

RAPID STUDY ON TECHNOLOGY FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS



THE CENTRE | Collaborative Centre for
Gender & Development



INITIATIVES FOR WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN'S
ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (IWWEE)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sexual and Gender Based Violence has taken on new evolving forms under Tech Facilitated GBV posing significant risks to users' safety and well-being both online and offline. Risks are just beginning to be understood as consequences unravel. To better understand Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TF GBV) within tertiary institutions, the Collaborative Center for Gender and Development (CCGD), in partnership with the University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub and with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) conducted a rapid study on TF GBV in Kenya with a focus on tertiary institutions in Nairobi. The study aimed to inform efforts at ending TF GBV.

The overall objective of the study was to contribute to knowledge on the status of TF GBV in Nairobi. Specifically, the study aimed to:

- i. To collect data on TF GBV incidence and prevalence among sampled students at tertiary institutions.
- ii. To understand the ecosystem of TF GBV among tertiary institution students (including who is affected, who is involved, perpetrator and victim/ vulnerability profiles, and the triggers/circumstances).
- iii. To understand how victims deal with TF GBV and what mitigation avenues are available.

The study was conducted in Nairobi with a focus on three tertiary institutions: the University of Nairobi, Zetech University, and Kabete National Polytechnic. The tertiary institutions were selected through purposive sampling to choose one public university, private university, and technical institution with equal sample size distribution within the targeted institutions. The study employed mixed methods research involving a general survey to collect quantitative data and focus group discussions (FGD) and key informant (KII) interviews to collect qualitative data. The target group for the quantitative surveys was the students from the three tertiary institutions. In contrast, qualitative data was collected from lecturers, deans of students, custodians, and guidance and counselling officers within the institutions through key informant interviews.

The students were randomly selected from all the faculties, which were broadly categorized into Sciences (science courses), Health Science (Medicine), Humanities, and Social Sciences (art and Law courses) to harmonize different structures within the targeted institutions, give everyone an equal chance of participation, reduce bias, and ensure equal representation of the population.

Furthermore, qualitative data was collected from various officers within the country's justice system, including the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP), the Directorate of Criminal Investigations (DCI), the Police, and the Judiciary, to understand better how TF GBV is being handled. This information was collected through key informant interviews with the appropriate personnel.

Findings included the following:

- i. The common platforms where TF GBV mainly occurs include Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Telegram.
- ii. Although most respondents were aware of TF GBV, only few- mostly young women had personally experienced it, whereas most had witnessed it.
- iii. Female students were the predominant victims of TF GBV, while male students were the main perpetrators.
- iv. For males, the most experienced forms of TF GBV were online defamation and cyberbullying, while sextortion and doxing were the least experienced forms of TF GBV.
- v. For females, the most experienced forms of TF GBV were online defamation and non-consensual pornography, while sextortion was the least experienced form of TF GBV.
- vi. The common triggers of TF GBV were personal conflicts, revenge, anger, jealousy, sexual desires, and online anonymity.
- vii. In terms of coping mechanisms and response to TF GBV, the majority of TF GBV victims respond by seeking social support services, intervention from digital platforms, and legal support services, while others take no action.
- viii. The different impacts on victims of TF GBV established from the study were psychological, social, economic, and physical impacts.
- ix. Most respondents were aware of the resources, reporting, and support systems available within the institutions to address TF GBV.
- x. Law enforcement and justice institutions are struggling to keep up with the evolving forms of TF GBV with serious resource limitations as the main drawback.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCGD	– The Collaborative Center for Gender and Development
DCI	– Directorate of Criminal Investigation
ICJ	– The International Commission of Jurists
MFWA	– Media Foundation for West Africa
NCA	– The National Crime Agency
NGO	– Non-Governmental Organization
OCS	– Officer Commanding Station
OC Gender	– Officer Commander in Charge of Gender
ODPP	– Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (ODPP)
PTSD	– Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
UNESCO	– United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	– United Nations Population Fund
UON WEE HUB	– The University of Nairobi Women’s Economic Empowerment Hub.
TF GBV	– Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
WEE	– Women’s Economic Empowerment



DEFINITION OF TERMS

Doxing

Posting personal and sensitive information including home and work addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and family names without their permission.

Cyber Stalking

Persistent, unwanted and/ or threatening surveillance, contact and/ or pursuit by technological means. Cyberstalking can turn to offline stalking and vice versa.

Cyber Bullying

A form of online harassment, the constant and intentional infliction of damage through digital technologies to undermine a target's self-esteem.

Online Harassment

Repeated conduct that threatens, posters, scares, or abuses someone by sending degrading, offensive or insulting comments or images. Online sexual harassment mainly affects women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals.

Non-Consensual Pornography/ Revenge Porn

A form of image based; a preferred term is non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery. While commonly used "Revenge porn" is objectionable as it suggests consent from and wrongdoing by the survivor to provoke retribution.

Sextortion

A type of electronic blackmail the demand for money. Sex/sex acts or additional explicit images in exchange for not exposing intimate images or private information.

Online impersonation

Creating a fake profile and assuming someone's identity for nefarious purposes, including destroying someone's reputation or threatening her safety.

Online Defamation

Defamation involves the public release of false information that damages a person's reputation and that has the intention of humiliating, threatening, intimidating, or punishing the survivor. Given the strict gender norms that govern female sexuality, defamatory statements about women's sexuality are particularly harmful to survivors' reputations. In fact, most online defamatory attacks against women and girls often focus on their sexuality.

Online Sexual Exploitation

This term encompasses a number of sexually exploitative and harmful behaviors that occur or are facilitated online and through the use of digital technologies. They include online grooming, live-streaming of sexual abuse, CSAM, online sexual coercion and extortion, online sex trafficking, and image-based sexual abuse.



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Collaborative Center for Gender and Development

The Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD) is a policy education/awareness and advocacy NGO registered in Kenya in 1996 and has over 25 years of conducting research, building gender mainstreaming capacity, gender-responsive institutional development of all sectors in planning, budgeting, programming, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation. CCGD works through multisector partnerships between international, regional, and national government agencies and civil society and private sector interests to promote institutional accountability to gender-responsive governance and equitable development that secures rights and enables the empowerment of, in particular, women and girls.

1.2 The University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Hub

The University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment (UON WEE Hub), domiciled in the African Women's Studies Center, is a multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral research and evidence Hub. The UON WEE Hub is a five-year program established through a partnership between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the University of Nairobi. Its key mandate is to strengthen the generation and use of evidence to advance women's economic empowerment (WEE) and gender equality in Kenya.

1.3 United Nation Population Fund (UNFPA)

UNFPA is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency, whose mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. UNFPA promotes gender equality and empowers women, girls and young people to take control of their bodies and their futures. In Kenya, UNFPA works with partners including government institutions and civil society organizations to provide access to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health services with the goal of ending unmet need for family planning, ending preventable maternal death, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation by 2030.

1.4 Background and Context

The UNFPA defines Technology Facilitated (TF) GBV as "an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person on the basis of their gender."¹ Similarly, The UN Women defines TF GBV as "any act 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."² TF GBV includes unlawful acts such as stalking, online intimidation, non-consensual sharing of graphic content (commonly referred to as "revenge porn"), cyberbullying, and online harassment. Via the anonymity offered by the internet, perpetrators rely on digital forums to threaten, humiliate, and degrade their victims. Previous studies show that women, particularly young women, are disproportionately affected by TF GBV, even though both men and women can become victims of it.³

While the internet and mobile technologies have created new opportunities for people to connect, share resources and experiences, and form communities, these digital spaces have also provided tools and platforms for the replication and continuation of violence, particularly against women and girls. The effects of TF GBV extend beyond the virtual environment and have a negative impact on victims' mental, emotional, and even physical health. Many victims feel ashamed, afraid, and powerless as their personal lives are invaded and abused through online channels. Furthermore, because established methods for reporting and managing gender-based violence may not be appropriate for managing online incidents, the subtle nature of TF GBV can make it challenging to address and counteract.⁴

1. UNFPA, Preventing Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, < https://www.un.org/techenvoy/sites/www.un.org.technvoy/files/GDC-Submission_UNFPA.pdf> accessed 2023.

2. UN Women, FAQs: Trolling, Stalking, Doxing and Other Forms of Violence Against Women in the Digital Age, < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence> > accessed 2023.

3. International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), Defining and Measuring Technology -Facilitated Gender-Based Violence, < https://anrows.intersearch.com.au/anrowsjspui/bitstream/1/20482/1/ICRW_TFGBVMarketing_Brief_v4_WebReady_%281%29.pdf > accessed 2023. .

4. UNFPA, Measuring Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: A Discussion Paper (2023), < https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Measuring%20TF%20GBV_%20A%20Discussion%20Paper_FINAL.pdf > accessed 2023.

Part of the reason that TF GBV is on the rise in Kenya is the lack of a specific legal framework governing TF GBV cases. Perpetrators essentially go unpunished, making it difficult for victims to seek justice. Nonetheless, Kenya has enacted several pieces of legislation that address and criminalize aspects of TF GBV, providing victims with legal recourse. The Constitution of Kenya stipulates that every citizen has a right to privacy of their personal information and private affairs. Several legislations were enacted as a result of this provision to realize and protect this constitutional right.

Additionally, various other legislations make provisions that criminalize TF GBV. The Computer Misuse and Cyber Crimes Act 2018 criminalizes cyberbullying, cyber harassment, and wrongful distribution of obscene or intimate images, among other cybercrimes. The Data Protection Act 2019 also provides for offences against persons disclosing or obtaining another person's data without their consent. This provision shields victims from perpetrators who extract and use their personal data/information to extort them, failing which the acquired information is released to the public.

Despite the aforementioned laws, limited data on reported cases influences prosecution and conviction rates. This is primarily because people are unaware of the laws protecting them from TF GBV. Additionally, law enforcement departments lack the knowledge and skills to identify a TF GBV case or conduct investigations that can lead to the perpetrators' conviction. As a result, there is a need to raise awareness, particularly on the criminal aspect and the legal options available to survivors.

Like in other countries, combating TF GBV in Kenya requires a multifaceted strategy. This entails creating awareness about digital safety and consent, drawing attention to the existence and effects of TF GBV, creating safe spaces for victims to report incidents, and training duty bearers in the referral pathway, particularly law enforcement, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) and the Judiciary, on how to successfully handle, investigate, and prosecute TF GBV cases. Cooperation between governmental organizations, non-profits, IT firms, academic institutions, and the general public is also critical to making the internet safer.⁵

To better understand the aspect of TF GBV, the CCGD, in partnership with the UON WEE Hub and with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), conducted a rapid study on TF GBV in Kenya, with a focus on tertiary institutions within Nairobi to inform efforts at ending TF GBV in Kenya. Through this project, CCGD aims to create a strong foundation for advocacy and action against Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Kenya.

1.5 Project Goal

To contribute to efforts at ending Technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence.

1.6 General Objective

To contribute to knowledge on the status of Technology-facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Nairobi, Kenya.

1.7 Specific Objectives:

- i. To collect TF GBV data on incidence forms and prevalence among sampled students at tertiary institutions.
- ii. To understand the ecosystem of TF GBV among tertiary institution students (including who is affected, who is involved, perpetrator and victim/vulnerability profiles, and what the triggers/circumstances are).
- iii. To understand how victims deal with TF GBV and what mitigation avenues are available.

1.8 The Structure of the Report

This report comprises five chapters, with chapter one being the introduction already discussed. What follows is chapter two on the literature review, chapter three addresses the methodology of the study, chapter four focuses on the study findings, and chapter five closes off with a conclusion and recommendations.

⁵. Ibid 3.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The internet and mobile technologies have opened new avenues for people to interact, exchange resources and experiences, and shape communities. Nevertheless, these spaces have also provided instruments and ecosystems for the replication and amplification of the perpetration of violence against women online, referred to as TF GBV.⁶ This presents a double-edged sword for women. On the one hand, it provides vital spaces for women seeking expression and opportunity as it also increases the vector for abusers targeting women. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened this situation as women spend more time online, increasing their exposure to threats. With the growing prevalence of digital media in people's lives, gender-based violence has also moved online.⁷ Perpetrators of TF GBV have adopted the tools of technology to broaden the scope of violence they enact against their victims.

With the evolution of technology, abusers are now using technology to spread misinformation, hate campaigns, harassment based on gender, and intimate partner violence, among other harms. This form of GBV is carried out using the internet and modern technology. It includes stalking, bullying, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech, and exploitation and is mainly triggered by revenge, jealousy, political agenda, anger, sexual desire, monetary needs/desire, and ideological agenda. Additionally, TF GBV can be a manifestation of power dynamics, such as sexism, misogyny, or other forms of discrimination. These power imbalances left unaddressed spill over into physical spaces, reinforcing existing inequalities and contributing to offline violence. Like other forms of gender-based violence, TF GBV is rooted in discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and institutions that promote sexist gender norms. In many of its expressions, it overlaps with racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other discriminatory systems. The forms of TF GBV are wide and varied, and, like other forms of GBV, can be sexual, emotional, psychological, and economical and can result in physical harm⁸.

While TF GBV has an extensive reach, women and girls are disproportionately impacted.⁹ According to the UN Women, one in three women is likely to encounter physical and sexual violence at some point in her lifetime, and 35% of women globally have faced either physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Additionally, Hicks, in his study, establishes that between 16-58% of women have been victims of TF GBV.¹⁰ Furthermore, according to data from the Economist Intelligence Unit, 85% of women who spend time online have observed instances of TF GBV against other women, and 38% of women have personally experienced it. Other studies have assessed the prevalence of online harassment and abuse, which ranges from around 33% of respondents in studies from Kenya and South Africa¹¹ to 40% of adults in the United States¹². This online harassment/abuse and threats exacerbate, trigger, and drive offline physical and sexual aggregations.

Persistent exposure to violent and abusive language, threats, or vicious content online can contribute to the normalization of such behaviors and potentially desensitize individuals, making them more likely to engage in or tolerate violence offline. Research by Malanga showed that 53.7% of women experienced physical abuse exacerbated by online violence and that 34.3% were physically harmed or injured as a consequence of it.¹³ The line between online and offline life is becoming increasingly blurred as online interactions can bring real-world consequences, and individuals may carry the emotional burden of online harassment into their offline lives, potentially influencing their reactions and behaviors. Notably, these sustained online harassments have severe effects on the mental health of individuals, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The compromised mental well-being of the victim may make them more vulnerable to physical or sexual aggression offline.

6. ICJ Kenya (2016), Human Rights Report 2016.

7. UN Women, < <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/faqs/tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence> > 2020.

8. UN Human Rights Council (2018a)

9. De Araújo, A. V. M., Bonfim, C. V. D., Bushatsky, M., & Furtado, B. M. a. S. M. (2022). Technology-facilitated sexual violence: a review of virtual violence against women. *Research, Society and Development*, 11(2), < <https://doi.org/10.33448/rsd-v11i2.25757> >

10. Hicks, J. (2021). Global Evidence on the Prevalence and Impact of Online Gender-based Violence (OGBV), < <https://doi.org/10.19088/k4d.2021.140> >

11. African Development Bank (2016)

12. Duggan (2014)

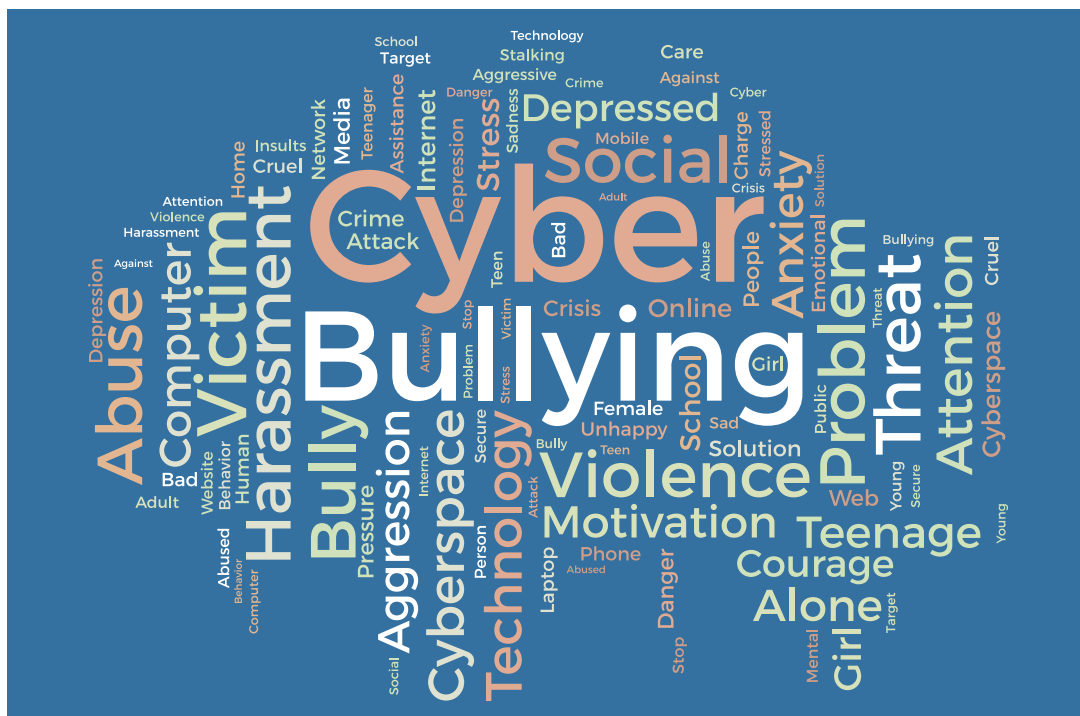
13. Donald Malanga, Tackling Gender-Based Cyber Violence Against Women and Girls in Malawi Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic, 2020.

A baseline study conducted by the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in 2017 showed that online harassment is one of the major challenges facing women in the Ghanaian online space.¹⁴ The study also highlighted that online harassment usually manifests in the forms of non-consensual distribution of photos and videos, sexual harassment, cyberstalking, and sharing of offensive comments. Between 2015 and 2016, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) conducted a survey to gauge the extent and manifestations of technology-assisted violence against women in Kenya. The study identified the prevalent forms of TF GBV as cyber-stalking, online harassment, trolling, hacking, surveillance, impersonation, denigration, malicious distribution, and, in the case of children, grooming.

A video of several men sexually abusing a woman went viral in 2020, sparking nationwide demonstrations in Bangladesh. This, in turn, resulted in more cyberbullying of female protestors and elevated the topic of GBV, especially TF GBV, to the top of the national conversation¹⁵. This demonstrates how social media and technology foster an atmosphere where offenders feel at ease and can readily share such heinous acts with a broad audience. Not only does the non-consensual sharing of the assault re-victimize survivors and their families, but in the absence of well-defined and well-enforced legal actions, these platforms facilitate the perpetuation of TF GBV and the silencing of survivor voices.

Recent measures taken by governments, NGOs, development partners, and researchers indicate that GBV is gaining recognition and is seen as an issue that warrants policy and programmatic action. For instance, a study on sexual and reproductive health by BRAC University is creating videos focused on raising community awareness about cyber harassment in Bangladesh.

It is worth noting that the 2022–2025 UNFPA Strategic Plan acknowledges the impact of digitalization on societies globally, defining it as a global megatrend that cannot be ignored. It further recognizes the benefits of using technology to accelerate progress toward ensuring that technology and digital spaces are safe and equitable to all.¹⁶ To affirm this, the UNFPA organized a global symposium on TF GBV held during 16 days of activism in 2022. This forum brought together different actors - academia, cybersecurity, data scientists, activists, civil society, government and non-government partners, United Nations agencies, business, and technology, as well as gender and GBV specialists to engage in coming up with effective measures to address TF GBV.



14. The Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), Baseline Study: Women's Right Online Issues in Ghana, (2018), < <https://www.mfwa.org/publication/baseline-study-womens-right-online-issues-in-ghana/> > accessed 2023.

15. Human Rights Watch, Bangladesh: Protests Erupt Over Rape Case, (2020), < <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/10/09/bangladesh-protests-erupt-over-rape-case> > accessed 2023.

16. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_Measuring%20TF%20GBV_%20A%20Discussion%20Paper_FINAL.pdf

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design applied a mixed methods approach, which combines quantitative data collection and analysis with qualitative techniques to uncover deeper insights and comprehensively understand the research problem. This approach ensures a thorough exploration of the research problem.

In the general survey, a structured questionnaire was developed to gather quantitative data from a representative sample of students. Random sampling methods were employed to ensure a balanced representation across academic disciplines, years of study, and demographic characteristics. The survey included closed-ended questions to collect demographic information on the incidence, forms, and prevalence of TF GBV, the ecosystem of TF GBV, coping mechanisms, and mitigation of TF GBV. The study targeted a sample size of 600 respondents for the general survey, 16 key informant interviews (KII), and six focus group discussions (FGD).

3.2 Study Site

This study was conducted within Nairobi County with a focus on three tertiary institutions: the University of Nairobi, Zetech University, and Kabete National Polytechnic. The tertiary institutions were selected through purposive sampling to choose one public university, private university, and technical institution with equal sample size distribution within the targeted institutions. The three tertiary institutions offered impressive study locations with sizable student populations. The institutions' diverse student and faculty population contributes to moderate urban biodiversity, resulting in an academic environment characterized by a blend of technological advancements, cultures, settlement patterns, social standing, and interactions.

The three tertiary institutions were also selected for various reasons. The University of Nairobi, a well-established institution, offers insights into diverse academic disciplines, research facilities, and a large student population. Kabete National Polytechnic's emphasis on technical and vocational training adds a unique dimension to applied education, while Zetech University, as a private institution, contributes to the diversity of Nairobi's educational ecosystem. This collective focus enables researchers to explore various facets of higher education, including academic specialties, vocational training, and the role of private institutions, providing a holistic understanding of these institutions' impact on Nairobi's socio-economic fabric.

3.3 Study Population

The study population comprised undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in diverse academic programs at the University of Nairobi, Kabete National Polytechnic, and Zetech University in Nairobi, Kenya. The unit of analysis was individual students, encompassing a broad cross-section of disciplines, including arts, sciences, engineering, business, and vocational training.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Quantitative Survey

The study conducted a quantitative survey among a sample of students from tertiary institutions who were randomly selected from all the faculties that were broadly categorized into Sciences (all science courses), Health Science (Medicine), Humanities, and Social Sciences (all art courses & LLB) to harmonize different structures within the targeted institutions, to give everyone an equal chance of participation, reduce bias, and equal representation of the population. However, to address the well-documented and ongoing gender differences in experiences of violence, females were the primary focus of the study.

Research repeatedly demonstrates that harassment and other forms of TF GBV, such as cyberbullying, have a disproportionately negative impact on girls and women. Therefore, the general survey study targeted more females than males in the ratio of 3:2, or 120:80 per institution, to amplify their voices, highlight their unique challenges, and provide critical information for gender-sensitive policies and initiatives to help create a safer and more equitable environment for all.

3.4.2 Qualitative Interviews

3.4.2.1 Key Informant Interview

Key informants were selected through purposive sampling. The approach included conducting qualitative interviews to gain in-depth insights into the ecosystem of TF GBV, victim coping mechanisms, and available mitigation avenues. The study targeted the dean of students, lecturers, counsellors, and custodians within the tertiary institutions due to their extensive knowledge and awareness of student incidents. This is because they interact with students in various capacities and were deemed to have access to crucial data for the study.

Additionally, this target group contributes to prevention and intervention through awareness creation and can help develop and implement policies and contribute to changes that make the institution's environment safer. Key informant interviews were also conducted with the Police Department, specifically the Officer Commanding Station (OCS) or the Officer Commander in charge of Gender (OC Gender), the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution (ODPP) prosecutors, and the Directorate of Criminal Investigation officers and judicial officers within the Judiciary as they are the legal and law enforcement bodies and institutions tasked with investigating and prosecuting criminal incidents/cases involving gender-based violence, particularly those that utilize technology. Therefore, their firsthand knowledge of the nature of these occurrences and their assessment of the challenges involved in handling the cases were considered essential for the study.

By targeting these groups as key informants, the study aimed to acquire various information about the legal issues, processes, and challenges surrounding incidents of TF GBV and the ecosystem, providing crucial context for the study. The study aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the opportunities and challenges in tackling TF GBV, which will ultimately help inform and contribute to efforts to end it.

3.4.2.2 Focus Group Discussion

A total of six FGDs were conducted among the students at the selected institutions. The study conducted two FGDs (8-12 participants) per institution, one male and one female. This enabled the diversity of perspective, comparative analysis, triangulation, and in-depth exploration.

3.5 Mobilization of Participants

The participants were mobilized by visiting the participating institutions and institutions and through the UON WEE Hub, which played a critical role in mobilizing the participants from the University of Nairobi.

3.6 Development of Data Collection Tools

The CCGD and the UON WEE Hub developed and reviewed the detailed data collection tools to collect quantitative and qualitative information from respondents. The tools were categorized into two KII questionnaires, an FGD questionnaire, and a General Survey tool. The tools included both closed and open-ended questions. The administration of the tools opted for face-to-face interviews in most cases and phone interviews in a few instances due to the busy schedules of some of the key informants.

3.7 Selection and Training of Research Assistants

Qualified research assistants were selected from CCGD and contracted. The research assistants were then trained on different aspects of qualitative and quantitative research methods and conducting interviews. Subsequently, the research assistants were assigned specific numbers of respondents to interview.

3.8 Data Management

3.8.1 Data Analysis

Power BI software was used to analyze the quantitative data. Descriptives were generated from the cleaned data in the form of tables, graphs, and pie charts. On the other hand, NVivo 12 Pro software was used to analyze the qualitative data. A framework for analysis was developed from the interview guides. The team read and re-read the transcripts to familiarize themselves with the content, which led to more themes. Using the developed framework, they then coded the responses. Each theme and sub-theme were numbered serially to reflect the analysis hierarchy.

3.9 Ethical Consideration: Informed Consent

The purpose of the study, as well as the methods for seeking and obtaining consent from participants, were clearly explained to the enumerators during training. Participants in the study were not only informed that the information they provided would be kept private but were also informed of their right to refuse to participate in the study, to refuse to answer any specific survey question(s), or to withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process.

3.10 Fieldwork Schedule

This rapid study was conducted over a nine-day period between 29th September and 12th October 2023 and included 723 respondents from general survey, 6 focus group discussions and 24 key informant interviews. The quantitative survey targeted 600 respondents, which was exceeded to 723 respondents. The additional 123 respondents were intended to address the skewed year of study sample distribution that was as a result of interviewing more 1st and 2nd year students. Therefore, to mitigate the bias in sample distribution more respondents from 3rd and 4th year students were interviewed. The oversampling did not affect the statistical validity of the results.



4.0 FINDINGS

This section presents the key findings of the fieldwork study conducted.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 1: Demographic characteristics

Category	Sub-Category	Frequency	Percent
Institutions	University of Nairobi	241	33.3
	Zetech University	241	33.3
	Kabete National Polytechnic	241	33.3
Sex	Female	424	58.4
	Male	299	41.2
Age	<20	135	18.6
	20≤24>	550	75.8
	25≤	38	5.2
Degree Programme	Humanities and	271	37.3
	Medical	102	14.0
	Sciences	351	48.3
Year of Study	1 & 2	395	54.4
	3 & 4	289	39.8
	5 & 6	38	5.2
Marital Status	Married	5	7
	Single	717	98.8

The total number of respondents that took part in this survey was 723. The respondents were equally distributed within the institutions of study, with each institution accounting to 33.3% of the total sample. The majority of the respondents, 98.8%, were single. 58.4% of the respondents were female while 41.2% were male. Although the respondents' ages ranged from 18 to 28, the majority, 75.8%, were in the 20–24 age bracket. Additionally, the majority of the respondents, 54.4%, were in their first or second year of study, with the year of study ranging from the first to the sixth, as seen in the table above.

4.2 Awareness of TF GBV and prevalence among sampled students at tertiary institutions

This study aimed to ascertain the respondents' knowledge of TF GBV and the prevalence of TF GBV among them, either through personal experience or witnessing.

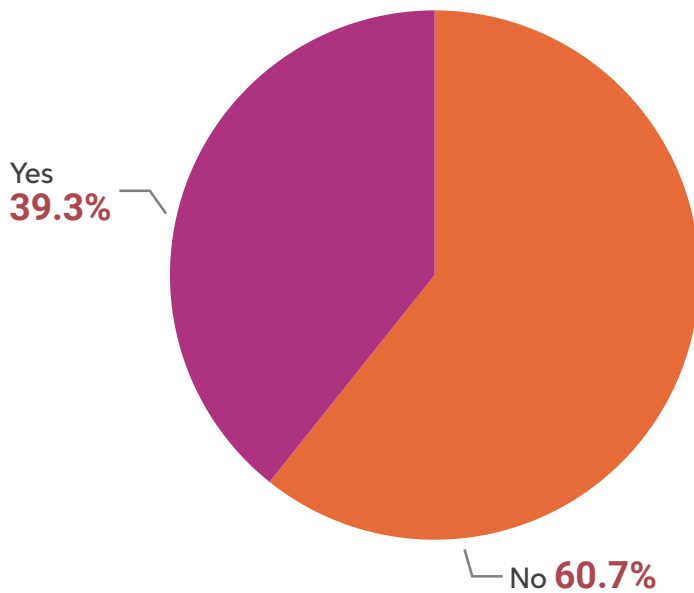
4.2.1 Awareness of TF GBV

Of the respondents surveyed, the majority cited awareness of TF GBV. Some of the respondents stated:

"Yes, they are aware. We have had sensitization sessions on the same issue on cases of TF GBV, and it is something we have been talking about in our forums, so the department trains the students to be aware of the same." KII Lecturer

"We are aware of TF GBV, and we engage various stakeholders and committees. We also participate in sensitization forums, talk shows, and judiciary open days to enlighten the community. We also engage with other civil societies such as County Peace Actors Forum (CPAF) and other accelerated programs that facilitate community-based programs where we discuss issues of GBV and related offenses." KII ODPP

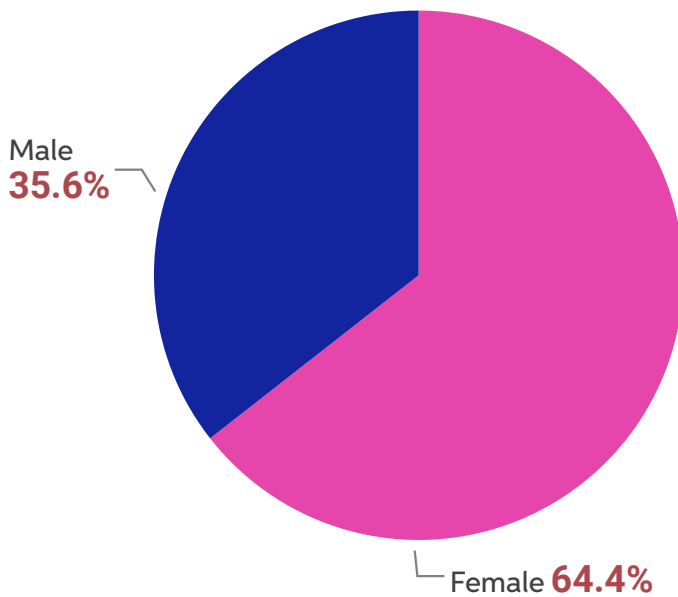
Figure 1: Experience of TF GBV



As illustrated in figure 1 left, only 39.3% of the respondents reported having experienced TF GBV.

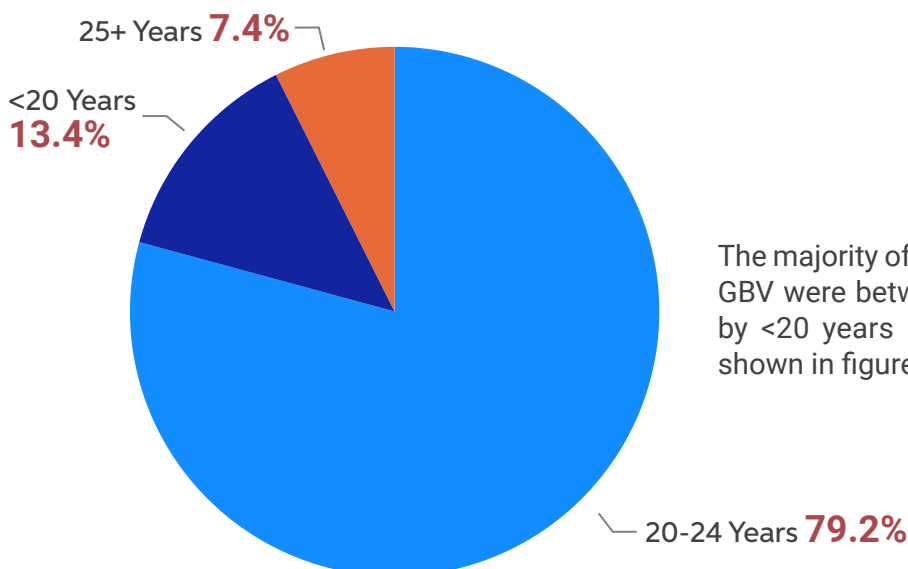
"As I had said, I have experienced cyberbullying. I create content on social media, and people comment negatively sometimes." Boys FGD

Figure 2: Experience by gender



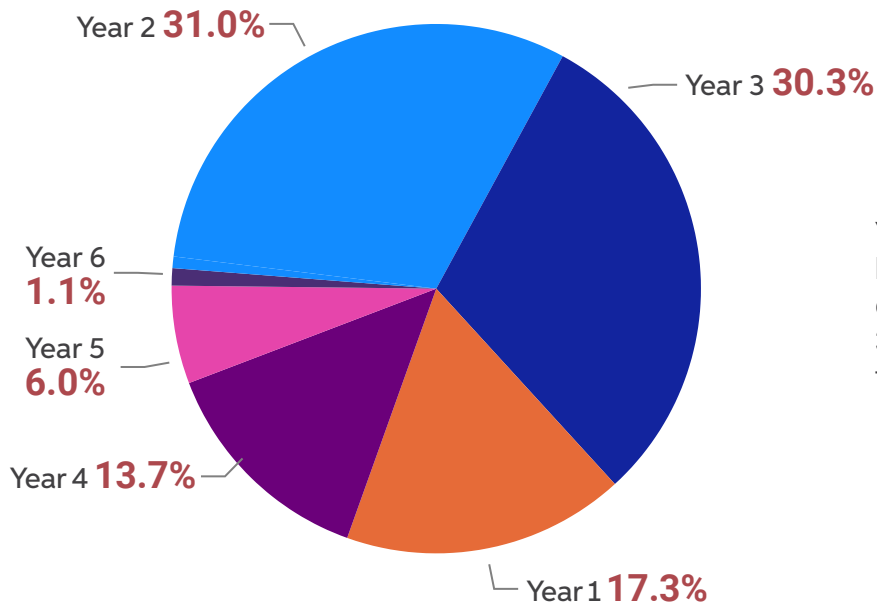
Out of the 39.3% of the respondents who experienced TF GBV, 64.4% were female whereas 35.5% were male as illustrated in figure 2 left.

Figure 3: Experience by Age



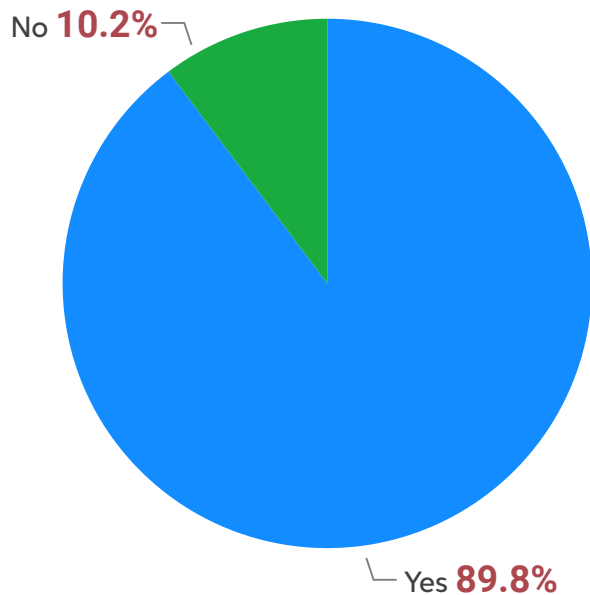
The majority of age group who had experienced TF GBV were between 20-24 years (79.2%), followed by <20 years (13.4%), and 25+ years (7.4%) as shown in figure 3 left.

Figure 4: Experience by year of study



Year 2 (31.0%) students were the highest year of study who had experienced TF GBV, followed by Year 3 (30.3%), and Year 4 (13.7%) at figure 4 left.

Figure 5: Witness of TF GBV



89.8% of the respondents reported having only witnessed TF GBV, as illustrated in figure 5 left.

"I know of stalking and trolling of girls. You find men engage in these activities of discussing girls' physiques and later using the information to insult her." Boys FGD

"They happen mostly towards females. You find the males threatening a girl mostly if they are fighting over her with a group of other males." Boys FGD

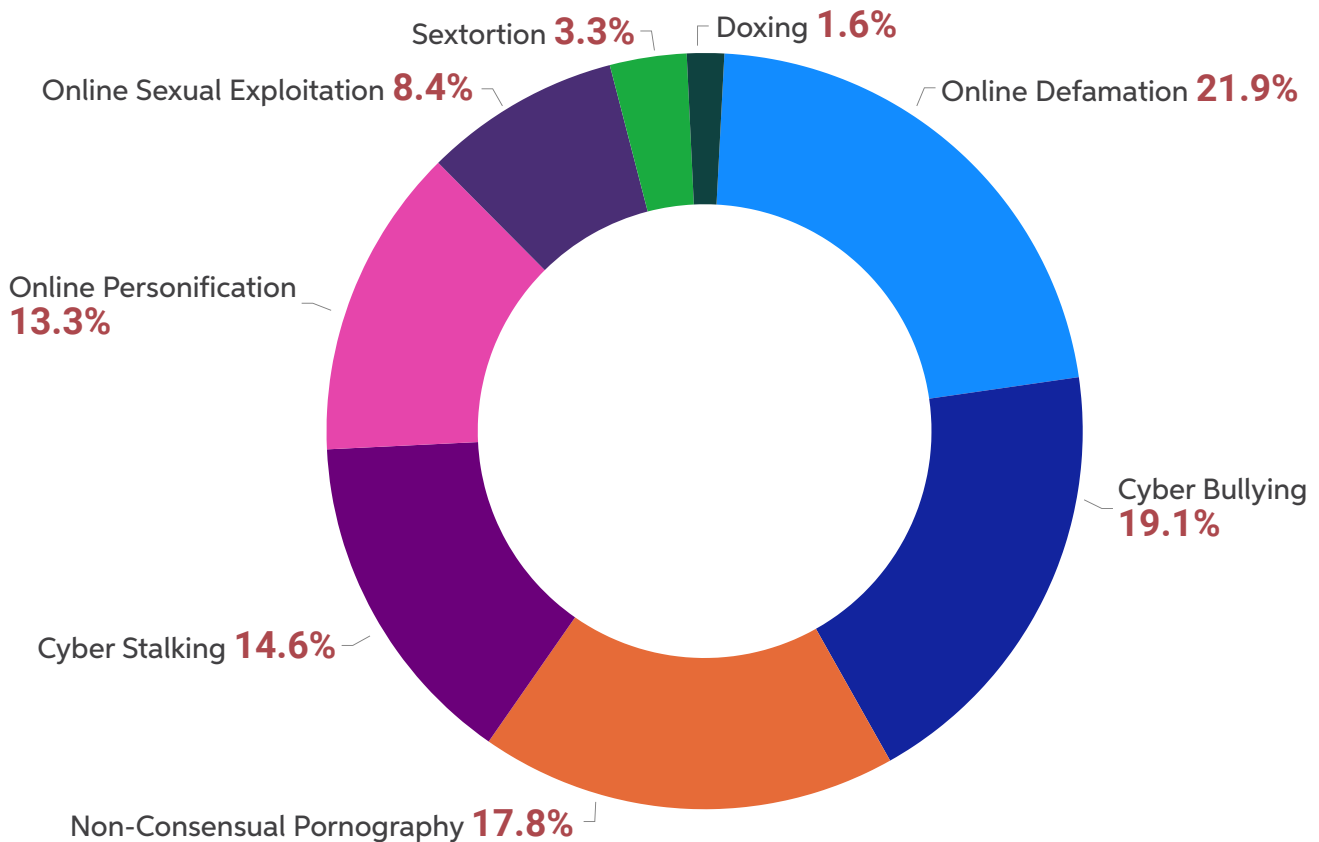
"I have heard here in school even the teachers asking for sexual favors." Girls FGD



4.2.2 Forms of TF GBV

The study sought to determine the most common forms of TF GBV experienced and witnessed by the respondents.

Figure 6: Common TF GBV forms experienced and witnessed



According to the findings, the most common forms of TF GBV witnessed and experienced were online defamation (21.9%), cyber bullying (19.1%), non-consensual pornography (17.8%) while sextortion and doxing were reported as the least experienced form of TF GBV at (3.3%) and (1.6%) respectively, as illustrated in figure 6 above.

Some of the respondents stated:

"Yes, people are bullied online, called names even. And nowadays, people are called names such as 'kienyeji' based on how they dress and talk. There are clubs online that post people and what they do. We even have a (Name of institution mentioned) gossip club. In fact, last year, there was a controversial case of a male and female student." Boys FGD

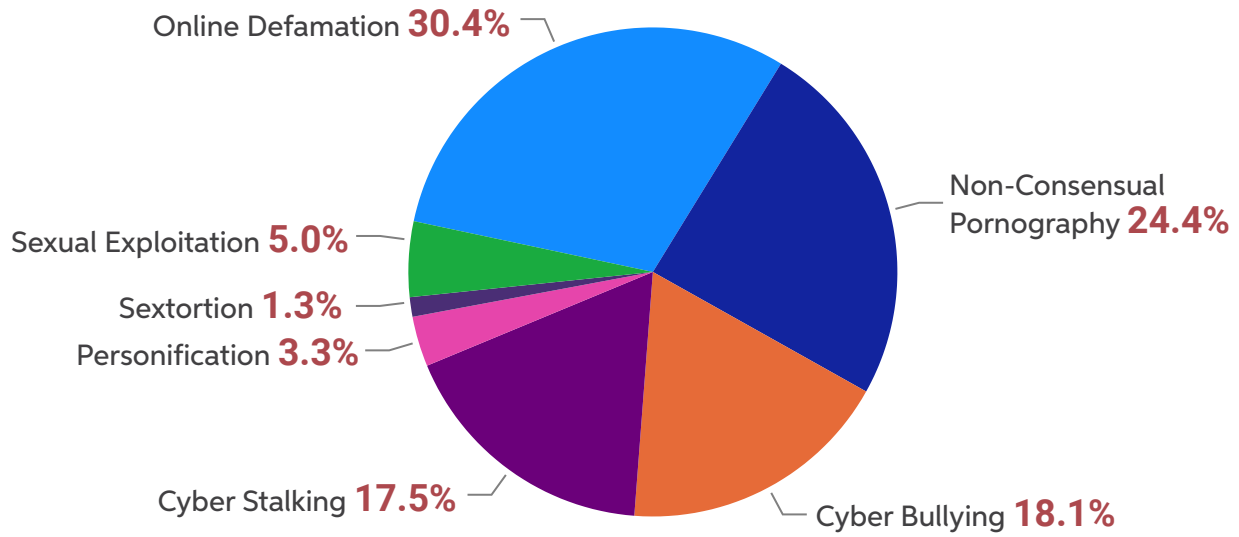
"Yes, my office is quite aware, and we have had various discussions with various stakeholders on how social media is contributing to cyber harassment and cyberbullying..." Dean of Students

"So far, it would be posting of explicit images and video, online text harassment where someone insults you on text messages, Sexual exploitation from people in authority where the bosses ask for sexual favours if you want a promotion or want employment." OC GENDER

4.2.3 Female Experience

Of the forms of TF GBV experienced by the respondents, the study sought to determine those commonly experienced by females.

Figure 7: Forms experienced by females



The forms of TF GBV reported to be mostly experienced by women were online defamation and non-consensual pornography at 30.4% and 24.4%, respectively. In contrast, sextortion (1.3%) was reported as the least experienced form of TF GBV. Other forms included: body shaming, cyberstalking, online personification, sexual exploitation, and trolling.

According to the findings, in some of these situations, the victims were harassed after their personal information was collected through lawful transactions:

"After you pay for goods using your Mpesa, some men will use that number to text you later, which makes you uncomfortable." Girls FGD

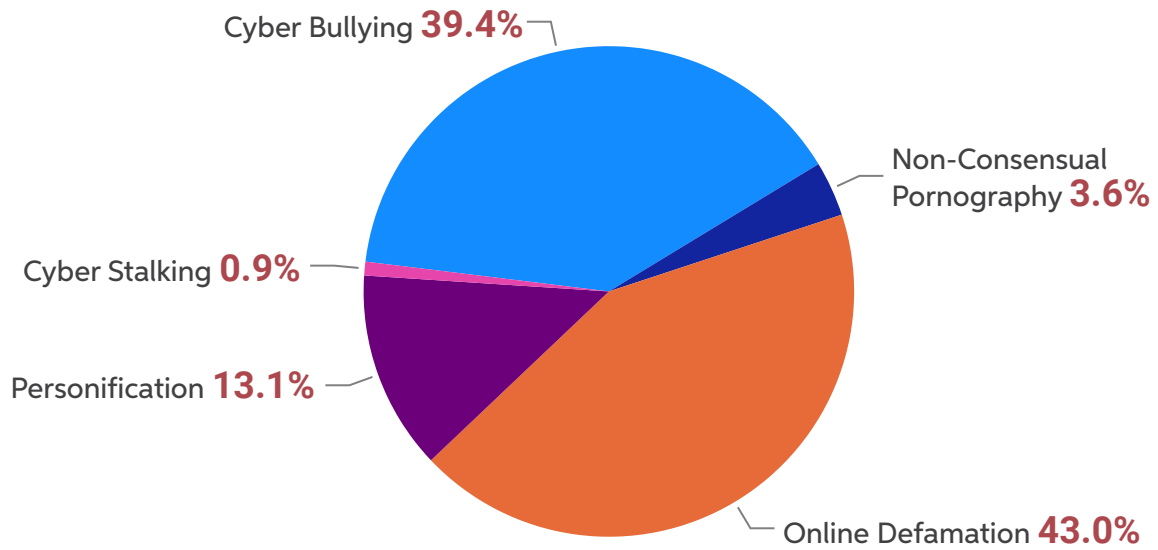
"I heard from my friend that she used to take videos with her boyfriend when having sex, and when they broke up, he shared these videos with his friends." Girls FGD



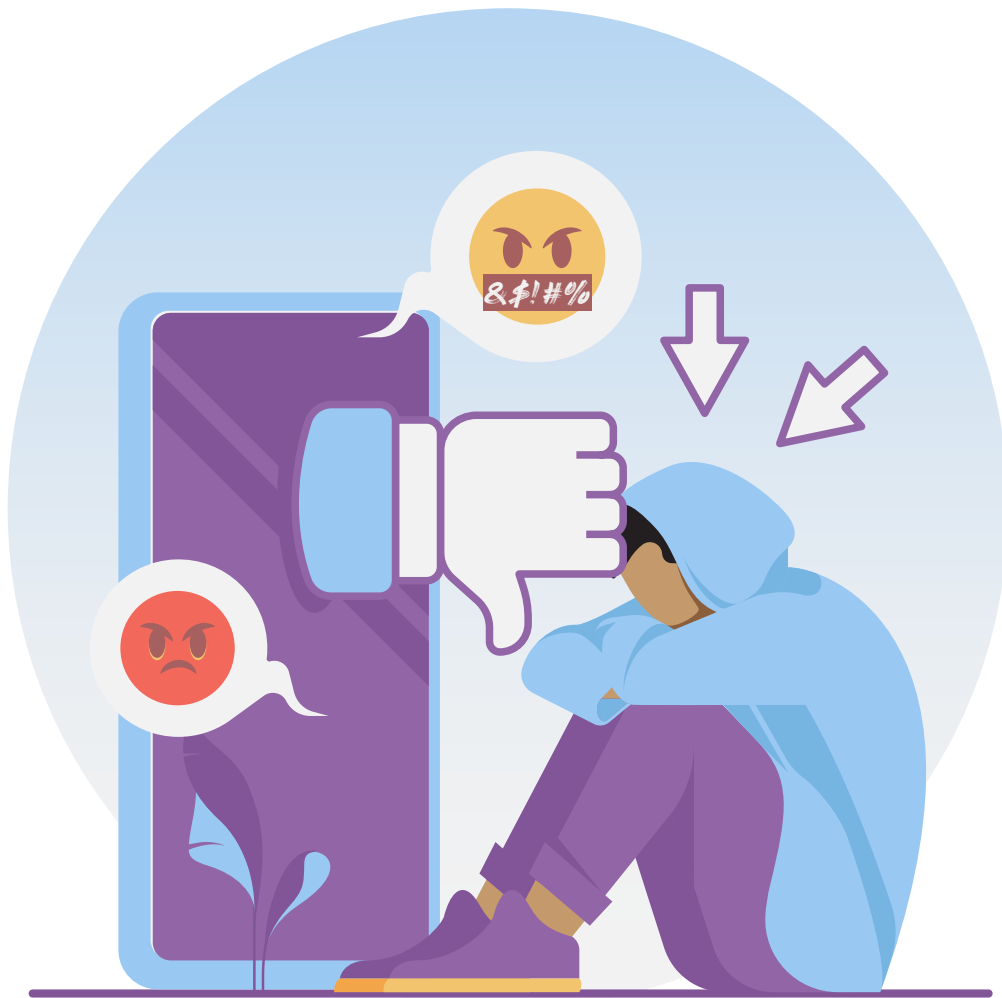
4.2.4 Male Experience

Of the forms of TF GBV experienced by the respondents, the study sought to determine those commonly experienced by males.

Figure 8: Forms experienced by males



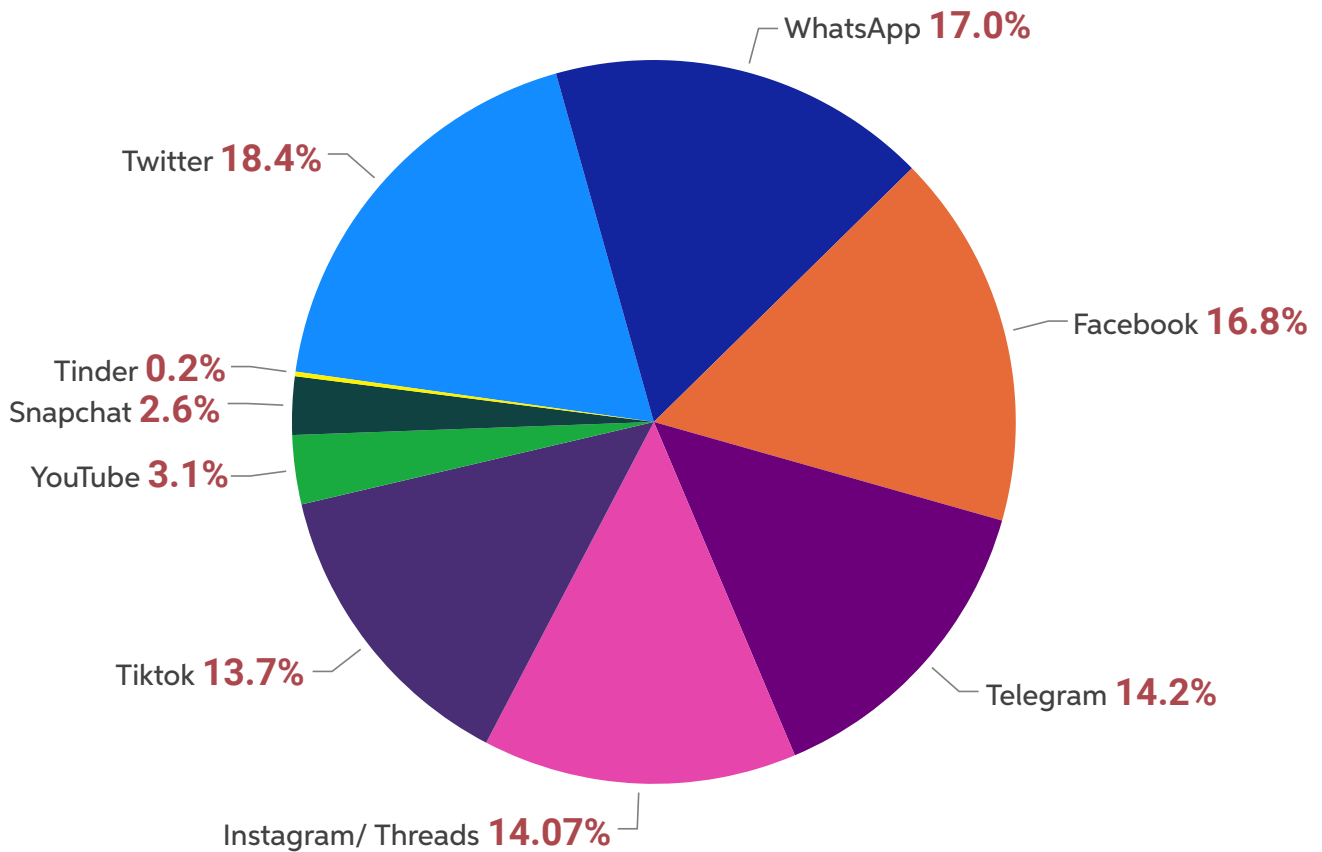
The most common forms of TF GBV reported to be experienced by males were defamation and cyberbullying at 43.0% and 39.4%, respectively, while stalking was reported as the least experienced form of TF GBV at 0.9%. Additionally, male respondents admitted to participating in or witnessing the creation of memes, defamation through political activities, and the use of personal information to harass their peers.



4.2.5 Common Platforms

The study sought to determine the social media platforms where TF GBV was prevalent, with a particular focus on male and female respondents' perspectives.

Figure 9: Common platforms of TF GBV occurrence



According to the findings, TF GBV was prevalent on social media platforms such as Twitter formerly X(18.4%), WhatsApp (17.0%), Facebook (16.8%), Telegram (14.2%), Instagram/threads (14.2%) and TikTok (13.7%). For the Male FGD, Twitter and Telegram stood out, while Twitter and WhatsApp stood out for the Female FGD. Twitter was noted for its susceptibility to creating false accounts, allowing for anonymous commenting.

Some of the respondents stated:

"Twitter. It is because you can create a false account and comment on anything." Boys FGD

"Telegram. It is because the platform is uncontrolled. People can post anything, and once you post, it can't get deleted unless the owner deletes it." Boys FGD

"For this information to get on Twitter or Telegram, sometimes it originates from WhatsApp groups." Girls FGD

"Twitter; Defamation and trolling." Girls FGD

"Telegram. It is easy to post nudes and other material on telegram." Girls FGD

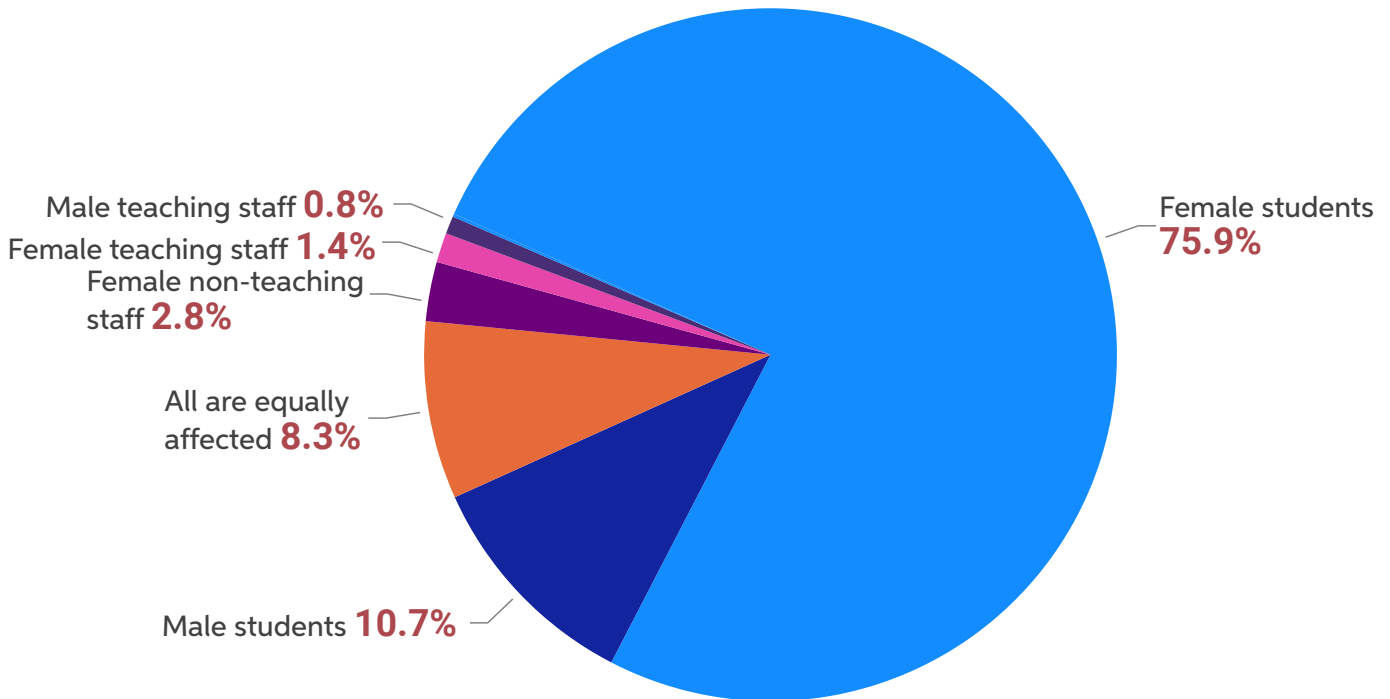
"I think it's Twitter because everything starts with Twitter before going viral anywhere." Girls FGD

4.3 The Ecosystem of Technology Facilitated (TF) GBV

The study sought to determine who is most affected by TF GBV within tertiary institutions, what makes people vulnerable to TF GBV, who are the perpetrators, what are the triggers of TF GBV, what is the impact of TF GBV on victims, what coping mechanisms are available within and outside of tertiary institutions, and what support and reporting mechanisms are available for TF GBV victims.

4.3.1 Victims of TF GBV

Figure 10: Most affected groups



According to the findings, female students (75.9%) were notable survivors of TF GBV, followed by male students (10.7%). Male teaching (0.8%) and non-teaching staff (0.1%) were reported to be the least victims of TF GBV, as shown in Figure 10 above

The reasons attributed to female students being the primary victims of TF GBV included the exploitation of women’s perceived weaknesses, societal expectations, and the backlash they may face if they speak out.



4.3.2 Vulnerability

The study sought to establish factors that make people vulnerable to TF GBV. Throughout the various discussions, students consistently emphasized female vulnerability, particularly in the context of relationships and societal stereotypes. Economic vulnerabilities and naivety were identified as the profiles that make victims vulnerable, particularly among young students. Additionally, individuals were targeted because of their physical appearance, sharing of personal information, behaviour, desire for fame, peer pressure, social adaptability, and personality differences.

Study findings also revealed that students in their early university years, such as first years, who lacked adaptation and digital literacy, frequently became victims, with some engaging in online activities for monetary gain. Poverty, lack of role models, unconventional thinking, lack of exposure to digital safety, and a trusting personality were all attributed to contributing to victimization. Orphans and those from dysfunctional families looking for paternal affection were also identified as vulnerable.

Some of the responses were:

“Mostly ladies. Most ladies will post controversial things online to trend and be celebrities. This makes them a target. There was a case of a girl who posted something online, and people bullied her because of what she was doing.” Boys FGD

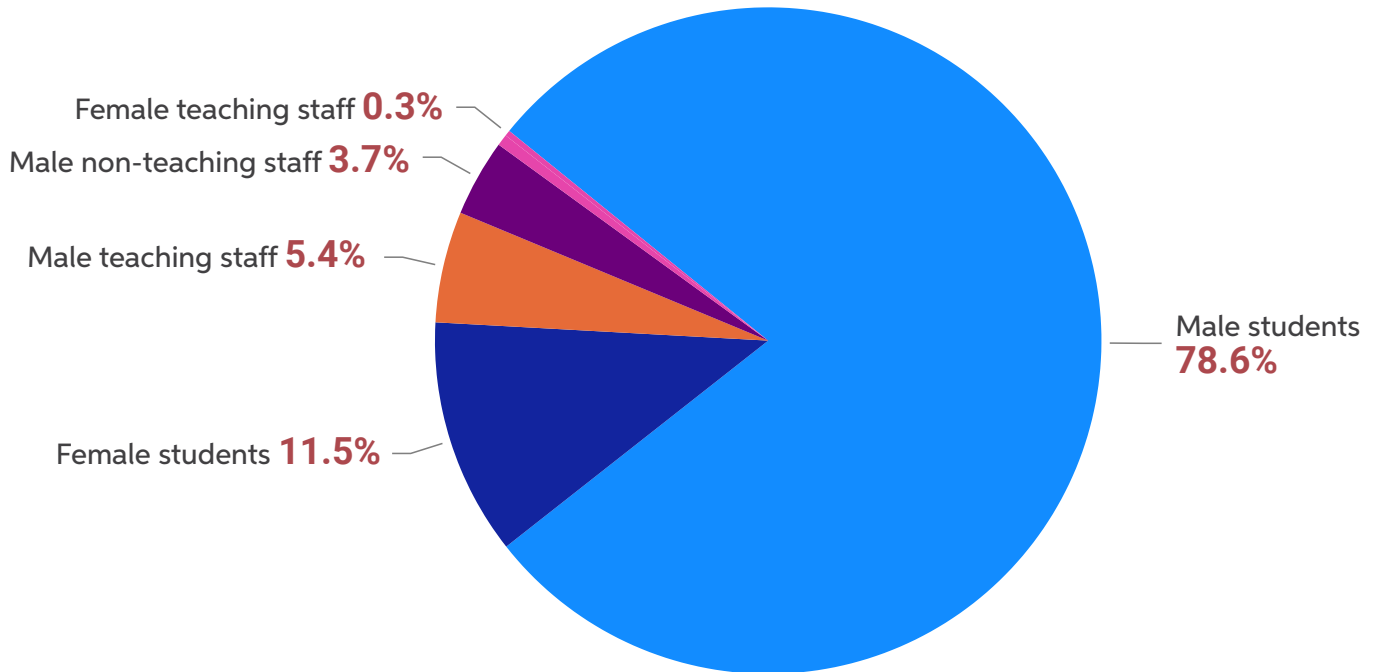
“Mostly, the affected are students and specifically ladies. Because they are seen as vulnerable, and most of them are inferior, especially those from rural areas, and it’s their first time to experience such modern lives in urban areas, they cannot make independent and firm decisions. Sometimes, boys can also be victims, and it might be done in agreement to achieve a specific goal, like being given money in return, and if by any chance it happens forcefully, they rarely communicate about it due to the fear of stigmatization. For the teaching and non-teaching staff, I have not received or heard any case so far, so I assume each is okay.” Guidance and Counselling Officer

“Unconventional thinking because there is pressure of conformity. Anyone with a different opinion or perspective can make you a victim. I would also like to mention that how people perceive can also make someone vulnerable. For instance, if someone perceives you as weak, they might bully you. You can also be bullied depending on the kind of things you post or the kind of arguments you engage in. If they see your arguments as childish or immature, you might be a victim since they might not take you seriously. They might think you are not intelligent.” KII Lecturer



4.3.3 Perpetrators

Figure 11: Perpetrators of TF GBV



Male students (78.6%) were identified as the top perpetrators of TF GBV, followed by female students (11.5%) and male teaching staff (5.4%). On the other hand, female teaching and non-teaching staff were reported as the least perpetrators of TF GBV, as shown in Figure 8 above.

Additionally, study findings also revealed that older students, such as those in their third and fourth years, were more likely to commit TF GBV than students in their early university years. Furthermore, instances of former lovers being perpetrators were prevalent, suggesting that past romantic connections play a role in TF GBV. Class groups and social media friends were also identified as possible perpetrators, with motives ranging from gaining fame to manipulation.

The respondents highlighted that:

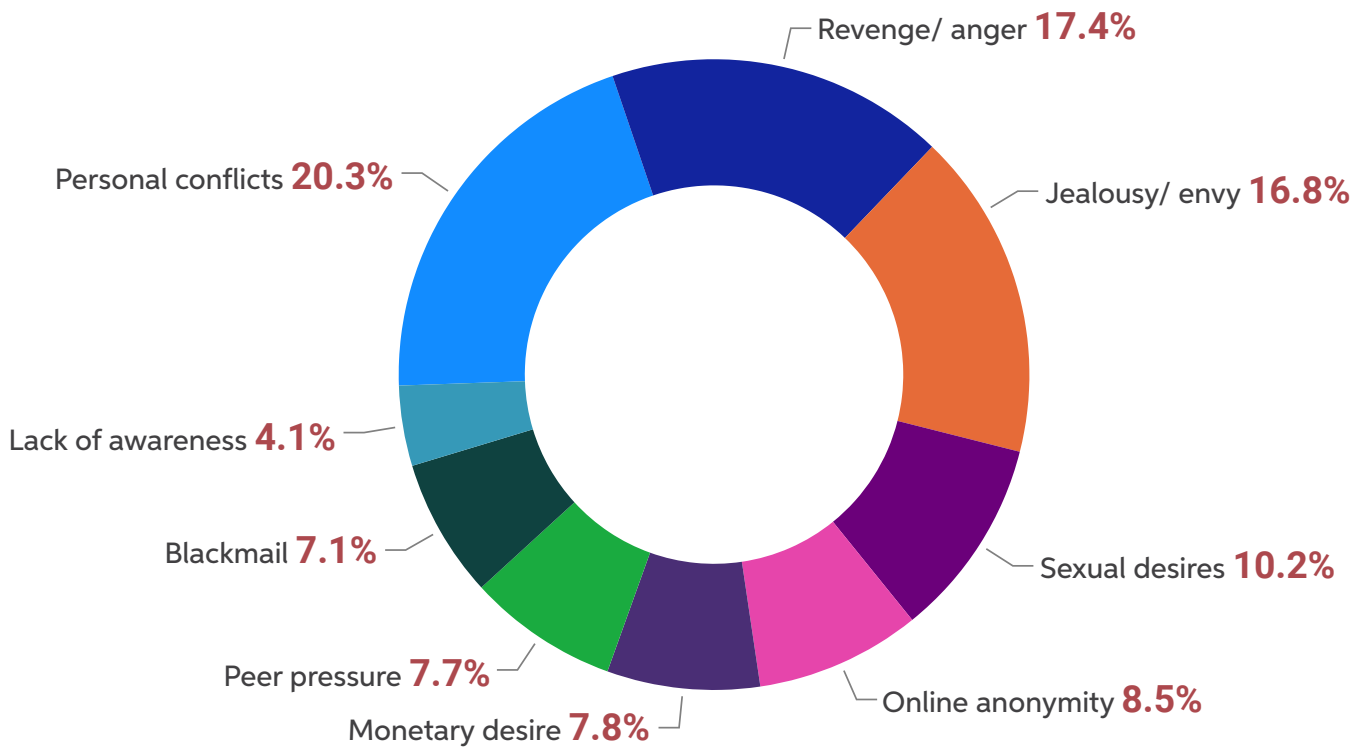
“Most of these issues are between girlfriends and boyfriends. They get into a disagreement, and one of them chooses to go to online platforms to harass the ex-girlfriend. This can be because they are angry or envious of their ex-partner, and this makes them the perpetrators.” Deans of Students

“Friends because they know so much about you. Friends are likely to open up to friends, and therefore, their secrets lie within that other person who can easily use them.” Girls FGD

“The younger generation is more exposed to this technology, and it seems like they have fewer values to govern what they do with it, so they are more likely to do it than the older generation. So, I think that they can bully people very effectively online. On the basis of probability, there might be fewer people from the older generation who can commit such cases.” Lecturer

4.3.4 Most common triggers of TF GBV

Figure 12: Most common triggers to TF GBV



From the research findings, some of the triggers of TF GBV commonly identified were personal conflicts (20.3%), revenge/anger (17.4%), jealousy (16.8%), sexual desires (10.2%), and online anonymity (8.5%), as illustrated in Figure 12 above.

Seeking popularity, whether through exposing someone or creating content, idleness, and the quest for relevancy on social media platforms were also identified as triggers of TF GBV. Lack of morals, peer pressure, alcohol and drug abuse, economic challenges, culture shock for new students, and a lack of guidance were also recognized as factors that trigger TF GBV.

"Some of them are looking for fame. Like if you expose someone, you might get famous through that." Boys FGD

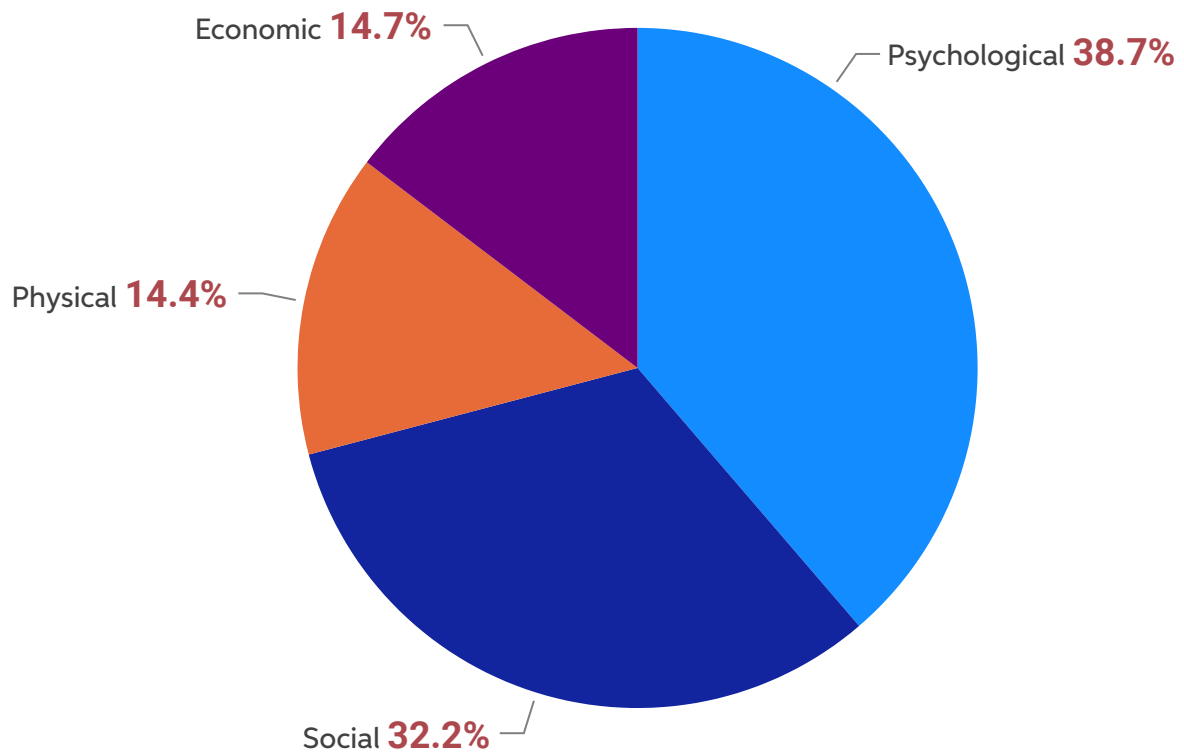
"In platforms like Twitter, individuals engage in such issues just to remain relevant and have engagement. The nastier the posts are, the more the engagement and follows." Boys FGD

"The triggers include things like peer pressure, poverty, and the lack of values. Alcohol and drug abuse can also trigger such situations because when one drinks or abuses drugs, they tend to behave irrationally and out of the norm sometimes. You find that someone might post something abusive or constantly harass another person online through calls or messages due to their impaired thinking." Lecturer

"Financial instability. Lacking money to meet your basic needs might contribute to such cases. Some students are desperate to do anything such that they can find themselves as victims or perpetrators of TF-GBV." KII Guidance and Counselling Officer

4.3.5 Impact of TF GBV

Figure 13: Impacts of TF GBV



The findings established different impacts on victims of TF GBV. 38.7% reported psychological impacts, 32.2% reported social impacts, 14.7% reported economic impacts, and 14.4% reported physical impacts, as illustrated in Figure 13 above.

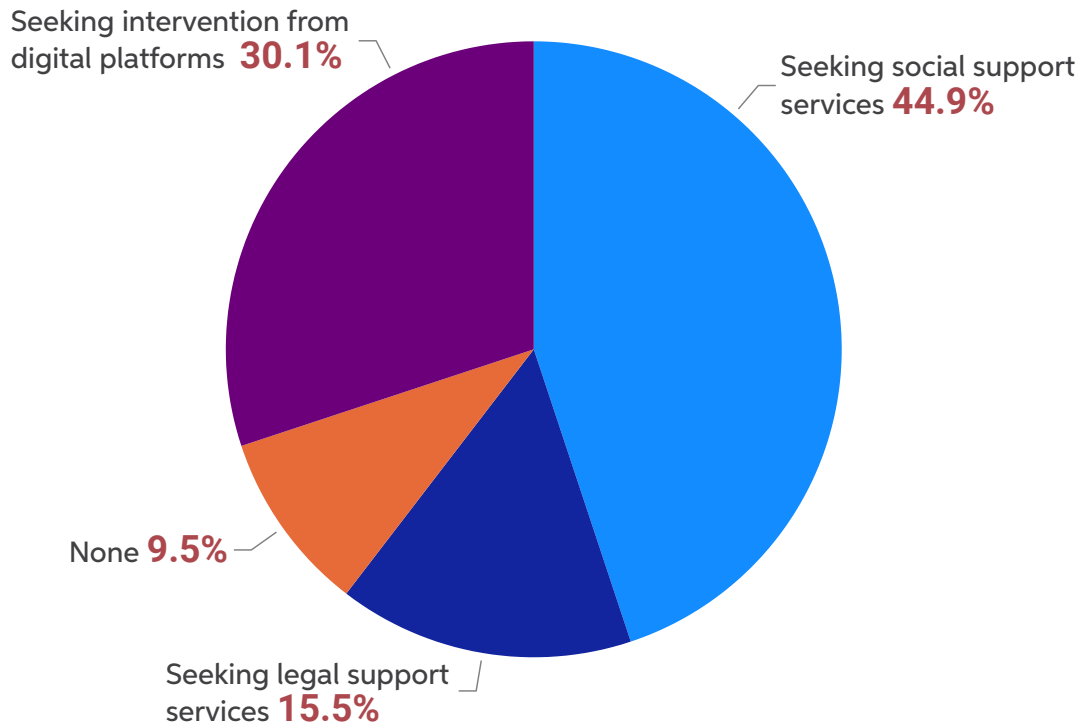


4.4 Coping mechanisms and mitigation

The study sought to determine victims' responses, patterns, and behaviours in dealing with TF GBV. The study further sought to understand the social, digital, and legal support services that victims sought after experiencing TF GBV.

4.4.4 Most common response by victims to TF GBV

Figure 14: Most common response of victims to TF GBV



The findings established that when victims encounter TF GBV The majority responded by seeking social support services (44.9%), seeking intervention from digital platforms (30.1%), and seeking legal support services (15.5%), while others took no action (9.5%), as illustrated in Figure 14 above.

Additionally, the findings established that some victims resort to extreme measures such as suicide, relocation, self-isolation, and seeking revenge. Other victims live in a state of denial, normalize the abuse, others leverage the incident for fame, while others act indifferent to the situation.

Respondents from FGD stated that:

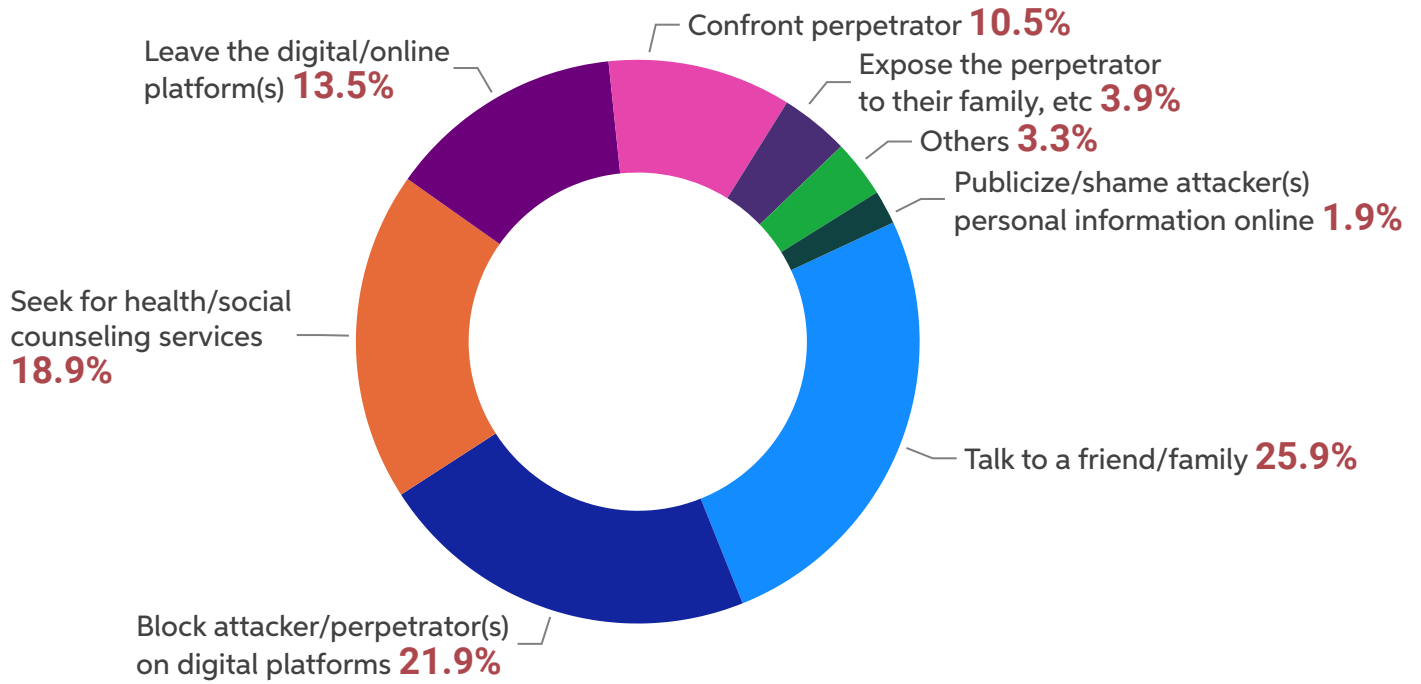
"Some commit suicide by overdosing on drugs, jumping off buildings." Girls FGD

"Some people respond with suicide and depression." Boys FGD

"Some move places to avoid the pressure." Boys FGD

4.4.1.1 Seeking social support services.

Figure 15: Seeking social support services



In seeking social services, the respondents reported that they often talk to friends (25.9%), block perpetrators on the digital platform (21.9%), seek guidance and counselling services (18.9%), and some even leave the digital platform (13.5%), as illustrated in Figure 15 above.

Respondents from Boys' FGD stated that;

"Some people can choose to withdraw from social activities and lay low for it to end so that people can stop talking about it."

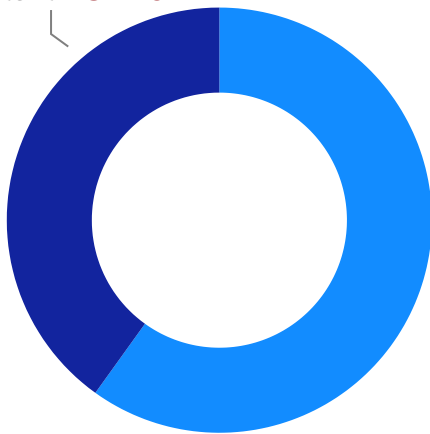
"Seeking therapy and rebranding themselves"



4.4.1.2 Seeking intervention from digital platforms

Figure 16: Seeking Intervention from the digital platform

Digital platforms remove the content **40.1%**



As illustrated in Figure 16 left, when seeking intervention from digital platforms, the findings revealed that such platforms provided assistance services, such as barring the perpetrator (59.9%) and removing the perpetrator's content (40.1%).

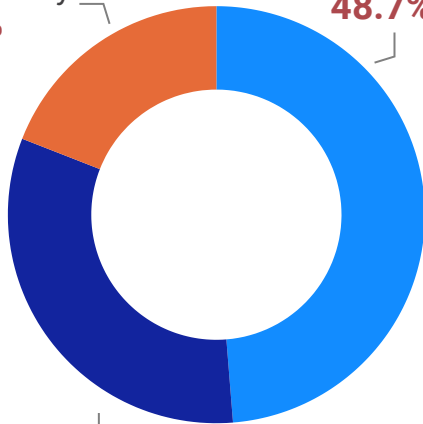
Furthermore, on whether digital platforms offer support once TF GBV cases are reported, 90.6% of the respondents responded in the affirmative, while 9.4% reported that the digital platforms do not provide any support.

Digital platforms block the perpetrator **59.9%**

4.4.1.3 Seeking legal support services

Figure 17: Seeking legal support services

Talk to a friend/family **19.1%**



Report to the police **48.7%**

File a civil lawsuit against the perpetrator **32.2%**

In terms of seeking legal support services, the majority of the respondents (48.7%) reported incidents of TF GBV to the police, and 32.2% filed a civil lawsuit, as illustrated in Figure 17 left.

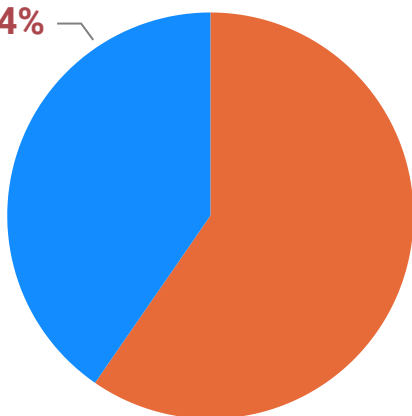
A respondent from the Girls' FGD stated:

"Reporting to the police stations as well as taking legal action by taking the person to court, although the process takes long, and sometimes they criticize you."

4.4.2 Resources/ Support systems to address TF GBV

Figure 18: Awareness of resources

No **40.4%**

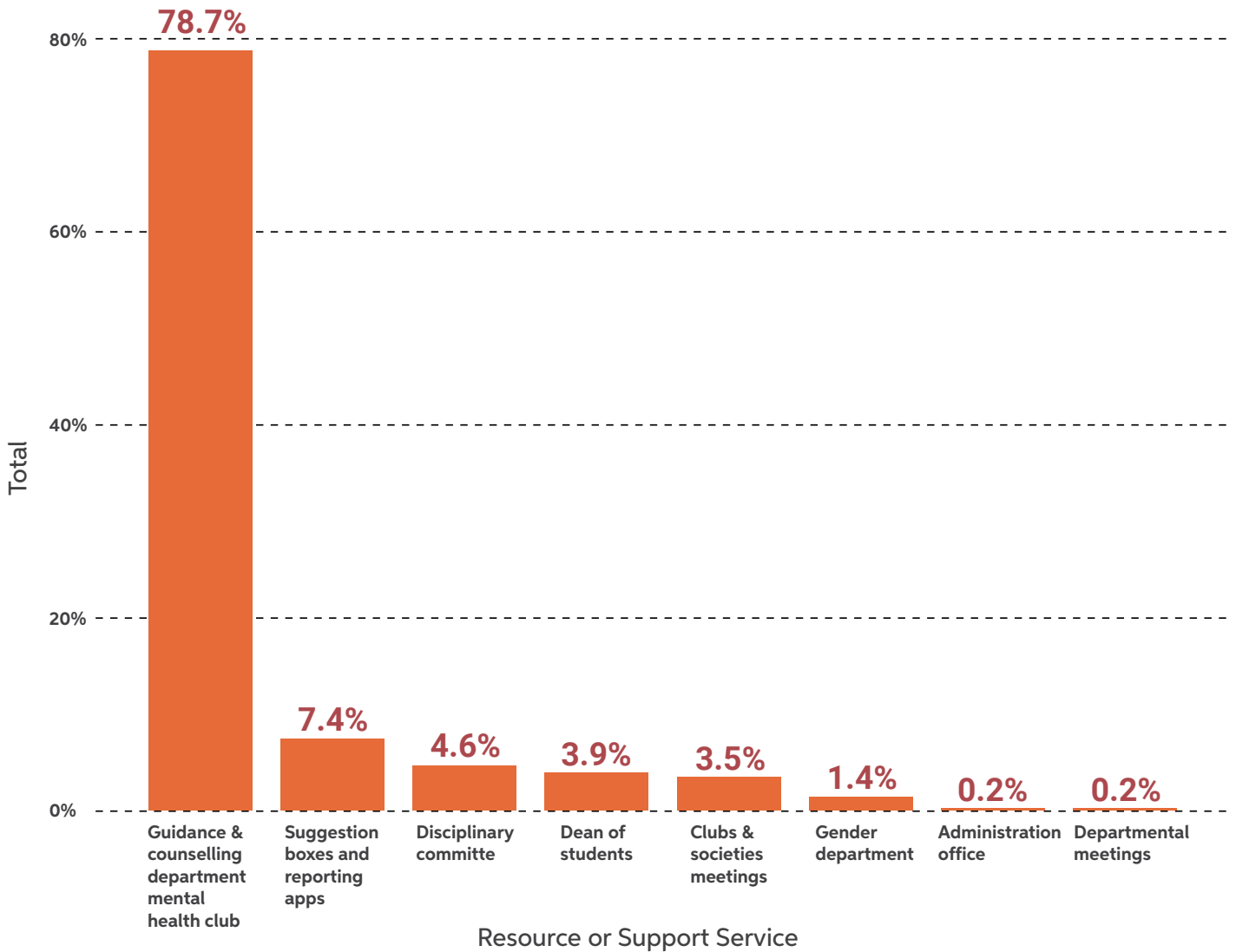


Yes **59.6%**

The study sought to establish the existence of resources and support systems available within the tertiary institutions to address TF GBV as well as the awareness and access to these resources by the students.

In terms of the awareness of the resources/ support systems available for addressing TF GBV, 59.6% of the respondents were aware, while 40.4% were not, as illustrated in Figure 18 left.

Figure 19: Resource/Support systems



The majority of respondents (78.7%) who reported awareness of TF GBV resources and support systems identified guidance and counselling as the most common support system, as illustrated in Figure 19 above.

According to the respondents, the available guidance and counselling services were offered by guidance and counselling officers within the institution, church units, and trusted friends. Other support systems/resources identified included talk forums and therapy sessions organized for students and peer educators. Few respondents reported the availability of the gender desk and toll-free number available for students to seek support.

When faced with incidents of TF GBV, respondents also considered various external support options, such as seeking help from hospitals, police stations, churches, and family members. Additionally, respondents also reported the availability of psychological support in hospitals, e.g., Mathare Hospital, and external organizations, such as “Shamiri,” which offer free counselling services.

Some respondents stated:

"Guidance and counselling with professionals to provide psychosocial support. Through the management, we punish and discourage the perpetrators. Sensitization during orientation on not being vulnerable online and how to report, we have a college number that they can call, and the person is connected to a specialist." Guidance and Counselling Officer

"I am not fully aware of all the support mechanisms, but I know there is peer and counselling. Students facing any issue can seek the services of a counsellor, and as a lecturer, if a student approaches me with such an issue, I can try to assist them." Lecturer

"There is a guidance and counselling office in the school." Boys FGD

"In terms of reporting, there are no ways of reporting something that happened online unless it's a physical violence." Boys FGD

"Religious places like the church." Girls FGD

"There is a police station here next to the school. One can go there." Boys FGD

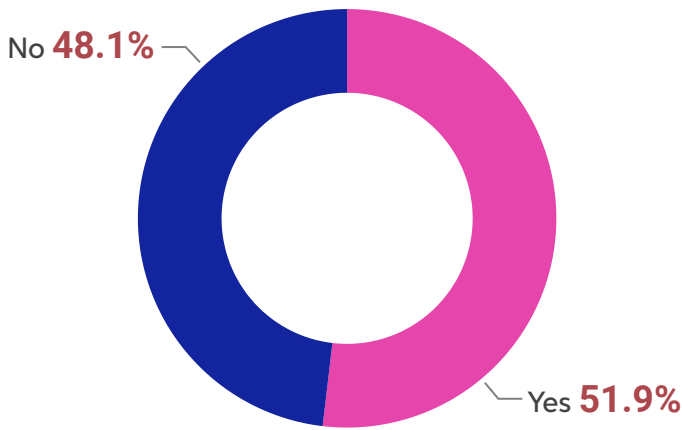
"You might go to a church to seek for guidance and counselling." Girls FGD

"Seeking help from hospitals can be helpful, such as clinical psychologists." Girls FGD



4.4.3 Reporting systems of TF GBV

Figure 20: Reporting of TF GBV



According to the quantitative findings, 51.9% of the respondents reported awareness of the reporting systems/ mechanism, while 48.1% were unaware, as illustrated in figure 20 left.

However, the qualitative findings from focus group discussions, which demonstrated that the majority of respondents were unaware of the reporting procedures available, did not validate these conclusions.

According to the qualitative findings, while reporting policies and processes existed within the institutions, the majority of students were ignorant of their existence, as indicated below:

"The students might not know which procedures to follow since such cases seem hard to even report. I am not aware of the process the students are supposed to follow." Guidance and Counselling Officer

"The University of Nairobi cannot lack established reporting mechanisms. The students are not aware that there are certain procedures or processes one needs to follow when they experience any form of violence. Apart from victims reporting the issues to trusted lecturers and friends, the dean of students could be in a position to assist them too." Lecturer

"Unison: No reporting system that we are aware of." Girls FGD

"The students might not know which procedures to follow since such cases seem hard to even report. I am not aware of the process the students are supposed to follow." Guidance and Counselling Officer



4.5 Discussion of Key Findings.

This section discusses the key findings of the qualitative study.

4.5.1 TF GBV prevalence and incidence

The vast majority of respondents were aware of TF GBV cases, citing reported incidents. Additionally, reports of TF GBV, notably on social media, prompted the establishment of a safe forum for students to share their experiences. Few respondents expressed a lack of awareness, relying on monthly reports on student affairs; however, respondents acknowledged that technology can facilitate gender-based violence.

The most common forms of TF GBV identified were cyberbullying and harassment, with Twitter, Telegram, and WhatsApp being identified as the platforms where TF GBV was prevalent. Twitter was regarded as the origin of information before it spread to other platforms, while WhatsApp groups, both within and outside of institutions, were regarded as influential platforms for content diffusion and trolling. Telegram was identified for its easy availability of explicit content

Some respondents admitted to participating in or witnessing the creation of memes, defamation through political activities, and the use of personal information to harass their peers.

4.5.2 The Ecosystem of TF GBV

Female students were identified as the primary victims of TF GBV, while male students were identified as the top perpetrators of cyber harassment, particularly after failed relationships. Specific emphasis was placed on final-year and third-year students who, having spent more time in the institution, may exploit new students. Instances of staff, particularly male staff, targeting female students were also mentioned, with power imbalances leading to potential exploitation.

Some respondents admitted to participating in or witnessing the creation of memes, defamation through political activities, and the use of personal information to harass peers.

Personal disputes, vengeance, rage, envy, peer pressure, sexual desires, and internet anonymity were identified as some of the most prevalent triggers of TF GBV. Furthermore, respondents highlighted other TF GBV triggers, such as pursuing fame, whether through exposing someone or creating content, idleness, pursuit of relevance on social media platforms, lack of morals, peer pressure, alcohol and drug usage, economic issues, culture shock for new students, and a lack of guidance.

Revenge porn was identified as the most prevalent form of TF GBV experienced by females, with former lovers sharing explicit content online following breakups. Females also identified instances of staff members taking advantage of the power dynamics that exist in school settings to solicit sexual favors and engage in inappropriate behaviors. Female students also reported an unsettling trend of personal information obtained through legitimate transactions being used for harassment later on. According to the respondents, the ubiquity of stalking, trolling, and the sharing of personal information without consent creates an environment in which girls constantly feel vulnerable and exposed.

4.5.3 Response to TF GBV and mitigation avenues available

According to the findings, victims respond/ deal with TF GBV in various ways. Depression, social withdrawal, and academic degradation are some of the responses noted, as are the use of alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism, workouts to increase physical strength and boost self-esteem, and taking breaks from social media. Furthermore, the findings established that some victims resort to extreme measures such as suicide, relocation, plastic surgery, self-isolation, and vengeance. Other victims live in denial, normalize the abuse, leverage the incident for fame, and others act indifferent to the situation.

Many victims do not report incidents of TF GBV, often out of fear, the sensitive nature of relationships, and the perceived extreme consequences of legal action.

The critical support mechanisms highlighted by respondents for TF GBV victims in institutions were guidance and counselling services that offer psychosocial assistance, as well as several reporting channels through the dean of students' office. Respondents cited various levels of support, such as talk forums and therapy sessions organized for students and peer educators. Few respondents indicated the availability of a gender desk and a

toll-free hotline for students to seek assistance, whereas others were not aware of any support mechanisms available to the students.

Various external mechanisms were also identified, such as seeking help from hospitals, police stations, churches, and family members. Additionally, respondents highlighted the availability of psychological support at places like Mathare Hospital and external organizations, such as “Shamiri,” which offer free counseling services.

Various stakeholders within tertiary institutions are responsible for raising awareness about TF GBV as well as managing TF GBV within the institutions. This duty has been assigned to stakeholders such as the dean of students, heads of departments, lecturers, and the guidance and counselling office. Furthermore, many departments within the institutions are responsible for informing and managing TF GBV cases, as well as collaborating with the dean’s office to ensure relevant protocols are followed when dealing with such cases.

Tertiary institutions have employed disciplinary, legal, and supportive measures to combat TF GBV. Perpetrators face disciplinary sanctions such as suspension or expulsion, depending on the gravity of the offence. However, despite these efforts, institutions face various challenges, such as uncertainty about punishment for perpetrators, potential difficulties in obtaining evidence, and the need for precise reporting mechanisms.

Tertiary institutions have also implemented preventive measures such as sensitization programs to raise awareness about TF GBV. The counselling office also offers educational programs such as psychoeducation and discussion forums to address students’ concerns and educate them on reporting procedures. Furthermore, institutions collaborate with external organizations such as UNESCO to provide comprehensive counselling training. There are also toll-free numbers, gender desks, and university-wide initiatives to raise awareness about TF GBV, such as the 16 days of activism against GBV.

Furthermore, tertiary institutions have created reporting policies and procedures through coordination between dean offices and the guidance and counselling department. Students are also encouraged to file reports with the appropriate offices. However, the lack of awareness by students of such policies, the subtle nature of TF GBV, and the failure to recognize TF GBV as a specific form of GBV have impeded the efforts being made by the institutions.

4.5.4 Justice system

Respondents in the justice system, including the police, judiciary, DCI, and ODPP, understood TF GBV. They noted the prevalence of online harassment and defined TF GBV as gender-based violence perpetrated through technology, notably phones. Its various manifestations were also highlighted, ranging from verbal abuse to potential physical assault and devastating consequences for victims and their families.

The respondents in the justice system acknowledged handling TF GBV cases. Respondents were also aware of the various forms of TF GBV, ranging from cyberbullying, defamation, cyberstalking, online abuse, and grooming, particularly concerning sexual exploitation and abuse of children and extorting private photos.

One of the most notable findings from the justice system is that while the prevalence of TF GBV is significant, the reporting rates remain low. Many cases go unreported due to victims feeling ashamed, embarrassed, or lacking awareness that online offences can be legally prosecuted. The findings also revealed that the lack of awareness about the criminal nature of online abuse and harassment hinders the frequency of reporting. Within the justice system, officers faced various challenges in handling and prosecuting TF GBV cases due to limited information. A recurring theme was the limited awareness among the public, with many individuals unaware that their interactions with perpetrators serve as crucial evidence for prosecution. Frequently, victims close accounts, delete messages or stop following up on their complaints, thus unintentionally altering the evidence required for the prosecution of the cases.

Additionally, TF GBV is underreported because of fear and embarrassment by the victims. The lack of awareness also extends to law enforcement, where police officers, particularly those not affiliated with the gender department, may lack understanding and may dismiss TF GBV. Respondents also emphasized that victims are usually reluctant to involve the police in intimate crime reports due to fear and embarrassment.

Police officers and officers within the DCI also reported obstacles in handling and investigating TF GBV cases. Respondents cited challenges such as the lack of trained personnel, insufficient equipment and resources, slow internet, occasional technological failures, and difficulties in the preservation of evidence and verification of the identity of perpetrators, especially on platforms with pseudo-accounts. Additionally, lengthy procedures and delays in receiving responses from online platforms, insufficient evidence, issues of evidence tampering, and the chain of custody were stated to hinder the authentication of evidence. Respondents also noted that while a forensic laboratory exists, victims' reluctance to provide gadgets for examination and delays in returning them after examination contribute to the challenges.

To assure the legitimacy of materials submitted in court, the judicial system employs various measures, including evidence authentication and the engagement of cybercrime specialists. Overall, there was a concerted effort to navigate the complexities of TF GBV cases through collaboration amongst multiple stakeholders, emphasizing awareness, support, and legal measures.

The findings also revealed that while the DCI department receives support from the National Crime Agency (NCA) in the UK for dealing with online offenses, particularly the emerging issue of TF GBV, officers are unaware of the existing measures. Furthermore, even though department officers regularly participate in forums and trainings on GBV, it's still unclear how effective these efforts are as officers are still unable to handle GBV cases effectively.



5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

Findings of this study show that TF GBV is prevalent in tertiary institutions in Kenya but functional awareness is limited and response mechanisms largely inadequate. Youthfulness of the students combined with the frequent use of communication technology in official and unofficial contexts and in particular on social media platforms positions them both as perpetrators and victims of TF GBV. Young women are disproportionately affected negatively by TF GBV as well as women staff within the evolving norms of social media- TF GBV targeting them has become the norm on digital platforms. However, despite its increasing prevalence, the fact that this type of GBV occurs on digital platforms/online, with the majority of incidents and perpetrators hiding under the relative anonymity of the platforms counteracting it is not easy.

Relatively little is being done to address TF GBV partly because of its emerging and evolving nature which calls for focusing more resources to efforts at understanding it holistically to put in place digital safety for everyone who uses the internet. Stakeholders should prioritize equipping students and staff with the necessary knowledge and skills that will allow them to detect, prevent and report TF GBV promptly. While this will not address all of the TF GBV-related issues, it will be a good starting point for better addressing TF GBV in tertiary institutions.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the recommendation are as follows:

5.3.1 Tertiary institutions

There is a need for tertiary institutions to:

- i. Develop an advocacy and public awareness strategy for addressing TF GBV. Institutions should plan and implement consistent and informative student-centered awareness campaigns, sensitization forums, and open talks to raise functional awareness about TF GBV, its repercussions, mitigation mechanisms, and the reporting procedures and systems available within and outside of the institution. In doing so, institutions should engage men and boys against TF GBV as allies, advocates, role models, champions, and change agents in lobbying against TF GBV.
- ii. Expand the institution's ecosystem and its capacity to mitigate TF GBV by enhancing peer-to-peer support in institutions through collaboration with existing student bodies and Gender-Based Violence activists. This can be achieved by providing financial and technical support for immediate assistance and capacity building of students, as well as encouraging non-governmental organizations to support student organizations in organizing themselves.
- iii. Develop guidelines for preventing, detecting and responding to TF GBV, which should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure victims have clear and diverse options for support and resources.
- iv. Strengthen support networks for students and sharing of knowledge on effective measures to mitigate TF GBV within tertiary institutions, including enough counsellors. Furthermore, lecturers should be assigned a more active role in TF GBV management and promoting student-lecturer understanding. Lecturers should also be actively involved in policy formulation, and the establishment and implementation of a TF GBV curriculum to increase sensitization, reduce stigma, and boost guidance and counselling within institutions.
- v. Due to the high prevalence of TF GBV among female students, attributed to vulnerability profiles such as naivety and economic vulnerability, the media should enhance orientation and digital literacy programs, to increase exposure to digital safety. Additionally, institutions should do more to identify and support economically vulnerable students to meet their gender specific basic needs.
- vi. The National Gender-Based Violence Working Group should utilize the findings to inform coordination and policy initiatives to mitigate TF GBV, and support review of existing laws to include emerging forms of TF GBV, such as cyberstalking and online impersonation, which have become prevalent in the new era.
- vii. Support institution based 24 hours toll-free helplines accessible to TF GBV among other SGBV survivors to provide appropriate real time response.
- viii. Enhance students' participation in extracurricular activities, such as sports, by purposefully targeting the use of recreational facilities within institutions to enhance social skills and emotional intelligence.
- ix. Conduct a study for further investigation to understand the current effectiveness of response mechanisms

to SGBV/TF GBV and reporting systems within institutions. This study should aim to show frequency of use, accessibility, and customer satisfaction levels.

5.3.2 Legal system

To ensure that TF GBV cases are handled and addressed efficiently and effectively, the following need to be ensured:

- i. Curriculum development: Integrating TF GBV into police training curricula to raise awareness and equip officers to handle TF GBV cases.
- ii. Constant training and capacity building for the police, prosecutors, judges, magistrates, DCI officers and at the grassroots, is necessary to address TF GBV.
- iii. Sufficient budgetary allocation by the Government to law enforcement to enable the procurement of necessary equipment for the successful investigation and prosecution of TF GBV cases, such as tools for independent verification and more personnel specifically trained in handling TF GBV cases. Furthermore, providing law enforcement with critical information, materials, and resources for addressing TF GBV cases will result in effective and efficient services.
- iv. The development, implementation and review of legislation to strengthen and accommodate the online nature of TF GBV and modern methods of evidence delivery to solve challenges faced in determining and prosecuting cases due to the electronic nature of evidence.
- v. Constant engagement and collaboration amongst key stakeholders in the legal system and other actors such as the police, the judiciary, the ODPP, the DCI, NGOs and CSOs, with a focus on prevention, victim protection, prosecution of perpetrators and personnel training.
- vi. Strengthen data management and storage systems, specifically for TF GBV cases response eco system.



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