



# A Legal And Criminological Analysis Of Online Sexual Harassment: Understanding The Behaviour Of The Accused

RATHAN S  
B.COM. LL. B (HONS) V<sup>th</sup> YEAR  
School of Law  
(VISTAS)

CO- AUTHOR:  
Mr. HARIHARAN K  
Assistant professor  
VISTAS

Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies

## ABSTRACT

Fast changes in how people connect through technology have reshaped daily interactions today. Because of apps and websites, talking across distances feels normal now. These tools help students learn, companies run, and friends stay close. Still, some misuse them - like using fake trust to harass others online. New ways to reach people often bring unexpected risks too.

What happens when someone harasses another person using the internet often shows up on apps or sites where people chat or share things. Messages with sexual content appear unexpectedly, sometimes alongside images shared without permission. Stalking takes place across message threads that never seem to stop. Comments filled with sexual insults pop up in replies or posts. Threats of sexual harm arrive through private notes or public rants.

Aiming to explore online sexual harassment through law and crime studies forms the core of this work. Looking at what drives those who offend comes before considering how website layouts may encourage harmful acts. Digital spaces shape behaviour in ways that quietly support abuse, a point often missed. Laws meant to handle internet crimes in India get reviewed here too, though they sometimes fall short. What rules exist now must face real patterns of misuse.

Young people today find it easier than ever to reach smartphones and social media. Without strong checks, kids slip into digital areas meant for older users. Many websites fail to confirm user ages, leaving gaps that underage visitors quickly fill. These open doors lead straight to risky material and unwanted attention. Being online without guidance raises the chance of facing abuse. Loose rules mean less protection when they explore virtual worlds.

One idea from the research points to tighter checks for user ages on social networks. Stopping images of naked bodies or sexual material before they go live is another step suggested. Platforms could face real consequences if harmful behavior spreads under their watch. Teaching people how to stay safer online appears high on the list of fixes. Looking into internet crimes might get more effective with better tools and training.

Starting fresh, safety online grows when laws adapt, tools improve, while people learn. A mix of updated rules, better tech defenses, followed by informed users shapes calmer spaces. Protection clicks only if policy shifts happen alongside software changes, paired with everyday understanding. Without one piece, progress stalls - each part leans on the others. When law catches up, systems adjust, minds open, risk drops.

A Legal and Criminological Look at Online Sexual Harassment and the Actions of Those Accused.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Study Background

Fast changes in tech have reshaped how people talk, connect, because of new online spaces. Two decades ago, phones with web access began spreading; since then, distance matters less when sharing messages. Chat apps popped up first, yet now sites for posting videos or joining discussions do more than just link friends. These tools help teach students, deliver news, host debates, while also running ads or selling products behind the scenes. What started as ways to stay close has grown into systems shaping daily routines without asking permission.

Digital tools opened fresh paths for connection and creativity, yet brought along troubling shifts too. What shows up now includes unseen shapes of wrongdoing, growing alongside progress itself. One rising issue - sexual hostility on the web - has climbed into clear view across communities lately. This conduct unfolds without touch, moving through screens via messages, posts, or chats found on apps and sites people use daily. It arrives uninvited, often laced with intent that crosses lines few expected when logging in.

A message might arrive out of nowhere - crude, unwanted, aimed straight at your screen. Someone shares private pictures without permission, slipping boundaries like smoke through cracks. Comments turn sharp, laced with sex talk meant to degrade rather than connect. Stalking follows no schedule, creeping in late at night or between meetings, hiding in notifications. Threats take shape in DMs, promising harm that feels real even when sent across continents. Photos get twisted by software, faces swapped into fake scenes built to shame. Screens become entry points; there is no lock strong enough. Distance offers no shield because borders blur where signals travel fast. What happens online does not stay there - it leaks, repeats, sticks.

Hidden behind screens, people can say things they would never dare aloud. A fake name becomes a shield when someone chooses to harm others online. Without a face attached, consequences feel distant, almost unreal. What stops them in person does not matter here. Actions unfold freely where identity dissolves into code. Fear of getting caught fades when no one knows who you really are.

Stored online, nasty posts stick around far longer than anyone wants. Take down a photo here, yet copies live on elsewhere without warning. Screenshots circulate quietly after deletion, haunting those targeted. Damage builds slowly, lingering well beyond the initial post. A victim's peace? Often shattered by what never truly disappears.

These days, getting harassed online feels harder to avoid, especially as kids and teens find it easier to reach smartphones and the web. Little ones often hold their first phone before they finish primary school. Cheap phones paired with budget-friendly data mean nearly every student carries a device now.

Younger kids often get onto social sites even though rules say they must be thirteen. Birthdates? They just make them up when signing up - no one checks. Without real oversight, underage users scroll through feeds left on their own. Enforcement hardly ever happens, so barriers stay weak at best. Access slips open wide while safeguards lag behind quietly.

Young kids wandering through social media without limits brings up big worries. Not far in, they might run into images or videos that are too adult for their age. Trouble often shows up when teens get targeted - bullied, tricked, or pushed into risky chats by people much older. Early brushes with grown-up material can quietly shift how they see relationships, bodies, and personal boundaries.

A big issue pops up when intimate photos or clips show online. Most sites let people post visuals without tight rules. Sometimes, what gets shared includes bare skin or flirtatious behavior. Once posted, it moves fast - jumping from site to site. Young eyes might see these moments just as easily as older ones.

Out here, raw images float through feeds, shaping what seems normal - suddenly disrespect blurs into routine. When kids stumble on these scenes, minds bend in ways hard to undo. Scenes meant for adults twist young understanding, leaving marks that last. Pressure builds without warning, nudging some toward harmful acts. What shows up on screens doesn't stay there - it leaks into actions, into choices, into real harm.

Now here's a fresh take on things - looking at online sexual harassment through law and crime study makes sense. Laws show which rules cover digital wrongs, also if today's laws actually handle abuse well. Offenders act for reasons, though; criminology digs into why people do it, plus what in society feeds those actions.

Looking into how online spaces handle sexual harassment means seeing it through two lenses at once - law and human actions. Laws around cyber harassment in India get reviewed here alongside what drives people to act aggressively online. Instead of just reacting, there is value in building better oversight tools like checking user ages more carefully. Systems that manage harmful posts can stop intimate photos spreading without consent while shielding those most at risk.

## 1.2 Research Problem Statement

Even though rules against internet crimes are in place, digital sexual abuse keeps rising around the world. Across India, laws tackling online harassment appear in both the 2000 Information Technology Act and the 2023 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Such acts make illegal behaviors like watching someone secretly online, stalking through digital channels, spreading indecent content, or sending intimate pictures without consent punishable by law.

Still, these laws do not work well because of various issues. One reason stands out - they usually kick in once damage is done. Instead of stopping crimes before they happen, courts spend time penalizing actions later. By then, people have already faced serious consequences. Help arrives too late to undo what happened.

Folks hiding behind screen names often slip through the cracks when authorities try to track them down. When someone harasses another person online, they might set up false personas or jump across borders using overseas servers just to stay out of sight.

Spreading fast, digital content makes control tough when it comes to disturbing material. Start one image online, within hours it hops from site to site without pause. Pulling everything down? Nearly impossible once shared beyond a single spot.

What stands out now is how poorly some online sites check user ages. Without solid rules in place, young people slip through the cracks every day. Despite set limits, kids still manage to sign up for apps meant for older crowds.

Young users face risks when they encounter damaging material online, opening doors to abuse. Starting at a young age, exposure can shape actions in ways that mimic unhealthy patterns seen across digital spaces. What spreads easily often blurs lines between acceptable and harmful interactions. Seeing suggestive content shared widely might quietly shift what feels normal around personal boundaries.

Starting off, the main issue here looks at if current laws can properly handle online sexual harassment. Laws might not do enough to shield young people using the internet. Instead of just relying on what exists, new rules could be needed. One idea involves setting age limits that block access for younger users. Another angle examines how monitoring harmful posts might help. Safety in digital spaces may depend on these added steps. Still, it remains unclear how well any of this works in practice.

### 1.3 Hypothesis

This research rests on a set of working assumptions. Though unproven, these ideas guide the approach taken here. Each one shapes how data are interpreted. Without them, direction might be lost. Still, they remain open to challenge. Where evidence leads, conclusions will follow.

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ):

What drives online sexual harassment? Not so much the mindset of those doing it nor how websites are built. Instead, laws already on the books in India handle these acts well enough.

Research Hypothesis ( $H_1$ ):

What drives online sexual harassment? Offenders' mental patterns play a role, while platform designs often make things worse. India's current laws fail to keep up, leaving gaps in protection. Strength of rules matters less when systems ignore how abuse spreads.

Online sexual harassment isn't just about laws. How people act plays a role too. The way apps are built can shape what happens. Offenders often carry certain mental traits. Platform layouts might encourage harmful actions. Behaviour unfolds differently online than offline. Design choices matter more than they first appear. Minds behind screens aren't always predictable. Digital spaces respond to human impulses. Tech shapes interaction patterns quietly. Laws alone cannot explain it all.

## 1.4 Study Objectives

The primary objectives of this research are as follows:

- To examine the concept and scope of online sexual harassment in digital environments.
- To analyse the legal framework governing online sexual harassment in India.
- To study the psychological and criminological factors influencing offender behaviour.
- Finding out if current rules on online bullying actually work.
- Looking into what happens when kids can use social media without limits.

One way might be checking ages before access is allowed. Tools that watch what gets posted could help too. Sometimes stopping problems means looking at who's online first. Watching content closely tends to reduce risks. Making sure only certain people see things may prevent issues later. Filters often catch what should not get through.

## 1.5 Research Questions

What does this study aim to explore? Here are the key questions it tackles

What are the main causes of online sexual harassment in digital environments?

What about India's current laws tackling cyber sex abuse? Are they up to the task.

What psychological traits influence individuals who engage in online harassment?

Online spaces shape how people interact - sometimes making abuse easier to spread. Yet those same tools can offer ways to block or report harmful behavior. Rules set by tech companies influence whether cruelty thrives or gets stopped. Design choices quietly guide what users see, say, or endure. Power sits mostly with platform owners when it comes to fixing harm.

What regulatory measures can be implemented to protect children from harmful online content?

## 1.6 Scope and Limits of the Study

This work looks only at online sexual abuse through India's legal lens. Focusing on laws passed by parliament, court rulings shape the analysis instead of broad social trends. Legal frameworks guide the inquiry while judgments bring real cases into view. Criminology ideas help explain behavior behind digital attacks rather than just listing rules.

Books, research papers, official reports, or laws form the core of this work instead. Interviews or questionnaires - those kinds of firsthand inputs - never entered the process at any point.

Ahead of today's rules, tech keeps shifting - harassment could change shape down the line, slipping through existing laws. What works now might not hold up when new patterns arrive uninvited. Future behaviors may dodge current penalties simply because they were never imagined before. Laws tend to lag, especially when screens transform faster than lawmakers can react. Down the road, gaps will likely open where protection should be.

## 1.7 Research Methodology

Looking into how rules are made shapes this project's core approach. Through court rulings, laws already on record connect with writings by scholars focusing on digital spaces where harassment happens. Examining these pieces forms the backbone of what unfolds here.

Starting off, laws found in the Information Technology Act form a key part of legal groundwork. Alongside these, sections from the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita also play a role. Then come parts of the Constitution that tie into digital issues. On another note, writings such as academic books help build understanding. Journal pieces add further insight on cyber offenses. Research papers dig deeper into patterns of online abuse. Scholarly works round out the picture with analysis grounded in study.

Besides looking at laws, the work pulls ideas from crime studies and mind science to see why people act out. By mixing these views, it examines digital abuse through how rules are written plus how humans actually behave.

## 1.8 Research Gap

Even so, research into cybercrime often zeroes in on laws and court rulings. Not much digs into what drives people to harass others online. Rarely do papers explore how platform designs might make it easier for abuse to spread.

Few people are talking about how kids can get on social media anytime they want - laws haven't caught up yet. With more young ones holding phones now, danger lurks in what they see online, also who might target them.

A missing piece in current studies? How tech tools might stop explicit material from spreading online hardly gets mentioned. What's overlooked sits right there - solutions through technology rarely enter the conversation. Online sharing of sensitive content continues, yet answers hiding in software or systems are often ignored. Little attention goes to digital fixes that could block such leaks before they start. The silence around these options stands out when you look closer.

## 1.9 Importance of the Research

This work stands out because it mixes law with insights from crime studies and human behavior. Instead of staying within one field, it draws connections across disciplines to explore digital abuse. A broader lens helps uncover patterns that single-field methods might miss. Seeing the problem through multiple angles adds depth most studies lack.

Few realize how much kids face online dangers - rules could help shield them better. A closer look shows safer spaces might come from stricter oversight.

### 1.10 Review of Literature

Online harassment and cybercrime have drawn attention from multiple researchers. What stands out is how Danielle Keats Citron sees abusive behavior on the web as undermining both free speech and personal respect. In much the same way, John Suler links harsher conduct online to an environment where people feel less restrained. The looseness of digital spaces, he suggests, fuels actions they might avoid face-to-face.

When someone ready to cause harm finds a chance online, trouble can start. A person becomes vulnerable if there is no protection around. These situations often grow from behaviors picked up over time. What people do online reflects what they have seen others do before. Risk rises when habits meet weak defenses.

1. David S. Wall, *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age* 45 (Polity Press 2007).2. Danielle Keats Citron, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* 15 (Harvard Univ. Press 2014).3. Nicola Henry & Anastasia Powell, *Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence*, 21 *Violence Against Women* 758 (2015).4. Susan W. Brenner, *Cybercrime and the Law* 112 (Northeastern Univ. Press 2012).5. UNICEF, *Children's Rights in the Digital Age* (2017).6. *Information Technology Act, No. 21 of 2000*, §§ 66E, 67, 67A, 67B (India).7. Danielle Keats Citron, *Cyber Civil Rights*, 89 *B.U. L. Rev.* 61 (2009).8. John Suler, *The Online Disinhibition Effect*, 7 *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 321 (2004)9. Lawrence E. Cohen & Marcus Felson, *Social Change and Crime Rate Trends*, 44 *Am. Sociological Rev.* 588 (1979).

RATHAN S

B.COM. LL. B (HONS) V<sup>th</sup> YEAR

Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS)

CO- AUTHOR:

Mr. HARIHARAN K ,Assistant professor VISTAS

## CHAPTER 2

### Conceptual And Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1 Introduction

Digital talk tools changed how people connect, share thoughts, and join group activities. Not just phones or emails - apps like chat rooms, message apps, and websites now host huge crowds every day. Yet alongside easier chats and faster info flow, fresh dangers popped up in hidden corners. One troubling trend stands out: unwanted sexual messages or actions online are rising sharply.

What happens when someone says or shares sexual things online that cross the line? That is online sexual harassment. It shows up on apps where people chat fast. Or in games played with strangers far away. Sometimes it spreads across websites meant for connection. The space isn't real, but harm still lands hard. Bodies aren't near each other here. Yet words cut just the same. Anonymity gives some a shield. Others feel trapped watching pain go viral. Control slips faster than offline. Screens blur boundaries others would respect face-to-face.

Online spaces often make it easier for people to harass others. Because conversations happen through screens, not in person, some feel less responsible for how they act. Messages full of abuse - whether words, pictures, or clips - can race from one place to another almost instantly. Hidden behind usernames, those doing harm can stay unknown, slipping away from any real pushback. Distance blurs empathy, speed multiplies damage, invisibility shields the sender.

Lately, having phones and web access everywhere made things worse. Right now, kids included can get on social apps almost too easily. Some sites say you must be older to join, even so checks hardly ever happen. Because of that, young users sometimes see sexual material or face bullying online.

Looking at laws and crime patterns, spotting what drives online sexual harassment means digging into actions, minds, and tech features behind it. So here comes a closer look - defining exactly what counts as online sexual harassment, showing how it appears in different shapes across platforms. Behaviour isn't random; hidden mental pushes often steer offenders, something we'll unpack next. Then again, old-school crime ideas adapt surprisingly well when explaining why these acts thrive online. The digital space changes delivery - not motives.

#### 2.2 Online Sexual Harassment Explained

What happens when someone sends lewd texts without permission? That counts as online sexual harassment. Picture getting nasty remarks about your body over social media - unwanted, invasive. Someone spreading private photos without consent fits here too. Think about being followed across apps by a stranger making dirty threats. Digital spaces host these violations every day. Messages meant to degrade, stalk, or shame with a sexual twist cross the line

What happens online can break basic rights like dignity, privacy, self-direction - laws meant to protect these exist in many countries. Hurt comes fast when someone receives lewd messages or finds intimate

photos shared without permission. Such acts strike at who a person is, how they're seen, what control they hold over their own life.

What happens on screens often mirrors old power imbalances, just moved online. Those speaking up - especially women and people on society's edges - often face sharper attacks for stepping outside expected roles. Being visible in public conversation opens some to more abuse than others. Digital spaces aren't neutral; they carry forward real-world patterns of control and silencing

What stands out about online sexual harassment is how long it lasts. Not like face-to-face incidents tied to one place, this kind stays close through different websites. People who harass often keep sending notes, open new profiles, or share damaging posts again - long after they were taken down.

What sticks around matters too - nasty posts live on long after they appear. Take down a video here, yet screenshots might be spreading there. A post gone today could still linger in hidden corners tomorrow.

What stands out is how tough it becomes to handle online sexual harassment using old-style laws because of these traits. Still present are the issues that come from its unique nature, making control a real challenge under standard rules.

## **2.3 Online Sexual Harassment Types**

Harassment online takes many shapes. Each one brings its own mix of emotional strain and legal hurdles to handle.

### **2.3.1 Cyberstalking**

Starting with texts that never stop, cyberstalking means using tech again and again to pressure someone. Messages pile up when one person watches another's moves online too closely. Digital footsteps get followed across websites by someone who won't let go. Threats appear where people share photos, thoughts, or plans. What happens on screens can feel like being trapped

Worries creep in when someone feels watched online, never knowing when it might happen again. Sometimes a person starts jumping at small sounds, heart racing for no clear reason. Life gets harder when sleep fades and concentration slips away. Days stretch long when trust vanishes along with peace of mind. Work suffers just as much as quiet moments at home.

### **2.3.2 Unwanted Sexual Messages and Photos**

Out of nowhere, someone might receive graphic photos or videos they never asked for. That kind of message pops up uninvited, crossing clear boundaries. Instead of mutual agreement, there's pressure - or worse, silence being ignored. Personal space gets blurred when choices are overridden like that. Consent fades when one person decides for another.

Quick sharing online helps explain why this kind of harassment happens so often. Messages with sexual content zip across apps the moment someone hits send.

### **2.3.3 Sharing Private Photos Without Consent**

Spreading personal photos without permission - sometimes called revenge porn - ranks among the worst kinds of digital abuse. These actions release private footage meant to shame or hurt someone.<sup>5</sup>

When someone shares private material online, it tends to spread fast. That kind of exposure sticks around, hurting how people see them over time. Feelings like shame or anxiety often follow, lingering much longer than expected.

### **2.3.4 Morphing and Deepfake Content**

Now fake pictures pop up online thanks to tech tools. Offenders swap faces into adult scenes using software that mimics real people. Computers help twist reality by sliding someone's likeness where it does not belong. These edits look real but are built on deception and harm.

Truth becomes harder to spot when fake videos feel real. What looks like proof might be crafted by software instead. Courts struggle as rules lag behind these tools. Right now, deciding what counts as evidence gets messy. People can make others appear to say things they never did. This shifts how trust works online. Laws are still catching up to handle such cases.

### **2.3.5 Sexually Offensive Remarks and Threats**

Public commenting happens a lot online. People, especially women, reporters, or advocates, sometimes get hit with explicit remarks or warnings about sexual harm.<sup>6</sup>

This kind of conduct could aim to quiet people down. Or it might make them less likely to join conversations online.

## **2.4 Mental States Shaping Criminal Actions**

Few stop to think why people harass others online. Yet knowing what drives them changes how we respond. Motives matter more than assumed. Reactions shift when inner reasons surface. Behind every act sits a reason often ignored. Clarity comes by examining minds behind screens. What pushes someone to harm another digitally? Answers hide in emotional patterns rarely discussed. Responses grow sharper once intentions are clear.

### **2.4.1 Online Disinhibition Effect**

People often act harsher online than they do in person. Behind a screen, names hidden and bodies unseen, normal rules start to fade. Psychologist John Suler points out that when actions carry no instant fallout, self-control slips. Words fly easier where faces don't show reactions. What happens quietly on a device might never happen across a table. Distance changes how people respond. Freed from being seen, some say things they normally would not

### **2.4.2 Lack of Empathy**

Some people typing harsh things online seem less able to feel what others go through. Without face-to-face contact, those on the receiving end can start to feel like ideas instead of actual humans carrying pain.

### **2.4.3 Narcissism and the Need for Attention**

A craving for notice might drive some people to act harshly online. Those leaning toward narcissism often

find themselves posting things meant to shock or upset others. Attention becomes a reward when reactions roll in - loud responses feeding their need to feel seen. Validation hides in controversy for these personalities, who thrive on being talked about rather than ignored.

#### **2.4.4 Impulsivity and Low Self Control**

Starting fast, some people act before thinking - this ties closely to acting out in ways that break social rules. When someone struggles to pause themselves, they might bother others without weighing what could happen next

### **2.5 Criminological Theories and Online Sexual Harassment**

Online sexual harassment happens for reasons that some crime studies can clarify.

#### **2.5.1 Routine Activity Theory**

A lone chance shows up whenever a thief meets no one watching. A target appears - suddenly open, without protection. Timing shifts everything. The moment stretches, empty of helpers. Opportunity grows where eyes are missing. Action follows when risks feel low. Places matter more when guards vanish  
a motivated offender

a suitable target

Missing someone able to protect.<sup>9</sup>

When people spend a lot of time online, they can become targets because systems often fail to watch closely. Digital spaces sometimes miss warning signs simply due to weak oversight.

#### **2.5.2 Social Learning Theory**

What people see others do shapes how they act. If rude actions are treated like normal in online groups, some might copy them just to fit in

#### **2.5.3 General Theory of Crime**

Picture this: trouble saying no often leads people down risky paths. Those who struggle to pause before acting? They might lash out in digital spaces. A mind racing ahead without brakes tends to skip consequences. Think quick reactions, little patience - online attacks fit right into that pattern. Impulse drives choices when control fades. Some folks just can't sit still with their emotions - and that spills into how they treat others online. When restraint weakens, actions follow fast, no map needed. Self-regulation slips, risks rise. Fewer filters mean sharper words sent too soon. It's less about planning, more about reacting now. That spark? Often lit by poor impulse management.

#### **2.5.4 Feminist Criminology**

Feminist criminology looks at crime by focusing on how genders are treated unequally. From this view, cybersexism mirrors deep-rooted male-dominated systems found everywhere. Those targeted tend to be women speaking out - attacked not for what they say but because they speak at all.

## 2.6 Digital Platforms and Harassment Support

What happens online often depends on how digital spaces are built. Because some parts of social media work certain ways, harm can spread easier than it stops. One feature might let messages pile up fast; another could make it hard to block who sends them. Rules that seem neutral sometimes protect harmful behavior by default. Design choices shape whether people feel safe - or exposed - over time

- anonymity of users
- weak content moderation systems

Sharing files fast happens online now. Digital stuff moves quick between people. Information spreads without slowing down. Files travel across devices in moments. People exchange data at high speed today

- lack of strict age verification mechanisms

What worries many is how freely kids can get onto social media sites. Without much standing in their way, young users sign up fast and jump into online worlds missing key safeguards. Because of this gap, they might run into harmful material or face bullying from others online.

Spreading explicit pictures or videos online often happens through social networks. These sites usually let people post whatever they want, with little checking. When something shows bare skin or nudity, it can move fast from one person to another. That speed makes it easier for someone to be targeted or misused. So here it is: tougher rules need to step in. Age checks could help stop underage access. Spotting harmful material fast might come from smart tools that scan automatically. When those pieces work together, fewer people face abuse online. Protection grows when systems act before harm spreads.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter looked at how online sexual harassment works behind the scenes. It turns out the problem ties together mindsets, tech setups, because behavior shifts when screens get involved. What happens isn't just about individuals - platform designs matter too, since they shape interactions without users always noticing. Harassment shows up in many ways, like relentless online tracking or unwanted explicit texts. One moment someone feels safe; next, private photos appear without permission. Technology twists facts, alters images, traps people unfairly. Laws struggle to keep pace when harm spreads through screens. Victims carry weight silently while rules lag behind.

Out there in the digital world, people sometimes act abusively because they feel hidden behind screens - this idea comes from what psychologists call the online disinhibition effect. When it comes to understanding deeper patterns, criminology offers some angles: take Routine Activity Theory, which looks at how opportunity shapes actions. Then there is Social Learning Theory, suggesting folks pick up harmful habits by watching others behave badly online. Another lens, the General Theory of Crime, ties impulsive tendencies to repeated misconduct across settings. Together, these views sketch a fuller picture of why harassment takes root where it does.

A closer look at how digital platforms are built shows they often make it easier for bullying to happen.

Ways to shield those at risk - especially kids - must go beyond current rules, demanding tougher oversight.

## Bluebook Footnotes

David S. Wall, *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age* (Polity Press 2007). Citron Danielle Keats wrote a book called *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace*. Published by Harvard University Press it came out in 2014. Nicola Henry & Anastasia Powell, *Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence*, 21 *Violence Against Women* 758 (2015). Susan W. Brenner wrote a book on cybercrime and legal rules. It came out in 2012 through Northeastern University Press. Mary Anne Franks, *Drafting an Effective "Revenge Porn" Law*, 14 *Geo. Mason L. Rev.* 1301 (2015). Danielle Keats Citron wrote on cyber civil rights in the *Boston University Law Review*, volume 89, page 61, published in 2009. A psychologist named John Suler wrote about how people act more freely online. His thoughts appeared in a journal called *CyberPsychology & Behavior*. That was back in 2004. The paper took up pages 321 of volume seven. Michael Gottfredson & Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford Univ. Press 1990). Back in 1979, Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson took a close look at how crime shifts alongside society's daily rhythms. Their work appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, volume 44, page 588. Instead of focusing on motives alone, they tracked changes through ordinary patterns - where people go, what they do. Shifts in lifestyle often opened new chances for offenders. When routines changed across large groups, so did crime rates. The link wasn't always obvious, yet it shaped trends over time. Opportunity mattered just as much as intent. Daily life created hidden pathways that affected safety more than expected. What seemed normal could quietly influence risk. Ronald L. Akers, *Social Learning and Social Structure* (Transaction Publishers 1998).

## CHAPTER 3

### Online Sexual Harassment Laws in India

#### 3.1 Introduction

Fast changes in tech brought fresh ways people talk and connect. Messaging apps, places to share photos, spaces for chatting online - these let folks reach each other no matter where they are. Still, tools built for connection sometimes open doors to harm instead. A troubling result? Harassment through screens, especially targeting others sexually on the web.

Starting with a message that crosses the line, online sexual harassment shows up in digital spaces where it is not wanted. Sometimes it arrives as pictures shared without permission, sometimes as words meant to degrade. Other times, someone follows another person across websites, refusing to stop despite clear signals to leave them alone. Comments posted under fake names can carry threats dressed as jokes. Each act chips away at a person's sense of safety and control over their own life.

Online sexual harassment in India falls under several kinds of laws at once. Cyber regulations form one part, alongside existing criminal rules and rights built into the constitution. At the core sits the Information Technology Act passed in 2000, setting ground for digital crimes. Meanwhile, acts like stalking or spying on someone get covered by sections within the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita*. Each layer works apart yet ties together when cases arise.

Still, even with laws in place, online sexual harassment grows because deeper problems remain. Social

media sites go mostly unsupervised, which opens doors. Kids get phones earlier now - sometimes before they turn ten - and those apps often skip real checks on age. Without solid barriers, underage users slip through, landing where harmful material waits. Exposure happens fast, sometimes without warning.

Out here, shaky photos and raw clips move fast online. Some sites let people post whatever they want, hardly anyone checks it first. When something bare shows up, it jumps from place to place like a spark. Young eyes might catch it before anyone even notices.

This chapter looks at India's laws on online sexual harassment, then checks how well rules like age limits hold up legally - content oversight comes into play here while platform duties are weighed too.

What matters most isn't just law - old moral lessons place deep value on treating people with care. Lines from ancient Tamil works like Thirukkural speak sharply against actions that wound another's worth. Sometimes it's not rules but words from centuries ago that shape how we see each other.

For example:

"ஓழுக்கம் விழுப்பம் தரலான் ஓழுக்கம்  
உயிரினும் ஒம்பப் படும்."

(Thirukkural 131)

A life may end, yet how we treat one another should never be sacrificed. Online cruelty shows why guarding kindness matters just as much today.

### **3.2 Information Technology Act 2000**

Cybercrime rules in India mostly come from a law passed in 2000. Though built for digital trade and messaging, it also covers online wrongdoing. Privacy breaches find mention there, along with lewd material or repeated troubling messages.

#### **3.2.1 Section 66E Breaching Personal Privacy**

Caught on camera where they shouldn't be - private parts snapped or shared without saying yes - that's what Section 66E of the IT Act makes illegal. When someone spreads intimate visuals without permission, this law steps in to name it wrongdoing.

Few people expect their private moments captured without consent, yet it happens when someone takes photos or videos behind their back. These recordings often surface online, shared across devices and networks without warning. Instead of walking away, some choose to weaponize the footage, turning silence into threats. Pressure builds fast when images get used to control or intimidate those pictured. What begins as a hidden lens can spiral into ongoing distress for the person filmed.

Time behind bars could last as long as three years, or there might be a financial penalty instead. Jail isn't always the outcome - sometimes money changes hands. A court may choose confinement, yet fines also fit within the rule. Not every case leads to prison; cash penalties stand as an option too. Length of stay in custody capped at thirty-six months, though payment can take its place.

When someone shares intimate pictures online to embarrass another person, this rule applies clearly.

Offenders often act out of a desire to hurt, using stolen visuals as weapons against those they target.

### **3.2.2 Section 67 Publishing Obscene Material**

Obscene content shared online becomes illegal under Section 67 of the Information Technology Act.<sup>3</sup>

A single rule spells out consequences for sharing explicit content online. Anyone caught sending such material could face jail time along with financial penalties. The law targets electronic transmission of offensive images or words. Punishment includes both prison and monetary fines. Breaking this rule leads to serious legal outcomes.

Out here, seeing lewd material spread across websites slowly makes extreme sexual conduct seem ordinary. Sometimes, that shift opens doors to abuse or manipulation without sounding alarms.

Yet deciding just what counts as offensive material proves tricky. Looking at whether it might lead people into immoral behavior has been one way judges try to make sense of it.

### **3.2.3 Sexually Explicit Content under Section 67A**

Apart from general rules, Section 67A steps in when sexual material shows up online.<sup>4</sup>

Time behind bars could last five years when someone commits these acts, along with having to pay money. Jail is one outcome, another comes in the form of charges added by courts. Lengthy confinement might follow, financial penalties tag alongside. Prison stretches possibly half a decade, cash penalties arrive too. Locked away for long periods happens sometimes, forced payments come just after.

When pictures or videos showing private moments spread online, this rule often comes into play. Social networks can become pathways for such material to move fast between users.

Now imagine someone sharing private photos without permission. These acts often leave deep emotional scars. Spreading intimate footage can ruin how others see a person. Hurt runs beyond the screen when trust gets broken like that.

### **3.2.4 Section 67B Protects Children**

A child appearing in sexual content gets protected under Section 67B, which outlaws sharing or sending such material.<sup>5</sup>

A new rule came into place because more kids were being harmed online. Digital spaces had become a risk, so steps followed.

Still, how well this rule works hinges mostly on whether online sites can keep young users away from damaging material.

Young users often slip past checks because today's social apps depend on honesty when asking how old someone is. Because of this gap, better digital tools must step in to keep kids safe online.

## **3.3 Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023**

A fresh legal framework stepped in during 2023, swapping out India's old penal code. Outdated rules got updates through this shift, bringing changes to how crimes are defined now.

### **3.3.1 Sexual Harassment**

A crime in the eyes of the BNS is any unwanted advance of a sexual kind. Remarks laced with sexuality fall under this label too. Behavior that crosses the line shows up here, even if it seems minor at first glance. Fewer boundaries show up online, making it easier for mean behavior to spread through messages or posts on websites where people share updates. Harassment slips into these spaces without much effort.

### **3.3.2 Cyberstalking**

A person might keep reaching out or watching someone else online, using tools like messages or social media. Digital paths often make it easier to follow others without their okay. Sometimes screens hide the ones who won't stop checking in. Repeated contact shows up in emails, posts, or constant alerts. Watching happens quietly, built into apps people use every day.

Messages can pile up when someone follows a person across social sites. Following them online might turn into constant contact. Threats sometimes show up in those messages too.

When people act this way, deep emotional pain often follows - sometimes spilling into real-world targeting. A single incident online might ripple outward, turning private torment into public pursuit.

### **3.3.3 Voyeurism**

Peeking at someone's hidden moments often starts with a camera clicking where it should not. A person might find their picture passed around, never having agreed to any of it. Privacy slips away when actions meant to stay unseen get copied, then spread. Someone else holds the moment hostage, shared beyond control.

Secret recordings now happen more often since phones and tiny cameras make spying simpler. Offenders take pictures without being seen, thanks to tech that fits in a pocket. Hidden gadgets let people watch others who aren't expecting it. Devices that fit anywhere turn private moments into stolen views. Cameras blend into everyday objects, making abuse harder to spot. What once required effort now only needs a quick tap on a screen.

### **3.3.4 Protecting the Identity of Victims**

Under Indian law, safeguarding a victim's identity in sexual offence matters takes priority.

Fear fades when privacy is respected, shielding those affected from added harm or judgment by others.

## **3.4 Constitutional Protection**

Online harassment finds limits through individual protections built into India's founding legal document. These basic freedoms act like shields when digital spaces turn hostile. Each right stands ready to defend personal safety in virtual interactions. Power rests with citizens because the framework supports dignity even behind screens.

### **3.4.1 Right to Life and Privacy**

Article 21 guarantees the right to life and personal liberty.

Besides protecting liberty, the highest court sees this right as covering personal privacy too. Dignity comes into play just as much under its umbrella.

Harm done on the internet by exposing someone's private life or damaging their name falls under breach of Article 21. Because when personal boundaries are crossed online, it counts as an infringement. Spreading false claims or sharing intimate details without consent isn't just wrong - it crosses a legal line. When digital actions harm dignity or secrecy, they clash with constitutional rights. So invading privacy through cyber abuse triggers protection under Article 21.

### **3.4.2 Everyone Treated Equally Under The Law**

All are treated the same under the rules written here. How fair things look depends on how they're applied every single time.

Folks who identify as women or belong to sidelined communities tend to face more online abuse than others. When responses fall short, fairness takes a hit - quietly but surely.

### **3.4.3 Freedom of speech with limits**

Folks can speak their minds, thanks to Article 19. Still, limits kick in when words risk harming others or clash with shared values.

Speech that harms through sexual threats crosses a line no argument about free voice can defend. What hides behind openness should never shield abuse.

## **3.5 Key Indian Legal Cases**

### **3.5.1 State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti (2004)**

Out of nowhere, this became India's first confirmed legal win against digital abuse. A man filled a web space with crude remarks aimed at a woman, then built a pretend identity using her name. Instead of letting it slide, authorities stepped in, pointing straight to the IT Act when they brought charges. Guilty was the verdict handed down by judges who saw through the deception.

### **3.5.2 Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)**

One moment changed everything when the highest court wiped out Section 66A over free expression concerns. Still, rules targeting abuse or explicit material stayed untouched by that decision.

### **3.5.3 Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)**

A fresh look at India's highest court showed privacy now stands protected like life itself. What changed was how judges saw personal space - not just physical but mental too. Suddenly, old laws felt outdated against new digital realities. This shift came through careful reasoning tied to freedom and dignity. Protection of private choices became part of what it means to live fully.

A single act - posting someone's private pictures without permission - can break their sense of safety. When courts rule on these cases, it shifts how abuse spreads across digital spaces.

## **3.6 Platform Rules and Legal Standing**

A key problem found here involves how social media sites aren't properly overseen. Yet rules meant to control them often fall short. Since oversight remains weak, misuse spreads more easily. Because gaps exist in enforcement, platforms operate with little accountability. While some efforts are made, they rarely

match the scale of the issue.

Right now, kids get their hands on phones fast - signing up for apps before anyone checks age. That opens doors to dangerous stuff online while making bullying more likely.

Folks running social sites? They'd need stiffer rules in place. A shift toward tougher oversight might just happen if pressure builds quietly behind the scenes.

### **3.6.1 Age Limits for Social Media Use**

Before letting anyone sign up, social networks ought to check how old they really are. A solid proof of age must come first, not after profiles go live.

Possible mechanisms include:

- identity verification
- parental consent systems
- biometric verification technologies

Fewer kids might stumble on dangerous material if these steps were taken.

### **3.6.2 Limits on Explicit Material**

A sudden shift happens when software spots nudity without human eyes. Machines now flag graphic clips before they spread online. Alerts pop up the moment a system recognizes something inappropriate. Screens light up with warnings thanks to silent algorithms working overnight. Detection runs quietly behind every upload and stream. Software learns patterns so people do not have to watch everything.

Anything showing these gets blocked right away:

- nude content
- half-nude images

Explicit videos featuring sexual acts

Adult material meant for those eighteen years old or more

Fewer toxic things would move around if these steps were taken.

### **3.6.3 Platform Liability**

Facing consequences might push digital spaces to act faster on toxic material. Removing damaging posts could become a priority if laws demand it. Liability may force platforms to stop ignoring what spreads online. When rules apply equally, cleaning up content feels less optional. Harmful stuff lingering too long? Courts might finally have something to say.

Faster removal of graphic material might become mandatory under tougher platform regulations. A set timeframe may be imposed for taking down such content once flagged. Rules could force companies to act quickly when hosts share harmful visuals. Timing matters more if sites must delete explicit posts by a strict deadline. Enforcement might hinge on how fast networks respond after notification.

What matters in Tamil writings is how people treat one another. A person's actions often show what they truly value inside.

Another Thirukkural on the same theme

"அறத்தொடு நடுவுவேண்டும் ஆக்கம் அதுவின்றேல்  
பிறத்தொடு போகும் புகழ்."

### 3.7 Conclusion

Online sexual harassment laws in India come from several sources. One is the Information Technology Act, which sets rules for digital conduct. Another source appears in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, where old criminal codes now live. Rights tucked inside the Constitution also play a part. Equality shows up through Article 14. Free expression gets shaped by Article 19. Personal liberty stands on Article 21.

Still, current laws tend to respond once harm happens instead of stopping it ahead of time.

Stronger rules need to happen if online spaces are going to protect people better. Age checks might help stop underage access before it starts. Machines that scan posts could catch harmful material faster than humans alone. When platforms face real consequences, they tend to act more carefully. Safety grows when someone has to answer for what shows up online.

Still today, old ideas about honor and fairness help point the way through new kinds of mistreatment. Though times change, treating people right stays a steady compass.

### 3.8 Ethical Ideas About Dignity and Respect From Tamil Literary Works

Back when temples stood taller than towers, old Tamil poems spoke plainly about honor, how people ought to treat one another. Even now, through glowing screens and quick messages, those lessons still hold weight.

Respect for others shows up early in the Thirukkural, a work shaped by the ancient Tamil thinker Thiruvalluvar. Self-discipline weaves through its lines, not shouted but quietly lived. Moral choices matter here - more than rules, they reflect how one walks through life. Though old, its voice stays close, speaking without grand claims. What stands out is how little it needs to prove.

A famous pair of lines goes like this:

"ஒழுக்கம் விழுப்பம் தரலான் ஒழுக்கம்  
உயிரினும் ஒம்பப் படும்."

Life matters, yet honor demands greater care. When people speak online, their words carry weight - respect shapes how they connect. Freedom exists, still it needs boundaries so others stay safe. What you say reflects who you are, especially where screens hide faces.

A verse from long ago puts it plainly: one thing happens because another came before

"தீயினாற் சூட்ட புண் உள்ளாறும் ஆறாதே

நாவினாற் சூட்ட வடு.”

A burn might fade after a time, yet cruel speech could leave pain that stays forever. Think about how people act on the internet - what they type sticks deeper than expected. Written lines or voice messages out there shape silent suffering no one sees right away.

A single cruel message online might echo endlessly, lingering far beyond its first post. Hurt often deepens when insults or threats stay visible, piling up over days or months.

What someone thinks of you matters deeply in Tamil tradition. Harming another's standing draws strong disapproval through old writings. Dignity often shows itself in how people uphold their name. Respect follows those who guard a person's good name carefully.

One classic Tamil work, the Naladiyar, teaches avoiding deeds that shame people. Because of lessons like these, valuing human worth isn't new - it's rooted deep in Tamil thought. Through time, standing against dishonor shaped everyday ethics.

Respect still matters, even when messages fly across screens. Though tools shift how words travel, fairness in how people speak stays put. What we say online carries weight, just like face-to-face talk once did. Even with new gadgets shaping chats, kindness isn't outdated. How voices echo through networks doesn't erase basic decency.

### **3.9 Cultural and Social Effects of Online Sexual Harassment**

One person's abuse online can ripple outward, touching more than just them. Harassment in digital places often makes people step back from forums or stay quiet. Some stop sharing thoughts altogether after being targeted. Others choose silence rather than face another attack. Public conversations lose voices when fear takes hold. Withdrawal spreads quietly, changing how open the internet feels.

When people fear speaking up online, it shrinks the room for open conversation. Public debate often happens now through digital channels - places where politics, learning, and work connections mix. Without a sense of safety, many step back instead of joining in. What spreads across screens shapes who speaks, who listens, who stays silent.

Not every woman faces abuse online, yet patterns show they're more likely than men to endure it. When someone speaks out about politics or society, attacks can follow - especially if she's a target just for speaking up. Threats often take a sexual turn, turning disagreement into something far uglier.

Not just an isolated issue, this conduct ties into deeper societal imbalances between genders. Women's voices in public conversations tend to face pushback through digital abuse, according to researchers focused on feminist theory.

Worry sets in when thinking about how online attacks affect mental health. Anxiety, sadness, and constant unease show up regularly among those targeted. When things get extreme, deep emotional scars can stick around for years afterward.

Stuck online, digital posts can last much longer than expected. When damaging stuff shows up, it tends to

stick around - sometimes years. Take it down yourself, yet duplicates still pop up elsewhere anyway.

Laws alone won't fix it - attitudes have to shift too.

### 3.10 Broader Review of Legal Precedents

State of Tamil Nadu v. Suhas Katti (2004)

A young man in India ended up convicted after one of the country's first cybercrime cases unfolded online. He wrote offensive posts about a woman using a Yahoo message board, slipping words into public view like they meant nothing. A made-up email followed - set up under her identity - as if copying her voice without consent. Courts saw it clearly: digital space held real harm, even back then.

Messages filled with abuse poured in after the accused set up a false profile online. Found guilty, the person faced charges tied to both cyber regulations and standard criminal statutes.

From this situation came a clear sign: old cyber rules might work against online abuse, yet getting them enforced still stumbles.

Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)

That day, the highest court erased Section 66A of the IT law - its reason? The rule had trampled free speech protected by Article 19(1)(a). Though written quietly into statute books, its effect roared too loudly against basic rights. With one ruling, vague threats tucked inside digital rules were pulled apart. Words once used to silence online voices lost their power when tested against constitutional promise. What stood before as legal cover for censorship fell flat under scrutiny. Not through protest but judgment did clarity return to what speaking freely means online.

Still, the justices made clear that rules covering defamation, obscene material, or abusive behavior still stand.

A decision made clear that free speech matters, yet so does shielding people from damaging words. While one right stands strong, the other holds equal weight in practice. What counts is how both fit together without breaking apart.

Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)

A ruling once seen as distant now stands clear: India's highest court placed personal privacy within the core promises of Article 21. What was assumed is now affirmed - dignity includes secrecy of self, woven into life's legal shield.

A person's sense of self matters deeply when courts weigh privacy rights. When someone spreads intimate photos without consent online, it strikes at their control over who sees what. Such acts cross a line, stepping into spaces meant to stay hidden.

A ruling like this one now makes it tougher to get away with snooping on people online. How private someone stays in digital spaces matters more because of what happened here.

### 3.11 Global Views on Regulating Digital Platforms

Facing rising concerns, nations start tightening rules on tech companies to reduce abuse and damaging material online. While some resist, changes slowly roll out across borders aiming at cleaner digital spaces. Pressure builds as leaders rethink how these platforms operate every day.

A case in point: under the EU's Digital Services Act, big online platforms must strengthen how they handle harmful material while acting fast to take down unlawful posts.

Just like that, the UK and Australia rolled out new rules making social media companies handle damaging posts more seriously.

Far beyond borders, fresh moves show big tech can't just watch - eyes are on them to stop harm spreading through screens. New steps worldwide suggest platform giants now face real pressure to act before things go wrong online.

Few countries tweak rules like India could after seeing others' moves.

### 3.12 Stronger age checks

A key point made here centers on tighter checks for user ages within online social spaces. While focusing on platform rules, it pushes a harder line when confirming how old someone really is.

Thirteen turns out to be the magic number on most sites today. Yet that rule melts fast when someone types any birthday they want while signing up.

Facing this flaw leaves kids open to damaging online spaces.

Stronger verification mechanisms could include:

- linking social media accounts to government identification systems
- requiring parental consent for minors

With smart software spotting young people online. Machines help find kids by learning patterns over time. Through digital clues, systems guess ages quietly. By watching behavior, programs flag under-eighteens carefully. Some tech watches for signs of youth without asking names

Fewer kids might stumble on harmful stuff online if these steps get taken. Harassment could drop when young users are better shielded by smarter safeguards.

### 3.13 Controlling Explicit Material Through Technology

A shift gaining attention targets how online spaces handle graphic photos and moving footage. Though often overlooked, rules around such material are shifting quietly beneath broader debates.

Out of nowhere, modern AI tools spot explicit pictures before they spread online. When something shows nudity or sexual content, these programs step in - stopping uploads fast. They work silently, yet catch what most would rather never see.

A single system could stop bad material spreading. By using these tools, damage might be reduced before it spreads too far. One fix leads to fewer problems later on. Harm often moves fast - this slows it down. When filters work early, trouble finds less room to grow.

Minors gain protection through this method, while at the same time digital spaces become tougher for harassers to misuse.

### 3.14 Platform Responsibility and Legal Protection for Online Services

Nowadays, platforms online help people talk to one another across distances. Back then, those middlemen weren't held fully responsible for what users posted.

Still, when online spaces turn into main hubs for talking, how they handle damaging posts starts to matter more. What once seemed minor now carries weight simply because so many gather there daily.

Stronger intermediary liability rules could require platforms to:

- remove explicit content within a specific timeframe
- implement automated monitoring systems

Work alongside police when looking into online crimes

These steps might push platforms to act sooner when stopping abuse. A shift like this could mean companies watch more closely what happens on their sites. Instead of waiting, they may start fixing problems before things get worse. Changes like these tend to make firms pay attention earlier. Acting fast becomes more likely under such rules.

### 3.15 Blending Old Values With New Rules Online

Finding balance between old moral principles and new tech rules might help reduce abuse on the internet. While one builds on long-held beliefs, the other adapts to fast-changing digital behavior. Where past guidelines offer foundation, present systems add enforcement tools. This mix could slow harmful actions online. Though different in origin, their combined effect may bring clearer outcomes. Instead of replacing ethics, technology supports them in a connected world.

Again and again, old Tamil writings point to kindness as a steady guide through life. What matters most shows up in how people hold themselves back when needed. Respect for one another threads through each story like a quiet rule never named but always followed.

another thirukkural verse on the topic

A good deed needs fairness inside it. Without that balance, progress loses its way instead

பிறத்தொடு போகும் புகழ்.”

Fairness shapes what we do, not just rules but care for others. Doing right matters more than winning. Choices show who people really are. Justice isn't forced - it grows from how one treats the world. What someone does reveals their inner truth.

Mindful choices online mean freedom works alongside duty. What we build should reflect care, not just what's possible.

Respectful talk? That's what digital spaces need more of. Hurtful actions tend to fade when kindness gets space to grow.

### 3.16 Conclusion

Online sexual harassment laws in India come from multiple sources. One part lives inside the Information Technology Act. Another stretches through criminal rules now placed in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita. Then there are shields built into the Constitution itself - Articles 14, 19, and 21 back them up. These layers work apart, yet point in the same direction.

Even when rules help protect people, they usually kick in too late. Laws tend to step forward once harm is already done.

Few things matter more than stopping problems before they start.

This chapter made its case by pointing to tighter rules for digital spaces, especially tools like checking user ages, filtering harmful posts automatically, one way firms could be held responsible. A shift like that might sharply cut down on sexual harassment happening online.

Fresh ideas in law walk alongside old wisdom that values how people treat one another. Dignity shows up not through rules but in daily choices. Respect grows where actions match intent. Moral weight sits quietly in each decision made. How someone carries themselves tells more than words ever could.

A shift toward stronger rules could work better when paired with a clearer sense of right and wrong in how people act online. Still, laws alone might miss the deeper patterns behind harmful behavior on digital platforms. What matters is how guidelines meet real human choices in everyday interactions. Often, fairness comes not just from enforced limits but from personal responsibility too. Without shared values, even strict policies can fall short. So it's less about adding penalties and more about shaping attitudes across networks. In that light, structure plus judgment creates sturdier ground for change.

#### Bluebook Footnotes

Danielle Keats Citron, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* (Harvard Univ. Press 2014).

Information Technology Act, 2000, sec66E (India). Punishment exists under India's Information Technology Act of 2000, Section 67, for publishing obscene material electronically. Punishment under India's Information Technology Act of 2000, Section 67A. Punishment exists under India's Information Technology Act of 2000, section 67B, for publishing child pornography online. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita was introduced in India during 2023. Book by Susan W. Brenner on cybercrime, released in 2012 through Northeastern University Press. John Suler, *The Online Disinhibition Effect*, 7 *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 321 (2004). Section 66E, along with Sections 67, 67A, and 67B of India's Information Technology Act from the year 2000 covers penalties for privacy violations, obscene material publishing, sexually explicit content distribution, and child pornography. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita enacted in 2023 within India. *Shreya Singhal against the Union of India*, decided in 2015, reported in volume five of the Supreme Court Cases at page one. *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*, (2017) 10 SCC 1.

## CHAPTER 4

### Studying Why Offenders Act the Way They Do

## 4.1 Introduction

Digital spaces now see growing numbers of people facing unwanted sexual advances online. Though laws help by holding wrongdoers accountable and offering safety to those harmed, knowing why someone acts this way matters just as much when stopping future cases. Courts usually step in once harm happens, naming actions illegal and assigning consequences. Yet punishment alone rarely touches the deeper reasons - emotions, beliefs, group influences - that push someone toward hurting others. Understanding these hidden drivers can shift efforts earlier, before damage occurs.

Out in online spaces, people tend to act unlike how they do when not behind screens. Distance changes things - names get hidden, chats happen with unknown faces, messages fly fast across continents. Without someone looking them in the eye, some feel looser about what they say or share. What gets posted there might never leave the house in real life.

One way to look at online sexual harassment is through the lens of crime studies - where it shows up as harmful actions made possible by digital spaces. Impulsiveness, self-centered thinking, or missing concern for others might push some people into harassing acts. Even so, being hidden behind screens and systems that boost extreme content can make cruelty seem common or even acceptable. What stands out is how minds, tech setups, and group habits mix in messy ways.

Out here, criminological ideas help make sense of why some people harass online when most do not. Picture a world where chances line up just right - that is what Routine Activity Theory explores. Instead of copying others, imagine learning bad habits through repeated exposure; Social Learning Theory digs into that path. Then there are built-in tendencies shaping actions, something the General Theory of Crime tries to unpack. Each lens shifts focus - one on situation, another on imitation, the last on character - yet all point toward digital misconduct.

Looking closer at people who harass others online, this section studies their mental traits. Because motives matter, it uses crime-related ideas to make sense of actions. Where tech shapes conduct, platform layouts either feed or block harmful patterns.

## 4.2 Online Harassers Psychological Traits

What drives some people to harass others online often ties back to specific mental patterns. Not everyone acts the same, yet certain habits of thinking show up again and again in those who do. Behind the screen, attitudes can shift - aggression slips through more easily when faces aren't seen. Traits like impulsiveness or lack of empathy tend to appear in these cases. Behaviour doesn't happen in isolation; it links closely to how a person views control, power, or social rules. When distance removes consequence, actions may grow bolder without real-world checks. Still, each situation carries its own weight, shaped by hidden pressures.

Patterns emerge only after looking across many examples. What repeats points toward deeper issues, not just isolated moments.

#### **4.2.1 Online Disinhibition Effect**

A person might say things online they would never say in real life. That slip happens because screens soften social rules. Psychologist John Suler named this shift the online disinhibition effect. Behind a keyboard, restraint often fades. Behavior spreads wider there - bolder, sometimes harsher. Distance from others changes how someone acts. What feels risky in person can feel weightless behind a screen.

It happens for a few reasons. Hidden names let people stay unknown. Because no one knows who they really are, some act like there won't be any fallout. Without someone watching closely, harsh words come easier. Mean comments slip out when blame feels far away. Fear of getting caught fades behind a screen. Out there in the digital world, you cannot see people, so things like frowns or crossed arms just vanish. Picture someone speaking too loud - face to face, their volume might shift when they notice a wince. Online, none of that shows up at all. A glance, a pause, even sarcasm carried by pitch - all gone missing. Without those signals, it is easier to say something harsh without noticing how it lands. Body talk fades into silence behind screens.

Instant posting online skips the pause people usually take before speaking. Because there is no tap on the shoulder stopping them, some let words fly too fast. A silent moment offline becomes a quick click online. What gets typed might never leave their mouth face-to-face. Reactions show up in pixels instead of glances. Heat from emotion burns through screens easier than walls. Distance hides hesitation. The screen acts like a mask one slips on without noticing. Thoughts pour out raw when nobody physically stands across. Words escape faster than regret arrives.

Out here, people act differently behind screens - something shifts when faces stay hidden. A quiet distance grows, making harsh words easier to send. Without eye contact, impulses aren't slowed the way they are in person. Words fly fast when consequences feel far away. This gap between self and screen opens space for behavior that wouldn't happen face-to-face. Hidden by pixels, some cross lines they normally would not. The mind slips into a looser state, less guarded than usual. Anonymity feeds actions that surprise even the one doing them.

#### **4.2.2 Lack of Empathy**

What often shows up in people who harass online? A missing sense of empathy. Feeling what another feels - that's empathy. When someone has it, they tend to pause before causing hurt. Without it, impact on others slips by unnoticed.

Still, typing messages can put space between people's minds. Because wrongdoers don't witness pain right away, their actions face less pushback from guilt or empathy.

People sometimes miss how deeply someone else is hurt. That gap in understanding opens room for

excuses. Jokes about bodies or private things might seem light at first glance. Yet those words can cut deeper than expected. What feels like teasing to one person lands differently on another. Harm hides in what gets laughed off. Dismissing pain makes it easier to keep going.

Few people notice how coldness keeps digital cruelty going.

### **4.2.3 Narcissism and the Pursuit of Power**

A need to feel superior often drives those who harass online. What stands out is how little thought goes into how others might feel. Admiration becomes a goal, sometimes more than connection. Attention feeds the behavior, even when it comes at someone else's expense.

Folks who crave spotlight might stir trouble just to be noticed. Out there on the internet, mean or sexual insults can spark replies - each one feeding their ego like fuel to a fire. Reactions pile up, quietly telling them they matter.

Sometimes power plays a role when people attack others online. To feel stronger, they pick on someone, aiming to embarrass them or shut them down. Those who speak up regularly - like women, reporters, or well-known voices - are common victims.

### **4.2.4 Impulsivity and Low Self-Control**

Some people act without thinking, often because they struggle to hold back their urges. When someone finds it hard to pause before acting, trouble follows more easily. Trouble tends to follow those who rush into things instead of waiting. Acting fast without weighing outcomes links strongly to a pattern of breaking norms. A well-known idea says weak restraint shapes how some choose quick thrills. Those who can't delay gratification lean toward choices with clear risks. Rushing ahead becomes normal when inner brakes feel too weak.

Out here, feelings hit fast when screens remove delays between thought and message. A quick reply often comes before reflection, fueled by heat rather than patience. Emotions spill through texts before brakes can be applied. Reactions flash like sparks, unchecked by pause or doubt. Words fly without weighing what follows after. Impulse drives more than reason once fingers touch keys.

Behind the screen, people often feel unseen. That hidden feeling can make choices seem safer than they are. Acting fast without thinking gets easier when consequences feel distant. Mistakes spread quick when caution fades away.

## **4.3 Criminological Analysis**

What drives online harassment? Criminological ideas explore this by looking at wider patterns. Social

setups shape actions, not just individuals. These theories dig into surroundings that feed harmful conduct. Instead of blaming people alone, they examine conditions allowing such acts. Context matters - power, norms, location - all play quiet roles. Behaviour emerges from environments, rarely from isolated choices. Structures quietly guide who offends, plus how often it happens.

### 4.3.1 Routine Activity Theory

A situation turns risky if a likely offender meets an opportunity without anyone watching. Missing any one piece changes the whole picture. When no guardian steps in, trouble finds its moment. Targets matter just as much as timing. Each part connects, yet works on its own

- a motivated offender
- a suitable target
- absence of capable guardianship

Out here online, those three things often come together. People aiming to do harm can reach possible targets fast using social media. Meanwhile, the systems meant to catch bad actions might just sit empty or ignored. Sometimes nothing really watches what happens at all.

When there is no one around who can protect, trouble often finds a way in.

### 4.3.2 Social Learning Theory

People pick up actions by watching those around them. Watching someone act abusively - and get away with it - can lead others to copy that conduct. A lack of response often signals permission. What goes unpunished tends to repeat. Seeing mistreatment tolerated reshapes what feels acceptable. Behaviour spreads when it seems to work.

A single click can fuel cruelty when praise piles up around harmful posts. Where mockery spreads fast, cruelty starts feeling ordinary.

### 4.3.3 General Theory of Crime

A sudden lack of restraint often shapes choices people make when breaking rules. Those who struggle to pause before acting tend to chase quick rewards instead.

What drives some people online is a low-cost way to act out, yet still get a quick rush of feeling powerful.

A single click can spark cruelty, though the harm spreads fast behind screens.

### 4.3.4 Feminist Criminology

Feminist criminology looks at crime by focusing on how genders are treated unequally. Because of this view, digital spaces where people face unwanted sexual behavior show deeper patterns of male dominance rooted in everyday life.

Out there, women stepping into debates - especially where power plays a role - tend to draw unwanted attacks meant to shut them down. Sometimes it happens fast; other times it builds slowly through repeated remarks. Not always loud, yet noticeable. Pressure shows up in messages, comments, even sideways glances during meetings. The goal? To make speaking up feel heavier each time. Those who challenge norms often face subtle punishments disguised as opinion. Silence becomes easier than response after a while. Still, many keep going anyway.

Because of online harassment, power stays uneven between genders in digital places. Not equal treatment shows up when people attack others through screens. Digital areas tilt toward one group when abuse goes unchecked. Uneven control grows where hostility spreads online. Power shifts happen silently as some voices get drowned out by cruelty.

## **4.4 Influence of Digital Platform Design**

How a digital platform looks can quietly guide how people act on it.

### **4.4.1 Anonymity**

Hidden names often fuel unkind behavior on the internet. Websites make it possible to join without revealing who you really are.

Hidden identities might shield how people speak their minds, yet often slip responsibility at the same time. Without a name attached, harsh actions find room to grow quietly.

### **4.4.2 Algorithmic Amplification**

A single click can send a post spinning through feeds, especially if it stirs anger. When people react sharply, systems often push that material further, without asking why. Moments of shock tend to travel fast, lifted by unseen sorting rules. What grabs attention tightly usually spreads wider, feeding the cycle silently.

So one mean post can spark more bullying online. That kind of message travels fast, feeding into nastier behavior later on. A single insult might echo across platforms, turning small flames into something worse. When harsh words get attention, people repeat them without thinking. Over time, that pattern makes spaces feel unsafe for others just trying to show up.

### **4.4.3 Weak Content Moderation**

Weak content checks plague plenty of online spaces. Instead of watching closely, most sites wait for people to flag problems.

Harmful material might stay up for a long time before anyone takes it down.

## **4.5 Online Harassers Behaviour Patterns**

A number of repeated actions show up often in people who harass others online.

Offenders usually go after people whose lives show up easily online. Take someone like a blogger or reporter - those voices tend to draw unwanted attention. A politician speaking out? Same story. Even regular users sharing thoughts can find themselves in the crosshairs. Being visible has its costs, especially when opinions travel fast. Women voicing ideas online often feel it most. Visibility pulls risk close, whether you want it or not.

It often happens that people who offend are part of circles where bullying feels routine. When others act the same way, bad actions get stronger while personal blame slips away.

Over time, harmful actions tend to grow worse. Starting with harsh words, things can shift toward harassment, repeated following, or sharing personal photos without consent.

Finding out how people act online gives those who run websites and make rules a chance to stop abuse before it spreads. Most of the time, spotting habits early shapes better responses down the line.

## 4.6 Conclusion

A look into how people act when they harass others sexually online forms the core of this section, viewed through psychology and crime study lenses. While one angle explores mental drivers, the other tracks patterns tied to unlawful conduct. From inner motives to outward actions, each viewpoint adds weight. Not just thoughts alone shape these acts - social triggers do too. Where mind meets deed, certain habits emerge clearly. This part connects those dots without guessing at hidden reasons.

One reason people act out online might be because they feel hidden. When someone cannot see a victim's reaction, caring often disappears. A strong focus on oneself can push actions without thinking about others. Acting fast without pausing plays its part too. What draws trouble is sometimes just daily habits meeting weak safeguards. People pick up harmful acts by watching others behave badly in digital spaces. Poor self-control combined with constant access helps explain repeated patterns. How we move through online worlds shapes risk more than many realize.

One part shows how online spaces are built to influence what people do. Hidden identities, hidden boosts from computer systems, lack of strong rules on posts - these things can feed into harmful actions without meaning to. A quiet setup often leads to loud outcomes.

Figuring out how people act online matters a lot when shaping laws and tools that stop digital abuse. What happens in chats often shapes what rules get made later. Ways we respond must match real human patterns, not just theory. Without seeing behaviour clearly, fixes might miss the point entirely. How folks interact online guides smarter solutions behind the scenes.

Danielle Keats Citron, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* 3–10 (Harvard Univ. Press 2014).

David S. Wall, *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age* 45–60 (Polity Press 2007).

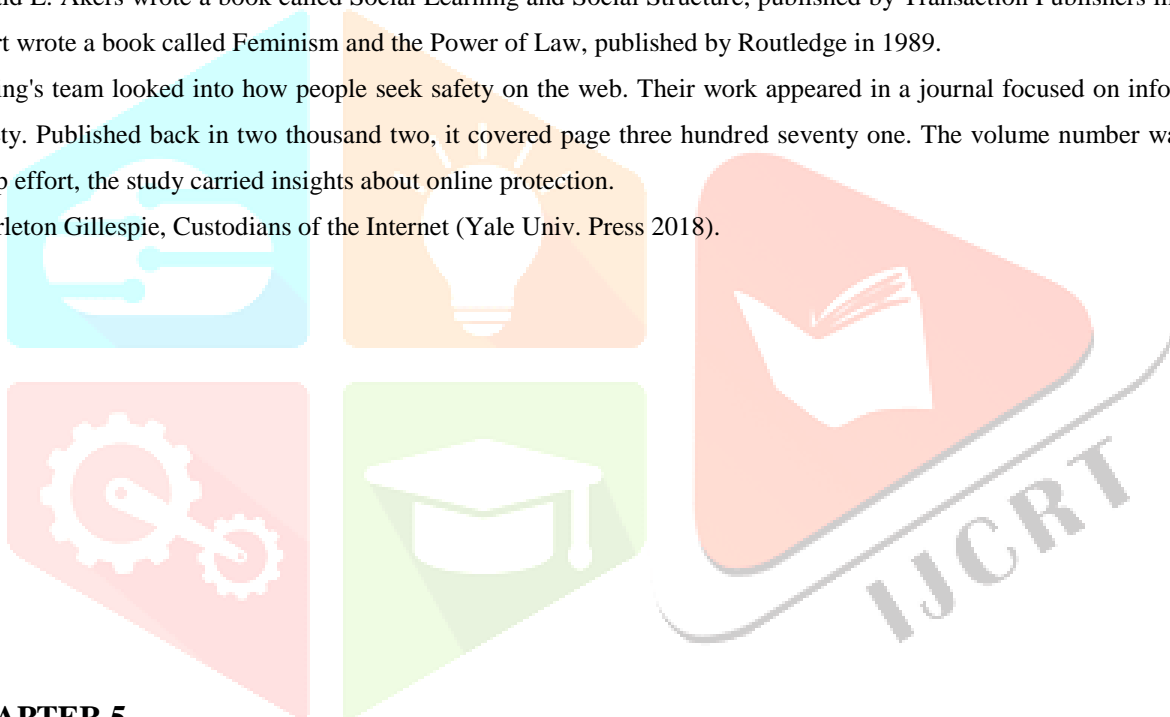
Nicola Henry & Anastasia Powell, Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence, 21 Violence Against Women 758 (2015). □Majid Yar & Kevin F. Steinmetz, Cybercrime and Society (Sage Publications 2019). John Suler, The Online Disinhibition Effect, 7 CyberPsychology & Behavior 321 (2004). Brenner's book on cybercrime came out in 2012 through Northeastern University Press. Law meets digital crime here, shaped by Susan W. Brenner's take. Published details sit with the press, clear and fixed. The work stands as a legal look at online offenses. Year after year, it remains tied to that 2012 release point. Research by W. Keith Campbell together with Joshua Miller links narcissism to social media use, published in Personality and Social Psychology Review during 2011.

Michael Gottfredson & Travis Hirschi, A General Theory of Crime (Stanford Univ. Press 1990). American Sociological Review published a piece in 1979 by Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson. Their work linked shifts in daily life patterns to fluctuations in crime levels. Instead of focusing on offenders' motives, they looked at opportunities for crimes to happen. Changes in how people spend time - like more women working outside home - affect exposure to risk. When routines shift, so do the chances for theft or assault to occur. Targets become available when guardians are absent during these new patterns. The article appeared in volume 44, starting on page 588. Social structure alters along with crime trends through such everyday movements.

Ronald L. Akers wrote a book called Social Learning and Social Structure, published by Transaction Publishers in 1998. Carol Smart wrote a book called Feminism and the Power of Law, published by Routledge in 1989.

Herring's team looked into how people seek safety on the web. Their work appeared in a journal focused on information and society. Published back in two thousand two, it covered page three hundred seventy one. The volume number was fifteen. A group effort, the study carried insights about online protection.

□ Tarleton Gillespie, Custodians of the Internet (Yale Univ. Press 2018).



## CHAPTER 5

### Gaps and Challenges in Addressing Online Sexual Harassment

#### 5.1 Introduction

Not just phones and apps have changed how people connect - digital shifts opened fresh ways to interact every day. Still, along with these chances came troubling actions, like unwanted sexual messages online. Even though rules exist to punish internet crimes, reports of abuse keep rising across countries. Because these acts keep happening, current systems - both law and tech - might miss key parts of the issue.

What happens online moves fast, yet laws often lag behind when sex-based abuse shows up in messages or posts. Hidden identities let people say things they might not face-to-face. Once something is shared, it jumps from site to site - hard to catch, harder to erase. The usual rules feel slow, mismatched, like trying to fix a live wire with gloves two sizes too big.

A big problem now shows up through how easy it is for kids and teens to get phones and go online. Lately,

gadgets like tablets and mobiles spread fast in classrooms. Most young ones carry their own device, logging into apps where people share updates. Even if those sites say you must be older to join, nobody really checks who's signing up. So pretending to be grown enough happens without much trouble at all.

Young people wandering into social media stumble upon risky material because guards are weak. Images and moving pictures go live fast - checks before posting barely exist. Nudity slips through, traveling wide across screens big and small. No gate stops a child from seeing what should stay hidden. Loose rules feed harm; eyes too young catch flashes they cannot unsee.

This chapter looks at key problems blocking progress on online sexual harassment. Because laws often fail to cover new forms of abuse, responses stay weak. When rules exist, putting them into practice gets messy across borders. Platforms hold power yet dodge responsibility through vague policies. Since kids can reach almost any corner.

## 5.2 Structural Gaps in the Legal Framework

Despite passing multiple laws on cybercrime and sexual harassment, India's legal system still holds weaknesses that reduce how well they work.

A key weakness lies in how most laws come into play only once a crime has already taken place. While criminal justice systems work to trace wrongdoers and assign penalties, prevention often falls outside their reach. Stopping harassment before it starts remains an uncertain outcome.

Take the rules in India's IT Act that ban posting explicit content or invading someone's private life. Though useful for holding people accountable later, enforcement usually kicks in once damage is done.

One more structural weakness stems from how quickly digital tools change. Because cybercrime advances quicker than laws adapt, gaps appear unexpectedly. Recently, novel kinds of abuse have surfaced - like fake porn made with artificial imagery. Offenders now generate lifelike yet false visuals capable of damaging someone's standing online.

Facing new types of misconduct, older laws sometimes fall short. Where digital interactions evolve quickly, established rules can lag behind. Though built on precedent, some statutes struggle with modern behaviors. Because contexts shift, past frameworks might lack clarity today. When patterns change, previous guidelines may not fit neatly.

When criminals act from separate nations, legal authority gets complicated. Because online spaces let people interact beyond borders, police often struggle to pursue suspects abroad. Investigations slow down where one country's power ends and another begins.

## 5.3 Enforcement Challenges

Where rules are on the books, actually applying them online often hits roadblocks. Enforcement stumbles despite statutes sitting ready.

### 5.3.1 Identifying Unknown Individuals Who Commit Offenses

Buried within the chaos of online spaces, tracking those behind harassment often hinges on overcoming anonymity. Because digital environments permit account creation devoid of verified details, disguise becomes effortless. Hiding behind invented names, fleeting emails, or fabricated personas, perpetrators remain shielded - identity blurred by design.

This difficulty can leave both targets and police searching without clear answers about who started the abuse.

### 5.3.2 Collecting Digital Evidence

Getting hold of digital proof can be tricky. When abuse happens online, it frequently travels through hidden chats or short-lived updates. Messages vanish fast - sometimes within minutes. What once existed might later leave no trace at all.

When digital proof risks vanishing, police need fast response. Still, some people wait to report abuse - worried what others might think or simply unaware help exists.

### 5.3.3 Jurisdictional Issues

Across borders, cyber crimes often unfold via online networks. From a single nation, a perpetrator might strike someone continents away. Digital systems, running on infrastructure tucked within yet another country, enable these acts. Distance offers little protection when connections bridge regions invisibly. Faced with layered challenges, authorities often struggle to align investigative efforts while applying consequences under the law.

## 5.4 Platform Accountability Issues

Online spaces heavily influence how people act and interact digitally. Still, most depend more on reports from users than active oversight.

Content that causes harm can stay visible online for a long time before being taken down.

One concern centers on who bears responsibility when online spaces host harmful material. Platforms frequently claim neutrality, positioning themselves as channels rather than creators of user-shared information. Their stance rests on the idea that hosting content differs from producing it

Though safeguards for intermediaries help defend free speech, too much protection can let platforms sidestep accountability when harm spreads online.

When people spend more time online, keeping them safe from abuse turns into a bigger duty for tech companies. Platforms shape how we connect - so shielding users matters more now than before. With chat, posts, and comments forming modern public squares, harmful behavior can spread fast unless checked.

Responsibility grows not just because of size, but due to influence over daily life. Safety isn't optional when conversations live inside private systems used by millions.

## 5.5 Unrestricted Social Media Use Among Minors

Minors gaining unchecked entry to social media stands out as a major issue today. While digital connectivity expands, oversight often lags behind. Access happens fast, yet consequences unfold slowly. Platforms designed for adults rarely consider younger users' needs. Without clear boundaries, exposure increases risks. Supervision slips through gaps in design and policy. Age verification methods remain inconsistent at best. Some tools help, though enforcement varies widely. Responsibility spreads across developers, parents, regulators. Each group acts differently, results differ too.

Nowadays, kids often get smartphones surprisingly early in life. Because they need tools for schoolwork, some families give them phones. Still, chatting with unknown people comes easily when apps are just a tap away. Learning happens through screens, yet risks appear without clear warning signs. Even quiet moments can shift quickly once connections form beyond family circles.

Few teens meet the minimum age on most social networks. Still, lying about a birthday during signup makes access common well before thirteen.

Because of this, plenty of young users join social networks despite being under the required age.

This open availability puts young people in harm's way in multiple ways:

- exposure to sexually explicit content
- cyberbullying and harassment
- grooming by predators
- psychological harm caused by abusive communication

Online access to clear pictures or video clips makes certain dangers more likely. If websites let people share sexual or revealing posts without strong oversight, young viewers might see things unsuited to their maturity level.

So, better checks on user ages must step in where kids face risky online spaces. A solid shield forms when tech confirms maturity before access opens up. Without clear proof of age, young users drift into corners of the web unfit for them. Guarding minors means tools adapt quickly to new digital paths they wander down. Only then does safety catch up with connectivity.

## 5.6 Judges React to Sex Harassment on Internet

Facing a rise in digital abuse, Indian judges are taking online harassment more seriously. Through legal reasoning, they shape responses to these crimes. Not every case unfolds the same way. Some rulings stretch existing laws to fit new realities. Others rely on older statutes adjusted for modern behavior. The judiciary steps in where legislation lags behind. Responses emerge slowly, shaped by context. Each judgment reflects shifting attitudes toward virtual conduct.

In *Shreya Singhal versus Union of India*, the top court underlined how free expression must coexist with safeguards against damaging messages. While striking down section 66A of the IT Act, it upheld related rules targeting offensive content and online abuse.

The top court's ruling in *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* treated privacy as a core constitutional guarantee, rooted in Article 21. Because of this decision, safeguards around personal data - like private photos or intimate details - gained stronger legal backing.

Because courts have acknowledged privacy and dignity, survivors of digital abuse now find stronger legal footing. How rights are interpreted shapes outcomes - this shift matters most when power is unbalanced.

## 5.7 Preventive legal steps are necessary

Because current laws fall short, stopping online abuse before it starts matters more than reacting later.

### 5.7.1 Age Verification Systems

Preventing underage exposure to unsuitable material begins with tighter checks on digital services. Where users prove their age more rigorously, access gaps shrink naturally. Platforms able to confirm maturity levels reduce risks without blocking legitimate audiences. Stronger identity steps mean fewer loopholes exploited by younger visitors. Age confirmation built into entry points limits accidental encounters with harmful media. When systems demand verified details upfront, protection improves quietly behind the scenes.

Possible solutions include:

- tied to state ID frameworks, access relies on verified personal data matching official records across digital platforms
- requiring parental consent for minors
- using artificial intelligence tools to detect underage users

Focusing on these steps could make online spaces safer for young users. Children might then face fewer risks while navigating digital platforms.

### 5.7.2 Blocking Explicit Content

Automated tools could help digital platforms spot explicit visual content before it spreads widely. Detection

happens faster when software runs in the background, quietly scanning uploads. Such systems might reduce reliance on human reviewers by flagging questionable material early. Speed matters - content moves quickly online, so responses must too. While not perfect, these methods offer a practical layer of oversight across large networks.

Content showing any of these elements will face automatic rejection:

- nude content
- half-nude images
- sexually explicit videos
- 18+ adult content

Some artificial intelligence tools today spot explicit images very accurately. Because these solutions are available, using them could limit how much damaging content spreads online. Still, their deployment remains inconsistent across platforms despite clear benefits.

### **5.7.3 Stronger Platform Liability**

Failing to act quickly on toxic material risks wider exposure - platforms ought to delete such content promptly after users flag it. How fast they respond could shape public safety online, given delays often allow damage to spread unchecked.

Facing tougher rules, intermediaries might invest in better tools to track activity while sharing information with authorities. Though pressure increases, oversight methods may improve alongside collaboration efforts. When accountability rises, companies often adjust by refining detection processes instead of resisting change. Pressure from regulation can lead to sharper responses without direct orders being given.

## **5.8 Conclusion**

This chapter looked at key shortcomings in tackling online sexual abuse. Even though India passed multiple cybercrime laws, weak systems slow progress. Enforcement struggles persist because of outdated methods. Technology changes faster than rules can follow. Gaps remain despite legal efforts. Real impact gets lost in implementation failures.

Children face serious risks when they freely enter social media spaces meant for older users. When systems fail to confirm a user's age, harmful material can appear without warning. Harassment often follows where oversight is weak. Exposure grows quietly under loose controls.

Still, many online spaces fail to control what users post, so damaging content moves fast through networks. Occasionally weak oversight lets problematic posts grow before anyone stops them.

Stronger prevention becomes essential when risks grow. Where age checks exist, harm often drops - automation spots harmful material faster than people do. Platforms take more responsibility, fewer young users face abuse online. Protection improves not by chance, but through design that prioritizes safety over

speed.

Later sections introduce suggestions alongside final thoughts aimed at strengthening laws and rules tackling digital spaces where sexual harassment occurs.

### Bluebook Footnotes

Information Technology Act, 2000, §§ 66E, 67, 67A (India).

Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet* (Yale Univ. Press 2018).

In the matter of Shreya Singhal against the Union of India, decided in 2015 by the Supreme Court of India, reported in volume five of the Supreme Court Cases at page one.

Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, (2017) 10 SCC 1.

## CHAPTER 6

### Statistical Analysis Digital Influence Control Measures Online Sexual Harassment

#### 6.1 Introduction

Instant connections now shape how people talk, thanks to the fast growth of digital tools. Across borders, folks exchange messages quickly through apps and websites meant for chatting. Yet alongside easier contact comes a darker result - fresh chances for illegal acts. Platforms built for sharing thoughts sometimes host harmful behavior instead. Among growing worries online, unwanted sexual advances stand out sharply.

Not limited to physical spaces, sexual harassment often moves into digital environments. Uninvited remarks of a sexual nature appear in chats, emails, or social media posts. Messages containing nudity may circulate without permission - often causing deep distress. Following someone persistently across online platforms is another form this can take. Hostile comments rooted in sexuality show up in forums, comment sections, or group messages. Threats involving sexual harm are delivered through direct or public digital channels. Dignity erodes when personal boundaries collapse under such pressure. Privacy fades as control over one's image slips away. Emotional strain builds silently but grows steadily over time.

Now reaching more people than ever, digital platforms grow alongside smartphone use and online access. Each day, large numbers take part in social media activity across the globe. Still, tools meant for connection often become paths for harm and manipulation. Young children, using mobile devices earlier in life, enter these spaces without proper oversight.

This chapter looks at patterns in data on internet-based sexual abuse. How digital tools shape harmful actions comes under review next. Ways to manage these acts appear later through real-world approaches instead.

## 6.2 Online Sexual Harassment Patterns Over Time

Worldwide, signs point to a sharp rise in cyber harassment alongside digital sexual misconduct. Data from global research plus official publications underscores how often people face mistreatment online now compared to before. Though numbers differ by region, patterns show similar upward trends nearly everywhere observed.

Cybercrime numbers have climbed each year, data shows. Over sixty-five thousand incidents were logged nationwide in 2022 alone. Many stemmed from unwanted digital attention - persistent messaging, threatening behavior online, or sharing explicit content without consent. Behind the figures lies a growing pattern tied to how people interact through technology.

Females appear frequently among those targeted in online abuse incidents, according to the findings. Often, these instances include sharing intimate images without consent, lewd communications, or intimidation via digital networks.

Cybercrime numbers rising ties closely to how fast internet use has expanded. With more than 800 million people online, India shows one of the largest digital populations today. Smartphones serve as the main gateway for many accessing the web here. Because mobile data costs little now, staying connected fits within reach of most households. Low-priced handsets add further fuel, letting even rural areas join digital networks easily.

Not just local but global studies show how common online abuse really is. About 41 out of every 100 people who go online say they've faced unwanted aggression digitally, according to work done at the Pew Research Center. Younger users and females stand out here - sexual threats and being followed persistently happen to them far more often. Though many types exist, it's these intense forms hitting certain groups harder than others.

A recent worldwide survey led by UN Women found over 70 percent of female internet users faced online abuse or harassment at some point. Despite regional differences, such experiences are widespread - showing how deeply rooted digital gender-based harm truly is.

Young people face higher risks of cyber harassment, studies show. Because they spend more time on social media, teens and those in early adulthood attract unwanted aggression online. Hidden behind screen names, attackers find it simple to strike without being recognized. Identity shields built into digital spaces encourage such behavior.

Few realize how common online sexual harassment has become - it shows up everywhere, signaling a deep-rooted issue society can't afford to ignore.

### 6.3 Digital Impact on Online Sexual Harassment

What people do online is often shaped by digital tools they use. Features built into these platforms can make harassment more likely to happen. Some design choices subtly encourage harmful actions instead of preventing them. How users interact depends heavily on the technology guiding their experience.

**Anonymity in Digital Communication** Behind much online abuse lies the shield of hidden identity. Platforms often permit account creation absent any proof of who someone really is. Because of this, people acting abusively slip into false personas without consequence. What emerges is harm delivered from nowhere - faces unseen, names untraceable.

When people stay anonymous, responsibility fades - leading some to act unlike their usual selves during in-person exchanges.

#### Rapid Spread of Information

Spreading fast - digital material moves beyond original contexts within minutes. What begins as a single post often reaches countless screens before anyone reacts. After something damaging appears online, networks carry it far, jumping from site to site without pause.

This fast movement allows little chance to stop who sees private details or pictures once they are shared.

#### How Algorithms Spread Content

What shows up online tends to depend on how people react to it. When posts stir intense feelings, like fury, they spread faster. Algorithms notice this pattern, pushing charged material further. Outrage becomes a kind of fuel - visibility follows emotion. The angrier the response, the wider it travels.

Because of this, harmful or provocative material can circulate quickly - fueling mistreatment without intent. Sometimes, what spreads isn't meant to hurt, yet still does. In these cases, reach outweighs purpose. Misuse follows exposure, quietly. The wider it goes, the more damage slips through.

#### Flawed systems filter online material poorly

Online spaces often depend on people flagging offensive material. Because of this reliance, troubling posts can stay visible for long stretches. Poor oversight lets abuse linger instead of stopping it quickly.

#### Minors Using Digital Platforms Easily

What stands out is how freely kids reach social media sites. Early exposure happens since phones enter their hands during childhood years. Since platforms depend on users stating their own age, young people slip through by adjusting birthdates they submit.

With open access, kids face exposure to adult material while becoming more prone to digital abuse. Their lack of filters often leads straight into risky interactions online.

### 6.4 Suggestions to Control Online Sexual Harassment

Handling cyberbullying well means using laws, digital tools, plus public understanding together. While rules set boundaries, software can block abuse before it spreads. Awareness shifts how people act, because

behavior changes when norms evolve slowly. Still, none of these parts work alone - each depends on the others behind the scenes.

#### **6.4.1 Strict Age Checks Put Into Place**

Starting with stricter checks, social media sites could limit underage exposure to damaging material. One path involves connecting profiles to official ID databases. Another route demands approval from caregivers before young users join. These steps may help filter access more effectively.

A different way to spot underage users might involve tracking how they act online and what they do with their accounts. Sometimes behaviour gives it away, especially when routines stand out across platforms. Watching these signals can reveal age-related clues without asking directly. Patterns in usage often differ between younger people and adults. Certain actions appear more frequently among teens, making them noticeable over time.

Young people face fewer dangers online when strong checks confirm their age. Because these controls block access more effectively, exposure drops. Where rules tighten, harm trends downward. Since platforms verify users carefully, kids encounter less risk. As safeguards improve, safety increases too.

#### **6.4.2 Blocking Nude and Sexually Explicit Content**

Starting with detection, digital platforms ought to deploy automation that flags explicit visuals. These systems, powered by artificial intelligence, spot nudity effectively. Accuracy tends to run high when identifying sexual content through such tools. Often, it is machine learning models doing the heavy lifting behind the scenes.

Content showing any of these elements will face automatic rejection

- nude images
- half-nude images
- sexually explicit videos
- adult content

Putting these systems into place could limit how widely damaging content spreads online, while also shielding those targeted from abuse. Though designed simply, they may disrupt common patterns that allow harm to continue unchecked across platforms.

#### **6.4.3 Strengthening Platform Accountability**

One way forward involves tech firms stepping up efforts to manage damaging material online. Should they fall short, authorities might step in with rules that set deadlines for taking down unlawful posts. A shift toward stricter accountability for intermediaries might lead firms to boost spending on advanced moderation tools, thereby enhancing online safety. While such changes could reshape corporate priorities, they may also prompt innovation in how platforms handle harmful content. The result? A more secure

digital environment driven by updated legal expectations rather than voluntary efforts.

#### **6.4.4 Digital Awareness and Education Programs**

One way schools can help is by offering lessons on how to act wisely online. Through these sessions, learners grasp why treating people fairly matters. Another point covered includes understanding permission before sharing personal details. Often overlooked, yet vital, is knowing laws tied to harmful actions on the internet. Such efforts slowly shape safer digital spaces over time. Promoting digital ethics fosters healthier interactions across virtual spaces. While safety grows, users often experience fewer conflicts. Where norms shift, respect tends to follow. Still, change depends on consistent choices made by many. Through shared effort, trust becomes more common online.

#### **6.4.5 Stronger Ways to Investigate Online Crime**

A different kind of team could handle online crimes if police departments set up dedicated groups using modern tech gear. When properly trained, these teams might examine digital traces more effectively than general officers. Though complex, learning cyber methods becomes easier with focused practice over time. Some find that handling data carefully leads to stronger court outcomes later on.

Better tools for tracking online crime could mean more suspects caught, while also making others think twice before acting. A shift in investigative methods may lead to stronger outcomes over time, simply because risks become clearer to those considering illegal steps.

### **6.5 Conclusion**

Nowhere is safety guaranteed online, especially when it comes to personal boundaries. As communication platforms multiply, so do chances for harm - hidden behind screens, some users exploit access without facing consequences.

More people see online abuse growing fast, especially targeting women and younger web users. Hidden identities on apps make it easier to attack others without consequence. Information spreads quickly across networks, feeding harmful behavior. When algorithms push extreme posts higher, mistreatment gains more attention. Poor oversight by platforms lets these patterns continue unchecked.

Young people face greater risks when they can freely use smartphones and social media without limits. Exposure to harmful material becomes more likely under such conditions. Their safety weakens as digital spaces remain open without oversight. What appears as connectivity often turns into a path toward unwanted explicit encounters. Open access, while common, carries hidden dangers for developing minds. A single solution won't fix online sexual harassment - progress comes when governments, tech firms, schools, and police work alongside each other. Tougher checks on user ages might help, yet real change needs clearer rules for posting adult material. Platforms must answer more directly for what spreads through their services. Teaching people how to stay safe online fits into this too - not tacked on, but built in. When investigations into digital abuse grow more effective, fewer incidents slip through

unnoticed. Fewer risks emerge when communities put such steps into practice - safety grows, personal respect holds steady online. Individual worth stays guarded where these actions take root. Nearly every year, crime data surfaces through a government body tracking incidents nationwide. This particular report comes from an agency under the central home ministry.

Published in 2022, it compiles statistics on criminal activity across Indian states. Known by its full name, the National Crime Records Bureau manages this annual compilation. Accessible online, the source lives on a public website maintained by official authorities. Information flows directly from that digital location, hosted at ncrb dot gov dot in. India's government agency responsible for internal security released cybercrime data for 2023. Public policy research centre focusing on digital offences targeting women across India. National Crime Records Bureau reports on cyber offenses targeting children, 2022 data. Emily A. Vogels, The State of Online Harassment, Pew Research Center (2021). Pew Research Center, Online Harassment Survey Report (2017).

## CHAPTER 7

### SUGGESTIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 Introduction

Digital tools keep changing how people connect today. From morning scrolls to late-night chats, much of social life now flows through screens. Platforms meant for sharing moments help students learn, workers find jobs, friends stay close. Still, hidden within these conveniences are fresh risks nobody expected years ago. Crime finds new paths where attention gathers, especially online. What brings folks together can also expose them, quietly.

A major challenge arising in recent times centers on unwanted sexual behavior via internet channels. Uninvited acts of a sexual nature now frequently occur across digital spaces. Messages containing explicit material might appear alongside hostile remarks of a sexual kind. Sharing private photos without permission forms another common pattern. Cyberstalking or threats delivered through messaging also fall within this scope. Emotional distress, mental strain, and damaged relationships often follow such experiences.

Nowadays, more people face unwanted sexual comments online - and that shift ties closely to how tech has spread. Millions connect daily thanks to phones and constant web access. Because social networks let messages reach many at once, interaction happens fast - sometimes hidden behind fake names. Hidden identities make it easier to act badly. Instant sharing sounds useful until harm spreads just as quickly. Without clear consequences right after a post, some feel free to cross lines.

Young people today reach digital spaces earlier than before. Access to phones begins in childhood, often without delay. Since many sites depend on users stating their own age, it is common for kids to lie about how old they are. This opens doors to harmful material or unwanted contact online. Without strong checks, pretend identities let underaged users slip through.

This study explored digital sexual abuse through law and crime science lenses. Previous sections broke down how online mistreatment is understood, what laws exist in India against internet crimes, traits

common among perpetrators, alongside systemic barriers complicating enforcement efforts.

This last section pulls together the study's main outcomes while suggesting realistic steps to lessen online sexual abuse. While drawing these insights together, it looks into changes in rules that could improve security in digital spaces. Ending here, thoughts turn toward what lies ahead for how online environments are managed.

## 7.2 Study Key Findings

Findings from this work reveal key insights into what drives, how often, and the effects tied to digital sexual abuse. Though focused on specific cases, results highlight recurring themes across different platforms where such behavior emerges unexpectedly. Patterns noticed during analysis suggest certain behaviors lead more frequently to harmful outcomes than others might expect. What stands out is how consequences extend beyond individuals directly involved - impacting wider communities over time.

Nowhere has change been more evident than in rising rates of online sexual harassment. Because digital tools spread so quickly, people now connect across vast networks without showing their identity. When anonymity combines with instant reach, actions often shift - behaviour once rare surfaces more frequently.

What feels distant behind a screen sometimes leads to choices avoided during personal encounters.

An often-overlooked insight involves how offenders think and react mentally. Because people assume anonymity online, normal rules seem less binding to them. Freed from usual expectations, some grow bolder in expressing anger or cruelty through screens. Behavior shifts happen quietly, yet powerfully, when identity blurs behind usernames. Such detachment fuels hostile actions across digital spaces without immediate consequences felt.

Surprisingly, how online spaces are built can make abuse more likely. Instead of calm discussion, what grabs attention tends to rise - especially posts stirring anger. Because systems reward reaction, harmful messages sometimes travel far. When outrage spreads fast, platforms might unknowingly boost what hurts users.

Another finding shows current laws usually respond after harm happens instead of stopping it early. Cyber harassment regulations tend to emphasize penalties once an act takes place. Still, these rules sometimes fail to block damaging material before it spreads.

Young kids now get phones and gadgets sooner than ever before. Still, most social media sites lack strong checks to confirm user age. As a result, children slip into these spaces with little oversight. A major concern emerges when access outpaces maturity. Without solid barriers, underage users move freely across digital networks.

Minors face multiple dangers when given open internet access. Exposure to sexual material becomes possible without restrictions in place. Cyberbullying often follows unchecked online interactions. Predators may initiate contact through deceptive conversations. Harmful messages can deeply affect emotional well-being over time.

Ultimately, tackling digital sexual abuse demands coordinated efforts - laws must evolve, tools need updating, schools should teach prevention, while communities grow more informed through outreach.

## 7.3 Recommendations

From these results, a few suggestions emerge for curbing online sexual harassment while strengthening digital security.

### 7.3.1 Strict Age Verification Systems

A key suggestion from this study involves enforcing tighter age checks on social media sites. Right now, such platforms generally depend on users stating their own age when signing up. The system prompts individuals to submit a birthdate. Yet accuracy often goes unchecked, leaving room for error or deception. Verification methods beyond basic entry remain rare in practice.

Because of this, young users often sign up for social media using incorrect birth dates. So, underage individuals gain entry to sites where they might face harmful material or be targeted by cyberbullying.

One way to tackle this problem involves digital platforms using more reliable age checks. These could work by connecting accounts to official ID records, for instance. Another option might involve getting approval from parents when users are underage. Systems like these help confirm a person's age more accurately.

One way to spot underage users involves studying how they act online. Behaviour linked to younger people might trigger a closer look at their profile. Sometimes, unusual posting habits raise flags for automated systems. When certain signs appear, extra checks can follow. Patterns in usage often hint at age-related traits. Machines notice these clues without being told each time. Verification steps kick in if signals match known trends.

A shift toward stronger age checks could limit how often young users face risky online spaces while boosting general internet security. Though not perfect, such measures tend to lower underage access more effectively than current methods. Most approaches now fail under pressure - tighter rules might change that pattern slowly. Digital harm reaches kids too easily; better barriers may slow it down. Safety improves when platforms take identity seriously, especially during early engagement stages.

### 7.3.2 Blocking Nude and Sexually Explicit Content

What often gets overlooked is how loosely some sites handle image sharing online. Without tighter controls, certain posts move fast through connected spaces. Oversight tends to lag behind user activity on these channels. Content showing sensitive material appears more easily when checks are weak.

Though often overlooked, explicit content spreads easily across social networks, nudging harmful actions into everyday view. When young users enter these spaces, they risk meeting images or messages meant for

adults. Exposure happens fast - without warning or filter - and shapes expectations about relationships and limits. What seems like personal choice can quietly shift group norms over time. Instead of clear protection, many children face unfiltered feeds where boundaries blur. Over months or years, repeated contact makes extreme acts appear ordinary. Not every viewer understands context, leaving some mimicking what they see. Safety tools exist, yet enforcement remains uneven at best.

Though machines now spot revealing pictures quite well, online networks could instead choose to filter such visuals before they spread. When photos appear, software might quietly step in - stopping them from being shared further.

Stopping people from sharing inappropriate files might be possible through automated detection tools that act instantly when such data appears. When these methods are used, they can shield individuals at risk while limiting how widely damaging content spreads across digital spaces.

### **7.3.3 Stronger Platform Accountability**

Though digital spaces dominate how people interact online, oversight often waits for complaints instead of spotting issues early. Still, most depend on users flagging problems, not active detection methods.

Waiting too long to act lets harmful material stay visible across digital spaces. When responses come slowly, those affected face serious consequences during the delay.

One way forward is clearer responsibility rules for tech firms. When toxic material appears online, detection tools could act before damage spreads. Cooperation with police often speeds up digital crime investigations. What matters most is acting fast once risks are spotted.

Facing rising concerns, officials could opt for stricter oversight of online spaces by setting fixed deadlines for taking down unlawful material. Timely removal might become an enforced duty rather than a voluntary step under such measures.

### **7.3.4 Digital Safety Education**

What keeps online spaces safer? Teaching people early. Young users often act without seeing how words travel far beyond a screen. Learning shapes choices - without it, mistakes multiply quietly. Understanding grows when lessons start before harm happens.

Starting young helps shape mindful internet habits later on. When schools include lessons on digital citizenship, learners begin seeing screens as shared spaces. Respect grows when people pause before posting. Consent matters just as much online as it does offline. Mistakes made behind a keyboard can lead to real penalties under the law. Awareness often prevents harm before it spreads.

Staying safe online begins with clear guidance for learners. When youth understand privacy tools, ways to flag concerns, or how to interact carefully on digital platforms, risks of mistreatment drop noticeably. Learning these skills early shapes wiser choices later. Awareness becomes a shield - quiet but effective.

### 7.3.5 Faster Ways to Investigate Cybercrime

A key suggestion involves updating how cybercrime investigations are handled. Messages, pictures, or logs of internet behavior frequently form the core of online harassment claims. When these materials aren't stored correctly, they can vanish fast - sometimes within hours. Systems that capture and secure data need stronger protocols to keep pace.

Specialized teams within police forces need access to modern digital forensics technology. Training must cover how data is gathered electronically, methods for probing online criminal activity, while also including skills in monitoring internet-based actions. Starting strong here matters - expertise grows when practice meets updated tools regularly across investigations.

A shift toward faster cybercrime probes tends to uncover suspects more often. When cases move without delay, consequences follow. Tracking digital trails closely makes it harder for wrongdoers to stay hidden. Speed and precision reshape outcomes. Accountability grows when systems respond sharply. Those involved face results more consistently under such conditions.

### 7.4 Policy Recommendations

A shift beyond day-to-day actions means deeper changes in rules must happen. For real progress against online sexual harassment, updated policies play a key role. Without adjustments that go further than current steps, efforts may fall short. Structural updates help support what individuals do on the ground. Lasting impact comes not just from isolated moves, but system-wide shifts.

One way forward might involve new laws focused on digital safety, shaping how social media operates. These rules could demand stronger tools to manage harmful content online. Protection for at-risk individuals may come through enforced platform accountability. Age checks might become a standard requirement under these policies. What matters is building safeguards without waiting for harm to occur first.

When crimes happen online, one country alone can't always respond - since digital activity ignores borders, joint efforts between nations become necessary. Working together allows authorities to follow leads across regions, making it possible to track down suspects who operate from distant locations.

Investment in better tools often begins with how tech firms approach their R&D priorities. When machine learning improves, spotting damaging posts becomes faster, sometimes even ahead of posting. Progress here tends to reduce abuse simply by acting sooner.

### 7.5 Final Thoughts on the Idea

This work looked into online sexual abuse through legal and criminology lenses, aiming especially at how

suspects act and what systemic conditions help spread misconduct across digital spaces. Instead of just describing events, it explored how ideas about online abuse are formed, what mental patterns appear among perpetrators, which laws apply to internet-based crimes in India, yet also where police struggle when responding to these incidents.

Results show online sexual harassment stems not just from one cause, yet ties closely to mental traits, tech access, and group dynamics. Impulsiveness or high self-focus, paired with limited concern for others' feelings, often drives those who harass. Hidden behind screens, people sometimes act more boldly due to reduced fear of being judged or punished right away.

A closer look revealed key tech-related elements tied to cyber abuse. Though anonymity options exist on digital forums, people can post without revealing identity. Instant reach to many viewers happens through fast connections between users. Because messages spread quickly, harmful acts often go unchecked. With little fear of consequences, some find it simpler to mistreat others online.

Young users often reach online networks without proper safeguards. Devices get into small hands far earlier than expected. Since entry checks depend on personal input, underage individuals adjust their birth years to join. This gap lets inappropriate material appear before kids regularly. Harassment risks rise when boundaries fail. Access stays unchecked across many apps today.

So the study backs its main prediction: how people act in their minds, along with how online spaces are built, plays a strong role in cyber sexual abuse. What's clear is that laws already on the books fall short when used by themselves. Digital settings shape actions more than rules can control.

The idea that psychological and tech-related aspects have little effect on online sexual harassment - along with the belief that current laws handle it well - fails under scrutiny, so it gets set aside.

Looking at the findings here shows how rules tackling online abuse usually respond after harm occurs instead of stopping it early. While statutes like the Information Technology Act along with penal codes allow penalties for wrongdoers, spreading damaging material still happens before any intervention kicks in.

Because of these findings, researchers suggest multiple ways to lower online abuse risks. Starting early, schools could teach students how to stay safe online through dedicated courses. One step involves tighter checks that confirm users' ages before they access social networks. Instead of ignoring harmful behavior, tech companies might face real consequences for failing to act. At the same time, automated tools powered by machine learning may filter out inappropriate images automatically. Behind the scenes, law enforcement agencies need better methods to track down offenders quickly. Each measure works differently - yet together, they form a broader defense.

Still, tackling online sexual harassment means weaving laws, tech advances, and public understanding into one effort. Collaboration among governments, tech firms, police, and schools becomes essential for building secure spaces online.

When rules are clear and users act with care, fewer people face abuse online. Digital environments become

safer because accountability grows quietly behind consistent oversight. Respect follows structure when communities uphold standards without spectacle. Harms decline where norms shift toward decency by design. Individual worth remains intact largely due to steady enforcement that prioritizes fairness over reaction.

### Final Overall Conclusion of the Study

Ultimately, this work - "A Legal and Criminological Analysis of Online Sexual Harassment: Understanding the Behaviour of the Accused" - investigates rising instances of digital abuse shaped by today's networked communication tools. Rather than treating isolated incidents, it unpacks how online harassment is defined, alongside laws in India addressing cybercrime. Psychological drivers behind perpetrators' actions appear closely tied to broader behavioural patterns seen in criminology. Meanwhile, weaknesses persist in enforcement mechanisms and policy design, leaving parts of the system under strain.

What this study shows is that online sexual harassment does not stem from one single cause. Shaped by how technology works, it also ties into the mindset of those who offend. Because digital messages travel fast, harmful material circulates before anyone can stop it. Social networks often let users hide behind fake names, making abuse easier to carry out. Weak oversight on these platforms leaves gaps where harm grows unchecked. Young people now reach the internet earlier than ever, thanks to phones being everywhere. With wider access comes greater exposure to danger. How kids interact online has changed quickly - faster than safety measures have kept up.

Despite their role in holding wrongdoers accountable, current legal systems tend to respond after harm takes place instead of stopping it beforehand. Cyber harassment laws usually come into play once damage is done. Because of this timing gap, efforts focused on early intervention become critical. Prevention matters most when trying to lower rates of digital abuse.

Despite growing concerns, few safeguards truly protect young users online. When platforms enforce stricter age checks, underage exposure to harmful content drops significantly. Because automated detection tools flag explicit images before they spread, some abuse materials never gain traction. Stronger oversight often follows where legal responsibility is clearly assigned to tech companies. Investigations into digital misconduct become more successful once reporting systems are updated and accessible. Over time, user awareness grows when educational efforts focus on practical risks rather than abstract warnings. Effective prevention rarely relies on one fix alone - layers matter. While technology evolves rapidly, policies lag unless constant pressure reshapes them. A safer environment emerges not just from rules, but from how consistently they're applied.

Working together, governments alongside tech firms, police forces, schools, and community groups must respond to cyber sexual abuse. When rules meet inventive tools plus a sense of moral duty, digital spaces grow more secure - respecting personal boundaries, private lives, finally human worth.

When digital tools change, laws must shift too. Because safety matters, rules should keep pace. Where people interact online, fairness begins with clear expectations. Protection from abuse helps everyone

breathe easier. A calmer internet grows when limits are understood. Future users inherit what today decides. Without guardrails, harm spreads quietly. Respect does not appear by accident. Clarity shapes behavior more than warnings do. What feels minor now may matter late renerations.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Hariharan, Assistant Professor, Vels University School of Law, for his valuable guidance, encouragement, and support throughout the completion of this research project titled “A Legal and Criminological Analysis of Online Sexual Harassment: Understanding the Behaviour of the Accused.”

His continuous guidance, insightful suggestions, and academic support have greatly contributed to the successful completion of this research work. I am extremely grateful for his patience and willingness to provide assistance whenever required.

I would also like to thank the faculty members of Vels University School of Law for providing the academic environment and resources necessary for conducting this research.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family and friends for their constant encouragement and support during the preparation of this project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the authors, researchers, and institutions whose works have been referred to in this research project.

Place: Chennai

Date: 13.04.2026

Signature of the Student

Rathna S.

B.Com LL.B (Hons), 5th Year

## TABLE OF STATUTES

### 1. **Information Technology Act, 2000 (India)**

- Section 43 – Unauthorized access to computer systems
- Section 66 – Computer-related offences
- Section 66E – Violation of privacy
- Section 67 – Publishing obscene material in electronic form
- Section 67A – Publishing sexually explicit content
- Section 67B – Child sexual abuse material

### 2. **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (India)**

- Sexual harassment provisions
- Stalking and cyberstalking
- Voyeurism
- Protection of victim identity

### 3. **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO)**

### 4. **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**

### 5. **Constitution of India**

- Article 14 – Equality before law
- Article 19 – Freedom of speech and expression
- Article 21 – Right to life and personal liberty (including privacy)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Books

1. Brenner, Susan W., *Cybercrime and the Law* (Northeastern University Press, 2012).
2. Citron, Danielle Keats, *Hate Crimes in Cyberspace* (Harvard University Press, 2014).
3. Gillespie, Tarleton, *Custodians of the Internet* (Yale University Press, 2018).
4. Gottfredson, Michael & Travis Hirschi, *A General Theory of Crime* (Stanford University Press, 1990).
5. Henry, Nicola & Anastasia Powell, *Sexual Violence in a Digital Age* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
6. Smart, Carol, *Feminism and the Power of Law* (Routledge, 1989).

7. Wall, David S., *Cybercrime: The Transformation of Crime in the Information Age* (Polity Press, 2007).
8. Yar, Majid & Kevin F. Steinmetz, *Cybercrime and Society* (Sage Publications, 2019).
9. Smith, Russell, *Cybercrime: Law and Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
10. Brenner, Susan, *Cyber Threats and the Law* (Praeger, 2007).

### Journal Articles

11. Akers, Ronald, "Social Learning and Social Structure," *Journal of Criminology*.
12. Citron, Danielle, "Cyber Civil Rights," *89 Boston University Law Review* 61 (2009).
13. Henry, Nicola & Powell, Anastasia, "Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence," *21 Violence Against Women* (2015).
14. Suler, John, "The Online Disinhibition Effect," *CyberPsychology & Behavior* (2004).
15. Herring, Susan, "Gender and Online Communication," *Information Society Journal*.
16. Campbell, W. Keith, "Narcissism and Social Media Behaviour," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*.
17. Franks, Mary Anne, "Revenge Porn and Law Reform," *Georgetown Law Review*.
18. Powell, Anastasia & Henry, Nicola, "Digital Harassment and Violence," *Feminist Media Studies*.
19. Jane, Emma A., "Online Misogyny and Gendered Harassment," *Feminist Media Studies*.
20. Salter, Michael, "Digital Abuse and Image-Based Violence," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

### Reports

21. National Crime Records Bureau, *Crime in India Report 2022*.
22. Pew Research Center, *The State of Online Harassment* (2021).
23. United Nations Women, *Online Violence Against Women and Girls* (2020).
24. UNICEF, *Children's Rights in the Digital Age* (2017).
25. World Health Organization, *Digital Safety and Youth Protection Report*.
26. Internet Society, *Global Internet User Behaviour Report*.
27. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India, *Cyber Safety Guidelines*.
28. National Commission for Women, *Report on Cyber Crimes Against Women*.
29. International Telecommunication Union, *Global Cybersecurity Index*.
30. European Commission, *Digital Services Act Impact Assessment*.

## Online Sources

31. NCRB Official Website – <https://www.ncrb.gov.in>
32. Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology – <https://www.meity.gov.in>
33. Pew Research Center – <https://www.pewresearch.org>
34. UN Women – <https://www.unwomen.org>
35. Internet Society – <https://www.internetsociety.org>
36. UNICEF Digital Safety Resources – <https://www.unicef.org>
37. National Commission for Women – <https://www.ncw.nic.in>
38. Cyber Crime Portal India – <https://cybercrime.gov.in>
39. World Economic Forum Digital Safety Reports – <https://www.weforum.org>
40. International Telecommunication Union – <https://www.itu.int>







## 1% Overall Similarity

The combined total of all matches, including overlapping sources, for each database.




### Filtered from the Report

- Bibliography
- Small Matches (less than 10 words)

### Match Groups

-  18 Not Cited or Quoted 1%  
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
-  6 Missing Quotations 0%  
Matches that are still very similar to source material
-  1 Missing Citation 0%  
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
-  0 Cited and Quoted 0%  
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks





### Top Sources

- 1%  Internet sources
- 1%  Publications
- 1%  Submitted works (Student Papers)

### Integrity Flags

0 Integrity Flags for Review




### Match Groups

-  18 Not Cited or Quoted 1%  
Matches with neither in-text citation nor quotation marks
-  6 Missing Quotations 0%  
Matches that are still very similar to source material
-  1 Missing Citation 0%  
Matches that have quotation marks, but no in-text citation
-  0 Cited and Quoted 0%  
Matches with in-text citation present, but no quotation marks

Our system's algorithms look deeply at a document for any inconsistencies that would set it apart from a normal submission. If we notice something strange, we flag it for you to review.

A Flag is not necessarily an indicator of a problem. However, we'd recommend you focus your attention there for further review.

### Top Sources

- 1%  Internet sources
- 1%  Publications
- 1%  Submitted works (Student Papers)

### Top Sources

The sources with the highest number of matches within the submission. Overlapping sources will not be displayed.

- 1

**Internet**

3fdef50c-add3-4615-a675-a91741bcb5c0.usrfiles.com

<1%

---

- 2

**Internet**

94ee8b88-9ce0-4866-a7e6-564fad3575e4.usrfiles.com

<1%

---

- 3

**Internet**

ir.kiu.ac.ug

<1%

---

- 4

**Internet**

www.ijlra.com

<1%

---

- 5

**Publication**

Jaelyn Schildkraut and H. Jaymi Elsass. "Prevention of Mass Shootings (Response)..."

<1%

---

- 6

**Student papers**

Vellore Institute of Technology on 2026-03-31 <1%

**7** Internet

www.apnilaw.com <1%

**8** Student papers

Vikrant University on 2026-03-10 <1%

**9** Internet

fixmycase.in <1%

**10** Student papers

Damodaram Sanjivayya National Law University on 2026-04-07 <1%

**11** Student papers

Vellore Institute of Technology on 2026-02-16 <1%

**12** Internet

ijrl.com <1%

**13** Internet

legal.bihar.in <1%

**14** Internet

www.coursehero.com <1%

**15** Internet

www.ijfmr.com <1%

**16** Student papers

Queen Mary and Westfield College on 2024-08-22 <1%

**17** Student papers

Uttaranchal University, Dehradun on 2025-05-21 <1%

**18** Internet

journals.uic.edu <1%

**19** Internet

www.knightcolumbia.org <1%

