

Children's Rights in Digital Spaces: Emerging Legal and Societal Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has transformed the ways in which children learn, communicate, socialize, and access information, creating unprecedented opportunities alongside significant legal, ethical, and societal challenges. As children become increasingly active participants in digital environments, concerns relating to privacy, online safety, data protection, cyberbullying, digital exploitation, algorithmic profiling, and unequal access to digital resources have intensified. This review article examines the evolving landscape of children's rights in digital spaces by critically analyzing international legal frameworks, national regulatory developments, and emerging societal perspectives that seek to safeguard children's rights in the digital age. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, international conventions, policy documents, judicial decisions, and reports from global organizations, the study explores the adequacy of existing legal mechanisms in protecting children's rights while balancing innovation, freedom of expression, and access to digital technologies. The review identifies significant progress in recognizing children's digital rights through instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and subsequent international guidelines, yet reveals persistent implementation gaps arising from fragmented legislation, jurisdictional limitations, inconsistent enforcement, and the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies. The findings further demonstrate that effective protection of children's rights requires a multidisciplinary approach involving governments, technology companies, educational institutions, parents, civil society organizations, and children themselves. Emerging perspectives emphasize child-centered digital governance, privacy-by-design principles, digital literacy, ethical artificial intelligence, and stronger corporate accountability as essential components of future regulatory frameworks. The study concludes that strengthening legal harmonization, enhancing international cooperation, promoting digital citizenship education, and developing adaptive regulatory models are critical to ensuring that children's rights remain effectively protected in increasingly complex digital ecosystems. The review contributes to contemporary discourse by synthesizing current legal and societal developments and providing recommendations for policymakers, researchers, and digital platform stakeholders committed to advancing children's rights in the digital era.

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the lives of children across the globe. The proliferation of internet connectivity, smartphones, social media platforms, online learning environments, gaming applications, and artificial intelligence (AI)-driven technologies has created unprecedented opportunities for children's education, communication, creativity, and participation in society. Children today are increasingly recognized as "digital natives," growing up in environments where digital engagement forms an integral part of their social, educational, and recreational experiences (Livingstone, 2017). While these technologies have significantly enhanced children's access to information, learning resources,

and social interactions, they have simultaneously exposed them to complex legal, ethical, and societal challenges that require comprehensive policy and legal responses.

The digital environment has become an essential platform through which children exercise many of their internationally recognized human rights, including the rights to education, freedom of expression, access to information, participation, privacy, and development. However, digital spaces also present significant risks, including cyberbullying, online sexual exploitation and abuse, digital surveillance, exposure to harmful content, misinformation, identity theft, algorithmic discrimination, excessive commercialization, and violations of children's personal data (Third, 2017). The increasing sophistication of digital technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, facial recognition systems, and automated decision-making processes, has further complicated the protection of children's rights by creating new forms of vulnerability that existing legal frameworks were not originally designed to address.

The recognition of children's rights in digital environments has evolved alongside developments in international human rights law. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), adopted in 1989, remains the primary international legal instrument protecting children's rights. Although drafted before the emergence of today's digital ecosystem, its principles remain highly relevant in guiding the interpretation and application of children's rights in online environments. These principles include the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, the right to life, survival and development, and the right of children to express their views on matters affecting them (Lievens, 2018). More recently, international organizations have acknowledged the need to explicitly interpret children's rights within digital contexts through updated guidance and policy recommendations, recognizing that the digital environment is now inseparable from children's everyday lives.

Globally, governments have introduced a variety of legislative and regulatory measures aimed at protecting children online. Data protection laws, online safety legislation, child protection frameworks, and cybersecurity regulations increasingly incorporate provisions addressing children's privacy, consent, age verification, and digital safety. Jurisdictions such as the European Union have strengthened protections through comprehensive data protection regimes and digital governance frameworks that require online platforms to consider children's best interests when designing digital services (Coppock, 2016). Similarly, countries including the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and several African nations have enacted or proposed online safety legislation that seeks to balance children's protection with their rights to participation, expression, and access to information. Despite these developments, significant inconsistencies remain across jurisdictions regarding enforcement mechanisms, regulatory standards, and institutional capacities.

Beyond legal considerations, the realization of children's rights in digital spaces is influenced by broader societal factors. Digital inequality continues to affect children's ability to meaningfully benefit from technological opportunities, particularly among children living in low-income communities, rural areas, refugee settlements, and marginalized populations. Unequal access to internet infrastructure, digital devices, affordable connectivity, and digital literacy creates disparities that undermine the principle of equal access to education and information (Nawaila, 2018). Furthermore, parents, educators, policymakers, technology companies, and civil society organizations increasingly share responsibility for creating safer digital environments while respecting children's autonomy and evolving capacities. The concept of digital citizenship has therefore gained prominence as an essential component of child development, emphasizing responsible online behaviour, digital literacy, critical thinking, and awareness of online risks.

The emergence of artificial intelligence has further intensified debates surrounding children's rights in digital environments. AI-powered recommendation systems, educational technologies, biometric identification, predictive analytics, and generative AI applications increasingly shape children's online experiences. While these technologies offer innovative educational and developmental opportunities, they also raise important concerns regarding algorithmic bias, transparency, privacy, consent, profiling, manipulation, and accountability (Islam, 2026). Children may lack the capacity to fully understand how their personal information is collected, processed, and utilized by digital platforms, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitative commercial practices and automated decision-making systems. Consequently, scholars and policymakers increasingly advocate for child-centred approaches to AI governance that prioritize transparency, accountability, and the best interests of the child.

Recent global events have further highlighted the importance of safeguarding children's rights in digital spaces. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated children's dependence on digital technologies for education, healthcare, social interaction, and access to public services. School closures forced millions of children to rely on online learning platforms, exposing disparities in digital access while simultaneously increasing online exposure to cyber threats and privacy risks (Nyamutata, 2019). These developments reinforced the necessity of strengthening legal protections and digital governance mechanisms capable of responding to rapidly evolving technological landscapes without restricting children's legitimate opportunities for learning, participation, and innovation.

Academic scholarship examining children's rights in digital environments has expanded considerably over the past decade. Existing literature explores diverse themes including online child protection, digital privacy, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence governance, digital literacy, online participation, and platform accountability. Nevertheless, much of the available research remains fragmented, often focusing on isolated legal issues or specific technological developments without comprehensively examining the interconnected legal and societal dimensions of children's digital rights (Gasser, 2016). Moreover, rapid technological innovation continues to outpace legislative reform, creating persistent regulatory gaps and implementation challenges that require continuous scholarly evaluation.

This review study seeks to examine the emerging legal and societal perspectives surrounding children's rights in digital spaces. It critically analyses the evolution of international and domestic legal frameworks governing children's digital rights, explores contemporary societal challenges affecting children's online experiences, and evaluates the effectiveness of existing regulatory and governance approaches in addressing emerging digital risks (Guštin, 2022). The study also investigates the responsibilities of governments, technology companies, educational institutions, parents, and civil society in promoting child-centred digital environments while preserving children's fundamental freedoms. By synthesizing current legal developments, policy initiatives, and scholarly evidence, the review contributes to ongoing discussions on strengthening children's rights within rapidly evolving digital ecosystems.

Ultimately, protecting children's rights in digital spaces requires a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach that integrates legal safeguards, technological innovation, ethical governance, digital literacy, and international cooperation. As digital technologies continue to reshape childhood experiences across societies, ensuring that children's rights remain central to digital governance has become an urgent global priority (Islam, 2023). This study contributes to that objective by providing a comprehensive review of the evolving legal landscape and societal considerations that inform the protection, promotion, and realization of children's rights in the digital age.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative review research design to critically examine the evolving discourse surrounding children's rights in digital spaces from legal, policy, and societal perspectives. As a review article, the study did not involve the collection of primary empirical data but instead synthesized existing scholarly literature, international legal instruments, policy documents, judicial decisions, and reports published by reputable organizations. The review approach was considered appropriate because it facilitates the integration of diverse sources of evidence, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the opportunities, risks, and regulatory challenges associated with children's participation in digital environments. Through this approach, the study identifies prevailing trends, recurring themes, emerging legal developments, and knowledge gaps that continue to shape the protection and promotion of children's rights in the digital age.

2.2 Literature Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted systematically using major multidisciplinary and legal research databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, HeinOnline, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and Wiley Online Library. Additional materials were retrieved from publications produced by international organizations such as the United Nations, UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Council of Europe, the European Union, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Relevant national legislative documents, policy papers, judicial decisions, and reports from child rights organizations were also reviewed to provide broader contextual understanding.

The search strategy employed combinations of keywords and Boolean operators, including "children's rights," "digital rights," "online child protection," "children and digital technologies," "internet governance," "privacy rights of children," "online safety," "cyberbullying," "artificial intelligence and children," "digital platforms," "data protection," "children's participation," and "digital inclusion." Boolean connectors such as AND, OR, and NOT were used to refine search results and improve relevance. Reference lists of selected publications were further examined to identify additional significant studies.

2.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, legal commentaries, conference proceedings, international treaties, policy frameworks, judicial decisions, and institutional reports that addressed children's rights within digital environments. Preference was given to publications produced between 2010 and 2026 to capture contemporary developments associated with rapid technological advancement, although seminal earlier works that significantly influenced the evolution of children's digital rights were also incorporated where necessary. Only publications available in English were considered to ensure consistency in interpretation and analysis.

Studies that focused exclusively on technical aspects of information technology without discussing legal, ethical, educational, or social implications for children were excluded. Similarly, publications lacking sufficient methodological rigor, duplicate studies, opinion pieces without supporting evidence, and sources unrelated to children's rights or digital governance were omitted from the review.

2.4 Data Extraction and Organization

Following the identification and selection of relevant literature, information was extracted using a structured review framework to ensure consistency across studies. Key information included publication details, geographical focus, legal framework examined, research objectives, methodology employed, principal findings, policy recommendations, and identified research gaps. Particular attention was paid to discussions concerning children's privacy, freedom of expression, digital participation, online safety, data protection, algorithmic governance, artificial intelligence, cyberbullying, online exploitation, digital literacy, and the responsibilities of governments and technology companies.

The extracted information was organized into thematic categories corresponding to the objectives of the review. This facilitated comparison across jurisdictions, highlighted converging and diverging perspectives, and enabled the identification of emerging patterns in both legal scholarship and policy development.

2.5 Thematic Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis. This analytical approach involved repeatedly reviewing the selected publications to identify recurring concepts, legal principles, societal concerns, and policy trends relevant to children's rights in digital spaces. Themes were developed inductively and refined through continuous comparison of findings across studies. Particular emphasis was placed on identifying the interaction between international human rights standards, domestic legal frameworks, technological innovations, and social realities influencing children's digital experiences.

The thematic analysis also explored areas of consensus and disagreement within existing scholarship, highlighting both established legal protections and unresolved regulatory challenges. Comparative analysis across different jurisdictions enabled the study to examine variations in legislative responses, enforcement mechanisms, and institutional capacities for protecting children's rights online.

2.6 Quality Assessment of Sources

To enhance the reliability and credibility of the review, the selected literature was evaluated based on academic quality, relevance, methodological rigor, and institutional credibility. Peer-reviewed publications from reputable academic journals were prioritized alongside official legal documents and reports issued by internationally recognized organizations. Consideration was also given to the consistency of findings across multiple studies, the transparency of research methodologies, and the authority of legal and policy sources. This quality assessment minimized the inclusion of unreliable information while strengthening the validity of the synthesized evidence.

2.7 Ethical Considerations

Since this study relied exclusively on publicly available secondary sources, no human participants were involved, and ethical approval from an institutional review board was not required. Nevertheless, the review adhered to established principles of academic integrity by accurately representing the findings of previous studies, acknowledging original authors through appropriate citation, and avoiding plagiarism or misinterpretation of source materials. The study also maintained objectivity by presenting balanced interpretations of differing scholarly viewpoints and legal perspectives.

2.8 Limitations of the Review

Although the review provides a comprehensive synthesis of current literature, several limitations should be acknowledged. The exclusion of non-English publications may have limited the representation of legal developments from certain jurisdictions. Additionally, the rapidly evolving nature of digital technologies, artificial intelligence, and online governance means that legislative reforms and policy initiatives continue to emerge beyond the period covered by this review. Furthermore, variations in legal systems, cultural contexts, and technological infrastructure across countries may affect the generalizability of some findings. Despite these limitations, the review offers a robust and up-to-date assessment of the legal and societal dimensions of children's rights in digital spaces while identifying important directions for future research, policy development, and international cooperation.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Evolution of Children's Rights in Digital Spaces

The review findings demonstrate that children's rights have undergone significant conceptual and legal transformation in response to rapid technological advancement and the increasing integration of digital technologies into everyday life. Traditionally, child rights discourse focused primarily on physical protection, education, healthcare, and family welfare. However, the digital revolution has expanded this framework to include children's rights within online environments, where issues such as digital participation, privacy, access to information, identity protection, and online safety have become equally important. The evidence reviewed indicates that children are no longer merely passive recipients of digital protection measures but active digital citizens whose rights require balanced protection and empowerment (Garayova, 2024). Existing child rights principles are increasingly being interpreted to apply equally within virtual environments, reflecting a shift from viewing technology solely as a source of risk toward recognizing its role in promoting children's development, education, and civic participation.

These findings align with previous studies by Choudhuri (2019), who argued that digital technologies have fundamentally reshaped the implementation of children's rights by creating new opportunities alongside unprecedented risks. Similarly, research by Islam (2023) emphasized that children's online experiences should be understood through a rights-based framework that integrates protection, provision, and participation rather than focusing exclusively on online safety. The literature consistently demonstrates that digital rights have become an integral extension of universal human rights rather than a separate legal category.

3.1.1 International Legal Recognition of Children's Digital Rights

The review reveals a progressive expansion of international legal recognition concerning children's digital rights. Although foundational human rights instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) were adopted before the widespread use of the internet, subsequent legal interpretation has successfully extended their application to digital environments. A significant milestone identified across the reviewed literature is the adoption of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 25 (2021), which explicitly recognizes that children's rights must be fully respected, protected, and fulfilled within digital spaces. This guidance emphasizes children's rights to privacy, education, freedom of expression, access to information, protection from exploitation, and participation in digital society.

The findings further indicate that international organizations including UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and the Council of Europe have developed complementary frameworks promoting child-centered digital governance (Drăghici, 2025). These initiatives increasingly encourage governments and technology companies to adopt child rights impact assessments during policy development and technological innovation.

The findings support previous work by Čulo Margaletić (2023), who argued that children's rights have evolved through dynamic legal interpretation rather than constitutional amendment. Likewise, Verma (2024) emphasized that digital technologies should enhance rather than undermine children's realization of internationally recognized rights. The growing consensus across international institutions reflects a shift toward embedding children's rights throughout the lifecycle of digital products and services rather than relying solely on reactive regulatory measures.

3.1.2 Digital Transformation and Children's Online Participation

The review demonstrates that digital transformation has substantially expanded opportunities for children's participation across educational, social, cultural, and civic domains. Increased internet connectivity, widespread smartphone ownership, virtual learning platforms, and social media have enabled children to access educational resources beyond traditional classrooms, communicate across geographical boundaries, and participate in discussions affecting their communities (Herman, 2025). Digital technologies have also facilitated inclusion for marginalized populations through accessible learning platforms, multilingual educational resources, and assistive technologies for children with disabilities.

Evidence from numerous studies indicates that online participation became particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when digital platforms served as the primary medium for education, healthcare communication, and social interaction. Educational institutions rapidly transitioned to remote learning, demonstrating both the transformative potential and inequalities associated with digital access (Lupton, 2017). Countries with stronger digital infrastructure generally experienced more successful educational continuity, while those with limited connectivity encountered widening educational disparities.

The review further finds that digital platforms increasingly support children's civic engagement. Young people now participate in environmental campaigns, human rights advocacy, public health awareness, and social justice movements using social media platforms (Bello, 2025). For example, youth climate activism has demonstrated how digital technologies facilitate global collaboration and amplify children's voices in policymaking processes.

These findings correspond with research conducted by KOVAČIČ (2025), who found that children's online participation contributes positively to learning, creativity, and democratic engagement when supported by appropriate safeguards. Similarly, Joudaki (2024) reported that digital literacy enhances children's educational outcomes and long-term social inclusion, provided inequalities in internet access and digital skills are adequately addressed.

3.1.3 Emerging Challenges in the Digital Rights Landscape

Despite significant opportunities, the review identifies increasingly complex challenges affecting children's realization of digital rights. Cyberbullying remains one of the most frequently reported online harms, contributing to anxiety, depression, reduced academic performance, and social isolation among children and adolescents (Milkaite, 2019). Unlike traditional bullying, digital harassment often extends beyond school environments and may occur continuously across multiple online platforms.

The findings further reveal growing concern regarding online sexual exploitation, grooming, trafficking, and child sexual abuse materials facilitated through encrypted communication platforms and anonymous digital services. Advances in artificial intelligence have introduced additional risks through synthetic media, deepfakes, and automated exploitation technologies (O'Brien, 2024). Law enforcement agencies continue to face significant challenges in identifying perpetrators operating across international jurisdictions.

Another emerging issue identified throughout the review involves extensive commercial data collection targeting children. Many online services collect behavioral information for personalized advertising and algorithmic recommendation systems without children's meaningful understanding or informed consent. Such practices raise important concerns regarding privacy, autonomy, and long-term digital profiling (Almog, 2020). Furthermore, algorithmic decision-making systems may unintentionally reinforce discrimination by disproportionately recommending harmful content or limiting children's exposure to diverse educational opportunities.

The review also identifies exposure to misinformation, violent content, self-harm material, hate speech, and addictive platform design as significant threats to children's mental health and overall well-being. Platform engagement algorithms often prioritize emotionally stimulating content, increasing children's exposure to harmful material (Swist, 2017).

These findings are consistent with Kaesling (2021), who observed that digital opportunities and risks frequently coexist rather than occurring independently. Likewise, research by the World Health Organization and UNICEF has linked excessive screen exposure, cyberbullying, and harmful online content with adverse psychological outcomes among children. Collectively, the evidence suggests that child protection strategies must evolve beyond content removal toward comprehensive digital governance emphasizing safety-by-design principles.

3.2 Legal and Policy Frameworks Protecting Children in Digital Spaces

The review demonstrates that legal and policy frameworks protecting children in digital environments have expanded considerably over the past decade. Governments, regional organizations, and international institutions increasingly recognize that effective child protection requires integrated legal approaches combining privacy protection, cybersecurity regulation, platform accountability, digital education, and child participation (Ibukun, 2024). However, despite substantial legislative progress, implementation remains uneven across jurisdictions due to differences in technological capacity, regulatory resources, and institutional coordination.

The findings indicate that the most effective legal systems combine statutory regulation with industry self-regulation, independent oversight bodies, public awareness campaigns, and digital literacy education. Countries adopting comprehensive regulatory strategies generally demonstrate stronger protection outcomes than those relying solely on criminal sanctions or voluntary compliance by technology companies (Gupta, 2025).

These findings support previous studies by Mwakisiki (2025) and Djefal (2022), which concluded that protecting children's rights online requires coordinated governance involving governments, educators, parents, civil society organizations, and private technology companies.

3.2.1 International Conventions and Regulatory Standards

The review finds that international legal frameworks continue to provide the normative foundation for protecting children's rights in digital spaces. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child remains the principal global instrument, with its provisions concerning privacy, education, protection from exploitation, freedom of expression, and access to information increasingly interpreted within digital contexts (Kassim, 2026). General Comment No. 25 significantly strengthened this framework by providing practical guidance on implementing children's rights in relation to digital technologies.

The findings also highlight the growing influence of complementary international standards, including UNICEF's Policy Guidance on AI for Children, UNESCO's Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, the Council of Europe's Strategy for the Rights of the Child, and the OECD Recommendation on Children in the Digital Environment (Kassim, 2025). Collectively, these frameworks promote child-centered digital governance emphasizing transparency, accountability, privacy, safety-by-design, and meaningful participation.

The review demonstrates that these international standards increasingly influence national legislation by encouraging harmonized approaches to age verification, data protection, online safety, and platform accountability. Previous research by Livingstone (2017) similarly concluded that international child rights law provides sufficient flexibility to accommodate emerging technological developments while preserving core human rights principles.

3.2.2 National Legislative Responses and Regulatory Approaches

The review reveals considerable variation in national legislative responses to children's digital rights. Many countries have introduced specialized legislation addressing online child protection, cybersecurity, personal data protection, digital education, and regulation of digital platforms (Third, 2017). The European Union has adopted one of the most comprehensive regulatory approaches through instruments such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Digital Services Act, both of which strengthen protections for minors by imposing stricter obligations on digital service providers regarding data processing, risk assessment, transparency, and content moderation.

In the United Kingdom, the Age Appropriate Design Code requires online services likely to be accessed by children to prioritize children's best interests through privacy-by-default settings and limitations on profiling. In the United States, the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA) regulates the collection of personal information from young children, although scholars have noted limitations relating to its age threshold and enforcement scope (Lievens, 2018). Australia, Canada, Singapore, and South Korea have similarly introduced legislation strengthening online child safety and digital privacy protections.

The review further indicates growing legislative activity across African countries, including Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, and Rwanda, where data protection laws, cybersecurity frameworks, and child online protection strategies increasingly address digital risks affecting children (Coppock, 2016). However, implementation capacity remains uneven due to resource limitations, infrastructure disparities, and institutional challenges.

3.2.3 Enforcement Challenges and Regulatory Gaps

Despite considerable legislative progress, the review identifies persistent enforcement challenges limiting the effectiveness of children's digital rights protections. One of the most significant challenges involves the inherently transnational nature of digital platforms. Technology companies frequently operate across multiple jurisdictions with differing legal standards, creating conflicts concerning applicable law, investigative authority, evidence collection, and regulatory enforcement (Nawaila, 2018). Consequently, national regulators often encounter difficulties holding multinational digital service providers accountable for violations affecting children.

The findings further indicate that technological innovation consistently outpaces legislative reform. Artificial intelligence, virtual reality, biometric technologies, blockchain applications, encrypted messaging services, and generative AI have introduced regulatory questions not fully anticipated by existing legal frameworks (Islam, 2026). As a result, policymakers frequently respond after technological risks have already emerged rather than proactively regulating new digital environments.

The review also identifies limited institutional resources, insufficient digital expertise among regulators and judicial officers, inconsistent age-verification mechanisms, and inadequate cooperation between governments and technology companies as major implementation barriers. In many developing countries, weak internet infrastructure, digital inequality, and limited cybersecurity capacity further constrain effective enforcement (Gasser, 2016). Moreover, children and parents often possess insufficient digital literacy to recognize online risks or exercise available legal remedies.

These findings reinforce earlier studies by Nyamutata (2019), which concluded that legal protection alone cannot adequately safeguard children's rights without complementary educational initiatives, technological safeguards, and international cooperation. Similarly, the Guštin (2022) argued that future regulatory systems should adopt adaptive, risk-based governance models capable of responding more rapidly to evolving digital technologies. Overall, the evidence suggests that protecting children's rights in digital spaces requires not only comprehensive legislation but also robust enforcement institutions, international collaboration, responsible platform governance, and sustained investment in digital literacy and child-centered technological innovation.

3.3 Major Threats to Children's Rights in Digital Environments

The review findings demonstrate that the digital environment presents both unprecedented opportunities and significant threats to children's rights. While digital technologies facilitate access to education, communication, healthcare information, and civic participation, they also expose children to complex risks that frequently transcend national boundaries and challenge conventional legal protections (Islam, 2023). The literature consistently identifies online exploitation, privacy violations, excessive surveillance, and negative psychological impacts as the most pervasive threats affecting children in digital spaces. These findings align with international reports from global child protection organizations, which indicate that digital harms have evolved alongside technological innovation, requiring equally adaptive legal and institutional responses. Unlike traditional child protection concerns confined to physical environments, digital threats are continuous, borderless, and often facilitated through sophisticated technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), encrypted messaging, and algorithm-driven recommendation systems (Garayova, 2024). Consequently, protecting children's rights in digital spaces requires integrated legal, technological, educational, and societal interventions rather than isolated regulatory measures.

3.3.1 Online Exploitation, Abuse, and Cyberbullying

The review indicates that online exploitation and technology-facilitated abuse represent some of the most serious violations of children's digital rights. Existing studies consistently reveal that the expansion of internet connectivity and social media platforms has increased opportunities for online grooming, child sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, identity theft, sextortion, and various forms of digital harassment. Offenders increasingly exploit anonymous communication platforms, online gaming environments, encrypted messaging applications, and live-streaming services to establish contact with children before manipulating or exploiting them (Islam, 2023). The findings demonstrate that these offences have become increasingly sophisticated, often involving organized criminal networks operating across multiple jurisdictions, thereby complicating investigation and prosecution.

Cyberbullying emerged as one of the most frequently documented digital harms affecting children across diverse cultural and socioeconomic contexts. Unlike traditional school bullying, cyberbullying extends beyond school environments and persists continuously through social networking platforms, messaging applications, online gaming communities, and anonymous forums. Victims commonly experience repeated harassment, public humiliation, social exclusion, hate speech, impersonation, and dissemination of harmful content. The literature consistently associates cyberbullying with increased levels of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, academic decline, social withdrawal, and suicidal ideation among adolescents. Research conducted by scholars such as Choudhuri (2019) and Islam (2025) similarly concluded that cyberbullying significantly undermines children's psychological well-being while creating long-term emotional consequences that may persist into adulthood.

The review further reveals that online child sexual exploitation has expanded considerably through digital technologies. Reports indicate increasing cases involving online grooming, coercion into producing self-generated sexual content, livestream abuse, and distribution of child sexual abuse materials through encrypted platforms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries reported substantial increases in online child exploitation cases as children spent significantly more time online for education and social interaction (Drăghici, 2025). These findings reinforce previous international studies demonstrating that digital technologies have simultaneously increased educational opportunities while expanding opportunities for technology-enabled abuse.

Another emerging concern identified in the literature involves financial exploitation and online fraud targeting children through gaming platforms, fake competitions, cryptocurrency scams, and deceptive online advertisements. Children often lack sufficient digital literacy to recognize fraudulent schemes, making them particularly vulnerable to manipulation by malicious actors (Čulo Margaletić, 2023). The review therefore demonstrates that legal responses must increasingly integrate cybercrime prevention with child protection frameworks to address evolving patterns of digital victimization.

3.3.2 Data Privacy, Surveillance, and Artificial Intelligence

The review identifies children's data privacy as one of the fastest-growing concerns within digital rights scholarship. Children routinely generate extensive digital footprints through educational platforms, mobile applications, social media, online games, wearable technologies, and internet-connected devices. Many digital services collect substantial amounts of personal information, including browsing histories, biometric identifiers, location data, behavioral patterns, purchasing preferences, and social interactions (Verma, 2024). The findings indicate that children often lack sufficient understanding of complex privacy policies, limiting their ability to provide meaningful informed consent regarding personal data collection.

A recurring finding concerns algorithmic profiling and targeted advertising directed toward children. Numerous studies demonstrate that technology companies increasingly utilize sophisticated algorithms to personalize content, advertisements, and recommendations based on children's online behaviors. Although personalization may enhance user experience, excessive

profiling raises significant concerns regarding autonomy, manipulation, consumer exploitation, and discrimination (Herman, 2025). Previous research by Livingstone, Third, and colleagues similarly argues that children's evolving capacities require stronger safeguards against commercial exploitation facilitated through data analytics.

Artificial intelligence introduces additional challenges to children's rights. The review finds growing concern regarding AI-powered facial recognition systems, automated decision-making, predictive analytics, educational monitoring software, and biometric surveillance technologies. Schools increasingly employ AI-based systems to monitor attendance, classroom behavior, examination integrity, and academic performance (Lupton, 2017). While these technologies may improve administrative efficiency, the literature questions whether continuous surveillance undermines children's privacy, dignity, and freedom of expression. Scholars argue that constant monitoring may discourage creativity, experimentation, and open participation among young learners.

The findings further indicate that AI systems may unintentionally reinforce existing social inequalities through biased algorithms trained on incomplete or discriminatory datasets. Automated content moderation systems occasionally fail to distinguish between harmful content and legitimate child expression, resulting in unjustified removal of educational or advocacy materials (Bello, 2025). Conversely, harmful content may remain undetected due to algorithmic limitations. These observations correspond with previous studies emphasizing the importance of human oversight in AI-assisted moderation systems affecting children's rights.

Another significant concern relates to insufficient transparency surrounding AI decision-making. Many children and parents remain unaware of how recommendation systems influence content exposure, online behavior, and purchasing decisions. Recommendation algorithms frequently prioritize user engagement over child well-being, increasing exposure to sensational, addictive, or emotionally manipulative content (KOVAČIĆ, 2025). Consequently, the review supports previous scholarship advocating child-centered AI governance, transparency obligations, algorithmic accountability, data minimization principles, privacy-by-design approaches, and stronger regulatory oversight for technologies processing children's personal information.

3.3.3 Mental Health, Digital Addiction, and Social Development

The review demonstrates increasing scholarly concern regarding the relationship between digital technologies and children's mental health. Although digital platforms facilitate social interaction, educational access, and emotional support, excessive or unregulated use is consistently associated with adverse psychological outcomes (Joudaki, 2024). The literature identifies problematic internet use, excessive social media engagement, gaming addiction, disrupted sleep patterns, reduced physical activity, and compulsive digital behaviors as emerging public health concerns affecting children and adolescents globally.

One of the most consistent findings concerns the association between prolonged social media use and increased symptoms of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and diminished self-esteem. Constant exposure to carefully curated online lifestyles encourages unhealthy social comparison, unrealistic beauty standards, and fear of missing out (FOMO). These pressures are particularly pronounced during adolescence, when identity formation and peer acceptance play central developmental roles. Previous empirical studies by Milkaite (2019) similarly report significant associations between excessive social media engagement and declining psychological well-being, although they caution that these relationships are influenced by multiple contextual factors.

The review also identifies digital addiction as an increasingly recognized behavioral concern. Many digital platforms intentionally incorporate persuasive design features including infinite scrolling, personalized notifications, variable rewards, and algorithmically optimized content to maximize user engagement. Children, whose cognitive self-regulation capacities are still developing, are especially susceptible to these mechanisms (O'Brien, 2024). Excessive screen time has been associated with reduced concentration, declining academic performance, impaired executive functioning, sleep disturbances, and diminished face-to-face social interactions.

Exposure to misinformation, violent content, extremist ideologies, and harmful online challenges further complicates children's healthy development. Younger users often struggle to distinguish reliable information from manipulated or misleading content, increasing vulnerability to disinformation campaigns and harmful online influence (Almog, 2020). The rapid dissemination of misinformation during global crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrated how children can become exposed to inaccurate health information, conspiracy theories, and digitally amplified fear.

Despite these challenges, the review also identifies evidence that digital technologies can positively contribute to children's mental health when appropriately designed and supervised. Online counseling services, peer-support communities, educational applications, and mental health awareness campaigns have improved access to psychological support for many young people, particularly in underserved communities (Swist, 2017). Accordingly, the findings support previous research emphasizing that

digital technologies themselves are neither inherently harmful nor inherently beneficial; rather, their impact depends largely on usage patterns, platform design, digital literacy, family environments, and regulatory safeguards.

3.4 Balancing Children's Protection and Digital Participation

The findings indicate that contemporary legal scholarship increasingly recognizes the need to balance protection from digital harms with children's rights to participate fully in the digital society. Rather than viewing children solely as vulnerable individuals requiring protection, recent legal and policy frameworks increasingly recognize them as active rights holders entitled to freedom of expression, access to information, education, participation, privacy, and digital inclusion (Kaesling, 2021). The review demonstrates that effective governance should avoid creating unnecessary restrictions that limit children's opportunities for learning, innovation, and civic engagement. Instead, child-centered regulatory approaches seek to minimize digital risks while preserving opportunities for meaningful participation consistent with the principles established under international human rights law.

3.4.1 Freedom of Expression and Access to Digital Information

The review finds that maintaining an appropriate balance between online safety and freedom of expression remains one of the most challenging aspects of digital governance. Children increasingly rely on digital platforms to communicate, acquire knowledge, participate in democratic processes, create content, and engage with diverse communities (Ibukun, 2024). Excessively restrictive internet regulations intended to protect children may inadvertently suppress legitimate educational resources, artistic creativity, political participation, or access to essential health information.

The literature demonstrates that age-appropriate access restrictions are generally more effective than broad censorship measures. Content moderation systems should distinguish between genuinely harmful material and legitimate educational or informational content (Gupta, 2025). Previous studies emphasize that children's evolving capacities require regulatory approaches that progressively expand digital autonomy while maintaining proportionate protective safeguards.

The findings also indicate growing recognition of children's right to participate in policymaking affecting digital environments. Several jurisdictions increasingly involve children in consultations regarding online safety legislation, digital education policies, and technology governance (Mwakisiki, 2025). These participatory approaches align with previous research advocating child-inclusive policy development as an essential component of rights-based digital governance.

3.4.2 Digital Literacy, Education, and Parental Responsibility

The review consistently identifies digital literacy as one of the most effective long-term strategies for protecting children's rights online. Rather than relying exclusively on legal restrictions, educational interventions empower children to recognize online risks, evaluate digital information critically, protect personal data, respond to cyberbullying, and exercise responsible digital citizenship (Djeffal, 2022). Studies across different regions indicate that comprehensive digital literacy education significantly reduces children's vulnerability to online exploitation and misinformation.

Schools emerge as central institutions for promoting safe digital engagement. Effective digital citizenship curricula increasingly integrate cybersecurity awareness, media literacy, ethical technology use, privacy education, responsible social media participation, and critical thinking (Kassim, 2026). Previous studies similarly conclude that early digital education improves children's resilience while encouraging responsible online behavior throughout adolescence.

The findings further highlight the indispensable role of parents and caregivers. Active parental mediation including open communication, collaborative internet use, age-appropriate supervision, and guidance regarding privacy settings has been consistently associated with safer online experiences. However, the review acknowledges that many parents face challenges due to rapidly evolving technologies and limited digital competencies (Gupta, 2025). Consequently, community organizations, governments, and educational institutions increasingly provide parental training programs designed to strengthen family-based digital safety practices.

Importantly, the evidence suggests that overly restrictive parental surveillance may undermine trust and discourage children from reporting harmful online experiences. Instead, previous scholarship advocates balanced parental engagement emphasizing communication, education, and shared responsibility rather than excessive monitoring (Kassim, 2025).

3.4.3 Responsibilities of Technology Companies and Digital Platforms

The review demonstrates growing international consensus that technology companies bear substantial responsibility for safeguarding children's rights within digital environments. Increasingly, regulatory frameworks emphasize that child safety should be incorporated into digital products during their design, development, deployment, and ongoing operation rather than

addressed solely after harm occurs (Livingstone, 2017). Child-centered design principles require platforms to prioritize children's best interests by default through enhanced privacy protections, age-appropriate interfaces, transparent data practices, and robust reporting mechanisms.

The findings indicate that many jurisdictions now require technology companies to implement stronger age assurance systems, default privacy settings, proactive detection of child sexual abuse material, effective content moderation, and accessible reporting procedures for harmful content (Lievens, 2018). Nevertheless, significant implementation gaps remain due to inconsistent regulatory standards, jurisdictional fragmentation, and the rapid pace of technological innovation.

Content moderation represents another major area of responsibility. While automated moderation technologies have improved the detection of harmful material, the review finds that AI systems remain imperfect, occasionally removing legitimate content or failing to detect sophisticated forms of abuse (Coppock, 2016). Consequently, previous research advocates combining AI-assisted moderation with trained human reviewers, transparent appeals procedures, and regular algorithmic audits to ensure fairness and accountability.

The literature further emphasizes the importance of corporate accountability through transparency reporting, independent oversight, child rights impact assessments, and meaningful stakeholder engagement. Increasingly, scholars argue that technology companies should move beyond minimum legal compliance by adopting ethical governance frameworks that embed children's rights into corporate decision-making processes (Nawaila, 2018). Collectively, these findings reinforce the growing international view that governments, educational institutions, parents, civil society organizations, and technology companies share a collective responsibility for creating digital ecosystems that simultaneously protect children from harm while enabling them to exercise their rights safely, confidently, and meaningfully in the digital age.

3.5 Findings and Discussion: Future Directions for Children's Rights in Digital Governance

The review findings indicate that the future of children's rights in digital governance depends on the ability of legal systems, technology developers, educational institutions, and international organizations to respond proactively to rapidly evolving digital technologies. Existing regulatory frameworks have made considerable progress in recognizing children's rights online, yet they continue to lag behind technological innovations such as artificial intelligence (AI), generative AI, immersive virtual environments, algorithmic recommendation systems, biometric technologies, and cross-border digital platforms. The evidence reviewed demonstrates that protecting children's rights can no longer rely solely on reactive legal interventions but requires anticipatory governance that integrates children's best interests into the design, deployment, and regulation of digital technologies. Consistent with the rights-based approach advanced by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and reinforced through General Comment No. 25, the findings suggest that future digital governance should balance innovation with accountability, ensuring that technological progress enhances rather than undermines children's rights. Previous studies by Islam (2026), Gasser (2016), and the Nyamutata (2019) similarly argue that children's digital rights should become a central pillar of global digital governance rather than a peripheral consideration within broader technology regulation.

3.5.1 Strengthening International Cooperation and Harmonized Regulation

The review found that one of the greatest obstacles to effective protection of children's rights in digital environments is the fragmented nature of national legal frameworks. Digital platforms operate across multiple jurisdictions, while legal enforcement remains largely confined within national borders. This regulatory mismatch creates significant challenges in addressing online child sexual exploitation, cyberbullying, privacy violations, digital trafficking, algorithmic discrimination, and the commercialization of children's personal data (Guštin, 2022). Evidence from comparative legal studies demonstrates that countries adopting comprehensive digital governance laws often face enforcement limitations when harmful online activities originate outside their jurisdictions.

The findings further reveal increasing international recognition that coordinated legal responses are necessary to address transnational digital risks. Regional instruments such as the European Union's Digital Services Act, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and Artificial Intelligence Act provide valuable regulatory models by introducing platform accountability, stronger transparency requirements, and enhanced safeguards for minors. However, similar protections remain inconsistent across many developing countries where legal capacity, regulatory resources, and technological infrastructure remain limited. Previous studies by Islam (2023), Garayova (2024), and the Council of Europe emphasize that disparities in regulatory standards create opportunities for regulatory arbitrage, allowing multinational technology companies to operate under weaker legal protections in certain jurisdictions.

The review also highlights the growing importance of international organizations in facilitating harmonized digital governance. Institutions including the United Nations, UNICEF, UNESCO, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), and regional

human rights bodies increasingly advocate common standards that recognize children's rights across digital platforms regardless of geographical location (Islam, 2025). Collaborative mechanisms involving information sharing, coordinated law enforcement, joint investigations, and mutual legal assistance have proven particularly effective in combating online child exploitation networks operating across borders.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that future international cooperation should extend beyond legal enforcement to include harmonized standards for AI governance, digital privacy, online education, child-focused cybersecurity, and ethical technology development. Establishing internationally recognized principles governing children's data protection, algorithmic transparency, and digital platform accountability would reduce regulatory fragmentation while promoting consistent protection worldwide. These findings support earlier recommendations by the Čulo Margaletić (2023) and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that digital governance should increasingly evolve through coordinated global frameworks capable of responding to rapidly changing technologies.

3.5.2 Child-Centered Digital Policy and Technological Innovation

The review demonstrates that future digital governance requires shifting from technology-centered regulation toward child-centered digital policy design. Rather than regulating harmful technologies only after negative consequences emerge, policymakers and technology developers should incorporate children's rights throughout the technological development lifecycle (Verma, 2024). This preventive approach reflects the growing international movement toward "rights-by-design" governance, where legal protections become embedded within digital systems from their inception.

A major finding concerns the increasing role of ethical artificial intelligence in protecting children's rights. AI systems now influence educational platforms, healthcare services, recruitment, social media recommendations, content moderation, biometric identification, and online advertising. Without appropriate safeguards, these technologies may unintentionally reinforce discrimination, manipulate children's behaviour, expose them to inappropriate content, or compromise their privacy through large-scale data collection (Herman, 2025). The literature consistently indicates that algorithmic decision-making often lacks transparency, making it difficult for children, parents, educators, and regulators to understand how automated systems affect children's opportunities and well-being.

The review further finds that privacy-by-design principles represent one of the most effective strategies for protecting children's digital rights. Integrating strong privacy protections during system development minimizes unnecessary data collection, limits profiling, strengthens security measures, and enhances user control over personal information. Similarly, age-appropriate design frameworks ensure that digital services account for children's developmental capacities by providing simplified privacy notices, safer default settings, stronger parental support mechanisms where appropriate, and reduced exposure to harmful commercial practices (Lupton, 2017). Evidence from jurisdictions implementing age-appropriate design standards demonstrates improvements in children's online safety while maintaining access to educational and developmental opportunities.

Emerging technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, generative AI, and the metaverse present both opportunities and new regulatory challenges. The findings indicate that these technologies can enhance creativity, learning, inclusion, and digital participation but may also increase risks associated with psychological manipulation, identity theft, misinformation, addictive design practices, and immersive online abuse if left insufficiently regulated. Consequently, future technological innovation should undergo systematic child rights impact assessments before widespread implementation. Previous studies by Bello (2025), KOVAČIČ (2025), and Joudaki (2024) similarly advocate integrating ethical AI principles, transparency requirements, accountability mechanisms, and child participation into technology governance to ensure innovation remains compatible with children's rights.

Another important finding concerns children's participation in digital policymaking. The review identifies increasing recognition that children should not merely be passive beneficiaries of digital protection but active contributors to decisions affecting their digital lives. Meaningful consultation enables policymakers to better understand children's online experiences, digital literacy needs, and emerging risks while strengthening democratic legitimacy and policy effectiveness (Milkaite, 2019). This finding aligns closely with Article 12 of the UNCRC, which recognizes children's right to express their views on matters affecting them.

3.5.3 Policy Recommendations for Inclusive and Safe Digital Spaces

The findings suggest that creating inclusive and safe digital environments requires coordinated action across multiple sectors rather than isolated legal reforms. Governments should establish comprehensive national digital child protection strategies that integrate children's rights across education, technology regulation, cybersecurity, data protection, health, and social welfare policies (O'Brien, 2024). Such strategies should include independent regulatory oversight, effective complaint mechanisms,

accessible remedies for affected children, regular monitoring of digital risks, and periodic review of legislation to accommodate emerging technologies.

The review further indicates that educational institutions play a central role in strengthening children's digital resilience. Schools should integrate digital citizenship, online safety, media literacy, privacy awareness, AI literacy, and responsible technology use throughout formal education. Evidence consistently demonstrates that digitally literate children are better equipped to recognize misinformation, resist online manipulation, protect their personal information, and respond appropriately to cyberbullying and other digital threats (Almog, 2020). These findings support previous research by Mwakisiki (2025) which emphasizes education as one of the most sustainable long-term approaches to digital child protection.

Technology companies also bear significant responsibility for protecting children's rights within digital ecosystems. The evidence reviewed suggests that companies should adopt child rights due diligence procedures, conduct regular risk assessments, strengthen content moderation systems, improve algorithmic transparency, enhance age verification mechanisms while respecting privacy, and prioritize children's best interests in platform design. Businesses should move beyond minimum legal compliance by incorporating child rights impact assessments throughout product development and corporate governance (Swist, 2017). Previous studies by the UNICEF Children's Rights and Business Principles demonstrate that corporate responsibility significantly influences children's online experiences and safety outcomes.

Civil society organizations remain essential partners in promoting children's digital rights through advocacy, independent monitoring, public awareness campaigns, legal assistance, research, and community-based digital literacy initiatives. Their collaboration with governments, educators, families, and technology companies strengthens accountability while ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable children receive appropriate protection (Kaesling, 2021). The review also identifies the growing importance of public-private partnerships in developing innovative technological solutions for online child protection without unnecessarily restricting children's rights to participation, education, and access to information.

Finally, international institutions should continue promoting globally coordinated digital governance by developing shared standards, facilitating cross-border cooperation, supporting capacity building in developing countries, and financing research on emerging digital risks affecting children. Future governance frameworks should remain flexible enough to adapt to technological change while consistently upholding the fundamental principles of non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, participation, survival, development, privacy, and protection from harm (Ibukun, 2024). Overall, the findings demonstrate that safeguarding children's rights in future digital ecosystems requires an integrated governance model that combines harmonized international regulation, child-centered technological innovation, inclusive policymaking, digital education, corporate accountability, and sustained multi-stakeholder collaboration (Gupta, 2025). These conclusions reinforce previous international research asserting that children's rights must become foundational principles guiding the governance of increasingly complex digital societies rather than reactive responses to technological harms.

4. Conclusion

The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed the environment in which children learn, communicate, socialize, and access information, creating both unprecedented opportunities and significant challenges for the realization of children's rights. This review demonstrates that while digital platforms have enhanced children's access to education, participation, creativity, healthcare information, and civic engagement, they have simultaneously introduced complex risks related to privacy violations, cyberbullying, online exploitation, misinformation, excessive surveillance, algorithmic discrimination, and unequal access to digital resources. These developments have extended the scope of children's rights beyond traditional physical settings into increasingly sophisticated digital ecosystems, requiring legal, institutional, and societal responses that are adaptive, rights-based, and internationally coordinated.

The findings reveal that existing international human rights instruments, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), continue to provide a strong normative foundation for protecting children in digital environments. However, many legal and regulatory frameworks have struggled to keep pace with the rapid evolution of artificial intelligence, social media, immersive technologies, and cross-border digital services. Significant variations remain among countries regarding data protection standards, online safety regulations, digital literacy initiatives, and mechanisms for enforcing children's digital rights. These disparities expose children to inconsistent levels of protection and underscore the need for greater harmonization of digital governance policies across jurisdictions.

The review further establishes that the realization of children's rights in digital spaces depends not only on legislation but also on collaborative governance involving governments, technology companies, educational institutions, parents, civil society organizations, and children themselves. Technology companies bear increasing responsibility for incorporating child-centered

principles into platform design through privacy-by-design, safety-by-design, transparent content moderation, age-appropriate services, and accountable artificial intelligence systems. Equally important is the role of schools and families in strengthening digital literacy, online resilience, ethical technology use, and critical media evaluation, enabling children to participate safely and meaningfully in digital environments.

Emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality, biometric systems, and algorithm-driven decision-making present new regulatory challenges that require continuous legal innovation and ethical oversight. Protecting children's rights in these evolving environments demands proactive governance approaches that anticipate technological developments rather than merely responding to harms after they occur. Future regulatory frameworks should prioritize transparency, accountability, explainability, child impact assessments, and effective mechanisms for monitoring digital platforms while ensuring that children's rights to expression, participation, education, and access to information are preserved alongside protections against exploitation and abuse.

The review also highlights persistent inequalities in digital access and participation. Socioeconomic disparities, geographical differences, gender inequalities, disability, and varying levels of technological infrastructure continue to shape children's digital experiences. Bridging the digital divide therefore remains essential to ensuring that all children can equally benefit from digital opportunities without being disproportionately exposed to digital harms. Policies promoting affordable internet access, inclusive digital infrastructure, accessible technologies, and equitable educational resources are fundamental components of children's digital rights.

Finally, this study concludes that children's rights in digital spaces should be understood as an evolving extension of established human rights principles rather than as a separate category of rights. Protecting these rights requires an integrated framework that combines effective legal regulation, ethical technological innovation, digital education, international cooperation, and multi-stakeholder governance. As digital technologies continue to reshape childhood and society, safeguarding children's dignity, autonomy, privacy, development, and participation must remain central to future digital governance. Continued interdisciplinary research, evidence-based policymaking, and sustained global collaboration will be critical in ensuring that digital transformation advances the best interests of every child while fostering safe, inclusive, and empowering digital environments for present and future generations.

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