

Women, Technology and Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This study gives an overview and critical analysis of the recent patterns, causes and consequences of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in online spaces or through technological means in Bangladesh. In recent years, women in Bangladesh have become more exposed to violent stimuli as a result of the widespread use of smartphones and social media. Traditional ways of gender-based violence that took place offline have now transferred to the digital realm. This new trend of violence not only harms a woman physically, psychologically or socially but also restricts their freedom of movement, mobility, expression and opportunities in digital space. Moreover, the safety and privacy of women are at serious stake, where technological advancement has become one of the prime concerns for the government's policy agenda for women's development and empowerment issues in Bangladesh. The study is based on qualitative content analysis and the empirical material consists of several number of newspaper reports written and published within the time frame of 2016 to 2022. The time frame was selected consciously to get the current scenario of the last six years. The study argues that inherent gender inequality and discrimination have a role in the consumption and use of technology to participate in the digital space and how this leads to violence against women in Bangladeshi society. This demonstrates how gender dynamics are generally patriarchal, which leads to online aggression.

Keywords: *Mobile phone technology, social media, gender-based violence, women, Bangladesh.*

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is regarded as a critical social problem in Bangladesh and is an increasing and persistent issue (MJF, 2020). In recent years, the trend of violence has taken on a new form not only in physical spaces but also in digital spaces. Several experiences of sexual victimization and harassment have arisen against women in the country through access to mobile phone technology and social media platforms (Prothom Alo, 2021). While technologies continue to provide innovation and opportunities for women in Bangladesh (GSM Association, 2021), there is also growing concern about the use of technology to sexually exploit, harass and abuse them.

Technological advancement is recognized as a means for achieving gender equality and inclusive socio-economic growth in the national development policies of Bangladesh, also known by the acronym, 'Digital Bangladesh' (GSM Association, 2021). The government's priority on women's development through technological advancement has resulted in various successes as well. The widespread use of mobile phones and social media networks has resulted in substantial changes in society in terms of how women connect, participate and entertain themselves (Nova et al., 2019). Despite the opportunities afforded by technology, it has created a new risk of violence against women in society. According to The Daily Star report (2022), cited from a survey mentioned that 64 out of 100 women in Bangladesh faced

harassment through social media networks and mobile phone technology in the year 2022. These online abuses are mostly sexist comments and women face mental illness as a consequence of it.

Online GBV threatens women's lives, security, reputation and physical and psychological health, diminishes their presence and participation online and hence limits their opportunities (Van Der Wilk, 2018). Decreasing participation of women in online space leads to greater gender inequality and a slower development process (The Guardian, 2021; Kaul, 2012). Moreover, these aspects translate into higher socio-economic costs through the government's investment in health and judiciary services. Therefore, to exploit the potential of technology for women's development, eliminating online violence against women becomes a key priority.

Technology-based violence against women is a relatively recent topic of inquiry (Dunn, 2020). There have been several studies conducted on the trends, causes and impact of online violence against women; however, the majority of them are carried out in 'developed' countries (Iyer, Nyamwire, & Nabulega, 2020; Bailey et al., 2021; Makinde et al., 2021). Hence, understanding the causes, trends, and consequences of technology-based abuse against women in a developing country like Bangladesh, where online violence is an increasing trend, can provide practical relevance to women's technological usage and the restrictions associated with it.

This paper aims to provide an overview and critical analysis of the recent patterns, consequences and causes of online abuse against women in Bangladesh. By analyzing cases in the newspaper reports and existing literature the paper maps how aspects of violence against women in offline settings are also extended online. This study argues that inherent gender inequality and discrimination have played a role in the consumption and use of technology to participate in the digital space and how this leads to violence against women in society. Moreover, the findings reveal that this violence often becomes even more significant for women in particular who are media personalities civically engaged, vocal, and active on social media.

A broad spectrum of terms and definitions is now part of the academic debate to define technology-based abuse, which comprises technology-facilitated violence or sexual violence, cyber violence, gendered cyberhate, online misogyny, online harassment, digital abuse and Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) (APC Women's Rights Programme, 2015; Henry & Powell, 2016; Kavanagh & Brown, 2019; Montiel et al., 2016; Hinson et al., 2018). Though there are many similar definitions, but varying terms employed to describe the term, this paper aligns with these definitions considering TFGBV to be the most comprehensive, inclusive, and nuanced term highlighting, "the gendered nature of the violence and [...] the circumstances and forms in which technology can be used to perpetrate violence" (UNFPA, 2021a, p. 9).

GENDER INEQUALITY, TECHNOLOGY AND VIOLENCE

GBV is one of the tools used to maintain unequal power relations (Watts & Zimmerman, 2002) and, as such, is inextricably linked with gender inequality. Similarly, technology-based violence against women is a representation of gender inequality embedded within a patriarchal structure which governs society and subsequently influences the use of technology (Barker & Jurasz, 2019a, 2019b). The root causes of TFGBV, like other types of gender-based violence, are the result of discriminatory beliefs and institutions that reinforce sexist gender norms (Dunn, 2020). Hence, new methods of GBV evolved (Brown & Hennis,

2019), only to replicate or duplicate many of the issues that long existed offline, as offline life became completely integrated with online spaces (Chayko, 2017).

Women are more likely to be subject to online violence than men (OECD, 2019). Systematic gender inequality in society creates an opportunity for a perpetrator to threaten and abuse women, even on online platforms (Van Der Wilk, 2018). Individual aspirations are influenced by technology choices, but societal values and beliefs can also have an impact on them (Sugarman & Willoughby, 2013; Rofil, 2016; Syed, 2019). As scholar Jane (2017) mentioned online harassment is a reflection of broader cultural understandings of gender and women's inferior position in society. Inequalities and social control, which appear structurally and institutionally, offline and online, are the root cause and result of violence. These factors influence technology, and looking at how they are developed, governed, and used can help to understand how violence is practised, encouraged, and normalized (Harris, 2020).

Despite differences in ethnicity, class, culture, and economic conditions among nations, this new trend of violence against women is common and gradually becoming a serious concern for most nations. The Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Africa have the highest rates of TFGBV globally (98%, 91%, and 90%, respectively), while Asia Pacific, North America, and Europe have lower (though still relatively high) rates of 88%, 76%, and 74%, respectively (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021). Based on a landscape analysis conducted in 2022, it was found that in countries like Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Thailand, online GBV constitutes myriad forms of abuse, violence, and harassment that are largely shaped by key societal norms and values as well as the evolving landscape of technology use in the region (Worldwide Web Foundation, 2022). Another study conducted on young women's experiences of online violence in South India also revealed the gendered dimensions of TFGBV and stated:

'Norms and practices of digital space do not seem to erase gendered hierarchies. On the contrary, even though they are contested by feminist actors and actions, oppressive gender relations continue to prevail in the contemporary configurations of society.'

(Gurumurthy, Vasudevan & Chami, 2019)

Aside from gender inequality, certain technological designs, features, and applications also contribute to violence against women. According to the Amnesty International report titled *"Toxic Twitter"*, published in 2018, Twitter remains a threatening space for women, particularly due to its nature, which allows direct and rapid communication between an endless number of users (Amnesty International, 2018). Similarly, GPS tracking, which removes physical boundaries, gives the perpetrator an advantage in maintaining control over the abusers and allowing them to track their targets across time, potentially extending post-separation time in cases of intimate partner violence (Women's Aid Report, 2014).

While online abuse may be a global issue, it is likely that women suffer disproportionately as a result of it (Brown, Reed & Messing, 2018). Therefore, more research is needed in general, as existing studies are dominated by the viewpoints of higher-income nations with less focus on lower and middle-income countries (Iyer, Nyamwire & Nabulega, 2020). Moreover, there remains a scarcity of empirical and theoretical work exploring the digital harms that women in particular experience (Henry & Powell, 2015). Thus, there is an opportunity to add to the body of knowledge on TFGBV, as well as to raise awareness and

provide information to the general public and important stakeholders who can address this issue now and in the future, in the context of a developing country.

METHODOLOGY

The particular aim of this study is to understand the trends, causes and consequences of technology-based violence against women in Bangladesh. To explore this matter, we have collected data from secondary sources, which have been obtained from online news portals, journal articles, reports, and other online sources. The main sources of secondary data are the leading local and international news portals. The analysis of online abuse cases highlighted in the leading news portals was determined by reading and interpreting reports. To analyze the data, the study employed qualitative methods and thematic analysis techniques (Lumsden, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The news reports that reflect on TFGBV were found via the Google search engine. Newspapers are preferred for their relevance to the current situation and their ability to highlight the pattern, causes, and consequences of TFGBV. The web portals of the selected newspapers are published in the English language and are well-organized thus it was considerably easy to filter out relevant articles and collect data from the portals using the web scraping technique. Besides, several videos related to the study that have been posted online on TV channels, international news portals and social media networks in the context of Bangladesh have been included.

A form of purposive sampling helped to determine selected news articles for analysis. To determine which article to select for the study, some selection criteria were determined in terms of time frame and selective keywords. The empirical material consists of several newspaper reports on mobile phone technology and social media network-based violence written and published within the time frame of 2016 to 2021. The time frame was selected consciously to get the current scenario of the last five years and to ensure that the technology discussed was current (Zych et al., 2015a, 2015b). The newspaper articles were found using the terms 'digital violence,' 'online violence,' 'cyber-crime', 'trolling', 'cyberbullying', 'women' and 'technology'. The article's major focus was on women who have been victims of online abuse. Sections of materials from these articles that explain patterns, causes, victim traits, and consequences were taken into consideration. Those materials that are concerned with any topic other than online violence against women and in which online violence was a sub-theme or was not directly addressed were excluded.

Common themes that emerged are technology escalating the abuse, the pervasiveness of technology-related violence against women, the extensive harm it caused, and the barriers it created to women's lives. In the analysis, the focus is both on power relations and gender inequality around technology-based violence against women in Bangladesh, which connects the findings to earlier relevant studies.

FINDINGS

Two major themes within the newspaper-reported cases were references to why and how women in particular are targeted online. Under the themes, the nature of violence, underlying causes, and consequences on the victims, and whether the perpetrator was held accountable for their actions, are reflected.

Gender Identity and Image-Based Sexual Abuse

The increasing access to technology and social media networks among women in Bangladesh (GSM Association, 2021) has made it easier for perpetrators to target women only through access to mobile phones and social media accounts (Khan & Saad, 2021). The victims of online abuse, which is typically sexual are targeted young women as evident in a report that stated that more than 17,000 complaints have been made to the government's Information and Communication Technology Division's Cyber Help Center as of December 2017, with 70% of the complainants being women (Akter, 2018). For instance, the majority of women who experienced abuse online only in Dhaka city, the nation's capital, are between the ages of 15 and 25 (Dhaka Tribune, 2019).

The disclosure of victims' details alongside image distribution, which is a feature of image-based sexual abuse (Citron & Franks, 2014), is evident as a common trend in the reported cases in Bangladesh. The most prevalent forms of TFGBV which women face include blackmailing or revenge pornography, offensive comments and images, taking or using photos of another person without their consent, posting rape videos or photographs, creating a fake personal account on social media platforms, threatening emails, record harassing texts and calls (Khan, 2021). A similar trend in the sexual nature of online abuse was also found in another study on 'online sexual harassment through anonymous social media in Bangladesh', which mentioned that women receive messages on social media that are largely about sexual offers, objectifying content, and romantic proposals (Nova et al., 2019).

There are instances where the victim is unaware of the identity of the perpetrators, in contrast to circumstances where they are known. The experience of receiving abuse may be individual, private or solitary, and at the same time, it can be public by circulating in social media networks. Several reported cases in the newspaper stated that women had experienced threats of nude or sexual photographs or videos of them without their consent. In some instances, the victim's image is incorporated into pornographic content or where an image may be taken consensually but shared without consent. A leading newspaper in Bangladesh reported on this issue, citing the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Social Media Monitoring of Counter-Terrorism and Cyber Crime who said that there have been instances of girls' intimate videos being uploaded to pornographic websites without the victims' knowledge (Malik, 2017).

For instance, Papia (pseudonym) discovered that her modified offensive images were posted on a fake Facebook account. Her family was almost ostracized from society due to the pervasive social stigma that works against women in such situations (Khan, 2022). Another news report postulates a similar pattern:

"Twenty-five-year-old Raima (not real name) was horrified when she discovered that some nude photographs had been posted on her Facebook messenger. One of her Facebook friends began blackmailing Raima and sent the photos to rekindle the romance. Faced with rejection he posted intimate videos online".

(Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS), 2019)

Another woman was harassed after she lost her smartphone and the man who got the phone downloaded her images from her email account without her permission and threatened to make them viral on social media if she did not agree to have an affair with him (BSS, 2019). One news report mentioned the experiences of female students of several

private universities in Bangladesh who have experienced image-based abuse through their mobile phones or social media networks (Alam, 2022). In these cases, the perpetrator was unknown.

In contrast to unknown perpetrators, some reported cases stated how known and trusted persons are perpetrators and target women on online platforms. For instance, one case stated that after allegedly being subjected to both emotional and physical abuse by her spouse, a woman who works for the government has served him with a divorce notice. Her husband threatened to release pictures of some of their private moments on social media if she did not withdraw the divorce notice after sharing pictures of some of their private times with her family (Mahmud, 2021). A similar pattern is evident in another case where Nila (pseudonym) met an expatriate living through social media in the Middle East. They were married secretly, but Nila's expectations for life were not fulfilled. She divorced her spouse shortly after learning that he was having an affair. Her ex-husband created numerous fictitious social media sites in her name and began posting her images there. But, out of concern for the social rejection of her and her family, Nila simply submitted a general diary (GD) and declined to register a lawsuit (Khan, 2022).

Additionally, women who choose to speak online and voice their opinions often face online harassment and bullying. The report of Bangladesh Legal Aid Services and Trust (BLAST, 2018) also quoted from the comments section of a leading newspaper in the country and mentioned how people made abusive comments like “*we will rape you*” about two female activists in the country. Another survey results also revealed that more than one-third of female journalists have experienced online harassment, with social media being the most common platform for such abuse in 2018 (Das, 2023). Different cases also stand out which reveals how women face abuse when they are vocal on social media.

For instance, according to a news report, the deceased's adolescent classmates who were protesting the tragic death of an English-medium student suffered online hatred, as they held banners in the street and called for justice (Islam, 2021). Threats of rape were all over the video's comment sections on YouTube, which are aggressive. The comments were targeting the victim and blaming her for the incident as well. The victim's sexuality was a target of these assaults. As quoted in the report (Islam, 2021), some male commentators said:

*"Is this not the ***** who had gone to group study? She had voluntarily been raped so why is she asking for justice?"*

"-----If you come to protest in a public place, then you will be caned"

(Islam, 2021)

Moreover, different reports reveal how female media personalities in particular those who are vocal become easy and frequent victims of online abuse. Abusive tweets containing the words ‘slut’ and ‘whore’ was emphasized in many Facebook comments indicating the sexist nature of online abuse in public discourse against female media personalities (Sonali, 2022). For instance, a singer-actor-development worker, and a renowned media personality in Bangladesh, Rafiath Rashid Mithila is a frequent target of vicious online attacks due to her divorce from another well-known musician. Sexual harassment has made up a majority of the comments she receives on social media. It became worse when her private photos were also leaked on social media without her consent (Islam, 2021).

Examples of abusive comments against other internationally and nationally award-winning actresses in Bangladesh like Jaya Ahsan and Azmeri Haque Badhon are subjected to

personal attacks and victim-blaming comments when they share any views on women's safety or rights in Bangladesh (Das, 2023). The experience of another prominent actress Ashna Habib Bhabna's statement in an interview reveals a similar scenario as she stated:

"As artists, we use social media platforms and public profiles to communicate with our fans and we are always open to constructive criticism. But often we see female celebrities like myself get virtually harassed for my attire, my looks and whatnot"

(Sonali, 2022)

Moreover, in recent years, a new trend of technology-based abuse has started through the trafficking of women. Traffickers can make contact with women through everyday social networking sites such as Facebook. Potential victims can be groomed until a level of trust is created, or victims can be tempted by the additional offer of a better life or job. Access to the internet also allows traffickers to extend their activities online in terms of the sales of victims or their videos. Several news reports (Prothom Alo, 2021; The Daily Sun, 2021; New Age, 2021) in Bangladesh highlighted a sensational case of 'Tiktok Hridoy Babu' on women's trafficking and how the trafficking chain is facilitated by Facebook and Tiktok. These trafficking gangs are well-connected with other Middle Eastern countries and India. One of the rescued victims of this case has stated that she was taken to a neighbouring country India for sexual exploitation. The traffickers control the victim by threatening to post compromising pictures of her online and threatening to send the videos to her family if she tries to flee (Prothom Alo, 2021). This trend is similar to other contexts where technology and the internet have been used to target women for sexual exploitation and forced labour (UNODC, 2016).

Defamation, Shame and Under-Reporting

In the reported cases, a significant impact or consequence has been found between technology-based abuse and the mental well-being of victims. The analysis reveals that it harms women's mental health, and has adverse impacts both on their personal and professional lives. For instance, a short documentary premiered on YouTube (2021) titled *"Left with Scars Behind the Screen"* highlighted some of the real-life survivor stories of Bangladeshi women who faced violence on social media networks. One of the victims named *Bina's story* stated that she received an indecent proposal over Facebook from a married colleague and when she declined, the ramifications affected her in many ways. She was falsely accused by her co-workers and relatives, and forced to isolate herself from everyone at one point. It harms her mental health, and she has developed suicidal tendencies over time (Power to Bloom, 2021).

In another case, the victim also revealed how this form of abuse affects not only a woman's family life but also her position in the community which is reflected in the victim's statement:

"My husband won't sleep with me, my in-laws won't eat with me, my parents won't have me around, and nobody in the community will acknowledge me"

(Khan, 2020)

Social media has been used to defame a woman repeatedly who was already a victim of sexual harassment. The case revealed that a 13-year-old girl (Purnima) who was once gang

raped is still being abused, targeted and shamed on social media, became a topic of malicious gossip and derision among her colleagues and left her job (BBC News, 2016). The case of Purnima can be referred to as ‘triggering’ (Lewis et al., 2015) whereby reactions to other abusive experiences are relived. The following quote from Purnima reference reveals the damage that online abuse has caused her and the social realities in Bangladesh:

“Purnima still faces abuse online because of the stigma that clings to rape survivors in parts of Bangladesh”

(BBC News, 2016)

The fear of social humiliation in most cases restricts women from raising their voices against any abuse in Bangladesh. Many victims do not report their cases for fear of losing their face in society which might affect their family members as well (BLAST, 2017). Given the argument that victims are harmed when people continue to view the images (Citron & Franks, 2014), taking legal action means going public about their victimization (Lee, 2012a). As the Al Jazeera report stated:

“Alongside shifting the blame onto the victim, it associates a woman’s honour with their bodies. Essentially all honour is lost when a woman is raped and this stigma is translated into societal hostility and rejection”

(Khan, 2020)

The Daily Star report (2021) referred to a survey and mentioned that the percentage of women who report online sexual harassment in the country is low and women prefer to share it with friends and family rather than report it to police or legal agencies. In some instances, when women get the courage to raise their voices, the legal agencies cannot protect them and can cause more damage to the victim. This is exemplified in situations where a 19-year-old girl’s sexual abuse case was reported and recorded to legal agencies, which was leaked by the reporting officer. Reporting the sexual harassment case cost her life, she was later burned alive by the perpetrator (Sabbir, 2019). Another news report (Prothom Alo, 2022) narrated how a girl hanged herself after a film of raping the girl was posted on social media four days after a case on charges was filed with the legal agencies.

DISCUSSION

Extension of Social Realities in Online Platforms

The analysis of these cases is a reflection of how technology and online platforms are used to sexually degrade women in Bangladesh. Technology and digital space are also revealed as extensions of offline gendered realities, where violence and abuse are the ‘wallpaper’ (Lewis et al., 2015) of women’s unequal position in society. The normalization of violence, shame, and abuse against women, including online abuse, is aided by stereotypical, mediated representations of women as sexual objects, judged by their beauty, and passive members of society with a lack of power (Wood et al., 2015). This is evident in most cases where threats of sexual violence and images through violent pornographic depictions are commonly used by the perpetrators.

Online spaces may not always be gender-neutral or free from the conventional norms of the offline world. The findings reveal that image-based sexual abuse is an attempt to maintain power and control when women choose to end or accept the relationship. This is a

way of getting the women's attention when they have ceased all contact with the perpetrator after the relationship has terminated. Men's violence against women during or following the end of a relationship is argued to be an attempt to restore lost pride and honour in their minds and also within the minds of their peers (Salter, 2017). As a consequence of the perpetrator's anger and frustration that a relationship has broken down, they attempt to ruin the women's reputations, image and mental health issues. Thus, women face a spectrum of behaviours including rape and death threats, invasions of privacy, insults and personal comments. The findings are consistent with other studies in the context of showing that women are more likely than men to experience abuse based on physical appearance and sexual harassment online (Angus Reid, 2016; Duggan, 2014).

Many of the woman victim-survivor stories reflect the harms in large part because of the social stigma and shame surrounding women's sexuality. The harm and damage that is done to women's reputations and well-being through the sharing and publication of sexually intimate images is a way to humiliate and degrade women (Salter & Cofts, 2015; Bates, 2017). This is compounded by the fact that technology is used to humiliate women by sharing their sexual images on social media networks and allowing them to be viewed by others on multiple sites. Hence, sexual images of women were being used as a means of humiliation and retaliation in society, where the motivations related to control (McGlynn et al., 2019).

The characteristics and consequences of online GBV are very similar to traditional forms (Melovi et al., 2020). As with real-life violence, online abuse against women also instils fear and silence. Earlier research shows that experiences with online harassment, in addition to inciting fear and other emotional symptoms, can lead individuals to become more cautious in expressing their views and remain silent (Cote, 2017; Fladmoe & Nadim, 2017; Gelber & McNamara, 2016; Leets, 2002). It extends the harm of other crimes (Powell & Henry, 2015); it also restricts women's participation in digital media, careers and even social life (Jane, 2017). The victims expressed concerns about the repercussions of the abuse they received on their family's reputation and image. The finding is related to Bangladeshi patriarchal culture where the image and honour of a family depend on the conduct of women (Rahman, 2019).

Similar to offline abuse women face the challenge of patterns of shame, stigma, and self-blame and instead involve others in confronting them. The feature of offline abuse of remaining silent on private matters is similar to the online trend as well. The reported cases are related to the circumstances of other forms of violence against women in Bangladesh, where the social stigma makes it particularly difficult for the victims to make their cases public (Rahman, 2019) and feel a great deal of humiliation (Khan, 2020). The stigma of self-blaming remains a serious concern and this pattern of abuse against Asian women often contains sexual overtones, or expectations for silent and obedient women (Felmlee, Rodis, & Francisco, 2018). In contrast, women who are vocal face more abuse as Bhadhon and Mithila the media personalities rightly pointed out that in Bangladeshi society, people prefer to see women as helpless, vulnerable and submissive. Society cannot accept a woman who is strong, and independent and voices her opinion against any injustice in life (DBC News, 2023).

Violence in any form, whether it's online or offline, makes it difficult and challenging for a woman to make it public or seek assistance from legal agencies due to its association with shame, a powerful form of social control in society (Rahman, 2019). This stigma is enforced by the unequal position of women in society to intervene in the process, attitudes and patriarchal beliefs which need to be altered, or challenge the power of dominant groups (Russo & Pirlott, 2006). There is an interesting similarity between online and offline abuse in

terms of seeking help from legal agencies and low levels of reporting in the Bangladesh context (Hasan, 2016; Shilpi, 2015), and lack of initiatives by legal agencies to apprehend and punish rapists that discourage women from coming forward (Khan, 2020). From the reports, however, it was clear that the creation and enforcement of laws happens within a complicated cultural and legal system which makes enacting laws not a simple matter. Additionally, the reported cases show that there is frustration and a lack of trust among women with police responses which treated each communication as a discrete act, rather than grasping the harm caused by the accumulation of abuse (Jane, 2017). This reflects broader concerns that the institutional responses and help-seeking agencies fail to conceptualize the cumulative impact of online abuse, a concern that informed legislation to respond more effectively both to antisocial behaviour and address violence as a serious concern.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

Technology-based violence is a growing phenomenon, and a solution to address this issue requires sociocultural reform towards stronger values of gender equality. While different studies have looked into the expansion of forms of violence against women, the technology-based abuse of women demands more focus and investigation. Other possibilities for future research in this area, especially in the context of developing countries are diverse. There is much scope for representing women's stories of those who have gone through online violence and their experience of dealing with the legal system. Furthermore, there is a need for a more comprehensive understanding of the difficulties in terms of how easy prosecutions are to achieve, whether legal agencies are handling cases appropriately and whether measures need to be implemented to aid victims. Given the findings of this study, future research might inquire deeper into particular experiences of abused women. Additionally, the studies should critically examine the prevalence of this issue, especially concerning the frequently gendered nature of online abuse.

Moreover, the findings of this study are important to highlight the need for the inclusion of some gender-specific strategies for developing awareness and counselling programs for victims. The availability of awareness programs can protect women from the negative psychological and emotional impact of TFGBV. Changing social beliefs, and the resulting attitudes that promote abuse against women is therefore essential to preventing violence against women on both offline and online platforms. In addition, adequate actions are needed to provide victims and their families with effective protection services and access to justice.

BIODATA

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