

VEFAMUN'26

UNWOMEN

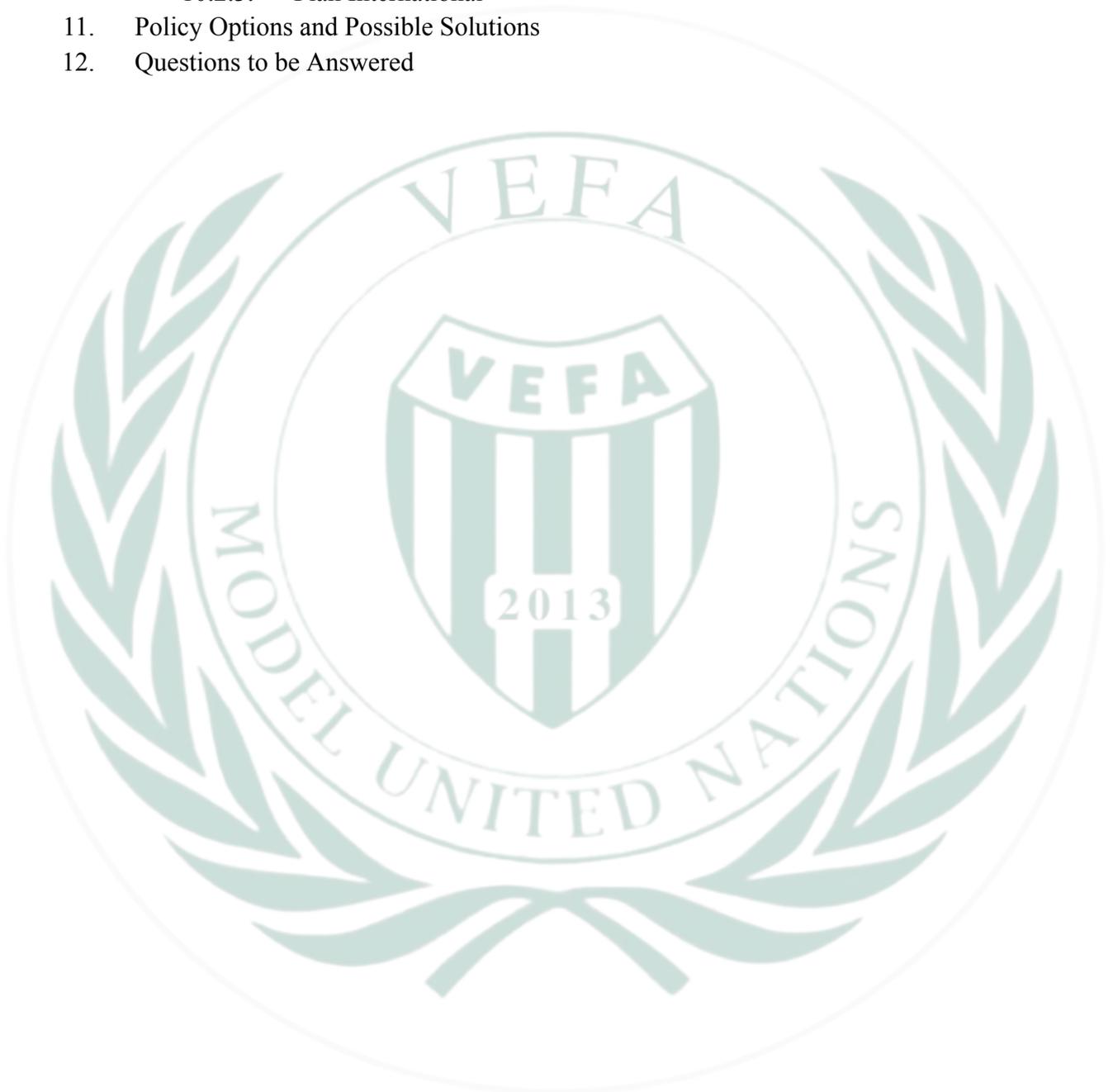
STUDY GUIDE

Addressing Digital Harassment and
Online Gender-Based Violence Against Women

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1. Letter from Secretary-General

Most Special Participants of VefaMUN'26,

As the Secretary-General of VefaMUN'26, I'm absolutely thrilled to welcome you to our 6th edition, happening on March 28-29 right here at Vefa High School.

My journey with this club began on day one of my high school career, and it's been a true passion ever since. I started as an Academy Team Member, climbed to Head of Academy, served as the Deputy Secretary-General, and now stand proudly as Secretary-General. Over these years, I've given my all to this club and this family. We've faced endless obstacles together, and turned "an idea that became reality" from our slogan into our living truth. Every challenge we overcame only made us stronger, more united, and ready to deliver something extraordinary.

Our academy and organisation teams have poured relentless effort into this conference. We tackled every hurdle with grit and designed eight dynamic committees to challenge your minds, spark debates, and create unforgettable memories. From crisis simulations to deep policy dives, each one is crafted for maximum engagement and growth.

But here's the heart of it: none of this shines without you, our incredible participants. Your energy, ideas, and passion are what breathe life into VefaMUN. So come join our family, dive into action, and let's make this edition legendary together.

Best Wishes,

Melis Usanır

Secretary-General of VefaMUN'26

2. Letter from Under-Secretary-General

Esteemed Participants,

First, I would like to welcome you all to VEFAMUN'26. It's a pleasure to be here for all of you.

My name is Ada Akar and I'm an IBDP 11th-grade student in SOBIL. I am more than delighted to attend this thrilling conference with you all. We worked day and night to bring you the best academic experience ever. There is nothing more I want than for all of you dear delegates to have the best time at this event.

Just after I was invited to be the USG of this committee, the whole academic team started to work tirelessly to bring you this amazing experience. You will be able to find every single detail that you'll need in your debates. Believe me, it will be an unforgettable memory for all of you, but not just in an academic way :)

This study guide should be your first research data. The committee will keep the ball rolling with the information and the keywords in it. The points I want you to specifically cover are all in this guide. I highly recommend that you also check the Questions To Be Answered and the Possible Solutions part to have more certain ideas about the agenda. The planned committee is according to this guide, but moreover i recommend you to do research from the sources in the bibliography.

Last but not least, I'm as excited as you are for this committee and believe me when I say that the whole of academia is here to encourage and support you whenever we can. I hope VEFAMUN'26 will be THE mun for all of you.

You can contact me if you need via adakar2008@gmail.com,

Ada Akar

Under-Secretary-General of UNWOMEN

VEFAMUN'26

3. Introduction to the Committee: UNWOMEN

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is the UN (United Nations) organization delivering programmes, policies, and standards that uphold women's human rights and ensure that every woman and girl lives up to her full potential. The entity is also known as the youngest United Nations organization to be established. In July 2010, due to the challenges faced in promoting gender equality globally caused by inadequate funding and the lack of support, the United Nations General Assembly created UNWOMEN.



Creation of the entity ended up merging and building on the significant works of four previously distinct parts of the UN system, which focused exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment: Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). UNWOMEN focuses on priority areas that are fundamental to women's equality and inclusion in society, such as leadership skills and political participation, economic independence, ending violence against women, HIV and AIDS, and LGBTQIA+ rights. UNWOMEN details all its past, present, and future solutions regarding its areas of work in necessary documentation and digital content. For the agenda item, UNWOMEN is leading efforts to combat technology-facilitated violence against women and girls by pushing for laws to protect women and girls, closing data gaps, adapting support services for survivors, and working with men and boys to challenge gender stereotypes and discrimination.

4. Introduction to the Agenda Item: Addressing Digital Harassment and Online Gender-Based Violence Against Women

Technology-related violence/harassment towards women and girls encompasses a range of harmful acts that are committed through the use of information and communication devices based on their gender. Both women and men experience gender-based violence, but the majority are women and girls. Moreover, 1 in 3 women in the EU experiences physical and/or sexual abuse since the age of 15. With the development of technology, access to these kinds of abuses became more common and aggressive. Furthermore, this development is turned into a weapon by the assailants. What starts as online abuse can swiftly spiral into danger that extends beyond screens and borders, making it impossible for many women to feel safe at home, work, or in public spaces.

Millions of women and girls face digital violence. Studies done by UNWOMEN show that between 16 and 58 per cent of women have faced technology-based abuse. In Arab states: %60, Eastern Europe and Central Asia: more than %50, Sub-Saharan Africa: %28, Europe and the USA: %23. These data are only the reported ones.



The most common forms of digital harassment are sexual abuse and stalking. Image-based abuse, posts on social media platforms, and unwanted messages towards these sharings are the main ways to access women and girls. The primary target audience contains young women and girls, given that their percentage of using technological devices and social media platforms is higher. Women who face discrimination due to disabilities, race, immigration, and LGBTIQ+ are also more likely to be attacked. And last but not least, women who are active in political and social life are a target for digital attackers. Activists, human rights defenders, politicians, journalists, etc.

The UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights articulate clear expectations that platforms have a responsibility to design and operate their networks in a way that avoids infringing on the rights of those they affect, as well as to find new, effective remedies for online abuse. The personal data society gives to these platforms can easily be manipulated and sold. That leads us to the fact that not only the attackers, but also the owners of these platforms are responsible for these kinds of acts.

5. Key Terminology

Gender Equality: Means that the rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are male or female, handicapped or able-bodied, young or elderly, white or black, or from rural or urban settings. Women are entitled to live in dignity, safety, and security.

NGO's: A non-profit organization that operates independently of any government, typically ones whose purpose is to address a social or political issue.

Digital Harassment: The use of information and communication technologies by an individual or group to repeatedly cause harm to another person.,

Physical Harm: Any act that results in (or has a high likelihood of resulting in) bodily injury, physical pain, illness, or physiological impairment.

Psychological Harm: Harm that causes mental or emotional trauma or that causes behavioral change or physical symptoms that require psychological or psychiatric care.

Stalking: Stalking is a crime of power and control. It is a course of action directed at an individual that causes the victim to fear for their safety, and generally involves repeated visual or physical proximity, nonconsensual communication, and verbal, written, or implied threats.

Image-Based Assault: When someone takes, shares, or threatens to share sexually explicit images or videos of a person without their knowledge or consent, with the intent to cause them distress or harm. This can include digitally altered images, also known as “deepfakes”.

Trafficking: Traffickers are increasingly using technology to profile, recruit, control, and exploit their victims, as well as using the Internet, especially the dark web, to hide information about their activities and identities.

CVAWG: Occurs as part of the broader continuum of gender-based violence (GBV), which is embedded in persisting unbalanced power structures. This brief by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) aims to support digital and social media platforms by providing evidence-based, actionable recommendations on how to strengthen their policies and practices to combat CVAWG.

Violence Against Women: Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Artificial Intelligence: The application of computer systems able to perform tasks or produce output normally requiring human intelligence, especially by applying machine learning techniques to large collections of data.

6. Specialized Overview

6.1. Forms of Digital Harassment

6.1.1. Doxing

Doxing, or Doxxing, is the act of publicly revealing previously private personal information about an individual or organization, including email addresses, phone numbers, addresses, social security numbers, or bank information, without their consent, to embarrass them and take revenge. Doxing is based on the fact that nearly everyone has data about them floating

around on the internet, protected by varying levels of security—and in some cases, barely any at all. Once this data has been found, it is weaponized and used against the target.

6.1.2. Swatting

Swatting is a malicious act that can involve placing false emergency calls to emergency responders, often reporting a (false) severe, ongoing crisis at a specific location. The purpose of swatting is to harass someone believed to be at a specific location. It may be an extension of doxxing, where a bad actor fabricates a dangerous story to law enforcement about the victim.

6.1.3. Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking involves the use of information and communications technology (ICT) to perpetrate multiple incidents intended to repeatedly harass, annoy, attack, threaten, frighten, and/or verbally abuse individuals. Cyberstalking involves a series of behaviours and actions over a period of time that are intended to intimidate, alarm, frighten, or harass the victim and/or the victim's family, partner, and friends.

6.1.4. Sextortion

Sextortion is blackmail using real or fabricated intimate images to force someone into unwanted actions. What distinguishes sextortion from other types of sexually abusive conduct is that it has both a sexual component and a corruption component. We cannot mention sextortion without corruption. This corruption may be economic, sexual, or personal. The rapid growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has serious implications for Technology-facilitated Violence Against Women and Girls (TF VAWG). AI is intensifying TF VAWG both by facilitating the spread of targeted disinformation as well as the proliferation of image-based abuse and deepfake pornographic videos.

6.1.5. Online Sexual Harassment

Online sexual harassment is the activity of using the internet to harm or frighten another person, especially by sending them unpleasant messages. Online sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of behaviours that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of different platforms (private or public). Any kind of digital sexually explicit unpleasant content is a form of online sexual harassment.

6.1.6. Non-Consensual Intimate Images (NCII)

Non-consensual intimate images basically mean the photos that are taken and shared without the owner's consent. The photos may include (partial) nudity, toileting, or materials that are

culturally embarrassing for the victim. NCII is often called Revenge Porn but it is not the only reason for Non-consensual intimate images. The growth of AI also disseminates NCII.

6.1.7. Virtual Mobbing

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming, where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else, causing embarrassment or humiliation.

6.1.8. Defamation

Defamation is a false and unprivileged statement of fact that is harmful to someone's reputation. Even though it has really serious punishments, it is still a really common form of digital harassment.

6.1.9. Trolling

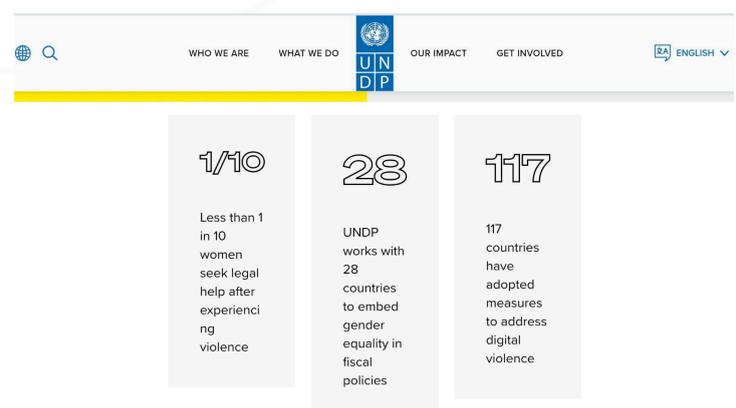
Trolling can be defined as when individuals deliberately follow and provoke others online, often with offensive content, and may escalate into threats. This may include online hate – personal attacks that target someone because of their race, culture, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The troll may also encourage mob mentality, urging others to join in the attack so it becomes a pile-on.

6.1.10. Online Hate Speech

Online hate speech is defined as online harassment that involves offensive and discriminatory language or actions motivated by animosity toward aspects of identity, such as race, religion, gender identity, etc. It's characterized by the use of slurs, name-calling, and other forms of verbal abuse and can also be conveyed through images and memes on social media.

6.2. Global Trends and Statistics on Digital Violence

Despite limited globally comparable data, studies show that technology-facilitated violence is widespread. Prevalence among women ranges from 16 to 58 percent. Younger women, particularly in Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (born between 1981 and 1996), are more at risk; girls face severe impacts. In 2024, 97 percent of child



sexual abuse imagery where the victim's sex was recorded showed girls only. Often, images were “self-generated” under coercion, grooming, or extortion, most commonly targeting 11–13 year-olds, with a sharp rise among 7–10 year-olds. Around 40 per cent of girls report harassment at least monthly, and 11 percent daily or almost daily, echoing earlier findings that 58 per cent of girls have personally experienced online abuse.

Related harms are escalating, with a 192 per cent annual rise in online enticement reports in 2024 and over 26,000 cases of financial sextortion in 2023. Perpetrators are often known to the victim-survivor, and risks are heightened for women politicians, journalists, human rights and environmental defenders, feminist activists, and women and girls perceived as challenging gender norms and patriarchal structures, including LGBTQI+ individuals and those with limited access to digital tools and literacy. TF VAWG (Technology-facilitated violence against women and girls) disproportionately impacts women and girls. The most affected groups include women facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as racialized women and women belonging to religious or ethnic minorities, young women, poor women, and women with disabilities. One of the most efficient ways of fighting against digital harassment is taking legislative measures. However, according to World Bank data, fewer than 40 per cent of countries have laws protecting women from cyber harassment or cyber stalking. This leaves 44 per cent of the world's women and girls – 1.8 billion – without access to legal protection.

However, the risks are high worldwide, not only in non-developed or developing countries. In Arab States, 60 percent of women internet users have experienced online violence. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, over 50 percent of women have faced technology-facilitated abuse. In sub-Saharan Africa, 28 percent of women reported online violence. It is also common in high-income countries. In Denmark, Italy, New Zealand, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, 23 percent of women aged 18 to 55 reported online abuse or harassment.

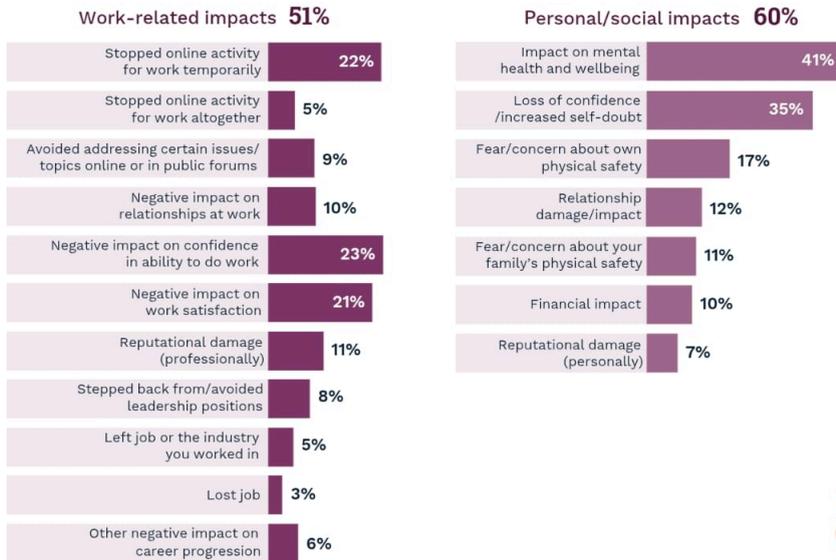
Furthermore, these are only the tip of the iceberg. When women face relentless online abuse, they may be deterred from speaking, participating, or running for office; gendered disinformation distorts political debate; threats and deepfakes undermine the fairness of electoral competition; and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable erodes trust in institutions. According to research made by the IPU (Inter-Parliamentary Union), more than half of the women tend to hide the online attacks experienced.

6.3. Impacts on Women's Safety, Mental Health, and Digital Participation

Online harassment, abuse, and exclusion prevent girls and women from fully participating, expressing themselves freely, and realizing their potential. Digital abuse and bullying cause women to face serious physical and mental issues, such as sleeplessness and illnesses. Women and girls avoid commenting, posting, or becoming active figures on social media due

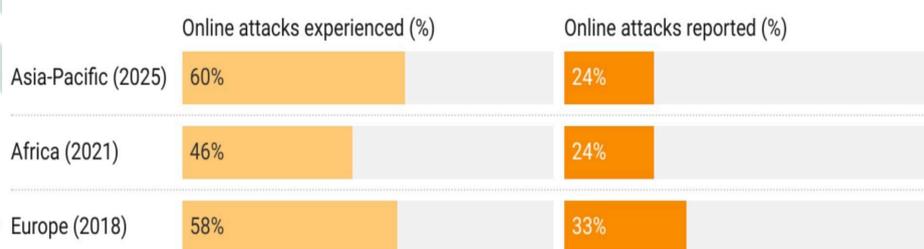
to online violence. Many women do not even use a real profile photo to shirk digital harassment, and AI-generated videos. The survey done by the Australian e-safety department shows how digital harassment impacts women’s safety, mental health, and digital participation.

Figure 7: Impacts of online abuse



Question D7: What, if any, impact did this/these things have on you?
 Base: Total women's sample that experienced online abuse (n=526).
 *Based on agreement with the statement (E1).

Prevalence and reporting of online abuse against women parliamentarians



7. Root Causes and Contributing Factors

7.1. Gender Inequality and Power Imbalances

Although there is increasing awareness of gender inequality, women are still facing gender based discrimination, harassment, and violence, both physical and digital. According to the UN WOMEN report in 2024, 1 in 3 women is subjected to physical and/or sexual violence at

least once in their lifetime. Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is increasingly experienced across the online and offline continuum. According to UN, any act against women and girls that is committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified by the use of information communication technologies or other digital tools that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological, social, political, or economic harm, or other infringements of rights and freedoms is called Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence (TF GBV). Online Gender-Based Violence and Digital Harassment also mostly include a hierarchy. Moreover, those with more power are more likely to perpetrate TF GBV against others. A boss may try to perpetrate digital abuse to his/her employee to benefit, especially if the employee is a woman. This power and threat can silence the victim's voice.

7.2. Lack of Protection and Enforcement

Digital inclusion is not possible without digital safety. That is, benefiting from digital products is not possible without ensuring the safety and security of users. The prevalence of the internet and digital products has presented both a tremendous opportunity to create, build, and regulate a more equal future for women and girls and a place with its dangers to face TF GBV for women. Legal and policy responses to TF GBV need further definition and embodiment of human rights, addressing both punitive criminalization as well as transformative justice elements. Despite TF GBV being the most systemic form of online violence, governments and organizations have been slow to develop appropriate solutions due to economic issues, sociocultural norms, or public apathy. Lack of protection and enforcement causes TF GBV to increase worldwide.

7.3. Sociocultural Norms Supporting

Like all forms of violence against women and girls, TF VAWG is rooted in gender inequality and discriminatory gender norms. Digital spaces reflect, reinforce, and exacerbate systemic structural gender inequality as well as patterns of harmful masculinities that drive all forms of VAWG. All over the world, especially in underdeveloped countries, patriarchal society hinders women from taking an active role in life and supports gender-based violence. To fight against TF GBV, we should change the view of society first.

8. Challenges in Addressing Online Gender-Based Violence

We can classify the main challenges in addressing online gender-based violence under five categories, which are normalization of violence, impunity, lack of proper reporting mechanisms, low representation of women in information and communication technologies (ICT), and victim blaming.

The media, internet platforms, authorities, and communities in general often trivialize and normalize digital violence. This attitude contributes to erasing the visibility of the issue,

legitimizing it, and fostering an environment of impunity that dismisses victims' experiences and drives them into silence. Although in recent years new laws have been implemented and more cases are being resolved, the authorities' response remains insufficient, allowing this form of violence to go largely unpunished.

Among other challenges, there is a noticeable absence of effective reporting mechanisms, insufficient technical and financial resources to handle cases, significant shortcomings in the training and awareness of justice personnel, and a lack of reparative mechanisms for victims that extend beyond the criminal sanctions imposed on the aggressors.

One of the biggest challenges is the low representation of women in the technology sector, which leads to the incorporation of inequalities and systematic biases in ICTs. Moreover, there is a lack of inclusive design, proper content moderation, and effective mechanisms for detecting abuse.

Women who are victims of cyber-violence are also often blamed for the acts of violence they suffer and rarely obtain recognition, support, or access to justice. This attitude is mostly connected with cultural norms and expectations of the people towards women.

9. Case Studies

Since its formation in 2010, the UN WOMEN department has been conducting detailed studies and campaigns and fighting for women's rights in both digital and physical areas. It creates digital areas where women can report any digital harassment and online gender based violence, encourages governments to take legal actions against gender-based digital harassment and violence, and organizes awareness-raising campaigns such as “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence”, “UNITE to End Violence against Women”, or “[HeForShe](#)”. Thanks to these campaigns, UN WOMEN reaches women and girls and inspires them.

9.1. 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

This is a daily awareness-raising campaign that has been completed from 25 November to 10 December 2025 to tell women and girls how they can protect themselves from digital abuse. Its motto is “There is #NoExcuse for online abuse”.

9.2. UNITE to End Violence against Women Campaign

The UNITE to End Violence against Women initiative is a multiyear effort to prevent and eliminate violence against women and girls around the world.

The initiative, launched in 2008 under the leadership of the UN Secretary-General, was created to support the civil society-led 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign around the world.

Managed by UN Women, UNITE calls on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, media, and the UN system to join forces to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

9.3. HeForShe

HeForShe is a global UN Women-led solidarity movement that engages men and boys as agents of change to achieve gender equality, which focuses on transforming gender equality from a women's issue into a human rights issue that requires active participation from men in 2014.

10. Major Parties Involved

10.1. UN Bodies and Organs

10.1.1. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. It represents the world's commitment to the promotion and protection of the full range of human rights and freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

10.1.2. Commission on the Status Women (CSW)

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights, and the empowerment of women. A functional commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

10.1.3. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

The Economic and Social Council is at the heart of the United Nations system to advance the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social, and environmental. It is the central platform for fostering debate and innovative thinking, forging consensus on ways forward, and coordinating efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals. It is also responsible for the follow-up to major UN conferences and summits. It supports women to take an active role in economic life.

10.1.4. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also known as the UN Refugee Agency, is a global organization mandated to protect and assist individuals forced to flee conflict, violence, or persecution. It also supports and helps women refugees.

10.1.5. The United Nations Population Fund Agency (UNFPA)

UNFPA is the sexual and reproductive health agency of the UN. It works to uphold the rights and choices of women, girls, and young people across more than 150 countries. UNFPA aims to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe, and every young person can fulfil their potential. It fights against violence against women.

10.2. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

10.2.1. Global Fund for Women

Global Fund for Women is one of the biggest international NGOs, and it has provided financial support to local or global women's empowerment projects for over 40 years.

10.2.2. Women for Women International

Women for Women International is an organization that supports women survivors of war and conflict, providing them with social and economic skills to transform their own lives. For over 30 years, Women for Women International has used an integrated approach to go beyond charity to innovation: They are a learning organization that listens to data, our teams on-the-ground, and women themselves to constantly evolve and improve the way we work.

10.2.3. Plan International

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is an international membership-based network working to mobilise emerging electronic information and communication networks for social justice and development. It fights against TF GBV and digital harassment.

11. Policy Options and Possible Solutions

- Cooperation between governments, technology companies, and women's rights organizations to strengthen the policies and security software for preventing digital violence.
- Strengthening the data gaps and preventing information leakages.
- Creating a deterrent atmosphere by drafting tougher legislation.

- Shaping laws and current policies through organizations such as the Commission on the Status of Women and the UN General Assembly. Key contributions include supporting and informing frameworks such as the Global Digital Compact, the UNODC Cyber Crime Convention, and CSW67 Agreed Conclusions.
- Educating society on the digital danger and raising awareness.
- Pushing tech companies to build safety into the architectures of their platforms.
- Global trends in 2025–2026 show a shift toward criminalizing digital abuse with the same weight as physical violence.
- Equipping law enforcement with "Guides for Police on Addressing Technology-Facilitated Violence" so they understand how to preserve digital evidence rather than dismissing cases.
- Image Protection.

12. Questions to be Answered

1. What is the real reason behind the increase in gender-based violence on digital platforms?
2. What international precautions can be taken to prevent women's rights violations on digital platforms?
3. How can companies build safer security nets?
4. How can underage girls be protected from this digital environment?
5. Does the current law recognize "Technology-facilitated gender based violence" as a specific crime?
6. How much does the improvement of AI (Artificial Intelligence) provoke people to commit such crimes?
7. Can governments or companies track digital crimes in a fully efficient environment?
8. Does gender inequality affect the rates of digital harassment towards women and girls?
9. What obligatory rules should be given to the technology companies for strengthening security nets?
10. How can personal data be protected from strangers?
11. Can parental education for young girls be more efficient for preventing abuse towards them?
12. Can companies create software to check the users' previous criminal records to watch out for the abusers before logging into the application?
13. What can be done to prevent image-based violence?
14. Should all chatrooms be controlled by the government in order to prevent inappropriate communication nets to occur? If not, what can be done otherwise?
15. How can society be educated on the topic?

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