


# Chapter 11


## Safeguarding Children's Rights in the Digital Age: A Critical Analysis of India's Cyber Laws

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This chapter critically examines the legal framework governing child safety in India's digital landscape. It analyzes the IT Act, 2000, POCSO Act, 2012 and the DPDP Act, 2023, highlighting their relevance in combating cyber threats faced by children. It also discusses implementation gaps, lack of digital literacy and enforcement issues. Further, drawing insights from global practices. Thereafter, chapter emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and proactive regulatory reforms to ensure a safe digital environment for minors.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's world, digital technology is a big part of everyday life and has a strong effect on young people (UNICEF, 2017). The digital age has changed how children learn, play, and interact with others. With just one click, they can access endless information and entertainment. However, while this sounds exciting, it also comes with many risks (Sonia Livingstone et al. 2014). Children are exposed to online dangers like inappropriate content, cyberbullying and cyber-grooming, which can harm their innocence and safety (NCRB, 2022). Although the internet is a great tool for learning and growth, it can also be a place of danger and misuse (UNODC 2015,). In India, where there is a large population of young people and internet use is growing fast, online child safety has become a serious concern (IAMAI & Nielsen, 2023). Balancing traditional values with the rapid growth of digital technology is a big challenge. Many Indian children are not fully prepared to deal with online threats. The country's diverse culture and unequal access to digital education make the problem worse. India must not only protect its young internet users but also teach them how to use the internet safely and wisely (Save the Children, 2021).

To create a safe and healthy online environment for children, parents, teachers, lawmakers, and the children themselves need to work together. Moreover, online sexual abuse and exploitation of children in India have become more common over time. This problem has grown worse due to the increased use of technology and the internet in everyday life (UNICEF India, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic made things even harder, as children started spending more time online without enough supervision or protection. These conditions have made children more exposed to danger. Today's children face new types of online challenges that go beyond traditional bullying, especially as more of their lives are spent in the digital world. A harmful form of bullying known as cyberbullying is becoming more common, especially among teenagers. Unlike face-to-face bullying, cyberbullying takes place through digital platforms. It includes harmful actions such as doxing (sharing someone's private information without permission), spreading lies, posting mean or insulting comments on social media and sending threatening messages. Because online bullies can hide their identity and are physically distant, they often feel more confident, which can make things worse for the victims. Cyberbullying can cause serious mental health problems like depression, anxiety, self-harm, or even suicidal thoughts (Hinduja et al., 2014). This is a serious issue that needs a complete and careful approach to solve. It is equally important to stop cyberbullying before it happens and to help the victims recover. Another big online threat is grooming, where predators use the internet to gain the trust of children by pretending to be friends or kind adults. They do this through social media, chat rooms, online games and similar platforms, slowly building emotional bonds with children to take advantage

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