

# “Cyber-Delinquency and Its Impact on Children’s Mental Health: Legal Challenges in India”

Dr. Pawan Kumar Misra., \*Dr. Saurabh Tiwari

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, 226007

Assistant Professor, Department of Liberal Education, Era University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India, 226003

\*Corresponding Author

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12120135>

Received: 01 January 2026; Accepted: 06 January 2026; Published: 17 January 2026

## ABSTRACT

The rapid proliferation of digital technologies has reshaped the everyday experiences of children in India, presenting diverse opportunities for education, communication, and personal development, while simultaneously generating profound concerns regarding their overall well-being. This research, titled “Cyber-Delinquency and Its Impact on Children’s Mental Health: Legal Challenges in India,” explores the complex psychological and sociological implications of growing internet dependency, exposure to online sexual content, and the excessive use of social networking platforms among young users. It brings attention to the increasing involvement of juveniles in cyber-related offenses and critically evaluates the shortcomings of current legal frameworks in effectively protecting children’s emotional, cognitive, and social health. Persistent immersion in digital environments often results in reduced physical activity and weakened face-to-face social bonds, which in turn contribute to emerging mental health concerns such as heightened anxiety, depressive symptoms, and attention-related difficulties. The study adopts a mixed-method design, incorporating both primary and secondary sources, and includes empirical insights derived from interactions with juveniles apprehended at the Lucknow Juvenile Observation Home.

The rise of a pervasive cyber-culture characterized by its own informal rules, behaviors, and social norms has had a notable impact on young individuals, frequently guiding them toward risky or harmful online practices. Unrestricted access to explicit digital content exposes children to cyber-pornography at a vulnerable age, potentially shaping distorted understandings of sexuality, intimacy, and interpersonal relationships. Such exposure may also undermine self-worth and contribute to emotional turbulence. Over time, addictive patterns of online engagement intensify these vulnerabilities, increasing the likelihood of psychological distress and maladaptive behaviors.

Ultimately, the research underscores the troubling escalation of juvenile cyber-delinquency, where the anonymity and perceived invisibility of the virtual world encourage minors to participate in unlawful digital acts, including hacking, harassment, and cyberbullying. By analyzing the root causes and mental health consequences associated with these behaviors, the study highlights the urgent necessity for more robust legal safeguards and policy reforms to effectively mitigate the growing challenges posed by cyber-delinquency in the Indian context. The intersection of cyber-culture, cyber-crime, and cyber-delinquency poses significant risks to children’s mental health, highlighting the pressing demand for legal protections and adherence to digital netiquettes in India.

**Keywords-** Cyber-culture, Cyber-crime, Cyber-Delinquency, Cyber pornography, Netiquettes

## INTRODUCTION

The advent of the Internet, and various social media technologies has brought about multi- dimensional transformations in our globalized world. This qualitative research article, drawing on both primary and secondary

data, investigates various facets of cyber society, including cyber-crimes, children's mental health, cyber-culture, and internet addiction, with a particular focus on children in the Lucknow region of Uttar Pradesh. In our interconnected global society, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is continuously evolving and is influenced by cultural phenomena shaped by these technologies. "ICT, as a tool for processing and transmitting information, impacts modern social structures and contributes to the development of a network society" (Castells, 1996). "Information Technology (IT), often synonymous with ICT, permeates all aspects of contemporary life" (Giddens, 2003). When ICT is combined with the internet, it termed as 'Cyber.' The term 'Cyber' is derived from 'Cybernetics,' the science of communication and control between machines and humans, first introduced by 'Norbert Wiener' in 1948. As ICT and the internet become integral to human society, they foster a unique culture and a new cyber world with its own behavioral patterns and norms, leading to the development of cyber culture. Culture, society, and development are deeply intertwined. Development is a complex societal process that encompasses socio-economic and cultural growth, technological progress, and social change. Culture, defined as the shared beliefs, patterns, and practices of a group or society, shapes this process by influencing societal values and norms. It can either promote or hinder development, depending on whether it encourages innovation and change or upholds irrational traditions. Society provides the context in which development occurs and culture is formed. Understanding the intricate relationship between development, culture, and society is crucial for creating policies that foster sustainable growth along with social and mental well-being in a fair and justified manner. The relationship between culture, technology, and human health is intricate and reciprocal. Culture influences the use and perception of technology, which creates deviance in behavior causing adverse impact to mental health. The social, mental and any other type of human well-being is directly associated with its society's culture.

Culture consists of both material and non-material aspects of human life. Cyber culture can be understood as, "a collection of cultures and cultural products enabled by the Internet, along with the narratives about these cultures and products." (Silver, 2004) According to Merriam-Webster, "cyber culture encompasses shared attitudes, practices, and goals related to computers and the Internet. It also involves the creation of art, literature, music, and other creative works using the Internet and multimedia tools." Cyber-culture is linked to the electronic generation of new ideas, behaviors, and technological innovations. It includes the social expectations, netiquettes, practices, behaviors, and languages of people active on the World Wide Web or any digital platform powered by the Internet. Donna J. Haraway in early 1990s viewed "cyber culture as a blend of nature and culture through the concept of the cyborg, a fusion of machine and living organism. She argues that "cyber culture challenges traditional views of feminism, identity, and politics by blurring the lines between human and animal, natural and artificial, and physical and non-physical." (Haraway, 2010) Howard Rheingold argued that, "cyber culture as the emerging global culture shaped by the convergence of computing, telecommunications, and media technologies." (Rheingold, 2000)

Children are most precious and valuable assets for any nation. This cyber-culture and internet addiction is making our children depress, distressed and isolated. The outdoor games like cricket, hockey, and football are now being played by children on smartphones and laptops. Smartphones and laptops not only effect the eye-sights but also negatively impacts the physical and mental health of children. With the rapid proliferation of Internet in Indian lifestyle causing severe harm to the tender lives of our children. Increasing prevalence of cyber-culture has significantly influenced the lives of children in India, creating a complex interplay of issues such as cyber delinquency, challenges to mental well-being, and excessive dependence on the internet causing internet addiction. These aspects are closely interconnected, highlighting the broad social and psychological effects of growing up in a technologically driven environment.

India, as a rapidly advancing nation with some of the most affordable internet access worldwide, faces unique challenges in safeguarding its younger population. The unrestricted availability of online content often exposes children to harmful material, peer pressure, and exploitative circumstances, which can foster cyber delinquency. Activities such as cyberbullying, hacking, or circulating inappropriate content frequently stem from limited awareness of their long-term consequences. The anonymity offered by digital platforms further diminishes accountability, encouraging risky behavior. In this environment, children often occupy dual roles both as victims and perpetrators leading to disrupted emotional development, heightened anxiety, and depression. The pervasive reach of cyber-culture, encompassing social media, online gaming, and constant digital connectivity, has reshaped the mental health landscape for Indian youth. While these platforms provide avenues for creativity,

learning, and self-expression, they simultaneously impose unrealistic expectations and amplify the fear of missing out (FOMO). This contributes to declining self-esteem, stress, and depressive tendencies. Extended screen time also interferes with sleep cycles and physical well-being, intensifying psychological strain. Internet dependency has emerged as a pressing concern, with many children struggling to balance online engagement with real-world responsibilities. Excessive immersion in gaming or social networking often isolates children from meaningful social interactions, increasing vulnerability to cyber threats and reinforcing a cycle of negative outcomes. The growing intersection of cyber-culture, cyber-crime, and delinquency highlights the urgent need for legal safeguards and ethical digital practices in India's online ecosystem. Addressing these challenges requires collective action. Families, educators, policymakers, and technology providers must collaborate to strengthen digital literacy, regulate screen exposure, and expand access to mental health resources. A holistic approach is essential to protect children's psychological well-being in an evolving digital age. This study examines the complex relationship between cyber-delinquency, children's mental health, and cybersecurity measures. Insights are drawn from field visits to the Juvenile Boys' Observation Home in Lucknow, alongside survey data collected from students, professionals, and stakeholders in academia and law. Additional statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau of India (NCRB) further contextualize the findings.

## METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Methodology and Research Design are fundamental elements of any research. They provide the blueprint for the pattern and pathways of research and ensures us that the study is reliable, valid, and can be justified. Methodology means the systematic approach used by researcher to conduct research. It includes the theoretical analysis of the methods and principles associated with a branch of knowledge to explain "what" is happening. It also involves selecting the appropriate methods for data collection and analysis. This work on "Cyber-Delinquency and Its Impact on Children's Mental Health: Legal Challenges in India", is a qualitative research article which is exploratory in nature. The primary data was sourced from Juvenile Boy's Observation Home Lucknow, where Juveniles were apprehended from 12-17 years of age group, through purposive sampling it has been selected. Further, primary data was also sourced from stake holders of academia and law via snowball sampling by using questionnaire forms. The study proceeded on her way with a comprehensive review of existing literature on cyber-culture, cyber-delinquency, children's mental health issues and internet addiction. A review of the literature and theoretical framework oriented this study towards a multi-faceted approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data. This exploratory work aims to figure out the intricate dynamics among cyber-culture, and cyber-delinquency and its impact on children's mental health particularly within the multidimensional context of the cyber-security laws in India (particularly in context of Lucknow).

### Theoretical Orientations

Children's mental health is not only guided through a singular aspect, there are multiple factors and phenomenon like socialization, socio-economic, cultural conditions, schooling, and pressure from friends-peer groups etc. But the most dynamic and emerging aspect is role of internet and cyber-culture. Now a days, people are equally conscious about their public physical life and their virtual-cyber life that is their social media profile and internet engagements. Especially when it comes to children, who are in stage of development are highly prone to be a victim of bad, abusive and adult content available on social media and internet. In order to understand and explore the aspects of children's mental well-being apart from traditional factors we have to look most prominent factors that are role of internet and cyber-culture and how law works as an open paradigm in this line.

Manuel Castells, in his prominent work, "The Rise of the Network Society" explored the socio- economic and technical dynamics of the informative internet age. He called the modern society an 'informative society'. He points outs that "we are transitioning from the industrial society into the information society. This shift is driven by the advent of new information technologies, particularly those for communication and biological technologies." While the society is capitalistic, the technological means by which it operates has shifted from the notion energy and money to information and data collection. The society which is now interconnected, he refers it as network society, here in this, information is central to determining economic productivity.

According to him, "power and authority now rests in networks and information. Some networks, such as that of financial capital like trade and commerce organizations, are global in scale" (Castells, 1996). The concept of

"netiquettes" emerged, shaping a unique internet culture and influencing e-business and the broader economy. The geo-political implications of the internet are central to Castells' analysis. While the internet has the power to liberate, it can also marginalize those without access or technological literacy and also harm to sections like children or those who are not enough mature to identify the wrong digital data. The digital divide, viewed from a global perspective, presents challenges to the network society. He analyzed how the internet has created new opportunities for criminal activities and facilitated the proliferation of cyber-crimes. He discusses how individuals can engage in illegal activities such as hacking, identity theft, and online fraud while concealing their true identities behind digital avatars/profiles or anonymous online identities. This anonymity complicates efforts to identify and prosecute cyber-criminals, as conventional methods of investigation and surveillance are not efficient in cyberspace. Furthermore, he also examined the role of social networks and online communities in facilitating these cybercrimes. Castells highlighted the need for "greater transparency, strong and firm cyber-security measures and accountability in data collection practices to protect individuals' privacy and lessen the risk of cyber-crimes." (Castells, 1998)

'India Social' by Ankit Lal takes a deep dive into India's biggest social media campaigns and analyses how platforms like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and WhatsApp have changed the way Indians engage with politics, popular culture and social revolution by bring new trends in Internet lives. He also shreds light on fake messages and news campaign via. Internet and social media platforms and raise the issues of lack of cyber norms in the nation for digital platforms and social media websites. (Lal, 2017). Cyber-delinquency is a form of cyber-crime that involves minors engaging in illegal or harmful online activities. Cyber-delinquents may commit various offenses, such as hacking, phishing, cyberbullying, sexting, or accessing or distributing unlawful content, etc. Cyber-delinquency poses serious challenges for the legal, educational, and social systems. It is a contemporary sociological concern, arises from online deviant behavior which can harm the generations in a drastic manner. It reflects the intersection of technology, societal norms and deviance, demanding a nuanced understanding for effective prevention and regulation in the digital age of cyber culture

"Excessive use of internet causes anxiety and depression among children as social media applications where they upload their pictures and other stuffs many times the negative comments or the response what was expected when doesn't come, it makes children to think about that which impacts their mental well-being" (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). "Social media's role in shaping self-esteem, particularly in adolescents is a serious concern", as internet is becoming a new medium of socialization and learning, it develops stubbornness and arrogance among children, as here on social media children/youth can use fake identity which makes them

anonymous (Gupta, 2020). Covid pandemic brought education on smartphones/laptops. "The shift to online education has affected students' stress levels and simultaneously created a difficult situation for parents to make their children away from internet" (Patel & Desai, 2022). Internet addiction also raised the concern of "overuse of online gaming which is creating aggressive tendencies among children." (Sen & Joshi, 2019)

### **Cyber Delinquency and Children's Mental Health**

Cyber delinquency including cyberbullying, hacking, cyber-pornography, and online harassment has profound consequences for children's mental health, shaping their emotional well-being and social behavior. This interconnectedness highlights how cyber spaces influence developmental processes, often amplifying existing vulnerabilities in children's cognitive and emotional growth. Cyber-delinquency emerges as a product of social structures, technological advancements, and evolving digital norms. The increasing engagement of children in online spaces provides anonymity and detachment, reducing accountability for harmful actions. Social learning theory suggests that children may mimic online behaviors modelled by peers or influential media figures. Additionally, family dynamics play a crucial role, lack of parental supervision or inadequate digital literacy can expose children to harmful interactions. In communities where peer validation and online hierarchies shape social interactions, cyber-delinquency thrives, leading to social exclusion, withdrawal, and deteriorating self-esteem among victims. These challenges further affect children's ability to integrate into offline environments, reinforcing isolation. Further, cyber-delinquency significantly impacts cognitive and emotional development, triggering stress, anxiety, and depression. Victims of cyberbullying frequently exhibit trauma-related symptoms, including fear, social anxiety, and diminished self-worth. Perpetrators, on the other hand, may experience impulse control issues, empathy deficits, or antisocial tendencies, contributing to the cycle of delinquency.

Continuous engagement in harmful digital interactions increases emotional exhaustion, deepening negative self-perceptions and encouraging maladaptive coping mechanisms. Prolonged exposure to cyber delinquency has been shown to affect neural pathways related to stress response, escalating emotional distress and behavioral instability in affected children.

### Juvenile Observation Home: Analysis of Delinquency

During our field visits in May 2024 to the Juvenile Boys’ Observation Home, officially known as “Rajkiya Bal Samprekshan Grah” located on Mohaan Road, Buddheshwar, Lucknow, a total of 96 juveniles were housed at the facility. Among them, the majority 62.5% (60 boys) were aged 16 years. A significant proportion, 74% (71 boys), came from nuclear families, residing only with parents and siblings. Caste-wise distribution revealed that 59.3% (57 juveniles) belonged to Scheduled Castes, 13.5% (13) were from Other Backward Classes, 11.5% (11) represented the General category, and 15.6% (15) were from minority Muslim families. In terms of offences, 16.7% (16 juveniles) were apprehended for petty crimes, 38.5% (37) for serious offences, and 44.8% (43) for heinous crimes. Digital exposure was nearly universal. Out of 96 juveniles, 94 (97.9%) were familiar with smartphones and the internet. All were adept at using mobile devices and actively engaged on social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, and various short-video applications. Specifically, 26% (25 boys) were highly active on Instagram, 25% (24 boys) preferred YouTube, while 17.7% (17 boys) used multiple platforms simultaneously. Ownership of smartphones was also notable: 59.4% (57 juveniles) possessed personal devices before apprehension, while 40.6% (39) relied on phones belonging to parents or siblings. Exposure to adult content was widespread, with 82.3% (79 juveniles) admitting to having watched pornographic videos, leaving only 17.7% (17 boys) who had not. Despite being at an age meant for education and constructive socialization, many had already fallen into the influence of pornography and explicit material. Except for two boys, nearly all 97.9% (94 juveniles) were actively engaged on social media platforms, underscoring the deep penetration of digital culture in their daily lives.

Age  
96 responses

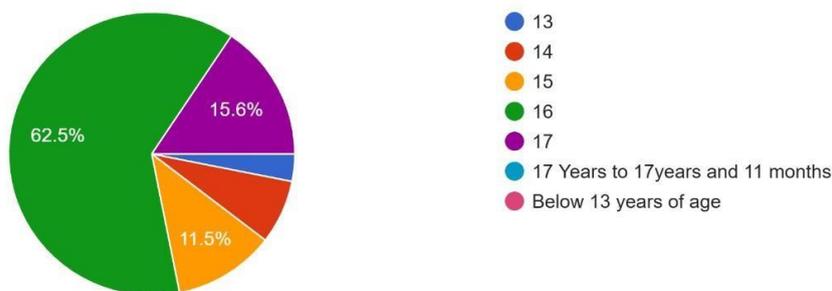


Fig. 1 The above pie-chart shows juvenile of different age groups apprehended at Boy’s Observation Home

Family type  
96 responses

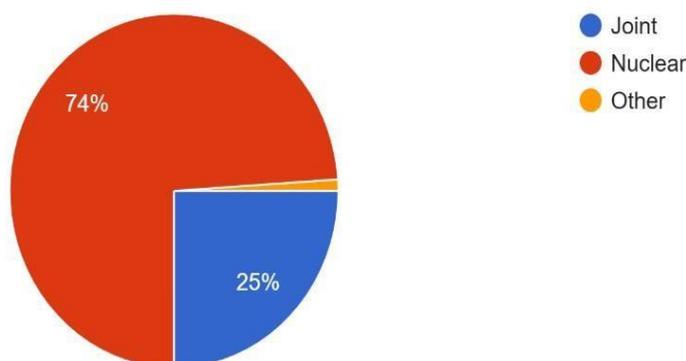


Fig. 2 The above pie chart shows family type of juveniles apprehended at Boy’s Observation Home

### Count of Caste Group of Juveniles

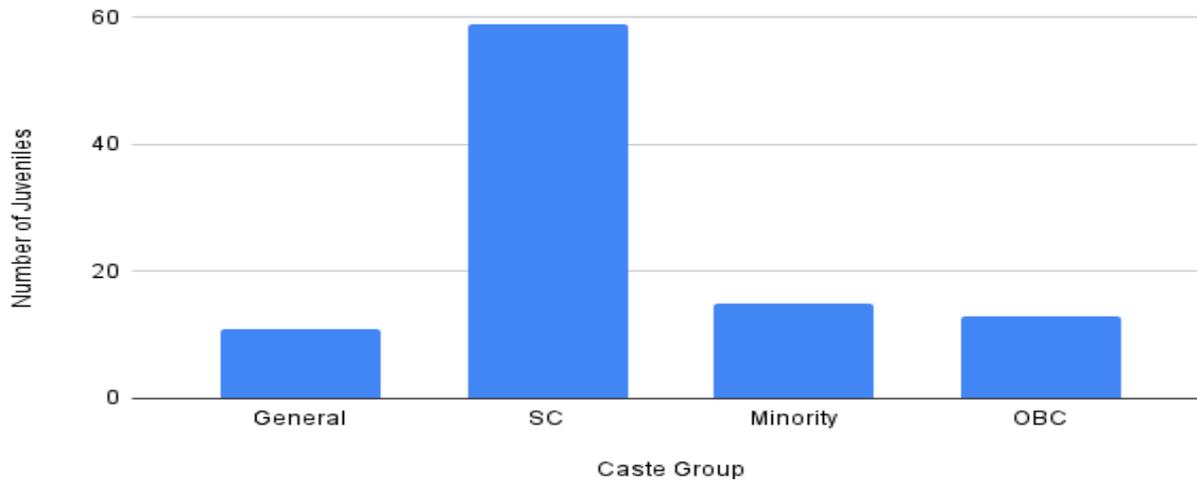


Fig. 3 The above graph shows caste dynamics of juveniles apprehended at Boy’s Observation Home

### Nature of Offence

96 responses

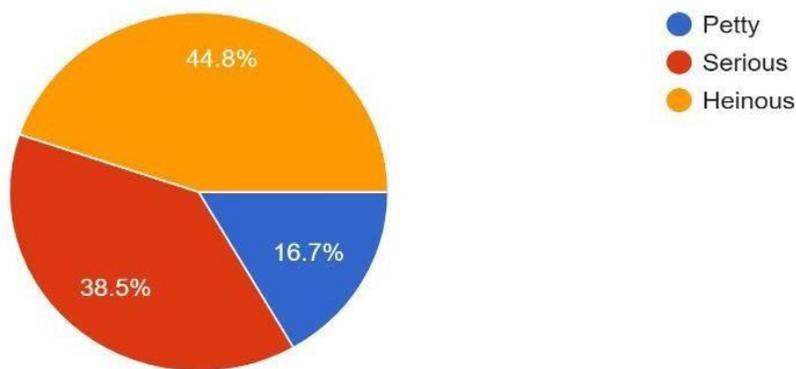


Fig. 4 The above pie chart showed the nature of offence committed by juveniles apprehended at Boy’s Observation Home

### Are you aware about use of smartphones and internet ?

96 responses

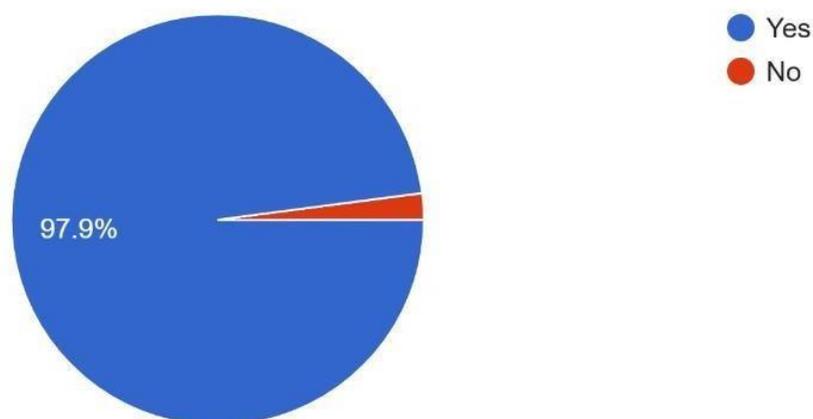


Fig. 5 The above pie chart shows the awareness about use of smartphones and internet among juveniles apprehended at Boy’s Observation Home

Do you were having your own smartphone ?

96 responses

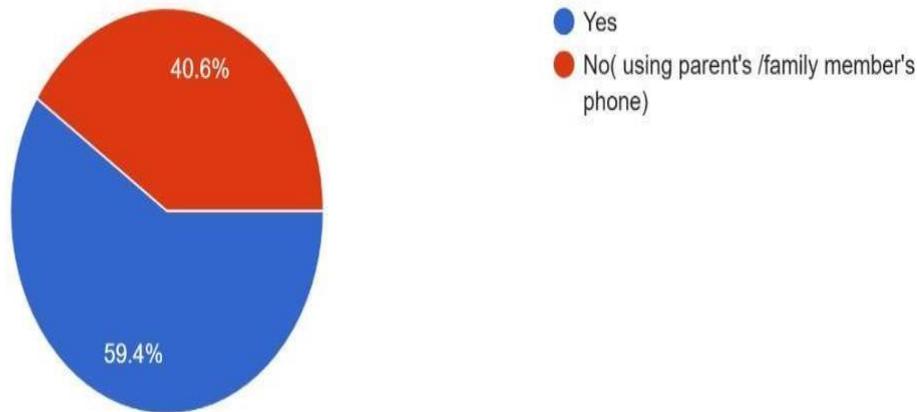


Fig. 6 The above pie chart shows count of juveniles having their own smartphones

Do you use, social media applications ?

96 responses

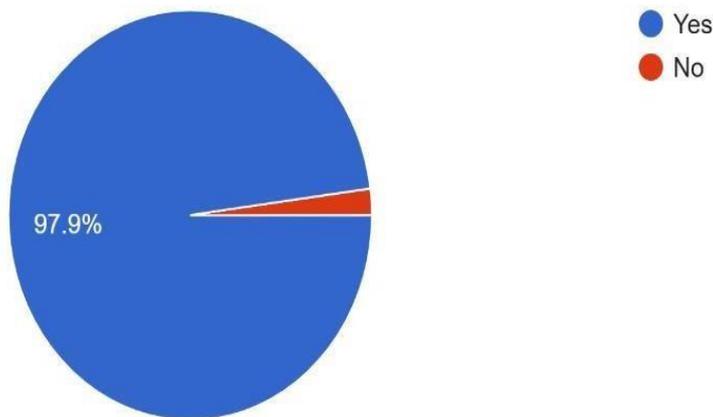


Fig. 7 The above pie-chart shows the count of juveniles who were active on social media applications

Which social media application you prefer most and highly active on it?

96 responses

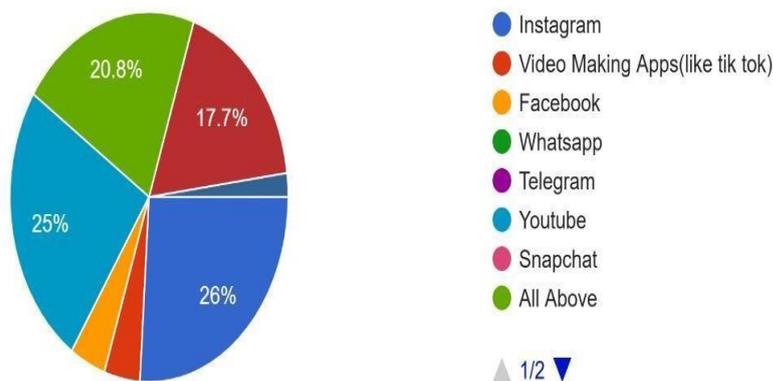


Fig. 8 The above pie chart depicts various social media platforms being used by among juveniles apprehended at Boy's Observation Home

## Have you seen adult/porn movie/scenes/content ?

96 responses

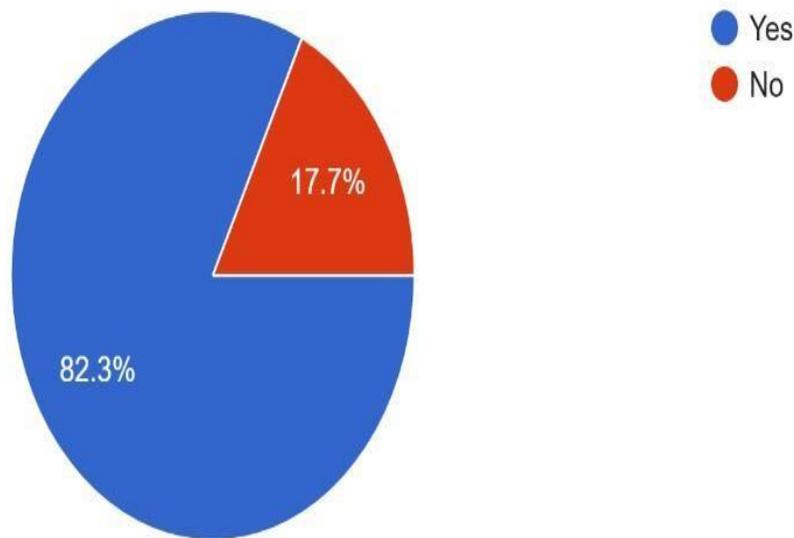


Fig. 9 The above pie chart shows number count of juveniles who had seen porn/adult content on internet

Apart, this the juveniles who were apprehended under serious and heinous offences, were charged for IPC 376 and NDPS act used smartphones in committing the offences. In this line the online gaming is also responsible for making children both victim as well as culprit of cyber- offences. Earlier due to increase adverse effect of internet gaming government of India has to ban "Blue Whale Game Suicide Challenge" and "PUBG" games which made many children victims as well as culprit of cyber- gamextortion are also the reflections that how due to lack of cyber-security and inefficient monitoring of internet world is destroying the tender lives of our children. It's a serious concern that more than 82% of juveniles have already seen the porn content are fully aware about social media applications. The cyber age has brought unprecedented access to information and connectivity, but it has also introduced challenges that significantly affect children's mental health. Internet addiction, exposure to pornography, and excessive use of social media are among the most pressing concerns. Internet addiction manifests as compulsive online behavior, where children struggle to regulate their screen time. This addiction disrupts daily routines, leading to sleep deprivation, academic decline, and social isolation. The constant need for digital engagement can heighten stress levels and contribute to anxiety and depression. Over time, children may develop a dependency on virtual interactions, undermining their ability to form meaningful offline relationships. Unregulated access to online content exposes children to inappropriate material, including pornography. Early exposure can distort perceptions of relationships, intimacy, and self-image. It may lead to confusion, guilt, or shame, affecting emotional development. It can normalize unhealthy behaviors and attitudes, perpetuating cycles of exploitation and objectification. The long-term impact includes difficulties in forming healthy relationships and increased vulnerability to risky behaviors. Social media platforms are designed to captivate users, often leading to excessive use among children. The constant comparison to curated online personas can erode self-esteem and foster feelings of inadequacy. Cyberbullying, a prevalent issue on social media, exacerbates emotional distress, leading to anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. Additionally, the dopamine-driven feedback loop of likes and comments reinforces addictive behavior, making it difficult for children to disengage. Not only depression but it is also a responsible factor for mental illness and suicidal tendencies among children. To gain insights into society's perceptions, a diverse group of stakeholders including members of the judiciary, advocates, police officers, law professors, students, and cyber experts were surveyed through a structured Google Forms questionnaire. The objective was to explore the foundations of cyber-culture and juvenile delinquency within the framework of juvenile laws. A total of 97 respondents participated by completing the questionnaire.

### Count of Age of Stake Holders

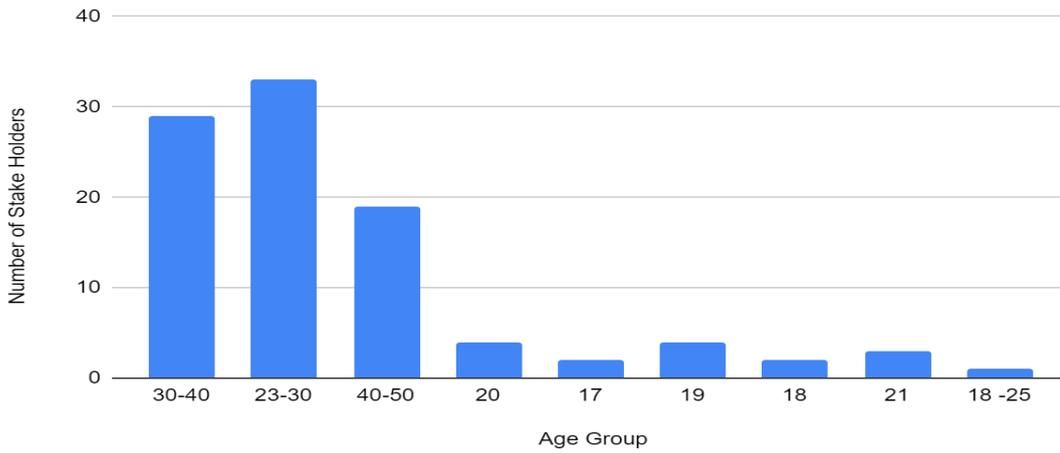


Fig. 10 The above graph shows the age group of stake holders

### Count of Caste of Stake Holders

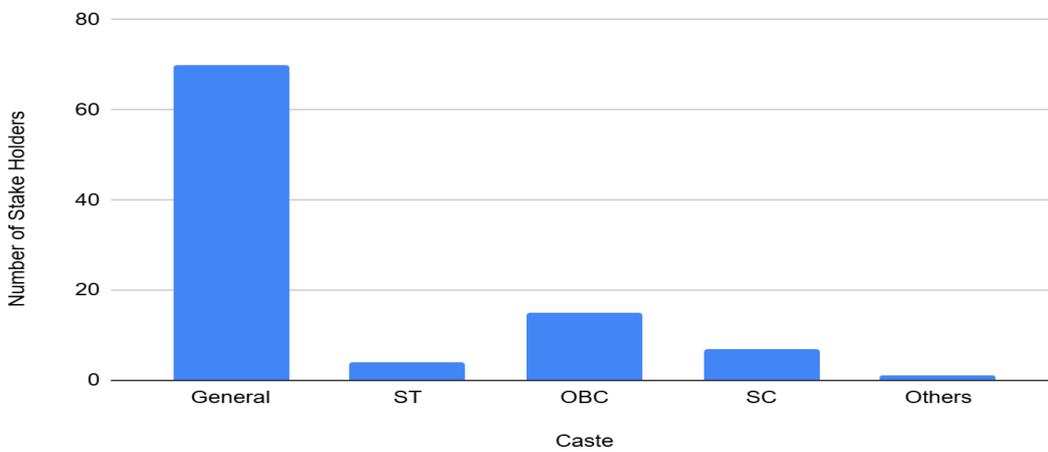


Fig. 11 The above graph shows the caste category of stake holders

Out of 97, respondents, 70(72.2%) of stake holders belongs to general category while 15(15.5%) belongs to OBC category and 7(7.2%) were from SC category.

### Count of Profession of Stake Holders

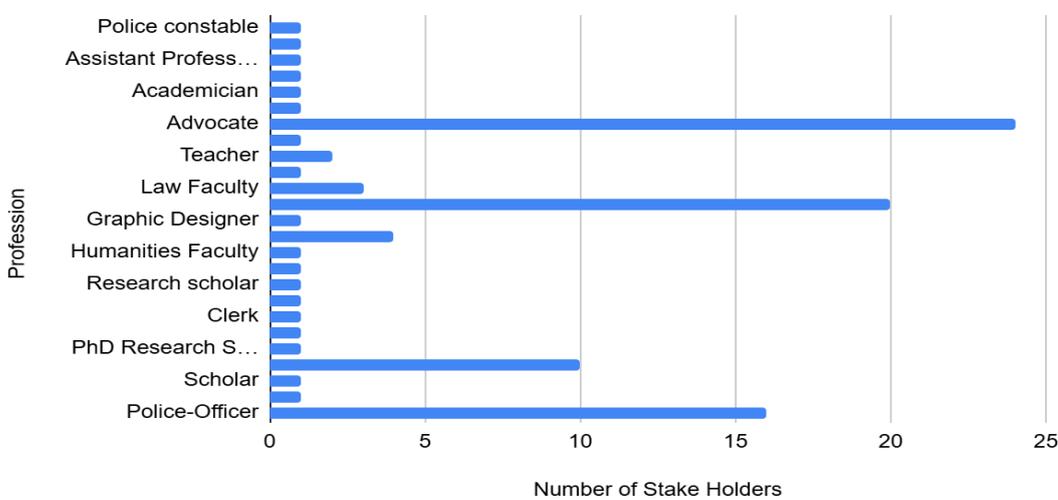


Fig. 12 The above graph is showing the profession of stake holders

Out of 97 respondents, 24(24.7%) were advocates, further 20(20.6%) were law students and 16(16.5%) were police officers, further it also includes professors, cyber professionals and one former magistrate of Juvenile

Court and one magistrate.

Count of Stake Holder's awareness about Cyber-crimes

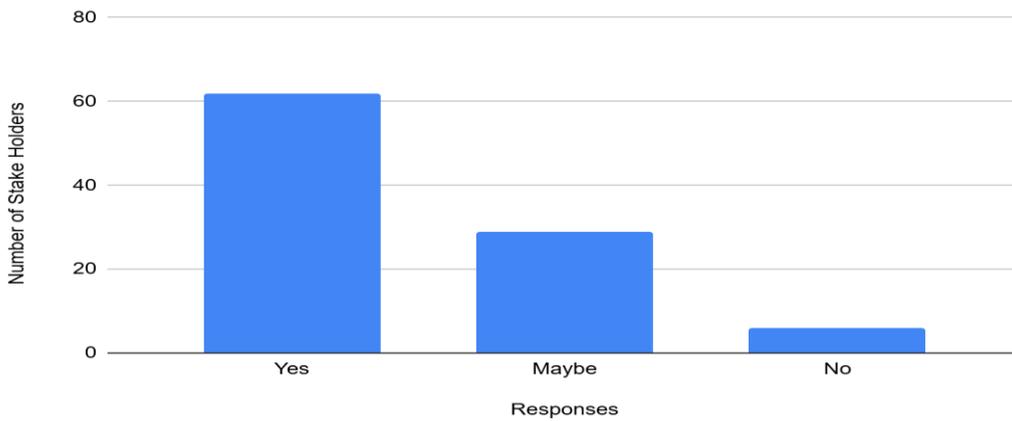


Fig. 13 The above graph represents the stake holder’s awareness about cyber-crimes

Out of 97 stake holders, 62(63.9%) respondents said that they are fully aware about cyber- crimes while 29(29.9%) respondents said that they are not fully aware about cyber-crimes.

Count of stake holders who were victim of cyber-crimes

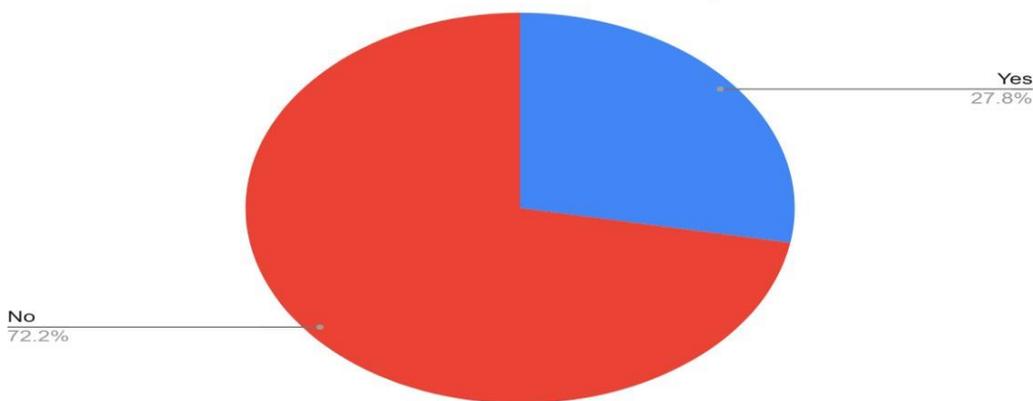


Fig. 14 The above representation shows the percentage of stake holders who were ever be the victim of cyber crimes

Out of 97 stakeholders, 27 (27.8%) respondents said that they were victims of cyber-crimes.

Count of stake holders who encountered juveniles committing cyber offences

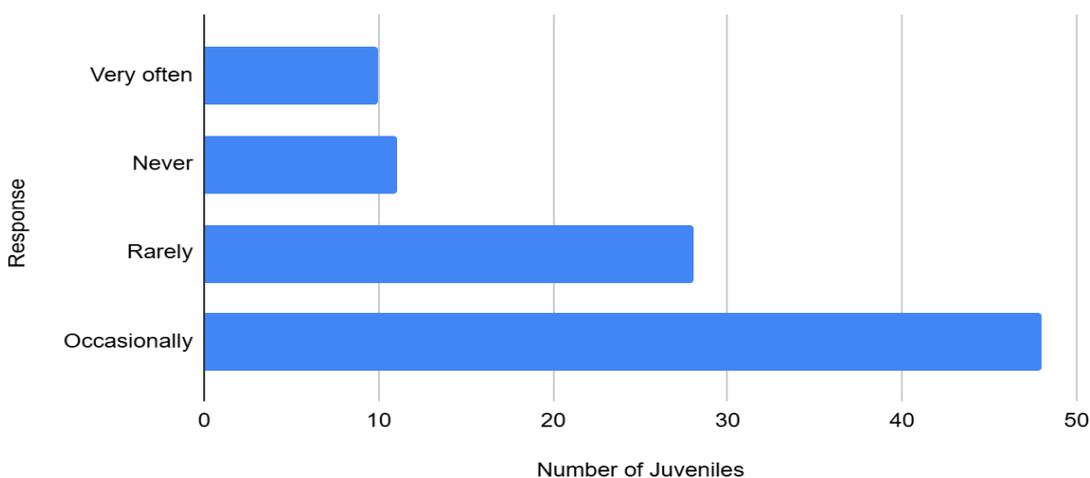


Fig. 15 The above chart shows the response of stake holders for cyber-crimes committed by Juveniles

Out of 97 stake holders, 48(49.5%) said that they encountered the juveniles involved in cyber-crimes occasionally while 28(28.9%) respondents said that they encountered it rarely further, 10(10.3%) respondents said that they encountered it very often.

### Count of stake holder's opinion, regarding most common type of cyber-crimes committed by juveniles.

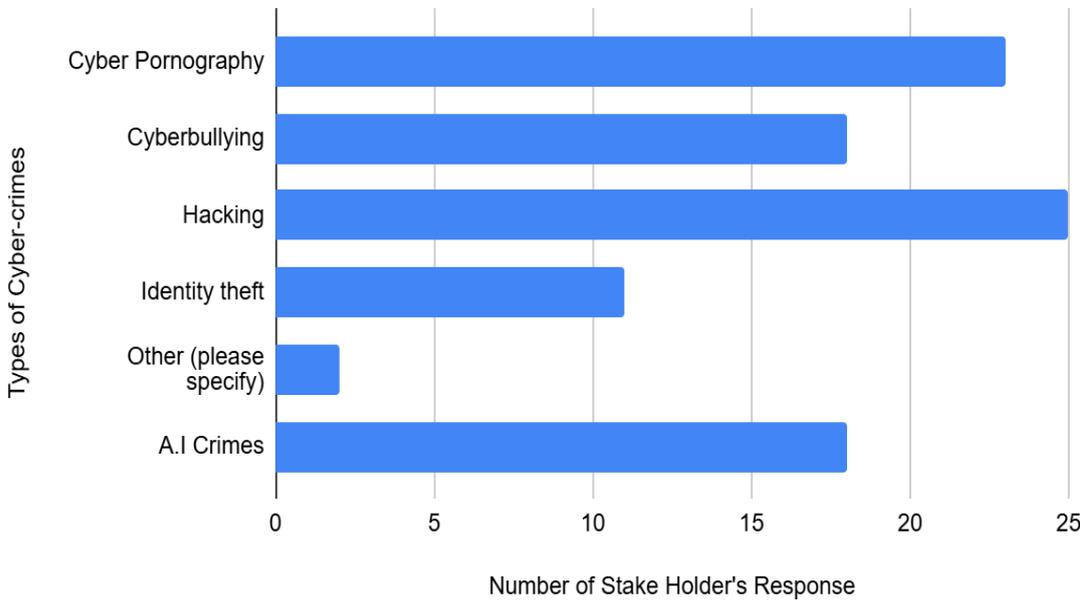


Fig. 16 The above graph represents the types of cyber-crimes committed by juveniles

Among 97 stake holders, 25(25.8%) respondents opined that juvenile mostly engaged in hacking of social media accounts, then 23(23.7%) respondents opined that mostly juveniles engaged in cyber-pornography and 18(18.6%) stake holders said that mostly juveniles engaged in cyber-bullying.

### Count of Stake Holders believe that the current legal framework is sufficient to address juvenile cyber-crime

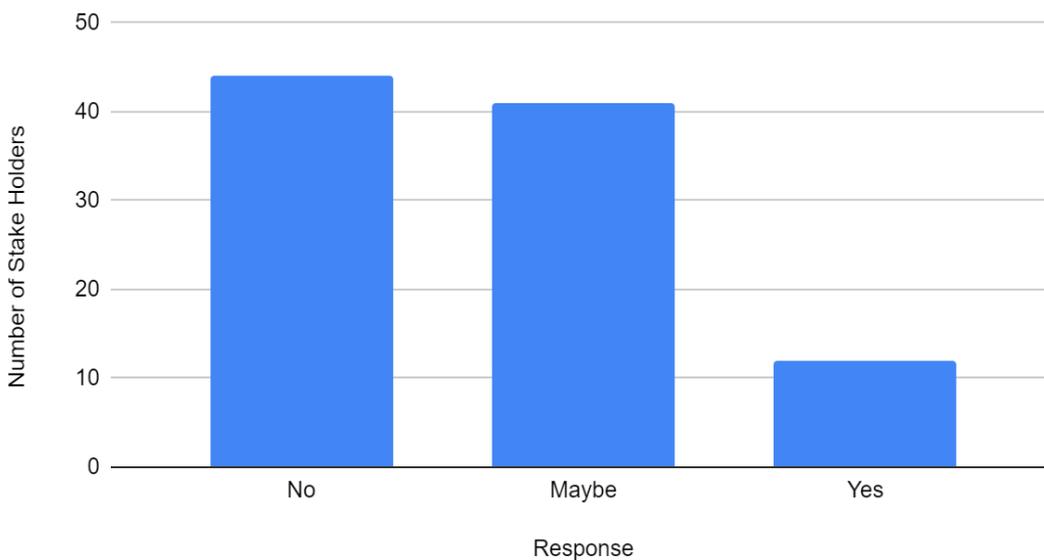


Fig. 17 The above graph is showing stake holders response regarding their opinion for current legal system for juveniles committing cyber-crimes

Out of 97 stake holders, 44(45.4%) stake holders opined that current legal framework is not enough sufficient to tackle the juvenile cyber delinquency while 41(42.3%) respondents were not sure as they said sometimes system acts in effective manner but many times it doesn't.

### Count of Stake Holders viewpoint regarding cause of cyber delinquency among juveniles

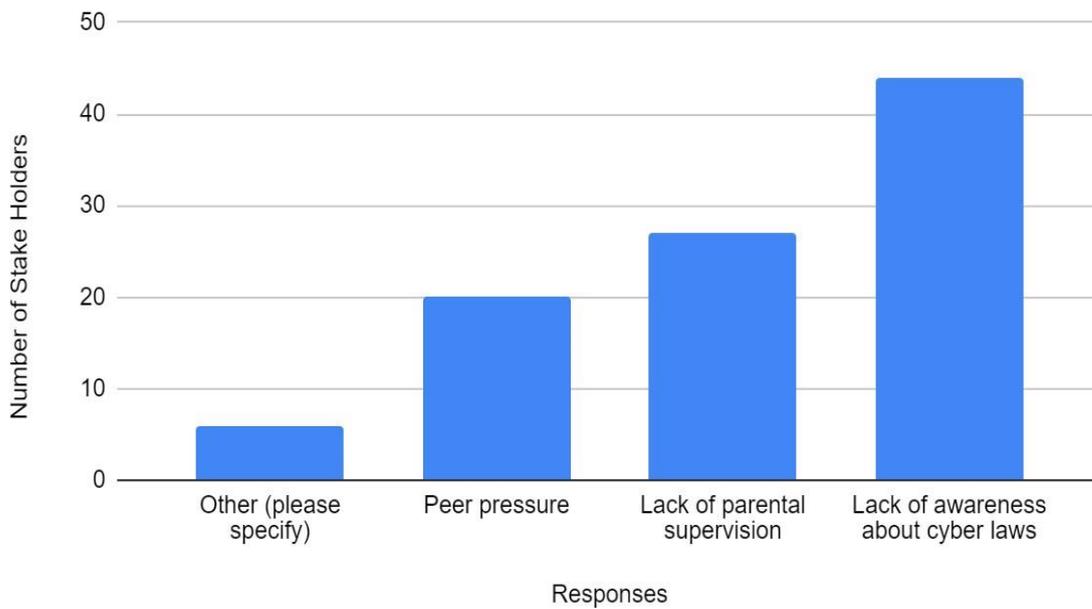


Fig. 18 The above graph shows the response of stake holders regarding cause of Juvenile cyber delinquency

Out of 97 stake holders, 44 (45.4%) respondents believe that due to lack of awareness about cyber laws is one of the main causes behind juvenile cyber delinquency, however, 27 (27.8%) respondents believe that due to lack of parental supervision it is happening.

However, 20 (20.6%) said due to peer pressure of performance and in order to prove themselves that they are better and more active sometimes juveniles commit these offences.

### Do you think that cybercrime laws should be lenient for juveniles?

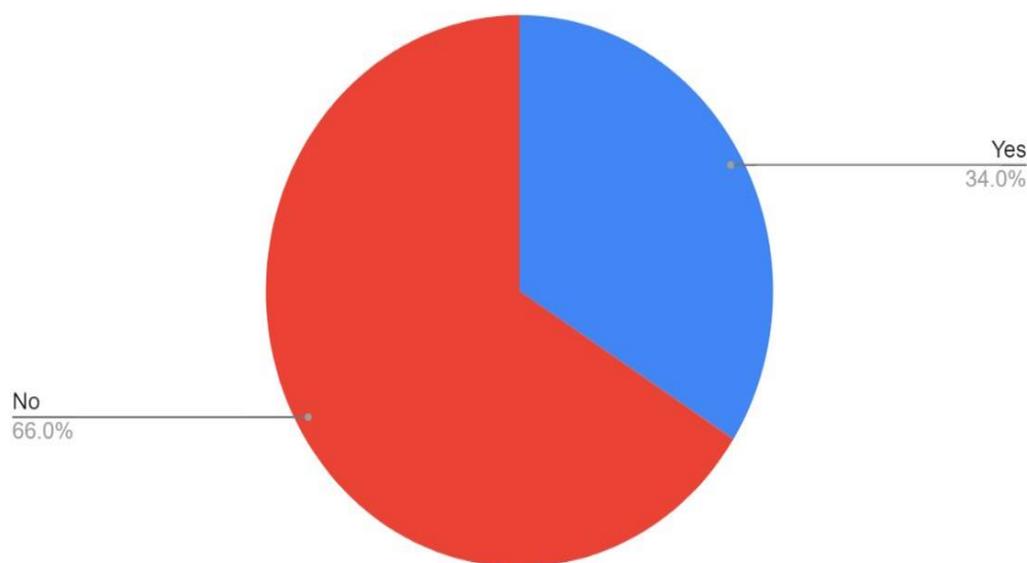


Fig. 19 The above chart shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding leniency in cyber-crime laws for juveniles.

Out of 97 respondents, 64 (66%) stake holders believe that cyber-crime laws for juveniles shouldn't be lenient for juveniles, as it may lead to more offences.

How effective do you think, are rehabilitation programs for juvenile cyber offenders?

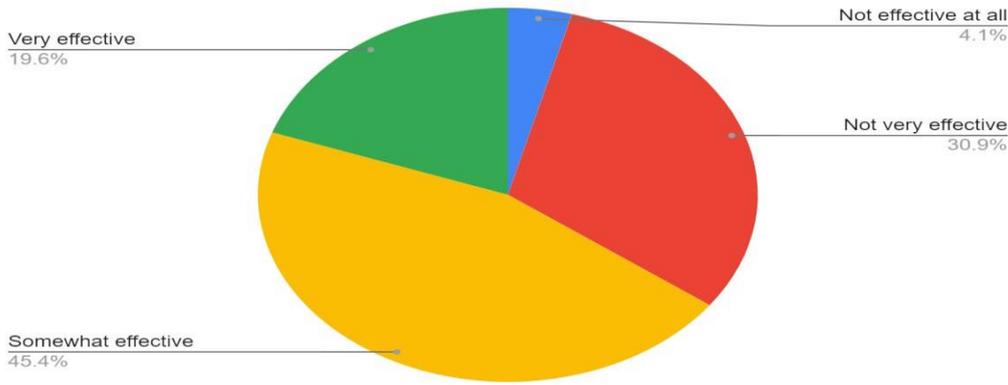


Fig. 20 The above graph shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding rehabilitation programs for Juveniles

Out of 97 stake holders, 44(45.4%) respondents believes that rehabilitation programs for juveniles are effective and can bring change up to a small level, while 30(30.9%) respondents believes that they are not effective at any level.

Do you believe that schools can play a significant role in educating students about cyber-crimes

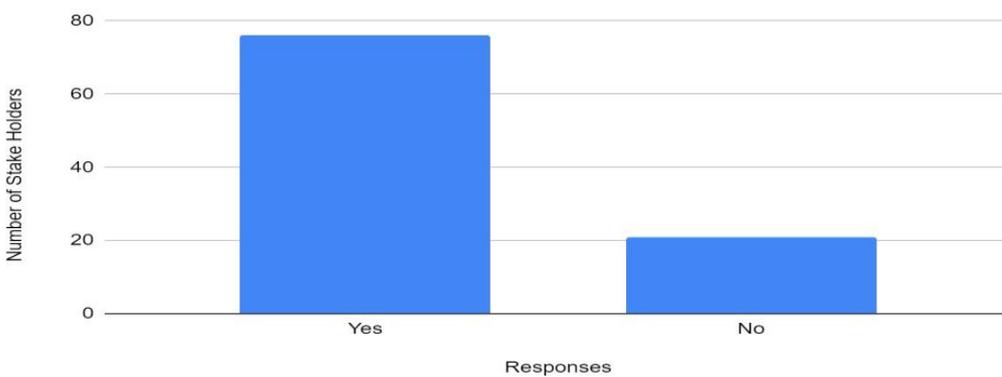


Fig. 21 The above graph shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding role of schools in educating children about cyber-crimes and cyber laws

Out of 97 respondents, 76(78.4%) respondents believes that schools can play a vital role in educating children about cyber laws and can play a crucial role in restraining the delinquency among children.

Do you believe that, juveniles understands/knows the seriousness of their cyber offenses

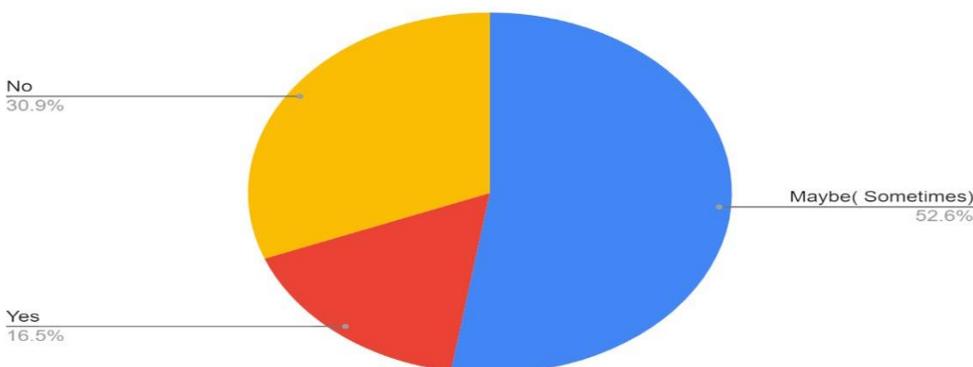


Fig. 22 The above graph shows the stake holders response regarding awareness among juveniles for the offences they are committing

Out of 97 stake holders, 30(30.9%) respondents believes that juveniles were not aware about seriousness, and impact of delinquency which they are committing, however 51 (52.6%) stake holders opined that sometimes

they are aware about the delinquency and its impact which they are committing but they were not aware fully.

Do you think that the rise of social media has contributed to an increase in juvenile cyber-crimes

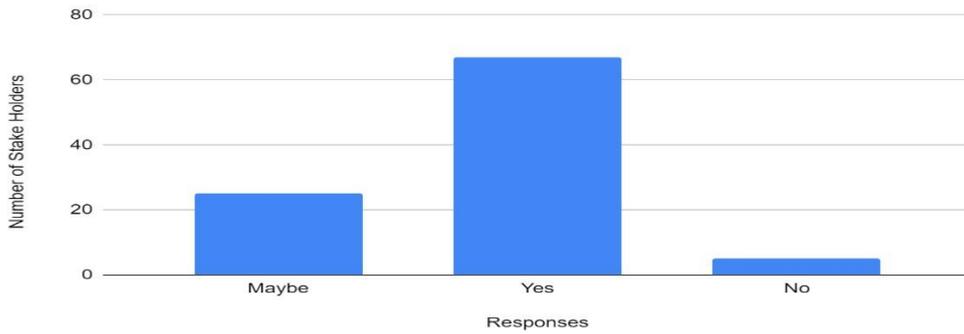


Fig. 23 The above graph shows the opinion of stake holders regarding role of social media in increase in juvenile cyber-crimes.

Out of 97 stake holders, 67(69.1%) respondents opined that due to rise in number of social media applications there is increase in cyber-crimes committed by juveniles, however, 25(25.8%) said that it may be or sometimes it causes rises in cyber-crimes committed by juveniles.

Do you think children/teenagers who are going to schools can commit more cyber offences

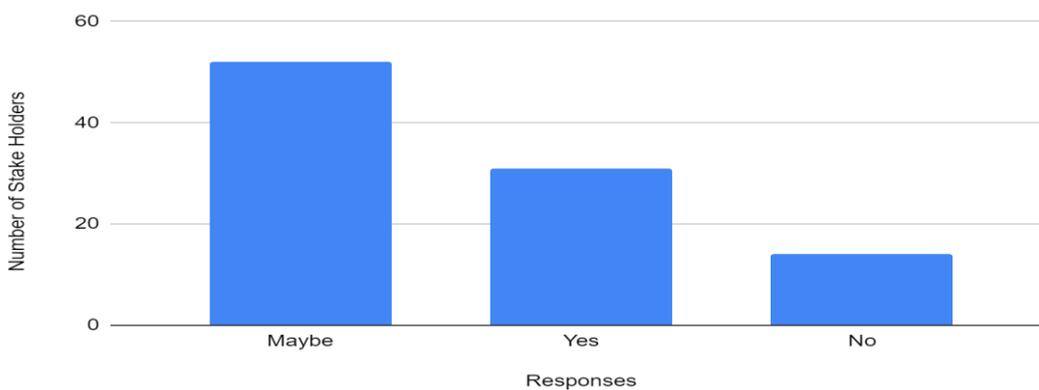


Fig. 24 The above graph shows the stake holders view point regarding cyber offences committed by school going children

Out of 97 stake holders 31(32%) respondents opined that school going children commits more offences, while 52(53.6%) stake holders opined that may be sometimes school going children commits more offences than other children.

What you have seen/observed, that children/teenagers of which group commits more cyber offences

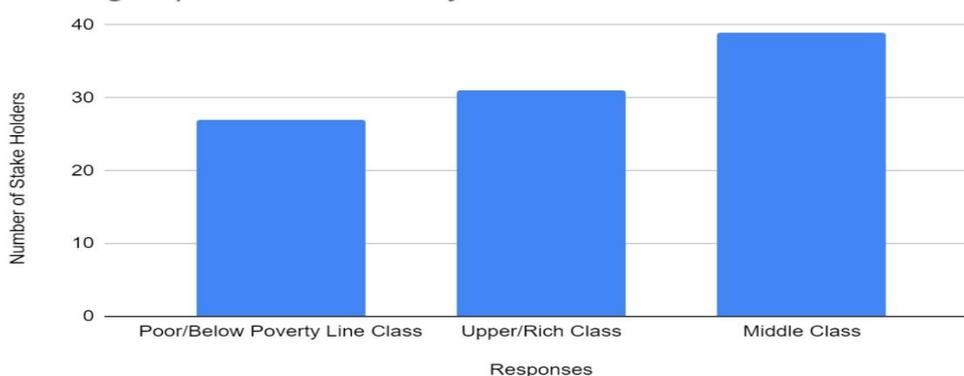


Fig. 25 The above graph shows the responses from stake holders regarding financial group of juveniles who commits cyber offences

Out of 97 stake holders, 39(40.2%) respondents opined that mostly middle-class children commit more cyber offences, however, 31(32%) respondents believes that children belonging to rich class or upper income group commits more cyber offences whereas 27(27.8%) respondents opined that mostly poor class children commit cyber offences. Strong surveillance and strict internet security protocols must be there in order to curtail the cyber-offences and to provide a clean and safe environment to our children and youth. Cyber-security is an urgent need of hour, as in nation like India, where internet is not only a source of communication, but also used for knowledge sharing, data transmission, data storage, entertainment and also a platform for generating income via multiple businesses. Since, Covid-19 human activities are changed significantly especially in education and corporate sectors. Nowadays smartphones and internet are becoming an integral part of school and university education, where many children are highly prone to be a victim as well as culprit of cyber offences. Data from NCRB shared in Rajya Sabha on dated 24-11-2024 shows a significant high rise in cyber-crimes in India.

ANNEXURE-I  
RS USQ. NO. 234 FOR 27.11.2024

STATE/UT-WISE CASES REGISTERED UNDER CYBER CRIMES DURING 2018-2022

SL	State/UT	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
1	Andhra Pradesh	1207	1886	1899	1875	2341
2	Arunachal Pradesh	7	8	30	47	14
3	Assam	2022	2231	3530	4846	1733
4	Bihar	374	1050	1512	1413	1621
5	Chhattisgarh	139	175	297	352	439
6	Goa	29	15	40	36	90
7	Gujarat	702	784	1283	1536	1417
8	Haryana	418	564	656	622	681
9	Himachal Pradesh	69	76	98	70	77
10	Jharkhand	930	1095	1204	953	967
11	Karnataka	5839	12020	10741	8136	12556
12	Kerala	340	307	426	626	773
13	Madhya Pradesh	740	602	699	589	826
14	Maharashtra	3511	4967	5496	5562	8249
15	Manipur	29	4	79	67	18
16	Meghalaya	74	89	142	107	75
17	Mizoram	6	8	13	30	1
18	Nagaland	2	2	8	8	4
19	Odisha	843	1485	1931	2037	1983
20	Punjab	239	243	378	551	697
21	Rajasthan	1104	1762	1354	1504	1833
22	Sikkim	1	2	0	0	26
23	Tamil Nadu	295	385	782	1076	2082
24	Telangana	1205	2691	5024	10303	15297
25	Tripura	20	20	34	24	30
26	Uttar Pradesh	6280	11416	11097	8829	10117
27	Uttarakhand	171	100	243	718	559
28	West Bengal	335	524	712	513	401
	<b>TOTAL STATE(S)</b>	<b>26931</b>	<b>44511</b>	<b>49708</b>	<b>52430</b>	<b>64907</b>
29	A&N Islands	7	2	5	8	28
30	Chandigarh	30	23	17	15	27
31	D&N Haveli and Daman & Diu+		3	3	5	5
32	Delhi	189	115	168	356	685
33	Jammu & Kashmir *	73	73	120	154	173
34	Ladakh	-	-	1	5	3
35	Lakshadweep	4	4	3	1	1
36	Puducherry	14	4	10	0	64
	<b>TOTAL UT(S)</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>544</b>	<b>986</b>
	<b>TOTAL (ALL INDIA)</b>	<b>27248</b>	<b>44735</b>	<b>50035</b>	<b>52974</b>	<b>65893</b>

Source: Crime in India

Note : '+' Combined data of erstwhile D&N Haveli UT and Daman & Diu UT for 2018, 2019

\*Data of erstwhile Jammu & Kashmir State including Ladakh for 2018, 2019

\*\*\*\*\*

## CONCLUSION

India has made significant strides in addressing cyber-crimes against children, yet legal shortcomings persist in ensuring their complete safety from cyber pornography and cyber exploitation. The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Information Technology (IT) Act, JJ Act 2021(amended) aims to curb online child abuse, but enforcement challenges and loopholes remain. They must sync together in a coherent manner so the dignity and rehabilitation of child must be ensured strictly. One of the major issues is the lack of stringent monitoring mechanisms for digital platforms. While India mandates social media intermediaries to

track the origin of explicit content, enforcement is inconsistent. Additionally, the legal framework does not adequately address evolving cyber threats, such as AI-generated child exploitation material. Another concern is the criminalization of passive consumption of child pornography. The Supreme Court has ruled that even viewing such content without storing or distributing it is punishable. However, automatic downloads of illicit material pose a risk to innocent users, highlighting the need for clearer legal safeguards. Furthermore, cyber-crime units lack adequate resources to track offenders efficiently.

Strengthening digital forensic capabilities and international cooperation is crucial to combat cross-border cyber-crimes. To ensure children's safety, we must update its cyber laws, enhance enforcement mechanisms, and invest in digital literacy programs to protect vulnerable users from online exploitation. The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed childhood experiences in India, providing unparalleled access to education, communication, and entertainment. However, alongside these benefits, significant mental health concerns have emerged. Internet addiction, exposure to inappropriate online content such as pornography, and inadequate cybersecurity measures pose serious threats to children's psychological well-being, leading to anxiety, depression, social isolation, and distorted perceptions of relationships. Without effective intervention, these challenges will continue to hinder children's cognitive and emotional growth.

Excessive internet usage among children has become a growing issue, particularly with prolonged engagement in social media, gaming, and browsing. Unregulated screen time disrupts sleep patterns, impairs academic performance, and weakens interpersonal relationships. Many children experiencing internet addiction struggle with heightened stress levels and difficulty engaging in offline interactions. The addictive nature of digital platforms fuels a cycle of compulsive online behavior, making disengagement increasingly challenging. A lack of parental oversight and structured digital regulations further exacerbates dependence on virtual interactions, deepening the negative effects on mental health.

Another serious concern is children's exposure to explicit content online, particularly pornography, which remains widely accessible due to ineffective digital safeguards. Early exposure can lead to confusion, anxiety, and emotional distress, altering perceptions of relationships and intimacy. On a broader level, such content reinforces harmful stereotypes and unhealthy behaviors, influencing children's social understanding. Research indicates that early exposure can contribute to riskier behaviors and difficulty in forming secure relationships later in life. Despite these concerns, India lacks comprehensive parental control systems and widespread awareness programs to prevent children from accessing such material. Adding to these risks is India's insufficient legal framework for cybersecurity for children's internet activity monitoring. Many young internet users experience harassment online without adequate legal protections, exacerbating mental health challenges. Furthermore, the absence of nationwide digital literacy initiatives limits children's ability to safely navigate the online world. Strengthening regulations, increasing parental involvement, and launching awareness campaigns are necessary steps to create a safer digital space for children. Addressing these urgent concerns requires a collective effort involving policymakers, educators, parents, and mental health professionals. Implementing comprehensive cybersecurity laws, enforcing digital safety protocols, and prioritizing child-focused mental health programs are essential. Integrating digital literacy education into school curricula can empower children to use technology responsibly and safeguard their well-being. Without proactive measures, the unchecked effects of internet addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and weak cybersecurity will continue to threaten children's mental health, creating long-term consequences for their development and overall well-being. Addressing these issues require a multi-faceted approach, including parental guidance, digital literacy education, and mental health support. By fostering awareness and promoting responsible internet use, society can mitigate the adverse effects of the digital world on children's mental health.

## REFERENCES

1. Castells, M. (1996). *The Rise of the Network Society*. John Wiley & Sons
2. Castells, M. (1998). *End of Millennium (Vol. 10)*. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons. New York
3. Giddens, A. (2003). *Runaway world: How globalization is reshaping our lives*. Taylor & Francis
4. Gupta, S. (2020). Social media exposure and self-esteem in Indian teenagers. *Cyberpsychology Journal*, 45(1), 101-115
5. Haraway, D. (2010). *A Cyborg Manifesto [1985]*. *Cultural theory: An Anthology*, 454

6. Lal, A. (2017). *India social: How Social Media is Leading the Charge and Changing the Country*. Hachette U.K.
7. Patel, V., & Desai, M. (2022). E-learning and cognitive stress among Indian students. *Educational Psychology Review*, 50(3), 230-245
8. Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community, revised edition: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. MIT press
9. Sen, B., & Joshi, A. (2019). Video gaming and aggression among Indian adolescents. *Behavioral Studies*, 27(3), 85-110
10. Sharma, R., & Kumar, P. (2021). Internet addiction and mental health challenges in Indian adolescents. *Journal of Child Psychology*, 34(2), 78-92
11. Silver, D. (2004). Internet/cyberculture/digital culture/new media/fill-in-the-blank studies. *New media & society*, 6(1), 55-64