


# Chapter 13


## Safeguarding Children in the Digital Age: Examining India's Cyber Laws and Child Protection Policies

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### **ABSTRACT**

*We have Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha) and Generation Z (Gen Z) in schools and in higher education. They are digital natives from birth and are technologically advanced, digitally immersed, and globally connected. With use of technology come risks like cyber bullying, sextortion, online grooming, online sexual exploitation and abuse, phishing, online frauds targeting children, online gambling and identity theft. We cannot separate this generation from technology hence, Government of India has established a legal framework to safeguard children from cybercrimes. Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 are few such Indian laws to safeguard children. This chapter will critically examine the impact and effectiveness of India's cyber laws and child protection policies in ensuring online safety of children, comparing it with International child protection standards along with recommendations for strengthening India's legal framework to safeguard children.*

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-5132-2.ch013

## INTRODUCTION

The Government of India launched a program 'Digital India' with a vision to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. India has undergone a rapid digital transformation in recent years as it supports an ecosystem of innovation, job creation and social progress. The Government of India took up many initiatives for education sector few to name are: PM eVIDYA, Swayam, Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA), e-pathshala, smart classrooms, virtual labs and ICT integrated teaching - learning process. All these initiatives came into picture to help India become the world's largest economy and people can take advantage of digitalisation to expand business, education and infrastructure.

The Internet is no longer a privilege for anyone, any person rich or poor can afford the internet. Children nowadays are frequent users of the internet to access educational resources, complete their assignments, research for project work, online meetings for projects, connect with friends, recreational activities and social media. Today in India we have around 900 million internet users most of them being children and adolescents. According to Internet and mobile association of India (IAMAI) in a survey conducted in 2021 revealed that around 60% of the internet uses in overall India's count is of children between age group of 8 - 18 years. And surprisingly this usage is without the supervision of an adult. Due to rapid digitalization 'the children from tier 2 and 3 are now using the internet equally as children of metropolitan cities do because internet is cheap and many companies are providing cheap internet' this was highlighted in a report published by The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).

We are also aware that with the increase in internet usage and our personal data being available on the internet we are prone to cyber-crimes. Children are not aware of such risks and unknowingly fall prey to predators in the digital world. We have come across many cases about cyber-crimes, for example there was a boy from Maharashtra during covid 20 he started playing online games and got addicted to it which led to many behavioral problems. It did not end here he disclosed his personal information to an unknown person and was subjected to blackmailing. Parents were unaware of it and when the issue turned very serious, they could intervene. This was just one case there are many such cases in which children fall prey to cyber criminals and are kidnapped, provoked to commit suicide, raped, sexually assaulted to even murdered.

According to a report by Data Security Council of India (DSCI) cyber threat landscape in India has reached a critical inflection point with an increase in the variety and volume of threats targeting individuals and organizations. The report uncovers detection of 369.01 million distinct malwares across 8.44 million endpoints.

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