AI for Women and Child Welfare: Opportunities, Risks, and Feminist Imperatives

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Abstract

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming various domains, including the field of women's and children's welfare. From predictive models for detecting abuse to mobile applications that ensure safety and real-time alerts, AI has emerged as a powerful tool in advancing protection and empowerment. Tools such as "Ask Save the Children" highlight AI's role in emergencies and everyday child protection, while machine learning algorithms help in the early detection of violence against women and children. However, these benefits of AI coexist with significant ethical concerns. Many systems reproduce and deepen gender bias based in the data they are trained on, and the underrepresentation of women in AI development further reinforces patriarchal and exclusionary outcomes. Plus, emerging harms such as AI-generated Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and AI-driven grooming of minors raise serious concerns about the misuse of such technologies. This article explores both the transformative potential and the inherent risks of AI in women and children's welfare, highlighting the need for feminist, inclusive, and ethical frameworks to guide future development.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Gender Bias, Women's Safety, Child Protection, Online Grooming, CSAM, Feminist Technology, Machine Learning, Ethical AI, Predictive Algorithms

1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the capacity of computers or computer-controlled robots to perform tasks typically requiring human intelligence, such as decision-making, problem-solving, and learning. In what is now widely described as the "AI age," AI is increasingly integrated into everyday life; from academic tools like ChatGPT and Gemini to voice assistants like Alexa assisting in household tasks.

Within academic and professional settings, AI supports data analysis, literature searches, and content generation. While these tools increase efficiency, concerns have also been highlighted around the undermining of critical thinking skills and creativity. Still, AI's expanding footprint across sectors remains undeniable and unbeatable.

One especially promising area of AI application is in the field of women and child welfare, particularly in child protection and the prevention of gender-based violence. These groups often are at the receiving end of structural discrimination and abuse, making technological interventions important to both preventive and responsive mechanisms.

2. AI for Child Protection and Women's Safety

Recent advancements have highlighted the utility of AI in identifying and predicting incidents of child

abuse and neglect. AI models are being trained on datasets consisting of radiological images, electronic health records, demographic profiles, and textual reports. Techniques like convolutional neural networks, artificial neural networks, and natural language processing (NLP) have been used to analyse these inputs. However, research in this area remains limited, particularly in studies conducted between 2020 and 2022. In the context of violence against women, AI has been used to analyze social media trends, police reports, and mobile device data to detect abusive patterns and send real-time alerts. Some machine learning algorithms have shown an accuracy of up to 85% in predicting high-risk areas. AI-powered platforms offering anonymous reporting mechanisms have resulted in a 50% increase in reported incidents. Additionally, mobile applications equipped with GPS tracking, SOS alerts, and integration with emergency services are increasingly being used to enhance safety. AI chatbots also educate users about legal rights and access to support systems, contributing to the creation of safer and better-informed communities (Abrol, n.d.).

One noteworthy example is the "Ask Save the Children" platform, a generative AI tool developed to support child protection during emergencies and in routine situations. It is made for use by parents, teachers, community leaders, and protection professionals. The tool is built on a specified knowledge base that ensures cultural relevance and context sensitivity (Save the Children, 2024).

3. AI for Digital Empowerment and Capacity Building in India

A significant step in addressing the digital gender divide in India is the launch of the **Yashoda AI Abhiyan** by the National Commission for Women (NCW) in May 2025. Developed in collaboration with Future Shift Labs, this nationwide initiative aims to empower over 1 crore women, especially students, with AI, cybersecurity, and digital literacy skills. Through multilingual mobile apps and workshops held in both urban and rural settings, Yashoda AI promotes inclusive, accessible learning. It trains young women to become **"AI Sakhis"** digital leaders in their communities who can guide peers and family members in using technology safely and responsibly. In doing so, it not only equips women to navigate the digital age but also enhances tech literacy and leadership at the grassroots level. The program's focus on AI ethics, online safety, and practical application aligns closely with feminist calls for technology that is ethical, inclusive, and transformative for marginalized groups. As India advances toward its vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India), initiatives like Yashoda AI play a crucial role in ensuring that women are not left behind in the country's digital revolution.(Yashoda AI Abhiyan, 2025)

4. Ethical Risks and Gender Bias in AI

Despite its benefits, AI also raises serious ethical challenges. Fundamentally, AI systems operate on large datasets that often reflect existing societal biases. This means that AI, if not critically monitored and regulated, may reproduce and even intensify gender inequalities.

Zinnya del Villar, in an interview with UN Women, highlights that AI algorithms often learn from stereotypical or exclusionary data patterns, leading to discriminatory results, such as misdiagnoses in women's health, biased hiring algorithms, and poor facial recognition for women of colour. At the same time, she emphasizes that when responsibly developed, AI can become a powerful tool for dealing with inequality (UN Women, 2025).

The problem is further worsened because of the underrepresentation of women in the development of AI. According to Himani Agrawal, Chief Partner Officer at Microsoft India and South Asia, the lack of gender diversity in AI design teams risks reinforcing today's biases into tomorrow's technologies. This is not

merely a numerical issue but a fundamental question of who gets to shape the digital future. Without inclusive representation, AI development has the risk of becoming an echo chamber for dominant perspectives and systemic inequalities.

5. AI-Enabled Harms: CSAM and Grooming

While AI offers promise in protection, it also introduces new forms of harm. AI-generated Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) represents one of the most alarming developments. Using generative algorithms, lifelike but fabricated content involving minors can now be produced at scale. This deeply unsettling trend highlights new challenges for law enforcement, educators, and guardians, who struggle to differentiate between real and AI-generated abuse material.

Another dangerous misuse is AI-assisted grooming. Predators now use algorithms to analyze children's online activities, communication styles, and emotional cues to tailor manipulative strategies. These advanced techniques allow for the precise identification of vulnerable individuals and further facilitate the creation of fake online personas that align with a child's interests or emotional needs. The process of grooming and building false trust to exploit children has thus become more sophisticated and harder to detect.

6. AI and its Impact on Emotional Intelligence

While artificial intelligence continues to evolve rapidly, a growing concern is its impact on children's **emotional intelligence (EI)**; the ability to understand, manage, and express emotions effectively. As AI-powered tools such as smart speakers and chatbots become a part of children's daily lives, studies show that young children often anthropomorphize these devices, believing they have emotions, thoughts, and social capacities. This can confuse emotional boundaries and hinder children's development of empathy, social cues, and emotional regulation; key components of EI. If children begin to trust AI more than human interactions for factual or emotional input, as some studies suggest, this could reshape how they form relationships and process emotions. These findings highlight the need for more research and child-focused digital policies that safeguard emotional and social development in the AI age.(Munzer, 2024)

7. Conclusion

AI has immense potential to support the welfare and protection of women and children. Its applications in real-time violence prevention, child safety monitoring, and support service access offer new pathways for building safer communities. However, this promise is counterbalanced by grave ethical risks, ranging from algorithmic gender bias to criminal misuse in grooming and CSAM production.

To ensure that AI becomes a force for good rather than harm, its development must be rooted in feminist ethics, inclusive participation, and strict accountability mechanisms. As AI becomes more embedded in our lives, shaping how we learn, communicate, and stay safe, its future must be collectively shaped by diverse voices advocating for equity, justice, and the protection of the most vulnerable.

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