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# DEFINING AND MEASURING TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (TFGBV)

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# I. WHAT IS TFGBV (TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE)?

The rapid expansion of internet and mobile technologies has fostered global progress and development. Yet, the omnipresence of digital technologies has also given rise to emerging human rights and safety issues. While terms like cyberbullying, online harassment, and cyberstalking are commonly employed, they fall short in encapsulating the diverse spectrum of violent behaviors prevalent in digital spaces, particularly those that disproportionately affect women, girls, and sexual minorities.

Without initially acknowledging the complete spectrum of gender-based violence occurring online or through technology, we lack the tools to prevent it and provide effective support to those who undergo such experiences. Therefore, we establish the definition of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV) as:

Definition of TFGBV:
"Action by one or more people that harms others based on their sexual or gender identity or by enforcing harmful gender norms. This action is carried out using the internet and/or mobile technology and includes stalking, bullying, sex-based harassment, defamation, hate speech, exploitation and gendertrolling." (Hinson, Mueller, O'Brien-Milne, & Wandera, 2018)

## 2. A Complex and Pervasive Problem

Mounting evidence indicates that TFGBV is a multifaceted and prevalent issue. Approximately one-third of internet users in South Africa and Kenya, and nearly three-quarters of users in the United States, report experiencing some form of online harassment (African Development Bank Group [ADBG], 2016; Burton & Mutongwizo, 2009; Duggan, 2014, 2017). The consequences of technology-facilitated GBV can extend significantly, encompassing psychological, physical, social, and economic impacts on the lives of victims/survivors and their families.

Furthermore, internet and mobile technologies can contribute to the transference of real-life violence to the online realm, as well as the simultaneous perpetration of both online and offline forms of GBV. This exacerbates the compromised safety and well-being of those undergoing such experiences (Backe,
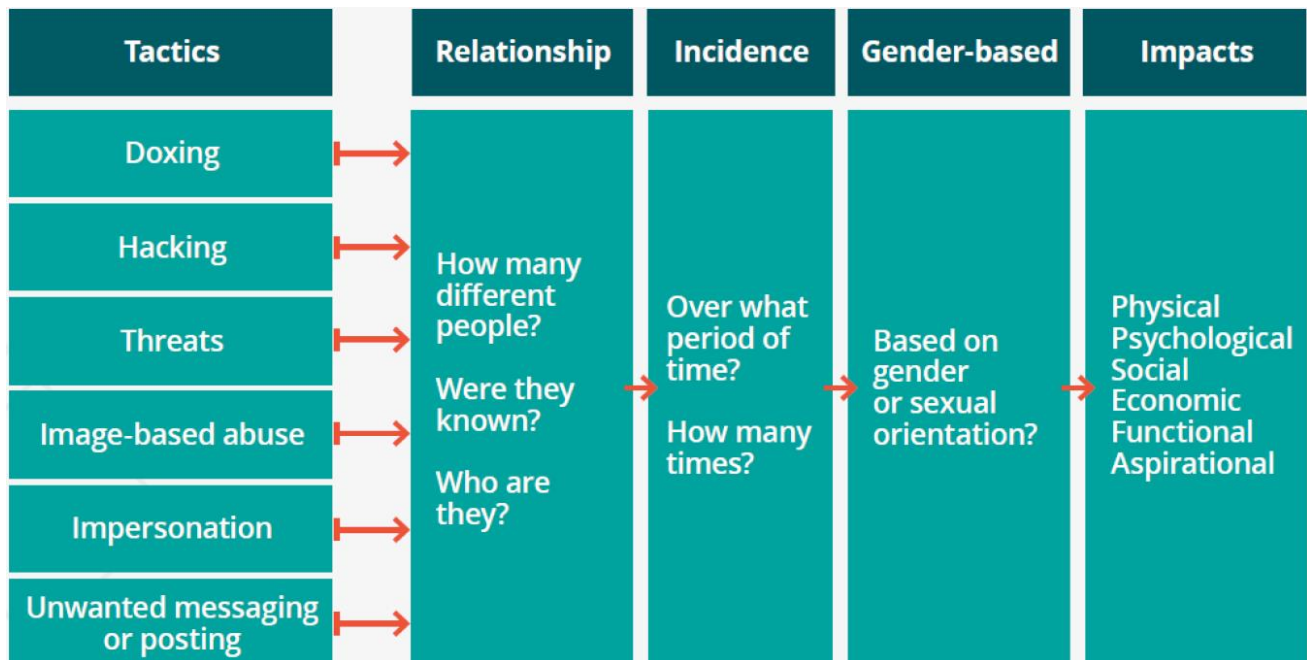
Lilleston, & McCleary-Sills, 2018; Lehhart, Ybarra, Zickuhr, & Price-Feeney, 2016a; Lenhart, Ybarra, & Price-Feeney, 2016b; Thakur, 2018).

# 3. The Conceptual Framework of Measures

The progression of technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) typically initiates within the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim/survivor and concludes with help-seeking behaviors. The intervening stages involve the motivations and intentions of the perpetrator, the frequency and duration of the experience (incidence), the particular technologies employed in the act (modes), the tactics utilized, resulting behaviors, and the subsequent impacts on the victim/survivor (Hinson et al., 2018).

Through our iterative process the main set of questions are given in the pic.1. Six tactics were defined based on drawing insights and from the literature review that form the foundation of nearly all forms of technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (GBV): doxing, image-based abuse, hacking, threatening, impersonation, and unwanted messaging or posting.

**Table 1. Sequence of Quantitative Questions During Interviews**

| Tactics | Relationship | Incidence | Gender-based | Impacts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Doxing | How many different people? Were they known? Who are they? | Over what period of time? How many times? | Based on gender or sexual orientation? | Physical Psychological Social Economic Functional Aspirational |
| Hacking | | | | |
| Threats | | | | |
| Image-based abuse | | | | |
| Impersonation | | | | |
| Unwanted messaging or posting | | | | |

# 4. Quantitative Measures of TFGBV

## 4.1. Determining a case definition for prevalence data

A case of TFGBV when participants encountered at least one tactic and were targeted based on their gender or sexual orientation, or if the incident's content reinforced harmful gender norms. It is considered any experienced tactic as an act of violence, regardless of the frequency, and even if the victim/survivor believed the perpetrator did not intend harm. This approach aligns with the standard practice of defining specific violent behaviors and querying participants about their experiences, a method employed for obtaining comparable prevalence estimates of violence as outlined by Ellsberg & Heise (2005).

Some victims did not interpret their experiences as attacks on their gender or sexual orientation, or were uncertain about it, despite the research team holding a different perspective. The qualitative approach in our work enabled us to gain insights into how gender played a role in these experiences. For instance, women in Uganda encountered violence instigated by their partners' former partners, where the targeting was linked to their relationship rather than their gender. However, the content of the violent actions, such as publicly sharing sexual history and using derogatory language, had gender-based and often sexual characteristics. Relying solely on a single quantitative question to determine if an experience was gender-based may lead to underreporting of such cases.

In connection with this, it is crucial to incorporate some technological aspect into the questions for each tactic. It is very important confirming that technology played a central role in the action when, in the course of during interviews.

## 4.2 Local Context and Standardized Measures

- Acknowledge the universal and context-dependent nature of TFGBV.
- Recognize that cultural norms influence what is considered "sexually explicit" and impact emotional responses.
- Develop standardized measures that capture localized expressions and permutations of TFGBV.
- Ensure prevalence data is cross-culturally comparable, considering both commonalities and distinct manifestations.

### 4.3 Quantitative Survey Tool Design

- Strike a balance between clarity and comprehensiveness in a quantitative survey tool.
- Break down the survey into smaller sections to focus on specific elements of TFGBV.
- Minimize participant burden by identifying the most traumatic experience and focusing on its implications.
- Consider alternatives such as focusing on impacts or help-seeking behaviors without connecting them to each tactic separately.

### 4.4 Technology's Impact on Definitions and Measurement

- Recognize that technology complicates definitions, experiences, and measurement of GBV.
- Address the challenge of defining relationships within technology-facilitated GBV, considering anonymity and institutional relationships.
- Adapt to the evolving nature of technology by focusing on platform categories rather than specific apps or websites.
- Acknowledge the unique obstacles researchers face in measuring perpetration accurately in the digital age.

### 4.5 Next Steps in Researching TFGBV

- Continue testing and validating quantitative measures for TFGBV.
- Develop reliable, valid, and practical quantitative measures with global applicability.
- Conduct research to understand prevalence and experiences globally and take meaningful action locally.
- Advocate for comprehensive, effective, and timely solutions to address TFGBV, involving policymakers, researchers, technology companies, and other stakeholders.

### 5. Continued testing and validation of quantitative measures are imperative

There is a pressing need for robust, reliable, and validated measures that possess global applicability to obtain accurate prevalence data. Armed with comprehensive prevalence data at the city, regional, and national levels, we can effectively advocate for change with governments, policymakers, and program developers. Achieving a holistic and contextualized understanding of technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence (GBV) demands further research that brings to light the diverse definitions held by participants.

## 6. Conduct formative research and continue conceptualization.

This problem is on the rise, and there is much that remains unclear, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It is crucial to continue investigating how this issue manifests locally and its impacts, with a specific focus on conducting in-depth analyses involving both victims/survivors and perpetrators. Furthermore, it is essential to conduct additional research that includes underrepresented groups, such as LGBTI individuals, to ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the issue.

## 7. Develop robust studies to understand nuances and lasting impacts

To understanding prevalence and experiences, It's needed well-designed studies that allow us to understand little-known aspects such as the connection between offline and online violence. Longitudinal studies can shed light on the long- lasting impacts of this issue.

## 8. Integrate technology-facilitated GBV into GBV studies more broadly.

Studies on GBV should consider including at minimum basic questions that capture experiences with technology-related GBV. This is essential for understanding the connections between online and offline violence. Similarly, the increasing interest in 'cyberbullying' among young people must recognize the specific, gendered nature of technology-facilitated GBV as a distinct form of violence.

"Universal measures and prevalence estimates are essential to demonstrating the global nature and scope of this problem. Prevalence, though, is just one tool for understanding and addressing technology-facilitated GBV. The highly context- dependent nature of each domain of technology-facilitated GBV is necessary to design effective responses. Building a consistent and nuanced understanding will consequently inform design, implementation and evaluation of essential interventions. Conducting this research with strong ethical standards, especially for young people, is essential."

"In a connected and anonymous world, researchers face unprecedented new challenges that are forcing us to grapple with how we've always worked. The stakes are high. But together, we can transform new challenges into useful new tools for naming, documenting and – ultimately - preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence."

## 9. GBV vs TFGBV

❑ **It has long been recognized that gender-based violence can incorporate acts of**

▪ Physical

▪ Sexual

▪ psychological

▪ economic abuse.

❑ **Increasingly, there is recognition that these forms of violence may be facilitated by the use of technology and facilitates emerging forms of violence including, but not limited to:**

▪ non-consensual sharing of intimate images

▪ private communications or personal data

▪ image-based sexual abuse

▪ online harassment and abuse

▪ Technology facilitated sexual abuse

▪ use of diverse forms of technology for surveillance and stalking

▪ targeted hacking

## 10. Government Role in Ensuring Safety Online

▪ Governments increasingly acknowledge the importance of ensuring citizen _**safety online.**_

▪ _**Regulatory environments**_ designed to hold business and technology accountable to users.

▪ Emphasis on safety by design in systems.

## 11. International Evidence on TF GBV

▪ Clear international evidence highlights the prevalence and harm of TF GBV.

▪ _Urgent need_ for _national laws and policies_ to enforce regulatory systems.

▪ _Support for prevention_ and response initiatives.

## 12. National law and policy requirements

- Clear international evidence highlights the common and harmful nature of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV).

- National laws and policies are crucial to enforce effective regulatory systems supporting prevention and response initiatives.

- Governments, technology companies, and businesses handling private information urgently need more evidence to understand evolving trends in TFGBV.

- Additional evidence is necessary to assess the effectiveness of existing programming and accountability systems.

- Civil society requires evidence to strengthen advocacy efforts in support of survivors, victims, and targets of TFGBV.

Table1. Prevalence Data

| TYPE OF EVIDENCE | FORMS, ANALYSIS AND PURPOSE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF EVIDENCE |
|---|---|
| Prevalence data | • On the number of people and proportion of a population who have experienced TF GBV<br><br>• On the number of people and proportion of a population who have committed TF GBV<br><br>• Showing statistical associations between different types of violence, including "online" and "offline" violence<br><br>• Showing statistical associations between experiences of TF GBV and different health and social outcomes<br><br>Analysis of these data should consider the number and proportion of that population who have access to technology, devices and digital/online spaces. Note that even in settings where a group or individual does not have access to technology, they can still be subject to TF GBV by others.<br><br>Analysis of these data should also consider demographic characteristics of respondents, to assess who may be more likely to commit or experience TF GBV. This should include information about profession.<br><br>Data about prevalence in the last 12 months may be most helpful, given the speed of change in access to technologies and forms of TF GBV.<br><br>**Evidence about the extent of the problem, and who might be more likely to experience TF GBV (on the basis of personal characteristics or identity, or professional role, for example), could be used to advocate for adequate resourcing of regulation and other responses to TF GBV.** |

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