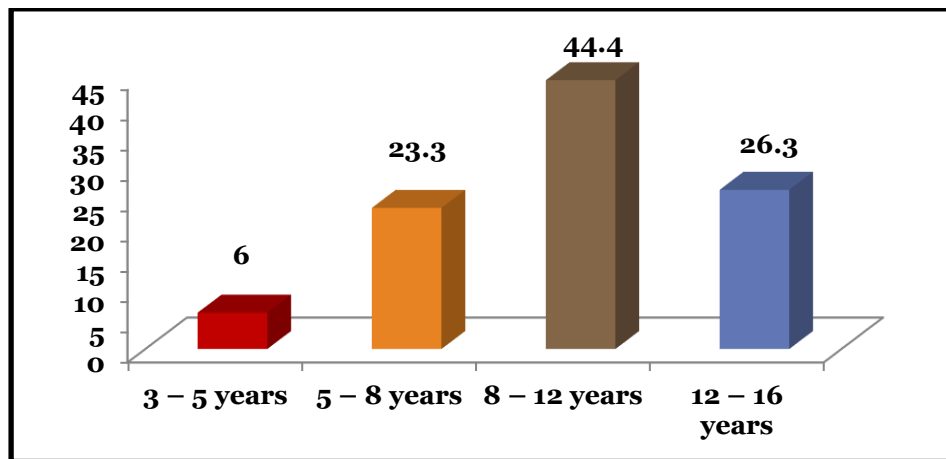


Figure 5: Graph of Frequency of age of the respondents

Table 8: Frequency of gender of the respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	105	78.9
Female	28	21.1
Total	133	100.0

Table 8 reveals the gender of the respondents. Majority 78.9% of the respondents were male and 21.1% of the respondents were female.

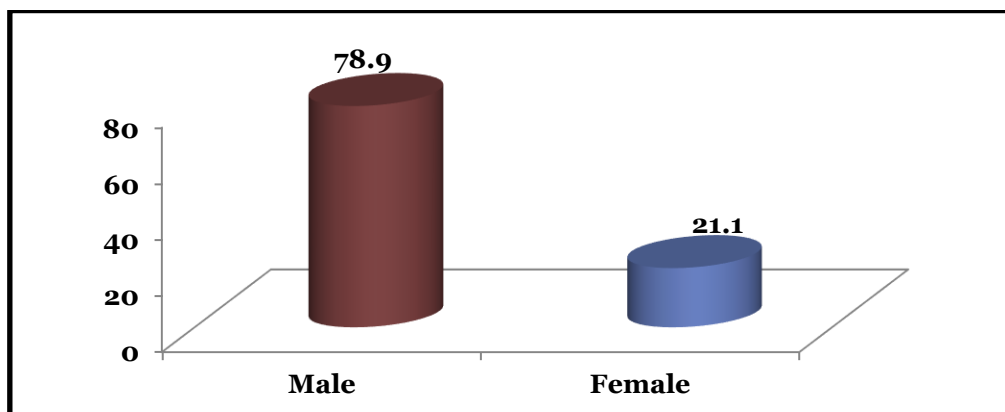


Figure 6: Graph of Frequency of gender of the respondents

Table 9: Frequency of Education of the Respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Kindergarten	8	6.0
Primary	28	21.1
Secondary	50	37.6
Skill development training (subject skills, computer, sports, etc.)	25	18.8
Extracurricular training (music, dance, painting, etc.)	22	16.5
Total	133	100.0

Table 9 depicts the education of the respondents. Majority 37.6% of the respondents were done secondary education followed 21.1% of the respondents were done up to primary, 18.8% of the respondents were Skill development training (subject skills, computer, sports, etc.), and 16.5% of the respondents were done Extracurricular training (music, dance, painting, etc.).

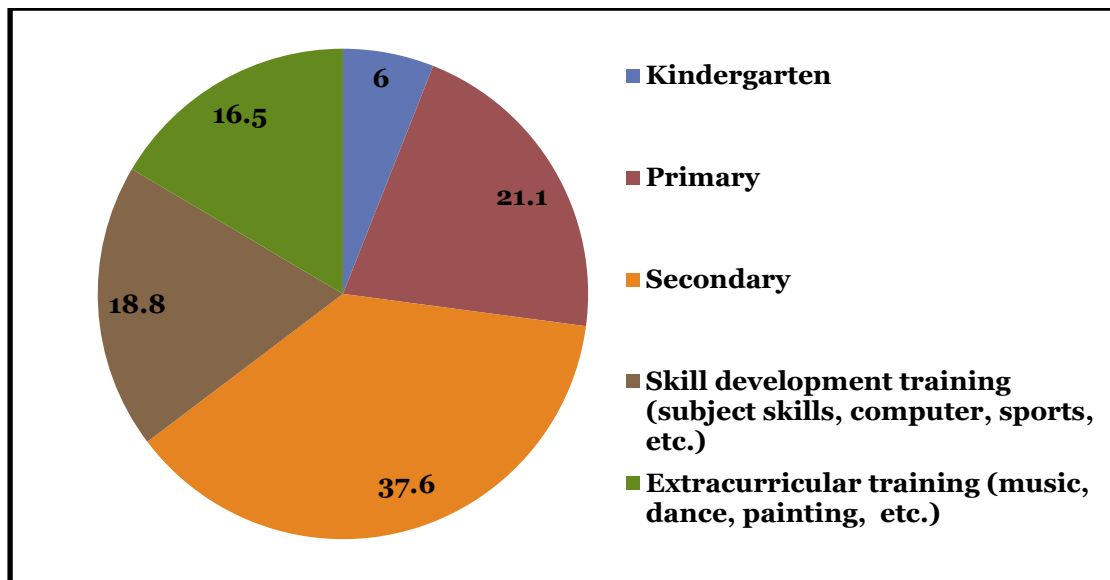


Figure 7: Graph of Frequency of Education of the respondents

Table 10: Frequency of the respondents who heard about incidents of respondents facing threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	45	33.8
Sometimes	17	12.8
Only a Few	12	9.0
No	59	44.4
Total	133	100.0

Table 10 depicts that the respondents heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities. Majority 44.4% of the respondents stated that they did not heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities followed by 33.8% of the respondents were heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities, 12.8% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 9% of the respondents only a few times heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad

comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities.

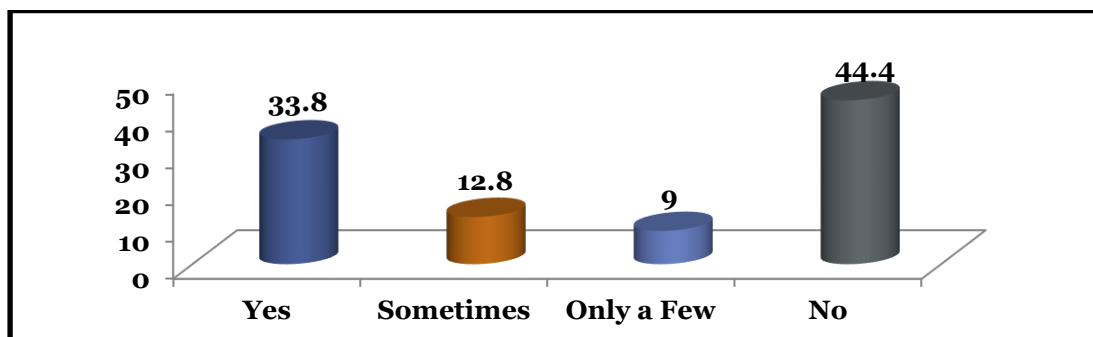


Figure 8: Graph of respondents heard about incidents of respondents to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities

Table 11: Frequency of the respondents heard about terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail, or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	49	36.8
Sometimes	37	27.8
Only a Few	22	16.5
No	25	18.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 11 depicts that the respondents heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents. Majority 36.8% of the respondents stated that they heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents followed by 18.8% of the respondents were not heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents, 27.8% of the

respondents mentioned sometimes and 16.5% of the respondents only a few times heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents.

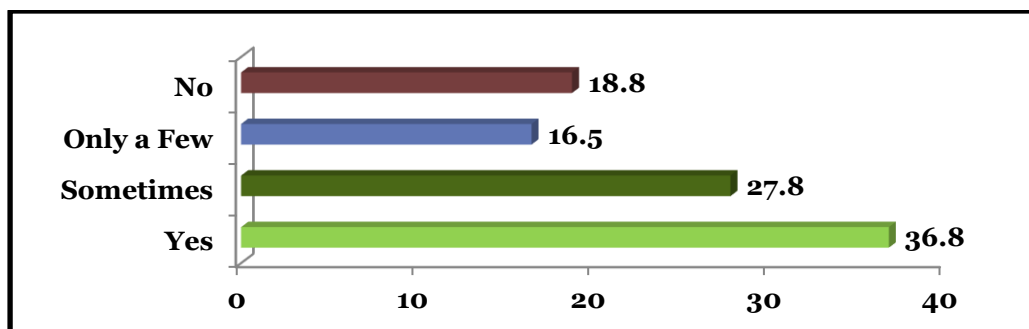


Figure 9: Graph the respondents heard about the terms like cyber bullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in respondents

Table 12: Frequency of the respondents who heard about online child security policies made by the government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassment

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	30	22.6
Sometimes	50	37.6
Only a Few	22	16.5
No	31	23.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 12 depicts that the respondents heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassments. Majority 22.6% of the respondents stated that they heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassments followed by 23.3% of the respondents were not heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from

online harassments, 37.6% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 16.5% of the respondents only a few times heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassments.

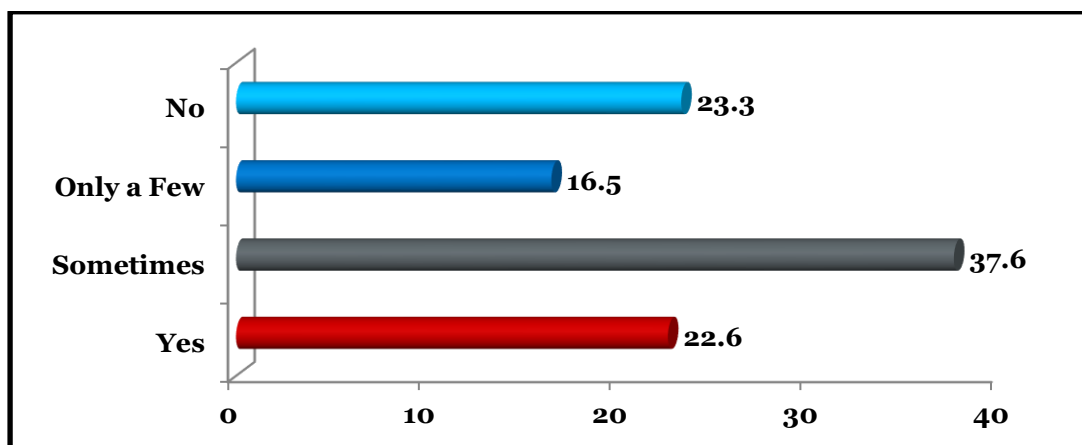


Figure 10: Graph of the respondents heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries

Table 13: Frequency of the respondents faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country at the time you're browsing the internet/doing online activities

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	51	38.3
Sometimes	21	15.8
Only a Few	20	15.0
No	41	30.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 13 depicts that the respondents faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country at the time you're browsing the internet/doing online activities. Majority 38.3% of the respondents stated that they faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country at the time you're browsing the internet/doing online activities followed by 30.8% of the respondents were not heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassments, 15.8% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 15% of the respondents only a few

times they faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country at the time you're browsing the internet/doing online activities.

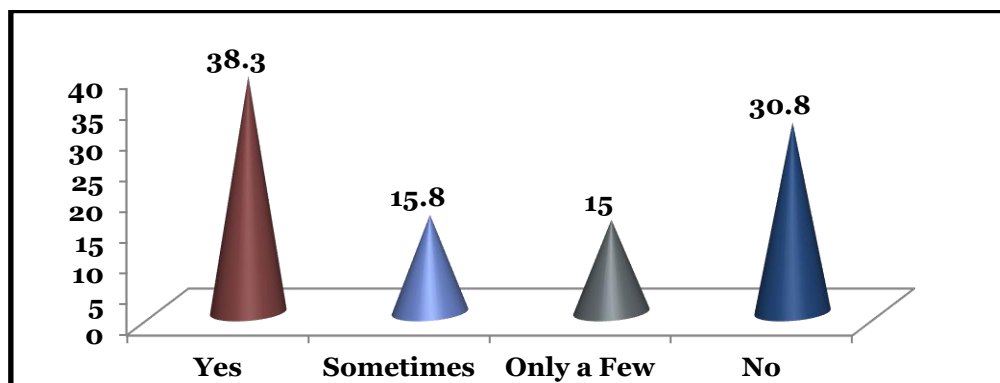


Figure 11: Graph of the respondents faced difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country

Table 15: Frequency of the respondents' kid of their age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	31.6
Sometimes	31	23.3
Only a Few	24	18.0
No	36	27.1
Total	133	100.0

Table 15 depicts that the respondents' kid of their age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on respondents. Majority 31.6% of the respondents stated that they their kid of age from other countries ever shared information on online exploitation on respondents followed by 23.3% of the respondents were not their kid age from other countries never shared any information on online exploitation on respondents, 23.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 18% of the respondents only a few times.

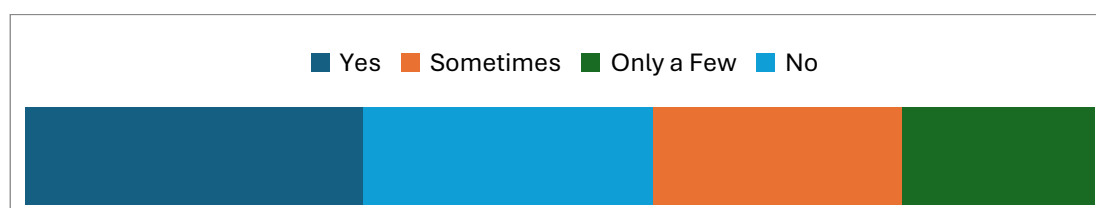


Figure 12: Graph of the respondents' kid of their age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on respondents

Table 16: Frequency of the respondents think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	37.6
Sometimes	46	34.6
Only a Few	26	19.5
No	11	8.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 16 depicts that the respondents think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body. Majority 37.6% of the respondents stated that they think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body followed by 8.3% of the respondents stated that they did not think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body, 34.6% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 19.5% of the respondents only a few times they think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body.

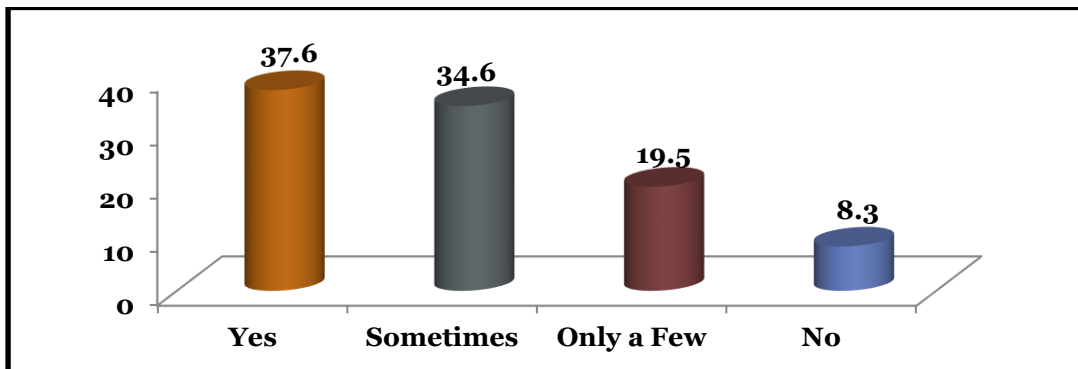


Figure 13: Graph of the respondents think that the incidents of online exploitation on respondents all over the world make bad impacts on child's mind and body

Table 17: Frequency of the respondents heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	18	13.5
Sometimes	24	18.0
Only a Few	37	27.8
No	54	40.6
Total	133	100.0

Table 17 depicts that the respondents heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents. Majority 13.5% of the respondents stated that they heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents followed by 40.6% of the respondents stated that they did not heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents, 18% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 27.8% of the respondents only a few times they heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on respondents.

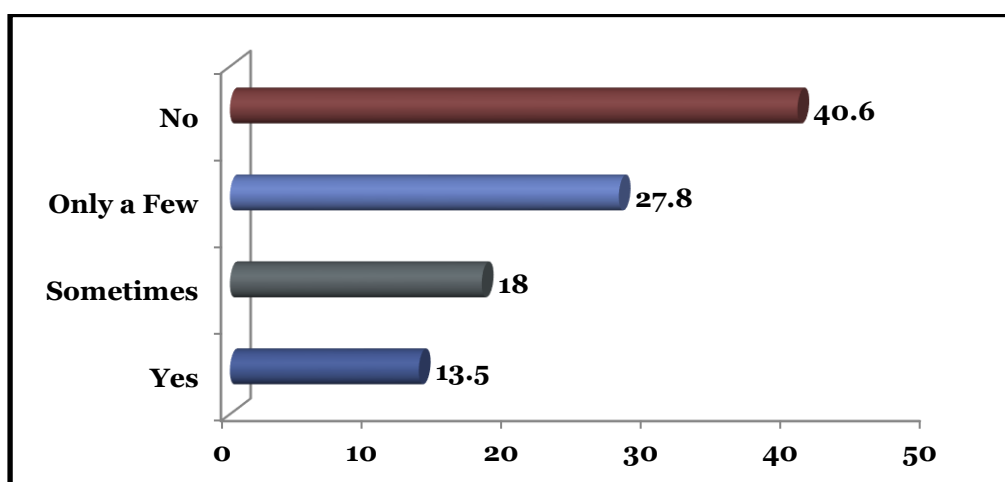


Figure 14: Graph of the respondents heard about their teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation

Table 18: Frequency of the respondents heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	73	54.9
Sometimes	21	15.8
Only a Few	23	17.3
No	16	12.0
Total	133	100.0

Table 18 depicts that the respondents heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation. Majority 54.9% of the respondents stated that they heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation followed by 12% of the respondents stated that they did not heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation, 15.8% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 17.3% of the respondents only a few times they heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation.

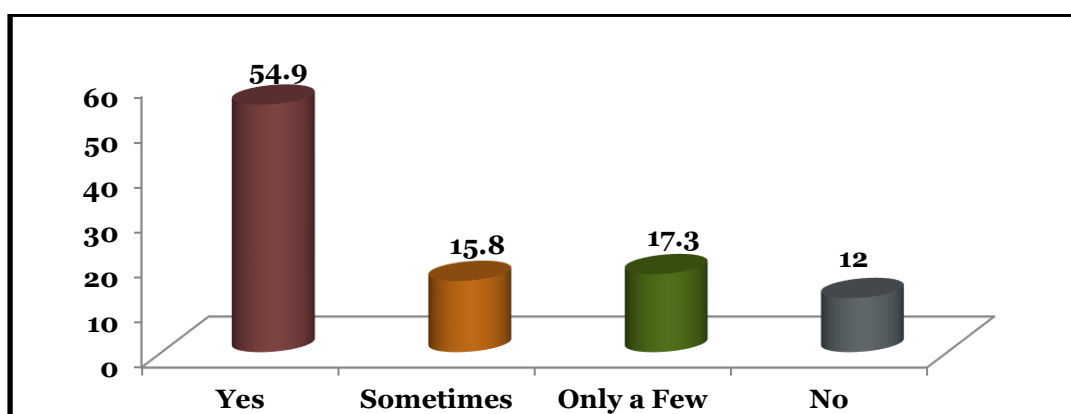


Figure 15: Graph of the respondents heard about online child safety measure policies

Table 19: Frequency of the respondents ever asked their teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that they were scared/feeling bad and need

protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to them while doing online activities

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	51	38.3
Sometimes	31	23.3
Only a Few	19	14.3
No	32	24.1
Total	133	100.0

Table 19 depicts that the respondents ever asked their teachers/ parents/ elders/ friends/ others that they were scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to them while doing online activities. Majority 38.3% of the respondents stated that they asked their teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that they were scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to them while doing online activities followed by 24.1% of the respondents stated that they did not heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation, 23.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 14.3% of the respondents only a few times they heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation.

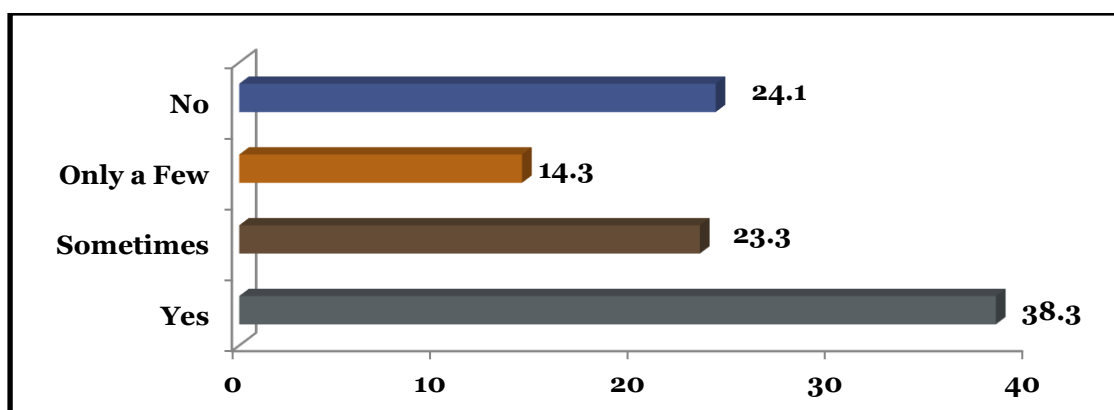


Figure 16: Graph of the respondents ever asked their teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that they were scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to them

Table 20: Frequency of the respondents ever met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	70	52.6
Sometimes	19	14.3
Only a Few	12	9.0
No	32	24.1
Total	133	100.0

Table 20 depicts that the respondents ever met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities. Majority 52.6% of the respondents stated that they met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities followed by 24.1% of the respondents stated that they did not meet NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities, 14.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 9% of the respondents only a few times they met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents and told to inform them if they suffer from bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities.

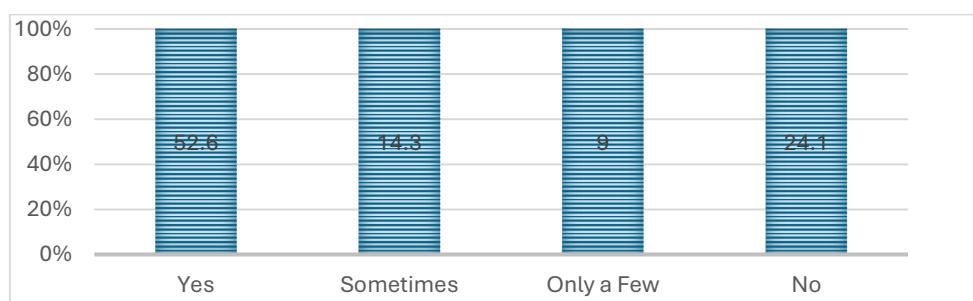


Figure 17: Figure of the respondents ever met NGO/police staff/official who cautioned about online exploitation on respondents

Table 21: Frequency of the respondents know any elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	58	43.6
Sometimes	27	20.3
Only a Few	13	9.8
No	35	26.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 21 depicts that the respondents know any elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents. Majority 43.6% of the respondents stated that they know elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents followed by 26.3% of the respondents stated that they did not know elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents, 20.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 9.8% of the respondents only a few times they know elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents.

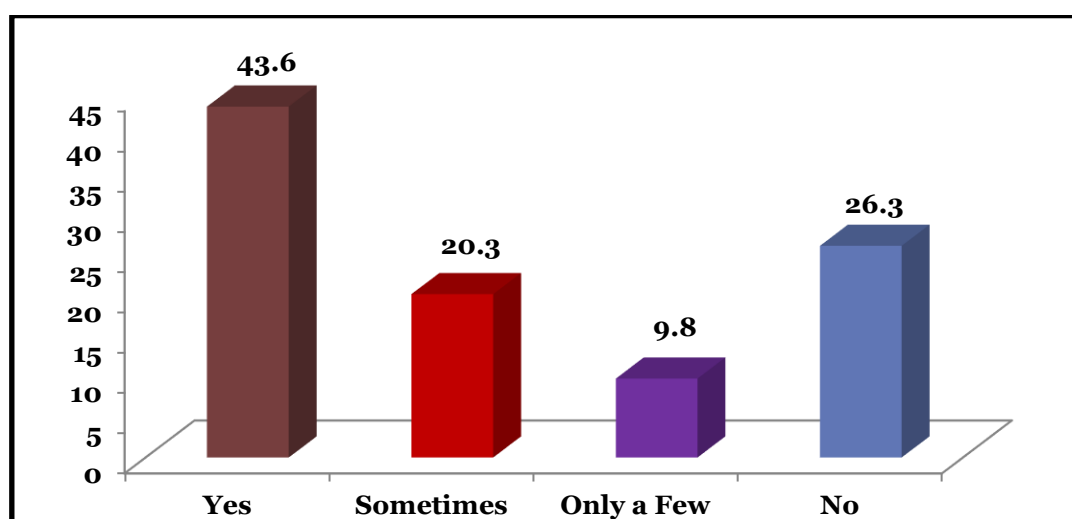


Figure 18: Graph of the respondents know any elders/neighbor’s/teachers of their school or their parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on respondents

Table 21 A: Frequency of the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	61	45.9
Sometimes	21	15.8
Only a Few	28	21.1
No	23	17.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 21 depicts that the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents. Majority 45.9% of the respondents stated that they see anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents followed by 17.3% of the respondents stated that they did not see anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents, 15.8% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 21.1% of the respondents only a few times they seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation on respondents.

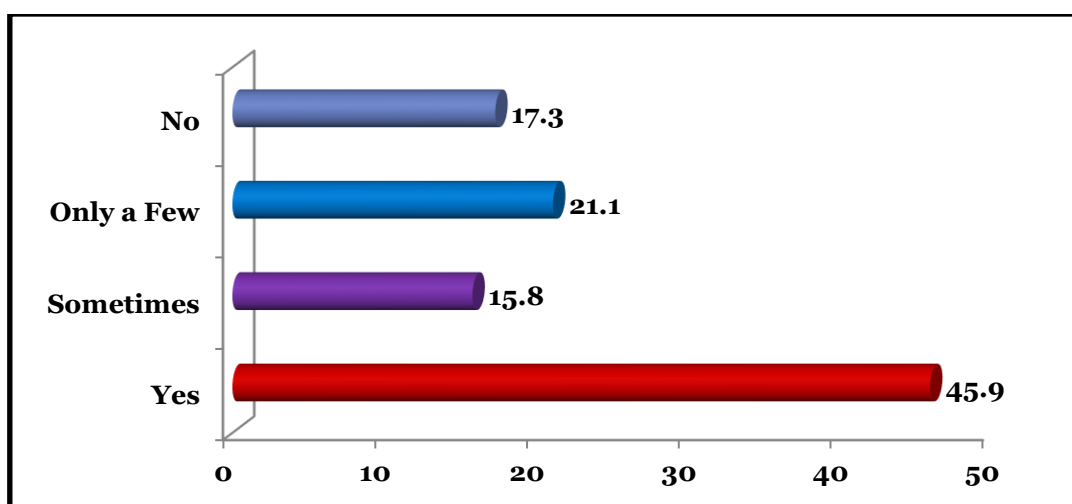


Figure 19: Graph of the respondents ever seen anyone personally make any complaint to the local police of their place on online exploitation

Table 22: Frequency of the respondents thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	86	64.7
Sometimes	14	10.5
Only a Few	11	8.3
No	22	16.5
Total	133	100.0

Table 22 depicts that the respondents thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on respondents. Majority 64.7% of the respondents stated that they thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on respondents followed by 16.5% of the respondents stated that they did not thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on respondents, 10.5% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 8.3% of the respondents only a few times they thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on respondents.

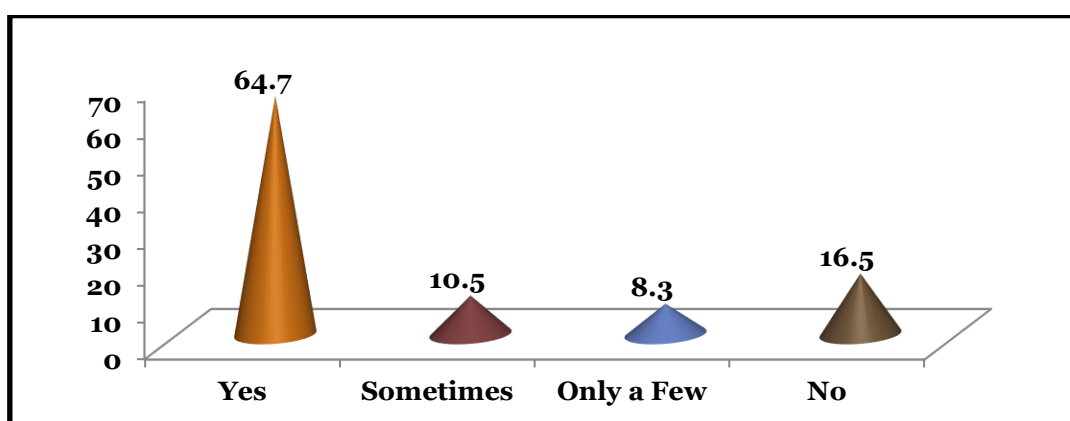


Figure 20: Graph of the respondents thinks teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained

Table 23: Frequency of the respondents attended any awareness events organized in your school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on respondents and take suitable actions

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	64	48.1
Sometimes	23	17.3
Only a Few	25	18.8
No	21	15.8
Total	133	100.0

Table 23 depicts that the respondents attended any awareness events organized in your school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on respondents and take suitable actions. Majority 48.1% of the respondents stated that they attended awareness events organized in their school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on respondents and take suitable actions followed by 15.8% of the respondents stated that they did not attended awareness events organized in their school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on respondents and take suitable actions, 17.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 18.8% of the respondents only a few times they attended awareness events organized in their school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on respondents and take suitable actions.

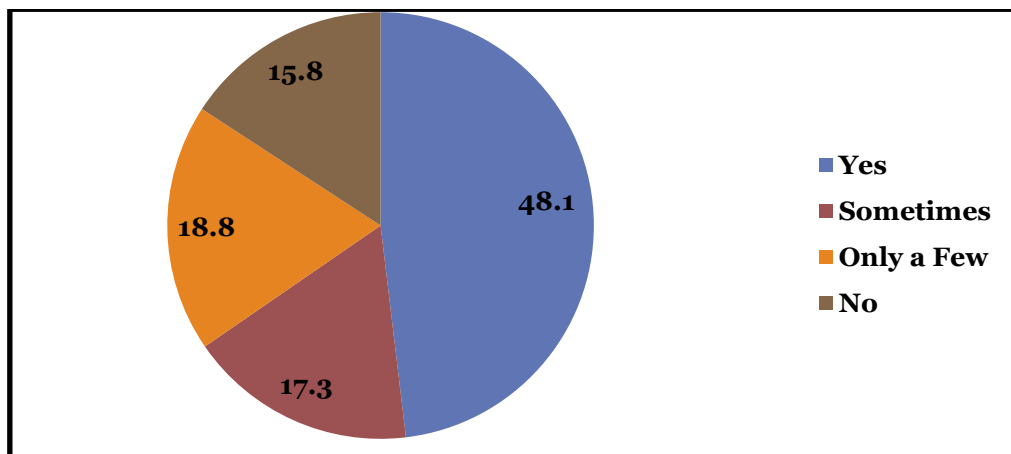


Figure 21: Graph of the respondents attended any awareness events organized in your school/ neighborhoods/ community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation

Table 24: Frequency of the respondents parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	48	36.1
Sometimes	27	20.3
Only a Few	30	22.6
No	28	21.1
Total	133	100.0

Table 24 depicts that the respondents parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online. Majority 36.1% of the respondents stated that the parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online followed by 20.3% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 22.6% of the respondents only a few times only the parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online.

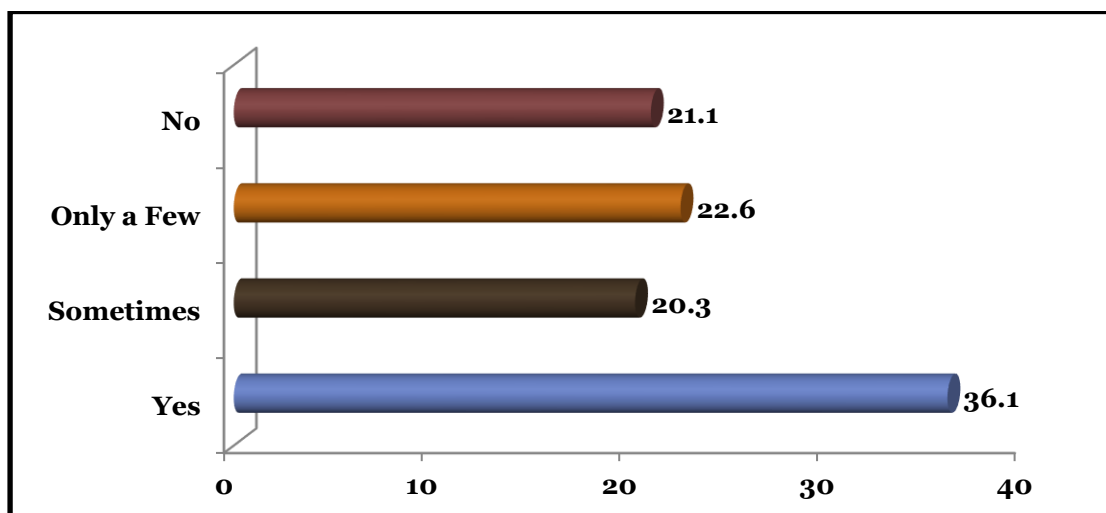


Figure 22: Graph of the respondents parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed

5.5.2 NGO Analysis

Table 25: Frequency of type of unit

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
NGO	25	71.4
Local Administration office managing safety and order	10	28.6
Total	35	100.0

Table 25 depicts that the type of unit. Majority 71.4% is NFO unit type and 28.6% is Local Administration office managing safety and order.

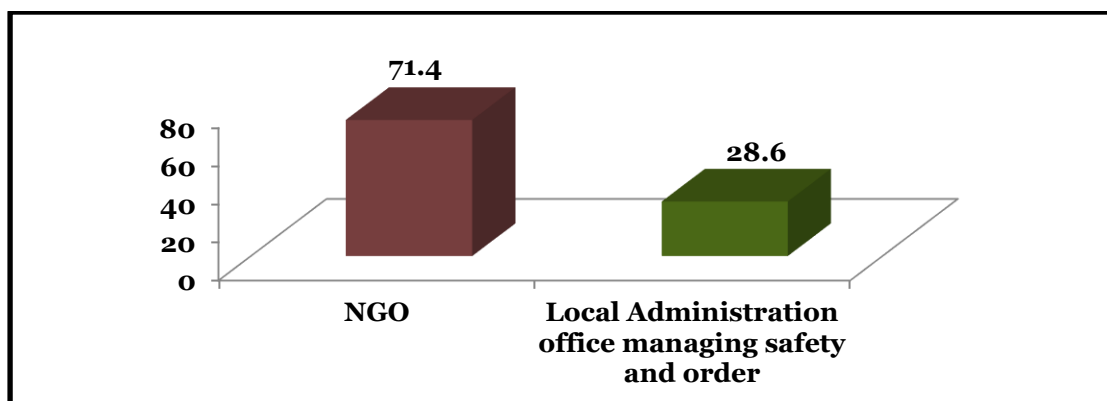


Figure 23: Graph of type of unit

Table 26: Frequency of Location

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Jaipur	27	77.1
Other parts of Rajasthan	8	22.9
Total	35	100.0

Table 26 depicts that the location of the respondents. Majority 77.1% of the respondents from Jaipur and 22.9% of the respondents were other parts of Rajasthan.

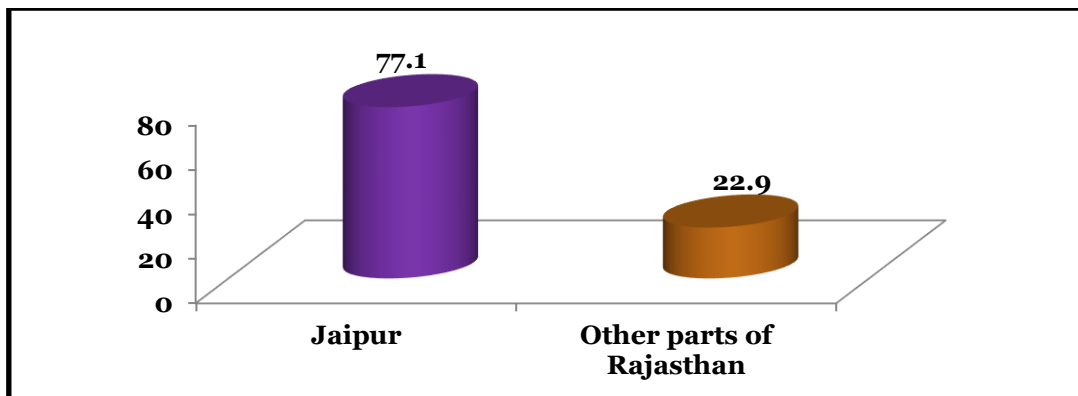


Figure 24: Graph of Location

Table 27: Frequency of Type of Activity done by the unit

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Child Rights Protection	22	62.9
Protection of Child from sexual exploitation	3	8.6
Awareness on sexual exploitation on children	5	14.3
Local regulatory bodies of safety and law	5	14.3
Total	35	100.0

Table 27 depicts that the Type of Activity done by the unit. Majority 62.9% of the respondents stated Child Rights Protection followed by 14.3% of the respondents stated Awareness on sexual exploitation on children and Local regulatory bodies of safety and law and 8.6% of the respondents mentioned Protection of Child from sexual exploitation.

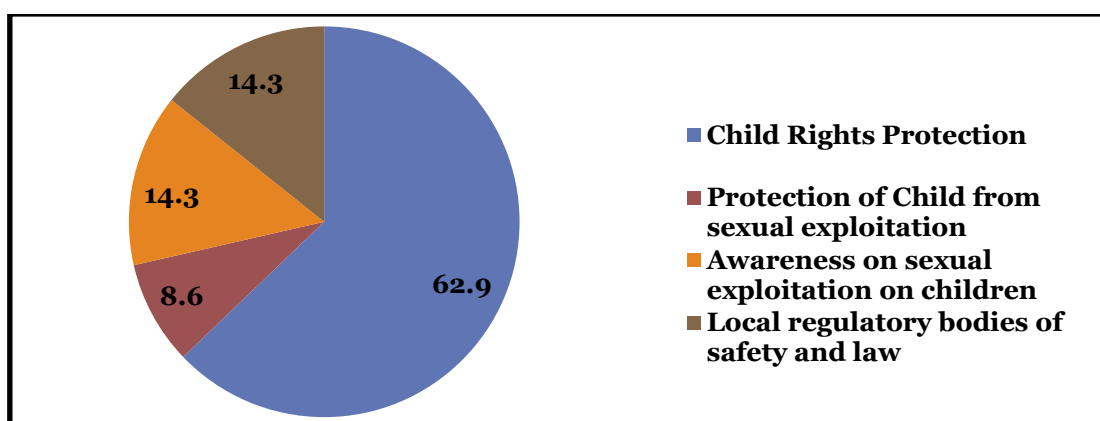


Figure 25: Graph of Type of Activity done by the unit

Table 28: Frequency of Person Interviewed on the unit

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Unit Head	6	17.1
Staff	21	60.0
Clerk	5	14.3
Word of Mouth	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

Table 28 depicts that the person interviewed on the unit. Majority 60% of the respondents mentioned staff unit followed by 17.1% of the respondents stated unit head and 8.6% of the respondents mentioned Word of Mouth.

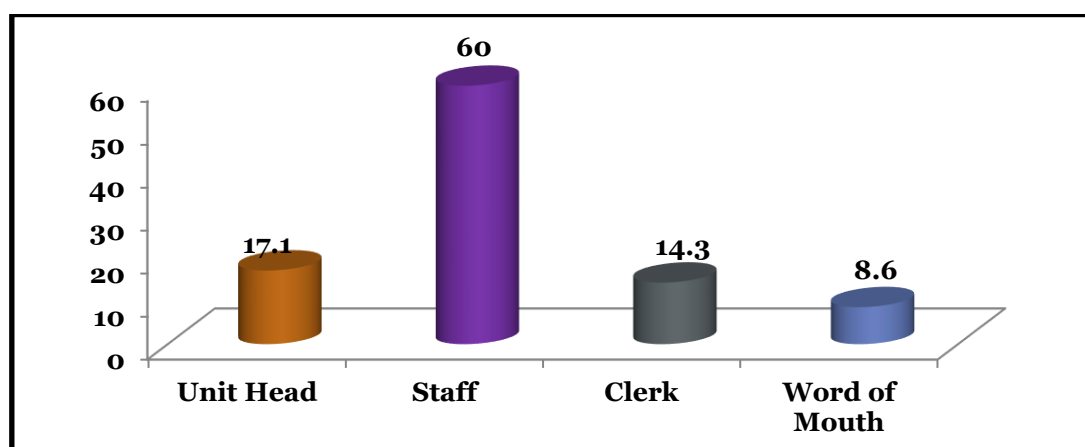


Figure 26: Graph of Person Interviewed on the unit

Table 29: Frequency of the respondents stated about how familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very familiar	7	20.0
Somewhat familiar	19	54.3
Not familiar at all	9	25.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 29 depicts that the respondents stated about how familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 54.3% of the respondents stated that somewhat familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation staff unit followed by 25.7% of the respondents stated not familiar at all and 20% of the respondents stated that very familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation staff unit.

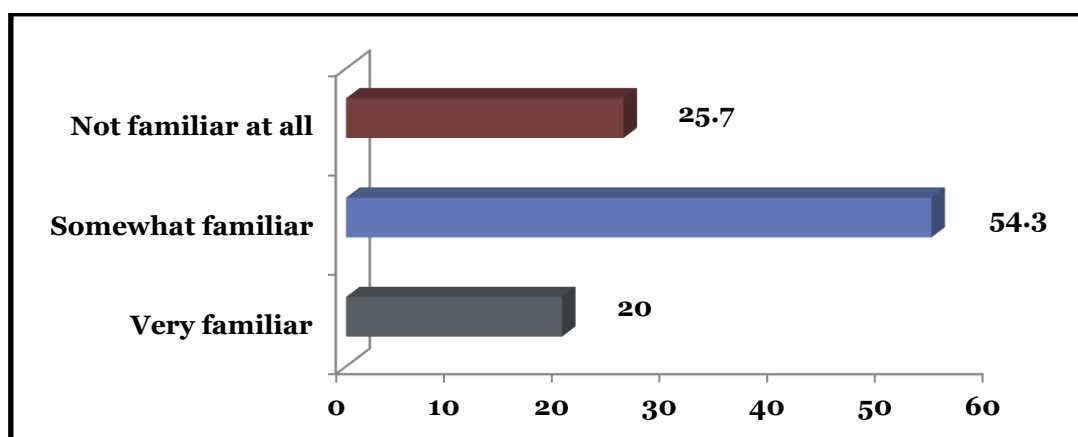


Figure 27: Graph of the respondents stated about how familiar is with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation

Table 30: Frequency of historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	4	11.4
Sometimes	5	14.3
No	10	28.6
Cannot say	16	45.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 30 depicts that historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives. Majority 11.4% of the respondents stated that the historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives followed by 14.3% of the

respondents mentioned sometimes and 28.6% of the respondents mentioned that there is no historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives.

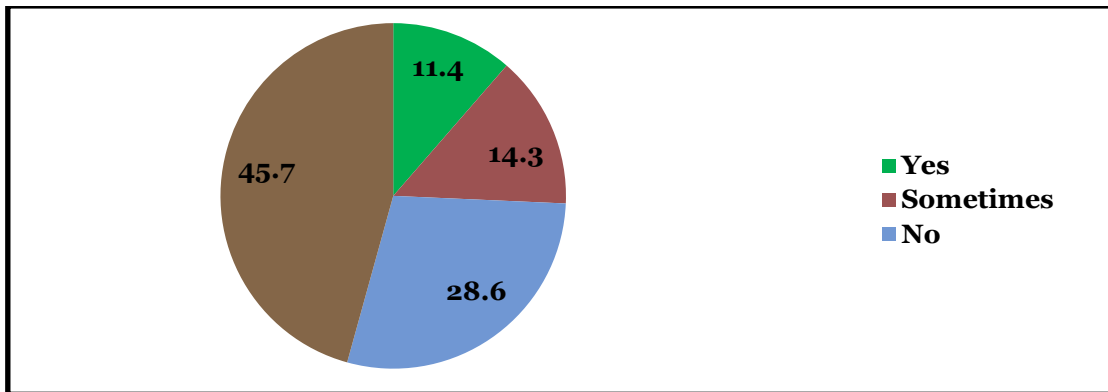


Figure 28: Graph of historic incidents on online child exploitations help in your work and initiatives

Table 31: Frequency of the respondents noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing in number than the historic incidents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	9	25.7
Sometimes	16	45.7
No	2	5.7
Cannot say	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

Table 31 depicts that the respondents noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing in number than the historic incidents. Majority 25.7% of the respondents stated that they noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing in number than the historic incidents followed by 45.7% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 5.7% of the respondents mentioned that they did not noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing in number than the historic incidents.

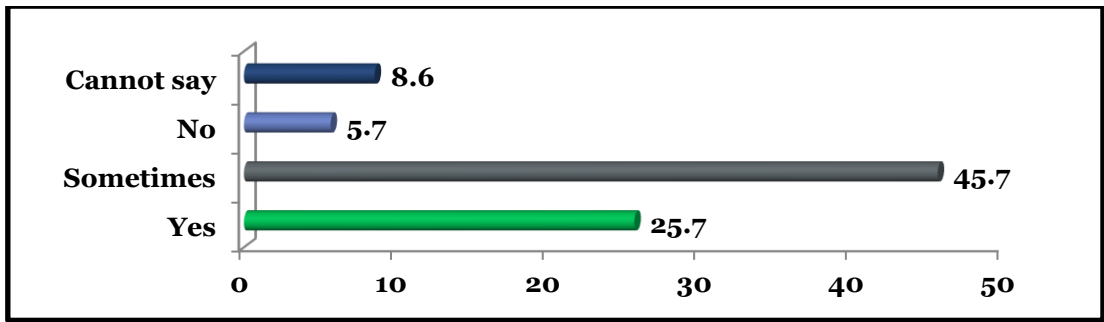


Figure 29: Graph of the respondents noticed/feel that the pattern of online child exploitations cases is changing and growing

Table 32: Frequency of law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	14	40.0
Sometimes	11	31.4
Once or twice	6	17.1
No	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

Table 32 depicts that the respondents stated about law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations. Majority 40% of the respondents stated that the law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations followed by 31.4% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 11.4% of the respondents mentioned that law and administrations are not aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations.

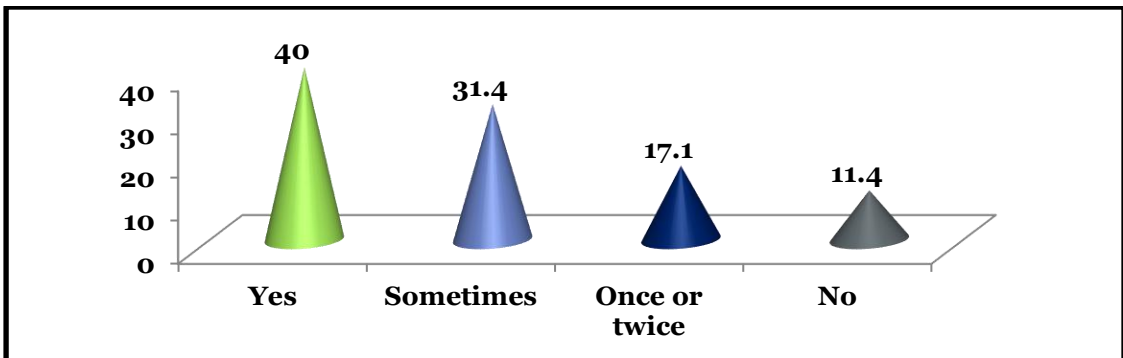


Figure 30: Graph of law and administrations are becoming more aware and capable than the historic times in handling online child exploitations

Table 33: Frequency of causes of growth/spread of online child exploitations in recent world

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Access of computer and internet in houses, school other skill building areas	3	8.6
Rise in use of smart phones	17	48.6
Rise in Online education	8	22.9
Access on online entertainment	3	8.6
Rise in Social Networking	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

Table 33 depicts that the respondents stated about causes of growth/spread of online child exploitations in recent world. Majority 48.6% of the respondents stated that Rise in use of smart phones followed by 22.9% of the respondents mentioned Rise in Online education, 11.4% of the respondents stated Rise in Social Networking and 8.6% of the respondents mentioned that access of computer and internet in houses, school other skill building areas and access on online entertainment.

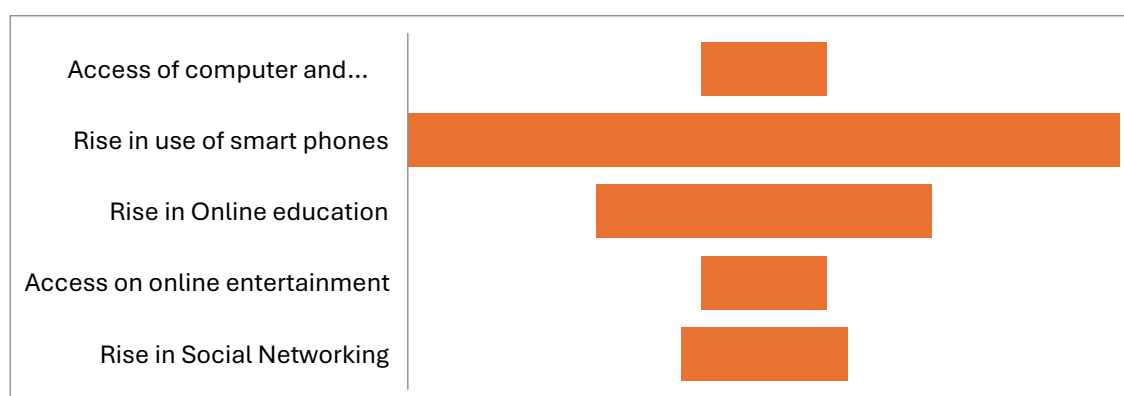


Figure 31: Graph of causes of growth/spread of online child exploitations in recent world

Table 34: Frequency of international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number in the country

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	54.3
Sometimes	3	8.6
Once or twice	5	14.3
No	5	14.3
Cannot say	3	8.6
Total	35	100.0

Table 34 depicts that the respondents' thinks international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number in the country. Majority 54.3% of the respondents stated that international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number in the country followed by 14.3% of the respondents stated that international cases of online child exploitations are not impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number in the country, 8.6% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 14.3% of the respondents only a few times only an international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing in number in the country.

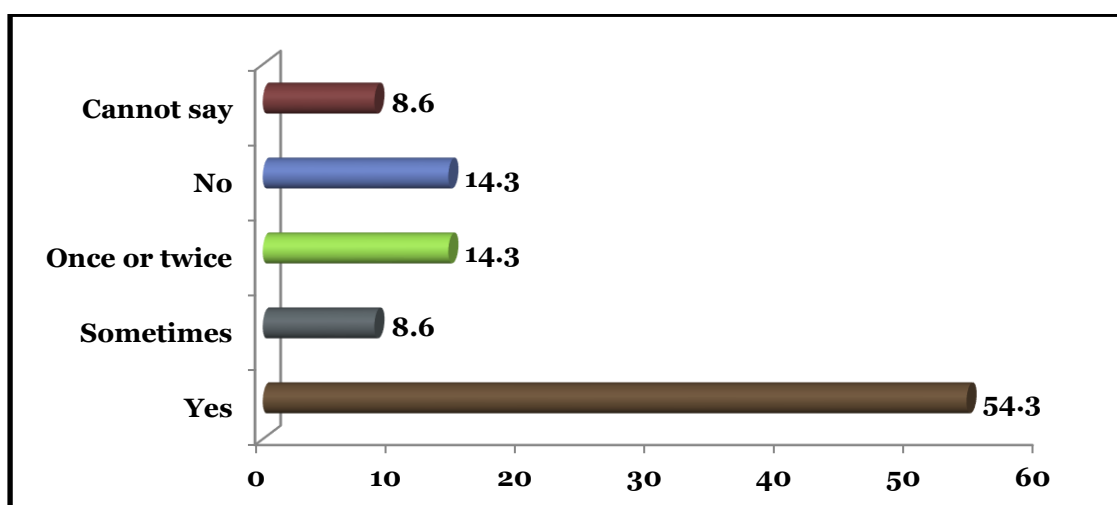


Figure 32: Graph of international cases of online child exploitations are impacting on India's society and similar cases are growing

Table 35: Frequency of International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	26	74.3
Sometimes	3	8.6
Once or twice	2	5.7
No	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

Table 35 depicts that the respondents' thinks International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations. Majority 74.3% of the respondents stated that International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations followed by 11.4% of the respondents stated that International legal systems and administration are not cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations, 8.6% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 5.7% of the respondents only a few times only an International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations.

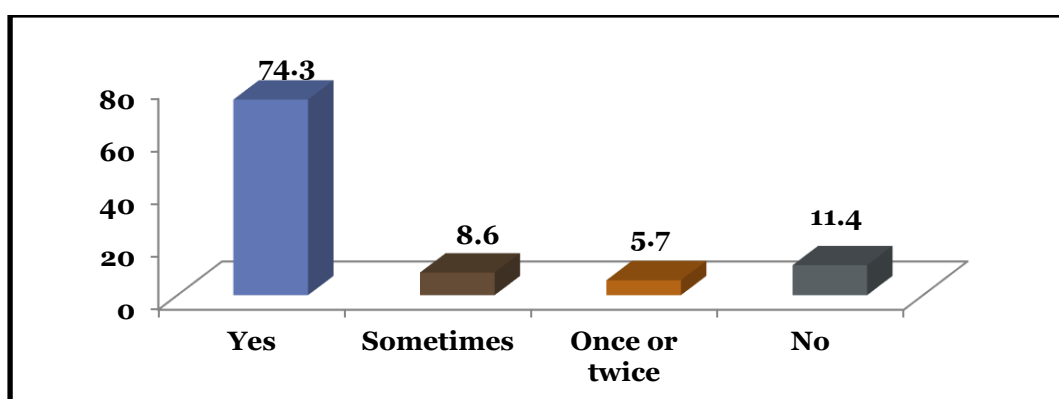


Figure 33: Graph of International legal systems and administration are cooperative and sensitive in protecting child safety and rights and support in controlling online child exploitations

Table 36: Frequency of effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Very effective	9	25.7
Effective	17	48.6
Moderate	9	25.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 36 depicts that the respondents rate for an effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child. Majority 48.6% of the respondents stated that there is effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child and 25.7% of the respondents stated that there is very effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child.

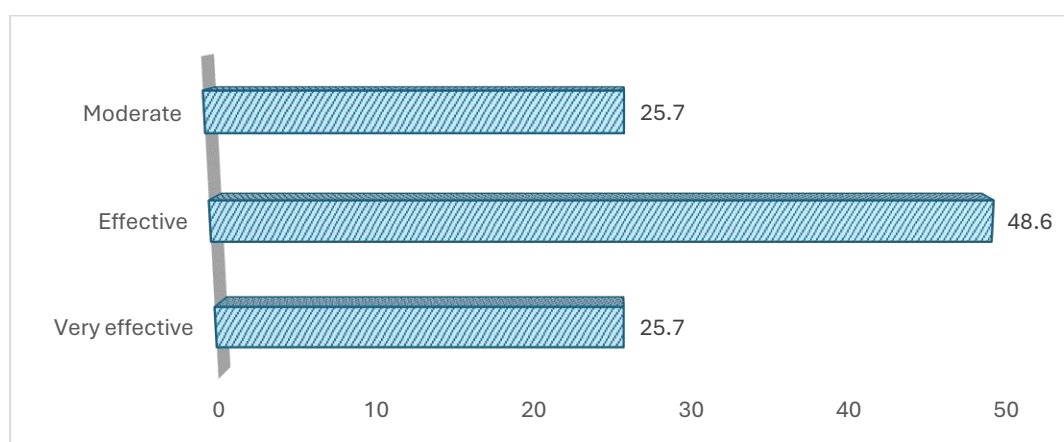


Figure 34: Graph of effectiveness and role of India's legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child

Table 37: Frequency of the respondents think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	22	62.9
Sometimes	4	11.4

Once or twice	4	11.4
No	3	8.6
Cannot say	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 37 depicts that the respondents' think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives. Majority 62.9% of the respondents stated that they think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives followed by 8.6% of the respondents stated that they did not think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives, 11.4% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 11.4% of the respondents only a few times only India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives.

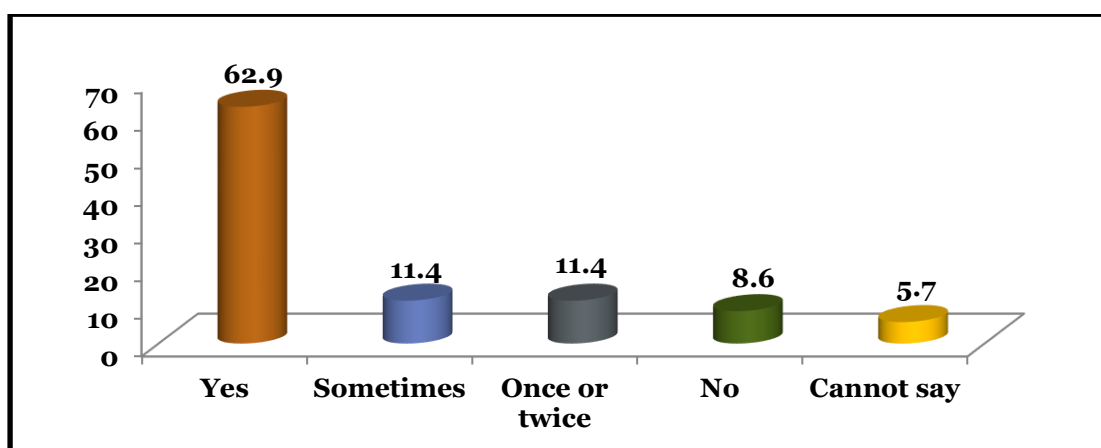


Figure 35: Graph of the respondents think India's legal administration system align and supportive to your role and initiatives

Table 38: Frequency of respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	4	11.4
Sometimes	6	17.1
Once or twice	4	11.4

No	19	54.3
Cannot say	2	5.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 38 depicts that the respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system. It was found that, 11.4% of the respondents stated that they respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system followed by 54.3% of the respondents stated that they did not face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system, 17.1% of the respondents mentioned sometimes and 11.4% of the respondents only a few times only face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system.

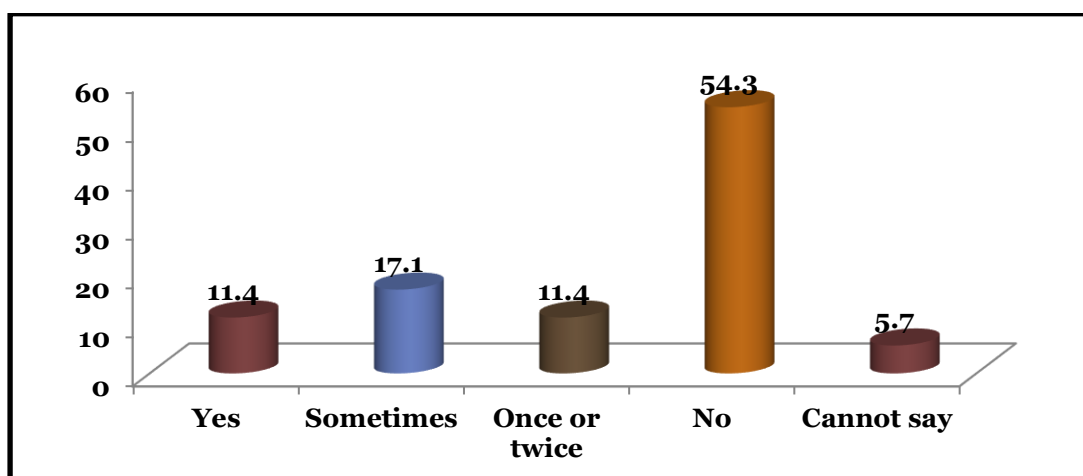


Figure 36: Graph of respondents face difficulties or conflicts in carrying out their child protection and prevention of online sexual exploitation on child under India's legal administration system

Table 39: Frequency of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Not at all effective	4	11.4

Not effective	2	5.7
Effective	25	71.4
Very effective	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

Table 39 depicts that the respondents rate for role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety. Majority 71.4% of the respondents stated that there is an effectiveness of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety and 11.4% of the respondents stated that there is very effectiveness of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety.

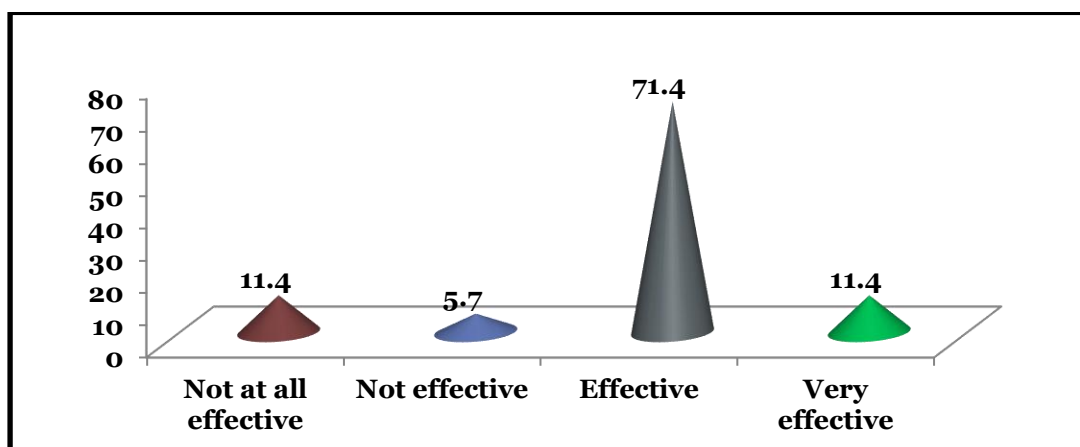


Figure 37: Graph of role and performances in terms of preventing online sexual exploitation on child and securing child rights and safety

Table 40: Frequency of How many cases of online sexual exploitation on child have you handled in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan so far

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Large number	2	5.7
Some	13	37.1
Only a few	3	8.6
Cannot say	17	48.6
Total	35	100.0

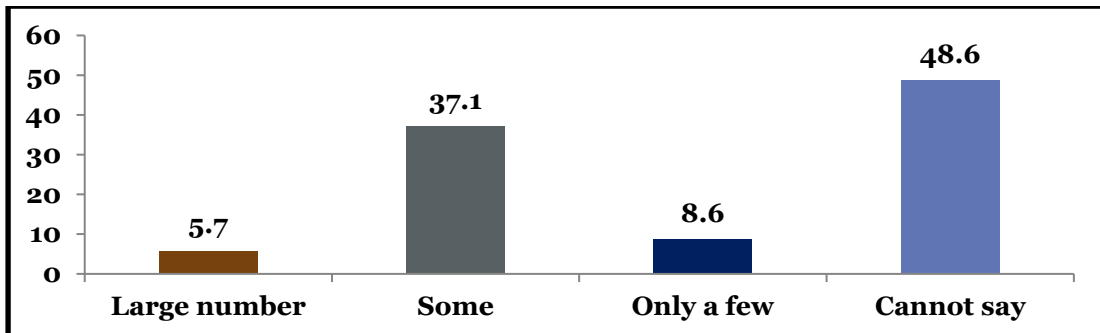


Figure 38: Graph of How many cases of online sexual exploitation on child have you handled in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan so far

Table 41: Frequency of get support and help from local judiciary, law and order system (police department)

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	71.4
No	6	17.1
Cannot say	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

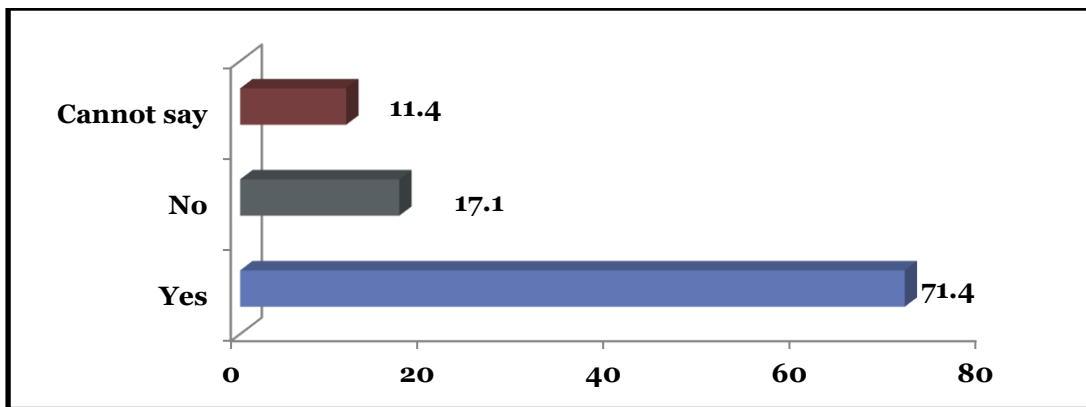


Figure 39: Graph of get support and help from local judiciary, law and order system (police department)

Table 42: Frequency of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Not at all effective	4	11.4
Moderate	3	8.6

Effective	19	54.3
Very effective	9	25.7
Total	35	100.0

Table 42 depicts that the respondents rate for Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child. Majority 54.3% of the respondents stated that there is an effectiveness of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child and 25.7% of the respondents stated that there is very effectiveness of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child.

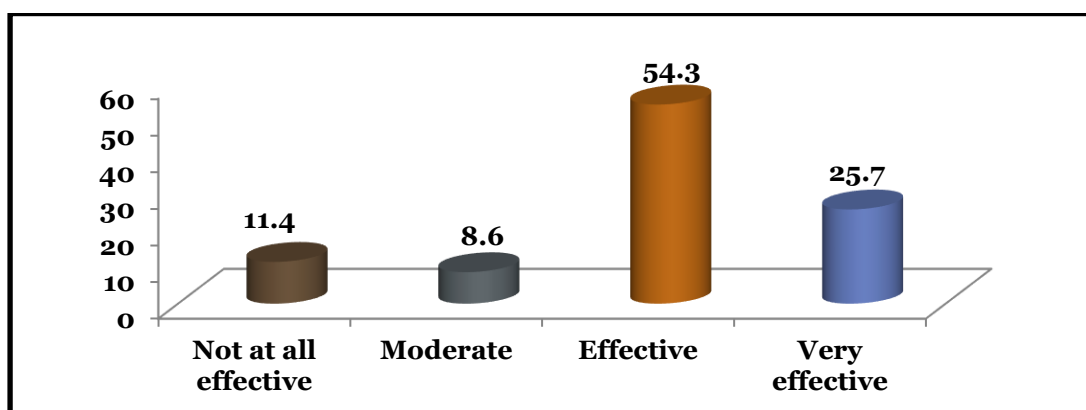


Figure 40: Graph of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police department) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child

Table 43: Frequency of awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Large number	5	14.3
Many	25	71.4
Some	1	2.9
Cannot say	4	11.4
Total	35	100.0

Table 43 depicts that the respondents' stated about awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan. It was found that, 71.4% of the respondents stated that there are many awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan followed by 14.3% of the respondents stated that there is large number of awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan and 2.9% of the respondents stated that there is some awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation on child in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan.

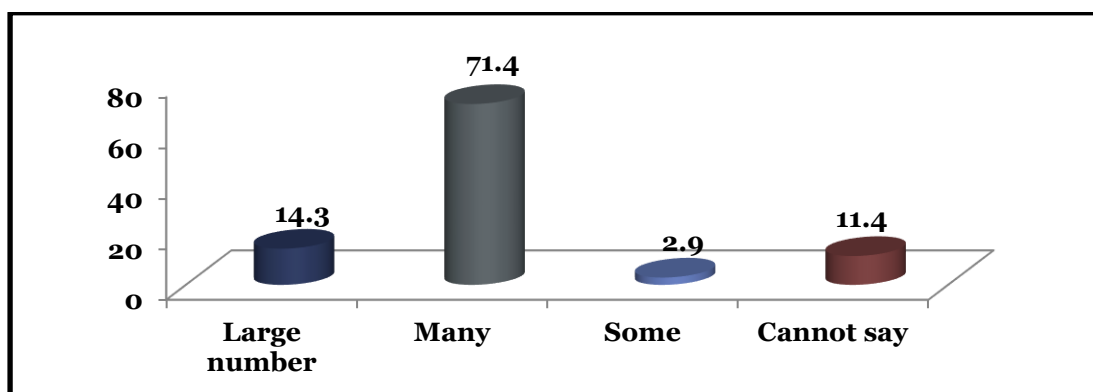


Figure 41: Graph of awareness initiatives have organized so far in schools/localities/door-to-door campaigns/any other ways on online sexual exploitation

Table 44: Frequency of respondents stated about public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	27	77.1
Sometimes	1	2.9
No	7	20.0
Total	35	100.0

Table 44 depicts that the respondents' stated about public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 77.1% of the respondents stated that public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child followed by 20% of the respondents stated that the public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are not aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child and 2.9% of the respondents stated that the public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are somewhat aware and active to support for and prevent online sexual exploitation on child.

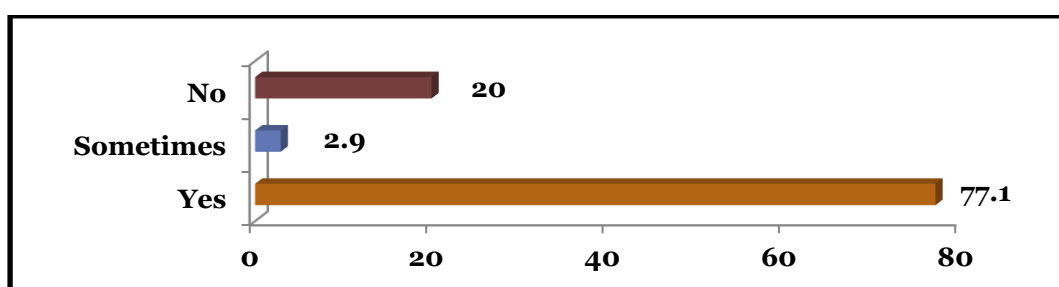


Figure 42: Graph of respondents stated about public/parents/schools/legal system in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan

5.5.3 Legal Analysis

Table 45: Frequency of age of the respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
18-24	7	9.9
25-34	31	43.7
35-44	20	28.2
45-54	7	9.9
Above 55	6	8.5
Total	77	100.0

Table 45 depicts that the age of the respondents. Majority 43.7% of the respondents' age between 25-34 years followed by 28.2% of the respondents' age between 34-44 years, 9.9% of the respondents age between 18-24 years and least 8.5% of the respondents' age above 55 years.

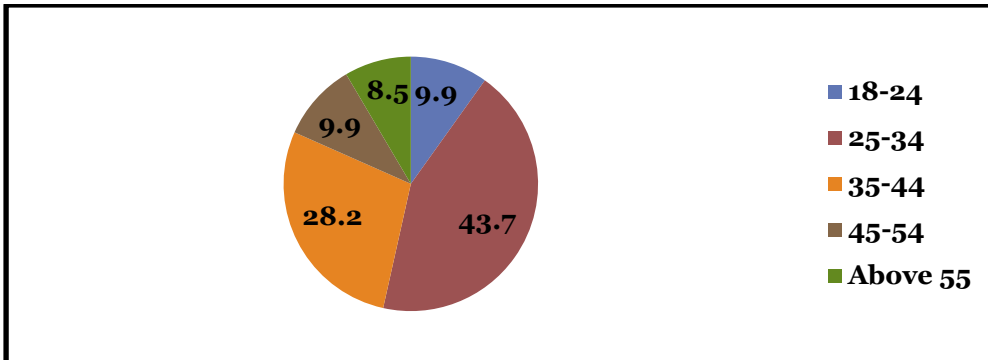


Figure 43: Graph of the age of the respondents

Table 46: Frequency of gender

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	58	81.7
Female	13	18.3
Total	77	100.0

Table 46 depicts that the gender of the respondents. Majority 81.7% of the respondents were male and 18.3% of the respondents were female.

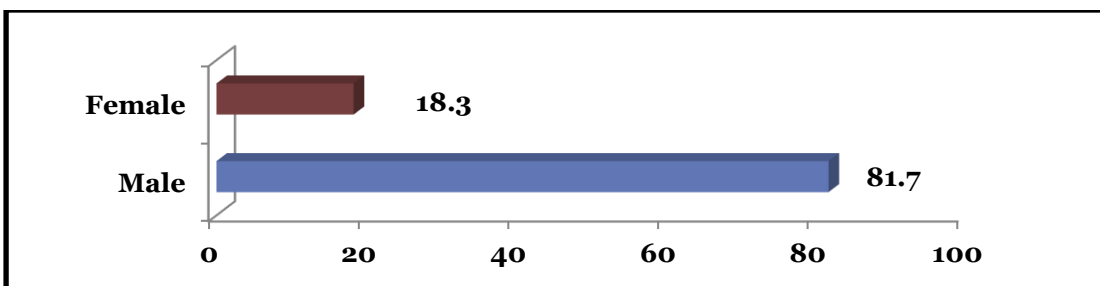


Figure 44: Graph of gender

Table 47: Frequency of Education of the Respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Graduate	5	7.0
Law Student	15	21.1

LLB	20	28.2
LLM	2	2.8
Doctorate in Judicial Science	19	26.8
Diploma in Law	10	14.1
Total	77	100.0

Table 47 depicts that the education of the respondents. Majority 28.2% of the respondents were done LLB followed by 26.8% of the respondents were completed LLM, 21.1% of the respondents were Law students and least 7% of the respondents were done graduate.

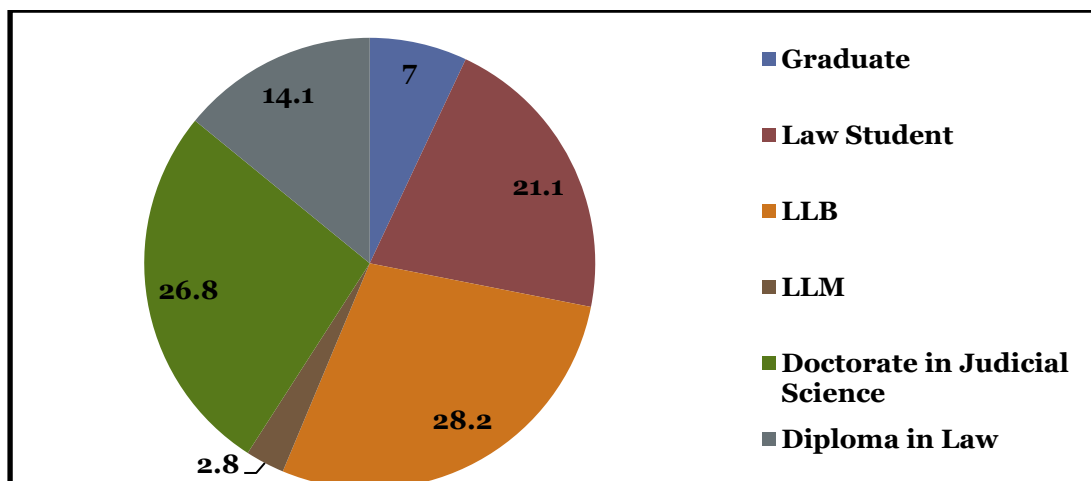


Figure 45: Graph of Education of the respondents

Table 47: Frequency of Occupation of the respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Law Intern	22	31.0
Legal Journalist	8	11.3
Advocate (Private)	9	12.7
Attorney	7	9.9
Prosecutor	9	12.7
Litigator	7	9.9
Law Consultant/Legal Advisor	1	1.4
Session Judge	8	11.3
Total	77	100.0

Table 47 depicts that the occupation of the respondents. Majority 31% of the respondents were done Law intern followed by 12.7% of the respondents were Advocate (Private) and Prosecutor, 11.3% of the respondents were Legal Journalist and Session Judge and least 1.4% of the respondents were Law Consultant/Legal Advisor.

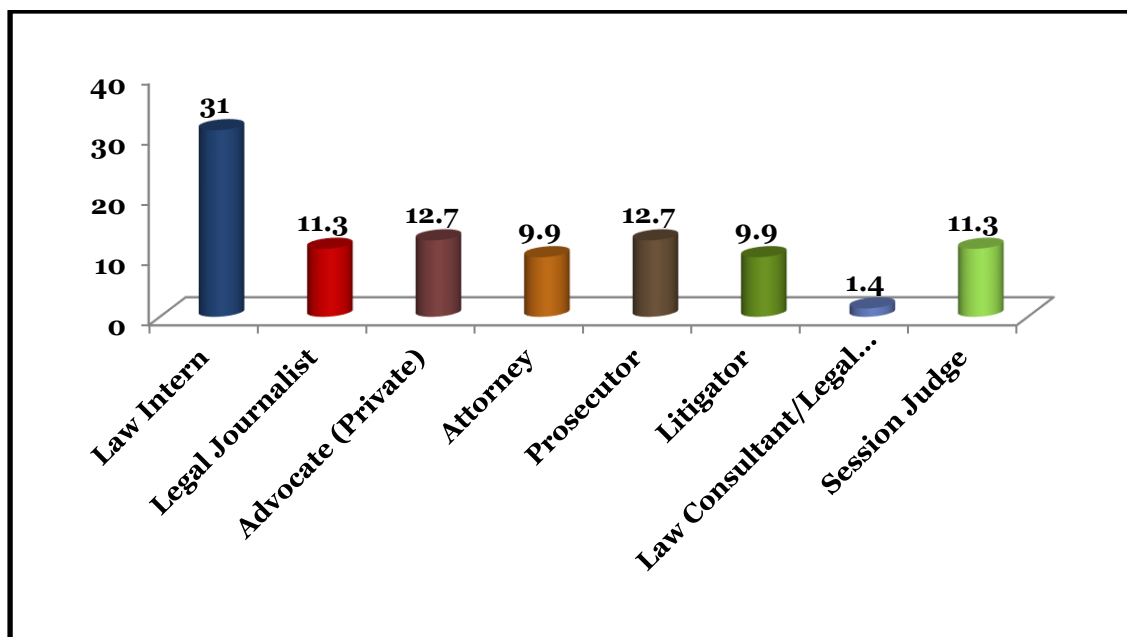


Figure 46: Graph of Occupation of the respondents

Table 49: Frequency of Experience of the respondents

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Fresher/Intern	33	46.5
1 – 2	13	18.3
2 – 4	14	19.7
More than 4 years	11	15.5
Total	77	100.0

Table 49 depicts that the experience of the respondents. Majority 46.5% of the respondents were done Fresher/Intern followed by 19.7% of the respondents were 2-4 years of experience, 18.3% of the respondents were 1-2 years of experience and least 15.5% of the respondents had more than 4 years of experience.

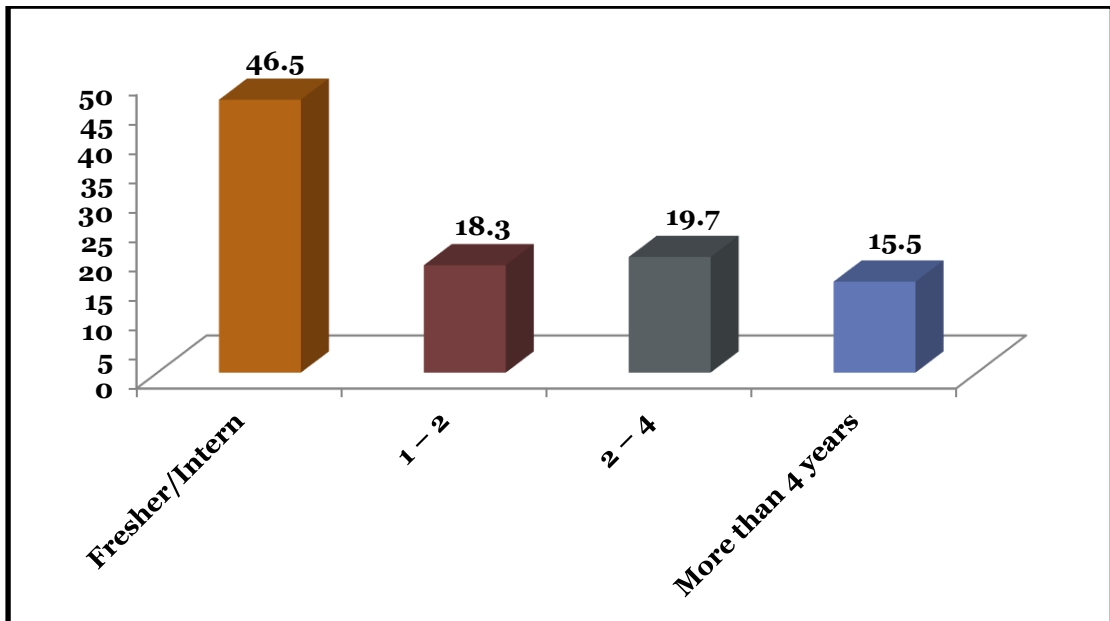


Figure 47: Graph of Experience of the respondents

Table 50: Frequency of respondents obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	42	59.2
Only a few times	12	16.9
Never	8	11.3
Can't say	9	12.7
Total	77	100.0

Table 50 depicts that the respondents' stated about obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 59.2% of the respondents stated that they obtained scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child followed by 11.3% of the respondents stated that they did not obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child and 16.9% of the respondents stated that only a few times they obtained scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child.

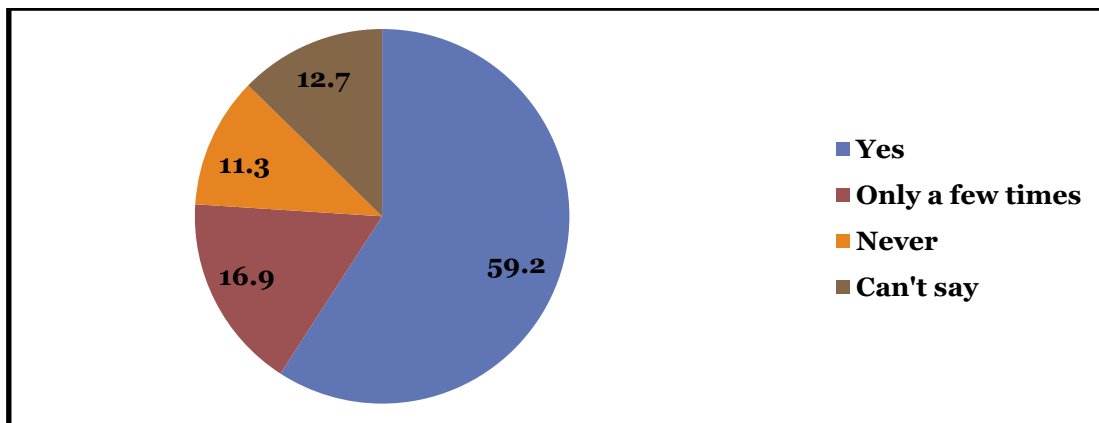


Figure 48: Graph of respondents obtained any scope to study the historical background of online sexual exploitation on child

Table 51: Frequency of historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences to handle the current crimes in these fields

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	44	62.0
Sometimes	6	8.5
Only a few cases	5	7.0
Historic cases are not applicable now but can be referred	12	16.9
No	4	5.6
Total	77	100.0

Table 51 depicts that the respondents' stated about historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences to handle the current crimes in these fields. It was found that, 62% of the respondents stated that historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences to handle the current crimes in these fields followed by 16% of the respondents stated that Historic cases are not applicable now but can be referred and 16.9% of the respondents stated that only a few times historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences to handle the current crimes in these fields.

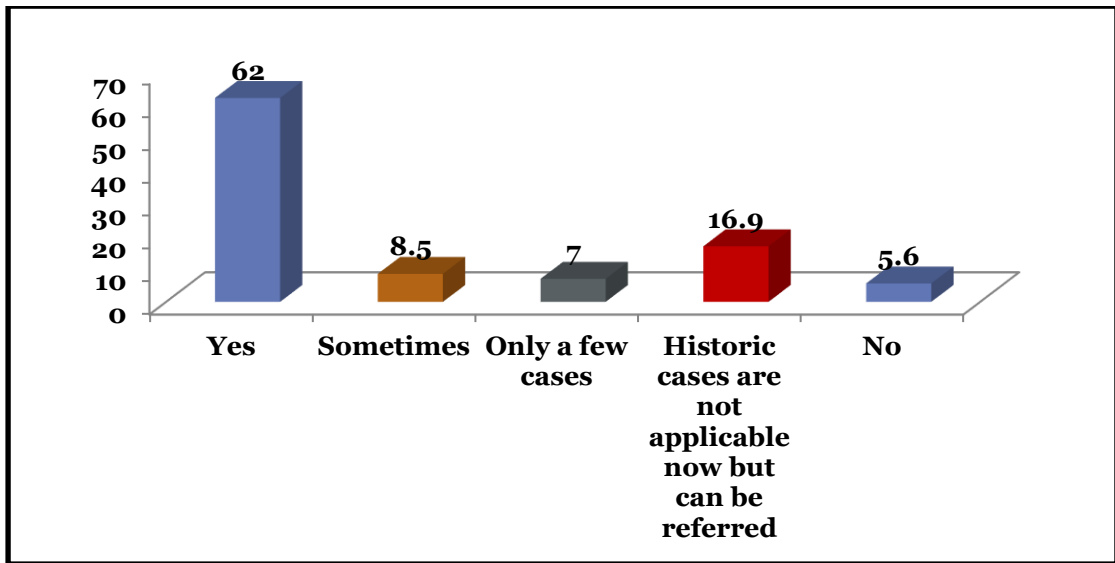


Figure 49: Graph of historical background of online sexual exploitation on child provides sufficient references and evidences

Table 52: Frequency of historic cases of India’s online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	50	70.4
Only a few times	10	14.1
Once	4	5.6
Never	2	2.8
Can't say	5	7.0
Total	71	100.0

Table 52 depicts that the respondents’ stated about historic cases of India’s online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources. It was found that, 70.4% of the respondents stated that historic cases of India’s online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources followed by 14.1% of the respondents stated that only few times historic cases of India’s online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources and 2.8% of the respondents stated that there is no historic cases of India’s online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained in the legal resources.

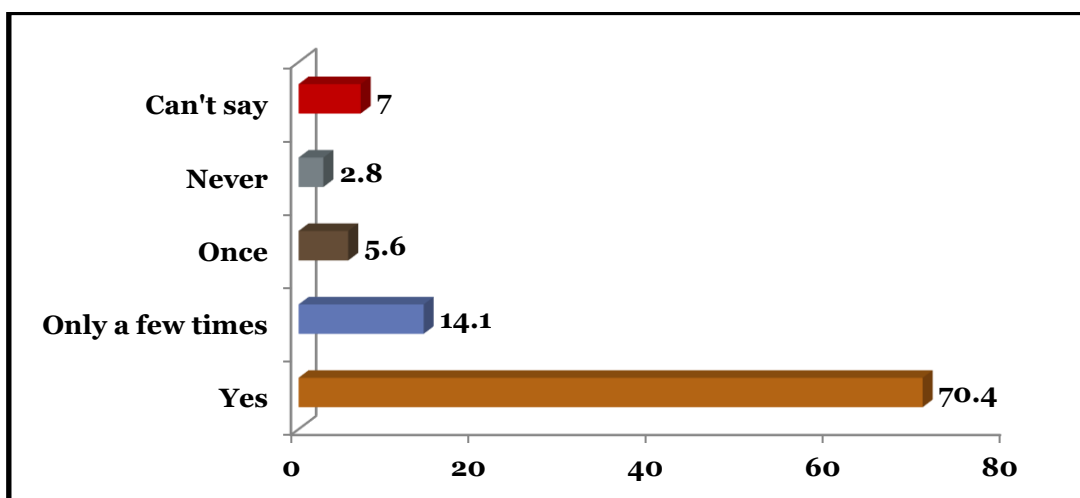


Figure 50: Graph of historic cases of India's online sexual exploitation on child are adequately included and explained

Table 53: Frequency of respondents ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	19	26.8
Only a few times	22	31.0
Once	8	11.3
Never	22	31.0
Total	71	100.0

Table 53 depicts that the respondents' ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation. It was found that, 31% of the respondents stated that they never ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation and also only few times they referred followed by 26.8% of the respondents stated that they referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation and 11.3% of the respondents stated that once they referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation.

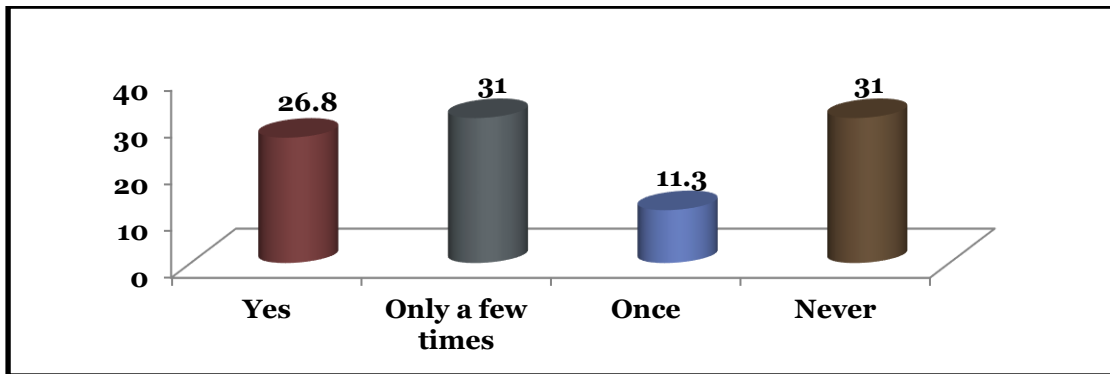


Figure 51: Graph of respondents ever referred International case(s) of online sexual exploitation on child in any defense/consultation

Table 54: Frequency of International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	54.9
Only a few times	9	12.7
Once	5	7.0
Never	6	8.5
Can't say	12	16.9
Total	71	100.0

Table 54 depicts that the respondents' International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 54.9% of the respondents stated that International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child followed by 12.7% of the respondents stated that only few times International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child and 7.0% of the respondents stated that once International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation on child.

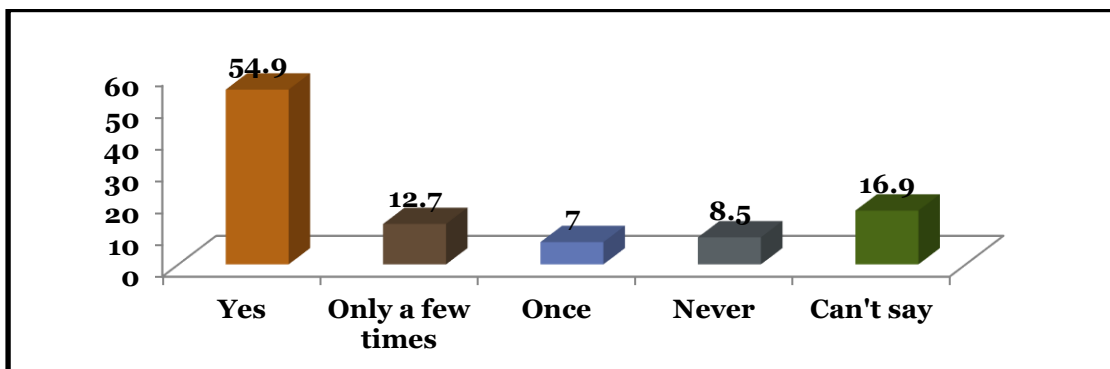


Figure 52: Graph of International laws and policies can be guidelines to set and reform India's laws on online sexual exploitation of children

Table 54: Frequency of effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Not at all effective	6	8.5
Not effective	11	15.5
Moderate	6	8.5
Effective	33	46.5
Very effective	15	21.1
Total	71	100.0

Table 54 depicts that the respondents stated about effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 46.5% of the respondents stated that there is an effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child followed by 21.1% of the respondents stated that there very effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child and 8.5% of the respondents stated that there is moderate effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child.

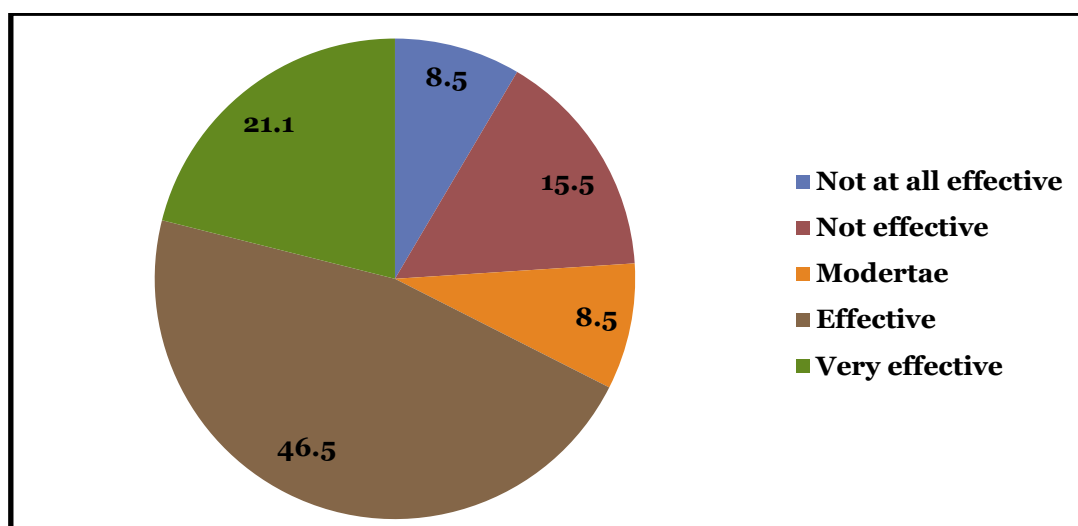


Figure 53: Graph of effectiveness and role of international legal policies and measures on online sexual exploitation on child

Table 56: Frequency of severe cases of OSE occur on child in India

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	45	63.4
Only a few times	10	14.1
Once	6	8.5
Never	6	8.5
Can't say	4	5.6
Total	71	100.0

Table 56 depicts that the respondents' stated that about severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India. It was found that, 63.4% of the respondents stated that there is severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India followed by 14.1% of the respondents stated that only few severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India and 8.5% of the respondents stated that there is once and never severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India.

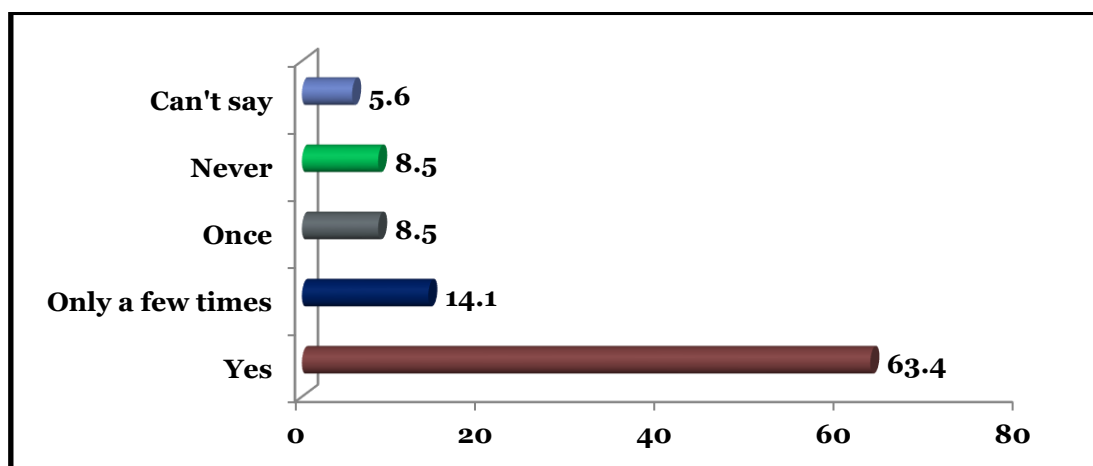


Figure 54: Graph of severe cases of online sexual exploitation occur on child in India

Table 57: Frequency of India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	51	71.8
Only a few times	7	9.9
Once	3	4.2
Never	7	9.9

Can't say	3	4.2
Total	71	100.0

Table 57 depicts that the respondents' stated that about India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 71.8% of the respondents stated that India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child followed by 9.9% of the respondents stated that only few India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child and 9.9% of the respondents stated that there is no India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child.

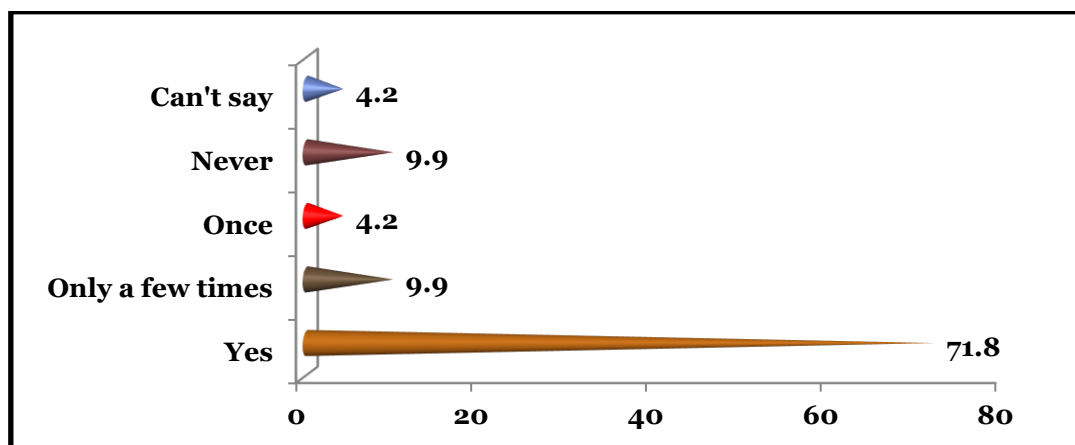


Figure 55: Graph of India's legal policies and measures pay sufficient attention to control and prevent online sexual exploitation on child

Table 58: Frequency of NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	58	81.7
Only a few times	3	4.2
Once	5	7.0
Never	3	4.2
Can't say	2	2.8
Total	71	100.0

Table 58 depicts that the respondents' stated that about NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 81.7% of the respondents stated that NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child followed by 4.2% of the respondents stated that only few NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child and 4.2% of the respondents stated that there is no NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child.

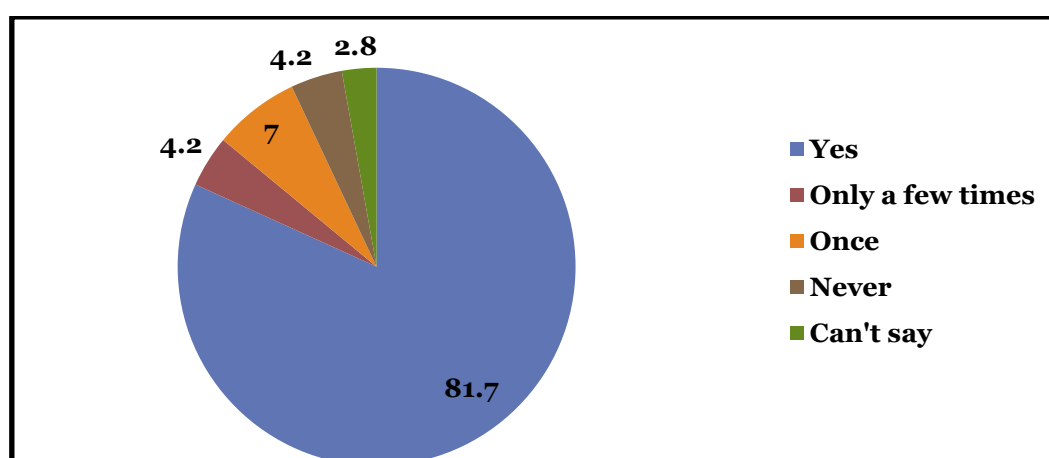


Figure 56: Graph of NGOs in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan who are active on the cases of online sexual exploitation on child

Table 59: Frequency of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Not at all effective	3	4.2
Not effective	8	11.3
Moderate	7	9.9
Effective	40	56.3
Very effective	13	18.3
Total	71	100.0

Table 59 depicts that the respondents stated about Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 56.3% of the respondents stated that there is an effectiveness of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of

their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child followed by 18.3% of the respondents stated that there very effectiveness of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child and 9.9% of the respondents stated that there is moderate effectiveness of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child.

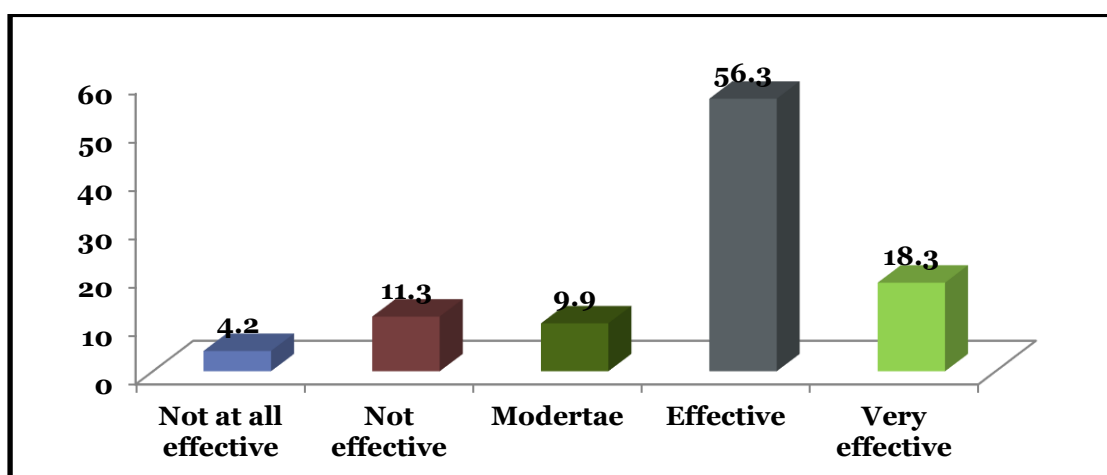


Figure 57: Graph of Jaipur's judiciary and law and order system (police depth) in terms of their control and preventing cases of online sexual exploitation on child

Table 60: Frequency severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	51	71.8
Only a few times	4	5.6
Once	3	4.2
Never	6	8.5
Can't say	7	9.9
Total	71	100.0

Table 60 depicts that the respondents' stated that about severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan. It was found that, 71.8% of the respondents stated that severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan followed by 8.5% of the respondents stated that once a severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in

Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan and 8.5% of the respondents stated that there is no severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan.

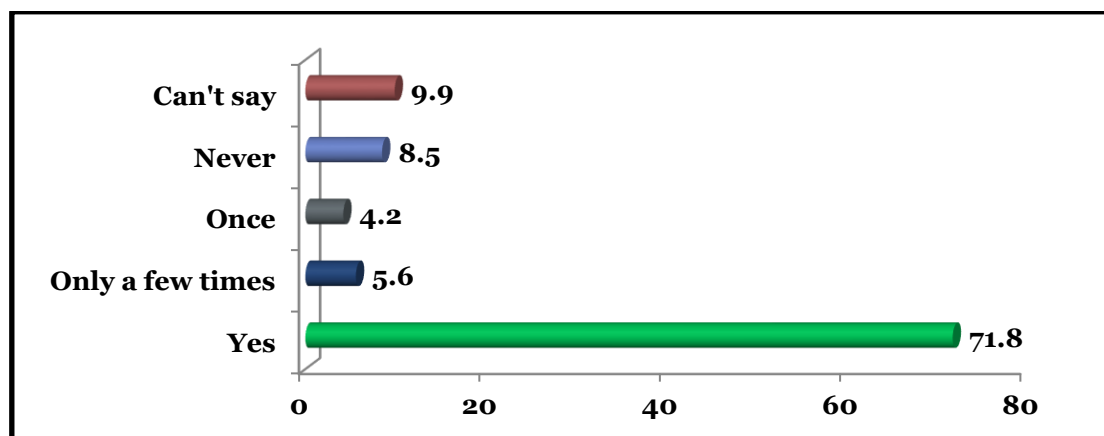


Figure 58: Graph of severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan

Table 61: Frequency sufficient public awareness in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan on the impacts of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	53	74.6
Only a few times	4	5.6
Once	6	8.5
Never	5	7.0
Can't say	3	4.2
Total	71	100.0

Table 61 depicts that the respondents' stated that about sufficient public awareness in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan on the impacts of online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that 74.6% of the respondents stated that severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan followed by 8.5% of the respondents stated that once a severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan and 7% of the respondents stated that there is no severe cases of online sexual exploitation on child in India occur in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan.

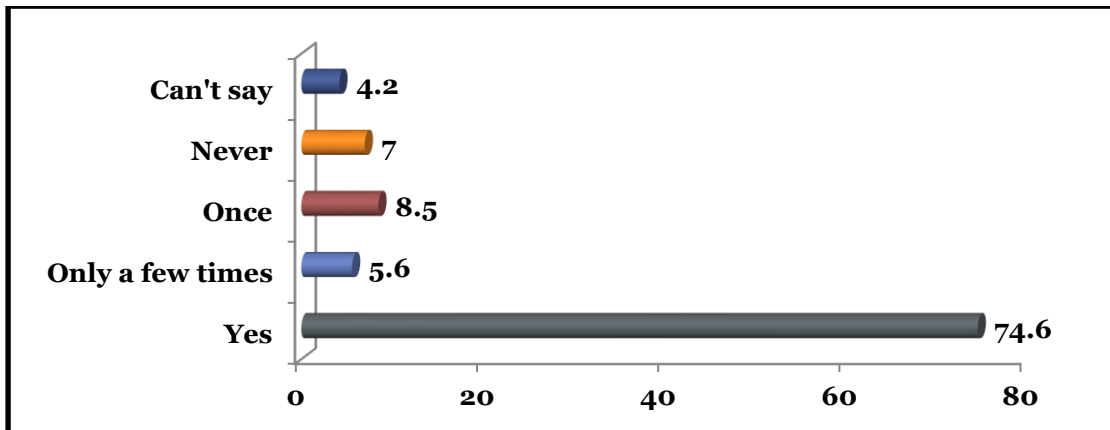


Figure 59: Graph of sufficient public awareness in Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan on the impacts of online sexual exploitation on child

Table 62: Frequency schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child

	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes	39	54.9
Only a few times	9	12.7
Once	13	18.3
Never	6	8.5
Can't say	4	5.6
Total	71	100.0

Table 62 depicts that the respondents' stated that about schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child. It was found that, 54.9% of the respondents stated that the schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child followed by 8.3% of the respondents stated that once a schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child and

8.5% of the respondents stated that there is no schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child.

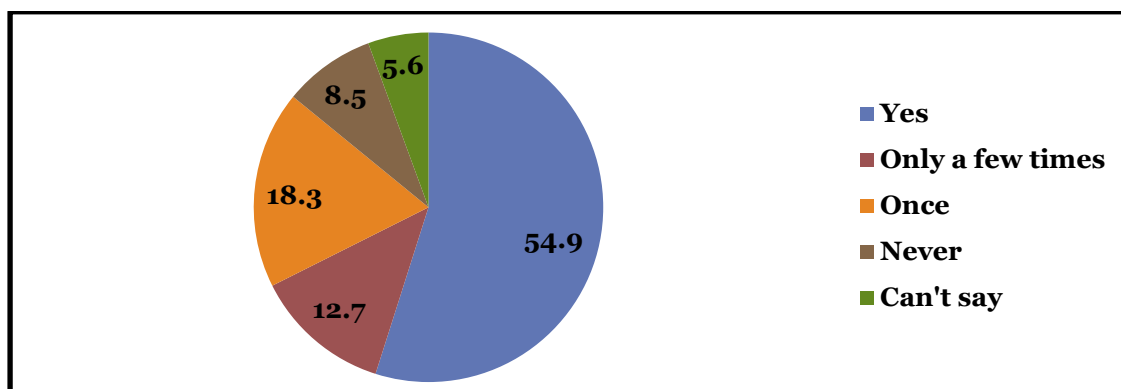


Figure 60: Graph of schools/NGOs/local administrations of Jaipur/other parts of Rajasthan are actively taking initiatives to spread awareness and attention towards cases of online sexual exploitation on child

5.5.4 General Public Response

Table 63: Frequency of age of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Under 18	12	4.6
18-24	96	36.8
25-34	73	28.0
35-44	44	16.9
45-55	30	11.5
55-64	6	2.3
Total	261	100.0

Table 63 depicts the age of the respondents. Majority 36.8% of the respondents' age between 18-24 years followed 28% of the respondents' age between 25-34 years, 16.9% of the respondents' age between 35 to 44 years and least 2.3% of the respondents' age between 55-64 years.

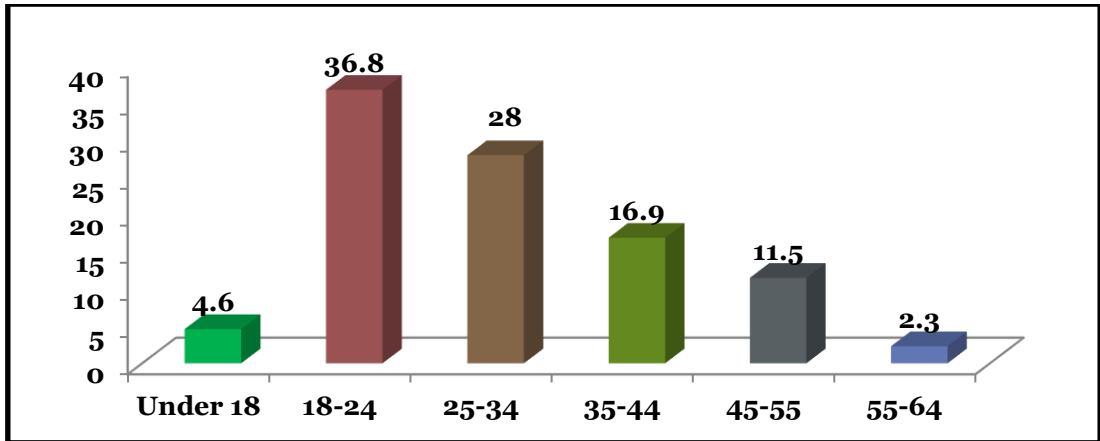


Figure 61: Graph of the age of the respondents

Table 64: Frequency of gender of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Male	118	45.2
Female	143	54.8
Total	261	100.0

Table 64 reveals the gender of the respondents. Majority 54.8% of the respondents were female and 45.2% if the respondents were male.

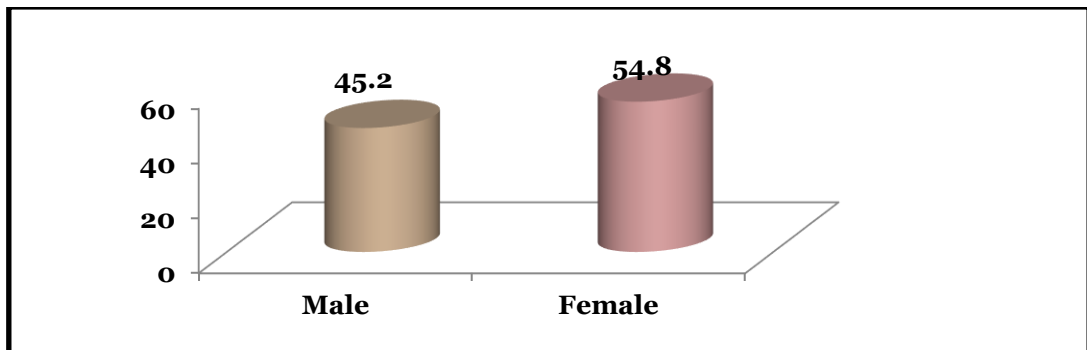


Figure 62: Frequency of age of the respondents

Table 65: Frequency of Occupation of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
Student	117	44.8
Employed (full-time)	67	25.7
Employed (part-time)	11	4.2

Self-employed	19	7.3
Unemployed	4	1.5
Others	7	2.7
Total	261	100.0

Table 65 depicts the occupation of the respondents. Majority 44.8% of the respondents were students followed 25.7% of the respondents were employed (full-time), 7.3% of the respondents were Self-employed and 1.5% of the respondents were unemployed.

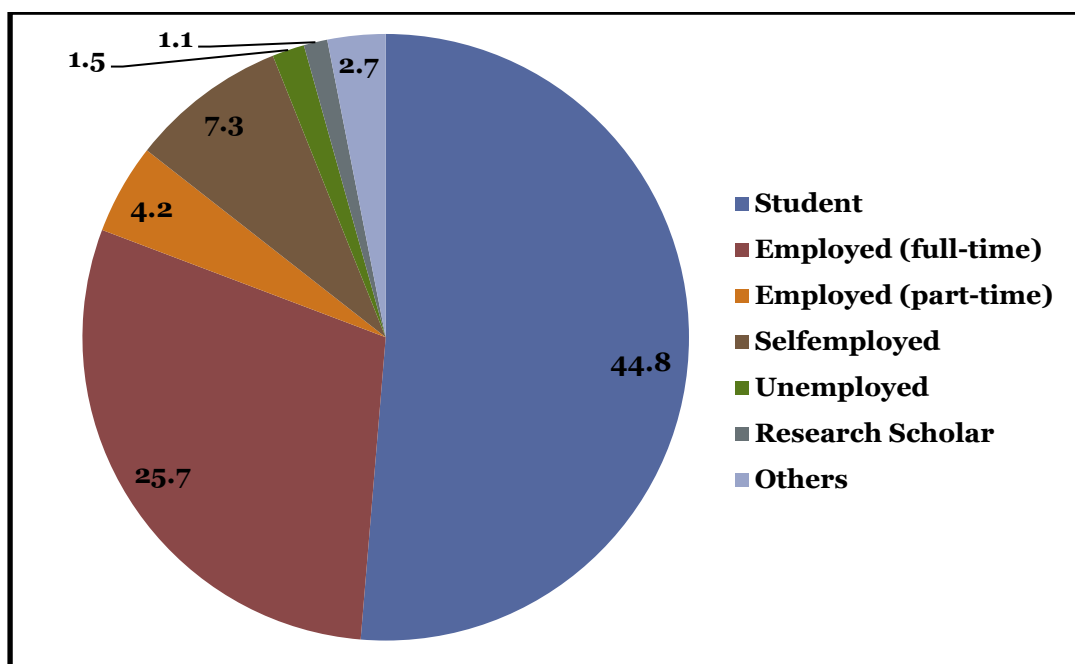


Figure 63: Graph of Occupation of the respondents

Table 66: Frequency of Educational Background of the respondents

	Frequency	Percent
High school or equivalent	28	10.7
Bachelor's degree	87	33.3
Master's degree	90	34.5
Doctoral degree	51	19.5
Research Scholar	3	1.1
Others	4	1.5
Total	261	100.0

Table 66 depicts the education of the respondents. Majority 34.5% of the respondents were done Master's degree followed 33.3% of the respondents were done up to Bachelor's degree, 19.5% of the respondents were Doctoral degree and 10.7% of the respondents were done High school or equivalent.

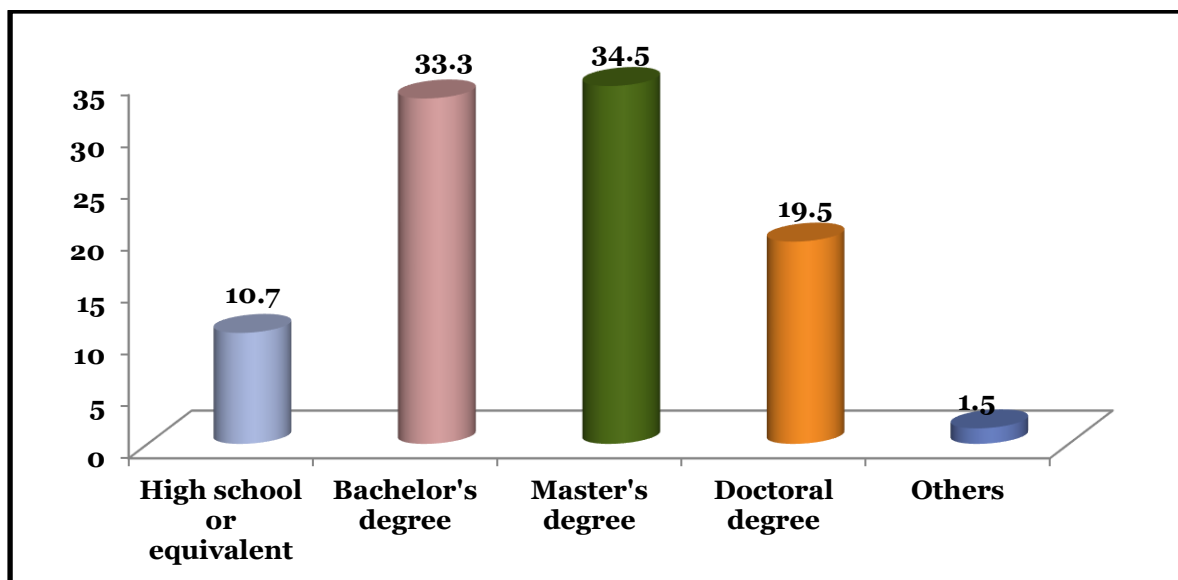


Figure 64: Graph of the Educational Background of the respondents

Table 67: Frequency of historical background of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Very familiar	84	32.2
Somewhat familiar	137	52.5
Not familiar at all	39	14.9
Total	261	100.0

Table 67 depicts the historical background of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 52.5% of the respondents stated that they somewhat familiar with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation followed 32.2% of the respondents very familiar with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation and 14.9% of the respondents stated that they not at familiar with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation.

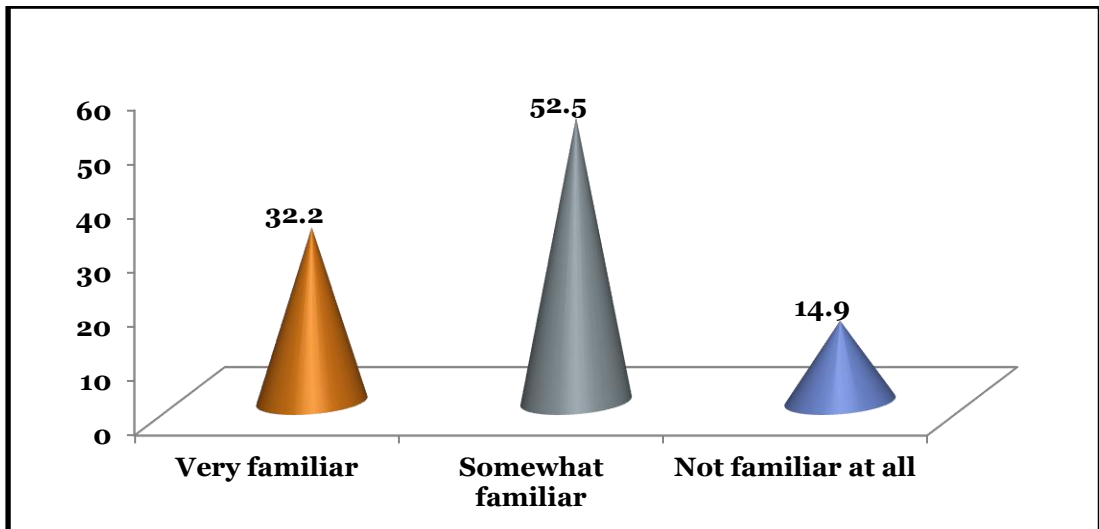


Figure 65: Graph of the historical background of online child sexual exploitation

Table 68: Frequency of primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Social and cultural attitudes towards sexuality	58	22.2
Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks	36	13.8
Proliferation of internet access and technology	46	17.6
Lack of awareness and understanding about online safety	121	46.4
Total	261	100.0

Table 68 depicts the primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 46.4% of the respondents stated that the primary historical factor is lack of awareness and understanding about online safety followed 22.2% of the respondents mentioned Social and cultural attitudes towards sexuality, 17.6% of the respondents stated Proliferation of internet access and technology and 13.8% of the respondents stated Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks.

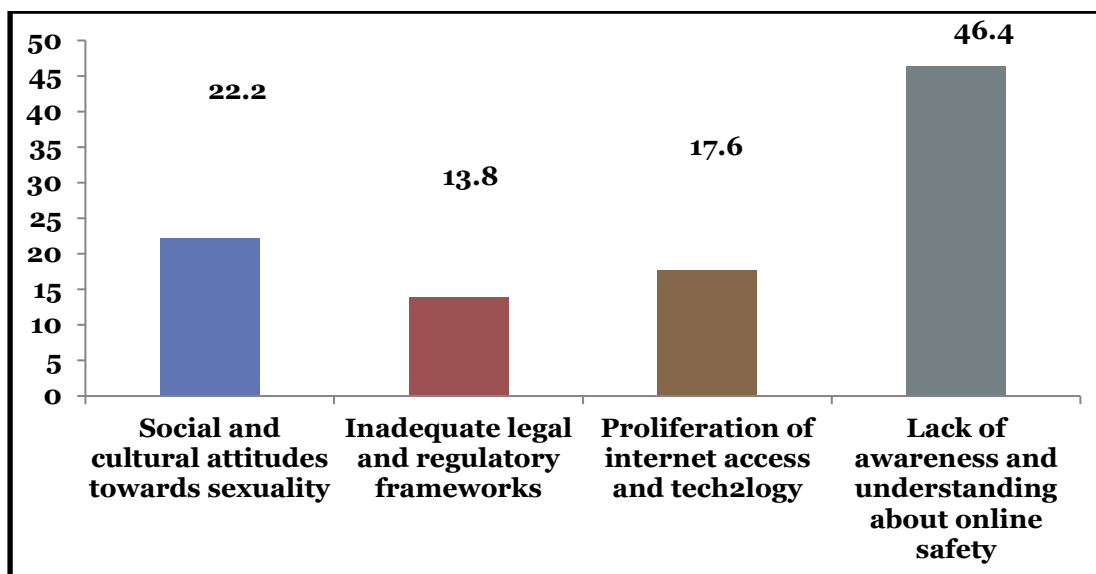


Figure 66: Graph of primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation

Table 69: Frequency of evaluation of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time

	Frequency	Percent
Increased accessibility to online platforms	82	31.4
Anonymity and ease of communication online	44	16.9
Proliferation of online pornography and explicit content	108	41.4
Exploitation of vulnerabilities in technology systems	27	10.3
Total	261	100.0

Table 69 depicts the evaluation of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time. Majority 41.4% of the respondents stated Proliferation of online pornography and explicit content followed 31.4% of the respondents mentioned Increased accessibility to online platforms, 16.9% of the respondents stated Anonymity and ease of communication online and 10.3% of the respondents stated Exploitation of vulnerabilities in technology systems.

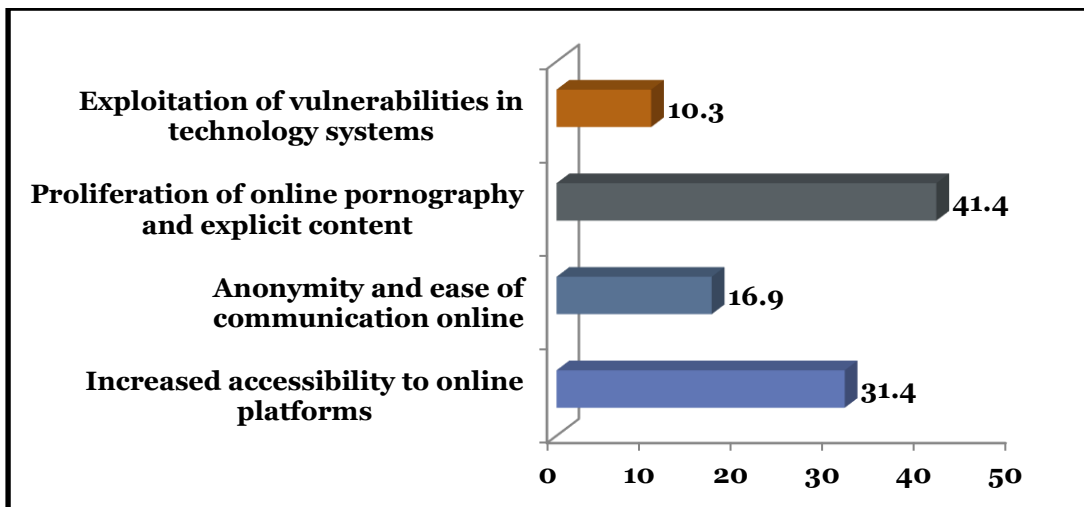


Figure 67: Graph of evaluation of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time

Table 70: Frequency of aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	150	57.5
No	111	42.5
Total	261	100.0

Table 70 depicts the respondents aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation. Majority 57.5% of the respondents' stated they aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation and 42.5% of the respondents stated they were not aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation.

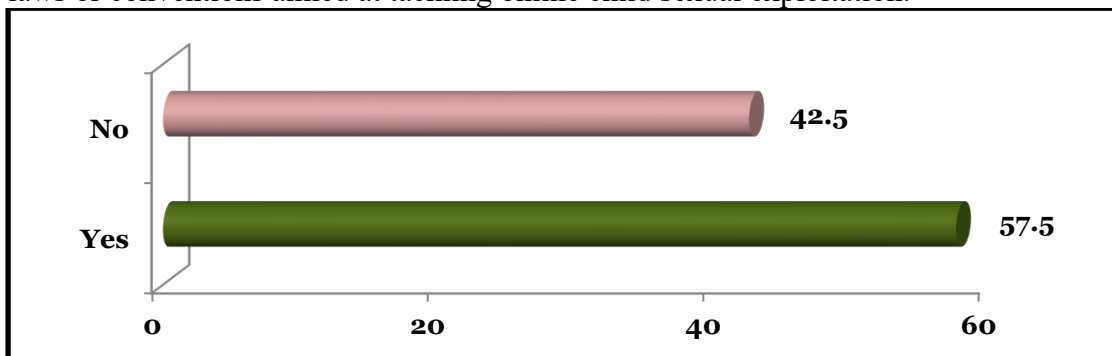


Figure 68: Frequency of aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation

Table 71: Frequency of believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	98	37.5
No	65	24.9
Not sure	98	37.5
Total	261	100.0

Table 69 depicts the respondents believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 37.5% of the respondents' stated they believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and 24.9% of the respondents stated they were not believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation.

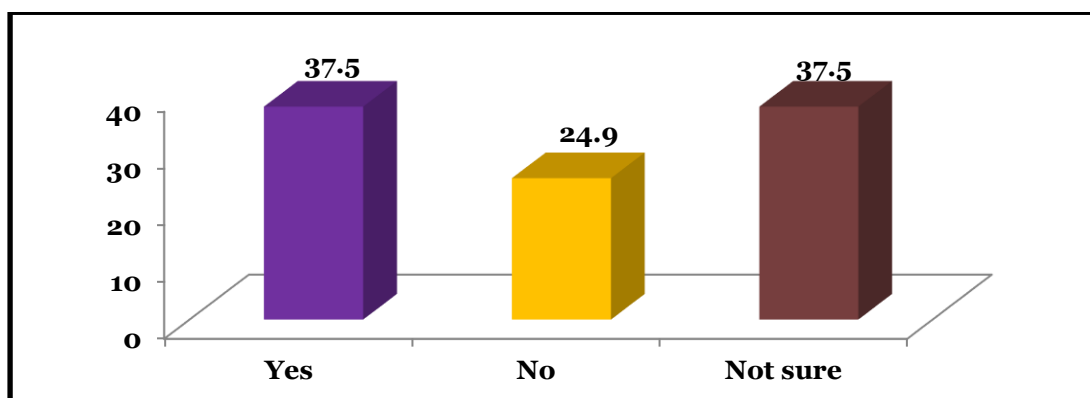


Figure 69: Graph of believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation

Table 72: Frequency of rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse

	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	38	14.6
Somewhat effective	168	64.4
Not effective at all	55	21.1
Total	261	100.0

Table 72 depicts the rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse. Majority 64.4% of the respondents stated that somewhat effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse followed 21.1% of the respondents stated not at all effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse and 14.6% of the respondents stated very effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse.

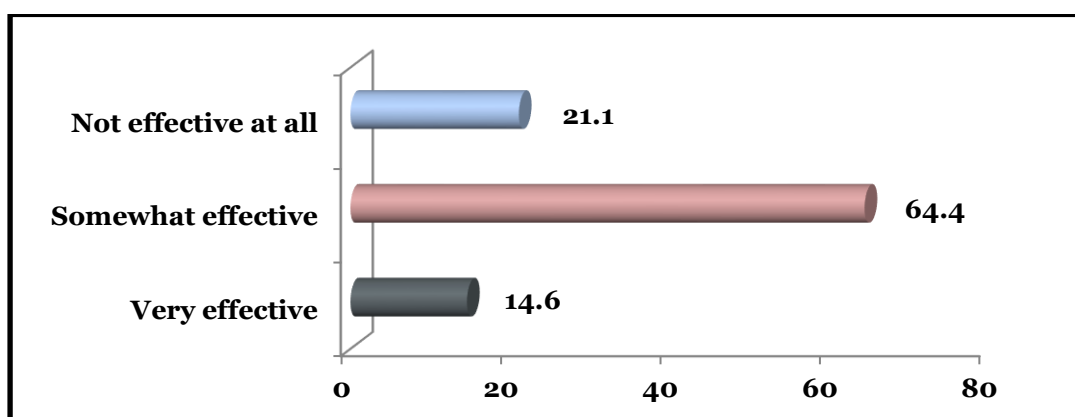


Figure 70: Graph of rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse

Table 73: Frequency of awareness of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	181	69.3
No	80	30.7
Total	261	100.0

Table 73 depicts the respondents aware of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation. Majority 69.3% of the respondents' stated they aware of specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation and 30.7% of the respondents stated they were not aware of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation.

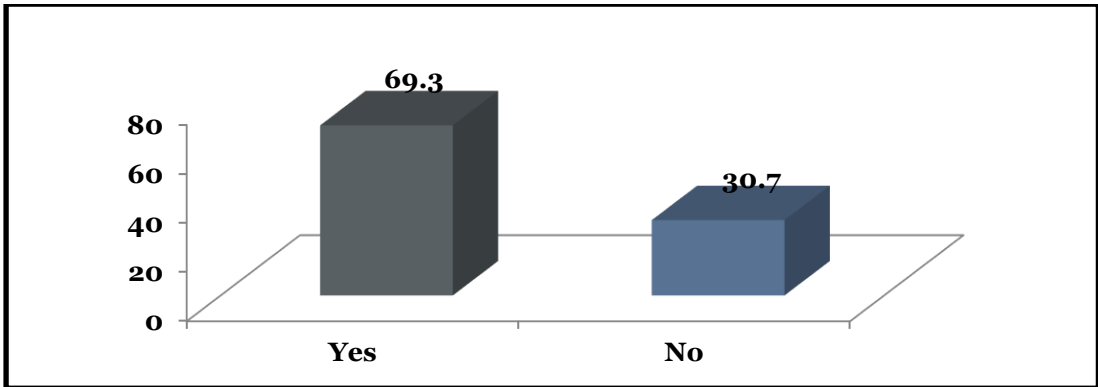


Figure 71: Graph of awareness of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation

Table 74: Frequency of legal provisions in India is most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act	156	59.8
Information Technology (Amendment) Act	69	26.4
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act	36	13.8
Total	261	100.0

Table 74 depicts the legal provisions in India is most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation. Majority 59.8% of the respondents stated Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act followed 26.4% of the respondents stated Information Technology (Amendment) Act and 13.8% of the respondents stated Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.

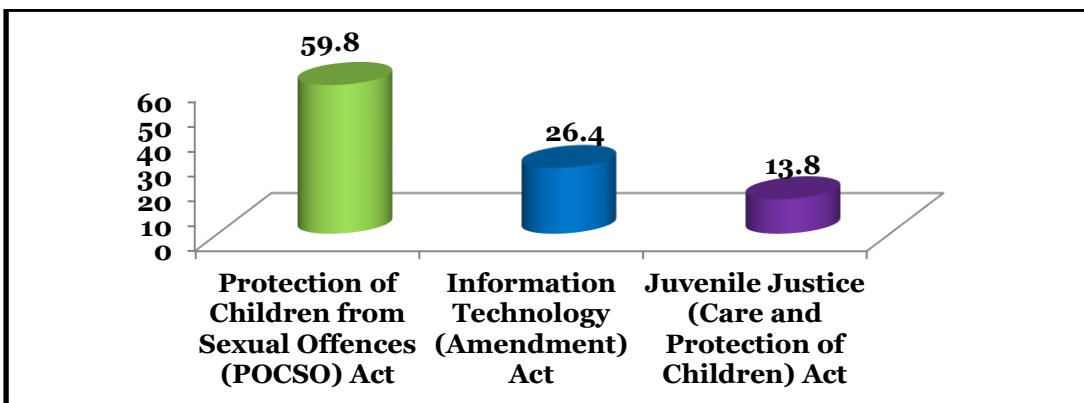


Figure 72: Graph of legal provisions in India is most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation

Table 75: Frequency of administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	89	34.1
No	67	25.7
May Be	105	40.2
Total	261	100.0

Table 75 depicts the administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation. Majority 40.2% of the respondents stated that may be administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation followed 34.1% of the respondents stated an administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation and 25.7% of the respondents stated there is no administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation.

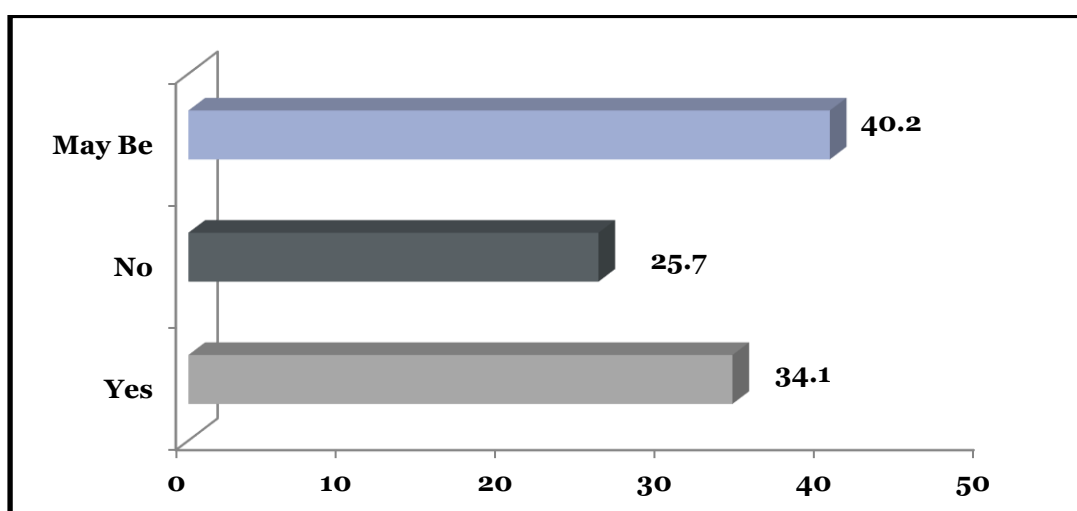


Figure 73: Graph of administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation

Table 76: Frequency of rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Not Very effective	23	8.8
Not effective	46	17.6
Moderately effective	103	39.5
Effective	63	24.1
Very effective	26	10.0
Total	261	100.0

Table 76 depicts the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 39.5% of the respondents stated that role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective followed 24.1% of the respondents stated role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is effective and 8.8% of the respondents stated role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is not very effective.

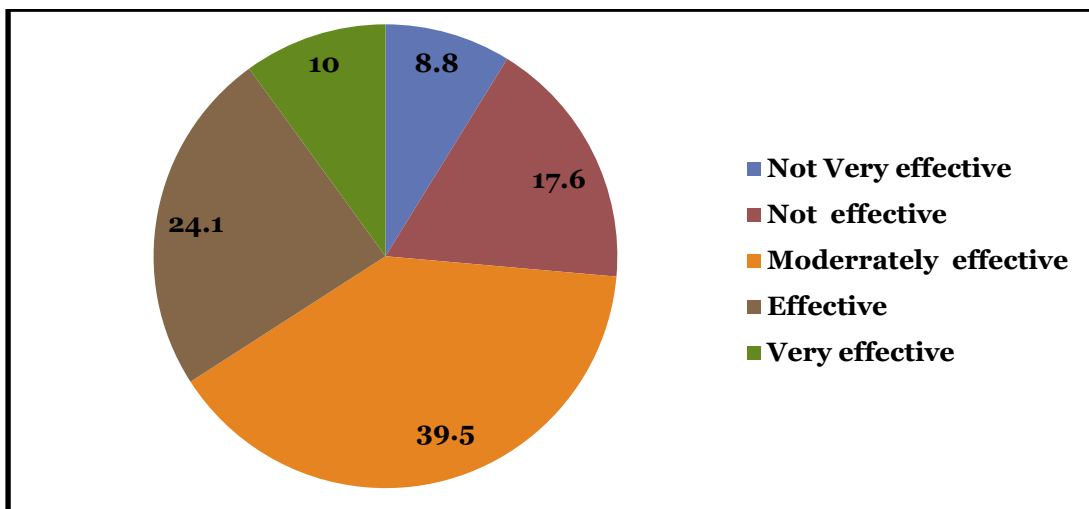


Figure 74: Graph of rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation

Table 77: Frequency of specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children

	Frequency	Percent
Awareness campaigns and education programs	120	46.0
Providing support services for victims and survivors	57	21.8
Advocating for policy change and legal reforms	58	22.2
Collaborating with law enforcement agencies	26	10.0
Total	261	100.0

Table 77 depicts the specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children. Majority 46% of the respondents stated that Awareness campaigns and education programs followed 22.2% of the respondents stated Advocating for policy change and legal reforms and 10% of the respondents stated Collaborating with law enforcement agencies.

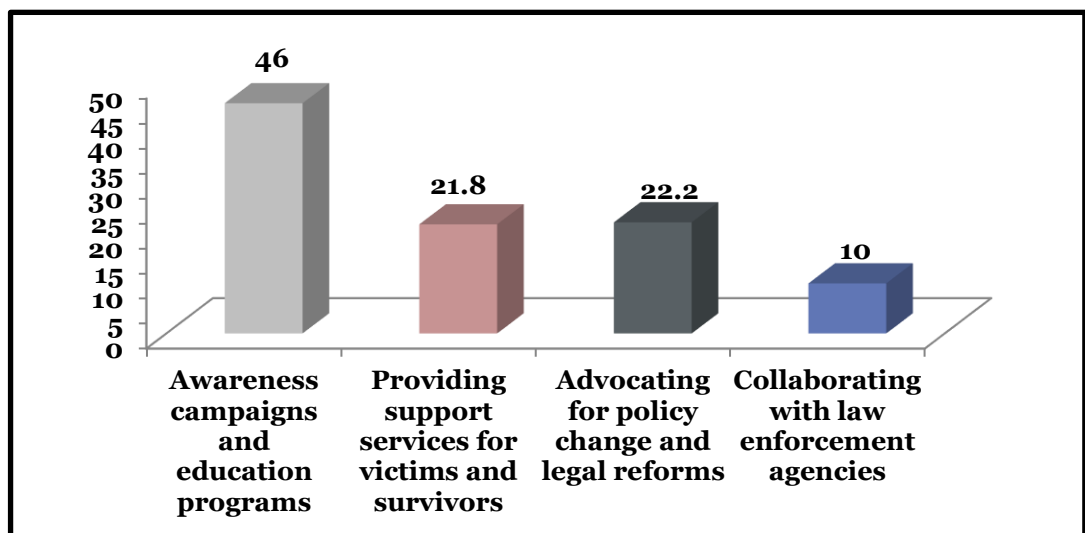


Figure 75: Graph of specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children

Table 78: Frequency of improvements do you think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Speeding up legal proceedings	72	27.6

Providing specialized training for judges and legal professionals	44	16.9
Strengthening laws and penalties for offenders	107	41.0
Enhancing support services for victims and survivors	38	14.6
Total	261	100.0

Table 78 depicts the respondents think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to online child sexual exploitation. Majority 41% of the respondents stated Strengthening laws and penalties for offenders followed 27.6% of the respondents speeding up legal proceedings and 14.6% of the respondents stated Enhancing support services for victims and survivors.

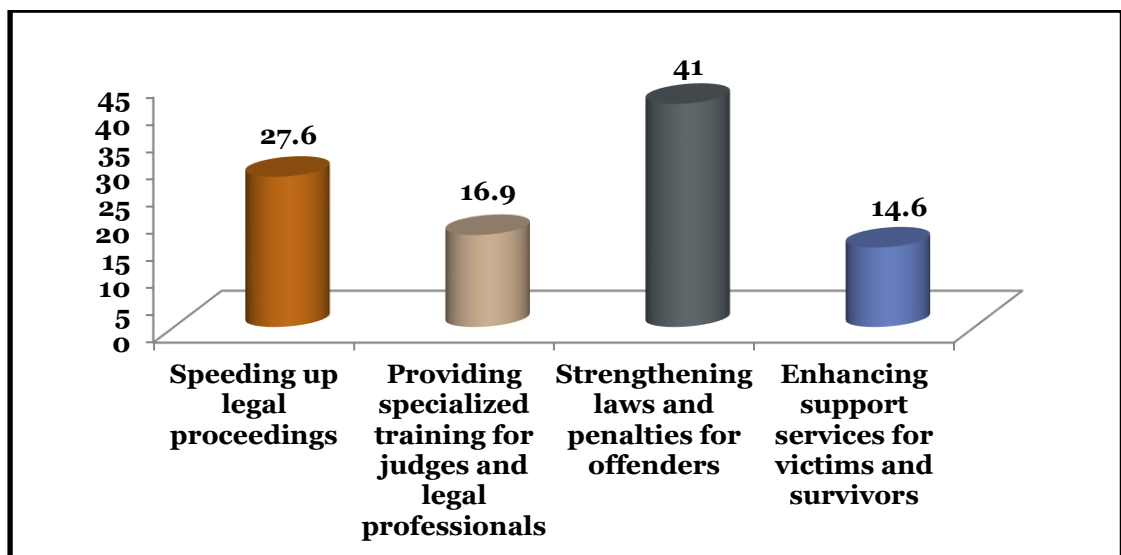


Figure 76: Graph of improvements do you think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to online child sexual exploitation

Table 79: Frequency of believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system

	Frequency	Percent
Provide legal aid and support services for victims	70	26.8
Ensure confidentiality and protection for victims during legal proceedings	101	38.7

Establish specialized support programs for child witnesses	55	21.1
Expedite court procedures for cases involving children	35	13.4
Total	261	100.0

Table 79 depicts the respondents believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system. Majority 38.7% of the respondents' stated Ensure confidentiality and protection for victims during legal proceedings followed 26.8% of the respondents mentioned Provide legal aid and support services for victims and 13.4% of the respondents stated Expedite court procedures for cases involving children.

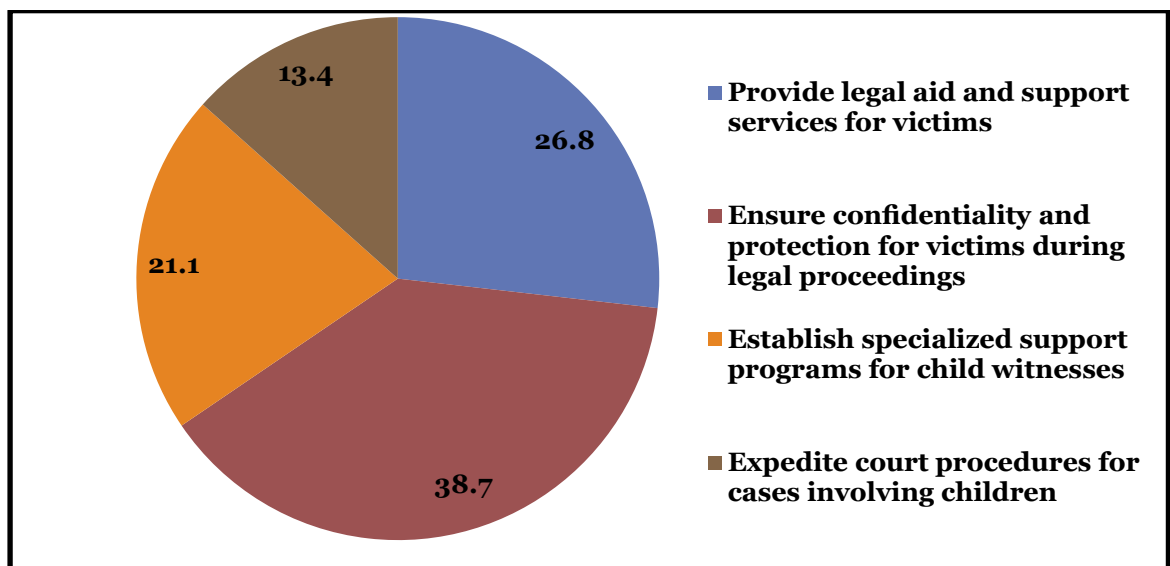


Figure 77: Graph of believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system

Table 80: Frequency of aware of general public is about OCSE

	Frequency	Percent
Not Very effective	48	18.4
Not effective	84	32.2
Moderately effective	94	36.0
Effective	18	6.9

Very effective	17	6.5
Total	261	100.0

Table 80 depicts the respondents aware of general public is about online child sexual exploitation. Majority 36% of the respondents' stated the general public is about online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective followed 32.2% of the respondents mentioned the general public is about online child sexual exploitation is not effective and 6.5% of the respondents stated the general public is about online child sexual exploitation is very effective.

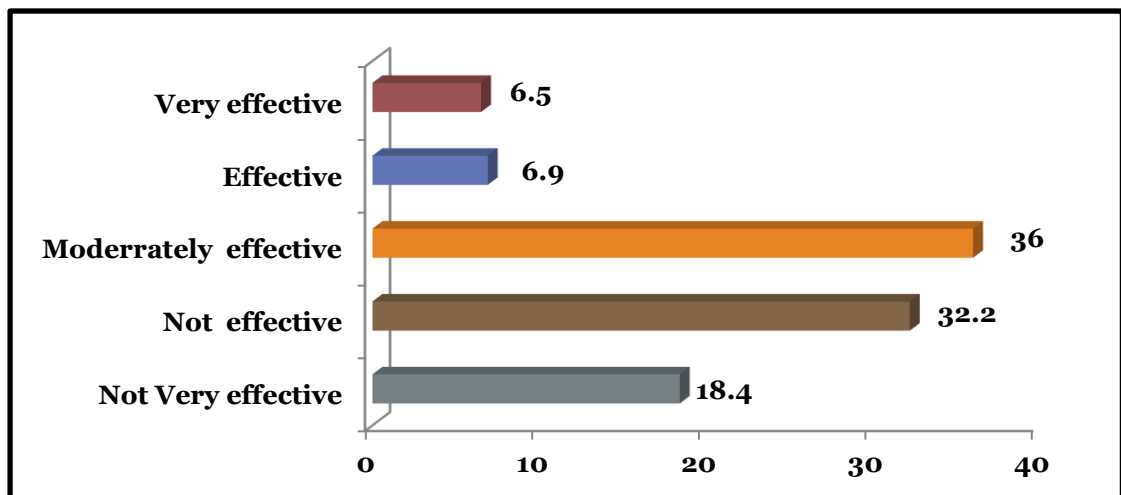


Figure 78: Graph of aware of general public is about online child sexual exploitation

Table 81: Frequency of received any formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	110	42.1
No	151	57.9
Total	261	100.0

Table 81 depicts the respondents received any formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation. Majority 57.9% of the respondents' stated they did not received formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation and 42.1% of the respondents stated they received formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation.

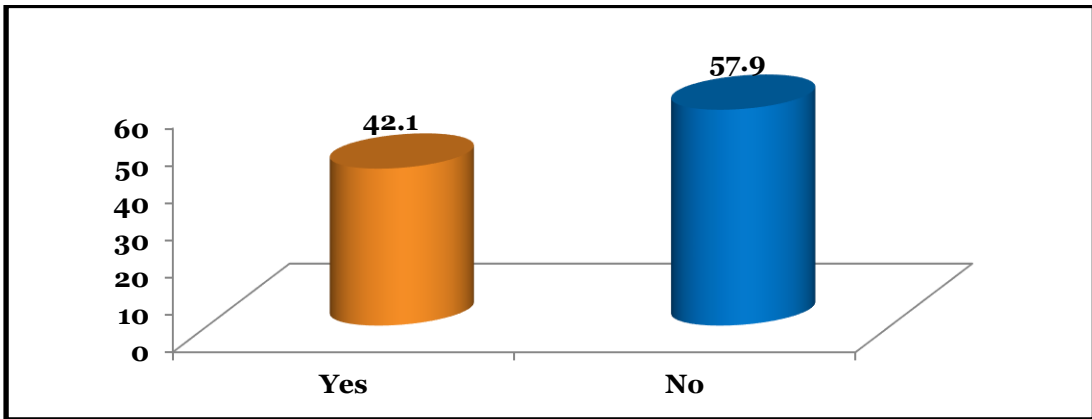


Figure 79: Graph of received any formal education or training on the topic of OCSE

Table 82: Frequency of belief that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	189	72.4
No	32	12.3
May be	40	15.3
Total	261	100.0

Table 82 depicts the respondents believe that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation. Majority 72.4% of the respondents' stated they believe that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation followed 15.3% of the respondents mentioned believe that may be parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation and 12.3% of the respondents stated believe that parents and guardians are not play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation.

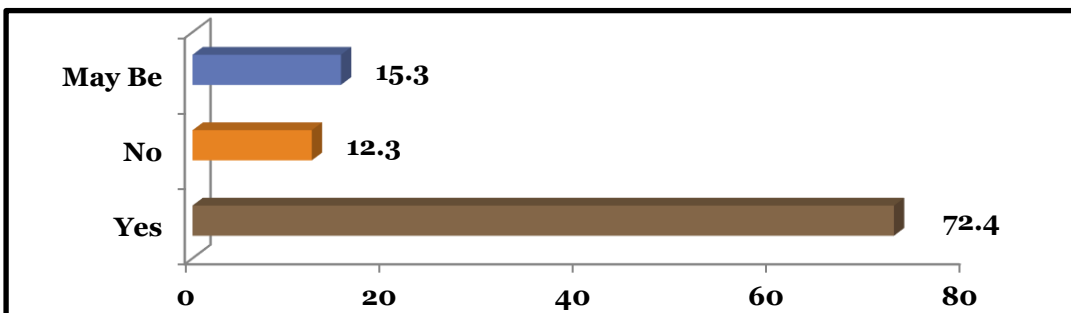


Figure 80: Graph of belief that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation

Table 83: Frequency of increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	194	74.3
No	25	9.6
May be	40	15.3
Total	261	100.0

Table 83 depicts the respondents increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children. Majority 74.3% of the respondents' stated there is an increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children followed 15.3% of the respondents mentioned may be increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children and 9.6% of the respondents stated there is no increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children.

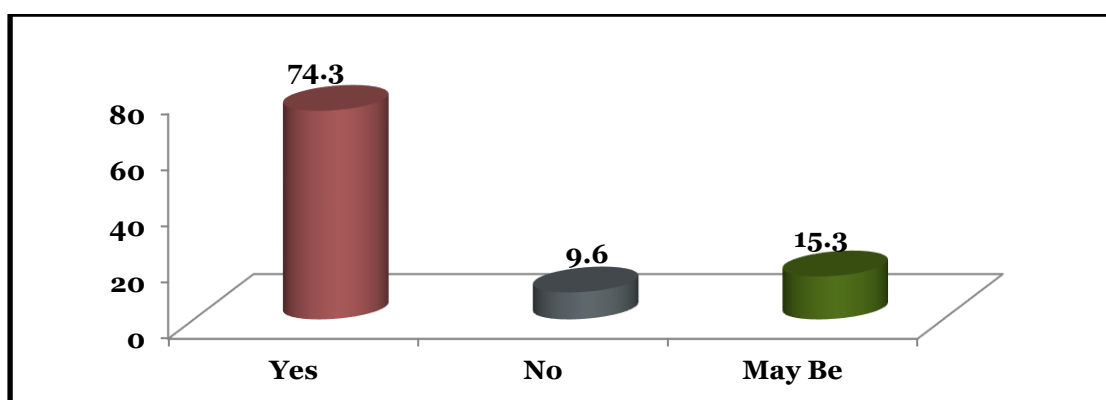


Figure 81: Graph of increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children

Table 84: Frequency of important to think it is for the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children

	Frequency	Percent
Not Very effective	13	5.0
Not effective	29	11.1
Moderately effective	56	21.5
Effective	49	18.8
Very effective	114	43.7
Total	261	100.0

Table 84 depicts the respondents stated about the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children. Majority 43.7% of the respondents' stated the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children is very effective followed 21.5% of the respondents mentioned the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children is moderately effect and 5% of the respondents stated the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children is not very effective.

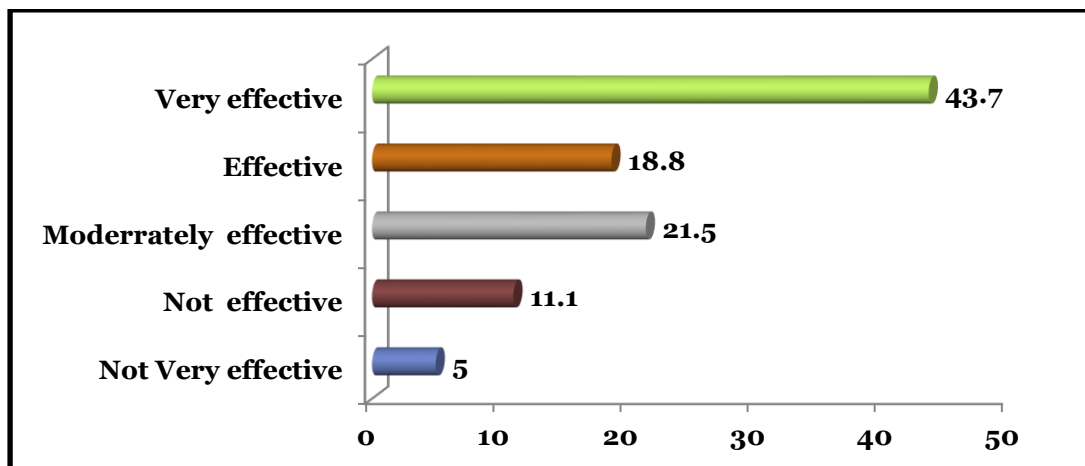


Figure 82: Graph of important to think it is for the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children

To study the historical background and factors responsible for online child sexual exploitation

Table 85: Association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation

	How familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation?			Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Very familiar	Somewhat familiar	Not familiar at all		
Social and cultural attitudes towards sexuality	22	29	7	58	2.324 (0.779)
Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks	12	17	7	36	
Proliferation of internet access and technology	16	25	5	46	
Lack of awareness and understanding about online safety	34	66	20	120	
Total	84	137	39	260	

The association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation are seen in Table 85. From the chi square value (2.324) and p value ($p=0.779>0.05$), it is evident there is no association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation.

To examine the role and utility of international law in tackling the challenge of online child sexual exploitation

Table 86: Association between International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation

International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation	Aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation?		Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Yes	No		
Yes	70	28	98	33.315 (0.000)**
No	46	19	65	
May Be	34	64	98	
Total	150	111	261	

****p<0.01**

The associations between International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation is seen in Table 86. The majority 98 numbers of respondents stated that may be International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (64 in number) stated that may be International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and also mentioned that they were not aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation. From the chi square value (13.531) and p value ($p=0.001<0.01$), it is evident there is an association between International laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation.

To analyze the legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse

Table 87: Association between primary legal provisions of India relevant to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation

Legal provisions in India are most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation	Rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse			Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective at all		
Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act	23	99	34	156	1.481 (0.830)
Information Technology (Amendment) Act	9	48	12	69	
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act	6	21	9	36	
Total	38	168	55	261	

The association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation are seen in Table 87. From the chi square value (1.481) and p value ($p=0.830>0.05$), it is evident there is no association between primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation and familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation.

To examine the effectiveness of administrative bodies and NGOs in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation

Table 88: Association between administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation

Administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation	Aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation?		Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Yes	No		
Yes	63	26	89	13.531 (0.001)**
No	40	27	67	
May Be	47	58	105	
Total	150	111	261	

****p<0.01**

The association between administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation is seen in Table 88. The majority 105 numbers of respondents stated that may be an administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (58 in number) stated that may be administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation and also mentioned that they not sure about international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation. From the chi square value (13.531) and p value ($p=0.001<0.01$), it is evident there is an association between administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation and aware of international laws or conventions aimed at tackling online child sexual exploitation.

To analyze the role of the judiciary in regulating the matters of online child sexual exploitation

Table 89: Association between the role of judiciary in regulating the matters of online child sexual exploitation and role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation

Rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation	Believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation			Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Yes	No	Not Sure		
Not Very effective	12	6	5	23	12.938 (0.030)*
Not effective	13	17	16	46	
Moderately effective	35	22	46	103	
Effective	24	17	22	63	
Very effective	14	3	9	26	
Total	98	65	98	261	

*p<0.05

The association between international laws is effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is seen in Table 89. The majority 103 numbers of respondents stated that the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (46 in number) stated that the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective and also mentioned that they not sure about an international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation. From the chi square value (12.938) and p value ($p=0.030 < 0.05$), it is evident there is an association between international laws is effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation and role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation.

To enhances public awareness and understanding of online child sexual exploitation through targeted educational initiatives.

Table 90: Association between Increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children and general public is about online child sexual exploitation

Aware do you think the general public is about online child sexual exploitation	Increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children			Total	Chi Square (p value)
	Yes	No	May		
Not Very effective	31	10	7	48	13.129 (0.010)*
Not effective	61	5	17	83	
Moderately effective	74	6	14	94	
Effective	15	2	1	18	
Very effective	13	2	1	16	
Total	194	25	40	259	

*p<0.05

The association between Increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children and general public is about online child sexual exploitation is seen in Table 90. The majority 94 numbers of respondents stated that the general public is about online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (74 in number) stated that the general public is about online child sexual exploitation is moderately effective and also mentioned that there is an increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children. From the chi square value (13.129) and p value (p=0.010<0.05), it is evident there is an association between Increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children and general public is about online child sexual exploitation.

Descriptive-Doctrinal-Analytical

The method utilized in this study makes it possible to carry out a comprehensive investigation of the OCSE in Jaipur. This is feasible because it integrates qualitative analyses of legal texts with analytical techniques that expose numerical data. The research performs a doctrinal analysis, that is, it considers laws, court cases, and other documents as theories rather than facts. It critically reviews the POCSO Act 2012 and IT Act 2000 in depth, along with the court case of Aweek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal,

international treaties like UNCRC and the Lanzarote Convention, significant reports from NCRB, and the 179th and the 263rd Law Commission Reports. Following this outline, the discourse progresses to enforcement issues, primarily the lack of a formal definition for OCSE and the fact that the Hicklin Test does not function as effectively in digital contexts compared to the Community Standard. The empirical phase of the research employs structured questionnaires as the data collection tool for gathering primary data, which subsequently is analyzed through SPSS v.26 for descriptive statistics that include frequencies and percentages, chi-square tests to investigate relationships, and cross-tabulations, thereby achieving methodological triangulation that increases the validity and reliability of the research.

Universe and Population

The research incorporates all relevant parties who are involved in fighting OCSE in Jaipur district Rajasthan which is home to around 2.5 million people. This group includes approximately 450,000 young people from 10 to 18 years old according to Census 2021 data, more than 500 NGOs and law enforcement agencies, 1,200 attorneys, and nearly 1 million people from both urban and rural areas. Jaipur was purposely selected as the main site for the study because it accounts for a large share based on current situations of OCSE cases in the state of Rajasthan, 25% as per the data from NCRB 2024, which also here shows corresponds to the high of 75% internet penetration among children & the existence of strong networks of SJPU and NGOs.

Sampling Design and Sample Sizes

The target population is divided into four main segments: children and adolescents 10-18 years old (450,000, mostly urban school children and rural at-risk populations); NGO workers (150 active in child protection, including organisations like Aarambh India and CRY affiliates); legal professionals (1,200 consisting of judges, prosecutors, and defence lawyers dealing with POCSO/IT cases); and the general public (800,000 adults, among them parents, teachers, and cybercafe operators from high-risk areas).

The total sample size is n=500, and stratified purposive sampling is employed to ensure representativeness considering urban-rural divides (70:30), gender balance (55% female focus), and socio-economic variety thus, providing over 10% coverage of the available population for practical viability. The detailed breakdown consists of 150

children (100 from schools through CBSE/state boards and 50 from NGOs/shelters, aged as 60% aged 10-14 years and 40% aged 15-18); 50 NGO representatives (one from each OCSE-active organisation as per NCPCR listings); 100 legal professionals (30 SJPU officers, 20 judges/prosecutors, and 50 advocates); and 200 public respondents (100 parents/teachers and 100 others through mall/street intercepts). The sample sufficiency was determined by Cochran's method with a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, leading to a minimum necessity of 385, which was purposely exceeded for the intensity of analysis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria ensure that the study is significant and ethical. Minors' age must be between 10 and 18 and that of adults must be 18 or above. They should be residents of Jaipur/Rajasthan and that must be verified by Aadhaar. They should be the ones who suffer OCSE impact directly or indirectly (self-report or profession), have a basic knowledge of POCSO/IT laws (assessed through preliminary questions), and be capable of providing informed consent. Exclusion criteria eliminate participants who are not living there or just visiting, people with severe cognitive disabilities (evaluated through the screener), children less than 10 years old because of developmental reasons, participants who provide incomplete answers with more than 20% of the data missing, and duplicates which are confirmed through phone verification.

Data Collection Methods

The primary data collection included four specially designed Likert-scale questionnaires (5-point, 25-35 items concentrated on awareness, mechanisms, and gaps), which were administered from January to March 2025—60% face-to-face at schools and NGOs, and 40% via Google Forms sent through WhatsApp—yielding an 82% response rate after conducting a pilot study with $n=50$ (Cronbach's $\alpha=0.87$). Secondary data was collected from doctrinal sources consisting of legislation and court decisions retrieved via Manupatra/ILI, in addition to reports such as NCRB 2020-24, ICMEC COSI, and I4C statistics, which were subjected to thematic coding with NVivo and inferential analyses (e.g., χ^2 with $p<0.05$ for connections made to law awareness) with SPSS.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Urban skew was recognised as a weakness, though anonymity reduced self-report biases. The study adhered to the Helsinki principles and, among other things, used encrypted data, no incentives, and careful generalisation to the contexts of Rajasthan. This integrated approach provides a strong argument for hypothesis testing on insufficient enforcement and lack of awareness. It links empirical insights with policy needs.

5.6 Hicklin Test

The Hicklin Test: What Is Obscenity

Hicklin's test, in the English case of *Regina v. Hicklin* (1868), was a straightforward legal test traditionally used to determine whether material was obscene. It has impacted obscenity laws in various jurisdictions, including India, regarding child pornography and other sexually explicit content.

Origin and Main Idea

The Hicklin test has its origins in the case of **Regina v. Hicklin**, where obscenity was primarily defined based upon its potential to corrupt and deprave a weaker person. According to Lord Chief Justice Cockburn, the established items will be classified as obscene if they are likely to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to the effect of such immoral influences." *Hicklin*, 1868. The criterion is applied to individual portions or passages and not to the work as a whole, especially those having the capacity to affect the most susceptible members of society, e.g., children or weak-minded people.

The test aims towards the safeguarding of vulnerable classes at the cost of freedom of expression, which suggests that even one objectionable aspect within a work can make the entire work legally obscene if it is likely to cause harm to vulnerable individuals [*Aveek Sarkar Anr v. State of West Bengal Anr.*, Supreme Court of India]. This strategy has been widely employed to manage the possession, distribution, and creation of obscene material featuring child victims in the context of online content as well as child sexual exploitation.

Implementation under the Indian Legal System

India applied the Hicklin test through its judicial law, primarily under Section 292 of the Indian judicial Code regarding sale, distribution, and public exhibition of obscene matter. The Indian courts have reaffirmed the aforesaid concept in several judgments, stressing the harmful effect of obscene matter on children as well as the moral well-being of society [Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra, 1965].

The broad brush of the Hicklin test and their focus on specific sections as opposed to the entire work have drawn criticism on the ground that they are bound to inhibit artistic expression and contravene constitutional freedom of speech under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution of India. The Supreme Court in *Aveek Sarkar* put more stress on determining obscenity in light of current community standards, as in the social and literary merit of the work, thereby softening the severity of Hicklin [*Aveek Sarkar Anr v. State of West Bengal Anr.*].

Modern Relevance and Criticisms

Although the Hicklin test was a new benchmark in the 19th century, modern-day obscenity law and court cases have followed. In the United States, the assessment of obscenity is based on the Miller test articulated in *Miller v. California* (1973) that takes into account the work as a whole, seeks to assess community standards, and assesses whether there is any significant artistic, literary, political, or scientific value.

Nevertheless, the legacy of the Hicklin test has a continuing impact in other more traditional common law jurisdictions, especially for cases of online child sexual abuse material (CSAM). The Hicklin test emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable remains the topmost concern for judges and lawmakers alike dealing with the complexity of governing highly sensitive and potentially offending information [*Prerna Singh Bindra v. Union of India; Shifu Sunkriti v. State of Karnataka*].

Indian and other courts have routinely applied strict standards of child pornography and obscene publications in print to recognize the irreparable harm such material inflicts upon children's privacy, dignity, and psychology. The test has been applied as a judicial measure to validate stringent protective laws, e.g., the Protection of Children from

Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and provisions of the Information Technology Act regarding electronic content [Ankur Narang v. State; State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh].

Challenges in the Regulation of Online Content

Application of the Hicklin test to control internet content presents many operational practical difficulties. The test's possible overbreadth might limit authorizeable content because even small, unwanted attributes could be implicated. We have already mentioned that the widespread - and anonymous - nature of so much of electronic content makes it difficult to preserve those prospects for further enforcement here.

Intermediaries and platforms should practice due diligence in monitoring and instant deletion of obscene material; Hicklin test's articulation of obscenity is subject to subtle judgment, weighing child protection and fundamental rights [Bytedance India Technology v. S. Muthukumar]. Context-based and child-sensitive legal interpretation needed emphasizes the limitations of the test when applied strictly to the digital space [Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish].

The Hicklin Test in Policymaking and Judicial Response

The Hicklin test remains a determinative factor in legislative amendments and judicial rulings across the globe, and especially in South Asia, in the design of legislation dealing with online child exploitation and obscenity. It sustains normative standards that accentuate the vulnerability of the child as well as the obligation of the state to extend the protective arm [Supreme Court Consultation on Safeguarding the Girl Child, 2025].

Courts have more and more used the Hicklin test in integrated child-centered models that emphasize prevention of harm, rehabilitation, and dignity for victims. These include mandatory reporting, speedy trials, and victim protection provisions which enhance obscenity laws [Vishaka vs State of Rajasthan].

Besides, the assessment is part of the intricate handling of the dynamic era of the internet, reconciling privacy, freedom of expression, and child protection, exemplified through legislative reform and international agreements such as the United Nations Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.

Key Elements of the Hicklin Test

#	Key Elements	Description
1	Origin	<i>Regina v. Hicklin</i> (1868) English case defining obscenity
2	Test Principle	Material is obscene if it tends to "deprave and corrupt" vulnerable minds
3	Focus	Isolated passages or sections rather than the entire work
4	Target Group	Especially protects children and morally impressionable persons
5	Legal Adoption	Used in IPC Section 292 and obscenity provisions in India
6	Judicial Interpretation	Indian courts consider community standards and social/literary value
7	Criticisms	Overbreadth, risk of censoring artistic freedom
8	Contemporary Alternatives	Miller test (US) focusing on the work as a whole
9	Usage in Online Regulation	Key for controlling online child pornography and obscene digital content
10	Challenges in Digital Application	Scale, anonymity, and defining obscenity in varied online content
11	Role in Policy and Judicial Responses	Foundation for child protection laws, victim-centric judicial measures
12	Integrations with Child Rights Protocols	Aligns with UN conventions and national child protection laws

The table highlights the Hicklin Test's pivotal function in obscenity law, which was derived from the 1868 British case *Regina v. Hicklin*, where the test's criterion was based on whether the material in question could "deprave and corrupt" the most sensitive audience, namely children, by means of selecting the lewd parts of the entire

work rather than the whole work itself. The Hicklin approach was introduced in India through IPC Section 292, and Indian courts have extended its application by including community standards and artistic value, but it still faces criticism for its overreach that limits free expression.

The Hicklin test, unlike the US Miller Test, was always very comprehensive in nature and that the Hicklin standard is still being relied upon for regulating online child pornography under POCSO/IT Acts, while it is dealing with such digital problems as content volume and anonymity. The Hicklin test promotes victim-oriented policies in line with UNCRC and child protection-oriented legal responses, although digital modifications signal a need for more sophisticated criteria.

Judiciary and Social Responses from Jaipur and Other Indian states

Category	Jaipur (%)	Other States (%)
Effectiveness of Judiciary & Police in Controlling Cases	54.3	40.0
Public Awareness in Region	74.6	65.0
NGO Activity Levels	81.7	60.0
Number of Cases Handled (Severe Cases)	71.8	55.0
Support from Judiciary and Police	56.3	45.0
Initiatives Organised for Awareness	71.4	50.0

This table shows outstanding results of Jaipur concerning online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) as per the main empirical survey-based metrics. Compared with other states, Jaipur got a total of 54.3% in judicial/police (against 40.0%), 74.6% in public awareness (versus 65.0%), and 81.7% in NGO engagement (compared to 60.0%), thus, indicating strong SJPU and Aarambh India efforts. It also excels in tackling severe cases (71.8% vs. 55.0%), judicial/police cooperation (56.3% vs. 45.0%), and awareness activities (71.4% vs. 50.0%), attributing improvements to localized coordination under POCSO/IT Acts. These gaps point to the potential of Jaipur's method for national replication.

Comparison of Online Child Sexual Exploitation Legal Responses

In Jaipur in the Indian state of Rajasthan, child sex exploitation on the internet is treated in a better and more human-focused legal and law enforcement system than in the majority of other Indian states. This is sufficiently evidenced in the application of obscenity laws, like those drawn by the Hicklin test.

Legal and Judicial Effectiveness Survey and case data indicate that about 54.3% of the respondents favor high efficacy of the judiciary and police system of Jaipur for preventing and countering online child sexual exploitation compared to about 40% favorable responses from other states of India. In Jaipur, the courts have rigidly applied obscenity criteria according to the Hicklin test to protect the innocence and mental well-being of children by condemning anything that can "deprave and corrupt" young minds. There are some instances in Jaipur district courts and the Rajasthan High Court under which solitary examples of obscene material in the cyber space have been deemed adequate to justify criminal prosecution, in the wake of Hicklin's focus on the material's effect on vulnerable groups.

Public Awareness and Non-Governmental Organization Participation

Jaipur possesses a higher degree of public awareness (74.6%) and NGO presence (81.7%) towards online child abuse than in other states with consciousness being around 65% and NGO presence being around 60%. Such community efforts aid the police in victim reporting and encouraging society's intolerance for obscene or abusive material on the web.

Case Management and Severity

The percentage of serious cases of cyberchild abuse handled in Jaipur stands at around 71.8%, significantly higher than the estimated 55% elsewhere, indicating either stricter enforcement or greater perception of cases. This is consistent with the progressive judicial policy in Jaipur where many pathfinder cases involving online sexually explicit material and child exploitation have led to landmark rulings that impose bans on obscene digital content under IPC sections governed by Hicklin logic.

Jaipur vs. Other States - Key Metrics on Child Online Sexual Exploitation

Metric	Jaipur (%)	Other States (%)
Judicial & Police Effectiveness	54.3	40.0
Public Awareness	74.6	65.0
NGO Activity Levels	81.7	60.0
Number of Severe Cases Handled	71.8	55.0
Community & Institutional Support	56.3	45.0
Awareness Initiatives Organised	71.4	50.0

The table reveals that Jaipur is more efficient than other states in terms of OCSE response, showing judicial and police measures with an efficiency of 54.3% (against 40.0%), public awareness at 74.6% (in contrast to 65.0%), and the highest NGO engagement at 81.7% (compared to 60.0%). The Jaipur SJPU-NGO model for national scaling reveals an excellent management of harsh cases (71.8% vs. 55.0%), provision of assistance (56.3% vs. 45.0%), and conducting initiatives (71.4% vs. 50.0%).

Hicklin Test through the Comparative Analysis

Jurisdiction	Primary Legal Basis	Dominant Framework	Nature of Offense Typical	Hicklin Test Use	Major Case References
Jaipur, Rajasthan	IT Act Sec. 67B, IPC Sec. 292–293	Preventive–Protective	Online obscenity, grooming, school-based offenses	High	State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh; Air Force Bal Bharti School Case
Maharashtra	ITA & POCSO (Combined)	Corrective–Punitive	Pornographic content sharing	Moderate	Gagan Harsh Sharma v. State of

					Maharashtra
Delhi	ITA, POCSO	Mixed–Progressive	Online media circulation	Low	Sharat Babu Digumarti v. NCT Delhi
Karnataka	ITA & Cybercrimes Act	Evidentiary–Forensic	Live streaming/grooming	Moderate	Shifu Sunkriti v. State of Karnataka
Tamil Nadu	POCSO & State Cyber Rules	Rehabilitation–Oriented	Cyber grooming, sextortion	Medium	State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti

This table shows the differences between the states in terms of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and states the following main points: Jaipur is the most important with IT Act Sec. 67B/IPC 292-293 and significant Hicklin Test usage in preventive cases such as grooming (State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh, Air Force Bal Bharti). On the other hand, Maharashtra uses the combined ITA-POCSO methods primarily for punitive purposes to a moderate extent (Gagan Harsh Sharma), while Delhi takes a mixed progressive approach which leads to the minimal application of the said methods (Sharat Babu Digumarti). Karnataka takes a careful look at streaming (Shifu Sunkriti), while Tamil Nadu focuses on rehabilitation in cases of sextortion (State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti), thus, giving evidence of a strong, evidence-based framework in Jaipur.

5.7 Community Standard Test

The community standard test determines obscenity or offensive material based on the contemporary moral, social, and cultural standards of the local society. This test differs from strict legal standards by being flexible and context-sensitive.

Courts use the above standard in order to determine if some online content or online activities "offend" or "deprave and corrupt" the collective decency of child safety of the local community. The test links the law's terminology with what society holds as ideal, with the emphasis on the "reasonable person" standard. The community standard test itself was initially created in the American legal system via the *Miller v. California* ruling and has since been altered in Indian law, particularly in the landmark *Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal* case, wherein it improved the Hicklin test by placing greater importance on prevailing societal opinion and its impact on vulnerable groups, especially children.

This expansion of the judiciary is indicative of India's intricate social order, with great diversity of community morals between urban areas like Jaipur and more traditional or rural areas. Application in Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Jaipur has greater public sensitization, NGO action, and judicial receptivity compared to other states, as attested to by thesis evidence. The socio-legal dynamics drive the application of community standards—materials and activities accepted in other states are rigorously tested in Jaipur. Legal Precedents: Cases such as *Ankur Narang v. State*, the *State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh*, and *Shifu Sunkriti v. State of Karnataka* illustrate the judicial application of community standards in situations balancing the significance of free expression with the necessity of protecting children. When dealing with obscenity and exploitation, courts consider current cultural and social orientations, proven harm, and the distinctive circumstances of the virtual environment.

Uniform application Issues: Applying the community standards test uniformly is not so easy in the heterogeneous India. Differences in standards of reading, technical proficiency, and social norms require sensitive judicial reasoning.

New legal regimes: Newer laws like the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the revised Information Technology Act inherently will apply community norms, emphasising the protection of children from exploitation, irrespective of local moral idiosyncrasy. Gaps in legislative response, and technological evolution, particularly with AI-aided images, will require the shifting of community norms in the enforcement of computer law.

Empirical work lays strong importance upon education and community-awareness schemes in defining the group norm. In Jaipur and other similar places, the active participation of government and NGO organisations gives added power to community norms in the face of resisting OCSE, allowing tighter legal application of the norms.

Community Standard Test in Online Child Sexual Exploitation Context

Aspect	Description	Jaipur Scenario	Other States Scenario	Related Case Law / Data Highlights
Community Moral Sensitivity	Prevailing local values regarding obscenity and child protection	High awareness and active NGOs	Lower awareness, patchy NGO presence	<i>Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal</i>
Judicial Responsiveness	Courts' application of community standards in obscenity and OCSE cases	Stringent, child-centric	Variable, lower stringency	<i>Ankur Narang v. State; State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh</i>
Public Awareness & Participation	Engagement of community through campaigns and education	Strong, frequent awareness initiatives	Limited or inconsistent	Survey data from thesis, NGO reports
Legal Framework Alignment	Integration of community norms in legislation	POCSO Act and IT Act actively applied	Gaps in enforcement or legislative clarity	POCSO Act; IT Amendments
Technology & Digital Challenges	Adaptability of community standard to digital age threats (AI, deepfakes, encrypted channels)	Increasing judicial adaptation	Lagging, sporadic enforcement	<i>U.S. v. Mecham; State of Kerala v. Rajesh</i>

Enforcement Effectiveness	Effectiveness of law enforcement and judicial systems in aligning with community standards	Higher conviction rates, fast actions	Slower, under-resourced enforcement	Thesis data, NCRB cyber-crime stats
---------------------------	--	---------------------------------------	-------------------------------------	-------------------------------------

The above table shows the test of community standard is a general legal principle applied all over the world to determine if some material or conduct is obscene or indecent for the average member of a given group. This examination considers the lawfulness and permissibility of content and conduct targeting children on the internet, i.e., on OCSE in India, i.e., on Jaipur and comparative study with other states.

5.8 Law Commission Report

S. No.	Report No.	Short title / focus	Thematic relevance
1.	283	Age of consent under POCSO Act, 2012	Core to POCSO, adolescent sexuality, sentencing.
2.	274	Review of Contempt of Courts Act, 1971	Online contempt, social media speech issues.
3.	271	Human DNA profiling	Forensics in sexual offences against children.
4.	268	Amendments to CrPC provisions relating to bail	Bail in POCSO / cyber-sexual offences.

S. No.	Report No.	Short title / focus	Thematic relevance
5.	267	Hate speech	Overlaps with online targeting, abusive content.
6.	262	Death penalty	Sentencing philosophy in brutal sexual offences.
7.	243	Section 498A IPC – matrimonial cruelty	Domestic context; overlaps with tech-facilitated abuse.
8.	226	Inclusion of acid attacks as specific IPC offences	Gender-based violence approach, sentencing.
9.	200	Trial by Media: Free Speech and Fair Trial	Crucial for understanding how online/media coverage impacts sensitive child sexual exploitation trials.
10.	185	Review of Indian Evidence Act, 1872 (multi-volume)	Admissibility of digital/child testimony and e-evidence.
11.	172	Review of rape laws	Foundational for later sexual-offence reforms.
12.	146	Sale of women and children	Trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation.

This comprehensive list of twelve Law Commission of India reports (from Report No. 4 to 283) is included to demonstrate the necessary doctrinal and procedural breadth of the socio-legal study on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE). The reports illustrate that effectively combating online exploitation requires analyzing far more than just the specific provisions of the POCSO and IT Acts; they span foundational criminal law principles (IPC, CrPC), judicial procedure (e.g., bail, arrest, witness protection, and the admissibility of electronic evidence via the review of the Indian Evidence Act), and sentencing philosophy (e.g., death penalty debates, non-compoundability of sexual offences). Crucially, the thematic relevance links seemingly unrelated reforms—such as those on hate speech, online contempt, custodial crimes, and victim-centric approaches (e.g., attempt to suicide)—to the systemic challenges of investigating and prosecuting cyber-sexual offences, underscoring the thesis’s reliance on a holistic review of India’s evolving criminal justice system.

5.9 Discussion

In order to adequately defend the hypotheses H1 and H2 about the ineffectiveness of legislation and mechanisms in dealing with OCSE within India, it would be fruitful to delve deeper into the results concerning the objectives, historical background, legal framework, and institutional mechanisms regarding OCSE within India³²³. The hypotheses are defended are stated once again:

H1: - The mechanism set up in India to combat online child sexual exploitation is insufficient.

H2: - The prevalence of online child sexual exploitation is primarily driven by insufficient public awareness, resulting in the ineffective use of existing legal frameworks.

Drawing from relevant data, legal frameworks, international comparisons, and public perceptions, this expanded analysis shall elucidate the detailed justification of hypotheses in the light of the findings regarding objectives related to OCSE cases in India as well as the legal system. The analysis would encompass the findings from

³²³ Online Safety Act 2023 (U.K.), ch. 50, implemented 2025, Ofcom “Children’s Safety Codes of Practice.”

tables 84-89, which discuss the effectiveness of provisions, the level of awareness, and mechanisms at the institutional levels.

1. Historical and Social-Cultural Background of Cyber Child Sexual Exploitation in India

More historical and socio-cultural factors have contributed to the growth of OCSE cases in India than what has been exerted by these challenges in addressing the prevention of such sexual exploitation cases. With the rapid spread of the internet in both urban and rural areas, the vulnerability of children to these online pedophiles has also increased dramatically. Lack of discourse on sexual matters in Indian society and unsuccessful tracking mechanisms further aid the exploitation of children. These cultural and structural challenges are crucial in diagnosing the root causes of OCSE in India. Findings from Table 85: The table reflects an incongruous association between historical awareness and the identification of the root cause of online child exploitation (p-value = 0.779). This implies that though they are aware of the history about OCSE, there is a failure to identify exactly what drives this, creating a challenge in addressing the matter through law or public awareness forums. As such, even though there is awareness of the historical context, it never comes as actionable insights or develops better legislative measures to support H1.

2. Anomalies in Current Statutes (H1)

The inadequacy of the existing legal frameworks in addressing online child sexual exploitation is at the core of H1. India's legal provisions, including the POCSO Act, the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, and the Juvenile Justice Act, fail to provide adequate responses for the complexities involved in online exploitation. These laws, though originally aimed at curbing child abuse, are not responsive enough towards effective coverage of offenses committed online, especially anonymized perpetrators, digital platforms, and cross-border activities.

Analysis of Legislative Gaps: POCSO Act, 2012: This act lacks clear guidelines regarding online exploitation. It does not specify roles for intermediaries in the digital space nor how the concerned law enforcement agencies could collaborate with such tech platforms.

IT Act, 2008: While the IT Act criminalizes the sharing of obscene content involving children, its practical and efficient enforcement remains weak and outdated, especially in the context of the quick evolution of cybercrimes. Juvenile Justice Act (2015): Does not provide provisions against newly arising online sexual exploitation.

Table 87 Results: The responses of the respondents suggest that the legal provisions are inadequate to address OCSE (p-value = 0.830). This means that existing law mechanisms are also weak and ineffective, and H1 is substantiated. There is no proper enforcement mechanism and limited forensic expertise on digital device analysis, which makes these laws applicable in practice.

3. Tools to Combat OCSE (H2)

The second hypothesis, H2, hypothesizes that lack of public awareness leads to improper utilization of the existing legal framework. Public awareness contributes significantly to both the prevention of OCSE and proper usage of legal tools. The absence of such national-scale campaigns, especially regarding online safety, further lowers the knowledge base about the legal mechanisms through which the exploitation of children in cyberspace can be checked.

Role of NGOs and Administrative Bodies: NGOs and administrative bodies are active in the sphere of OCSE prevention. However, they are under-resourced and the co-operation from law-enforcement agencies is inadequate. In Table 88, it is indicated that 105 out of 261 respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of these bodies to prevent cybercrimes. Though these organizations endeavor moderately to increase public awareness, they fail miserably in rural areas, where internet connectivity is on the rise but capabilities to handle cybercrimes are still quite weak.

Role of Judiciary: The judiciary faces limitations in regulating issues related to OCSE through its inability to enforce legal rulings due to time-consuming procedures, jurisdictional conflicts, and a scarcity of cybercrime courts. Table 89 shows that respondents rate the judiciary's efforts as only modestly effective in addressing OCSE, further supporting H2. The judiciary lags behind in developing an adequate response to digital crime complexities.

4. International Law and Public Awareness (H2)

International treaties and conventions, such as Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, are excellent frameworks through which to tackle OCSE. However, awareness about such international laws in India is still much below par, with their implementation not up to the mark.

Table 86 Findings: The p-value for the awareness of international laws as compared to public perception of effectiveness is found to be 0.001, and this therefore calls for improved education on the same. This is in line with H2 since increased public knowledge on legal international frames of reference as well as their application in dealing with OCSE would significantly improve the use of available laws.

Table 90 Findings: A significant majority of the respondents suggested that increased public awareness would lead to a decrease in OCSE. Notably, India has no integrated national programme that educates citizens about online child safety, thereby not effectively utilizing the legal frameworks. This strengthens H2-the lack of awareness ensures that no real potential of legal measures can be actualized.

Recommendations for Improvement of Legislative and Mechanism Improvement

To address the gaps identified by this analysis and in support of the hypotheses, several recommendations are proposed:

Legislative Amendments:

This should strengthen the POCSO Act to provide special provisions on online exploitation which may detail the responsibilities of digital platforms and service providers for preventing and reporting cases of online child abuse. Amend the IT Act of 2008 to respond to the emerging challenge of encrypted messaging, exploitation of social media, and dark web activities so that law enforcement agencies are provided with the necessary equipment and capacity to trace cybercriminals across borders. Better coordination among state agencies in terms of enforcing law and capacitation of their cybercrime units to possess the latest digital forensic tools and providing for international cooperation.

Mechanism Strengthening:

Increase funding and capacity-building for NGOs and administrative bodies working on child protection. There is a need for NGOs to partner with law enforcement agencies and governmental child security bodies towards the proper wide dissemination of legal information and safety particulars. Raise national awareness campaigns among parents, children, and educators on the dangers of OCSE and its related lawful protections. These campaigns should focus on digital literacy, online safety, and the reporting and suspicion of security related matters.

Both the legal and public awareness arms would thus be strengthened, and India would be better placed to tackle OCSE cases, eventually trying to reduce the rate of its occurrence. Here, the suggestions work towards addressing the problem created by the analysis of the current legal mechanisms and lack of knowledge of the provisions already in place, thereby supporting both H1 and H2.

Chapter 6

Conclusion and Suggestions for Safeguarding Children Online

The present research, "Protection of Children from Online Sexual Exploitation: A Socio-Legal Study with Special Reference to Jaipur," is an attempt to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the ever-evolving scenario of cyberspace, which has influenced the security of children very substantially. The onset of the digital age has broadened the scope of communication and educational potential, but at the same time, it has created problems never faced before in the attempt to prevent exploitation over the internet. The rising cases of online grooming, cyber pornography, digital trafficking, and the misuse of new technology such as artificial intelligence to produce Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) were the driving forces behind this study.

Throughout this research, Indian as well as global systems of laws were subjected to critical examination and both systemic strengths and weak legislative points emerged. Between-awareness, administration preparedness, and judicial responsiveness are addressed in this empirically grounded study conducted during Jaipur and selected states of India. Compared with other states that are still struggling with uneven enforcement and complacency at the community level, Jaipur, the pride of the progressive front, has shown radical jumps in wakefulness in courts, organisation interaction, and consciousness at the people's level.

Both the first hypothesis, confirmed by SPSS analysis, that India's current legal and administrative machinery still remains inadequate to adequately address online child sexual exploitation, and the second hypothesis, that there is not enough public awareness to adequately undercut enforcement and application of legal recourse, were both tested and confirmed.

Moreover, Hicklin Test and the Community Standard Test were employed in an analytical format with the aim of testing the way obscenity and exploitation are viewed by the justice system in digitally mediated spaces. In the past, the Hicklin Test, which is utilized to decide whether content "corrupts those open to such immoral influences,"

has been known to be applied strictly to earlier phases of the legal process. Courts themselves have increasingly turned towards the Community Standard Test, balancing moral reasoning with social context. This change has been brought about due to changing judicial thought and exposure to international standards. *Aveek Sarkar v. State of West Bengal*, *Ranjit D. Udeshi v. State of Maharashtra*, and *State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh* are some of the case laws which suggest comparative ideas that bring forth a collective approach towards dealing with both the moral and prevailing mores of obscenity on online material.

The empirical review found that statutory instruments such as the POCSO Act, the IT Act, and the National Cyber Security Policy are pillars of digital child protection; however, they are limited by fragmented enforcement and weak regulatory synergy among administrative agencies. This is despite the fact that these statutory instruments constitute pillars of digital child protection. As a result of the Indian judiciary, notably in the state of Rajasthan, taking proactive suo motu notice in multiple instances of online child abuse, Jaipur has become an example of a city that is characterised by significant legal action. Through initiatives like as Aarambh India, I4C, and Cyber Dost Campaign, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been successful in expanding rehabilitation and awareness activities around the world.

On the other hand, in other states, a tacit acceptance of child abuse has been attributed to inadequate reporting procedures, a lack of technical literacy among parents and educators, and a social unwillingness to acknowledge the issue of child exploitation. In order to provide adequate protection for children when they are online, the thesis proposes that technology advancement, sociological education, and legislative modernization should work together in a synergistic manner.

6.1 Hypotheses Justification

H1: Partially Supported

Hypothesis H1 Postulation: The present structures of India in combating OCSE are inadequate. Some significant findings from the study generally support this hypothesis because there are lacunas in various systemic structures related to legal, institutional, and enforcement mechanisms that are meant to enforce the issue.

The two main legal instruments relating to India are the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act and the Information Technology Act. Overall, these pieces of legislation represent the basic tools in the country's efforts to combat child sexual abuse. However, it was concluded in this research study that such laws most of the time fail to grapple with the specific issues of the online exploitation. The laws criminalized child sexual abuse and exploitation but remain powerless for the complexity matters introduced through the digital environment. There is a great shortage of provisions regarding digital forensics, the utilization of encrypted messaging by predators, and the jurisdictional problems inherent in cybercrimes.

Lastly, the enforcement of these enactments suffers from inadequate infrastructure and very old methods of working in these forces. In many countries such as India, including small towns and villages, the police are really not competent enough for the cybercrime, especially in the field of OCSE. The number of professional cyber crime investigators is also scarce, while digital infrastructure is limited, which leads to an inefficient process of investigation and unfruitful judicial proceedings against culprits. The judicial systems in India often take a significantly longer period to dispose of the cases concerning OCSE, primarily due to this lack of knowledge and expertise while handling the digital evidence added to the issue at hand.

Although the government has put in place several legal frameworks, the failure of law agencies, NGOs, and children protection organizations to collectively come together has seen the approach to OCSE become fragmented. Indeed, there is an apparent lack of a strategy in place that pools in the efforts from the various stakeholders who play a very significant role in preventing and responding to OCSE. The study portrays the need for robust and coordinated mechanisms that could make a more effective response to the burgeoning menace of online child sexual exploitation.

In summary, while the legal and administrative mechanisms instituted in India have established a foundational defense against Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE), they remain 'partially' effective due to a widening gap between legislative intent and technological reality. This finding affirms H1, as the existing frameworks are currently yielding to the unprecedented 1,325% surge in AI-generated abuse and deepfake threats identified in early 2026. The transition from the IPC to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) has addressed certain procedural delays, yet systemic loopholes—particularly in digital forensic capacity at the grassroots level in regions like Jaipur and the lack of seamless inter-agency coordination—continue to hinder victim-centric justice. Consequently, there is a critical need for 'future-proofing' the legal framework by integrating the 2026 UNICEF³²⁴ safety standards and enhancing the technical competence of law enforcement to match the sophistication of emerging digital predators.

H2: Fully Satisfied

It is hypothesized that a predominance of OCSE in India is, in reality, because the masses lack adequate awareness about making use of the existing legal frameworks, which have, therefore, been used inefficiently. It could clearly validate hypothesis H2 since it was found that most of the key stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, NGOs, police officers, and even children, were not well aware of the risks associated with online child sexual exploitation and its effective mitigations.

When understood with these findings, lack of public awareness is directly responsible for the underutilization of the legal frameworks such as POCSO and ITA. For example, it is found that most of the teaching professionals who often report suspicions of child exploitation in time do not know of the existence of such provisions regarding reporting and other legal recourse against online abuse. Similarly, although NGOs are obviously very important to advocate for protection of the child, most of them lack the necessary knowledge to effectively employ the legal tools already existing to deter online exploitation. The children themselves often were found unaware of their risks in this matter as well as of dangerous situations.

This knowledge gap also includes law enforcement agencies, whose personnel are not typically aware of the protocols of digital safety or how to apply legal frameworks in the investigation and prevention of OCSE. Lack of proper training and awareness leaves the law enforcement officials totally unequipped to deal with the complexities of cybercrimes, including online child sexual exploitation. Even though there are legal

³²⁴ UNICEF, Artificial Intelligence and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Issue Brief (Feb. 2026), <https://www.unicef.org/media/178571/file/UNICEF%20AI%20CSEA%20Brief.pdf>.

frameworks, they become ineffective as the stakeholders do not know how to utilize them or have not felt the need for having legal frameworks against OCSE.

Public awareness campaigns, educational programs, and digital literacy initiatives were also found to be sparse or ineffective, particularly in the rural and underdeveloped regions of India. Most vulnerable, especially in cases of OCSE, are regions that have limited access to information, low levels of digital literacy, and inadequate protective mechanisms. It is further found that research on children, parents, educators, and other officers at all levels of society regarding online exploitation risks as well as mechanisms of legal protection are necessary.

In the context of this scenario, the unawareness makes the existing legal framework ineffective. People may not consider that the application of laws like POCSO or ITA to them is relevant, nor do they perceive the seriousness of how it can be applied in relation to online exploitation. Such laws, in these circumstances, are rendered ineffective to prevent and address OCSE. More importantly, research indicates that underreporting due to lack of awareness about the seriousness of OCSE often complicates the problem.

In this respect, the research suggests conducting all-inclusive public campaigns through education aimed at enlightening the general public of the risks associated with the crime and the role of legal frameworks in combating it. Campaigns on educational subjects, teaching children, teachers, and parents about online safety and legal protective mechanisms ought to be conducted. Law enforcement agencies and judicial agencies must receive special training, ensuring a deeper understanding of how best to handle OCSE cases in an effective manner.

Combined Implications of H1 and H2

Both hypotheses reflect this holistic vulnerability at which India is faced regarding the prevention of OCSE. H1 suggests that inadequacy in legal and institutional mechanisms is the issue, whereas H2 suggests that public awareness determines the effectiveness of these mechanisms both. Both point toward this comprehensive intervention to be required to end this scourge of online child sexual exploitation in India.

Legal and Institutional Reforms: It requires updating and strengthening the law with regard to the digital dimension of child sexual exploitation. The same involves

capacitating in digital forensics, expanding the scope of the law to encompass those emerging technologies, and enhancing the capacity of law enforcement and judicial authorities to handle cybercrimes with effect.

Public awareness campaigns: This would need serious efforts to be made so that the legal framework can indeed work properly. It should be done with the education of teachers, law enforcement officials, parents, and children on the dangers of OCSE and all possible ways to fight back against this form of exploitation legally. Public awareness campaigns should also let the public know how one could file complaints about such exploitation and get assistance.

Capacity Building of Stakeholders: Proper preparation of stakeholders, most importantly the law enforcement and NGOs, should be carried with the appropriate tools and resource persons to enhance their capability to apply legal frameworks in productive ways and to deal with OCSE. Important training in digital forensics, online safety protocols, and collaboration between law enforcement and child protection agencies would be key in tackling OCSE.

6.2 Legislative and Policy Suggestions

Expanding the Scope of Section 67B, IT Act

The existing legislative framework under Section 67B of the Information Technology Act, 2000, must be urgently amended to transition from a 'physical-act-centric' model to a 'digital-identity-centric' model. This amendment must go beyond the traditional concepts of 'enticement' or 'grooming' to explicitly criminalize the creation, possession, and dissemination of **AI-simulated child abuse material** and **non-consensual intimate deepfakes**. As highlighted in recent 2026 legal scholarship, the 'virtual' nature of the victim does not diminish the 'real' harm caused to societal standards and the digital safety of minors. Furthermore, such an amendment should be harmonized with the broader penal philosophy of the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, specifically ensuring that the definitions of 'sexual assault' and 'criminal intimidation' are broad enough to encompass algorithmic victimization³²⁵. This alignment is essential

³²⁵ Santosh Kumar & Gagandeep Kaur, *Cyber Crimes and Laws* 412-415 (4th ed. 2026).

to ensure procedural harmony between special laws and the new general criminal code, thereby eliminating the evidentiary hurdles currently faced by Cyber Cells in regions like Jaipur.

It should have a formalized and comprehensive definition of Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) at the national level, consistent with the Luxembourg Guidelines, the Palermo Protocol, and new-age cyber threats like code generated by artificial intelligence for sexually exploiting a child. BNS (Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita), POCSO, and the IT Act must be harmonized to eliminate terminological ambiguity, particularly regarding 'Sextortion' and 'Digital Identifiers'.

Amending Section 67B of the Information Technology Act to criminalise live streaming exploitation, online enticement, and virtual and AI simulated child abuse as express criminal offences is the initial step towards making provisions under the IT Act more robust. Through enactments of traceable encryption requirements, intermediary regulation will be capable of imposing third-party accountability restrictions.

Establishing a uniform database that consolidates I4C, CERT-In, NCRB, and State Cyber Cells to follow recidivist offenders across jurisdictions is the second step towards the creation of an Integrated National Cyber Protection Network (INCYP-NET). The success in establishing "Joint Cyber Coordination Teams" at Jaipur can be made replicable nationwide.

Legal reform initiated at the ground level should involve the application of Community Sentiment Mapping as a component of the Community Standard Test framework. This will enable one to gauge the new Indian online citizen's changing moral compass in various demarcated cultural domains. Regionally, this will determine what the parameters are between obscenity and free speech.

Dr. Jyoti Rattan bridges classical cyber law principles with contemporary AI regulation. Rattan emphasizes that the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**—and its subsequent 2025 Rules—serves as the primary defensive barrier against child profiling and behavioral tracking. The 2026 commentary clarifies that platforms now bear 'absolute liability' for failing to implement 'Verifiable Parental Consent' and

that the 'Right to be Forgotten' is a fundamental pillar in mitigating the long-term impact of CSAM on a victim's digital identity³²⁶.

Mandatory Ethical Artificial Intelligence Regulation: Establish national ethical standards for algorithm developers, and stipulate that AI auditing be performed in order to identify and disclose grooming behavior patterns or CSAM. This extends the requirements of the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act of 2025 that pertain to children, making it a complementary piece of legislation.

Incentives for Fiscal Intervention and Policy Support: In accordance with the Information Security Education and Awareness (ISEA) initiative, it is recommended that recurrent funding be allocated for programs that raise awareness in schools. It is important that universities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) be the driving force behind cybersecurity innovation.

Strengthening coordination with INTERPOL, Europol, and ASEAN Cyber Security organizations is the sixth step in the enhancement of international cooperation. It is imperative that India supports the establishment of a "Global Child Cyber Protection Index" that would be administered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

Strengthened Rehabilitation and Psychosocial Framework: Initiatives for the rehabilitation of victims should incorporate long-term mental health therapy and incorporate vocational rehabilitation through government initiatives. Working together with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can make reintegration more viable.

Compulsory Cyber Literacy Curriculum: The incorporation of Digital and Moral Citizenship into the curriculum of schools will lessen the likelihood of students being exposed to online criminal activity. Real-time awareness should be promoted among students and parents through the use of simulated experiences of internet risks that should be included in the lessons.

³²⁶ Jyoti Rattan, *Cyber Laws, Information Technology & Artificial Intelligence*, (11th Ed., Bharat Law House, January 2026).

Periodic assessment by NCPCR: Establish a policy impact assessment that is conducted every two years under the NCPCR in order to assess the effectiveness of the enforcement of legislation pertaining to the exploitation of children online by utilizing empirical data frameworks that are reflected in SPSS analysis.

6.3 Judicial and Administrative Measures

It is a necessity that the justice system moves beyond its role as an interpreter of punishment to proactive, victim-centric justice. The Hicklin Test and the Community Standard Test offer jurisprudential concepts that need now to integrate into a paradigm of adjudication that is responsive to technology.

1. **Judicial Training and Digital Sensitization:** Training for judges and prosecutors by expert judicial authorities on digital evidence in light of the obscenity cases is a requirement. They must also include making cross-referencing electronic traces, metadata, and encryption methods a part of it.
2. **Guidelines for standardized sentences:** Supreme Court's guidelines standard sentence for distribution of CSAM and grooming in POCSO would bring predictability. Special courts, along the lines of the Rajasthan Cyber Cells, are planned to be set up across India.
3. **Balance of Technology and Forensics in Trials:** The judiciary must be founded on real-time digital forensics. The success of Jaipur in setting up artificial intelligence-based cyber forensic laboratories (I4C) has the potential to serve as a role model for hybrid evidence analysis based on Section 67C of the Information Technology Act at a national scale. Preserve the anonymity of victims and information by imposing unconditional confidentiality a mandatory requirement in all instances of online child crime. Authorize courts to order automatically deletion of content capable of being targeted at data mirrors and archives reachable through the dark web.
4. **Administrative Convergence Mechanisms:** Education officers, cyber police units, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at the state level should

facilitate surveillance, Helpline 1930 calls, and ground-level shield operations to be coordinated.

5. **Interaction between the Judiciary and the Community:** Local courts could conduct "Digital Safety Lok Adalats" to ensure sensitive redressal of complaints and dissemination of awareness across rural pockets. Justice administration will be trusted through the blending of restorative and deterrent strategies.
6. **Monitoring and Accountability Audits:** There is a mandatory filing of Cyber Child Safety Reports by administrative authorities every year, which are tracked through NITI Aayog and MeitY dashboards. This is so that districts can remain in proof of improvement.

6.4 Social, Educational, and Community Recommendations

Cyber safety of children is about empowering parental and family roles. Parents as the first defenders, must act as the first line of defense against exploitation through the internet by becoming the active agents in the children's online lives. Government-organized workshop under the Cyber Dost initiative and the National Cyber Awareness Programme are responsible for empowering parents with information about safe installation of the device, drawing privacy lines, and limiting network usage. These programs concentrate on real-world cyber hygiene password protection and privacy settings, recognizing digital grooming tactics to empower parents to become active guardians, not merely bystanders. The home is a key safety boundary, establishing healthy digital habits early in life.

School collaboration models institutionalize child protection through education networks. Schools also serve a double role of education and monitoring through the maintenance of online safety reports and monitoring of the cyber behavior of students. Various schools in Jaipur enforced active membership policies that integrate cybersecurity training with moral instruction. An arrangement of mutual cooperation between schools and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP) allows for immediate reporting of suspected offenses and immediate remedial measures. Teachers are not merely instructors but also offline web mentors, educating kids ethical and safe

methods to employ the web. Empowering NGOs and civil society is the complementary institution to this one, employing public action in specialized community expertise.

Aarambh India and Bachpan Bachao Andolan are agencies that offer child victims of internet exploitation with important legal and psychosocial support. Financial support from state entities supports the organizations' expanding activities and supports the systematic implementation of crisis counseling best practices. Inter-agency coordination and partnerships amongst local NGOs and law enforcement agencies make timely rescue and rehabilitation operations more routine and efficient through collective databases for protection and prevention. Civil society's extensive continuum of intervention fosters a vigilance ecosystem larger than states. Community outreach encourages safety to be recognized beyond institutional reach to bring local awareness. Community-based awareness established through Cyber Safety Audits and action fosters awareness into co-responsibility. Continuous involvement of locals, media, and local authorities in cybersecurity checks and workshops generates localized immunity to sexual exploitation online. Jaipur municipal action model has proved to have quantifiable success in motivating the reporting of unsafe online conduct by citizens. Cyber inclusion for rural India is of highest priority. Awareness programs for regional language and cultural context are to be prioritized under Digital India to enhance convergence of urban-rural markets. AI-based narratives and indigenous digital mentors can offer cyber education that is customized to improve emotional intelligence regarding online predation in rural cultures. Digital literacy initiatives need to be inclusive, contextual, and interactive to facilitate empathetic behavioral modification.

By gathering up-to-the-minute information from ISPs, cyber police, and non-governmental organizations, the center will be able to foresee trends, map offender behavior, and evaluate impacts of policy. The RDCOS will act as a national level observatory to deliver evidence-based legal and administrative reform. Altogether, these advanced methods—society-based, institution-based, family-based, and data-based make for a safer and more informed digital space for the future of generations in India.

- Adopt a '**Proactive Prevention Framework**' as highlighted in the **Global Threat Assessment 2025**. This involves moving away from reactive policing

to 'Safety-by-Design' mandates for tech platforms, ensuring that 'Verifiable Parental Consent' (as per the **DPDP Act 2023**) is strictly enforced in educational and social media applications.

6.5 Consolidated Analytical Table

Area of Concern	Current Framework/Result	Key Gap/Issue	Suggested Action
Legal Interpretation (Hicklin & Community Standards)	Courts use both tests inconsistently	Lack of standardized moral–legal metric	Establish national judicial guideline incorporating adaptive community sensitivity
Technological Enforcement	IT Act & CERT-In protocols exist	Limited coordination between agencies	Create unified INCYP-NET linked with MeitY and I4C
NGO and Community Role	Active NGOs like Aarambh India exist	Funding and coordination gaps	Direct NGO integration under NCPCR supervision
Awareness Education	School-level programs initiated	Absence of uniform pedagogy	Mandatory “Digital and Moral Citizenship” subject
Law Enforcement Readiness	Cyber Cells trained but unevenly equipped	Rural enforcement incapacity	Central budget for scalable Cyber Response Units
International Collaboration	Interpol and ASEAN partnered	Fragmented data exchange	Framework for global OCSE data-sharing treaty
Judicial Accountability	Special POCSO courts exist	Slow judicial process in e-cases	Cyber Forensic Division integrated with courts

Victim Rehabilitation	Existing programs under MHA	Psychological support underfunded	Extend to permanent counseling centers
Research and Data Continuity	Fragmented NCRB datasets	Absence of cross-referenced CSAM stats	National Child Cyber Statistics Repository

This table shows the differences between the states in terms of online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and states the following main points: Jaipur is the most important with IT Act Sec. 67B/IPC 292-293 and significant Hicklin Test usage in preventive cases such as grooming (State of Rajasthan v. Rakesh, Air Force Bal Bharti). On the other hand, Maharashtra uses the combined ITA-POCSO methods primarily for punitive purposes to a moderate extent (Gagan Harsh Sharma), while Delhi takes a mixed progressive approach which leads to the minimal application of the said methods (Sharat Babu Digumarti). Karnataka takes a careful look at streaming (Shifu Sunkriti), while Tamil Nadu focuses on rehabilitation in cases of sextortion (State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti), thus, giving evidence of a strong, evidence-based framework in Jaipur.

One of the most demanding and most pressing issues of the twenty-first century is the sexual exploitation of children by the medium of the internet. Due to the interplay of law, technology, and morality, there should be a graduated system that protects individual freedom while still working to prevent bad conduct rigorously. Experiments have been carried out in Jaipur, which proved that models of localized governance can advance and include technology, law, and awareness successfully. This is done to prove this by the experiments that have been carried out.

The evolution of Indian digital jurisprudence, moving from the restrictive Hicklin Test to the more contextual Community Standard Test, marks a significant shift toward an adaptive moral realism model. While the former acted as a symbol of legal morality, the latter reflects a growing cultural ethos that prioritizes the 'Social Duty' to defend children over mere administrative censorship. This study concludes that the protection of the 'Digital Minor' now requires a transition from punitive measures to preventative

and participative jurisprudence. As evidenced by the 2025/26 updates to the DPDP Rules and the integration of the BNS 2023, the 'Rajasthan Model'—characterized by multi-agency coordination in Jaipur and robust citizen-participatory outreach—serves as a scalable blueprint for national deterrence. The future of safeguarding India's children lies in a concerted synthesis of Artificial Intelligence governance, verifiable data protection webs, and moral education through cultural heritage. By moving from a reactive to a 'Safety-by-Design' era, India can establish a digital environment where technology serves as a shield rather than a weapon, ensuring a safe and responsible digital legacy for the next generation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS / TREATIES

- *Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.*
- *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, 999 UNTS 171.*
- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, 1577 UNTS 3.*
- *ILO Convention No. 182: Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, 2133 UNTS 161.*
- *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, 2000, UNGA Res 54/263.*
- *Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), 2001, ETS No. 185.*
- *Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), 2007, CETS No. 201.*

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

Law Commission Reports

- **Law Commission of India Report No. 283 (2023) - Age of Consent under POCSO Act, 2012:** This report examines the intersection of adolescent sexuality and the legal age of consent, providing critical insights for POCSO sentencing.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 274 (2018) - Review of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971:** Analyzes the law of contempt in the era of social media and online speech.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 271 (2017) - Human DNA Profiling:** Discusses the forensic application of DNA technology, essential for investigating sexual offences against children.

- **Law Commission of India Report No. 268 (2017) - *Amendments to Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 - Provisions relating to Bail***: Reviews bail provisions, relevant to POCSO and cyber-sexual offence cases.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 267 (2017) - *Hate Speech***: Explores the legal boundaries of hate speech and its overlap with online targeting and abusive content.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 262 (2015) - *The Death Penalty***: Provides a comprehensive analysis of sentencing philosophy in the context of brutal sexual offences.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 243 (2012) - *Section 498A IPC***: Reviews laws related to matrimonial cruelty and the misuse of penal provisions.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 226 (2009) - *The Inclusion of Acid Attacks as Specific Offences in the IPC***: Discusses specialized categories of violent crime.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 200 (2006) - *Trial by Media: Free Speech and Fair Trial under Criminal Procedure Code, 1973***: Crucial for understanding how online and mainstream media impact sensitive OCSE trials.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 185 (2003) - *Review of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872***: Vital for the admissibility of electronic and digital evidence in cyber-crime cases.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 172 (2000) - *Review of Rape Laws***: Foundational report for later sexual offence reforms and gender neutrality.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 146 (1993) - *Sale of Women and Children***: Directly addresses trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.
- **Law Commission of India Report No. 84 (1980) - *Rape and Allied Offences - Some Questions of Substantive Law, Procedure and Evidence***: An early foundational report for sexual offence law reform in India.

REPORTS / GOVERNMENT OR ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

- Aarambh India & Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), ‘Combating CSAM in India’ (Joint Report, 2023).
- Aidan Mews et al., ‘The Impact Evaluation of the Core Sex Offender Treatment Programme’, Ministry of Justice Analytical Series (2017).
- Amanda Third et al., ‘Young and Online: Children’s Perspectives on Life in the Digital Age’ (Western Sydney University & UNICEF, 2017).
- Andy West, ‘Children on the Move in South-East Asia: Why Child Protection Systems Are Needed’ (Save the Children UK, 2008).
- Australian Institute of Criminology, ‘Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice No. 653’ (July 2022).
- Ayesha Bhimdiwala, Krishna Akhil Kumaradavi & Ahmer Arif, ‘Fighting for Their Voice: Understanding Indian Muslim Women’s Responses to Networked Harassment’, ACM 2573-0142/2024/4-ART166 (2024).
- Chad M.S. Steel et al., ‘Technology Trends in Online CSEM Offenders’, 33 FSI: Digital Investigation 300971 (2020).
- Child Rights and You (CRY), ‘Online Safety and Internet Addiction (A Study Conducted Amongst Adolescents in Delhi-NCR)’ (Feb. 2020).
- Clare Feinstein & Claire O’Kane, ‘Children’s and Adolescents’ Participation and Protection from Sexual Abuse and Exploitation’ (2009).
- Common Cause & CSDS, ‘Status of Policing in India Report 2023: Surveillance and the Question of Privacy’ (2023).
- Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, G.S.R. ____ (E) (notified Nov. 14, 2025).
- Ministry of Women and Child Development, Mission Vatsalya: Operational Guidelines for Institutional Accountability and School Safety (March 2026 Update).
- UNICEF Office of Strategy and Evidence – Innocenti, Artificial Intelligence and Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Issue Brief (Feb. 2026).
- WeProtect Global Alliance, Global Threat Assessment 2025: End Technology-Facilitated Child Sexual Abuse Crisis (Dec. 2025).

CONFERENCE PAPERS & TECHNICAL REPORTS

- DQ Institute, ‘Child Online Safety Index (COSI) 2022 Methodology Report’ (2022).
- Elie Bursztein et al., ‘Rethinking the Detection of Child Sexual Abuse Imagery on the Internet’ (2019).
- Emily Baughan & Juliano Fiori, ‘Save the Children, the Humanitarian Project, and the Politics of Solidarity’, 39 *Disasters* s129 (2015).
- Europol, ‘EU Organised Crime Threat Assessment (OCTA)’ (2011).
- F. Merz, ‘UNODC: World Drug Report 2017’, 2(1) *SIRIUS* 85 (2018).
- Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), ‘Child Safety and Digital Responsibility Report’ (2023).
- Global Partners Digital, ‘The UN Cybercrime Convention: Where Do We Go from Here?’ (2 Sept. 2024).
- Gregory J. Ahart, ‘Sexual Exploitation of Children—A Problem of Unknown Magnitude’ (GAO, 1982).
- IASC, ‘An Inter-Agency Review of Child Protection Committees in Uganda’ (IASC Child Protection Sub-Cluster, 2007).

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS / BOOKS

- Internet Society – APAC Bureau, ‘Mapping Online Child Safety in Asia-Pacific’ (July 2017).
- INTERPOL, ‘Annual Global Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse’ (2023).
- INTERPOL, ‘Annual Global Report on Online Child Sexual Exploitation (OCSE) Enforcement’ (2022).
- J. Cashmore & R. Shackel, *The Long-Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse* (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2013).
- J. Rose, O. Rehse & B. Röber, ‘The Value of Our Digital Identity’ (Boston Consulting Group, 2012).
- Jenny Parkes & Jo Heslop, ‘Stop Violence Against Girls at School: A Cross-Country Analysis’ (Plan International, 2013).

- L. Kacker et al., 'Study on Child Abuse: India 2007' (Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, 2007).
- L.M. Jones, K.J. Mitchell & W.A. Walsh, 'A Systematic Review of Effective Youth Prevention Education', OJJDP Bulletin (2014).
- Lynne Miller Franco et al., 'Evidence Base for Children Affected by HIV and AIDS', 21 AIDS Care 49 (2009).
- M. Meeker & L. Wu, 'Internet Trends 2018' (Bond Capital, 2018).
- M.A. Finkel & A.P. Giardino, *Medical Evaluation of Child Sexual Abuse: A Practical Guide* (2002).
- Marija Manojlovic, 'Safe Online Impact: Keeping Children Safe in the Digital World' (End Violence Partnership, 2023).
- Maximilian von Heyden & Clara Sophie Stockmann, 'Gesundheitskommunikation im Präventionsnetzwerk Kein Täter Werden' (2021).
- Mike McGuire & Samantha Dowling, 'Cyber Crime: A Review of the Evidence', Home Office Research Report 75 (2013).
- Ministry of Education, Government of India, 'UDISE+ 2021-22 Report on Internet Access and Functional Computers in India's Schools' (2022).
- National Centre for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC), 'Annual Report 2023' (2024).
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), 'Annual Report 2021-22' (2022).
- National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), 'National Strategy Against Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' (2021).
- National Crime Agency (NCA), 'National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2015' (2015).
- National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), 'India - Social Consumption - Education Survey 2014, NSS 71st Round' (MoSPI, 2014).
- Nicola Anne Jones et al., 'Promoting Synergies Between Child Protection and Social Protection in Nigeria' (UNICEF, 2012).
- OHCHR, 'Human Rights and Poverty Reduction: A Conceptual Framework' (2002).

- OHCHR, ‘Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (2002).
- S. Dos Santos Lemos Fernandes, ‘Protecting Children from Cybercrime: Legislative Responses in Latin America’ (World Bank, 2015).
- S. Napier et al., ‘Australians Who View Live Streaming of Child Sexual Abuse’, Australian Institute of Criminology (2020).
- Srivastava et al., ‘Towards Digital Inclusion: Barriers to Internet Access for Economically-and Socially-Excluded Urban Communities’ (CCDS, Pune, 2015).
- Tracey Hewett et al., ‘Uncertain Futures: Children Seeking Asylum in Wales’ (Save the Children, 2005).
- Trisha Ray, ‘An ASEAN-India Cybersecurity Partnership for Peace, Progress, and Prosperity’, ORF Special Report (11 Apr. 2022).
- UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ‘Global Report on Online Child Sexual Abuse Materials’ (2023).
- UNICEF, ‘A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming’ (2009).
- UNICEF, ‘Child Online Protection in India: An Assessment’ (2016).
- UNICEF, ‘Child Online Protection in South Asia Report’ (2021).
- UNICEF, ‘Sexual Violence Against Children’ (Data Blog, 9 Sept. 2024).
- United Nations, ‘Violence Against Children’ (UN General Assembly Report, 29 Nov. 2022).
- W.A. Walsh, J. Wolak & D. Finkelhor, ‘Prosecution Dilemmas in Child Pornography Crimes’ (2013).
- William J. Anderson, ‘OJJDP Special Emphasis Program Report’ (GAO, 1982).

BOOKS

- Angela Carr, ‘The Social Dimension of the Online Trade of Child Sexual Exploitation Material’, in *Understanding and Preventing Online Sexual Exploitation of Children* 112 (2013).
- Anuradha Bajpai, *Child Rights in India: Law and Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

- B.G. Westlake, 'The Past, Present, and Future of Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Summarizing the Evolution of Production, Distribution, and Detection', in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).
- Bajpai, Anuradha, *Child Rights in India: Law and Policy* (Oxford University Press, 2008).
- Bang, Brandy, et al., *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (2013).
- Brandy Bang et al., *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children* (Shared Hope International, 2013).
- C.A. Grosch-Miller, *Making Sense of Sex and Faith: An Exercise in Poetic Practical Theology* (Canterbury Press, 2013).
- Chatteraj, Paromita (ed.), *Child Protection in India: Assessing Multi-disciplinary Response Mechanisms* (Routledge 2025).
- D.A. Norman, *The Design of Everyday Things* (Basic Books, 2002).
- D.B. Cornish & R.V. Clarke, 'The Rational Choice Perspective', in *Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis* (Routledge, 2nd edn, 2016).
- Emily Baughan, *Saving the Children: Humanitarianism, Internationalism, and Empire* (University of California Press, 2020).
- Gibson, J., *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979).
- Gibson, William, *Neuromancer* (1984).
- Grosch-Miller, C.A., *Making Sense of Sex and Faith: An Exercise in Poetic Practical Theology* (2013).
- Justice J.S. Verma Committee Report on Amendments to Criminal Law (LexisNexis, 2013).
- Kazi Abusaleh, Casmir Obinna Odo, Perfect Elikplim Kobla Ametepe & Uche Louisa Nwatu, 'Ubuntu Model as a Child Protection Mechanism: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh', in *The Ubuntu Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives* (International Federation of Social Workers, 2023).

- Kerry Sheldon & Dennis Howitt, *Sex Offenders and the Internet* (John Wiley & Sons, 2007).
- Kumar, Santosh & Kaur, Gagandeep, *Cyber Crimes and Laws: A Guide to Cyberlaws & The Information Technology Act, Rules, Regulation & Notification* (4th ed., Whitesmann Publishing 2026).
- L.E. Cohen & M. Felson, 'Social Change and Crime Rate Trends', in *Classics in Environmental Criminology* 203 (2010).
- Michael D. Rostoker & Robert H. Rines, *Computer Jurisprudence: Legal Responses to the Information Revolution* (Oceana Publications, 1986).
- Norman, D.A., *The Design of Everyday Things* (2002).
- R.D. Jerde, *Follow the Silk Road* (Naval Postgraduate School, 2017).
- R.K. Wortley, *Exploring the Person-Situation Interaction in Situational Crime Prevention* (Routledge, 2012).
- Rattan, Jyoti, *Cyber Laws, Information Technology & Artificial Intelligence* (11th ed., Bharat Law House 2026).
- Rostoker, Michael D. & Robert H. Rines, *Computer Jurisprudence: Legal Responses to the Information Revolution* (1986).
- S. Vaidhyathan, *The Googlization of Everything (And Why We Should Worry)* (University of California Press, 2011).
- Sesha Kethineni, 'Cybercrime in India: Laws, Regulations, and Enforcement Mechanisms', in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* 305 (2020).
- Sheldon, Kerry & Dennis Howitt, *Sex Offenders and the Internet* (2007).
- Smallbone, Stephen, William L. Marshall & Richard Wortley, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy and Practice* (2008).
- Stephen Smallbone, William L. Marshall & Richard Wortley, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: Evidence, Policy and Practice* (Willan Publishing, 2008).
- Vaidhyathan, Siva, *The Googlization of Everything* (2011).
- William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984), in *Crime and Media* (Routledge, 2019).

- Wortley, R.K., *Exploring the Person-Situation Interaction in Situational Crime Prevention* (Routledge, 2012).

JOURNAL ARTICLES AND CHAPTERS IN EDITED BOOKS

- **Abusaleh, Kazi, Casmir Obinna Odo, Perfect Elikplim Kobla Ametepe & Uche Louisa Nwatu**, 'Ubuntu Model as a Child Protection Mechanism: A Comparative Analysis of Nigeria, Ghana, and Bangladesh', in *The Ubuntu Practitioner: Social Work Perspectives* (International Federation of Social Workers, 2023).
- **Aghenitei, M.**, 'About Cybercrime in European Union', 2 *Public Administration & Regional Studies* 34 (2017).
- **Alimova, A.I., et al.**, 'Historicism in Criminal Law Science: Historical Methods and Their Significance for Evolution of Criminal Law', 10(2) *Journal of Advanced Pharmacy Education & Research* (2020).
- **Anne Burke et al.**, 'Child Pornography and the Internet: Policing and Treatment Issues', 9 *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 79 (2002).
- **Arumugham, S. & Thangaiah, P. Ranjit Jeba**, *Cyberpolicing Child Sexual Exploitative and Abuse Material: A Systematic Review of Tools and Practices*, 18(1) *Int'l J. Digital Crime & Forensics* (2026).
- **B.W. Reyns et al.**, 'Opportunity and Self-Control in Online Victimization', 44(1) *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019).
- **Babchishin, K.M., Hanson, R.K. & VanZuylen, H.**, 'Online Child Pornography Offenders Are Different: A Meta-Analysis of the Characteristics of Online and Offline Sex Offenders Against Children', 44(1) *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 45 (2015).
- **Beverly A. Thornhill et al.**, 'Prostatic Abscess: CT and Sonographic Findings', 148 *American Journal of Roentgenology* 899 (1987).
- **Bhimdiwala, Ayesha, Kumaradavi, Krishna Akhil & Arif, Ahmer**, 'Fighting for Their Voice: Understanding Indian Muslim Women's Responses to Networked Harassment', *ACM 2573-0142/2024/4-ART166* (2024).

- **Brantingham, Paul J. & Frederic L. Faust**, ‘A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention’, 22 *Crime & Delinquency* 284 (1976).
- **Burke, Anne, et al.**, ‘Child Pornography and the Internet: Policing and Treatment Issues’, 9 *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law* 79 (2002).
- **Bursztein, Elie, et al.**, ‘Rethinking the Detection of Child Sexual Abuse Imagery on the Internet’, *Proceedings of the International World Wide Web Conference* 2601 (2019).
- **C.M. Steel et al.**, ‘Technology and Countermeasures in Online CSEM Offenders’, 33 *FSI: Digital Investigation* 300971 (2020).
- **Carr, Angela**, ‘The Social Dimension of the Online Trade of Child Sexual Exploitation Material’, in *Understanding and Preventing Online Sexual Exploitation of Children* 112 (2013).
- **Casey, Rickey & Robbins, Jay**, ‘A Comparison of the Elements of Motivation in the Hospital Industry versus the Retail and Manufacturing Sectors’, 4 *Journal of Diversity Management* 13 (2009).
- **Cashmore, J. & Shackel, R.**, *The Long-Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse* (Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2013).
- **Cerna-Turoff, et al.**, ‘Factors Associated with Violence Against Children in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-Regression of Nationally Representative Data’, *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* (2021).
- **Chad M.S. Steel et al.**, ‘Technology Trends in Online CSEM Offenders’, 33 *FSI: Digital Investigation* 300971 (2020).
- **Christensen, L.S. & Vickery, N.**, ‘The Characteristics of Virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material Offenders and the Harms of Offending’, 27 *Sexuality & Culture* 1813 (2023).

- **Christina Demetriou & Andrew Silke**, ‘A Criminological Internet “Sting”:
Experimental Evidence of Illegal and Deviant Visits to a Website Trap’, 43
British Journal of Criminology 213 (2003).
- **Cohen, L.E. & Felson, M.**, ‘Social Change and Crime Rate Trends’, in *Classics
in Environmental Criminology* 203 (2010).
- **Cornish, Derek B. & Clarke, Ronald V.**, ‘Opportunities, Precipitators and
Criminal Decisions’, 16 *Crime Prevention Studies* 41 (2003).
- **Cornish, D.B. & R.V. Clarke**, ‘The Rational Choice Perspective’, in
Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis 48 (2016).
- **Costa, E.**, ‘Affordances-in-Practice’, 20(10) *New Media & Society* 3641
(2018).
- **Covington, P., Adams, J. & Sargin, E.**, ‘Deep Neural Networks for YouTube
Recommendations’ (2016).
- **D. Halder & K. Jaishankar**, ‘Teen Sexting: A Critical Analysis on the
Criminalization Vis-à-Vis Victimization Conundrums’, 1 *Journal of Cyber
Criminology* 26 (2014).
- **D. Middleton et al.**, ‘Does Treatment Work with Internet Sex Offenders?’, 15
Journal of Sexual Aggression 5 (2009).
- **David Finkelhor, Heather Turner & Deirdre Colburn**, ‘Which Dynamics
Make Online Child Sexual Abuse and Cyberstalking More Emotionally
Impactful: Perpetrator Identity and Images?’, 137 *Child Abuse & Neglect*
106020 (2023).
- **Demetriou, Christina & Silke, Andrew**, ‘A Criminological Internet “Sting”:
Experimental Evidence of Illegal and Deviant Visits to a Website Trap’, 43
British Journal of Criminology 213 (2003).
- **Derek B. Cornish & Ronald V. Clarke**, ‘Opportunities, Precipitators and
Criminal Decisions’, 16 *Crime Prevention Studies* 41 (2003).

- **Dombrowski, S.C., et al.**, ‘Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators: Technological, Psychoeducational, and Legal Considerations’, 35(1) *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 65 (2004).
- **E. Costa**, ‘Affordances-in-Practice’, 20(10) *New Media & Society* 3641 (2018).
- **E. Quayle**, ‘Prevention, Disruption and Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse’, 21 *ERA Forum* 429 (2020).
- **E.M. Fewtrell**, ‘Offences Against the Person Act, 1861, Sections 18 & 20’, 21(2) *Police Journal* 148 (1948).
- **Edwards, Michael**, ‘NGO Performance—What Breeds Success? New Evidence from South Asia’, 27 *World Development* 361 (2019).
- **Elisabeth Staksrud et al.**, ‘Social Networking Sites and Children’s Risk of Harm’, 29 *Computers in Human Behavior* 40 (2013).
- **Elliott, Ian A., Beech, Anthony R. & Mandeville-Norden, Rebecca**, ‘The Psychological Profiles of Internet, Contact, and Mixed Internet/Contact Sex Offenders’, 25 *Sexual Abuse* 3 (2013).
- **F. Miró-Llinares & A. Moneva**, ‘What About Cyberspace?’, 8(1) *Crime Science* 1 (2019).
- **Farrell, G. & Birks, D.**, ‘Did Cybercrime Cause the Crime Drop?’, 7(1) *Crime Science* 8 (2018).
- **Felipa Schmidt, Filippo Varese & Sandra Bucci**, ‘Understanding the Prolonged Impact of Online Sexual Abuse Occurring in Childhood’, 14 *Frontiers in Psychology* 1281996 (2023).
- **Fernandes, Gwen, et al.**, ‘Prevalence of Child Maltreatment in India and Its Association with Gender, Urbanisation and Policy: A Rapid Review and Meta-Analysis Protocol’, 11 *BMJ Open* e044983 (2021).
- **Fewtrell, E.M.**, ‘Offences Against the Person Act, 1861, Sections 18 & 20’, 21(2) *Police Journal* 148 (1948).

- **Finkel, M.A. & Giardino, A.P.**, *Medical Evaluation of Child Sexual Abuse: A Practical Guide* (2002).
- **Finkelhor, David, Turner, Heather & Colburn, Deirdre**, ‘Which Dynamics Make Online Child Sexual Abuse and Cyberstalking More Emotionally Impactful: Perpetrator Identity and Images?’, 137 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 106020 (2023).
- **G. Aswathy Prakash, Asha Sundaram & B. Sreeya**, ‘Online Exploitation of Children and the Role of Intermediaries: An Indian Legislative and Policy Perspective’, *Int’l Rev. L. Computers & Tech.* (2021).
- **G. Farrell & D. Birks**, ‘Did Cybercrime Cause the Crime Drop?’, 7(1) *Crime Science* 8 (2018).
- **Gilbert, Hannah & Cunliffe, Alex**, ‘Non-Governmental Organisations and the Management of HIV and AIDS in Refugee Camps: A Comparison of Marratane Camp in Mozambique and Kakuma Camp in Kenya’, 29 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 63 (2011).
- **Goldman, Philip S., et al.**, ‘Institutionalisation and Deinstitutionalisation of Children 2: Policy and Practice Recommendations for Global, National, and Local Actors’, 4(8) *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 606 (2020).
- **Gwen Fernandes et al.**, ‘Prevalence of Child Maltreatment in India and Its Association with Gender, Urbanisation and Policy: A Rapid Review and Meta-Analysis Protocol’, 11 *BMJ Open* e044983 (2021).
- **Halder, D. & Jaishankar, K.**, ‘Teen Sexting: A Critical Analysis on the Criminalization Vis-à-Vis Victimization Conundrums’, 1 *Journal of Cyber Criminology* 26 (2014).
- **Hannah Gilbert & Alex Cunliffe**, ‘Non-Governmental Organisations and the Management of HIV and AIDS in Refugee Camps: A Comparison of Marratane Camp in Mozambique and Kakuma Camp in Kenya’, 29 *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 63 (2011).
- **Henry Jenkins & Mark Deuze**, ‘Editorial: Convergence Culture’, 14 *Convergence* 5 (2008).

- **Huikuri, S.**, ‘Users of Online Child Sexual Abuse Material’, 38 *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 904 (2023).
- **Ian A. Elliott, Anthony R. Beech & Rebecca Mandeville-Norden**, ‘The Psychological Profiles of Internet, Contact, and Mixed Internet/Contact Sex Offenders’, 25 *Sexual Abuse* 3 (2013).
- **J. Wihbey**, ‘Global Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse’, 15(4) *Journalist Resource* 25 (2011).
- **Jang, Yujin & Ko, Bomin**, ‘Online Safety for Children and Youth Under the 4Cs Framework—A Focus on Digital Policies in Australia, Canada, and the UK’, 10(8) *Children* 1415 (2023).
- **Jenkins, Henry & Mark Deuze**, ‘Editorial: Convergence Culture’, 14 *Convergence* 5 (2008).
- **Jewkes, Yvonne & Andrews, Carol**, ‘Policing the Filth: The Problems of Investigating Online Child Pornography in England and Wales’, 15 *Policing and Society* 42 (2005).
- **K.J. Mitchell et al.**, ‘Use of Social Networking Sites in Online Sex Crimes Against Minors’, 47(2) *Journal of Adolescent Health* 183 (2010).
- **K.M. Babchishin et al.**, ‘Online Child Pornography Offenders Are Different’, 44(1) *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 45 (2015).
- **Karen Wells**, ‘Child Saving or Child Rights: Depictions of Children in International NGO Campaigns on Conflict’, 2 *Journal of Children and Media* 235 (2008).
- **Kaur, M. & Saini, M.**, ‘Indian Government Initiatives on Cyberbullying: A Case Study on Cyberbullying in Indian Higher Education Institutions’, 28 *Education and Information Technologies* 581 (2023).
- **Kaur, Ramanpreet, et al.**, ‘Artificial Intelligence for Cybersecurity: Literature Review and Future Research Directions’, 97 *Information Fusion* 101804 (2023).

- **Keller, Michael H. & Dance, Gabriel J.X.**, ‘The Internet Is Overrun with Images of Child Sexual Abuse’, *New York Times* (2019).
- **Kethineni, Sessa**, ‘Cybercrime in India: Laws, Regulations, and Enforcement Mechanisms’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* 305 (2020).
- **L.M. Jones, K.J. Mitchell & W.A. Walsh**, ‘A Systematic Review of Effective Youth Prevention Education’, 18 *Psychology of Violence* (2014).
- **L.S. Christensen & N. Vickery**, ‘The Characteristics of Virtual Child Sexual Abuse Material Offenders and the Harms of Offending’, 27 *Sexuality & Culture* 1813 (2023).
- **Laaksonen et al.**, ‘Changes in the Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse’, 35(7) *Child Abuse & Neglect* 480 (2011).
- **Laurie S. Ramiro et al.**, ‘Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Community Diagnosis Using the Social Norms Theory’, 96 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 104080 (2019).
- **Livingstone, S.**, ‘Key Issues for Youth Mental Health Research in Digital Environments’ (2019).
- **M. Aghenitei**, ‘About Cybercrime in European Union’, 2 *Public Administration & Regional Studies* 34 (2017).
- **M. Taylor & E. Quayle**, ‘The Internet and Abuse Images of Children’, 19 *Crime Prevention Studies* 169 (2006).
- **M.A. Moreno & J. D’Angelo**, ‘Social Media Intervention Design’, 21(3) *JMIR* e11014 (2019).
- **M.C. Seto**, ‘The Motivation-Facilitation Model of Sexual Offending’, 31(1) *Sexual Abuse* 3 (2019).
- **Madigan, Sheri, et al.**, ‘Prevalence of Unwanted Online Sexual Exposure among Youth’, 63 *Journal of Adolescent Health* 133 (2018).
- **Marta Zarzycka**, ‘Save the Child: Photographed Faces and Affective Transactions in NGO Child Sponsoring Programs’, 23 *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 28 (2016).

- **Merz, F.**, ‘UNODC: World Drug Report 2017’, 2(1) *SIRIUS* 85 (2018).
- **Michael Edwards**, ‘NGO Performance—What Breeds Success? New Evidence from South Asia’, 27 *World Development* 361 (2019).
- **Middleton, D., et al.**, ‘Does Treatment Work with Internet Sex Offenders?’, 15 *Journal of Sexual Aggression* 5 (2009).
- **Miró-Llinares, F. & Moneva, A.**, ‘What About Cyberspace?’, 8(1) *Crime Science* 1 (2019).
- **Mischel, Walter, Coates, Brian & Raskoff, Antonette**, ‘Effects of Success and Failure on Self-Gratification’, 10 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 381 (1968).
- **Mitchell, K.J., et al.**, ‘Use of Social Networking Sites in Online Sex Crimes Against Minors’, 47(2) *Journal of Adolescent Health* 183 (2010).
- **Moreno, M.A. & D’Angelo, J.**, ‘Social Media Intervention Design’, 21(3) *JMIR* e11014 (2019).
- **National Law University Odisha**, *Between Exploitation and Criminalisation: Responses to Sextortion*, 3(2) *J. on the Rts. of the Child* (2025).
- **Paul J. Brantingham & Frederic L. Faust**, ‘A Conceptual Model of Crime Prevention’, 22 *Crime & Delinquency* 284 (1976).
- **Philip S. Goldman et al.**, ‘Institutionalisation and Deinstitutionalisation of Children 2: Policy and Practice Recommendations for Global, National, and Local Actors’, 4(8) *The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health* 606 (2020).
- **Prakash, G. Aswathy, Sundaram, Asha & Sreeya, B.**, ‘Online Exploitation of Children and the Role of Intermediaries: An Indian Legislative and Policy Perspective’, *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology* (2021).
- **Priyanka & Kumar, Vivek**, ‘An Analysis upon Protection and Prevention of Child Maltreatment/Neglect in India: Safeguarding Child Rights and Building Non-violent Communities’, 13 *Journal of Advanced & Scholarly Researches Allied Education* 162 (2017).

- **Quayle, Ethel**, 'Prevention, Disruption and Deterrence of Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse', 21 *ERA Forum* 429 (2020).
- **Quayle, Ethel**, 'Researching Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse' (2016).
- **R. Renu & G. Chopra**, 'Child Sexual Abuse in India and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012: A Research Review', 6(2) *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences* 49 (2019).
- **R. Seth & R. Srivastava**, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Management and Prevention, and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act', 54 *Indian Pediatrics* 949 (2017).
- **Ramanpreet Kaur et al.**, 'Artificial Intelligence for Cybersecurity: Literature Review and Future Research Directions', 97 *Information Fusion* 101804 (2023).
- **Ramiro, Laurie S., et al.**, 'Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Community Diagnosis Using the Social Norms Theory', 96 *Child Abuse & Neglect* 104080 (2019).
- **Rathaur, Vyas K., et al.**, 'Child Abuse: A Social Evil in Indian Perspective', 10 *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 110 (2021).
- **Renu, R. & Chopra, G.**, 'Child Sexual Abuse in India and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act 2012: A Research Review', 6(2) *Integrated Journal of Social Sciences* 49 (2019).
- **Reyns, B.W., et al.**, 'Opportunity and Self-Control in Online Victimization', 44(1) *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019).
- **Richard H. Schwartz, Regina Milteer & Marc A. LeBeau**, 'Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault ("Date Rape")', 93 *Southern Medical Journal* 558 (2000).
- **Rickey Casey & Jay Robbins**, 'A Comparison of the Elements of Motivation in the Hospital Industry versus the Retail and Manufacturing Sectors', 4 *Journal of Diversity Management* 13 (2009).

- **S. Huikuri**, 'Users of Online Child Sexual Abuse Material', 38 *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 904 (2023).
- **S. Thaxton & R. Agnew**, 'When Criminal Coping is Likely: An Examination of Conditioning Effects in General Strain Theory', 34 *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 887 (2018).
- **S.C. Dombrowski et al.**, 'Protecting Children From Online Sexual Predators: Technological, Psychoeducational, and Legal Considerations', 35(1) *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 65 (2004).
- **S.C. Sarkar, Ravi Rautji, Sanjeev Lalwani & D.N. Bhardwaj**, 'A Study of Victims of Sexual Offences in South Delhi', 51 *J. Fam. Welfare* 60 (2005).
- **Sarkar, S.C., Rautji, Ravi, Lalwani, Sanjeev & Bhardwaj, D.N.**, 'A Study of Victims of Sexual Offences in South Delhi', 51 *Journal of Family Welfare* 60 (2005).
- **Schmidt, Felipa, Varese, Filippo & Bucci, Sandra**, 'Understanding the Prolonged Impact of Online Sexual Abuse Occurring in Childhood', 14 *Frontiers in Psychology* 1281996 (2023).
- **Schwartz, Richard H., Milteer, Regina & LeBeau, Marc A.**, 'Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assault ("Date Rape")', 93 *Southern Medical Journal* 558 (2000).
- **Seth, Rajeev & Srivastava, R.N.**, 'Child Sexual Abuse: Management and Prevention, and Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act', 54 *Indian Pediatrics* 949 (2017).
- **Seto, M.C.**, 'The Motivation-Facilitation Model of Sexual Offending', 31(1) *Sexual Abuse* 3 (2019).
- **Sheri Madigan et al.**, 'Prevalence of Unwanted Online Sexual Exposure among Youth', 63 *Journal of Adolescent Health* 133 (2018).
- **Staksrud, Elisabeth, et al.**, 'Social Networking Sites and Children's Risk of Harm', 29 *Computers in Human Behavior* 40 (2013).

- **Steel, C.M., et al.**, ‘Technology and Countermeasures in Online CSEM Offenders’, 33 *FSI: Digital Investigation* 300971 (2020).
- **Taylor, M. & Quayle, E.**, ‘The Internet and Abuse Images of Children’, 19 *Crime Prevention Studies* 169 (2006).
- **Thaxton, S. & Agnew, R.**, ‘When Criminal Coping is Likely: An Examination of Conditioning Effects in General Strain Theory’, 34 *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 887 (2018).
- **Theresa Tuwor & Marie-Antoinette Sossou**, ‘Gender Discrimination and Education in West Africa: Strategies for Maintaining Girls in School’, 12 *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 363 (2008).
- **Thornhill, Beverly A., et al.**, ‘Prostatic Abscess: CT and Sonographic Findings’, 148 *American Journal of Roentgenology* 899 (1987).
- **Tuwor, Theresa & Sossou, Marie-Antoinette**, ‘Gender Discrimination and Education in West Africa: Strategies for Maintaining Girls in School’, 12 *International Journal of Inclusive Education* 363 (2008).
- **von Heyden, Maximilian & Stockmann, Clara Sophie**, ‘Gesundheitskommunikation im Präventionsnetzwerk Kein Täter Werden’ (2021).
- **Vyas K. Rathaur et al.**, ‘Child Abuse: A Social Evil in Indian Perspective’, 10 *Journal of Family Medicine & Primary Care* 110 (2021).
- **Wall, D.S.**, ‘Crime, Security and Information Communication Technologies’, (20 July 2017).
- **Walsh, W.A., Wolak, J. & Finkelhor, D.**, ‘Prosecution Dilemmas in Child Pornography Crimes’ (2013).
- **Walter Mischel, Brian Coates & Antonette Raskoff**, ‘Effects of Success and Failure on Self-Gratification’, 10 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 381 (1968).

- **Wells, Karen**, ‘Child Saving or Child Rights: Depictions of Children in International NGO Campaigns on Conflict’, 2 *Journal of Children and Media* 235 (2008).
- **Westlake, B.G.**, ‘The Past, Present, and Future of Online Child Sexual Exploitation: Summarizing the Evolution of Production, Distribution, and Detection’, in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance* 1225–53 (2020).
- **Wihbey, J.**, ‘Global Prevalence of Child Sexual Abuse’, 15(4) *Journalist Resource* 25 (2011).
- **Yujin Jang & Bomim Ko**, ‘Online Safety for Children and Youth Under the 4Cs Framework—A Focus on Digital Policies in Australia, Canada, and the UK’, 10(8) *Children* 1415 (2023).
- **Yvonne Jewkes & Carol Andrews**, ‘Policing the Filth: The Problems of Investigating Online Child Pornography in England and Wales’, 15 *Policing and Society* 42 (2005).
- **Zarzycka, Marta**, ‘Save the Child: Photographed Faces and Affective Transactions in NGO Child Sponsoring Programs’, 23 *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 28 (2016).

CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGISLATIVE SOURCES (INDIA)

- **The Constitution of India, 1950.**
- **The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012** (Act No. 32 of 2012).
- **The Information Technology Act, 2000** (Act No. 21 of 2000).
- **The Indian Penal Code, 1860** (Act No. 45 of 1860).
- **The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** (Act No. 2 of 1974).
- **The Indian Evidence Act, 1872** (Act No. 1 of 1872).
- **The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023** (Act No. 45 of 2023).

- **The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023** (Act No. 46 of 2023).
- **The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023** (Act No. 47 of 2023).
- **The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** (Act No. 2 of 2016).
- **The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956** (Act No. 104 of 1956).
- **The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986** (Act No. 60 of 1986).
- **The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** (Act No. 22 of 2023).

AMENDMENT ACTS AND RULES

- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013.
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018.
- The Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008.
- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.
- The POCSO Rules, 2020.

GLOBAL LEGISLATIVE & POLICY FRAMEWORK

INTERNATIONAL & REGIONAL (EU & UN)

- **European Parliament and Council Directive (EU) 2024/1385** on combating violence against women and domestic violence.
- **European Parliament, Digital Services Act (DSA)**, Regulation (EU) 2022/2065.
- **EU Commission, AI and Child Safety: Policy Brief on Generative Risks to Minors**, COM (2025).
- **Save the Children, A Rights-Based Approach to Child Protection** (2005).

ASIA-PACIFIC

- **Bangladesh:** Pornography Control Act, 2012 (Act No. 5 of 2012).
- **Bangladesh:** Information and Communication Technology Act, 2006 (Amended 2013/2018).
- **Thailand:** Anti-Child Pornography Act, B.E. 2552 (2009).
- **Thailand:** Computer Crime Act, B.E. 2550 (2007).
- **Malaysia:** Child Act 2001 (Act 611), §§ 33–35.
- **Malaysia:** Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588).
- **Philippines:** Anti-Child Pornography Act of 2009, Rep. Act No. 9775.
- **Philippines:** Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, Rep. Act No. 10175.
- **Vietnam:** Law on Information Technology (No. 67/2006/QH11).
- **China:** Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, art. 366 (as amended).
- **China:** Law on Penalties for Administration of Public Security (Amendment) [2024/2025 Status].
- **Japan:** Penal Code (Act No. 45 of 1907), arts. 174, 175 (as amended).
- **South Korea:** Criminal Act (Act No. 293 of 1953), arts. 243–245 (as amended).

WESTERN JURISDICTIONS (UK, US, AUSTRALIA, NZ)

- **United Kingdom:** Online Safety Act 2023, ch. 50.
- **Australia:** Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth), Div. 273 & 474.
- **New Zealand:** Crimes Act 1961, ss. 124, 131B.
- **United States (Federal):** Kids Online Safety Act (KOSA), S.1409 [Check latest 118th/119th Congress status].
- **United States (Federal):** Children’s Online Privacy Protection Rule (COPPA) Amendments, 16 C.F.R. § 312.
- **United States (North Carolina):** Senate Bill 579 / House Bill 635 (Protecting Minors from Social Media/Pornography).

Appendices

Questionnaire 1: For the General Public

Survey on Protection of Children from Online Exploitation

Thank you for participating in this survey on the protection of children from online sexual exploitation in Jaipur. Your insights are valuable for understanding and addressing this critical issue. This questionnaire aims to gather information about your awareness, opinions, and experiences related to online child sexual exploitation. Your responses will remain confidential and will be used for research purposes only. Please read each question carefully and answer to the best of your knowledge. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

1. Email _____
2. Your age: under 18
 18-24 25-34 35-44
 45-54 55-64 65 or above
3. Gender
 Male Female Prefer not to say
4. Occupation
 Student Employed (full-time) Employed (part-time)
 Self-employed Unemployed Retired
 Home-maker Other: _____
5. Educational Background
 High- school or equivalent Bachelor's Degree
 Master's Degree Doctoral Degree Other:

Historical Background and Factors Responsible for Online Child Sexual Exploitation

6. How familiar are you with the historical background of online child sexual exploitation?
 Very Familiar Somewhat Familiar Not Familiar at all

7. What do you believe are the primary historical factors that have contributed to the prevalence of online child sexual exploitation?
- Social and cultural attitudes towards sexuality
- Inadequate legal and regulatory frameworks
- Other: _____
8. In your opinion, how has the evolution of technology influenced the spread of online child sexual exploitation over time?
- Increased accessibility to online platforms
- Anonymity and ease of communication online
- Proliferation of online pornography and explicit content
- Exploitation of vulnerabilities in technology systems
- Other: _____

Role and Utility of International Law

9. Are you aware of any International Laws or Conventions aimed at tackling Online Child Sexual Exploitation?
- Yes No
10. Do you believe that international laws are effective in addressing the challenge of online child sexual exploitation?
- Yes No Not Sure

Legal Provisions in India

11. How would you rate the effectiveness of legal provisions in India to resolve the issue of child sexual abuse?
- Very effective Somewhat effective Not effective at all
12. Are you aware of any specific laws in India that address online child sexual exploitation?
- Yes No
13. In your opinion, which of the following legal provisions in India are most relevant for addressing online child sexual exploitation? (Select all that apply)
- Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act
- Information Technology (Amendment) Act
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act
- Indian Penal Code (IPC) provisions related to sexual offenses

Other: _____

Effectiveness of Administrative Bodies and NGOs & Role of the Judiciary

14. Do you believe that administrative bodies and NGOs are effective in safeguarding children from online sexual exploitation?

Yes No Maybe

15. How would you rate the role of the judiciary in regulating matters of online child sexual exploitation?

 1 2 3 4 5
Not effective Very effective

16. In your opinion, what specific roles and responsibilities should administrative bodies and NGOs have in combating online sexual exploitation of children?

- Awareness campaigns and education programs
- Providing support services for victims and survivors
- Advocating for policy change and legal reforms
- Collaborating with law enforcement agencies
- other: _____

17. What improvements do you think could be made in the judicial system to enhance its effectiveness in handling cases related to online child sexual exploitation?

- Speeding up legal proceedings
- Providing specialized training for judges and legal professionals
- Strengthening laws and penalties for offenders
- Enhancing support services for victims and survivors
- Other: _____

18. What Measures do you believe should be implemented to ensure timely and fair justice for victims of online child sexual exploitation within the judicial system?

- Provide legal aid and support services for victims
- Ensure confidentiality and protection for victims during legal proceedings

Establish specialized support programs for child witnesses

Expedite court procedures for cases involving children

Other: _____

Awareness, Understanding, and Solutions to Control Online Sexual Exploitation of Children:

19. How aware do you think the general public is about online child sexual exploitation?

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

20. Have you received any formal education or training on the topic of online child sexual exploitation?

Yes No

21. Do you believe that parents and guardians play a significant role in educating children about online safety and sexual exploitation?

Yes No May be

22. Do you believe that increasing public awareness and education about online safety could help in reducing instances of online sexual exploitation of children?

Yes No May be

23. How important do you think it is for the government to allocate resources and funding towards combating online sexual exploitation of children?

1 2 3 4 5

Not effective Very effective

Questionnaire 2: For Children Respondents

Note: Parents are permitted to interpret and reply to the response of Children of 3-8 years age groups

General Information

- Age:

3 – 5 years _____

5 – 8 years _____

8 – 12 years _____

12 – 16 years _____

- Gender: Male _____ Female _____ Prefer not to say _____

- Education:

Kindergarten _____ Primary _____ Secondary _____

Extracurricular training (music, dance, painting, etc.) _____

Skill development training (subject skills, computer, sports, etc.) _____

- Place of residence: Jaipur _____ Other parts of Rajasthan _____

- School location: Jaipur _____ Other parts of Rajasthan _____

Historical Background of the Study

1. Have you ever heard about incidents of children to face threats/bad comments/mistreatment by others while they are browsing the internet/doing online activities

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

2. Have you ever heard about the terms like cyberbullying, online pornography, sexual cybercrimes, online sexual harassment, online blackmail or any other words that can cause fear, pain or depression in children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

3. Have you heard about online child security policies made by government of India and other countries to protect them from online harassments?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

International Scenario of the Study

4. Have you faced any difficulties/threat/fear/pain/depression from someone who is outside from our country at the time you're browsing the internet/doing online activities?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

5. Has any kid of your age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

6. Has any kid of your age from other countries ever shared any information on online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

Role of India's Legal Administration in the Study

7. Have you heard about your teachers, parents, elders, any known or unknown person talking about online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

8. Have you heard about online child safety measure policies are implemented by India's government to protect a child from online exploitation?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

9. Have you ever asked your teachers/parents/elders/friends/others that you're scared/feeling bad and need protection from a person who is blackmailing or causing some pain to you while you're doing online activities?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

NGOs and Role of Judiciary

10. Have you ever met any NGO/police staff/official who cautioned you about online exploitation on children and told you to inform them if you suffer from any bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____ No _____ Cannot say _____

11. Do you know any elders/neighbours/teachers of your school or your parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Some _____ No _____ Cannot say _____

12. Have you ever met any NGO/police staff/official who cautioned you about online exploitation on children and told you to inform them if you suffer from any bad behaviour/blackmail/threat/pain while doing online activities?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____ No _____ Cannot say _____

13. Do you know any elders/neighbours/teachers of your school or your parents who work in NGOs to protect online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____ No _____ Cannot say _____

14. Have you ever seen anyone/you personally make any complaint to the local police of your place on online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

15. Do you think your teachers/police staff/local law officials hear you carefully and take proper actions when someone/you have complained on online exploitation on children?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

Awareness and Solution Scope

16. Have you attended any awareness events organized in your school/neighbourhood/community gathering that advised on complaining against online exploitation on children and take suitable actions?

Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____

No _____ Cannot say _____

17. Do your parents take care to protect you in any incidents when you feel scared/pain/depressed with someone whom you talked/met online?

18. Yes _____ Sometimes _____ Only a Few _____ No _____ Cannot say _____

Questionnaire 3: NGO & Local Administrators

An Analysis of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in India

Note: This questionnaire is intended for research and analysis purposes. Your responses will contribute to understanding and addressing online sexual exploitation of children. Please answer the questions based on your experience and knowledge.

Section 1: Organizational Information

1. Organization Name: _____

2. Position/Role: _____

3. Type of Organization:

- NGO - Government Agency - Law Enforcement
- Educational Institution - Other (please specify): _____

4. Years of Experience in Dealing with Online Sexual Exploitation Cases:

- Less than 1 year 1-3 years 4-6 years More than 6 years

Section 2: Challenges and Issues

5. What are the primary challenges faced by your organization in addressing online sexual exploitation of children? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of awareness and education among children and parents
- Insufficient resources and funding
- Limited training for staff
- Difficulty in monitoring online activities
- Legal and procedural barriers
- Coordination with other agencies
- Other (please specify): _____

6. What types of online platforms are most commonly associated with online sexual exploitation of children in your experience? (Select all that apply)

- Social media
- Gaming platforms
- Instant messaging apps
- Chat rooms
- Video sharing platforms
- Other (please specify): _____

7. What are the most common signs or indicators of online sexual exploitation that you have encountered? (Select all that apply)

- Sudden changes in behaviour
- Secretive online activities
- Excessive time spent online
- Unexplained gifts or money
- Changes in academic performance
- Other (please specify): _____

Section 3: Interventions and Strategies

8. What types of interventions or programs does your organization currently implement to address online sexual exploitation? (Select all that apply)

- Educational workshops for children
- Training sessions for parents and guardians
- Counselling and support services for victims
- Collaboration with law enforcement
- Public awareness campaigns
- Development of online safety resources
- Other (please specify): _____

9. How effective do you find these interventions in preventing and addressing online sexual exploitation?

- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Neutral
- Somewhat ineffective
- Very ineffective

10. What additional support or resources would enhance your organization's ability to combat online sexual exploitation?

- _____

Section 4: Recommendations and Future Directions

11. What recommendations would you make to improve the current strategies and interventions for addressing online sexual exploitation of children?

- _____

12. Are there any successful case studies or best practices you would like to share?

- _____

13. How can government policies be improved to better support organizations working on this issue?

- _____

14. What role do you believe the community should play in addressing online sexual exploitation?

- _____

15. Do you have any additional comments or insights on the issue of online sexual exploitation of children?

- _____

Questionnaire 4: Legal Professionals

An Analysis of Online Sexual Exploitation of Children in India

Note: This questionnaire is intended for research purposes to understand the legal challenges and responses related to online sexual exploitation of children.

Section 1: Professional Background

1. Position/Role:

- Judge
Lawyer
- Prosecutor
- Defense
- Law Enforcement Officer
- Legal Academia []
- Other _____

2. Years of Experience in the Legal System:

- Less than 1 - 1-3 - 4-6 - More than 6

3. Area of Specialization:

- Criminal Law - Family Law
- Cyber Law - Child Protection Law
- Other (please specify): _____

Section 2: Legal Framework and Challenges

4. How familiar are you with the existing legal frameworks and laws related to online sexual exploitation of children in India?

- Very familiar - Somewhat familiar
- Not very familiar - Not familiar at all

5. What are the primary legal challenges in prosecuting online sexual exploitation cases? (Select all that apply)

- Inadequate legal provisions

- Difficulty in gathering digital evidence
- Jurisdictional issues
- Lack of specialized training for legal professionals
- Delays in the judicial process
- Challenges in identifying and protecting victims
- Other (please specify): _____

6. How effective do you find the current legal measures and policies in addressing online sexual exploitation of children?

- Very effective
- Somewhat effective
- Neutral
- Somewhat ineffective
- Very ineffective

Section 3: Case Handling and Interventions

7. What types of cases related to online sexual exploitation of children have you encountered? (Select all that apply)

- Grooming and exploitation
- Distribution of child sexual abuse material
- Online harassment or stalking
- Online recruitment for exploitation
- Other (please specify): _____

8. What strategies or practices do you find most effective in handling such cases? (Select all that apply)

- Collaboration with cybercrime units
- Use of digital forensics
- Victim support and protection measures

- Awareness and training programs for legal professionals
- Public awareness campaigns
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What improvements would you recommend for enhancing the legal response to online sexual exploitation of children? (Open-ended)

- _____

Section 4: Coordination and Future Directions

10. How well do you think different agencies (e.g., law enforcement, judiciary, NGOs) coordinate in handling cases of online sexual exploitation?

- Very well
- Somewhat well
- Neutral
- Somewhat poorly
- Very poorly

11. What additional measures or reforms would you suggest to improve inter-agency coordination?

12. How can the legal system better support victims of online sexual exploitation?

- _____

13. What role do you believe international cooperation should play in tackling online sexual exploitation of children?

- _____

14. Do you have any additional comments or insights on the issue of online sexual exploitation of children from a legal perspective?

- _____

List of Publications

1. **Social Media Regulation and Legislation Framework in India: An Analytical Study** ‘The Legal Compendium- An Almanack Rethinking The Law’, Variety Books Publishers Distributors. 2023, ISBN: 978-81-966997-4-1
2. **Consequences of Child Abuse over the Development of Children**
Vol.9 (XXII) – 2022, NIU International Journal of Human Rights (ISSN: 2394-0298)
3. **A Study of Healthcare Providers’ Perceptions of POCSO in Jaipur to Improve Protection of Children from Online Sexual Exploitation**
Vol. 45 No. 02 (2024), Tuijin Jishu/ Journal of Propulsion Technology (ISSN: 1001- 4055)
4. **Protection of Children and Women from Online Abuse**
‘Cyber Crimes and Legal Challenges in the Digital Era: A Focus on Women and Children’, Pacific Books International, First Published 2025; ISBN: 978-93 48285-00-3
5. **Bioanalytical Approaches to Safeguarding Children From Online Sexual Exploitation: A Multidisciplinary Framework for Detection, Prevention, And Policy Integration**
The Journal of Applied Bioanalysis, (ISSN 2405-710X) Volume 11 | Issue 4 (2025) | Pages 774-780]
6. **Balancing Safety and Privacy and Necessary Safeguards To Ensure Privacy and Prevent Surveillance**
Journal of Human Rights and Social Work (Springer Nature) (Accepted on 27th February, 2026)

List of Conferences

1. **Role of Social Media on Cyber Crime: An Analytical Study** at International Conference on Research Innovations and Challenges (ICRIC) held on 19 – 21 January 2023.
2. **Social Media Regulation and Legislation Framework in India: An Analytical Study** at National Seminar held in Maharaja Agrasen School of Law; Maharaja Agrasen University on 03rd December 2022.
3. **Control of Digital Media and Laws in India: A Critical Study** In National Media Conference held at Lovely Professional University on 25, 26 November 2022.
4. **Role of Social Media in Cyber Crime against Children: 'A Socio Legal Study with special reference to India** In National Seminar on 'Cyber crime And Criminal Justice System In India: Issues And Challenges In Collaboration With Cyber Law University' held at G D Goenka University on 18 November 2022.

List of Workshops

1. IPR and IP Management for Startups- Faculty of Law, Guru Kashi University, Talwandi Sabo, Bathinda, Punjab on 7.5.2024.
2. How to Write & Get Your Research Paper Published - Essgee Digiskills- May 8 to May 18, 2023.
3. Three-days Training Program on three new criminal laws organized by Career Guidance and Placement Cell of Rayat College of Law from July 10 to July 12, 2024.
4. One Month National Level Online Refresher Course on Teaching Law In 21st Century – Edition 1 (40 Hrs.) Organized By Law Teachers India And Gujarat Maritime University, Gandhinagar, from July 3 to August 5, 2023.
5. National Workshop on Research Methodology, From February 5 to February 12, 2023, Udaan Educational Services.
6. International Short-Term Training Programme- IX “On Environment Pollution: A threat to Life Below Water & World Environment Day Celebration Week” organized by Raj Rishi Govt. Autonomous College, from June 5 to June 11, 2023.