

Comparative Legal Study Between Indonesia and The Philippines in Responding to Youth Involvement in Cyber-Enabled Crime from the Perspective of Space Transition Theory*

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Article info

Received: 2 Jun 2026

Revised: 27 Jul 2026

Accepted: 30 Jul 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31599/krtha.v20i2.5679>

Abstract : *Children and adolescents now live substantial parts of their lives in cyberspace, where the benefits of the digital environment are accompanied by rising exposure to cyber-enabled harms — principally cyberbullying and cyber violence, including its sexual forms. This article offers a comparative socio-legal analysis of how Indonesia and the Philippines regulate these harms for youth, employing a normative juridical perspective supported by secondary empirical evidence and read against Space Transition Theory, which attributes online offending to anonymity, identity flexibility, weak deterrence, and movement between physical and virtual settings. It argues that the protective deficit is, in the first instance, structural rather than national: the international regime regulates online harm largely by transposing pre-existing offline offences into the digital domain rather than recognizing natively digital harms, so that sexual cyber-harms against minors are comparatively well covered while non-sexual cyber violence survives only as soft-law aspiration or strained analogy, with ASEAN supplying no binding floor. The two jurisdictions inherit this gap differently — Indonesia through dispersed, analogy-dependent instruments lacking an offence-specific definition of cyberbullying, the Philippines through a more integrated but sexual-exploitation-focused framework that treats cyberbullying as a school-administrative matter — while sharing a common implementation deficit and a dual youth victim/offender reality. The article concludes with calibrated recommendations for offence-specific definition,*

* This research is part of the student exchange program between Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya University in Indonesia and Mindanao University in the Philippines. The corresponding author is the lecturer who assists students from Indonesia and the Philippines in producing an academic paper.



statutory harmonization, coverage of synthetic harms, rehabilitative juvenile justice, and a regional binding instrument.

Keywords : *cyber-enabled crime; cyberbullying; cyber violence; juvenile justice; Space Transition Theory; online child protection*

Abstrak : Anak-anak dan remaja kini menjalani sebagian besar hidup mereka di dunia maya, di mana manfaat lingkungan digital diiringi oleh meningkatnya paparan terhadap bahaya yang dimungkinkan oleh dunia maya — terutama perundungan siber dan kekerasan siber, termasuk bentuk-bentuk seksualnya. Artikel ini menawarkan analisis sosial-hukum komparatif tentang bagaimana Indonesia dan Filipina mengatur bahaya-bahaya ini bagi kaum muda, dengan menggunakan perspektif yuridis normatif yang didukung oleh bukti empiris sekunder dan dibaca berdasarkan Teori Transisi Ruang, yang mengaitkan pelanggaran daring dengan anonimitas, fleksibilitas identitas, daya jera yang lemah, dan perpindahan antara lingkungan fisik dan virtual. Artikel ini berpendapat bahwa defisit perlindungan tersebut, pada dasarnya, bersifat struktural dan bukan nasional: rezim internasional mengatur bahaya daring sebagian besar dengan mentransposisikan pelanggaran luring yang sudah ada ke domain digital daripada mengakui bahaya digital secara alami, sehingga bahaya siber seksual terhadap anak di bawah umur relatif terlindungi dengan baik sementara kekerasan siber non-seksual hanya bertahan sebagai aspirasi hukum lunak atau analogi yang dipaksakan, tanpa ASEAN memberikan landasan yang mengikat. Kedua yurisdiksi mewarisi kesenjangan ini secara berbeda — Indonesia melalui instrumen yang tersebar dan bergantung pada analogi yang tidak memiliki definisi khusus tentang pelanggaran perundungan siber, Filipina melalui kerangka kerja yang lebih terintegrasi tetapi berfokus pada eksploitasi seksual yang memperlakukan perundungan siber sebagai masalah administrasi sekolah — sementara berbagi defisit implementasi yang sama dan realitas ganda korban/pelaku remaja. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan rekomendasi yang terukur untuk definisi khusus pelanggaran, harmonisasi undang-undang, cakupan kerugian sintetis, peradilan anak rehabilitatif, dan instrumen pengikat regional.

Kata kunci : Kejahatan-dimungkinkan-dunia maya; perundungan siber; kekerasan siber; peradilan anak; Teori Transisi Ruang; perlindungan anak daring.

Introduction

Indonesia and the Philippines are a useful pair because both are Southeast Asian states confronting fast-growing cyber harms. Still, they respond through different legal designs and enforcement styles.² The comparison is especially strong where child and youth online harms are concerned, because the Philippine law is often described as more explicit or integrated. In contrast,

² Rowela Cartin-Pecson et al., "Defending the Digital Domain: A Critical Look at Cybercrime Legislation in Indonesia and the Philippines," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 14, no. 2 2025: p. 198.

Indonesian law is repeatedly described as fragmented, reactive, or lacking offense-specific definitions.³

In regard to global communication, the expansion of the internet as a medium is a key marker of the development of information and communication technology in the modern era. This is fundamentally shifting patterns of human interaction. As this digital transformation continues, youth and children are growing into a generation of digital natives accustomed to interacting with digital technology from the beginning. Their lives are no longer limited to the physical dimension but have expanded into cyberspace, serving as a platform for virtual interaction, entertainment, and educational activities.

The existence of a digital environment offers various benefits for children, including ease of access to information, broader learning opportunities, and opportunities to develop creativity through various interactive platforms. However, despite these opportunities, the digital space also presents significant risks, particularly in the form of cybercrime targeting children and adolescents. The phenomenon of cybercrime against children has become a global issue, and Indonesia is among the countries facing this challenge. These crimes include cyberbullying, cyber harassment, distribution of child pornography, online sexual exploitation, and data and identity theft.⁴

Youth matters in crime in cyberspace for two reasons: young people appear repeatedly as primary victims of cyberbullying and online sexual harms, and in broader cybercrime research they also appear disproportionately among offenders.⁵ The main debate is whether cybercrime is mostly an old crime in a new form or a genuinely distinct phenomenon. The evidence supports a mixed answer: cyber-enabled offenses often resemble traditional offenses, but cyber-dependent offenses require distinct technical infrastructures and skills.⁶

Both categories of cybercrime are analytically different, but they often interact in the same criminal ecosystems. As for youth, youth are central to comparative cybercrime legal studies because they are both high-risk victims and a recurring offender group, and their cases expose where cyber laws protect poorly or unevenly across countries. Youth are studied first because digital harms concentrate around their online lives. Children and adolescents are frequent users of social media and internet platforms, which increases exposure to cyberbullying, grooming, fraud, and sexual exploitation.⁷

³ Farizt Sultanul Husni, Taufiq Taufiq, Fandi Rahmadi, Kautsar Ramadhan, Muhammad Arnif, and Muhammad Hatta, "Legal Implications of Cyber Bullying Crimes: A Comparative Study," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 2, no. 2 (2025): 36–45.

⁴ Yogesh Meena, Mayuri S. Sankhla, Swaroop S. Sonone, Ashish Parashar, Kapil Parihar, and Kuldeep Saini, "Cyber Exploitation through Cybercrimes & Challenges," in *Proceedings - 2021 3rd International Conference on Advances in Computing, Communication Control and Networking (ICAC3N)* IEEE, 2021, p. 1467.

⁵ Iwan Fahmi and Fanny Tanuwijaya, "Reformulating National Criminal Law for Protecting Child Victims of Cyberbullying Crimes," *Rechtenstudent* 6, no. 2025; p. 10.

⁶ M. Cormier, "Cyber-Dependent and Cyber-Enabled Crime: Legal Responses and Challenges," *Griffith Research Online* (2021).

⁷ Fitri Hardianti, Wahyudi Kumorotomo, and Widodo Agus Setianto, "Sosialisasi Child Grooming: Cyber Crime yang Mengintai Anak-Anak di Era Digital," *Jurnal Pengabdian Literasi Digital Indonesia* 2, no. 2 2023: p. 85.

Based on the study of the literature, most of the cybercrime committed by youth and when youth become victims is in the area of cyber-enabled crime⁸, which applies in the Philippines and Indonesia. Space transition theory (STT) fits the situation related to cyber-enabled crime because it explains why people, including youths, may behave differently online than offline through anonymity, identity flexibility, weak deterrence, and movement between physical and virtual settings.⁹

Methods

In this study, a socio-legal approach is applied, using a normative juridical perspective to analyze laws addressing youths committing crimes through cyberspace in Indonesia and the Philippines.¹⁰ This methodological choice is especially relevant, as the central focus of this research project is the assessment of the adequacy, coherence, and theoretical compatibility of current legal models with respect to the behavioral patterns associated with space transition theory in cyberspace. This does not include the generation or analysis of primary empirical data.¹¹

Socio-legal research considers law an organized system of norms made up of statutory rules, legal principles, and doctrine; but it should also include principles and doctrine in its discourse, because its methodological effectiveness lies in its capacity to handle norms, principles, and external doctrine properly.¹²

Therefore, this study does not merely describe existing legal provisions in Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) and the Philippines' Republic Act No. 10175 on Cybercrime Prevention, but also the socio-dynamic situation. It draws on secondary empirical evidence, including Government and law enforcement statistics and institutional reports, to formulate an evaluative and prescriptive assessment of how well each jurisdiction's juvenile justice and cybercrime framework aligns with Space Transition Theory.¹³

⁸ Catherine Schittenhelm et al., "Cybergrooming Victimization Among Young People: A Systematic Review of Prevalence Rates, Risk Factors, and Outcomes," *Adolescent Research Review* 10, no. 2 2024: p. 169–200.

⁹ Aroma Elmina Martha, "Perundungan Siber (Cyberbullying) Melalui Media Sosial Instagram dalam Teori the Space Transition of Cybercrimes," *Jurnal Hukum IUS QUIA IUSTUM* 31, no. 1, 2024: p. 199.

¹⁰ Afif Noor, "Socio-Legal Research: Integration of Normative and Empirical Juridical Research in Legal Research," *Jurnal Ilmiah Dunia Hukum* 7, no. 2, 2023: p. 1.

¹¹ Ahmad Jamaludin et al., "Propagation of AI-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material as a Cybercrime Commodity in Indonesia," *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 16, no. 3 2026: 1189–1206,

¹² Putri Wulandari, "Normative Legal Research Methodology from the Experts' Perspective: A Comparative Analysis of Concepts and Approaches," *Archipel: Journal of Indonesian Interdisciplinary Studies* 1, no. 6, 2026: p. 12.

¹³ Mop. Mujibur Rohman et al., "Methodological Reasoning Finds Law Using Normative Studies (Theory, Approach, and Analysis of Legal Materials)," *MAQASIDI: Jurnal Syariah dan Hukum* 4, no. 2, 2024: p. 204.

Result And Discussion

International Regulation Gaps on Cyber-Enabled Crime

Research indicates that cyber-enabled crime affecting youth is a growing and urgent problem in both Indonesia and the Philippines, but the evidence is much stronger on victimization and legal gaps than on clean national trend counts.¹⁴

Identifying the situation is important through understanding the crime committed in cyberspace. Cybercrime is a broad term covering two separate but interrelated categories of offense: cyber-dependent and cyber-enabled crimes.¹⁵ Cyber-dependent crimes are offenses that cannot be committed without a computer, a network, or some other form of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Examples include disseminating viruses and other malicious code, hacking, and distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks—where servers are overwhelmed with traffic in order to turn off websites or network infrastructure. These offenses are aimed chiefly at computers or network resources themselves, though they may produce knock-on consequences such as fraud.

Cyber-enabled crimes are conventional offenses whose scale or reach is amplified through computers, networks, or other ICT. In contrast to cyber-dependent crimes, they remain possible without any use of technology. For this research, cyber-enabled crimes are considered to be the issue associated with youth in both countries, which is cyberviolence, including bullying and sexual violence. The international instruments most often cited fall into three layers — general cybercrime treaties, child-protection treaties, and gender-violence treaties.

Table 1. Key International Legal Instruments Addressing Cyber-Enabled Harms Against Youth

Instrument	Year / status	What it covers for youth	Key limitation
a. General Cybercrime Treaties			
Council of Europe Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention), ETS No. 185	2001, in force 2004	Child sexual abuse material (Art. 9); supplies the <i>procedural</i> and e-evidence/cooperation framework	No cyberbullying or harassment offence; content offence limited to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM).
b. Child-Protection Treaties			

¹⁴ Naeem AllahRakha, "Global Perspectives on Cybercrime Legislation," *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 10, 2024.
¹⁵ Joanna Curtis and Gavin Oxburgh, "Understanding Cybercrime in 'Real World' Policing and Law Enforcement," *The Police Journal* 96, no. 4, 2023: 573–592

Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), Council of Europe Treaty Series (CETS) No. 201	2007, in force 2010	The substantive child-sexual-offence standard — grooming, CSAM, exploitation	Confined to <i>sexual</i> abuse and exploitation; silent on bullying/harassment
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Right of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC)	2000	Clarifies states' obligation to protect children from sexual exploitation and abuse	Pre-digital framing; sexual focus only
Convention on the Right of the Child General Comment No. 25 (children's rights in the digital environment)	2021	Recognises cyberbullying, grooming, CSAM as digital-environment risks	Soft law — interpretive guidance, not a criminalisation mandate

c. Gender-Violence Treaties

CoE Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), CETS No. 210	2011	The most comprehensive framework on gender-based violence including online forms — requires criminalisation of stalking, sexual harassment and psychological violence, read to	Gender-specific; regional (CoE); cyber dimension is interpretive, not explicit
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		include cyberstalking and online harassment	
UN Convention against Cybercrime ("Hanoi Convention"), A/RES/79/243	Adopted 24 Dec 2024; opened for signature Hanoi, 25 Oct 2025	Arts 14–16 below	Not yet in force; permissive drafting; no bullying offence

On the newest and most important instrument: Article 14 deals with offenses relating to child sexual abuse and exploitation material, and Article 15 with grooming, while Article 16 addresses the non-consensual dissemination of intimate images. The US delegation described Articles 14–16 as significantly improving international coordination in combating the non-consensual distribution of intimate images, child sexual abuse material, and online grooming of children for sexual purposes. It is notable as the first international treaty to recognize the non-consensual sharing of intimate images as an offense.

At the ASEAN regional level, particularly for Indonesia and the Philippines comparison, the binding-treaty layer is absent. The governing instruments are soft law: the 2019 ASEAN Declaration on the Protection of Children from All Forms of Online Exploitation and Abuse and its Regional Plan of Action (RPA). That RPA itself concedes that cyberbullying among children is a growing concern in the region, yet the framework remains exploitation-and-abuse focused rather than a comprehensive cyber-violence instrument.

The gaps in the international instruments associated with cyber-enabled crime for youth on cyber violence can be mapped out into the following:

1. No standalone international offense of cyberbullying or cyber-harassment¹⁶
None of the binding cybercrime treaties — Budapest or the new UN Convention — define or criminalize cyberbullying as such. Where it is reached at all, it is through analogy to data/system-interference provisions; the European Institute for Gender Equality notes that only Articles 4 and 5 of the Budapest Convention (data and system

¹⁶ Farizt Sultanul Husni et al., "Legal Implications of Cyber Bullying Crimes: A Comparative Study," *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* 2, no. 2 2025: 36

- interference) might apply to cyber violence, and only where it causes Death or physical/psychological injury — an awkward, indirect fit. The newest international movement on this is regional and very recent: an April 2026 European Parliament resolution that treats cyberbullying as, in many cases, a form of gender-based violence and a child-rights and public-health issue with severe long-lasting consequences for children's mental health and development, calling for targeted criminal provisions. That such a call is being made in 2026 underscores that the binding gap still exists.
2. "Gendered silences" in the new UN Convention¹⁷
Although Articles 14–16 are framed as protecting victims who are disproportionately female, the Convention itself does not mention women, and these gendered silences must be filled by national legislation. For youth — especially adolescent girls — this means the treaty addresses image-based abuse mechanically but does not name the gendered cyber-violence dynamic (sextortion, deepfake sexual abuse, coordinated harassment) that the empirical literature identifies.
 3. Psychological harm and the bullying→self-harm pathway are unregulated as such¹⁸
International instruments criminalize sexual content and image abuse but not the sustained psychological cyber-violence (humiliation campaigns, doxing, coordinated harassment) that the public-health literature links to adolescent self-harm and suicide. The Amanda Todd/Aydin Coban case is the paradigmatic illustration — prosecuted only by stitching together extortion, criminal harassment, child luring and child pornography charges because no dedicated cyber-violence offense existed.
 4. Definitional fragmentation¹⁹
There is no internationally agreed definition of "cyberbullying" or "cyber violence." The closest authoritative definition is the UN Special Rapporteur's 2018 formulation of online violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that is committed, assisted or aggravated by the use of Information and Communication Technology — but this is gender-specific and non-binding. For a youth-focused, gender-neutral category, the international vocabulary simply does not exist in treaty form.
 5. Emerging-harm gap²⁰
Even the most advanced binding instrument — Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence — closes only part of the gap on natively digital sexual harms. Rigotti, McGlynn and Benning describe the EU framework as a

¹⁷ Rangita de Silva de Alwis, "Gendering the New International Convention on Cybercrimes and New Norms on Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies," *Washington Journal of Law, Technology & Arts* 20, No. 2, 2025.

¹⁸ Elena Predescu, Iulia Calugar, and Roxana Sipos, "Cyberbullying and Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) in Adolescence: Exploring Moderators and Mediators through a Systematic Review," *Children* 11, No. 4 2024: 410.

¹⁹ Romina Cachia, David Villar Onrubia, Miguel Barreda Angeles, Annita Economou, and Maria Lopez Cobo, *Cyberbullying: Considerations towards a Common Definition* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2025), p. 1.

²⁰ Carlotta Rigotti, Clare McGlynn, and Franziska Benning, "Image-Based Sexual Abuse and EU Law: A Critical Analysis," *German Law Journal* 25, no. 9, 2024: 1472–93.

promising but partial approach that does not yet capture the full scope of image-based sexual abuse or the diverse experiences of its victims.²¹

The shortfalls they identify are directly relevant to youth: the deepfake provision (Art. 5(1)(b)) reaches only material depicting a person "engaged in sexually explicit activities," so that content produced through "nudification" apps may fall outside its scope because it does not depict active sexual engagement, excluding a considerable range of non-consensually produced material. The criminalization of threats (Art. 5(1)(c)) is confined to coercing a victim into "a certain act," meaning threats intended solely to cause distress are not covered. Crucially, the Directive penalizes distribution and threats but does not cover the non-consensual creation or taking of intimate imagery in the first place.

Cyberflashing is now an offense (Art. 7(c)), with the authors noting that young women in particular face the highest rates of victimization, but it is tied to a "serious psychological harm" threshold. Against an empirical backdrop in which over 90% of deepfakes are sexualised content, the conclusion is that comprehensive protection still depends on Member States legislating beyond the Directive's minimum — and that no instrument of comparable reach exists at UN or ASEAN level.

Cyber-Enabled Crime and Regulation in the Philippines and Indonesia

Indonesia and the Philippines are parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC). Only the Philippines is a state party to the Budapest Convention. While the treaty serves as an inspiration for Indonesian cyber laws, Indonesia has not officially ratified or acceded to it.

A comparative legal lens is useful because Indonesia and the Philippines face similar digital-risk pressures but do not regulate youth harms in the same way. Indonesia is repeatedly described as lacking specific legal provisions for cyberbullying against children, creating legal uncertainty and enforcement difficulty.²²

By contrast, Indonesian legal scholarship points to the Philippines as having more explicit regulation and stronger preventive and punitive positioning on cyberbullying.²³ A broader Southeast Asian comparison also finds that both countries have legal frameworks, but implementation is weakened by limited technical capacity, weak platform oversight, and low digital literacy.²⁴

In the case of Indonesia, the statutes include Law No. 11 of 2008, as amended through Law No. 19 of 2016 and Law No. 1 of 2024 on electronic information

²¹ Carlotta Rigotti, Clare McGlynn, and Franziska Benning, *Loc. Cit.*

²² Rugun Romaida Hutabarat et al., "The Role of the Government and the Legal Aspects of Cyber Bullying in the School Environment," paper presented at TICASH 2025, Tarumanagara University, Jakarta, October 2025.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Dwi Nur Fauziah Ahmad and Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith, "Digital Safety for Women and Children: Legal and Policy Challenges Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 5, no. 4, 2024: 1673–96

technology, Law No. 11 of 2012 on the criminal justice system for juveniles, Law No. 35 of 2014 on child protection, and Law No. 12 of 2022 on criminal sexual violence.

In the Philippines, the statutes mainly used include Republic Act No. 10175 – the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act of 2006, and the Anti-OSAEC and Anti-CSAEM Act of 2022. With this statutory foundation, this study will be able to identify the scope and limitations of these laws, especially concerning juvenile offenders and dealing with cyber-related offenses such as grooming, sextortion, and Online Sexual Exploitation of Children (OSCE).²⁵

Indonesia has enacted legal provisions meant to protect children in the digital space, with digital activities guided by the Electronic Information and Transactions Law, whose last amendment was effected via Law No. 1 of 2024, which saw the introduction of Article 16A.²⁶ However, the enforcement of these laws faces challenges due to limited technical capacity, a lack of expertise in digital forensics, and low digital literacy levels.²⁷

Compounding this further, a study conducted by the Oñati Socio-Legal Series revealed that artificial intelligence and cryptocurrency were becoming popular technologies being used for the distribution of cyber child sexual abuse material in Indonesia, resulting in a covert network of digitally generated and modified images circulated anonymously. It highlights the fact that there is ambiguity within Indonesian laws concerning the extent to which the definition of child sexual abuse material would encompass synthetic images. Therefore, it can be said that the common trend within Indonesian law is that of reactive measures.²⁸

This reactive posture is further explained through Space Transition Theory, which indicates how poorly the Indonesian legal system is adapted to address behavioral change as people transition from physical space to cyberspace, as perpetrators exploit their ability to shift their identities and remain anonymous in the dynamically evolving cyberspace. Engaging in fraudulent activities, they would never consider doing so in physical space unless supported by cyberspace. In Indonesia, cybercrime is still viewed as an evolution of traditional crimes, with its psychological aspect of young people's involvement remaining unaddressed.²⁹

In addition to these substantive legal shortcomings, an analysis of the sociolegal aspects of diversion and restorative justice in Indonesia, conducted in December 2025, revealed that Indonesia's efforts to develop its laws regarding juvenile justice. Whilst it seeks to align with international regulations, numerous discrepancies remain in its implementation. The

²⁵ Republic of the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10175, Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012; Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 1 of 2024 concerning the Second Amendment to Law No. 11 of 2008 on Electronic Information and Transactions.

²⁶ Teguh Darmawan, "Highlight: Amendment of Indonesia's Electronic Information and Transactions Law," *JD Supra* (February 5, 2024), p. 1.

²⁷ Dwi Nur Fauziah Ahmad and Nucharee Nuchkoom Smith, "Digital Safety for Women and Children: Legal and Policy Challenges in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand," *Journal of Law and Legal Reform* 5, no. 4 (2024): 1673–1696,

²⁸ Ahmad Jamaludin et al., "Propagation of AI-Generated Child Sexual Abuse Material as a Cybercrime Commodity in Indonesia," *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 16, no. 3 (2026): 1189–1206,

²⁹ Aroma Elmina Martha. Op. Cit.

discrepancies are largely due to regional inconsistencies, the absence of uniform procedures, and societal opposition stemming from Indonesia's prevailing punitive legal system. In cases such as online grooming and sextortion, it becomes even more problematic because of the crime's anonymous and borderless nature.³⁰

As opposed to Indonesia's reactive and implementation-challenged framework, the Philippines presents a more formally structured legal architecture, though not without its own significant gaps. Substantive crimes under the Cybercrime Prevention Law can be prosecuted under Republic Act 10175, the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012, which mandates the National Bureau of Investigation and the Philippine National Police to establish units focused on fighting cybercrimes. In line with this directive, the PNP Anti-Cybercrime Group was established in 2013 as a National Operational Support Unit of the Philippine National Police (PNP) to focus on cybercrime investigation, digital forensics, cyber patrolling, and cybersecurity. Importantly, the Philippines ratified the Budapest Convention in February 2018.³¹

Nevertheless, despite this stronger legal foundation, a 2025 opinion piece published by the Philippine News Agency reported that, nineteen years after the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act's enactment, child rights advocates continue to lament implementation gaps and inadequate resources. It hinders the effective rehabilitation and reintegration of children in conflict with the law, despite numerous interim implementation guidelines and training programs. As with Indonesia, this diversion architecture was not originally designed to anticipate the borderless and anonymous character of cyber-enabled offenses against and by minors.³²

Reviewing the Indonesia–Philippines comparison specifically, the region operates on declarations and plans of action rather than a binding convention, so harmonization of cyberbullying/cyber-violence offenses is left wholly to divergent national laws. This is particularly obvious in Indonesia's law on criminal sexual violence and the Electronic Law on information technology, and the Philippines Cybercrime Prevention Act, as well as the Anti-Bullying Act. The absence of a regional binding floor is itself a finding.

The clearest gap is cross-national evaluation of what legal protections work, especially for children's sexual exploitation and day-to-day prevention, even though many papers argue that comparative study is needed for cross-border harms. Another persistent gap is that victimization research is richer than enforcement research. Several papers document youth vulnerability, but fewer show whether specific laws, police training, or courts reduce harm in practice. That gap persists because cyber harms cross jurisdictions while

³⁰ Ina Helianny, "Reassessing Diversion and Restorative Justice in Indonesia's Juvenile Criminal System: Legal Paradigms, Policy Gaps, and Implementation Challenges," *Jurnal Akta* 12, no. 4, 2025.

³¹ Jesu G. Jumawan, "Strengthening of Information and Communication Technologies of the PNP for the Intensification of Cyber Crime Investigation in Connection with Republic Act No. 10175: Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012.

³² Brian James J. Lu, "A Significant Step Backward for Children's Rights," *Philippine News Agency*, opinion, 2025.

domestic laws remain uneven, outdated, or incomplete for minors, children, and juvenile offenders.

Space Transition Theory and Responding to the Current Regulation on Cyber-Enabled Crime for Youth in the Philippines and Indonesia

Youth are central to comparative cybercrime legal studies because they are both high-risk victims and a recurring offender group, and their cases expose where cyber laws protect poorly or unevenly across countries. Youth are studied first because digital harms concentrate around their online lives. Children and adolescents are frequent users of social media and internet platforms, which increases exposure to cyberbullying, grooming, fraud, and sexual exploitation.

In Indonesia, cyberbullying is described as a rising phenomenon among children alongside high social-media use by minors, while child grooming is presented as an annually increasing threat.³³ In the Philippines, local victimization data show cybercrime remains persistent, with cyberbullying the most reported offense in Pangasinan and a pandemic-era peak in 2020.³⁴

Youth are also studied because they are especially vulnerable to serious harms, not just frequent online conflict. Global reviews identify cyberbullying as a severe public-health issue for adolescents and children, and cybergrooming affects at least one in ten young people across the reviewed literature. Risk is higher among girls, older adolescents, those with problematic internet use, risky behavior, lower mental wellbeing, or prior victimization. Youth-focused legal study is therefore not only about crime counts; it is about protecting a group with elevated developmental and psychosocial vulnerability.³⁵

A comparative legal lens is useful because Indonesia and the Philippines face similar digital-risk pressures but do not regulate youth harms in the same way. Indonesia is repeatedly described as lacking specific legal provisions for cyberbullying against children, creating legal uncertainty and enforcement difficulty. By contrast, Indonesian legal scholarship points to the Philippines as having more explicit regulation and stronger preventive and punitive positioning on cyberbullying. A broader Southeast Asian comparison also finds that both countries have legal frameworks, but implementation is weakened by limited technical capacity, weak platform oversight, and low digital literacy.

Youth also matter because they can be perpetrators, not only victims. Indonesian adolescent research shows cyberbullying perpetration is a serious problem, with boys more likely to perpetrate and insecure peer attachment linked to greater involvement. Comparative and criminological work fits this pattern by showing adolescent cyber offending is associated with peer

³³ Ahmad Jamaludin et al. *Loc. Cit.*

³⁴ Rufino, C. D., Viray, M. L., Sindayen, R. K. P., Macaraeg, C., & Diaz, M. A. (2025). Five-Year Empirical Analysis of Cybercrime Victimization Trends in Pangasinan, Philippines. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(9), 4339–4354. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.9090003>.

³⁵ Chengyan Zhu, Shiqing Huang, Richard Evans, dan Wei Zhang, "Cyberbullying Among Adolescents and Children: A Comprehensive Review of the Global Situation, Risk Factors, and Preventive Measures," *Frontiers in Public Health* 9 (2021).

dynamics, online behavior, and developmental factors rather than only conventional criminality. That makes youth an analytically important group for laws that must balance punishment, prevention, and rehabilitation.

Space Transition Theory strengthens the youth focus because it explains why online settings can amplify youth offending and victimization. The theory argues that people behave differently when moving between physical and cyber spaces, especially where anonymity and weak deterrence are available. This maps closely onto youth cyberbullying and online abuse, where anonymity, identity masking, and low perceived consequences make harmful conduct easier to initiate or escalate.

It is also argued that the dualism of cyber-dependent/cyber-enabled is not perfect either, since grooming, initially considered an offline preparatory crime, has been found to take place exclusively online, thus falling into the middle ground between the two classifications.³⁶ While there is no single, universally accepted definition of youth, the United Nations defines it, for statistical purposes, as the demographic category of persons aged 15-24. Separately, many countries establish a legal threshold commonly referred to as the age of majority, typically set at 18, at which an individual transitions from adolescent to adult status under the law.³⁷

To illustrate the scale of this problem, in 2024, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) released data in the Special Child Protection Cluster, recording 41 cases of children as victims of pornography and cybercrime. This number represents 2.0% of the total complaints in the Special Child Protection Cluster. In terms of ranking, this figure ranks third in the number of complaints, with reports predominantly involving child victims of sexual crimes and cyberbullying.³⁸ The rise in cybercrime is also evident in the Philippines, which shows a consistent upward trend. The Presidential Communications Office reported a 21% increase in cybercrime cases between 2022 and 2023, while Phil Star Global recorded 3,668 incidents in the first quarter of 2023 alone, with a continued upward trend throughout 2024. Variations in cyber victimization patterns are also evident at the regional level. In 2019, Region 1 (Ilocos) recorded the highest number of victims of SMS and text message-based fraud, with over 113,000 cases. In addition, Pangasinan has been identified as a hub for online fraudulent activities, including romance scams, fake job offers, investment schemes, and identity theft.³⁹

Consequently, a critical review of the current legal and criminological literature reveals several substantial research gaps regarding juvenile

³⁶ Kirsty Phillips, Julia C. Davidson, Ruby R. Farr, Christine Burkhardt, Stefano Caneppele, and Mary P. Aiken, "Conceptualizing Cybercrime: Definitions, Typologies and Taxonomies," *Forensic Sciences* 2, no. 2, 2022: 379–39.

³⁷ Augustine Eguavvon Ainabor and Benjamin Osalumese Akuza, "Cyber-Crimes and Youth Empowerment for Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 9, no. 7, 2025: 1558–69.

³⁸ Yusrizal, Ferdy Saputra, Hadi Iskandar, Romi Asmara, and Laila Muhammad Rasyid, "Navigating the Digital Dilemma: Protecting Indonesian Children from Cybercrime," *Kanun: Jurnal Ilmu Hukum* 27, no. 2, 2025: 398–426.

³⁹ Claire D. Rufino et al, "Five-Year Empirical Analysis of Cybercrime Victimization Trends in Pangasinan, Philippines", *IJRISS*, October 11, 2025.

cybercrime in these jurisdictions.⁴⁰ First, the existing literature overwhelmingly emphasizes the vulnerability of young people to digital crime, resulting in a striking absence of legal comparisons that examine young offenders as juvenile hackers, purveyors of illegal material, or digital criminals.

Second, while the domestic legal frameworks of both nations strongly emphasize diversion and restorative justice to prevent juvenile incarceration, existing research has not yet adequately addressed the legal friction that occurs when these physical-world rehabilitative tactics are applied to borderless, anonymous cybercrimes.

Finally, a significant theoretical gap remains in evaluating the statutes themselves through the lens of Space Transition Theory. Specifically, it remains unexamined whether the penal codes and juvenile justice systems of Indonesia and the Philippines legally recognize the unique psychological drivers of cyberspace. Thus, it fails to account for the phenomenon wherein juveniles may commit offenses online that they would otherwise be deterred from committing in physical space.

Although Space Transition Theory provides a key foundation for analyzing the phenomenon of anonymity and physical dislocation in cyberspace that motivates juvenile offenders to transfer their crimes to online environments, a full study requires consideration of a multiplicity of theories from the social and legal disciplines.

According to Andrew Goldsmith and David S. Wall, there is a theory of the "seductions of cybercrime" that examines the distinctive characteristics of cyberspace platforms that make psychological obstacles less prominent, thereby motivating digital drift.⁴¹ Using this theory, one can argue that online spaces serve as an environment wherein youths become exposed to various types of deviant behaviors modeled by their peers, which results in the motivation for cyber delinquency through psycho-emotional gains.⁴²

On the other hand, examining the subject of investigation through the lens of legal science, it is critical to consider Legal Enforcement Theory for a thorough assessment of the organizational capacity, enforcement practices, and constraints of state enforcement bodies when dealing with transnational cybercrime. As stated by Casino et al., cross-border cybercrime investigations face mounting structural challenges because enforcement effectiveness depends heavily on technological capability, procedural coordination, and the ability to act across jurisdictional boundaries, while traditional, geographically anchored law enforcement frameworks struggle to adapt to technologies and criminal activity that operate independently of any single jurisdiction.⁴³

⁴⁰ Rahamathulla, M. (2021). Cyber Safety of Children in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Region: a Critical Review of Legal Frameworks and Policy Implications. *International Journal on Child Maltreatment: Research, Policy and Practice*, 4, 375–400.

⁴¹ Andrew Goldsmith and David S. Wall, "The Seductions of Cybercrime: Adolescence and the Thrills of Digital Transgression," *European Journal of Criminology* 19, no. 1 2022: 98–117.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Fran Casino, Claudia Pina, Patricia López-Aguilar, Edgar Batista, Agusti Solanas, and Constantinos Patsakis, "SoK: Cross-Border Criminal Investigations and Digital Evidence," *Journal of Cybersecurity* 8, no. 1, 2022: 1–18.

Conclusion

Cyber-enabled harms against youth in Indonesia and the Philippines are under-regulated and less thorough. The national failure stems from a structural feature inherited from an international regime that transposes offline offenses into the digital domain instead of recognizing natively digital harms: sexual cyber-harms against minors are comparatively well covered, while non-sexual cyber violence — harassment, humiliation campaigns, and the bullying-to-self-harm pathway — survives only as soft-law aspiration or strained analogy. With ASEAN supplying no binding floor, the gap falls to divergent national law. Indonesia regulates through dispersed general and sectoral instruments — the Electronic Information and Technology Law, the Child Protection Law, the Criminal Sexual Violence Law, and the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law — with no offense-specific definition of cyberbullying, so non-sexual harms are prosecuted by uncertain analogy even as electronic-based sexual violence is now better covered. The Philippines is more explicit and integrated on online sexual exploitation (RA 10175, RA 9775, RA 11930) but treats cyberbullying as a school-administrative matter. Both share an implementation deficit — limited forensic capacity, weak platform oversight, and low digital literacy — and a dual youth victim/offender reality that Space Transition Theory explains and that the law must answer with calibrated protection, prevention, and rehabilitation rather than punishment alone.

Recommendation

For Indonesia

Indonesia should enact an offense-specific definition of cyberbullying and non-sexual cyber violence against children, rather than relying on the elastic decency and defamation provisions of the Electronic Information and Technology Law. It should also harmonize the overlapping Electronic Information and Technology Law, Child Protection, Sexual Violence, and Juvenile Justice statutes so that charges need not be assembled across instruments. Coverage should expressly extend to deepfake and *nudified* imagery and to sextortion, reaching the non-consensual creation and taking of material, not only its distribution. The diversion and restorative justice mechanisms under the Juvenile Criminal Justice System Law should apply to child perpetrators in line with the best-interests principle. Investigative and forensic capacity, statutory platform duties, and school-based digital literacy should also be strengthened.

For the Philippines

The Philippines should close the non-sexual cyber-violence gap by enacting a dedicated criminal or quasi-criminal cyberbullying provision that applies beyond the school setting governed by RA 10627. The country needs to use the comprehensive definitions, platform-accountability duties, and extraterritorial reach of RA 11930 as a model for extending coverage to non-sexual and synthetic harms; prioritize enforcement, victim support, and inter-agency coordination, since the binding weakness is implementation rather than text. Furthermore, the Philippines needs to channel adolescent offenders

through the diversion and rehabilitation framework of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (RA 9344).

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