



RESEARCH

Policy Discourse on Child Protection from Cyberbullying and Online Sexual Violence: A Thematic Analysis in Indonesia

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Abstract

Cyberbullying and online sexual violence pose an escalating threat to children in the digital era, yet studies juxtaposing Indonesian policy statements with recent academic evidence remain limited. This study maps the main themes, convergences, and differences in policy emphasis between UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs, synthesizing these with the 2021-2026 literature. A descriptive qualitative design using document and discourse analysis was employed, collecting two official statements from key informants and secondary data, coded through six-phase thematic analysis. Results showed both informants described an increasing trend, a shift in incident locus toward private spaces, and psychological effects from digital traces permanence. They converged on family digital literacy but diverged on regulation versus content enforcement. Analysis revealed tension between the assumption that digital literacy creates a safe disclosure space for children, and literature showing parental mediation effectiveness varies. The study concludes family digital literacy is necessary but insufficient for digital child protection in Indonesia, recommending policy mechanisms that systematically bridge awareness and parenting practice. Its novelty lies in treating international and domestic policy statements as a single, synchronized discourse rather than analyzing them separately, an approach not previously applied to Indonesia; its originality rests on juxtaposing this discourse against empirical literature on parental mediation rather than relying solely on normative-legal analysis. The study contributes theoretically by distinguishing normative awareness from families' practical capacity as separate sub-mechanisms of institutional response, and practically by informing policymakers, schools, and families on the limits of digital literacy as a stand-alone solution.

Keywords cyberbullying; online sexual violence; child protection; digital literacy; parental mediation

INTRODUCTION

Every 0.5 seconds, a child somewhere in the world accesses the internet for the first time. In Indonesia alone, internet users now exceed 220 million, with approximately 9% under the age of 12. This rapid digital transformation has opened children's access to education, entertainment, and social relationships on a scale far broader than previous generations experienced. Behind these benefits, however, digital space has also become a new arena for threats against children which several international studies classify as an urgent global public health issue (Fry et al., 2025; Punjani et al., 2026; Sorrentino et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2021).

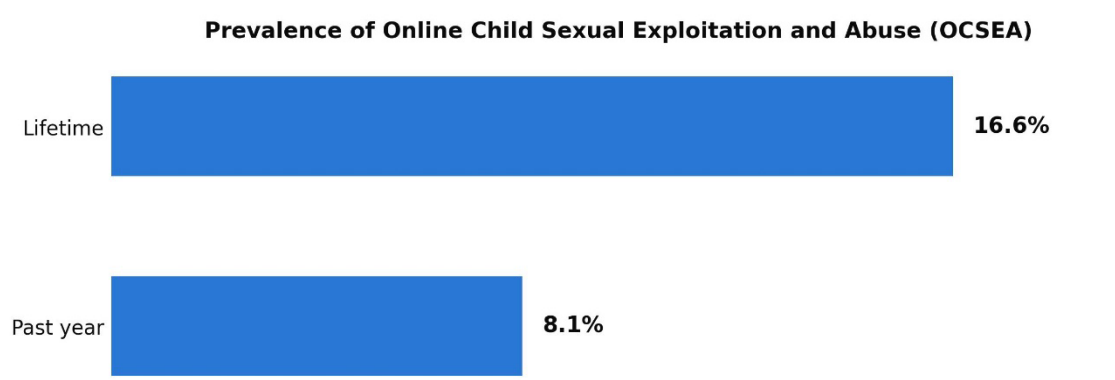
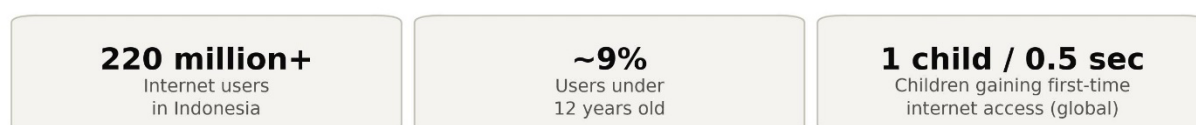


Figure 1. Children's Internet Access: Scale and Risk

The scale of this problem is substantial and continues to grow. A recent global meta-analysis estimated that 16.6% of children under 18 have experienced at least one form of OCSEA in their lifetime, with 8.1% experiencing it within the past year (Finkelhor et al., 2022). Meanwhile, reports of child exploitation content compiled by international agencies have also risen sharply year on year (2025 Media Coverage CyberTipline Success Stories, n.d.; Global Threat Assessment 2023, n.d.). A systematic review of cyberbullying trends during and after the pandemic further indicates an uneven pattern of increase across regions, rates rose in most Asian and Australian countries yet declined relatively in several Western countries (Sorrentino et al., 2023; Trompeter et al., 2022). This suggests that each country's social-digital context shapes the specific risk patterns children face. In Indonesia, this context is reflected in national data: the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has documented a cyberbullying prevalence among child internet users that exceeds global averages, a comparison detailed in the Results section. Similarly, the 2024 National Survey on the Life Experiences of Children and Adolescents (SNPHAR) found that more than 10% of children aged 13-17 had experienced cyberbullying, and approximately 4% had experienced non-contact online sexual violence (Linadi & Ayubi, 2026).

National baseline data corroborate this trend, showing that only 37.5% of Indonesian children have received guidance on safe internet use, while 42% report having felt uncomfortable or frightened by online experiences (Plato, n.d.). Regional evidence further indicates that nearly half of surveyed children in Indonesia remain unaware of how to report online sexual exploitation, reflecting a persistent gap between policy awareness campaigns and children's actual reporting knowledge (DISRUPTING HARM IN INDONESIA Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Disrupting Harm in Indonesia-Evidence on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 2, 2022). Although research on cyberbullying and OCSEA has grown rapidly over the past five years, this state-of-the-art review identifies at least three gaps relevant to the present study.

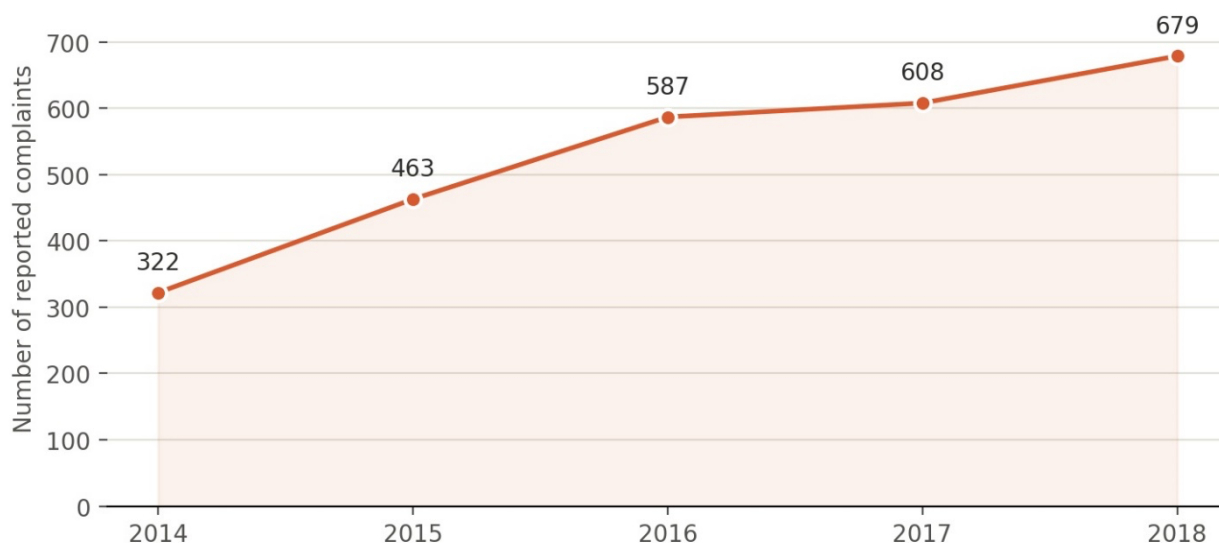


Figure 2. Reported complaints of child pornography and cybercrime victimization received

First, most large-scale prevalence studies and systematic reviews center on data from high-income countries or multinational aggregates (Fry et al., 2025; Ghai et al., 2026; Punjani et al., 2026; Sorrentino et al., 2023; Zhu et al., 2021), while studies that specifically synthesize statements from Indonesian national authorities remain limited and tend toward normative legal analysis (Fitri & Rahmadhani, 2024; Ramadhan et al., n.d.) rather than policy discourse analysis grounded in key stakeholders' public statements. Second, most research on family factors focuses on the effectiveness of parental mediation in relation to digital risk exposure (Sevilla-Fernández et al., 2025), yet relatively few studies explicitly link open parent-child communication to the severity of post-victimization psychological effects, a connection that UNICEF Indonesia strongly emphasizes in its statements. Third, a gap has emerged amid the rapidly evolving Indonesian regulatory landscape, which spans Law No. 1 of 2024 on Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE Law), Government Regulation No. 17 of 2025 on the Governance of Child Protection in Electronic Systems (PP TUNAS), and Presidential Regulation No. 87 of 2025 on the Roadmap for Child Protection in the Online Domain. This legal gap is compounded by the absence of dedicated cyberbullying legislation in Indonesia, leaving existing juvenile and electronic-transaction laws ill-equipped to address the specific dynamics of online harassment (Putra, 2024). Studies that read statements from international agencies and domestic regulators synchronously, as a single body of policy discourse, remain rare, even though both the convergences and divergences in emphasis between them matter for mapping a coherent policy direction. This study is positioned to address that gap by synthesizing official statements from two key stakeholders (UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs) together with recent secondary data. Although cyberbullying and OCSEA are conceptually distinct forms of digital harm, this study treats them jointly because both informants consistently discussed them together as part of a single overarching threat to children's digital safety, and because the literature on digital risk exposure and family mediation largely spans both constructs without strict conceptual separation. The aim is to thematically map how trends, loci of vulnerability, psychological effects, family factors, and the direction of child protection policy in Indonesia's digital space are understood by these authorities. The scientific novelty of this study lies in synthesizing international and domestic policy statements as a single body of discourse and testing that discourse against recent empirical evidence on parental mediation and platform regulation, an approach not yet undertaken for the Indonesian context, where existing work remains largely normative-legal or based on multinational prevalence aggregates. The following synthesis substantiates why this integrative reading has not yet been undertaken and thus underlies the novelty stated above, focusing on evidence directly relevant to the locus of risk and the effectiveness of family- and policy-level responses this study interrogates. Global review findings

indicate that most child sexual exploitation material now circulates through easily accessible image-sharing platforms as well as end-to-end encrypted channels that are difficult for authorities to monitor (Teunissen & Napier, n.d.), a pattern consistent with a broader shift in the locus of bullying toward private conversational spaces. This condition reinforces the argument that content takedown strategies alone are inadequate unless accompanied by strengthened digital literacy at the family level (Livingstone et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the parental mediation literature paints a more complex picture than the assumption that more supervision simply means more safety. A cross-sectional study of 1,894 Chinese adolescents found that different dimensions of parental mediation exerted different effects on children's objective digital literacy, even among families with less favorable socio-demographic status (Lou et al., 2024). An empirical cohort study of parent-adolescent dyads likewise found mixed results regarding the effectiveness of media mediation, indicating that the relationship between mediation and children's digital outcomes is not always linear (Huang et al., 2023). Meanwhile, a narrative review on mediation among young children found that parental mediation is frequently carried out without preparation or a structured strategy (Morawska et al., 2023; Nikken & Oprea, 2018). Read together, this body of evidence suggests parental mediation is not the straightforward safeguard that stronger digital literacy is often assumed to be, a pattern this study interrogates directly in the Discussion section. The literature instead shows that parents' good intentions do not automatically translate into effective digital parenting practices without structured program support (Nichols & Selim, 2022). On the policy response front, cross-country comparisons demonstrate that the effectiveness of takedown policies and platform regulation depends heavily on enforcement capacity and inter-agency coordination (Global Threat Assessment 2023, n.d.). In the Indonesian context, a juridical review of the revised ITE Law and PP TUNAS concludes that although the legal framework has been strengthened, gaps remain between normative regulation and implementation capacity, including in age verification and inter-agency digital forensic coordination (Khusnaini & Aisyah, 2025). A recent policy review even notes that the digital literacy mechanisms within PP TUNAS remain only loosely elaborated compared with the technical regulation of platforms, a finding relevant for critically assessing whether the two informants' emphasis on digital literacy is adequately reflected in actual policy design ("Reorientasi Kebijakan Pelindungan Anak Terhadap Adiksi Internet Dalam Perspektif Pemenuhan Hak Konstitusional Di Indonesia," 2026). This tension between international norms and local implementation realities has also been observed at the national policy level, where global child online protection guidelines are adapted unevenly amid domestic governance and industry constraints (Radovanović, 2026).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study frames three elements as an interrelated framework: the scale and trend of digital risk to children as captured by prevalence data; the impact mechanism explaining why such risk carries long-term psychological consequences, drawing on the publicity-permanence-permeability characteristics of cyberbullying (Erbiçer et al., 2023); and institutional responses in the form of family mediation and state policy, theorized as factors that moderate the relationship between risk exposure and impact severity. Building on the gaps and conceptual framework outlined above, this study aims to identify and classify the main themes in the public statements of UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs between July 2025 and February 2026 regarding trends, loci, impacts, and policy responses to cyberbullying and online sexual violence against children; to map points of convergence and differences in policy emphasis between the two stakeholders through comparative analysis; and to synthesize these thematic findings with the 2021-2026 academic literature in order to evaluate the extent to which domestic policy statements align with global empirical evidence on the effectiveness of parental mediation and platform regulation.

To achieve these objectives, this study is organized as follows. The Research Method section outlines the qualitative document and discourse analysis design, the selection of informants and secondary data, and the six-phase thematic analysis procedure used to code and interpret the corpus. The Results

and Discussion section presents the thematic findings on case trends, locus of incidents, psychological impact, and policy responses, before synthesizing these findings with the 2021-2026 literature to identify points of alignment and tension. The Conclusion then summarizes the study's theoretical and practical contributions and outlines its limitations and directions for future research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design using document and discourse analysis of policy stakeholders' public statements and secondary data related to cyberbullying and online sexual violence against children. This design was selected because the research questions are oriented toward mapping themes, interpreting meaning, and comparing policy emphasis across institutions. A descriptive qualitative design suits this study because the research aims to describe and interpret existing policy discourse. It does not aim to test causal relationships or generalize findings statistically. This design enables the researcher to capture the meaning embedded in institutional statements without manipulating the phenomenon under study. Specifically, the study seeks textual data on thematic patterns and on points of convergence and divergence in policy emphasis. This type of data cannot be reduced to numerical indicators of a single variable.

Research Site

Because this study relies on document and discourse analysis rather than field observation, the "research site" is defined institutionally as the public communication platforms of the two selected stakeholders, official statement forums and published materials of UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, rather than a physical location. The unit of analysis comprised documents and public statements, drawn from two categories of sources: official statements from key informants and supporting secondary data. Informants were selected purposively based on three inclusion criteria: (a) holding an institutional position relevant to child protection in digital space at the policymaking or institutional representation level; (b) delivering statements officially and documenting them in a verifiable public forum; and (c) delivering statements within a relatively close time frame (July 2025-February 2026), so that they could be read as contemporaneous policy discourse. Based on these criteria, the two selected informants were the Head of UNICEF Indonesia's Representative Office and the Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, representing the perspectives of an international agency and a domestic regulatory authority, respectively. Exclusion criteria covered individual opinions expressed outside institutional capacity. Secondary data in the form of prevalence figures were selected using similar inclusion criteria: sourced from institutions explicitly mentioned by the informants (UNICEF and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia), based on published survey methodologies, and thematically relevant to the statements analyzed. The size of the research corpus was therefore determined by the sufficiency of information needed to address the study's thematic and comparative mapping objectives for the two predetermined sources. This limited-corpus approach, focused on two key informants, follows the logic of an instrumental case study, in which depth of reading within a purposively selected case takes precedence over breadth of source coverage. Accordingly, the findings of this study should be read as an in-depth thematic mapping of the policy discourse of two key stakeholders within a specific period, rather than as a generalization about the entirety of digital child protection policy discourse in Indonesia.

Data Validation

In document analysis research, the primary "instrument" is the researcher, working with the aid of a thematic coding matrix. As an appropriate equivalent within qualitative research, the quality of the coding instrument was safeguarded through three steps. First, the theme matrix was developed based on the conceptual framework outlined in the state-of-the-art synthesis in the Introduction, encompassing five thematic categories: case trends, locus/domain of incidents, psychological impact,

family risk factors, and policy responses. The categories were thus theory-driven while remaining open to themes emerging from the data. Second, a coding trial was conducted on one statement prior to full coding, to ensure that the operational definition of each category was sufficiently clear and non-overlapping. Third, the operational definition of each category was documented in a written codebook containing example marker sentences for each theme, allowing the coding process to be traced and re-examined by readers or other researchers. Because coding was performed by a single researcher, the potential for interpretive bias was mitigated through a written audit trail (the codebook and coding worksheets), which allows transparent tracing of coding decisions, although this study did not involve formal intercoder reliability testing. This limitation is acknowledged as a methodological constraint and discussed further in the Limitations section. Data validity in this study was further supported through source triangulation, cross-verifying each informant's statement against official institutional publications, and peer debriefing with a colleague familiar with qualitative document analysis to review the coding worksheet and theme definitions prior to finalizing the results.

Data Collection

Data collection followed eight sequential steps to allow replication by other researchers. First, the researcher identified public events or forums relevant to child protection in digital space within the study period. Second, the researcher identified informants meeting the inclusion criteria described above. Third, the researcher traced and collected the texts of official statements from verifiable sources, including the location, date, and context of delivery. Fourth, the researcher cross-verified the authenticity and context of each statement by comparing it with official publications from the relevant institutions where available. Fifth, the researcher collected secondary data in the form of prevalence figures and supporting statistics from the same institutions, noting the measurement method and population coverage of each source. Sixth, all texts and data were compiled into a single structured corpus with accompanying metadata (source, date, informant's position, forum context). Seventh, the corpus was reviewed for completeness, with sections that could not be verified explicitly flagged as incomplete data rather than silently omitted. Eighth, the final verified corpus was stored as the basis for the data analysis stage. Table 1 summarizes the types of documents collected, the data obtained from each, and their relevance to the objectives of this study.

Table 1. Document Types, Data Obtained, and Relevance to This Study

Document Type	Data Obtained	Relevance to This Study
Verbatim transcripts of official public statements delivered by key informants	Exact wording on case trends, locus of incidents, psychological impact, and policy response, together with the date, forum, and speaker's institutional position	Forms the primary corpus coded through thematic analysis; directly supports the identification and comparison of policy themes between UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs
Official institutional publications used for cross-verification (press releases, verified statement records)	Confirmation of the authenticity, context, and precise wording of each informant's statement	Strengthens data validity through source triangulation, ensuring that coded statements accurately represent each institution's official position
UNICEF prevalence reports and global survey data	Quantitative figures on cyberbullying and OCSEA prevalence among children internationally (e.g., approximately 33% across 32 countries; approximately 16.7% globally in 2024)	Provides descriptive context for evaluating whether Indonesia's cyberbullying trend aligns with, or diverges from, global patterns

National statistical reports from the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs and the SNPHAR survey	National prevalence figures on cyberbullying and online sexual violence among Indonesian children (e.g., 48% of child internet users; SNPHAR 2024 statistics)	Grounds informants' statements in measurable domestic evidence and enables comparison between international and domestic prevalence estimates
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Data Analysis

Data analysis followed six phases, each applied to a specific portion of the corpus. In the familiarization phase, the researcher read the full transcripts of both statements. The secondary prevalence data were also reviewed to build a holistic understanding of the corpus. Subsequently, in the initial coding phase, the researcher processed individual meaning units within each transcript. Each unit received a code linked to one of five categories: case trends, locus of incidents, psychological impact, family risk factors, and policy responses. Next, in the theme-searching phase, the researcher grouped related codes from both statements into candidate themes. Examples include an increasing case trend, a shift toward private space, and family digital literacy. Following this, in the reviewing-themes phase, each candidate theme was checked against the entire corpus rather than isolated excerpts. This step verified internal consistency and identified overlap between themes. In the defining-and-naming phase, the refined themes were translated into clear operational definitions. These definitions were recorded in the codebook described in the Data Validation section. In the final phase, representative quotations linked to each theme were selected and paraphrased in accordance with academic conventions. The researcher then synthesized the finalized themes into a thematic narrative comparing the two informants' emphasis. This study followed the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis process, which emphasizes iterative engagement with the data rather than a strictly linear coding sequence (Campbell et al., 2021). Coding was performed manually using a structured worksheet (spreadsheet) containing columns for source, original quotation, code, and theme, without requiring large-scale qualitative analysis software given the corpus size, which was limited to two primary informants and supporting secondary data. Prevalence data cited from UNICEF and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia are presented as descriptive context without statistical pooling (such as meta-analysis), since they originate from different populations and survey methods.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Results

Research Findings

Data in this study were drawn from two types of material: public statements from two key informants representing the perspectives of an international agency and the government, and secondary data from research published by UNICEF and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The first informant was the Head of UNICEF Indonesia's Representative Office, who delivered her statement at the UNICEF Ambassador Launch event in Central Jakarta on February 10, 2026. The second informant was the Minister of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, who delivered his official statement on July 4, 2025. Both informants were selected because of their institutional positions as representatives of, respectively, an international organization and a domestic regulatory authority on the issue of child protection in Indonesia's digital domain.

According to UNICEF data, approximately one-third (around 33%) of young people across 32 countries have experienced cyberbullying, while 2024 global data indicate that roughly one in six children (around 16.7%) has experienced digital bullying. For the Indonesian context, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia recorded a higher figure, 48% of child internet users reported having experienced cyberbullying. These three figures derive from different populations, years, and survey methods, so comparisons among them are descriptive and indicative

rather than methodologically controlled statistical comparisons. Nevertheless, a fairly consistent pattern emerges. Regardless of differences in population coverage and data collection methods, cyberbullying prevalence among children falls within a fairly high range, with Indonesia's figure exceeding UNICEF's global average estimate.

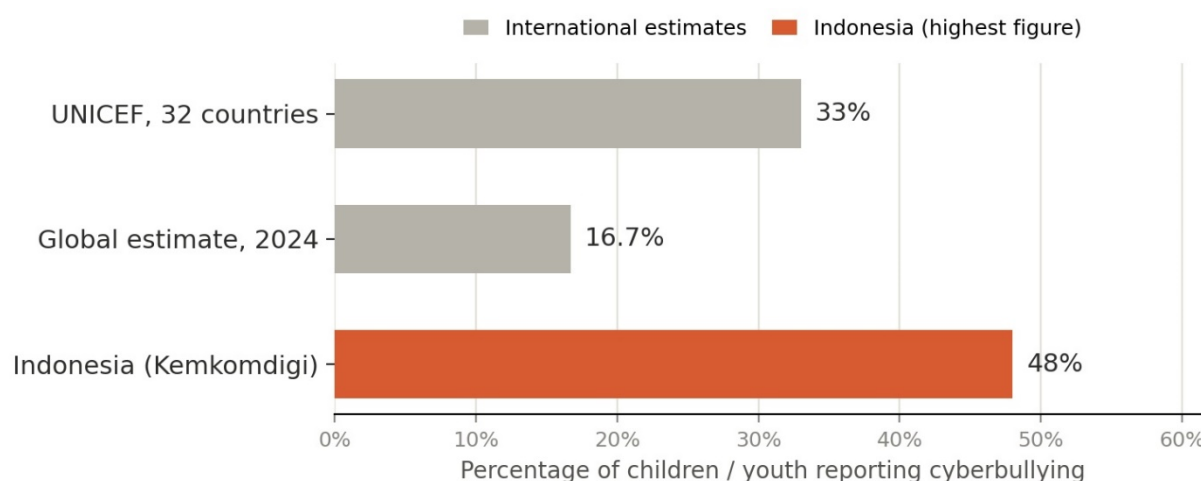


Figure 3. Comparison of cyberbullying prevalence estimates

Both informants consistently stated that cases of cyberbullying and online child sexual exploitation and abuse show an increasing trend alongside digitalization. UNICEF stated that digitalization brings many benefits but also opens new avenues of threat for children, particularly online bullying and online sexual exploitation and abuse. This statement reinforces the same upward trend both informants described, rather than being a claim about Indonesia's prevalence figure relative to the global estimate, which was already addressed separately in the preceding paragraph.

Regarding the location where bullying occurs, the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia explained that most cases take place in private spaces, such as personal conversations or peer group chats, making them difficult to detect and address. This finding carries practical importance because it shifts the focus of the problem away from public space toward closed private space, which demands a different approach to handling and places greater emphasis on education and parental involvement rather than content enforcement alone.

The psychological impact on child victims emerged as the most strongly emphasized and most extensively elaborated theme, particularly by UNICEF. UNICEF explained that digital traces never truly disappear, so the resulting trauma can persist for a lifetime and is not confined to the moment the incident occurs. UNICEF also described a behavioral pattern among child victims characterized by silence, withdrawal from social environments, and even self-isolation within their own world with no outlet for disclosure. The Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia added a dimension concerning variation in case severity, while still affirming a uniformity of emotional impact, stating that levels of bullying vary but that all nonetheless carry serious psychological consequences.

It should be noted that neither informant made any statement regarding mild cases that did not produce significant psychological impact. The absence of such comparative data does not mean that such cases do not exist. Rather, it reflects a limitation of the data sources, given that public statements tend to highlight severe cases. Consequently, the generalization that all levels of bullying carry equally serious impact should be read as an informant claim rather than as a conclusion empirically tested within this study.

In relation to this psychological impact, the absence of a safe space for disclosure was also identified as a factor that exacerbates harm to children. UNICEF affirmed that this is precisely the point at which the role of parents and family becomes critically important. This finding links the pattern of psychological impact to the policy recommendations that follow. Minimal open communication

between children and caregivers appears, qualitatively, as a connecting factor between cyberbullying exposure and trauma severity, although the available data do not permit statistical testing of this relationship, because comparative data between children with open communication and those with closed communication toward parents were not available.

Regarding policy responses and recommendations, both informants proposed complementary strategies, albeit with differing emphases. UNICEF emphasized strengthening child protection regulation in digital space, cooperation with internet service providers, and digital literacy for children and parents. The Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia placed greater emphasis on content takedown mechanisms and expanding the reach of digital education beyond major cities, while also touching on the importance of digital literacy. The point of convergence between the two informants lay in only one aspect: digital literacy, which both identified as a key strategy, indicating that this area constitutes a relatively uncontested priority across institutions.

Discussion

The findings regarding the increasing trend in cases and the shift in locus toward private space reinforce, rather than contradict, patterns already documented at the global scale. The estimate that 16.6% of children worldwide have experienced OCSEA in their lifetime (Fry et al., 2025; Lu et al., 2024), together with rising reports of exploitation content on private and encrypted channels (Drejer et al., 2024; Global Threat Assessment 2023, n.d.), is consistent with both informants' emphasis that private conversational space has become the primary, difficult-to-monitor locus. Similar patterns have been documented across East Asia, where children report unwanted online experiences they are reluctant to disclose to trusted adults, underscoring the regional relevance of the disclosure barriers examined in this study (Our Lives Online Use of Social Media by Children and Adolescents in East Asia-Opportunities, Risks and Harms, n.d.). This convergence between domestic policy discourse and global evidence extends prior understanding by showing that the shift in locus is not merely a technical-forensic finding but has become an explicit awareness at Indonesia's highest policymaking level, something not extensively documented in earlier policy studies, which have focused more on normative legal aspects.

Regarding psychological impact, the finding that both informants emphasized the prolonged duration of trauma resulting from the permanent nature of digital traces is conceptually consistent with the literature on the publicity, permanence, and permeability characteristics that distinguish cyberbullying from conventional bullying (Erbiçer et al., 2023; Eroglu et al., 2022; Grover & Raju, 2023), as well as with longitudinal meta-analytic evidence showing that cyber-victimization predictively precedes symptoms of depression and anxiety, rather than merely correlating with them (Lee et al., 2026). It is important to underscore that the data in this study are descriptive-thematic and do not statistically test causal relationships. The claim regarding prolonged trauma duration remains an informant statement interpreted as consistent with predictive findings in the literature, not a causal conclusion derived directly from this study's data. Building on the publicity-permanence-permeability framework (Erbiçer et al., 2023), one plausible interpretation is that the permanent, repeatedly accessible nature of digital content interrupts the natural psychological recovery process that typically occurs in episodic, non-digital bullying cases, though this mechanism itself was not directly tested in the present study and warrants dedicated empirical investigation.

By contrast, on the theme of parental mediation and digital literacy, this study identifies something that should be read as a conceptual tension rather than a simple confirmation of expectations. UNICEF Indonesia's statement implies an assumption that strengthening parental digital literacy will directly open a safe space for children to disclose their experiences. The recent literature, however, presents a more complex picture: the effectiveness of parental mediation varies considerably and is often unstructured, while cohort studies of parent-adolescent dyads find mixed and non-linear results between the intensity of media mediation and children's digital outcomes (Erbiçer et al., 2023; Huang et al., 2023), even across families with varying socio-demographic backgrounds (Lou et al., 2024;

ÜSTÜNDAĞ ALKAN et al., 2021). Empirical findings from interviews with over 500 Indonesian children further illustrate how online activity patterns and self-protective behaviors vary across regions, offering additional context for interpreting the informants' emphasis on family-level literacy (Muller et al., 2024). This tension is a finding that was not fully anticipated by this study's synthesis, and rather than being disregarded, it should be read as an indication that good policy intentions (digital literacy) do not necessarily translate into effective digital parenting practices without supporting structured programs (Nichols & Selim, 2022; Zhao et al., 2023). This pattern is consistent with the well-documented policy-practice gap in implementation studies, in which normative policy aspirations do not automatically translate into ground-level practice without intermediating structures. Read through this lens, a plausible methodological explanation for this discrepancy is that informant statements are aspirational-normative in character, articulating policy direction, whereas the parental mediation studies cited above are descriptive-empirical, examining actual family practice. The two therefore operate at different levels of analysis and are not necessarily logically contradictory. However, the gap between the normative level and the implementation level constitutes an important point for discussion.

IMPLICATION

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the conceptual framework proposed in the introduction by showing that institutional response (family mediation and state policy) cannot be treated as a single, uniform moderating factor. Rather, it encompasses at least two distinct sub-mechanisms: normative awareness of the importance of digital literacy, and families' practical capacity to translate that awareness into effective digital parenting. This contribution is tentative and conceptual, consistent with the qualitative-descriptive nature of this study's data, rather than an empirically tested theoretical claim derived from standardized measurement. Nevertheless, distinguishing these two sub-mechanisms offers a more precise framework for future research seeking to empirically test at which level family intervention is most effective. This distinction also speaks to policy framing theory, which suggests that policy actors often frame complex social problems around solutions that are politically and rhetorically convenient (e.g., "digital literacy") even when the empirical mechanism linking that solution to the outcome remains under-specified.

Practical and Policy Implications

The practical implications of these findings are fairly concrete and can be mapped onto three groups of practitioners. For policymakers and government institutions, the finding regarding the gap between awareness and parental mediation practice suggests that PP TUNAS and the Presidential Regulation on the Roadmap for Child Protection in the Online Domain (Perpres PARD) need to be complemented with more structured and measurable digital literacy mechanisms, rather than general appeals alone. Comparable regulatory dilemmas have emerged in the European context, where age-verification and age-tiered regulation approaches likewise struggle to balance children's safety with platform feasibility and enforcement capacity (Köhler-Dauner et al., 2025).

For schools and educators, evidence from a meta-analysis of school-based cyberbullying prevention programs in the Asia-Pacific region shows that integrating media literacy into the regular curriculum is more effective than stand-alone programs delivered as separate subjects. Schools in Indonesia might therefore consider a similar approach rather than one-off, ceremonial digital literacy programs. For parents and caregivers, given that the parental mediation literature shows considerable and often unstructured variation in effectiveness (Huang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2025), a realistic practical recommendation is not to promise the elimination of risk but rather to encourage routine open communication as an impact-mitigation mechanism while remaining mindful of the limited effectiveness of supervision alone.

This study shows that digital child protection policy discourse in Indonesia, as articulated by UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, is broadly consistent with global evidence regarding the scale and nature of the threat. However, it

contains one crucial conceptual weakness. The emphasis on family digital literacy as a solution has not yet been matched by explicit acknowledgment of the gap between awareness and parental mediation practice that has long been documented in the academic literature. This tension carries a clear practical implication: effective policy must explicitly design mechanisms that bridge the gap between families' good intentions and their capacity to act on them, rather than treating awareness-raising as self-sufficient. Given that this reading is based on statements from two informants at a specific point in time, this conclusion should be treated as a discourse-level proposition for further empirical testing, rather than a definitive assessment of institutional policy intent.

Reading the two informants' statements as a single, synchronized discourse, rather than analyzing each institution's narrative separately, makes visible a conceptual tension that neither statement reveals on its own: their shared assumption about digital literacy sits uneasily against the parental-mediation literature's more cautious findings. Together, these two moves distinguish the present analysis from prior normative-legal reviews of Indonesian child protection policy. Consequently, this study offers a discourse-level diagnostic that prior single-source or purely legal analyses could not provide.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to map how UNICEF Indonesia and the Ministry of Communication and Digital Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, as two key stakeholders, understand the trends, loci, impacts, and policy responses related to cyberbullying and online sexual violence against children, while juxtaposing this discourse with the 2021-2026 academic literature. The findings show that both informants consistently frame this issue as an escalating threat shifting toward private space, with prolonged psychological impact resulting from the permanent nature of digital traces, and one clear point of policy convergence amid differing emphases on regulation versus content enforcement. Accordingly, the three research objectives set out at the outset have been achieved through the thematic and comparative analysis presented in the Results and Discussion sections.

The main contribution of this study lies in providing the first synthesis that explicitly reads statements from international and domestic Indonesian authorities as a single body of policy discourse, while critically testing them against global empirical evidence on the effectiveness of parental mediation. To the extent of this literature review, such synthesis has not been extensively undertaken amid the dominance of normative legal studies and multinational aggregate-based prevalence studies. This novelty lies not in the discovery of new prevalence data, but in identifying a conceptual tension between the policy assumption that digital literacy automatically creates a safe space for children to disclose their experiences and literature evidence showing that parental awareness does not automatically translate into effective digital parenting practices. By revealing this tension, the study addresses part of the gap identified in the introduction while clarifying that this gap is not merely a literature gap but carries direct implications for ongoing policy design in Indonesia.

Theoretically, this refined view of institutional response as encompassing separate normative and practical sub-mechanisms offers researchers a more precise unit of analysis for testing family-level interventions. Practically, these findings direct policymakers, schools, and families not to treat digital literacy as a stand-alone solution, but as one component within a more structured and measurable approach, as elaborated in detail in the Discussion section.

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings above. First, the research corpus is limited to statements from two key informants, so the findings cannot be generalized to the entirety of digital child protection policy discourse in Indonesia. Rather, they represent an in-depth reading of two purposively selected sources. Second, thematic coding was performed by a single researcher without intercoder reliability testing, so theme interpretation may have been influenced by the researcher's perspective, although this was mitigated through a written audit trail. Third, the cited prevalence data derive from different populations, years, and survey methods, so comparisons of figures across institutions are indicative rather than controlled statistical comparisons. Fourth, as a document and discourse analysis study, this research does not empirically

test the causal relationship between parental mediation, digital literacy, and psychological impact through statistical means. The conceptual tension identified reflects a qualitative-interpretive reading of the gap between policy statements and the literature, rather than hypothesis testing. These limitations do not diminish the validity of the findings at the level of the policy discourse analyzed, but they point toward avenues for further research that could empirically test these thematic propositions through surveys of Indonesian families and evaluations of the implementation of PP TUNAS and Perpres PARD once both regulations have been in effect longer.

Amid the acceleration of digital transformation, which continues to draw children's private space closer to the public space of the internet, this study affirms that child protection in Indonesia's digital domain cannot rely on a single policy instrument, however important that instrument may be. Family digital literacy is a necessary condition, not a sufficient one, and failing to distinguish between the two risks leaving a policy gap precisely at the most private point of a child's life, yet where the impact lingers longest.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGY

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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