



## Artificial Intelligence and its Impact on Criminal Behavior in Juveniles

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### Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI) has significantly transformed the technological environment in which minors interact with digital platforms, information systems and social networks. While these technological developments offer significant opportunities in education, communication and digital participation, they also generate new risks related to juvenile behavior and cyber-related criminal activities. This paper examines the role of artificial intelligence in shaping the criminal behavior of minors by analysing technological, psychological and legal factors that influence their involvement in unlawful activities within digital environments. Through a qualitative and doctrinal legal analysis, the study evaluates the Albanian legal framework in comparison with relevant European and international standards, including the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The research highlights several normative gaps in the current legal framework, particularly concerning crimes facilitated by artificial intelligence and the determination of criminal liability when minors interact with autonomous technological systems. The study concludes that stronger legal regulation, institutional cooperation and digital education policies are necessary to ensure effective protection of minors and to prevent deviant behaviour in the digital age.

**Keywords:** artificial intelligence, minors, juvenile crime, cybercrime, digital platforms

### 1. Introduction

In the digital age, minors constitute one of the most vulnerable groups affected by advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI). Their interaction with these systems is no longer limited to the passive use of social platforms or entertainment applications but increasingly involves the creation, distribution and manipulation of digital content. In many cases, such content may contain harmful or illegal elements that can be used for criminal purposes. As a result, minors appear not only as potential victims of digital crimes but also, in certain circumstances, as perpetrators of criminal acts connected to the use or influence of artificial intelligence technologies (UNICEF, 2021).

In Albania, the legal basis for the criminal responsibility of minors is defined by Article 52 of the Criminal Code, which establishes the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 14 years and provides for differentiated measures aimed primarily at rehabilitation rather than punishment (Republic of Albania, 1995/2023). However, this framework was developed within a legal environment that did not fully anticipate the complexity of technological developments that influence modern forms of criminal behavior.

Artificial intelligence has transformed not only the means through which criminal offenses may be committed but also the way minors perceive responsibility, morality and social interaction within digital environments (Bajrami, 2022). International research has demonstrated that AI-based technologies can increase the risk of manipulation through personalized algorithms that expose minors to content capable of influencing emotional responses, behavioural patterns

and social norms (Floridi et al., 2018).

The use of AI systems to target children through automated content, algorithmic decision-making or manipulative digital advertising creates new challenges for criminal law and child protection policies (UNICEF, 2021). In this context, there is a growing need for an integrated legal approach that combines criminal law, personal data protection, children's rights and technology ethics.

This study contributes to legal scholarship by analysing the intersection between artificial intelligence, juvenile criminal responsibility and child protection, with particular emphasis on the challenges faced by the Albanian legal system in adapting to emerging technological realities.

## 2. Methods

The methodology of this research is based on qualitative and doctrinal legal analysis designed to explore the relationship between artificial intelligence and juvenile criminal behaviour.

First, the study applies a **legal-doctrinal analysis** of the Albanian Criminal Code, particularly Article 52 concerning the criminal responsibility of minors, as well as Law No. 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of Children." These legal provisions are evaluated in the context of new technological realities created by artificial intelligence systems.

Second, the research uses a **comparative legal approach**, examining the European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (2024), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international legal frameworks in order to identify similarities, differences and potential harmonisation needs between European and Albanian legislation.

Third, a **case-based review** is applied in order to analyse practical situations where artificial intelligence technologies—such as deepfakes, algorithmic manipulation or cyber blackmail—have influenced juvenile behaviour.

Finally, the research incorporates an **interdisciplinary perspective**, drawing insights from criminology, psychology and digital studies to better understand how algorithmic environments may shape the cognitive and social development of minors.

Through this methodological framework, the study provides a comprehensive assessment of the impact of artificial intelligence on minors as both potential victims and potential offenders.

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Criminal liability of minors

Albanian criminal law recognises minors as a special legal category that requires enhanced protection and differentiated treatment compared with adult offenders. According to Article 52 of the Albanian Criminal Code criminal responsibility begins at the age of fourteen. For individuals aged between fourteen and eighteen years, courts must consider the level of psychological maturity, social development and the specific circumstances surrounding the offense (Republic of Albania, 1995/2023).

This legal framework reflects a balance between individual responsibility and the educational purpose that characterises juvenile criminal policy (Sulstarova, 2020). However, technological developments have complicated the traditional understanding of criminal responsibility.

The increasing presence of artificial intelligence in the lives of young people—through social networks, algorithmic recommendation systems, automated content creation tools and digital communication platforms—has created new opportunities for both legitimate and harmful behaviour (Livingstone et al., 2018; OECD, 2021).

In practice, minors may participate in activities with criminal consequences without fully understanding the legal implications of their actions. For example, cases involving the manipulation of images through AI-based applications or the distribution of deepfake content illustrate how technological tools may facilitate harmful behaviour among adolescents (UNODC, 2022).

Psychological studies suggest that the anonymity and distance provided by digital environments can encourage risk-taking behaviour among minors. The phenomenon described as the "online disinhibition effect" (Suler, 2004) demonstrates how individuals—especially young users—may engage in actions that they would not normally undertake in offline environments.

### 3.2 Criminal law challenges in AI-related conduct

The rapid development of artificial intelligence has introduced new forms of criminality in which automated systems may act as tools, facilitators or indirect contributors to criminal activity. International practice increasingly identifies cases involving AI technologies in crimes such as digital harassment, cyber blackmail, deepfake distribution and online hate speech (Citron & Chesney, 2019; UNICEF, 2021).

When these acts are committed by minors, the legal situation becomes particularly complex. Determining the level of awareness and intent is difficult when technological systems partially contribute to the harmful act.

From the perspective of criminal law doctrine, two key issues arise:

**Causality:**

If an AI system autonomously produces harmful content, can the minor's behaviour be directly linked to the legal consequence?

**Mens rea (criminal intent):**

Did the minor possess sufficient awareness and intent when interacting with technological systems capable of generating illegal content?

According to Binns and Veale (2021), the increasing autonomy of algorithmic systems challenges traditional criminal law concepts by blurring the distinction between human intention and technological action.

Furthermore, legal responsibility may extend beyond individual users. Technology developers and online platforms may also bear certain responsibilities when harmful content is distributed through their systems. European case law, such as **Delfi AS v. Estonia (2015)**, established that digital platforms may share liability when they fail to prevent the dissemination of harmful content.

## 4. Protection of Minors within the Framework of AI Legislation

### 4.1 EU Regulation on Artificial Intelligence

The European Union Artificial Intelligence Act (2024) represents an important step toward establishing a comprehensive regulatory framework for artificial intelligence technologies. The regulation adopts a **risk-based classification system**, categorising AI applications into unacceptable, high, limited and minimal risk levels.

Systems that interact with children or influence their behaviour through algorithmic profiling are typically classified as **high-risk systems** and must comply with strict requirements regarding transparency, human oversight and data protection.

The regulation emphasises that AI systems affecting children must comply with **Article 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child** and **Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**, which require that the best interests of the child be considered a primary concern.

For candidate countries such as Albania, the AI Act represents an important reference point for the future development of national legislation.

### 4.2 Albanian legal framework on child protection

In Albania, the primary legal framework for the protection of minors is established through **Law No. 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of Children."** The law aims to protect children from violence, exploitation and abuse.

However, the legislation does not explicitly address risks associated with advanced digital technologies, including artificial intelligence. The absence of clear definitions regarding AI-generated content—such as deepfakes or algorithmically manipulated media—creates difficulties for institutions responsible for child protection.

This legislative gap demonstrates the need for legal reforms that recognise digital threats as potential forms of psychological harm.

### 4.3 Legal challenges and normative gaps

Despite improvements in child protection and criminal law policy, several legal gaps remain regarding artificial intelligence and minors.

First, Albanian criminal law lacks specific provisions addressing crimes facilitated through artificial intelligence

technologies. This creates legal uncertainty when authorities attempt to classify harmful behaviour involving digital manipulation or AI-generated content.

Second, determining the criminal responsibility of minors becomes difficult when autonomous technological systems contribute to harmful actions. The concept of criminal intent becomes more complex when minors interact with systems capable of generating independent outcomes.

Third, there is a lack of coordinated institutional protocols among schools, law enforcement agencies and social services for addressing harmful digital behaviour among minors.

Addressing these challenges requires an integrated strategy combining criminal law, child protection policies, technological regulation and digital education.

## 5. Discussion

The rapid development of artificial intelligence requires significant reforms in criminal law and child protection policies. Several measures may contribute to strengthening legal protection for minors.

First, criminal legislation should include specific provisions addressing crimes facilitated by artificial intelligence technologies.

Second, legal mechanisms should be developed to assess criminal intent when minors interact with automated systems capable of generating harmful outcomes.

Third, artificial intelligence tools may also be used for preventive purposes, including the detection of harmful online behaviour and early identification of cybercrime risks involving minors.

Finally, greater emphasis should be placed on digital education programs aimed at increasing awareness among children, parents and educators regarding the ethical and safe use of emerging technologies.

## 6. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence represents one of the most transformative technological developments of the modern era. While it offers significant opportunities for innovation, communication and learning, it also introduces new risks that challenge traditional legal frameworks.

The interaction between minors and artificial intelligence technologies has created new forms of deviant behaviour that are not fully addressed by existing legislation. These developments require a comprehensive legal and institutional response.

For Albania, harmonising national legislation with European standards is not only part of the European integration process but also an essential step toward ensuring the safety, dignity and development of children in the digital age.

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