

Cyber Culture and Juvenile Justice: Rethinking Legal Frameworks for Juvenile Offenders in the Cyber Era

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Abstract

Dynamic expansion of cyber-culture has transformed social interactions, communication, and identity formation among young people, creating both opportunities and challenges for juvenile justice systems. In the network society, adolescents are increasingly exposed to digital environments where boundaries between acceptable behaviour and cyber-crime are blurred. Acts of cyber-delinquency, ranging from online harassment to hacking, often emerge from experimentation, peer influence, or lack of awareness of netiquettes rather than from entrenched criminal intent. Traditional legal frameworks, however, remain largely rooted in offline paradigms, struggling to address the complexities of juvenile delinquency in the internet era.

This mismatch raises critical questions about proportionality, rehabilitation, and the protection of minors in cyberspace.

This paper argues for a rethinking of juvenile justice in the cyber era, emphasizing the need for adaptive legal responses that balance accountability with developmental considerations. It highlights how cyber-crime committed by juveniles differs from conventional delinquency, often involving anonymity, virtual identities, and transnational dimensions. The abstract underscores the importance of integrating digital literacy, ethical online conduct, and restorative approaches into juvenile justice policies. By embedding netiquettes and cyber-awareness into educational and legal frameworks, societies can mitigate risks while fostering responsible participation in digital culture. Ultimately, the study calls for a holistic approach that situates juvenile cyber- delinquency within broader socio-technological contexts. It advocates for legal reforms that recognize the evolving nature of cyber-culture, prioritize rehabilitation over punishment, and equip young offenders with the skills to navigate the digital world responsibly. Such reimagined frameworks will not only safeguard vulnerable youth but also strengthen the resilience of the network society against emerging forms of cyber-crime.

Keywords: *Cyber-culture; Cyber-crime; Cyber-Delinquency; Network Society; Juvenile Delinquency*

1. Introduction

Digital technologies and online social practices have transformed the socialization, risk exposure, and offending patterns of young people, demanding a reappraisal of juvenile justice frameworks. This introduction situates the study at the intersection of cyber culture and juvenile justice, arguing that conventional legal responses rooted in territorial,

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offline conceptions of delinquency are ill-equipped to address harms that are transnational, ephemeral, and mediated by platforms. Drawing on qualitative perspectives from youth studies, socio-legal scholarship, and cyber-criminology, the chapter foregrounds how identity formation, peer networks, and normative boundaries are negotiated online, producing novel forms of harm and vulnerability that challenge age-based culpability models. Three interrelated themes guide the analysis. First, the blurring of public and private in digital spaces complicates evidentiary practices and privacy protections for juveniles. Second, the role of platforms and algorithms in amplifying conduct reframes responsibility beyond individual actors to include corporate and infrastructural actors. Third, the cultural meanings of risk and play among adolescents where pranks, dares, and performative transgression requires nuanced interpretive frameworks that distinguish between exploratory behaviour and malicious intent.

Reconceptualising juvenile justice in the cyber era therefore entails legal pluralism: harmonizing restorative practices, proportionality, and digital literacy interventions with procedural safeguards tailored to developmental science. The introduction concludes by outlining policy implications, including adaptive sentencing guidelines, cross-border cooperation, and platform accountability, while emphasizing the ethical imperative to centre young people's voices in reform processes. Empirically, the study draws on case law, practitioner interviews, and youth narratives to illustrate tensions between protectionist impulses and adolescents' digital autonomy. By privileging contextualized, interpretive evidence, the research seeks to inform reforms that are both rights-respecting and responsive to the fluid realities of cyber-enabled youth behaviour and policy coherence. The rise of the Internet and social media technologies has triggered profound transformations in contemporary society, reshaping communication, identity, and social behaviour. This qualitative study, based on both primary and secondary data, explores the intersections of cyber-culture, cyber-crime, juvenile delinquency, and internet dependency, with particular attention to children in the Lucknow region of Uttar Pradesh. In today's interconnected world, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) continues to evolve, shaping cultural practices and influencing social structures. As Castells (1996) notes, "ICT, as a tool for processing and transmitting information, impacts modern social structures and contributes to the development of a network society." Similarly, Giddens (2003) emphasizes that "Information Technology (IT), often synonymous with ICT, permeates all aspects of contemporary life." The term "Cyber," derived from Norbert Wiener's concept of cybernetics (1948), reflects the fusion of ICT and the internet, producing a distinct digital environment with its own norms and behavioural codes.

Cyber-culture, as Silver (2004) defines, is "a collection of cultures and cultural products enabled by the Internet, along with the narratives about these cultures and products." According to Merriam-Webster, it encompasses shared practices, goals, and creative outputs shaped by digital technologies. Haraway (2010) conceptualizes cyber-culture through the metaphor of the cyborg, challenging traditional boundaries of identity and politics, while Rheingold (2000) views it as a global culture emerging from the convergence of computing, telecommunications, and media.

Within this framework, netiquettes, online behaviours, and digital languages form the foundation of social interaction in cyberspace. For children, however, this digital immersion has complex consequences. Increasing exposure to online platforms has led to cyber-delinquency, including cyberbullying, hacking, and circulation of harmful content. The anonymity of digital spaces reduces accountability, encouraging risky behaviours and blurring the line between victim and offender. Excessive reliance on digital devices has also displaced outdoor activities, contributing to physical health issues, disrupted sleep cycles, and psychological strain. Internet addiction and the fear of missing out (FOMO) further exacerbate stress, anxiety, and depression among youth.

India's affordable internet access has accelerated these challenges, exposing children to exploitative content and peer pressure. The pervasive reach of cyber-culture demands urgent legal and policy interventions. Juvenile justice frameworks, traditionally designed for offline offenses, must adapt to address cyber-crime committed by minors. This requires balancing accountability with rehabilitation, embedding digital literacy, and promoting ethical online practices. Families, educators, policymakers, and technology providers must collaborate to safeguard children's mental health while ensuring fair and just treatment of juvenile offenders in the cyber era. The growing availability of the internet to young people has led to new patterns of online misconduct among minors. Activities such as cyberbullying, sextortion, digital scams, grooming, and hacking now involve juveniles both as offenders and as targets in virtual environments. These behaviours are fuelled by increased access to personal devices, heavy reliance on social

media, peer influence, and gaps in digital literacy, presenting risks that differ significantly from conventional forms of youth delinquency. India's Information Technology Act together with cybercrime regulations deal with online offences, yet they often function separately from juvenile justice systems. This disconnect creates shortcomings in areas such as jurisdiction, digital evidence management, age-sensitive adjudication, and safeguarding victims. Moreover, police and child protection authorities frequently lack unified procedures for handling electronic evidence, implementing restorative measures, and ensuring minors' privacy. As a result, responses may swing between excessive criminalization and insufficient protection. India faces a growing challenge of juvenile cyber delinquency: the digital exposure of children has increased incidents like cyberbullying, hacking, and online exploitation, and while the 'Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015' modernized juvenile procedures, significant legal and implementation gaps remain between juvenile law and cybercrime statutes. This study draws insights from field visits to the Juvenile Boys' Observation Home in Lucknow and surveys conducted among students, professionals, and legal stakeholders, highlighting the pressing need to rethink juvenile justice in the context of cyber-culture and the network society.

2. Methodology and Research Design

Methodology and research design form the cornerstone of any scholarly investigation. They serve as the blueprint that guides the direction and structure of a study, ensuring its reliability, validity, and overall credibility. Methodology refers to the systematic approach adopted by researchers to conduct their work. It encompasses the theoretical examination of methods and principles within a given field of knowledge to explain phenomena, while also involving the careful selection of appropriate techniques for data collection and analysis. Methodologically, a qualitative approach privileging one on one interviews of juveniles apprehended at boy's observation home Lucknow via purposive sampling and discourse analysis is proposed to capture the lived experiences of delinquents and reflections from stake holders of judiciary, law graduates and experts of cyber-crimes via snowball sampling. During our visits 96 Boy juveniles were apprehended at boy's observation situated at Mohan Road Lucknow.

The study titled "Cyber Culture and Juvenile Justice: Rethinking Legal Frameworks for Juvenile Offenders in the Cyber Era" is a qualitative, exploratory research endeavour. Primary data was collected from the Juvenile Boys' Observation Home in Lucknow, focusing on juveniles aged 12–17 years, selected through purposive sampling. Additional data was gathered from stakeholders in academia and law using snowball sampling, facilitated through questionnaire forms (97 respondents). The research further incorporated an extensive review of existing literature on cyber-culture, cyber-delinquency, children's mental health, and internet addiction. This review, combined with the theoretical framework, shaped a multi-dimensional approach that integrates both qualitative and quantitative perspectives. Ultimately, the study seeks to unravel the complex interplay between cyber-culture and cyber-delinquency, and to examine their impact on children's rehabilitation and juvenile justice within the broader context of India's cyber-security laws, with particular emphasis on Lucknow.

3. Theoretical Framework

Juvenile Delinquency cannot be understood through a single lens; it is shaped by a complex interplay of socialization, economic background, and culture, schooling, and peer influences. Yet, in the contemporary era, the most transformative and challenging dimension is the pervasive role of the internet and cyber culture. Today, individuals especially the younger generation navigate dual identities: their physical presence in society and their digital existence through social media profiles and online interactions. Children in their early developmental years face increased vulnerability in today's digital world. Constant exposure to harmful, abusive, or unsuitable online material can significantly influence their mental health and social interactions. Therefore, any serious discussion of youth psychology must move beyond conventional considerations to carefully assess the role of cyber culture. This transformation also calls for a revision of legal structures. Juvenile justice systems, once built to address offenses in the physical realm, must now evolve to meet the challenges of the digital age. Laws should operate as flexible and inclusive frameworks equipped to confront the dangers of online environments while ensuring both accountability and protection for young people navigating these spaces.

In his influential work “The Rise of the Network Society”, Manuel Castells examined the social, economic, and technological transformations brought about by the internet era. He described contemporary society as an “informational society,” emphasizing that humanity is moving away from an industrial model toward one centered on information. This transition, according to Castells, is largely driven by advances in communication technologies and developments in biological sciences. Although capitalism remains the dominant economic framework, the resources that sustain it have shifted. Instead of relying primarily on energy and financial capital, modern systems increasingly depend on information and data. Castells coined the term “network society” to describe this interconnected world, where information plays a decisive role in shaping productivity and economic growth. He argued that authority and influence now reside within networks and flows of information. Global financial systems, trade organizations, and commercial enterprises exemplify these expansive networks (Castells, 1996). Alongside this, the rise of “netiquette” created a distinct online culture that reshaped e-business and the digital economy. Castells also highlighted the geopolitical consequences of the internet: while it can empower individuals, it simultaneously excludes those lacking access or digital literacy.

Vulnerable groups, such as children, are particularly at risk of exposure to harmful or misleading online content. The global digital divide, he noted, remains a pressing challenge. Castells further explored how cyberspace has opened new avenues for crime, including hacking, identity theft, and online fraud. The anonymity afforded by digital profiles and avatars makes it difficult to trace and prosecute offenders, as traditional investigative methods often fail in virtual environments. Social networks and online communities, he observed, can also facilitate such illicit activities. To counter these risks, Castells (1998) stressed the importance of transparency, robust cybersecurity frameworks, and accountability in data practices to safeguard privacy and reduce cybercrime.

Ankit Lal’s *India Social* provides an in-depth look at major social media movements in India. He analysed how platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and WhatsApp have reshaped political engagement, popular culture, and social activism by introducing new digital trends. Lal also drew attention to the spread of misinformation and fake campaigns online, pointing out the absence of adequate cyber regulations governing social media in India (Lal, 2017). One emerging concern is cyber-delinquency, which refers to minors participating in harmful or unlawful online activities. These may include hacking, phishing, cyberbullying, sexting, or distributing illegal content. Such behaviour poses significant challenges for legal, educational, and social institutions. As a sociological issue, cyber-delinquency reflects the intersection of technology, deviance, and societal norms, requiring careful study to develop effective preventive and regulatory measures in the digital age.

Research has shown that excessive internet use can negatively affect children’s mental health. For instance, repeated exposure to negative comments on social media posts can lead to anxiety and depression, as unmet expectations harm self-esteem (Sharma & Kumar, 2021). Adolescents, in particular, face risks as social media increasingly shapes their identity and confidence. The ability to create fake profiles fosters anonymity, which can encourage arrogance and antisocial behaviour (Gupta, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic intensified these challenges by shifting education to digital platforms. Online learning increased stress among students and created difficulties for parents attempting to limit screen time (Patel & Desai, 2022). Another growing issue is internet addiction, especially through online gaming, which has been linked to aggressive tendencies in children (Sen & Joshi, 2019).

4. Cyber Delinquency and Juvenile Justice

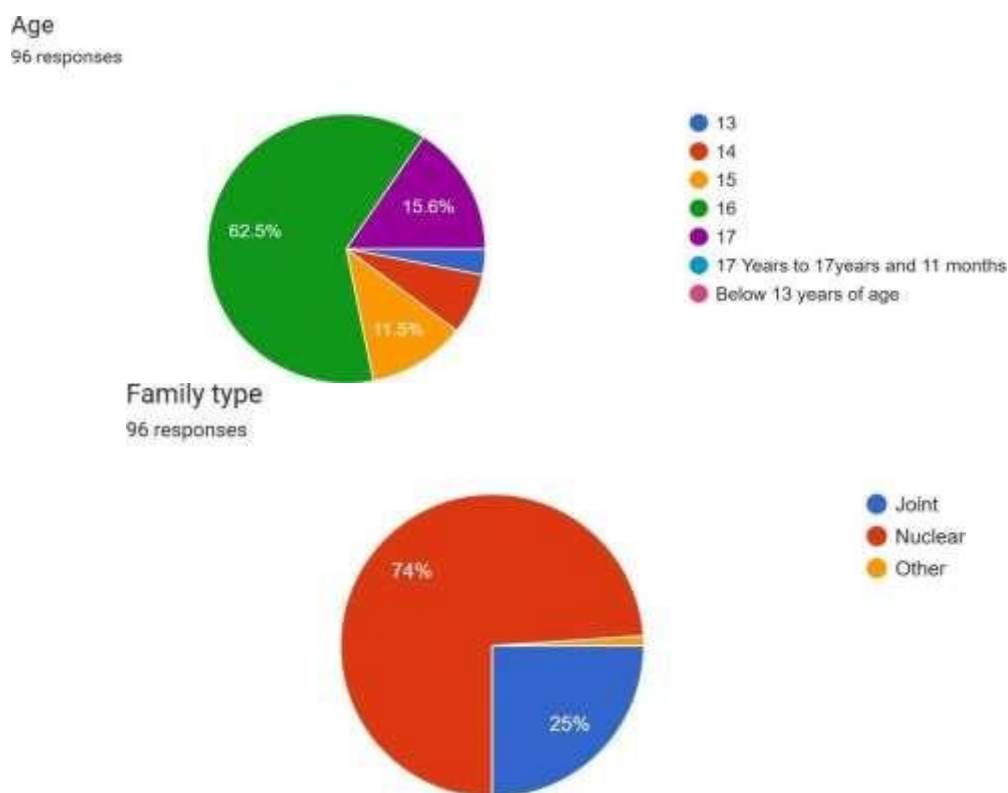
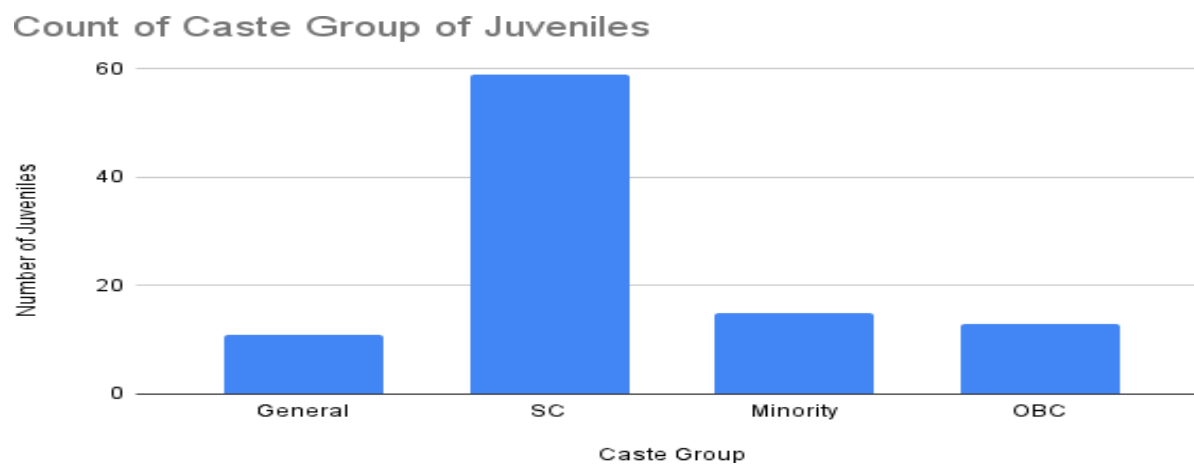
Cyber delinquency encompasses a range of illegal or harmful online behaviours carried out by minors, from hacking and cyberbullying to online fraud, identity theft, sextortion, and the spread of obscene material. As internet penetration, smartphone use, and social media engagement expand rapidly, young people in India face growing exposure to both digital opportunities and risks. Official crime records indicate an upward trend in juvenile involvement in cyber offenses, underscoring the need for a legal framework that can respond with nuance. The Juvenile Justice Act of 2015, which updated earlier statutes, centres on child welfare, restorative approaches, and rehabilitation rather than strict punishment, acknowledging that many children who come into conflict with the law do so under the influence of peer pressure, limited awareness, or socio-economic disadvantage. In cyber-related cases, Juvenile Justice Boards conduct inquiries that consider the nature of the act and the young person’s mental and

emotional maturity; the law categorizes offenses as petty, serious, or heinous, and allows for the possibility that 16–18-year-olds accused of heinous crimes may be tried as adults if the board determines they possessed sufficient maturity and intent. This threshold becomes especially pertinent when online wrongdoing involves organized fraud, sexual exploitation, or substantial financial damage, where the complexity of the conduct may point to adult-like culpability, yet critics warn that subjecting juveniles to adult trials can erode the rehabilitative aims of the statute, particularly when misconduct arises from ignorance, experimentation, or immaturity rather than deliberate malice.

Beyond legal classification, cyber delinquency exposes tensions between the Juvenile Justice Act and the Information Technology Act of 2000, with the differing emphases of each law rehabilitation and child-sensitive procedures on one hand, and statutory penalties for cyber offenses on the other sometimes producing enforcement ambiguities. These gaps have prompted calls for legislative and procedural reforms to align responsibilities and ensure that minors are held accountable in ways that do not forfeit their right to protection and reform. Equally important are questions of consent, capacity, and digital literacy: many adolescents lack a full understanding of the consequences of their online actions, making prevention through education essential. Schools, families, and community organizations must take an active role in teaching responsible online conduct, privacy awareness, and cyber ethics. Rehabilitation under the JJ Act can be adapted to address technology-specific harms by offering counselling, skills training, and community service that redirect energy into constructive pursuits and reduce the likelihood of repeat offenses. Ultimately, addressing juvenile cyber offending in India requires a balanced strategy that harmonizes cyber and juvenile laws, invests in digital education, and combines legal safeguards with preventive and rehabilitative measures so that young internet users are steered away from harmful behaviour and toward responsible digital citizenship.

5. Juvenile Observation Home

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.

Fig. 1 The above pie-chart shows juvenile of different age groups apprehended at Boy's Observation Home**Fig. 2** The above pie chart shows family type of juveniles apprehended at Boy's Observation Home**Fig. 3** The above graph shows caste dynamics of juveniles apprehended at Boy's Observation Home

Nature of Offence

96 responses

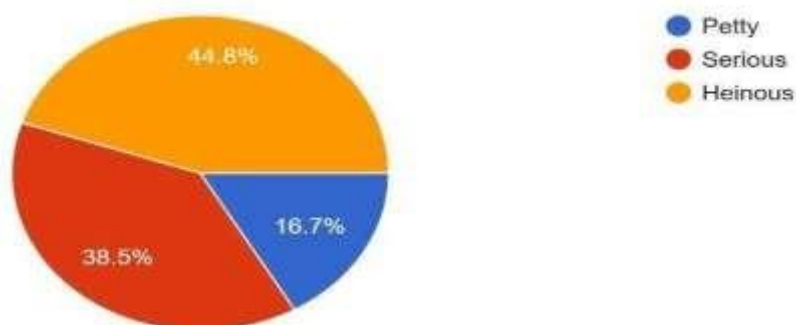


Fig. 4 The above pie chart showed the nature of offence committed by juveniles apprehended at Boy's Observation Home

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

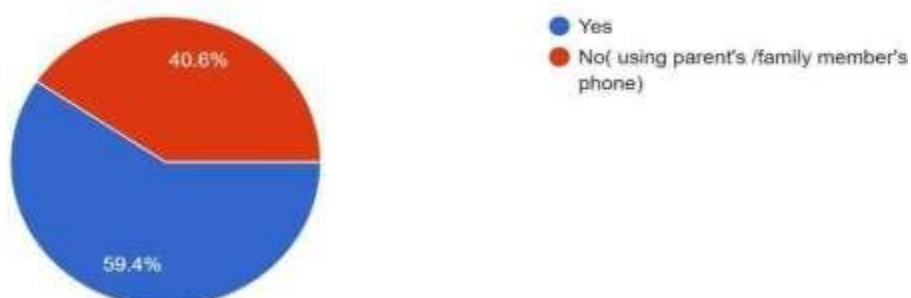


Fig. 6 The above pie chart shows count of juveniles having their own smartphones

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

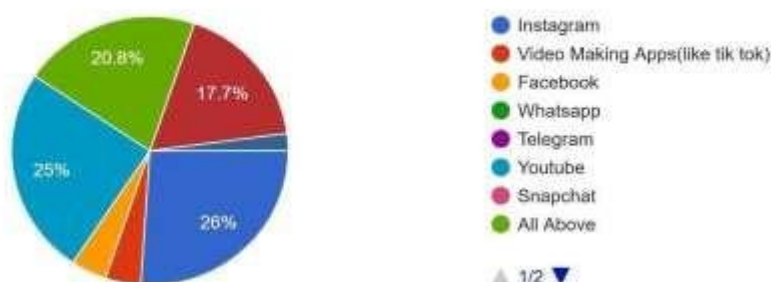


Fig. 8 The above pie chart depicts various social media platforms being used by among juveniles apprehended at Boy's Observation Home

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

96 responses

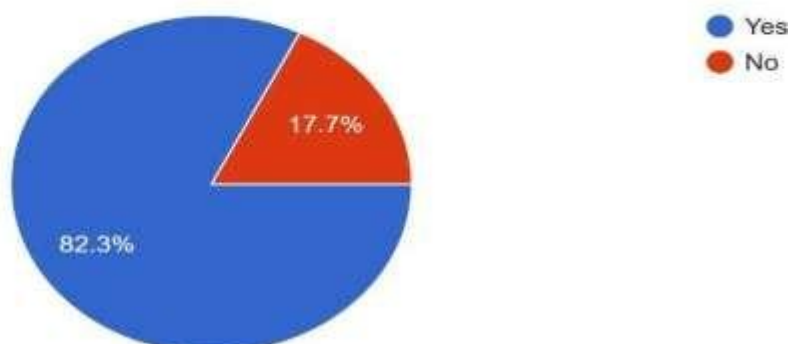


Fig. 9 The above pie chart shows number count of juveniles who had seen porn/adult content on internet

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.

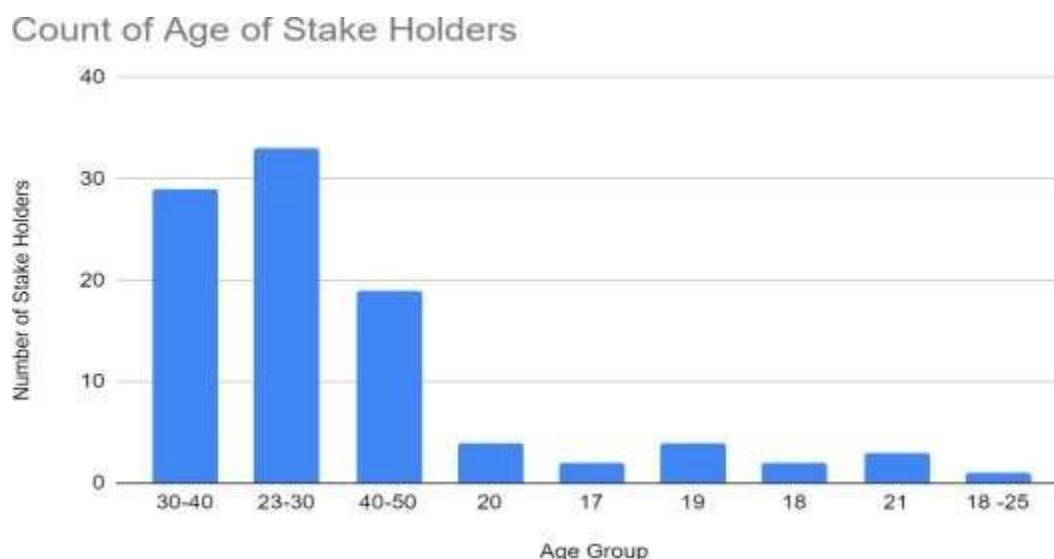


Fig. 10 The above graph shows the age group of stake holders

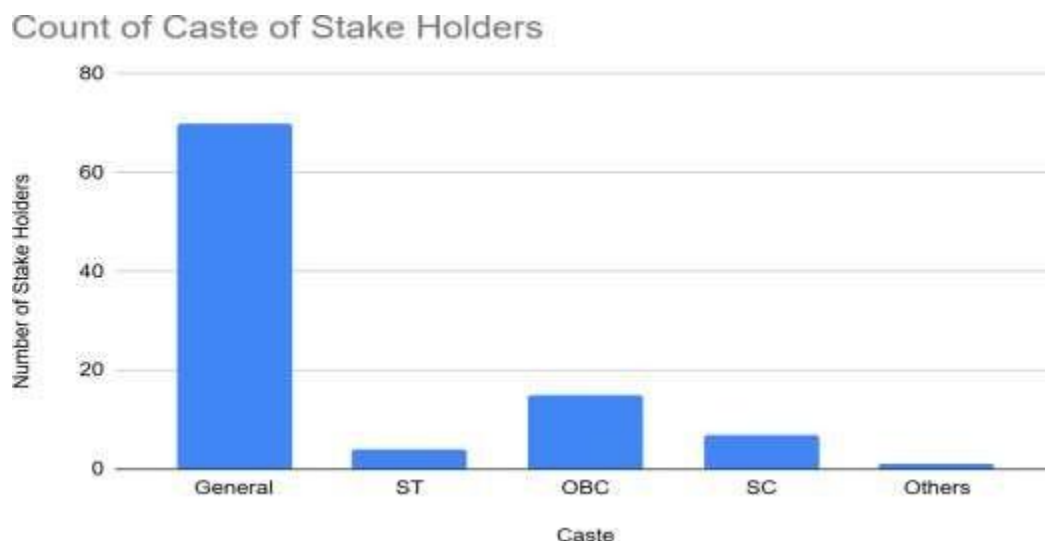


Fig. 11 The above graph shows the caste category of stake holders

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.

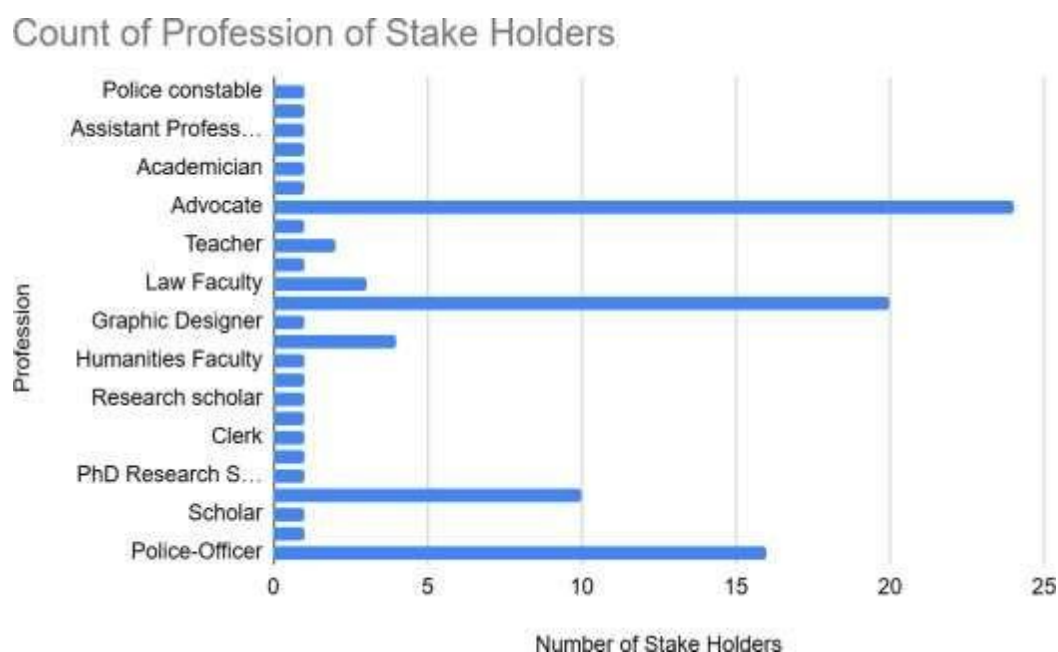


Fig. 12 The above graph is showing the profession of stake holders

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.

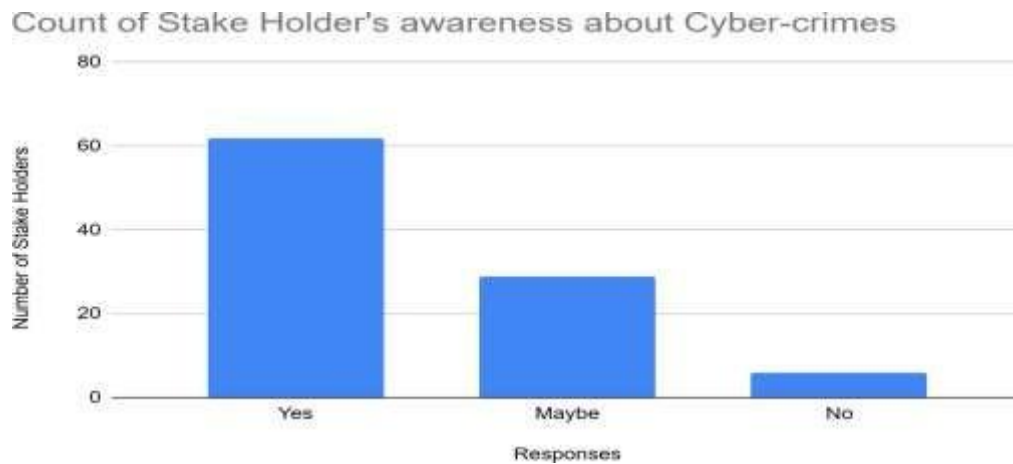


Fig. 13 The above graph represents the stake holder's awareness about cyber-crimes

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.

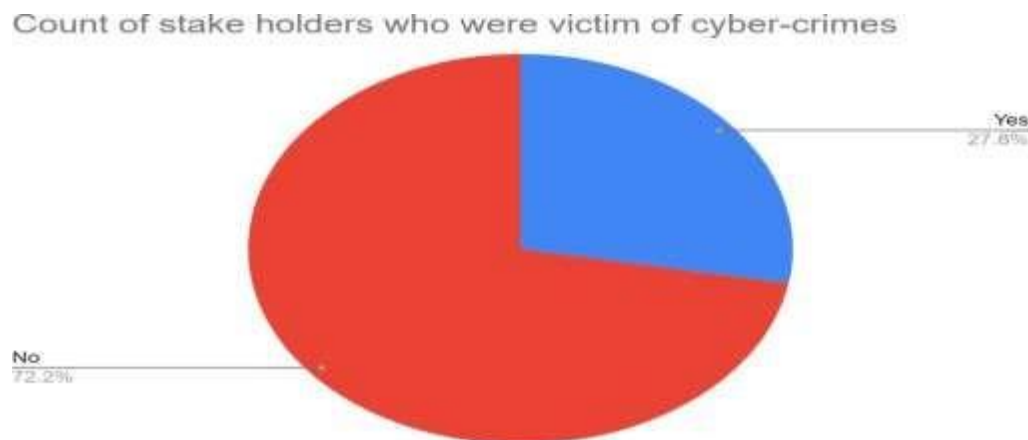


Fig. 14 The above representation shows the percentage of stake holders who were ever be the victim of cyber crimes

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

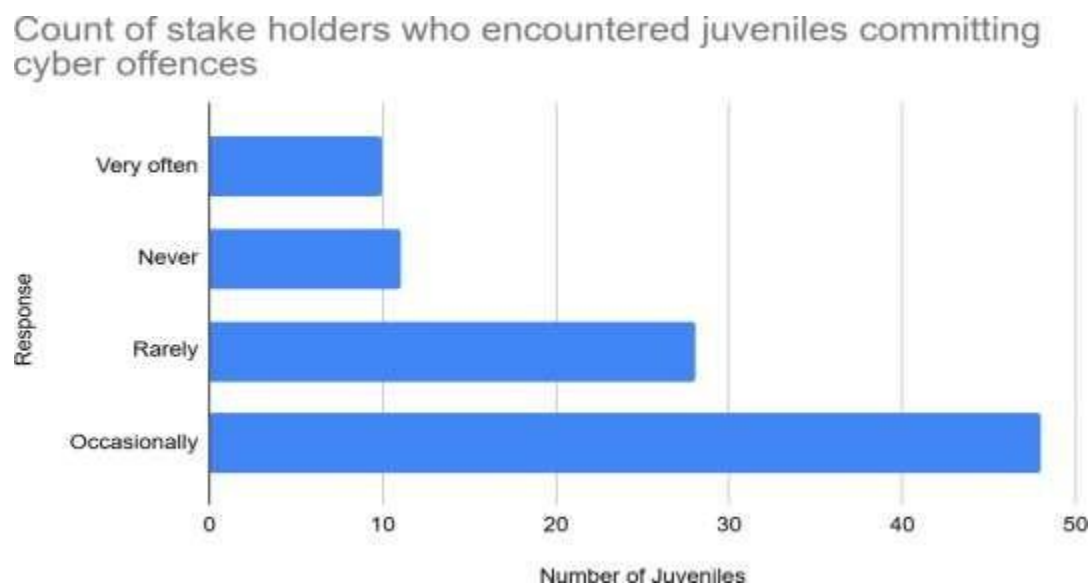


Fig. 15 The above chart shows the response of stake holders for cyber-crimes committed by Juveniles

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.

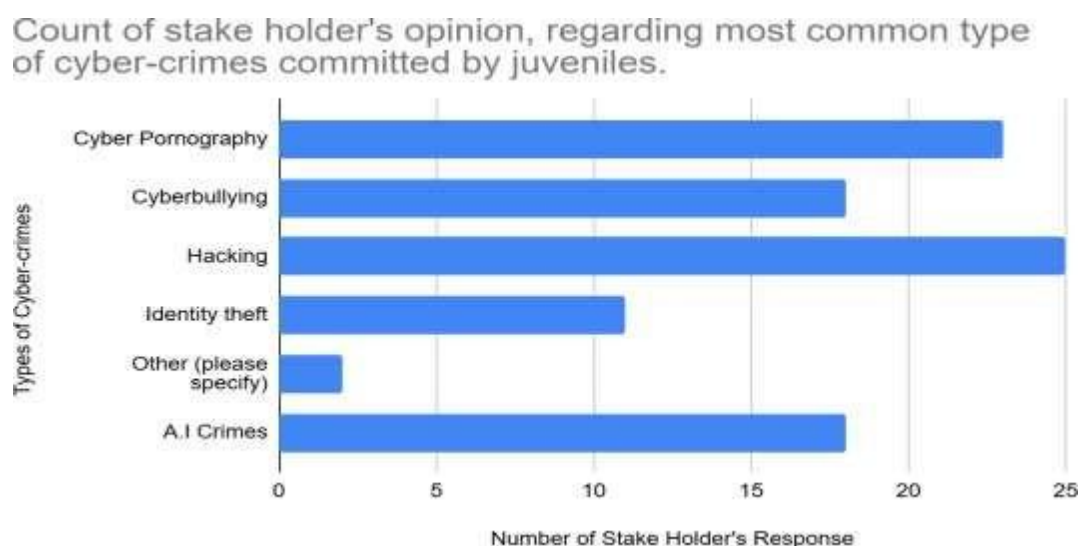


Fig. 16 The above graph represents the types of cyber-crimes committed by juveniles

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.

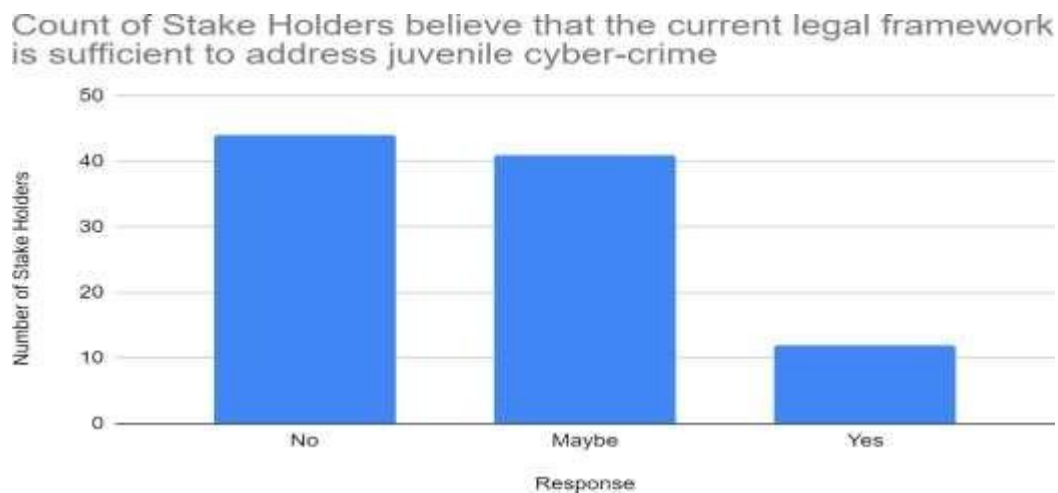


Fig. 17 The above graph is showing stake holders response regarding their opinion for current legal system for juveniles committing cyber-crimes

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.

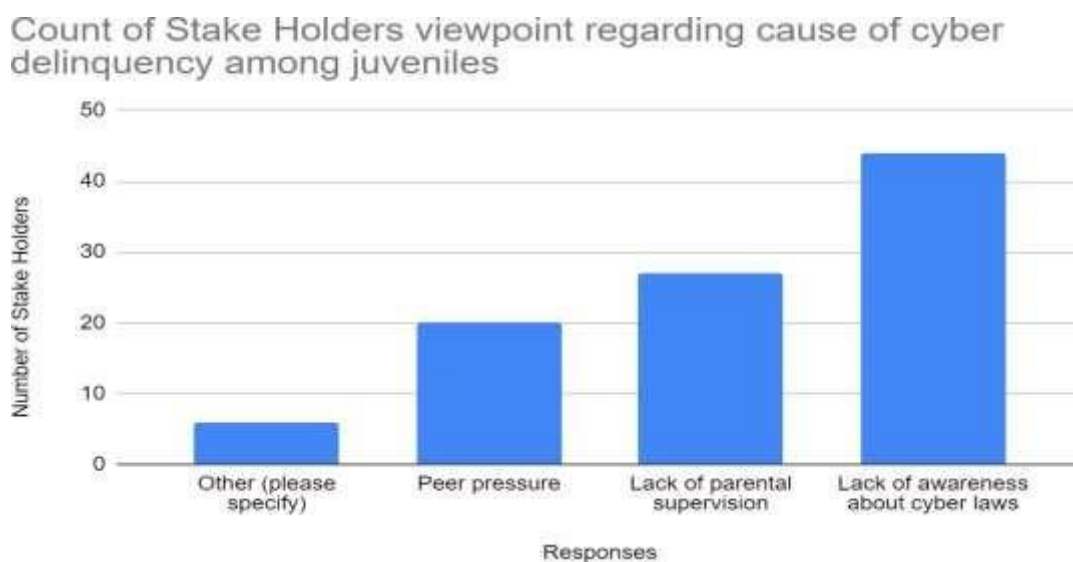


Fig. 18 The above graph shows the response of stake holders regarding cause of Juvenile cyber delinquency

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

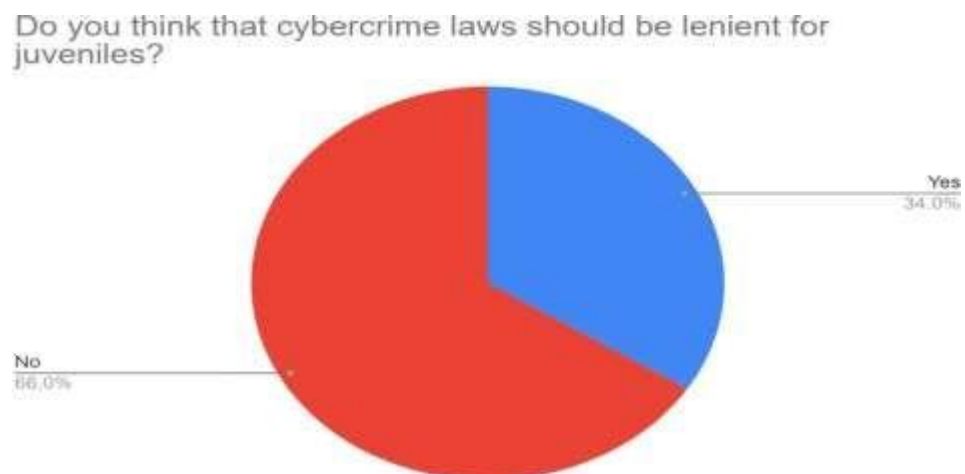


Fig. 19 The above chart shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding leniency in cyber-crime laws for juveniles.

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

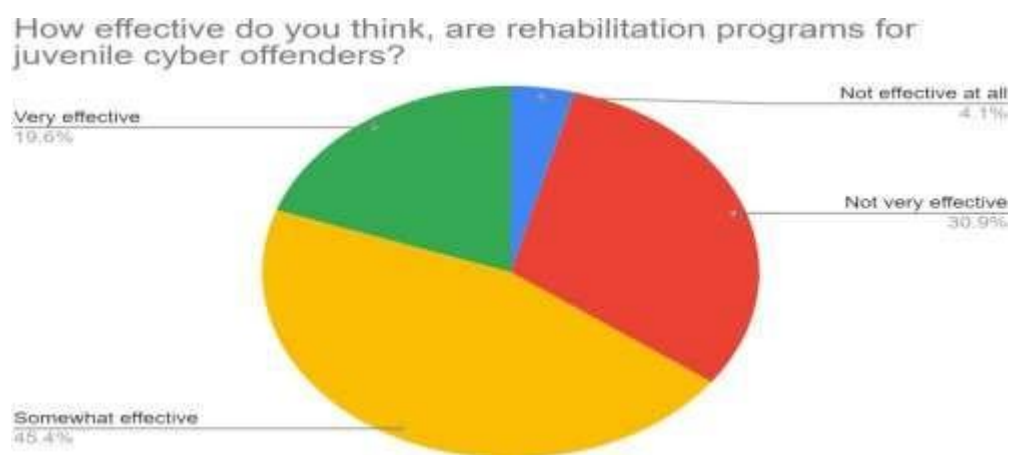


Fig. 20 The above graph shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding rehabilitation programs for Juveniles

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.

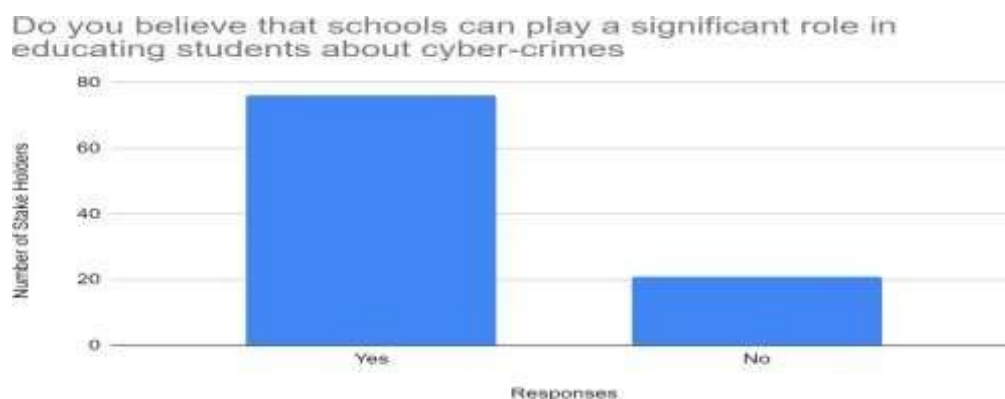


Fig. 21 The above graph shows the stake holders viewpoint regarding role of schools in educating children about cyber-crimes and cyber laws

Out of 97 respondents, 76 (78.4%) respondents believe 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.

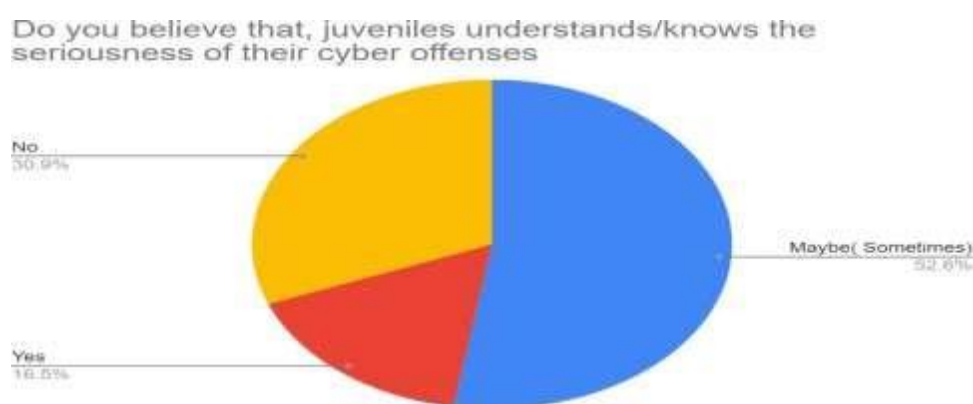


Fig. 22 The above graph shows the stake holders response regarding awareness among juveniles for the offences they are committing

Out of 97 stake holders, 30 (30.9%) respondents believe 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.

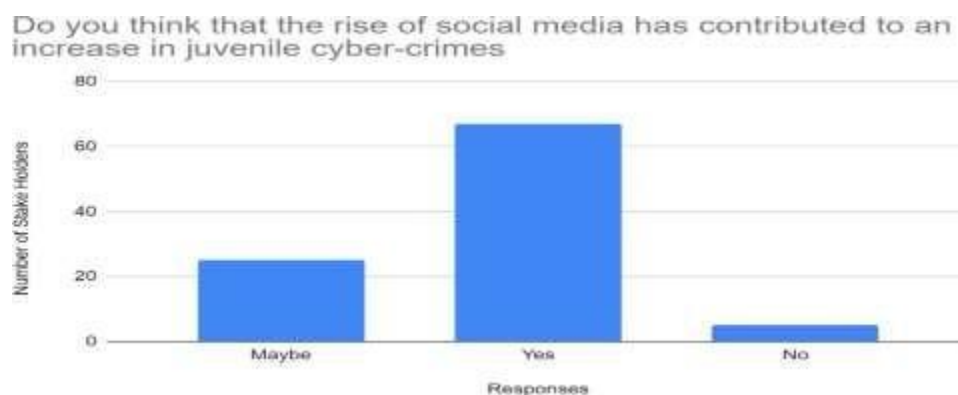


Fig. 23 The above graph shows the opinion of stake holders regarding role of social media in increase in juvenile cyber-crimes.

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.

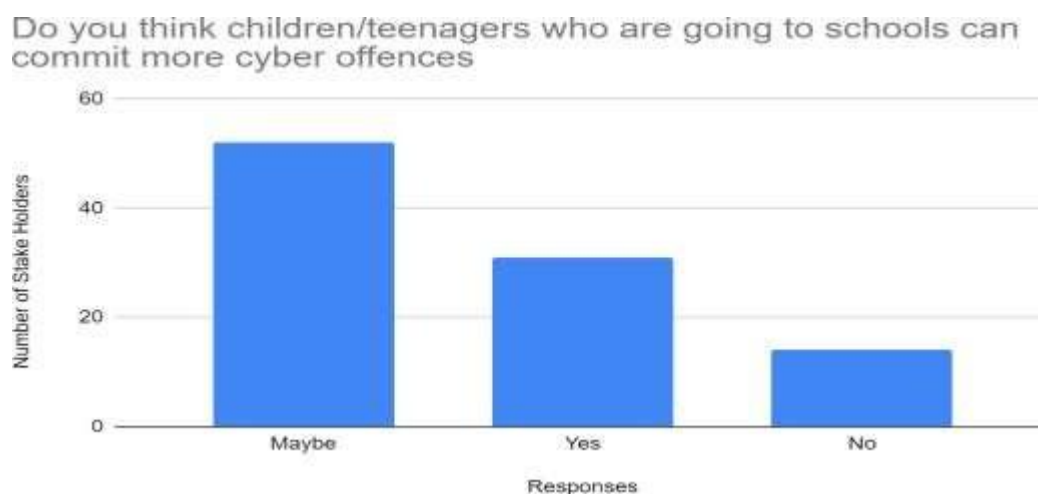


Fig. 24 The above graph shows the stake holders view point regarding cyber offences committed by school going children

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.

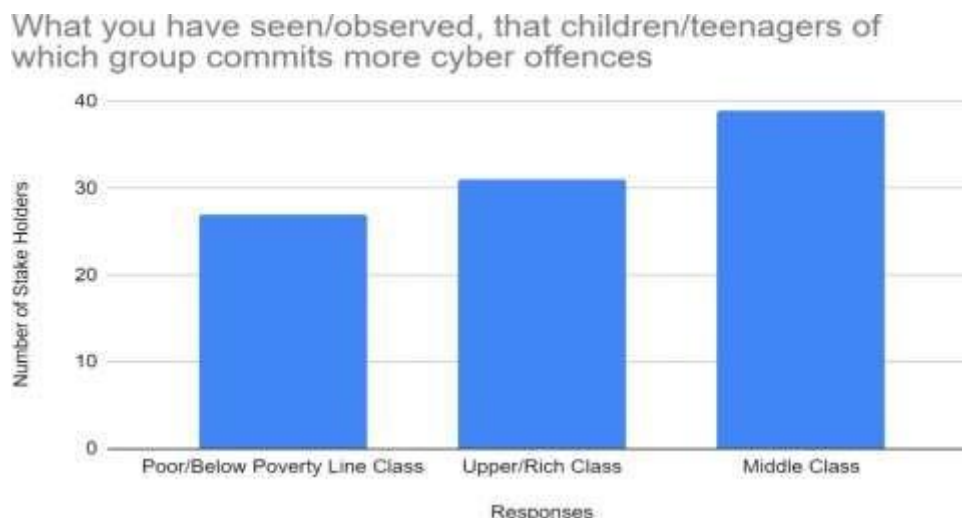


Fig. 25 The above graph shows the responses from stake holders regarding financial group of juveniles who commits cyber offences

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
	TOTAL STATE(S)	26931	44511	49708	52430	64907
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
	TOTAL UT(S)	317	224	327	544	986
	TOTAL (ALL INDIA)	27248	44735	50035	52974	65893

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

6. Conclusion

Juvenile delinquency in the digital age is increasingly complex, shaped by both long-standing social challenges and the unique dynamics of cyberspace. Traditional influences such as poverty, unstable family environments, peer pressure, academic struggles, and unmet socio-psychological needs now intersect with the pervasive reach of technology. Structural issues like economic exclusion, limited parental oversight due to work demands, and educational shortcomings in teaching responsible online behaviour combine with situational factors such as constant access to connected devices, the anonymity of online spaces, exposure to harmful content amplified by algorithms, and peer-driven normalization of risky digital practices. Excessive reliance on the internet further alters developmental pathways, diminishing attention spans, weakening interpersonal skills, and heightening impulsivity. Immersive online communities can glamorize harmful acts and provide technical knowledge that lowers barriers to cyber misconduct. The ripple effects are significant: victims endure privacy breaches, reputational harm, and emotional distress; young offenders risk stigmatization and disrupted futures; families and communities face eroded trust; and justice systems struggle with cases requiring specialized expertise and cross-border coordination. Because digital harms are easily replicated and persist indefinitely, both victims and offenders may experience long-term consequences, making rehabilitation and restorative approaches more difficult. Effective prevention must therefore extend beyond legal measures to include social support, mental health care, and educational reforms that address the root causes of youth vulnerability in cyberspace.

Examining the Juvenile Justice Act (JJ Act) through the lens of cyber realities highlights critical gaps and the need for reform. The current framework was designed for offenses rooted in physical spaces and often fails to address the nuances of online misconduct. It lacks clear definitions of cyber offenses tailored to age, standardized procedures for handling digital evidence while safeguarding privacy, and mechanisms for international cooperation when online harms cross borders. While the Act emphasizes rehabilitation and diversion, these measures are underfunded and rarely adapted to digital contexts programs seldom incorporate cyber ethics, digital literacy, or constructive outlets for technical skills. Procedural shortcomings include limited training for law enforcement and judicial officers in digital forensics, inadequate safeguards against over-criminalizing adolescent experimentation online, and weak collaboration with technology companies that could play a role in prevention. Reform should be comprehensive, distinguishing between malicious intent and youthful curiosity, embedding restorative justice principles suited to online harms, and ensuring proportional responses.

Practical steps include statutory provisions for digital diversion programs, mandatory curricula on digital citizenship in schools and communities, child-sensitive protocols for handling online evidence, and structured partnerships with platform providers that respect privacy. The Act should also mandate periodic reviews to keep pace with technological change and allocate resources for training, research, and multi-sector collaboration. Ultimately, a modernized juvenile justice system must balance accountability with opportunities for growth, ensuring that young people are guided toward safe and constructive digital participation rather than being penalized for exploratory behaviour.

At a societal level, such content reinforces harmful stereotypes and cultivates unhealthy behaviours, influencing how children form social perceptions and interact with others. Research indicates that early exposure can foster risk-taking tendencies and hinder the development of secure relationships later on. In India, the lack of effective parental controls and limited public awareness initiatives leave many children vulnerable to accessing damaging material, a situation worsened by gaps in the legal framework for monitoring online activity and enforcing cybersecurity. Consequently, numerous young users encounter harassment with inadequate legal protection, which exacerbates mental health challenges. The scarcity of nationwide digital literacy programs further undermines children's capacity to navigate the internet safely. Building a safer digital environment requires stronger regulations, engaged parents, and focused awareness campaigns. Confronting these problems calls for coordinated efforts from policymakers, educators, caregivers, and mental health professionals. Enacting comprehensive cybersecurity laws, rigorously enforcing digital safety standards, and prioritizing mental health services tailored to children are critical measures. Integrating digital literacy into school curricula will equip young people to use technology responsibly while safeguarding their well-being.

Absent decisive action, rising internet addiction, continued exposure to inappropriate content, and weak cybersecurity protections will keep jeopardizing children's mental health and long-term development. Effective solutions must be multi-faceted, combining parental guidance, formal digital literacy training, and accessible mental health support. By increasing awareness and promoting responsible online habits, society can lessen the digital world's negative effects on children's psychological welfare.

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