



Beyond the screen: The role of technology in creating new forms of gender-based violence against women

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Abstract: Gender-based violence against women has been a longstanding issue, and technology has introduced new forms of violence that exacerbate the problem. This research paper explores the various manifestations, causes, and effects of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women. The study sheds light on the increased surveillance, image-based sexual abuse, online harassment, cyberstalking, and other forms of violence that women face in digital spaces. It also identifies factors such as online anonymity, gender stereotypes, inadequate legal protection, and patriarchal attitudes that contribute to this phenomenon. The paper highlights the adverse consequences, including fear, isolation, mental health problems, financial losses, and stigmatization, experienced by women who fall victim to such violence. To address this pressing issue, the paper emphasizes the need for improved awareness, legal frameworks, technology design, and dismantling toxic online culture. The findings underscore the importance of creating a safer and more inclusive online environment for women through education, policy reforms, and collaborative efforts. It is crucial to protect women from technology-facilitated violence and promote a society where all individuals can thrive without fear of harm.

Key Words: Technology, Gender-based violence, Women, Online harassment, Cyberstalking.

1. INTRODUCTION:

Gender-based violence against women has been a prevalent issue for centuries, with various forms of physical, sexual, and emotional abuse reported across different cultures and societies. The issue has gained increasing attention in recent years, and significant efforts have been made to address it, such as the development of laws, policies, and interventions aimed at reducing its incidence and impact. However, with the rapid growth of technology in recent years, new forms of gender-based violence against women have emerged, which are facilitated or amplified by technology.

Technology has reshaped the way we live, work, and connect with each other. However, one of the negative aspects of technology is its ability to facilitate gender-based violence against women. The increased use of digital devices and online platforms has created new forms of violence. These technological advancements have enabled abusers to harass, threaten, and intimidate women in ways that were previously impossible.

Technologies such as social media, messaging apps, and online dating platforms have created new opportunities for abusers to engage in controlling, harassing, and threatening behaviors towards their partners. The internet and mobile technologies have facilitated the dissemination of private and intimate information, including images and videos, which can be used to harm and humiliate women.

Moreover, technology-facilitated violence can occur in a variety of settings, including the workplace, educational institutions, and public spaces. The anonymity afforded by the internet and social media platforms has allowed perpetrators to harass and threaten women without fear of being identified.

In conclusion, the issue of technology-facilitated violence against women is a complex and pressing one that requires urgent attention. This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing conversation on the subject by providing insights into the different forms that this violence takes, its impact on women, and potential solutions to the problem. Ultimately, it is essential to develop strategies that will protect women from technology-facilitated violence and create a safer online space for everyone.



2. DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS :

- **Role of technology:** Refers to the ways in which technology shapes and influences various aspects of society, including social norms, values, behaviours, and power dynamics.
- **New forms:** Refers to the emerging or evolving types of gender-based violence against women that are facilitated by technology, such as cyberstalking, revenge porn, and online harassment.
- **Gender-based violence:** Refers to any act of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence that is perpetrated against an individual based on their gender or gender identity.
- **Women:** Refers to individuals who identify as female or who are assigned female at birth, and encompasses a range of diverse experiences and identities.
- **Technology-facilitated violence:** Refers specifically to acts of violence against women that are enabled or exacerbated by technology, such as the use of social media to stalk, harass, or threaten women.

3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK :

The conceptual framework for this research paper focuses on the intersection of gender-based violence and technology. Technology has become a pervasive part of modern life, and with it, new forms of gender-based violence have emerged. These forms of violence include cyberstalking, revenge porn, and online harassment, among others. This research paper aims to explore the ways in which technology contributes to the perpetuation of gender-based violence against women, how it affects the lives of women, and how it can be prevented.

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK :

The theoretical framework for this research paper draws on the feminist theory. Feminist theory posits that gender-based violence is a manifestation of patriarchal power relations and seeks to understand the ways in which gender inequalities are perpetuated. The theory emphasizes that the use of technology to perpetuate gender-based violence is an extension of this power dynamic.

5. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE :

- **Lovbrand (2020)** provides a global perspective on cyber violence against women, highlighting the various forms of technology-facilitated violence experienced by women across the world. The article underscores the need for greater awareness of this issue and the development of effective policies and strategies to address it.
- **Henry, Powell, and Flynn (2018)** explore the experiences of women who have been victims of technology-facilitated domestic and family violence. They argue that such violence should be recognized as a serious and pervasive issue, and call for better support and protection for victims.
- **Gavey (2018)** provides a feminist perspective on technology-facilitated sexual violence, arguing that such violence is a product of patriarchal systems that perpetuate gender inequality. The article emphasizes the need for social change to address this issue.
- **Staksrud and Olafsson (2018)** examine the impact of cyberbullying on children's mental health, highlighting the need for greater awareness and prevention strategies to address this growing problem.
- **Ellison and Thompson (2019)** provide an overview of digital domestic abuse and highlight the need for greater research and intervention in this area. The article argues that such abuse is a serious and under-recognized issue that requires greater attention from policymakers and practitioners.
- **Hess and Wall (2017)** explore the role of technology in domestic violence, arguing that it is a key tool used by perpetrators to control and intimidate their victims. The article emphasizes the need for greater awareness of this issue and better support for victims.
- **Henry, Flynn, and Powell (2018)** examine the continuum of image-based sexual abuse, highlighting the various forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence experienced by women. The article underscores the need for better laws and policies to address this issue.



- **Zaleski and Lengnick-Hall (2020)** conduct a literature review of women's experiences with technology-facilitated intimate partner violence. The article highlights the various forms of violence experienced by women, including stalking, harassment, and surveillance, and argues for better prevention and intervention strategies.
- **Arora and Arora (2020)** examine cyberstalking of women in India, highlighting the various forms of technology-facilitated violence experienced by women in this context. The article calls for greater awareness and better legal and policy frameworks to address this issue.
- **Otjen and Birnholtz (2019)** explore technology-facilitated intimate partner violence as a workplace issue, arguing that employers have a role to play in addressing this issue. The article underscores the need for better training and support for employers to respond effectively to this problem.

6. RESEARCH GAP :

- On the basis of the review of the related literature, the researcher has discovered that there are various studies which have been conducted related to different forms of violence women facing but hardly any study directly or indirectly explains the causes of new forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women.
- There are plethora of studies conducted concerned with cyber violence, domestic and family violence, gender inequality, digital domestic abuse, cyberstalking and harassment, intimate partner violence but relatively very few studies have been conducted on the after effects of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women and its preventions, which leaves the gap for further research.

Hence, with these drawbacks, the researcher has attempted to fill the gaps by conducting a sociological study on “**Beyond the Screen: The Role of Technology in Creating New Forms of Gender-Based Violence against Women**” just to gain an understanding of the new forms of gender-based violence against women facilitated by technology.

7. OBJECTIVES :

The main objectives of the present research paper is

- To explain the causes of new forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women.
- To understand the effects of new forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women.

8. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY :

- **Research design:** Descriptive research design used to describe the extent and nature of technological violence against women using secondary data.
- **Data collection:** Secondary data sources, such as academic journals, government reports, and NGO reports, collected through a comprehensive literature review.
- **Data analysis:** Qualitative content analysis used to identify relevant themes and patterns and present results in a descriptive manner.
- **Sampling:** Purposive sampling method used to select data sources based on relevance and availability of data.
- **Ethical considerations:** No ethical considerations regarding human subjects due to the use of secondary data sources.
- **Limitations:** Biases in secondary data sources, lack of access to certain types of data, and potential gaps in data may limit the scope of the analysis.
- **Data validity and reliability:** Established secondary data sources used to ensure validity and reliability of data.
- **Data interpretation:** Results interpreted in light of research aim and objective, with conclusions based on evidence presented in the data.
- **Contribution to knowledge:** Aims to contribute to existing knowledge on technological violence against women through a comprehensive analysis of existing secondary data sources.



9. FINDINGS:

9.1 NEW FORMS OF TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

- **Increased surveillance:** With the use of technology, it is easier for perpetrators to monitor and track women's movements, activities, and communications. This not only violates their privacy but also exposes them to the risk of violence.
- **Image-based sexual abuse:** Technology has made it easier for perpetrators to distribute sexually explicit images and videos of women without their consent. This can lead to shame, embarrassment, and other negative consequences for the victims.
- **Impersonation:** Perpetrators can use technology to impersonate women online, creating fake profiles or pretending to be someone else. This can be used to spread false information or to harass women.
- **Online harassment:** Women are more likely to experience online harassment and bullying, which can include sexist and misogynistic comments, threats, and other forms of abuse. This can have a damaging effect on their mental health and self-esteem.
- **Cyberstalking:** With the help of technology, it has become easier for stalkers to follow women virtually, track their online activities, and gather personal information about them. This can lead to physical and psychological harm to women.
- **Revenge porn:** Technology has made it easier for perpetrators to share intimate images or videos of women without their consent, leading to humiliation, victim blaming, and harassment.
- **Lack of access:** Despite the widespread use of technology, many women still face barriers to access, particularly in developing countries. This digital divide can exacerbate gender inequality and limit opportunities for women to participate in the digital economy.
- **Intersectional violence:** Women from marginalized communities, such as women of colour, indigenous women, and LGBTQ+ women, are more likely to experience gender-based violence in the technological world due to the intersection of multiple forms of oppression.
- **Technology-facilitated trafficking:** The internet and other forms of technology have made it easier for traffickers to recruit and exploit women, particularly in the sex industry.
- **Legal loopholes:** The legal system often fails to keep pace with the rapid changes in technology, making it difficult to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions. This can further victimize women and discourage them from seeking justice.

9.2 CAUSES

- **Online anonymity:** The anonymity of the internet can give perpetrators a sense of impunity, making them more likely to engage in abusive behaviour.
- **Lack of awareness:** Many women may not be aware of the risks associated with using technology and may not know how to protect themselves online.
- **Gender stereotypes:** Traditional gender stereotypes can lead to the objectification and harassment of women online.
- **Inadequate legal protection:** Laws regarding online harassment and abuse may not be sufficient or well-enforced, leaving women vulnerable to abuse.
- **Inadequate technology design:** Some technologies may be designed without sufficient consideration for the risks they pose to women, such as lack of privacy or security features.
- **Toxic online culture:** The online culture of misogyny and harassment can create an environment that normalizes abusive behaviour towards women.
- **Patriarchal attitudes:** Men's belief in superiority and control over women can lead to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- **Lack of awareness:** Women's lack of knowledge about digital safety can make them vulnerable to various



forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

- **Anonymity:** Technology's anonymity can embolden perpetrators to engage in more severe and persistent forms of gender-based violence against women.
- **Accessibility to technology:** Unequal access to technology and the internet can create a digital divide, leaving women who are already marginalized or disadvantaged more vulnerable to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

These causes can interact with each other and create a complex web of factors that contribute to new forms of gender-based violence happening through technology against women.

9.3 EFFECTS

Here are some after effects of technology-facilitated gender-based violence women faces:

- **Fear and anxiety:** Women who have experienced technology-facilitated violence may feel unsafe and fearful in both online and offline spaces, leading to anxiety and stress.
- **Isolation:** Women may withdraw from social activities, both online and offline, to avoid being victimized by technology-facilitated violence. Feelings of solitude and loneliness may result from this.
- **Trust issues:** Women who have experienced technology-facilitated violence may become distrustful of others, both online and offline, and may find it difficult to form new relationships.
- **Mental health problems:** Exposure to technology-facilitated violence can have a negative impact on mental health, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **Financial losses:** Some forms of technology-facilitated violence, such as identity theft or financial fraud, can result in significant financial losses for women.
- **Employment issues:** Women who experience technology-facilitated violence may find it difficult to maintain employment or may be forced to leave their job due to safety concerns.
- **Legal issues:** Women who experience technology-facilitated violence may face legal challenges in seeking justice, as the laws surrounding these crimes can be complex and difficult to enforce.
- **Stigmatization:** Women who have experienced technology-facilitated violence may be stigmatized by society, which can further exacerbate the negative impacts of the violence.
- **Impact on children:** Children of women who experience technology-facilitated violence may also be negatively impacted, as they may witness or be exposed to the violence, which can affect their own mental health and well-being.
- **Overall quality of life:** Technology-facilitated violence against women can significantly impact their overall quality of life, leading to long-lasting physical, emotional, and financial consequences.

9.4 PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- **Raising Awareness and Education:** It is crucial to educate people, especially women, about the various forms of technology-facilitated violence, how to identify and report it, and what preventive measures they can take. This education could be done through awareness campaigns, workshops, and online resources.
- **Strengthening Legal Frameworks:** Legal frameworks that address online harassment and abuse, cyberstalking, and revenge pornography need to be strengthened and enforced to ensure that perpetrators of these crimes are held accountable for their actions.



- **Collaborative Efforts:** Collaborative efforts between law enforcement agencies, tech companies, and civil society organizations can help to develop policies and practices that combat technology-facilitated violence against women.
- **Building Safer Online Spaces:** Social media platforms and other online forums need to take proactive measures to ensure the safety of their users. This could involve developing robust reporting mechanisms, investing in content moderation, and implementing technologies that prevent the sharing of non-consensual intimate images.
- **Education and Awareness:** Providing education and awareness programs to women on how to identify and avoid online harassment and violence. Such programs can also educate them on their rights and legal options to protect themselves.
- **Technology Companies:** Technology companies should create and enforce clear policies against online harassment and abuse, and take prompt action against perpetrators. They should also provide tools and resources to users to report and block abusive behaviour.
- **Law Enforcement:** Law enforcement agencies should be trained to understand the nuances of online harassment and abuse, and should take online complaints seriously. They should also work closely with technology companies to identify and prosecute perpetrators.
- **Support Services:** Providing support services such as counselling, legal aid, and shelters for women who have experienced online harassment and violence.
- **Gender-Inclusive Design:** Technology companies should prioritize gender-inclusive design, which takes into account the needs and experiences of women and other marginalized groups. This includes designing platforms that are accessible, user-friendly, and safe for all users.

10. CONCLUSION:

Thus, it can be concluded that technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women is a complex issue that requires attention. The causes of this phenomenon are varied and include factors such as patriarchal attitudes, lack of awareness about digital safety, and the anonymity that technology can provide. The effects of this violence can be devastating, including psychological trauma, physical harm, and the perpetuation of harmful gender norms. To combat technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women, it is crucial to raise awareness about the issue and promote safe and responsible use of technology. This can involve educating individuals about online safety and encouraging bystander intervention when witnessing abusive behaviour. Additionally, policies and laws must be put in place to hold perpetrators accountable and provide support for survivors. Overall, addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence against women requires a multifaceted approach that involves education, policy change, and community action. By working together, we can create a safer and more equitable online environment for all individuals.

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