Cybercrimes Against Juveniles in India: Legal Framework, Law Enforcement Challenges, and Child-Sensitive Policy Responses

Ms. Sakshi Rewaria[1]; Dr. Ramveer Singh[2]
[1]*Research Scholar, School of Law, MVN University, Palwal, Haryana, India*
[2]Associate Professor, School of Law, MVN University, Palwal, Haryana, India

Abstract
Cybercrime against juveniles has become a serious legal and socio-technological problem because online abuse, cyberbullying, grooming, identity misuse, phishing, deepfake misuse and child sexual exploitation now operate through anonymous, trans-jurisdictional and rapidly evolving digital platforms. This paper examines the adequacy of the Indian legal framework for protecting juveniles from cybercrime with specific empirical reference to the National Capital Region (NCR), India. The study adopts a mixed doctrinal and empirical method. Doctrinal analysis covers the Information Technology Act, 2000, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, relevant criminal law provisions and intermediary obligations. Empirical data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 359 students/youth respondents from the NCR region. Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, Chi-square test of independence and Cramer's V effect-size analysis were identified as suitable techniques for assessing categorical patterns in awareness, reporting behaviour, legal knowledge and perceptions of enforcement effectiveness. The key doctrinal finding is that India has multiple protective statutes, but the framework remains fragmented because cyberbullying, grooming, platform accountability, child-friendly reporting, digital evidence preservation and rehabilitation of juvenile cyber offenders are not integrated into a single child-sensitive cyber protection mechanism. The empirical findings show substantial variation in exposure, legal awareness, reporting confidence and perceptions of enforcement across respondent categories. The paper proposes an integrated juvenile cyber protection framework combining legal clarification, digital literacy, platform accountability, child-friendly reporting, specialised cyber investigation and restorative rehabilitation.
Keywords: Cybercrime; Juveniles; Child Online Protection; Legal Framework; Law Enforcement.

1. Introduction

The digital technology explosion in the early 21st century has greater consequences on the way's individuals, communities, and businesses interact—not just with one another, but also with the world. The cyber world is now a pillar of daily life with the pervasiveness of the internet, social media, mobile, and online gaming. While there have been new avenues opened for businesses and communities to interact and engage, there have also been new avenues for criminals to exploit and inflict harm. One of the social groups that have been most adversely affected by the new technological processes has been children, particularly those in a "juvenescence" state. Cyberspace has made children very vulnerable. Digital environments are very difficult to operate and navigate, and children are being exposed to these environments with little, or often, no adult supervision. They are also exposed to a variety of violent and sexually exploitative behavior. It is difficult to compare traditional forms of crime to cyber forms of crime. The crimes are done in a way that is anonymous. Jurisdictions have become irrelevant. Technology advances quickly and, therefore, traditional forms of crime become increasingly difficult to detect. It is also difficult to conceptualize the nature and dimensions of these crimes. The nature of the crimes against children that are being committed has also become increasingly sophisticated[1].

[1] Chengton, *How Digital Science Influences in 21st Century | by Chengtong | Digital Society | Medium*, (2023), https://medium.com/digital-society/how-digital-science-influences-in-21st-century-947f273fe8d5.

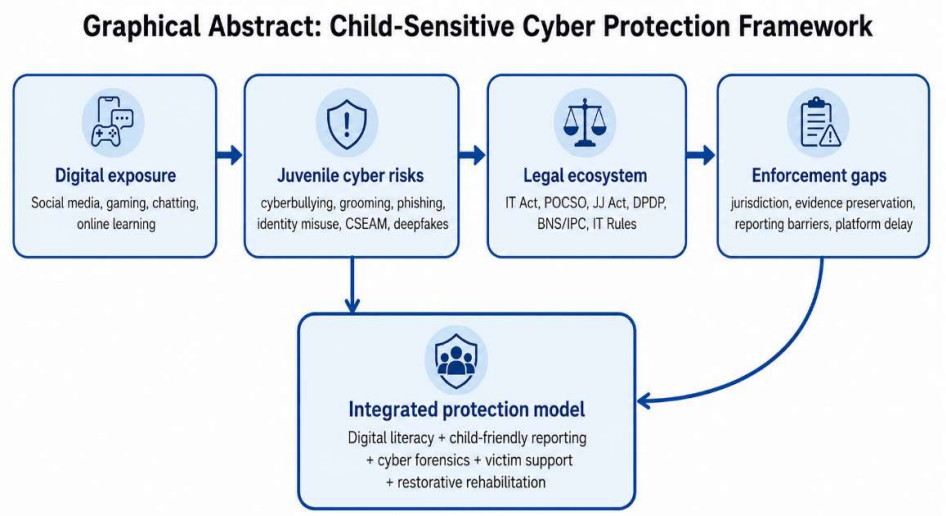

Figure 1. Graphical abstract showing the integrated juvenile cyber protection framework.
Source: Compiled by the Author.

Although some countries have tried implementing legal frameworks to regulate cyber activities, and to safeguard children, it is still a matter of some debate as to how effective these have been. In a number of jurisdictions, including India, legislation such as the Information Technology Act, 2000, as well as other child safeguarding legislations, have been attempts to provide a legal framework to address cyber related crimes. However, as is the case with many other fields, the rapid advancement of technology continues to outstrip the pace of legal advancements, and results in lacunae in both the implementation and enforcement of the law. Law enforcement agencies have to grapple with numerous issues, including the lack of sufficient technical expertise, poor and inadequate infrastructure to cope with the demands of jurisdictional gaps for cross-border crimes, and the lack of reporting by the victims for fear of the unknown and for lack of awareness. A legal and empirical study on cybercrime against juveniles is the intent of this research study. It will define the nature and scope of juvenile cybercrime, examine the existing legal frameworks, and identify the problems faced by law enforcement agencies. The study is based on empirical data via surveys and interviews, along with secondary data including legal frameworks, academic literature, and official reports.

By trying to bridge the gap between the rapid advancement of cyber threats and legal mechanisms and enforcement preparedness to combat them, this study attempts to further the existing literature on protection of children in the cyberspace. It also provides a number of viable recommendations to improve legal framework, enforcement preparedness, and stakeholder awareness. In the fast digitizing society, providing protection to juveniles in cyberspace is a legal obligation and an ethical obligation to society[2]. This research investigates changes in cybercrime perpetrated against minors in the 21st century, especially the new types of online threats and victimization brought about by digital technologies. This research will also evaluate how much study participants know about cybercrime and child protection laws as a means to measure how much the general public knows about legal child protection and how children are protected online. In addition, this research will examine the current laws and protection of children against cybercrime, focusing on how well the current strategies and laws respond to the new types of digital threats. Finally, this research will analyze legal, social, and procedural barriers to child cybercrime perpetration that could obstruct justice and protection of child victims.

[2] Gargi Sarkar & Sandeep K. Shukla, *Behavioral Analysis of Cybercrime: Paving the Way for Effective Policing Strategies*, 2 J. ECON. CRIMINOL. 100034 (2023), https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2949791423000349.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What are the major forms and increasing trends of cybercrimes against juveniles, especially in the NCR region?
2. How adequate is the existing legal framework for juvenile cyber protection in India?
3. What challenges are faced by law enforcement agencies in combating cybercrime against juveniles?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the major forms and increasing trends of cybercrimes against juveniles, especially in the NCR region.
2. To analyse the legal framework relating to juvenile cyber protection in India.
3. To identify the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in combating cybercrime against juveniles.

2. Legal and Statutory Framework

Table 1. Summary of Legal and Statutory Framework for Juvenile Cybercrime

Law/Instrument	Core relevance to juvenile cybercrime	Doctrinal significance
Information Technology Act, 2000	Identity theft, privacy violation, obscene/sexually explicit online material, intermediary liability and cyber offences.	Provides cyber-offence architecture but requires child-sensitive application.
POCSO Act, 2012	Online grooming, sexual exploitation, child sexual abuse and CSEAM-related offences.	Strongest child-protection statute for sexualised digital harm.
Juvenile Justice Act, 2015	Children in need of care and protection; children in conflict with law; rehabilitation and social reintegration.	Supports counselling, restorative intervention and non-punitive treatment.
Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023	Children's data, consent, data fiduciary obligations and privacy safeguards.	Adds data-protection safeguards to online child safety.
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 / Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 / Indian Penal Code, 1860 provisions	Cheating, extortion, intimidation, stalking, defamation and sexual offences through digital means.	Complements cyber-specific law where conduct overlaps with general criminal law.
IT Rules, 2021	Intermediary due diligence, grievance redressal, takedown obligations and user-safety duties.	Important for platform accountability and rapid response to harmful content.

Source: Compiled by the Author.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has stated that NCRB's latest published Crime in India report is for 2023 and that sufficient provisions are available under the IT Act, BNS and POCSO Act for dealing with cybercrime. It has also identified the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) and the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal as key institutional measures, with special focus on cybercrimes against women and children.

2.1 Case-Law Analysis and Judicial Developments

Table 2. Case-law Analysis and Judicial Developments Related to Juvenile Cyber Protection

Case law	Judgment/holding	Relevance to juvenile cyber protection

Shreya Singhal v. Union of India, Supreme Court, 2015	Section 66A of the IT Act was struck down as unconstitutional for vagueness and violation of Article 19(1)(a). The Court also clarified intermediary liability under Section 79.	Important because child protection measures must be precise and constitutionally valid; vague cyber provisions risk misuse.
Avnish Bajaj v. State (NCT of Delhi), Delhi High Court/Supreme Court proceedings, 2005-2008	The Bazee.com matter examined intermediary responsibility where obscene material was listed online. Proceedings highlighted the need to define platform responsibility and due diligence.	Relevant to platform-based circulation of harmful content involving juveniles and the need for prompt takedown/evidence preservation.
Sabu Mathew George v. Union of India, Supreme Court, 2017/2018	Search engines and intermediaries were directed to prevent unlawful online advertisements relating to prohibited sex-selection practices.	Shows that intermediaries may be required to create technical safeguards where online content violates protective statutes.
Nipun Saxena v. Union of India, Supreme Court, 2018	The Court issued directions prohibiting disclosure of identity of rape and POCSO victims in print, electronic and social media.	Critical for juvenile cyber cases because digital publication can permanently expose a child victim's identity.
Prajwala v. Union of India, Supreme Court, continuing directions	The matter concerns online sexual exploitation of children and directions for institutional response and online content control.	Reinforces the need for coordinated state, platform and investigative mechanisms against online child abuse material.
Just Rights for Children Alliance v. S. Harish, Supreme Court, 2024	The Court held that viewing, storing or possessing child sexual exploitation and abuse material can attract liability under POCSO and directed courts to use the term CSEAM rather than child pornography.	Landmark for online child protection because it treats digital possession and consumption of abusive material as serious exploitation-linked conduct.

Source: Compiled by the Author.

The case-law trend shows three principles: first, cyber restrictions must be precise and rights-compatible; second, online intermediaries cannot be treated as passive actors where unlawful child-related content is involved; and third, children's identity, dignity and psychological safety require stronger privacy-preserving procedures during investigation, reporting and adjudication.

2.2 Juvenile Justice System in India

The primary Indian legislative framework for juvenile offenders is the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The Act is based on the understanding that juveniles are capable of positive change and thus, should not be subjected to punishment, but rather to rehabilitative efforts. The Act advocates for treatment options, including observation homes, counseling, and educational services, rather than detention. India's approach to the treatment of juvenile offenders is aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which advocates for child offenders to be treated in a manner respectful of the child's age and dignity[3]. The 2015 Act was the first to say that children of 16 to 18 years could be tried as adults for particularly heinous crimes, such as those offenses where the minimum punishment in the statute is not less than seven years. Although this amendment aimed at addressing the issues relating to the commission of serious crimes by older juveniles, its application to cybercrimes raises concerns. Despite the fact that many cyber offenses,

[3] Nandini Chauhan, *WHEN CHILDREN ARE TRIED AS ADULTS : A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF CHILDREN ' S COURTS UNDER THE JJ ACT 2015*, VII 56 (2026).

including financial fraud, sexual exploitation, and identity theft, can be nonviolent, they may cause significant harm. Assigning the status of an adult to juvenile cyber offenders raises serious ethical dilemmas concerning the offender's intent, mental and emotional maturity, and proportionality of punishment, especially considering that many have limited understanding of the legal consequences of their actions. This gap in understanding demands that the legislature develop additional laws to address the differences between organized and malicious cyber offenses and the impulsive or uninformed digital activities committed by minors.

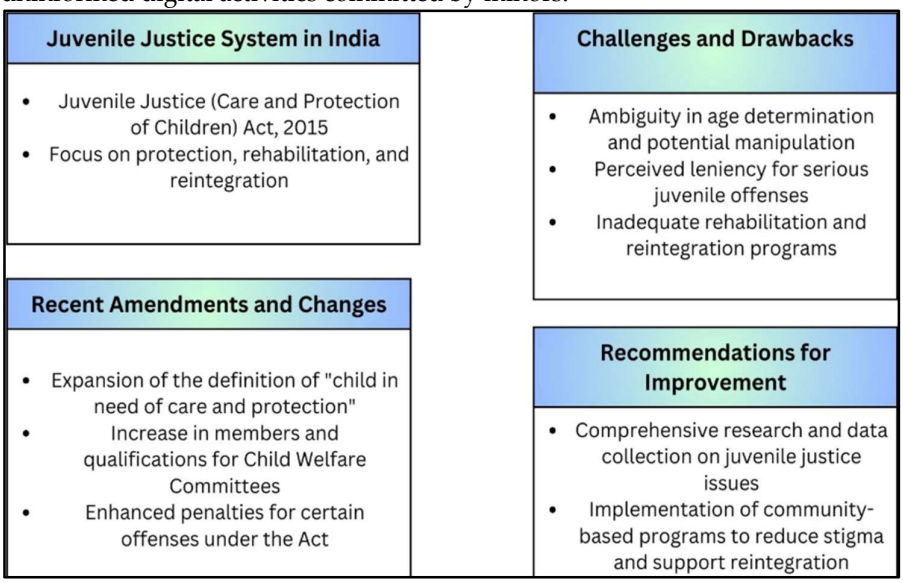

Figure 2. Juvenile justice system in India: key features, challenges and recommendations.

Source: Nancy Sharma, "The Juvenile Justice Law," The LawGist, 22 June 2024, https://thelawgist.org/the-juvenile-justice-law/

2.3 Conceptual Framework

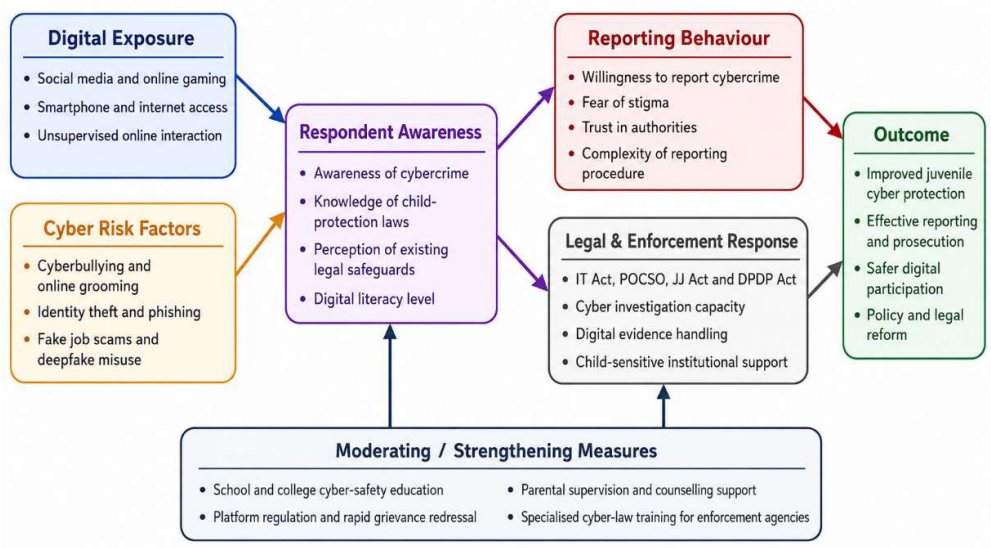

Figure 3. Conceptual framework showing variables affecting juvenile cyber protection.

Source: Compiled by the Author.

In this case, because the paper includes hypotheses, a conceptual framework is needed to demonstrate the connection between the main empirical and doctrinal variables. The framework operates on the idea that of the digital spaces increases exposure and risk of cybercrime, and that legal literacy, confidence in reporting, trust in institutions, and the effectiveness of law enforcement all have a bearing on the protection outcomes. The dependent variable is juvenile cyber safety, and is operationalized as

the protection, reporting, and confidence in enforcement. The independent variables are awareness of cybercrime, legal awareness, reporting obstacles, and perceived efficacy of law enforcement. The respondent category is considered as a grouping variable for categorical analysis, given that the study seeks to assess whether there are differences in perceptions.

Table 3. Proposed Conceptual Framework for Juvenile Cyber Protection

Construct	Explanation	Role in the Study
Digital exposure of juveniles	Social media, online gaming, digital communication and online learning increase contact with strangers and risky content.	Creates risk environment.
Cybercrime awareness	Knowledge of cyberbullying, grooming, identity theft, phishing, fake job scams, data theft and deepfake misuse.	Independent variable.
Legal awareness	Knowledge of IT Act, POCSO Act, JJ Act, DPDP Act and reporting mechanisms.	Independent variable.
Reporting behaviour and barriers	Willingness to report; fear of stigma; lack of awareness; complex procedure; lack of trust in authorities.	Independent variable.
Law enforcement effectiveness	Perceived capacity of police/cyber cells to investigate, preserve evidence and support victims.	Independent variable.
Juvenile cyber protection outcome	Safer digital participation, timely reporting, legal remedy, victim support and offender accountability.	Dependent outcome.

Source: Compiled by the Author.

3. Literature Review

The reviewed literature shows that juvenile cybercrime is shaped by technological growth, online anonymity, uneven legal awareness, reporting hesitation and varying institutional capacity. Studies on cybercrime transformation, youth vulnerability, digital safety, law enforcement and child-sensitive protection collectively indicate that cyber protection for juveniles cannot be assessed only through penal provisions. It must be connected with awareness, reporting confidence, platform accountability and rehabilitative justice.

3.1 Cybercrime Transformation and Juvenile Victimisation

AllahRakha et al. (2024) explain that cybercrime has transformed through social engineering, anonymity and transnational digital operations. Gupta and Nawal (2019), Basarkar (2023), Arjun (2024), Bahl (2025), Vijayarani et al. (2024), Livingstone et al. (2018), and Hinduja and Patchin (2019) further show that young people are vulnerable to cyberbullying, grooming, identity misuse, online harassment and psychological harm. These studies support the view that cybercrime against juveniles is increasing because digital exposure has become routine in education, social networking, gaming and communication.

H1: There is a significant association between respondent profile and awareness of cybercrimes against juveniles.

3.2 Legal Awareness and Adequacy of Juvenile Cyber Protection

Paradesi et al. (2025), Shrivastava et al. (2025), Philip (2025), Jain (2022), Singh and Lee (2026), UNICEF (2022) and UNODC (2021) indicate that cybercrime laws must be updated continuously because technological harms evolve faster than statutory and institutional responses. In the Indian context, the IT Act, POCSO Act, JJ Act, DPDP Act, BNS/BNSS/IPC provisions and intermediary rules together provide an important legal foundation, but the literature also shows gaps in cyberbullying, grooming, deepfake misuse, child-data protection, intermediary accountability and child-friendly reporting.

H2: There is a significant association between respondent profile and awareness of laws protecting juveniles from cybercrime.

3.3 Reporting Behaviour and Barriers

Cybercrime reporting depends not only on the existence of laws but also on trust, procedural simplicity, victim privacy and awareness. Studies by Abdullah and Jahan (2020), Juhari (2025), Fadli et al. (2025), Bhatti et al. (2021), Martin (2022) and Pragya Singh (2025) show that victims often face obstacles such as low public knowledge, weak coordination, lack of technical capacity, complex procedures and limited confidence in enforcement institutions. For juveniles, these barriers are intensified by stigma, fear of parental or social reaction and uncertainty about how to preserve digital evidence.

H3: There is a significant association between respondent profile and reporting behaviour/barriers in juvenile cybercrime cases.

3.4 Law Enforcement Effectiveness and Child-Sensitive Response

The enforcement-related literature highlights the need for cyber forensic capability, trained police personnel, inter-agency coordination, platform cooperation and child-sensitive interviewing. Elendu et al. (2024), Avrahami (2025), Pragya Singh (2025), Juhari (2025) and Fadli et al. (2025) emphasise that technological readiness and institutional training are necessary for effective cybercrime control. In juvenile cases, enforcement effectiveness must be measured by timely complaint registration, evidence preservation, victim support, privacy protection and rehabilitation of children in conflict with cyber law.

H4: There is a significant association between respondent profile and perceived effectiveness of law enforcement in handling juvenile cybercrime cases.

3.5 Literature Summary

The following table summarises the reviewed studies and identifies the research gap addressed by the present paper.

Table 4. Summary of Reviewed Literature and Research Gap

Author(s) / Year	Focus	Key Finding	Research Gap
AllahRakha et al. (2024)	Cybercrime trends and legal responses	Manipulation, transnational activity, and technological masking have all caused cybercrime sophistication.	Does not provide a juvenile-specific empirical model.
Paradesi et al. (2025)	Comparative cybersecurity laws	India needs to strengthen its enforcement capacity and learn comparatively from different cybersecurity regimes across the world.	Limited focus on child protection and juvenile reporting behaviour.
Elendu et al. (2024)	Cybersecurity obligations and legal responsibility	Cybersecurity incidents must be addressed with legal responsibility, technical readiness, and training an organization.	Sector-specific focus; not centred on juveniles.
Avrahami et al. (2025)	Open-source intelligence and proactive cybersecurity	OSINT may improve early threat detection and situational awareness.	Does not address child-friendly enforcement procedures.
Shrivastava et al. (2025)	Cybercrime in India	Cybercrime is growing in India due to digitalization as well as due to gaps in awareness and governance.	General study; lacks NCR-based juvenile evidence.
Gupta and Nawal (2019)	Impact of cybercrime on young adults	Youth mental health, safety and social confidence are affected by cybercrime.	Limited doctrinal legal analysis.

Basarkar et al. (2023)	Cybercrime against women, youngsters and children	Cyber pornography, stalking, and abuse as well as other digital form injuries, threaten the safety of children online.	Lacks statistical testing and legal framework integration.
Nimma (2022)	Cybercrimes in the digital world	Misuse of technology causes personal, financial, and institutional harm.	Broad cybercrime focus with weak juvenile depth.
Arjun (2024)	Social media and youth cyber risks	Poor privacy settings and heavy social media use increase youth risks.	Does not assess legal protection mechanisms.
Bahl (2025)	Global dimensions of juvenile cybercrimes	Juvenile cybercrime needs harmonization alongside rehabilitative and cybersecurity education.	Limited Indian empirical grounding.
Jain et al. (2024)	Legal issues and youth impact of cybercrime	Emphasizes components of cybercrime, impact on youth and the law problems.	Needs stronger implementation analysis.
Philip et al. (2024)	Cyber laws and enforcement in India	Indian cyber law demands the establishment of more robust cyber courts and cyber investigative authorities and necessitates reforms in legal responses.	No empirical testing of awareness or enforcement perceptions.
Singh (2022)	Cybercrime against vulnerable groups	Focuses on digital literacy, victim support, and fast justice for those who are most vulnerable.	Focuses on senior citizens rather than juveniles.
Vijayarani et al. (2024)	Cyberbullying among Indian adolescents	Digital involvement and adolescent mental health are impacted by cyberbullying.	Requires linkage with legal reporting and enforcement.
Livingstone et al. (2017)	Children's rights in the digital age	Children need safeguarding, engagement, and empowerment in the digital realm.	Requires legal localisation in Indian child cyber protection.
Hinduja and Patchin (2018)	Cyberbullying prevention	Prevention hinges on school awareness programs, victim support, and reporting systems.	Does not address Indian statutory structure.
Eileen Victoria Martin et al. (2022)	Cybercrime preparedness through learning styles	Enhanced cybercrime preparedness through infrastructure strategies and pragmatic learning	More studies needed for social change and cyber-terrorism prevention
Pragya Singh et al. (2025)	Role of law enforcement in cybercrime control	Significance of cyber forensics, education and mutual collaboration amongst agencies.	Lack of technical expertise, jurisdiction issues, rapid tech changes
Juhari et al. (2025)	Cybercrime challenges in Indonesia	Inadequate enforcement due to coordination shortfalls and resource constraints.	Need stronger laws, resources, and international collaboration

Abu Taher Muhammad Abdullah et al. (2020)	Cyber policing challenges	Barriers to investigation from Big Data and digital evidence.	Traditional policing methods inadequate for cybercrime detection
Maulana Arif Fadli et al. (2025)	Cyber law and enforcement effectiveness	Weak ITE Law, low awareness, and limited resources impact law enforcement agencies.	Need legal reforms, training, public awareness, and global cooperation
Dr. Shaukat Hussain Bhatti et al. (2021)	Public confidence in Pakistan's criminal justice system	FIA's Importance and Operational Challenges in Cybercrime Justice	More reforms needed to improve justice delivery and public trust

Source: Compiled by the Author.

3.6 Research Gap

The existing research analyses broad concepts of cybercrime, cybersecurity laws, and youth vulnerability. However, there are limited studies linking juvenile cyber victimization with legal awareness, reporting behavior, perception of enforcement, and the adequacy of legal doctrines. The field also lacks empirical studies on the NCR region, despite being an area with high internet penetration, urban schooling, social media exposure, and mixed socio-economic conditions. The current research aims to address this by combining doctrinal legal analysis with empirical research using 359 responses and offers an integrated cyber protection framework sensitive to the needs of children.

3.7 Statistical Context of Juvenile Cybercrime

Official PIB/MHA releases based on NCRB Crime in India data show that cybercrime cases registered in India increased from 52,974 in 2021 to 65,893 in 2022 and 86,420 in 2023. Delhi, an important NCR jurisdiction, reported 356 cybercrime cases in 2021, 685 in 2022 and 407 in 2023. Source: Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, "Cyber Awareness," 17 March 2026, based on NCRB Crime in India data.

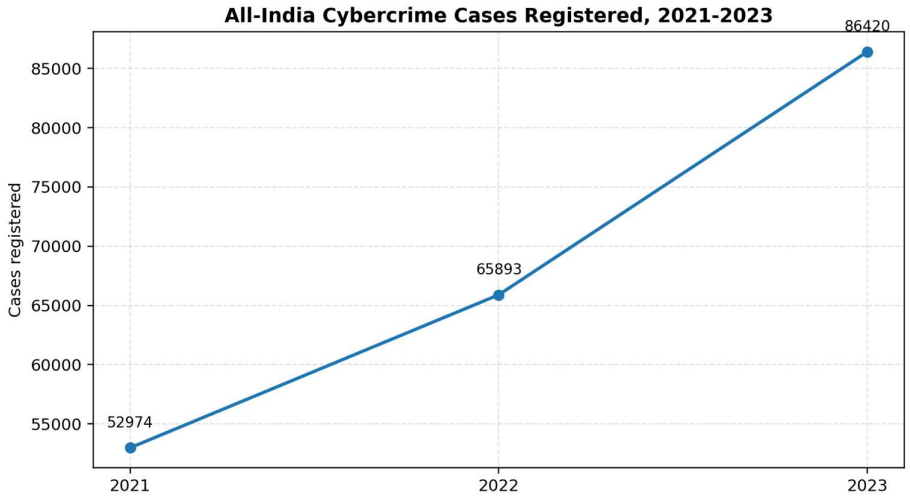

Figure 4. All-India cybercrime cases registered during 2021-2023 based on PIB/MHA-NCRB data.
Source: Calculated by the Author based on PIB/MHA-NCRB data.

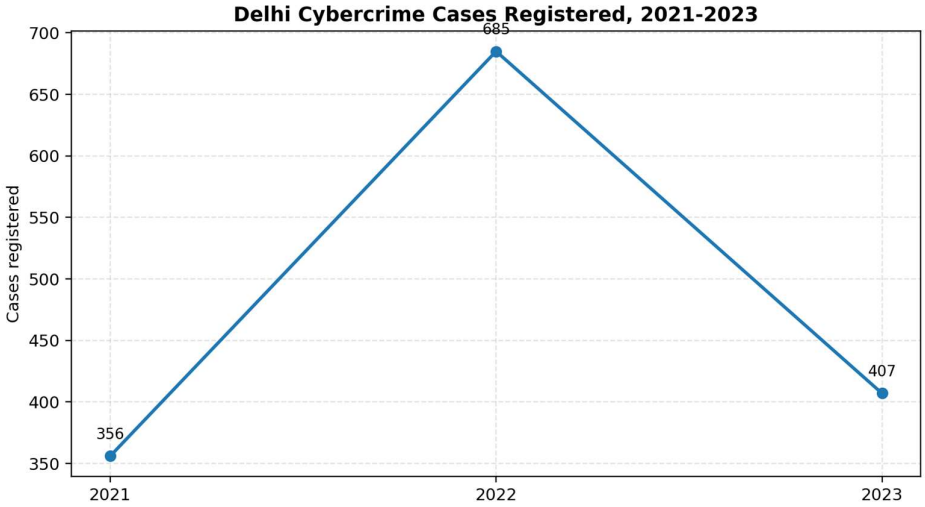

Figure 5. Delhi cybercrime cases registered during 2021-2023 based on PIB/MHA-NCRB data.
Source: Calculated by the Author based on PIB/MHA-NCRB data.

4. Research Methodology

This study utilizes an empirical, descriptive and analytical design to examine cybercrime committed against juveniles and to assess the adequacy of laws and enforcement mechanisms. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire from 359 youth/student respondents in the National Capital Region (NCR). After data screening, 358 valid responses were included in the final analysis. Secondary data were collected from statutes, case law, official government reports, journal articles and literature on cybercrime, juvenile justice and online child protection. The data were analysed through descriptive statistics, frequency, percentage, cross-tabulation, Chi-square test of independence and Cramer's V effect-size analysis, as these techniques are more suitable for categorical survey responses.

4.1 Sampling Design

The study was conducted in the National Capital Region (NCR) of India, comprising Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Noida, Ghaziabad and adjoining urban areas. Respondents were selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure inclusion of youth/students with varying levels of exposure to digital technologies and online environments.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered both online and offline. A total of 359 responses were received, out of which 358 valid responses were included in the final analysis. The NCR region was selected because of its high internet penetration, extensive use of social media and digital platforms, urban demographic diversity and increasing incidence of cybercrime-related complaints.

Inclusion criteria included respondents aged 18 years and above who were residents of the NCR region and possessed basic familiarity with internet-enabled devices or digital platforms. The exclusion of the remaining questionnaire was due to missing data, inconsistencies in recorded responses or insufficient understanding of questionnaire items.

4.2 Justification for Categorical Data Analysis

The questionnaire responses are mainly categorical in nature; therefore, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, the Chi-square test of independence and Cramer's V are more appropriate for this categorical data structure. Frequencies and percentages describe the distribution of responses. Cross-tabulation helps compare patterns such as Age x Victimization, Gender x Awareness and Education x Law Awareness. The Chi-square test examines whether two categorical variables are statistically associated, while Cramer's V indicates the strength of that association. This approach directly supports the study's objective of identifying awareness gaps, reporting barriers and enforcement perceptions among youth/student respondents.

4.3 Hypotheses of the Study

1. H01: There is no significant association between respondent profile and awareness of cybercrimes against juveniles.
2. H1: There is a significant association between respondent profile and awareness of cybercrimes against juveniles.
3. H02: There is no significant association between respondent profile and awareness of laws protecting juveniles from cybercrime.
4. H2: There is a significant association between respondent profile and awareness of laws protecting juveniles from cybercrime.
5. H03: There is no significant association between respondent profile and reporting behaviour/barriers in juvenile cybercrime cases.
6. H3: There is a significant association between respondent profile and reporting behaviour/barriers in juvenile cybercrime cases.
7. H04: There is no significant association between respondent profile and perceived effectiveness of law enforcement in juvenile cybercrime cases.
8. H4: There is a significant association between respondent profile and perceived effectiveness of law enforcement in juvenile cybercrime cases.

5. Results and Discussion

The survey findings demonstrate high exposure to cyber risks. Out of 359 respondents, 63.2% reported that they or someone known to them had experienced cybercrime. More than half reported repeated suspicious approaches by strangers online. This indicates that juvenile cyber risk is not confined to rare or exceptional events; it is embedded in routine digital interaction.

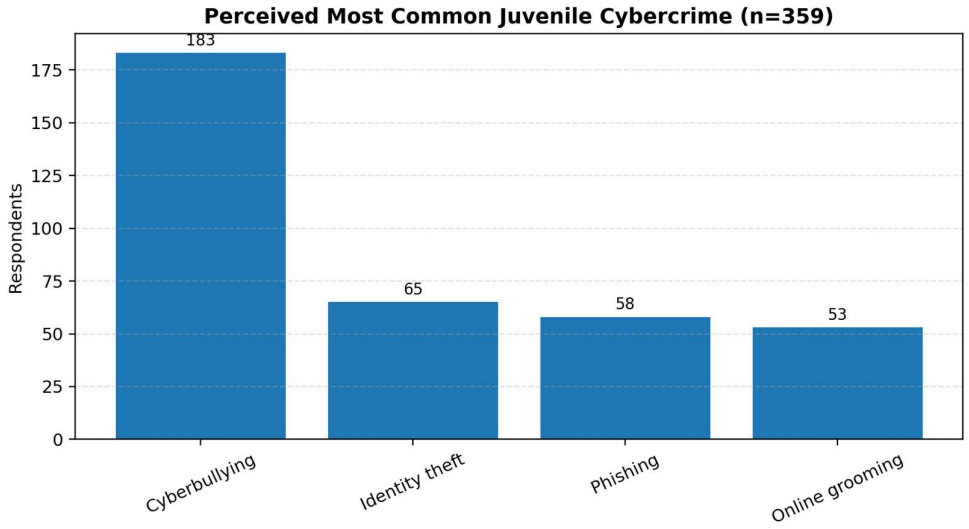

Figure 6. Respondent perception of the most common cybercrime among juveniles.

Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

Cyberbullying was identified by 51.0% of respondents as the most common juvenile cybercrime, followed by identity theft, phishing and online grooming. However, the hidden-threat profile shows that respondents also recognise fake employment scams, deepfake misuse, financial fraud and data theft as emerging vulnerabilities. This is important because law and policy often respond to visible offences, while juvenile risk is increasingly embedded in hybrid forms of social, sexual, financial and reputational exploitation.

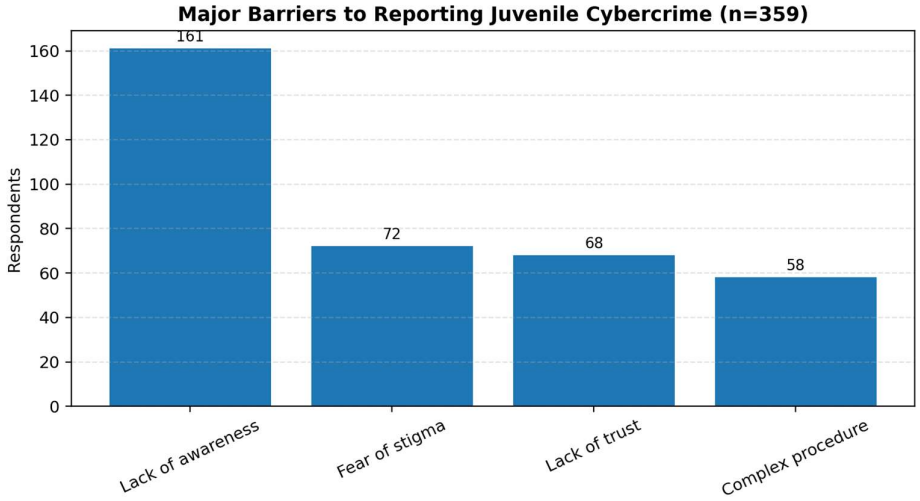

Figure 7. Major barriers to reporting cybercrime against juveniles.

Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

Reporting behaviour shows a gap between formal legal availability and practical accessibility. Although 70.2% of respondents stated that they would report cybercrime to authorities, barriers remained substantial. Lack of awareness was the leading barrier, followed by fear of stigma, lack of trust in authorities and complex reporting procedures. A child-friendly reporting system must therefore simplify procedure, protect identity, enable evidence upload, give status updates and provide victim support.

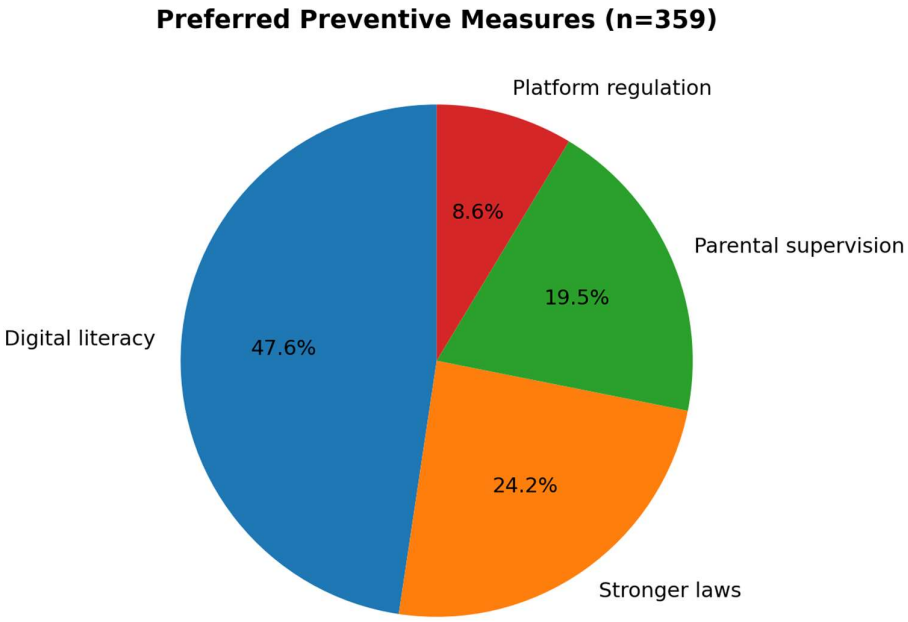

Figure 8. Preventive measures preferred by respondents.

Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

Respondents considered digital literacy programs the most effective preventive measure, followed by stronger laws, parental supervision and regulation of social media platforms. This suggests that the preferred policy approach is preventive and educational rather than purely punitive. For juveniles, digital literacy should include recognising grooming patterns, preserving screenshots and URLs,

avoiding malicious links, understanding consent in image sharing and knowing how to report harmful content.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis shows the frequency and percentage distribution of key responses. This is appropriate because the questionnaire data are categorical and the main research concern is to identify exposure, awareness, reporting intention, barriers and perceived enforcement effectiveness among youth/student respondents.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents and Key Survey Responses

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	191	53.2
Gender	Male	168	46.8
Occupation	Students	198	55.2
Cybercrime victimisation	Yes/self or known person	227	63.2
Suspicious online approach	Several times	190	52.9
Awareness of cybercrimes affecting youth	High awareness	151	42.1
Most common juvenile cybercrime	Cyberbullying	183	51.0
Hidden vulnerability	Fake job scams	144	40.1
Awareness of cyber laws	Aware	194	54.0
Would report cybercrime	Yes	252	70.2
Major reporting barrier	Lack of awareness	161	44.8
Preferred preventive measure	Digital literacy programmes	171	47.6

Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

5.2 Cross-tabulation

Cross-tabulation is used to examine how categorical responses vary across respondent characteristics. The following cross-tabulations are appropriate for the final data analysis because they directly connect respondent profile variables with victimisation, awareness and legal knowledge.

Table 6. Cross-tabulation of Occupation and Perceived Law Enforcement Effectiveness

Crosstab							
			How effective do you think law enforcement agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?				Total
			Very effective	Moderately effective	Ineffective	Not sure	
What best describes your current occupation?	Student	Count	107	43	27	21	198
		Expected Count	97.1	46.9	33.1	21.0	198.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	54.0%	21.7%	13.6%	10.6%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you	60.8%	50.6%	45.0%	55.3%	55.2%

		think law enforcement agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?					
	Employed	Count	31	26	21	11	89
		Expected Count	43.6	21.1	14.9	9.4	89.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	34.8%	29.2%	23.6%	12.4%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you think law enforcement agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?	17.6%	30.6%	35.0%	28.9%	24.8%
	Self-employed	Count	13	4	3	3	23
		Expected Count	11.3	5.4	3.8	2.4	23.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	56.5%	17.4%	13.0%	13.0%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you think law enforcement	7.4%	4.7%	5.0%	7.9%	6.4%

		agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?					
	Legal professional	Count	10	6	3	1	20
		Expected Count	9.8	4.7	3.3	2.1	20.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	50.0%	30.0%	15.0%	5.0%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you think law enforcement agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?	5.7%	7.1%	5.0%	2.6%	5.6%
	Unemployed	Count	15	6	6	2	29
		Expected Count	14.2	6.9	4.8	3.1	29.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	51.7%	20.7%	20.7%	6.9%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you think law enforcement agencies are in handling	8.5%	7.1%	10.0%	5.3%	8.1%

		cybercrime cases involving juveniles?					
Total		Count	176	85	60	38	359
		Expected Count	176.0	85.0	60.0	38.0	359.0
		% within What best describes your current occupation?	49.0%	23.7%	16.7%	10.6%	100.0 %
		% within How effective do you think law enforcement agencies are in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles?	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0 %

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate percentage within each occupation category.
Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

The crosstab shows the relationship between respondents' current occupation and their perception of the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles. Out of the total 359 respondents, the majority felt that law enforcement agencies are very effective (176 respondents, 49.0%), followed by moderately effective (85 respondents, 23.7%). However, 60 respondents (16.7%) considered them ineffective, while 38 respondents (10.6%) were not sure. This indicates that overall perception is comparatively positive, as nearly half of the respondents expressed strong confidence in law enforcement agencies.

Among students, who formed the largest occupational group (198 respondents, 55.2% of the sample), 54.0% believed that law enforcement agencies are very effective, while 21.7% rated them as moderately effective. Only 13.6% considered them ineffective and 10.6% were not sure. This suggests that students generally have a favourable view of law enforcement response in juvenile cybercrime cases. Since students also contributed 60.8% of all "very effective" responses, their opinion strongly influenced the overall positive result.

Among employed respondents, the perception was more mixed. Only 34.8% rated law enforcement as very effective, while 29.2% considered it moderately effective and 23.6% felt it was ineffective. Compared with students, employed respondents showed lower confidence and a higher level of dissatisfaction. This may indicate that employed respondents are more critical or may have greater awareness of practical limitations in cybercrime investigation, reporting procedures, legal delays, or enforcement challenges.

The self-employed respondents also showed a generally positive perception, with 56.5% rating law enforcement agencies as very effective. However, this group represented only 23 respondents, so its

impact on the overall result is limited. Similarly, among legal professionals, 50.0% considered law enforcement very effective and 30.0% considered them moderately effective. The lower "not sure" response among legal professionals (5.0%) suggests that this group may have clearer opinions due to their familiarity with legal and procedural aspects of cybercrime handling.

Among unemployed respondents, 51.7% viewed law enforcement agencies as very effective, while 20.7% considered them moderately effective and another 20.7% considered them ineffective. This indicates that although the majority view remains positive, a notable section of unemployed respondents expressed dissatisfaction with law enforcement effectiveness.

Overall, the table reveals that respondents across all occupational categories mostly perceive law enforcement agencies as very effective in handling juvenile cybercrime cases. However, employed respondents show a relatively higher level of concern, as they recorded the highest proportion of "ineffective" responses within their group. Therefore, while the general trend reflects confidence in law enforcement, the presence of negative and uncertain responses indicates the need for stronger investigation mechanisms, faster response systems, cybercrime awareness, and improved public trust in juvenile cybercrime handling.

Table 7. Chi-square Test for Association between Occupation and Perceived Law Enforcement Effectiveness

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.785[a]	12	.385
Likelihood Ratio	13.059	12	.365
Linear-by-Linear Association	.022	1	.881
N of Valid Cases	359		
a. 7 cells (35.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.12.			

Note: a. 7 cells (35.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.12.

Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

The Chi-square test was applied to examine whether there is a significant association between respondents' current occupation and their perception of the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles. The Pearson Chi-square value was $\chi^2 = 12.785$ with 12 degrees of freedom, and the significance value was $p = 0.385$. Since the p-value is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05, the result is statistically not significant. Therefore, the null hypothesis is accepted, indicating that there is no significant association between occupation and perception of law enforcement effectiveness in handling juvenile cybercrime cases.

The Likelihood Ratio value was 13.059 with a significance value of $p = 0.365$, which also supports the Pearson Chi-square result. Similarly, the Linear-by-Linear Association value was 0.022 with $p = 0.881$, indicating that there is no significant linear trend between occupational categories and perception levels.

Although the crosstab showed some differences in percentages across occupational groups, these differences are not statistically strong enough to conclude that occupation influences respondents' opinions. Hence, respondents from different occupational backgrounds appear to have broadly similar views regarding the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in juvenile cybercrime cases.

However, the assumption note shows that 7 cells (35.0%) had expected counts less than 5, with the minimum expected count being 2.12. Since more than 20% of the cells have expected values below 5, the Chi-square assumption is partially violated. Therefore, the result should be interpreted with caution. For more reliable confirmation, categories may be merged or an exact test/Monte Carlo significance test may be used.

Table 8. Symmetric Measures for Occupation and Perceived Law Enforcement Effectiveness

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approximate Significance
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	.389	.005
	Cramer's V	.409	.003
N of Valid Cases		359	

Note: Effect-size values are interpreted together with the Pearson Chi-square result.
Source: Calculated by the Author from primary survey data.

The symmetric measures were examined to determine the strength of association between respondents' occupation and their perception of the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in handling cybercrime cases involving juveniles.

The Phi value was 0.189 and Cramer's V was 0.109, indicating a weak association. The approximate significance value was p = 0.385, which is greater than 0.05. Therefore, the effect-size results should be interpreted consistently with the non-significant Chi-square finding.

Thus, occupation does not show a statistically significant or practically strong association with perception of law enforcement effectiveness. The observed differences across occupational groups remain descriptive and should be interpreted cautiously, particularly because the Chi-square assumption was partially violated.

5.5 Findings

First, the study found that cybercrime exposure among youth is high and practically relevant. A total of 63.2% of respondents stated that they or someone known to them had experienced cybercrime. This indicates that cybercrime affecting juveniles and young users is not an isolated or occasional problem, but a frequent risk connected with everyday digital interaction, including social media use, online gaming, online learning, messaging applications and other internet-based platforms.

Suspicious online interaction emerged as a serious concern. More than half of the respondents reported that they had experienced suspicious approaches from strangers online several times. This finding highlights the vulnerability of juveniles and young users to grooming, manipulation, fraud, impersonation, phishing links, fake profiles and other forms of online exploitation. The result also indicates that cyber risk is often initiated through ordinary communication channels rather than only through technically complex offences. cyberbullying was identified as the most common form of cybercrime against juveniles. Around 51.0% of respondents considered cyberbullying to be the most common juvenile cybercrime, followed by identity theft, phishing and online grooming. This finding shows that psychological, reputational and social forms of harm are highly visible among youth. Cyberbullying may result in emotional distress, fear, social withdrawal, academic impact and long-term psychological consequences. Therefore, cyber protection policy must treat cyberbullying as a serious child-safety concern rather than a minor interpersonal dispute.

The study found that juvenile cybercrime is no longer limited to cyberbullying alone. Respondents also identified fake job scams, deepfake misuse, financial fraud, data theft, phishing and online grooming as important emerging risks. This finding shows that juveniles and young users are exposed to multiple categories of cyber harm, including social, sexual, financial, psychological and privacy-related offences. Hence, a narrow legal or policy approach is insufficient.

The study found moderate legal awareness among respondents. Around 54.0% of respondents stated that they were aware of cyber laws. This indicates that a little more than half of the respondents have some knowledge of legal protection. However, a large section of respondents still lacks adequate legal awareness. This gap is significant because awareness of law directly affects reporting behaviour, evidence preservation, victim confidence and access to remedies. The study found a positive reporting intention among respondents. Around 70.2% stated that they would report cybercrime to the authorities. This indicates that respondents are not completely unwilling to approach formal mechanisms. However, reporting intention does not automatically mean effective reporting in real situations. Juveniles and families may still hesitate due to fear, stigma, lack of knowledge, social pressure, privacy concerns and uncertainty regarding police procedure.

Lack of awareness was identified as the leading barrier to reporting juvenile cybercrime. Around 44.8% of respondents considered lack of awareness as the major reporting barrier, followed by fear of stigma, lack of trust in authorities and complex reporting procedures. This finding clearly shows that the problem is not only legal but also procedural and social. Even when laws exist, victims may remain silent if they do not know where to complain, how to preserve evidence, how their identity will be protected or what action will follow.

Digital literacy programmes were identified as the most preferred preventive measure. Around 47.6% of respondents supported digital literacy as the most effective method of prevention, followed by stronger laws, parental supervision and platform regulation. This shows that respondents prefer preventive and educational measures along with legal protection. Digital literacy should therefore include practical training on cyberbullying, grooming, phishing, privacy settings, deepfake risks, consent in image sharing, screenshot preservation, cyber helplines and online complaint procedures.

The occupational cross-tabulation showed that most respondents across occupational categories viewed law enforcement agencies positively. Overall, 49.0% of respondents considered law enforcement agencies very effective in handling juvenile cybercrime cases, while 23.7% considered them moderately effective. However, 16.7% considered them ineffective and 10.6% were not sure. This means that while the general perception is favourable, a notable section of respondents still lacks confidence in enforcement effectiveness.

Students formed the largest respondent group and showed comparatively strong confidence in law enforcement. Among students, 54.0% rated law enforcement agencies as very effective. However, employed respondents showed a more mixed perception, with a comparatively higher proportion rating enforcement as ineffective. This suggests that respondents with different practical experiences may evaluate enforcement mechanisms differently, even though the overall statistical test does not establish a significant association.

The Chi-square test showed no statistically significant association between occupation and perception of law enforcement effectiveness. The Pearson Chi-square value was $\chi^2 = 12.785$ with 12 degrees of freedom and $p = 0.385$. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, the study concludes that occupation does not significantly influence respondents' perception of law enforcement effectiveness in handling juvenile cybercrime cases. The strength of association between occupation and perception of law enforcement effectiveness was weak. Since the Chi-square result is not significant, the effect-size interpretation should also be treated cautiously. Based on the Chi-square value and sample size, Phi is approximately 0.189 and Cramer's V is approximately 0.109, indicating a weak association. Therefore, the observed differences across occupational groups are descriptive in nature and should not be interpreted as statistically strong or moderate. The Chi-square assumption was partially violated because 7 cells, representing 35.0% of the total cells, had expected counts below 5, with the minimum expected count being 2.12. This means the statistical result should be interpreted with caution. For stronger confirmation, future analysis may merge smaller occupational categories or apply an exact test or Monte Carlo significance method.

Finally, the doctrinal analysis found that India has a broad legal framework through the Information Technology Act, 2000, POCSO Act, 2012, Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, BNS/BNSS provisions and IT Rules, 2021. However, the framework remains fragmented in practical application. Cyberbullying, grooming, deepfake misuse, child-sensitive reporting, evidence preservation, platform accountability and rehabilitation of juvenile cyber offenders require clearer integration into a unified child-sensitive cyber protection model.

5.6 Discussion

The findings of the study show that cybercrime against juveniles is a serious and growing concern in the digital age. A large proportion of respondents reported that they or someone known to them had experienced cybercrime, which indicates that online victimisation is now closely connected with routine digital activities such as social media use, online gaming, messaging and online learning.

Cyberbullying emerged as the most common form of cybercrime affecting juveniles. This is important because cyberbullying may cause psychological stress, fear, humiliation, social withdrawal and

reputational harm. Along with cyberbullying, respondents also identified identity theft, phishing, online grooming, fake job scams, deepfake misuse and data theft as major threats. This shows that juvenile cybercrime is multidimensional and includes social, financial, sexual, psychological and privacy-related harms.

The study also reveals that legal awareness among respondents is moderate. Although many respondents were aware of cyber laws, a considerable section still lacked proper knowledge of reporting mechanisms and legal remedies. This gap is important because the presence of law alone cannot ensure protection unless juveniles, parents, teachers and young users know how to report cybercrime, preserve digital evidence and seek timely help.

The reporting findings show that willingness to report cybercrime is comparatively high, but practical barriers remain strong. Lack of awareness was the major barrier, followed by fear of stigma, lack of trust in authorities and complex reporting procedures. Therefore, child-friendly reporting systems are necessary. Such systems should ensure simple complaint filing, identity protection, evidence upload facility, status tracking and victim support.

The preference for digital literacy programmes as the most effective preventive measure shows that respondents favour preventive and educational solutions. Digital literacy should include awareness about cyberbullying, grooming, phishing, privacy settings, deepfake risks, safe use of social media, consent in image sharing and reporting procedures. Schools and colleges should play an active role in building cyber safety awareness.

The cross-tabulation between occupation and perception of law enforcement effectiveness shows that most respondents viewed law enforcement agencies positively. However, some respondents considered them ineffective or were unsure. The Chi-square result was not statistically significant, as the p-value was greater than 0.05. Therefore, occupation does not have a significant association with perception of law enforcement effectiveness. The association is weak and should not be interpreted as moderate or strong.

The Chi-square assumption was also partly violated because more than 20% of the cells had expected counts below 5. Therefore, the result should be interpreted with caution. Future studies may merge smaller categories or use exact tests for more reliable statistical confirmation.

From the legal perspective, India has several laws such as the Information Technology Act, POCSO Act, Juvenile Justice Act, Digital Personal Data Protection Act and IT Rules. However, these laws operate in a fragmented manner. There is a need for a more integrated child-sensitive cyber protection framework covering prevention, reporting, investigation, evidence preservation, platform accountability, victim support and rehabilitation.

Overall, the study shows that juvenile cyber protection cannot depend only on punishment. It requires a combined approach involving legal awareness, digital literacy, trained cyber police, child-sensitive procedures, platform responsibility and counselling-based support. Such an integrated approach can help create a safer digital environment for juveniles in India.

6. Conclusion and Suggestions

The study concludes that cybercrime against juveniles in India is a multi-layered challenge involving legal protection, technological capacity, social awareness, institutional trust and platform governance. The NCR-based empirical findings show substantial exposure to cybercrime, repeated suspicious online approaches, and strong respondent concern regarding cyberbullying, fake job scams, identity theft, phishing, deepfake misuse and online grooming. The secondary data trend from NCRB/PIB further supports the finding that cybercrime is growing as a national enforcement concern, with all-India registered cybercrime cases rising sharply between 2021 and 2023.

India has a broad statutory framework through the IT Act, POCSO Act, JJ Act, DPDP Act, BNS/BNSS/IPC provisions and intermediary rules. However, the framework remains functionally fragmented. The legal system addresses individual offences but does not yet operate as a unified child-sensitive cyber protection mechanism. Case law has significantly strengthened the field by protecting online free speech from vague criminalisation, recognising intermediary responsibility, safeguarding victim identity, and treating possession or viewing of child sexual exploitation material as serious

harmful conduct. These judicial developments must now be translated into operational protocols for police, schools, parents, prosecutors, platforms and child welfare institutions.

The empirical results demonstrate that legal awareness, reporting behaviour, perceived barriers and enforcement confidence vary across respondent categories. Because the collected data are categorical, descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation, Chi-square testing and Cramer's V provide a more appropriate statistical approach for assessing these patterns for categorical survey variables. Policy cannot rely only on general awareness campaigns. India requires age-specific digital literacy, parent-oriented cyber safety training, simplified child-friendly reporting, faster platform takedown systems, cyber forensic strengthening, victim counselling and restorative intervention for children in conflict with cyber law. The paper therefore recommends an integrated juvenile cyber protection framework that combines prevention, reporting, investigation, adjudication, victim support, platform accountability and rehabilitation. Such a model would move India from a statute-centred approach to a rights-based, evidence-sensitive and child-centred cyber justice system.

6.1 Suggestions

1. Introduce mandatory digital safety curriculum in schools and colleges with modules on cyberbullying, grooming, phishing, deepfakes, consent and reporting.
2. Create child-friendly cybercrime reporting desks and simplified online complaint formats with identity protection.
3. Mandate rapid preservation of digital evidence by platforms in child-related cybercrime complaints.
4. Strengthen cyber forensic laboratories and train investigating officers in child-sensitive interviewing and online evidence protocols.
5. Issue judicial and police guidelines requiring the term Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Material (CSEAM) instead of child pornography.
6. Develop restorative and counselling-based mechanisms for immature juvenile cyber offenders while maintaining strict response to organised, exploitative and sexualised cyber offending.

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