Exploring the Dark Side of Digitization: The Role of Technology in Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract: *The literature review explores technology's role in perpetuating gender-based violence (GBV) by analysing literature on technology-facilitated GBV and its impact on survivors. It highlights how digital tools reinforce harmful social norms and stereotypes, with cyberstalking, revenge porn, and online harassment identified as common forms of abuse. Technology's anonymity, accessibility, and far-reaching capabilities exacerbate these issues, though online communities and social media can also provide crucial support for survivors. However, these platforms sometimes expose survivors to secondary victimization and additional harm.The study emphasizes the urgent need for greater awareness, education, and policy measures to combat technology-assisted GBV. Collaboration between technology companies, policymakers, and civil society organizations is recommended to develop effective interventions. Overall, the review demonstrates technology's dual potential as both a tool for empowerment and a source of harm, underscoring the importance of proactive measures to ensure it does not perpetuate gender-based violence.*
Keywords: technology-facilitated gender-based violence, online harassment, cyberstalking, gender stereotypes, survivor support

INTRODUCTION

Over the last ten years, digital technologies have become integral to virtually every aspect of daily life, influencing how people communicate, learn, work, and engage socially across the globe (Henry & Powell, 2018). The rapid expansion of high-speed internet, social media platforms, and mobile devices has led to unprecedented connectivity, bridging geographical gaps and providing users with new avenues for self-expression. These technological innovations have simultaneously contributed to economic growth and facilitated access to a wide range of services, from online banking to telehealth (Dragiewicz et al., 2018)In parallel, digital tools have become critical for

social movements—offering marginalized groups and activists a powerful mechanism to amplify their voices, draw attention to systemic injustices, and mobilize collective action for change (Henry & Powell, 2018). Consequently, digital spaces play a pivotal role in shaping both public and private interactions, reflecting society's values while also influencing new forms of social conduct.

However, as these technologies have proliferated, so too have the risks associated with their misuse, especially concerning gender-based violence (GBV). According to Henry and Powell (2018), the shift from traditional forms of interpersonal violence to technology-facilitated abuse is a logical outcome of society's increasing reliance on digital communication. Perpetrators are adapting these tools to engage in harassment, stalking, and other harmful activities, exploiting the features that make digital platforms appealing—such as anonymity, immediacy, and global reach. Consequently, **technology-assisted GBV**, sometimes referred to as technology-facilitated violence, encompasses a broad range of actions including cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse (commonly known as revenge pornography), and online harassment (Dragiewicz et al., 2018; Powell & Henry, 2016). The gravity of these acts is amplified by digital permanence and the ease with which content can be shared, downloaded, and redistributed across multiple platforms in a matter of seconds.

The implications of these developments are multifaceted. On the one hand, digital technologies can exacerbate harmful social norms and stereotypes, often rooted in patriarchal ideologies that target women and other marginalized groups (Henry & Powell, 2018). These platforms can inadvertently serve as echo chambers where misogynistic beliefs are reinforced rather than challenged, contributing to a culture in which gender-based violence becomes more normalized. On the other hand, the same digital spaces can foster solidarity and collective support for survivors. The paradox of digitization lies in technology's capacity to perpetuate gender inequality and violence while simultaneously offering survivors, activists, and advocacy groups essential tools for awareness-raising and empowerment. Indeed, online communities and social media campaigns—evident in movements such as #MeToo—have been instrumental in breaking the silence surrounding sexual violence, enabling survivors to share their stories and demand systemic changes in legal and social frameworks.

Against this backdrop, understanding the role of technology in either amplifying or mitigating GBV is critical for academic inquiry and policy intervention. Scholars have underscored the need to examine not only the technical features of digital platforms but also the broader cultural and socio-political contexts in which they operate (Powell & Henry, 2016). By illuminating the structural inequalities that pervade online spaces, researchers and practitioners can develop effective strategies to curb technology-facilitated harm and support those affected by it. This requires a holistic approach—one that accounts for legal, educational, and technological solutions. Legislative reforms must be complemented by robust moderation policies on social media sites and widespread digital literacy programs that empower users to navigate online risks responsibly (Dragiewicz et al., 2018; Powell & Henry, 2016).

In light of these considerations, this paper seeks to provide a comprehensive review of existing literature that dissects how digital technologies intersect with and reinforce harmful behaviours tied to GBV. Drawing on interdisciplinary sources—including feminist theory, communication studies, and policy documents—this review aims to piece together a nuanced perspective on technology's involvement in perpetuating gender-based violence. By analysing theoretical models that explain the amplification of existing inequalities, the discussion will also explore critical debates in policy and practice, offering insights into how stakeholders can harness digital tools for protective measures and survivor support. Ultimately, this paper underscores the vital importance of continued research, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and innovative policy-making to ensure that technology evolves into a force for empowerment rather than a mechanism for perpetuating violence.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) represents a complex and evolving phenomenon that intersects with multiple theoretical frameworks and sociocultural dynamics. In this section, four key areas are examined: the definition of TFGBV, feminist theory and social norms, Routine Activity Theory (RAT), and intersectionality. Collectively, these approaches offer a nuanced understanding of how digital technologies both reflect and perpetuate gendered inequalities, while also highlighting avenues for intervention and prevention.

Defining Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) can be broadly understood as any form of violence, harassment, or abuse that targets individuals—or groups of individuals—on the basis of their gender, aided by digital technologies and platforms (United Nations [UN], 2020). This definition encompasses a range of behaviors, including but not limited to cyberbullying, online harassment, revenge pornography (or image-based sexual abuse), doxxing, and stalking via social media, messaging applications, and other online channels (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2016). TFGBV is not confined to a specific geographic region or cultural setting; rather, it is a global challenge heightened by the ubiquity of internet access and the growing reliance on digital communication for personal, professional, and civic interactions.

One of the distinguishing features of TFGBV lies in its capacity to leverage the specific affordances of technology—such as anonymity, permanency of data, and the rapid dissemination of content—to exacerbate harm (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Perpetrators may exploit these attributes for targeted aggression, knowing that online environments can make it exceedingly difficult for victims and law enforcement to identify them or hold them accountable. This dynamic distinguishes TFGBV from certain offline forms of violence because it allows perpetrators to harass or intimidate from a distance, often under pseudonyms or false identities (Citron, 2014). In doing so, perpetrators can continue inflicting harm without direct physical contact, creating a relentless sense of vulnerability for survivors.

Moreover, TFGBV frequently intersects with pre-existing power imbalances and systemic inequalities in society (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021). Women and other marginalized communities—such as LGBTQ+ individuals, migrants, and people with disabilities—tend to face disproportionate risks due to ingrained societal biases, economic disparities, and a lack of robust legal protections (Henry & Powell, 2018). The online environment, despite its potential for democratizing information, can thus become a magnifying glass for societal prejudices, enabling perpetrators to harness digital spaces as extensions of discrimination and violence that already exist offline.

From a policy perspective, defining TFGBV has become increasingly important as governments and international bodies seek to implement legal frameworks that address digital harm. The United Nations (2020), for example, underscores the need for explicit recognition of TFGBV within national legislation to more effectively hold perpetrators accountable and protect survivors. Accurate and comprehensive definitions are also crucial for data collection, as they enable researchers and policymakers to systematically assess the prevalence, nature, and severity of technology-facilitated violence on a global scale. Nonetheless, definitional challenges persist. Digital harassment may cross multiple jurisdictions, and legal systems often struggle to keep pace with rapidly evolving technologies, resulting in fragmented or inconsistent legislation worldwide (Powell & Henry, 2016).

Finally, the definitional landscape of TFGBV must include a thorough analysis of how these harms extend beyond the immediate victim. In many cases, TFGBV also has "community-level" impacts, creating a chilling effect on free expression for specific groups. Women journalists and public figures, for instance, may self-censor or withdraw from public online spaces if they fear harassment or threats, thus perpetuating gender inequalities in digital and professional domains (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Recognizing this broader social cost underscores the urgency with which TFGBV must be addressed, integrating responses that span legal, educational, and platform governance measures.

Feminist Theory and Social Norms

Feminist theories provide a critical lens through which to examine the socio-cultural and structural dimensions that underpin technology-facilitated gender-based violence. At the core of feminist scholarship lies the assertion that patriarchal systems—and the power imbalances they create—are deeply embedded in most societies (Hooks, 1984; Butler, 1990). These patriarchal norms manifest in both overt and subtle ways, shaping everything from legal statutes to interpersonal relations, and from cultural representations to online interactions (Jaggar, 2013). Feminist theory thus helps illuminate why women and other marginalized genders are disproportionately targeted by online violence, revealing the systemic inequalities that create fertile ground for abuse.

One foundational concept within feminist discourse is the critique of patriarchal power relations, which often results in the subordination or objectification of women (Hooks,

1984). When mapped onto digital environments, these hierarchies can become amplified, as users may feel emboldened by the anonymity and immediacy offered by online platforms (Henry & Powell, 2018). For instance, misogynistic and sexist ideologies can be disseminated quickly to massive audiences, normalizing violent or degrading language toward women. These virtual "echo chambers" can foster a culture where discrimination and harassment are trivialized or even valorised, perpetuating cycles of abuse.

Moreover, feminist scholarship underscores the importance of **embodiment** in gendered experiences (Butler, 1990). Although interactions in digital spaces may appear disembodied—relying on text messages, images, or video streams—the impacts of virtual harassment can be profoundly felt in the offline world. Survivors may experience psychological distress, social isolation, and professional consequences due to online abuse (Henry & Powell, 2018). The threat of doxing, for example, wherein personal information is maliciously exposed, can result in tangible real-world dangers, from stalking to threats of physical violence.

In conjunction with feminist theory, **social norms theory** provides further insight into why certain types of technology-facilitated aggression may become normalized within digital communities (Berkowitz, 2004). Social norms theory posits that individuals' perceptions of what is "typical" or "accepted" behaviour in their environment significantly influence their own actions. Therefore, in online environments where hateful or abusive language toward women and marginalized genders appears commonplace—through memes, threads, or comment sections—perpetrators may feel validated to continue or even escalate their behaviour (Citron, 2014). Conversely, a lack of community backlash or platform enforcement can implicitly signal acceptance or tolerance of such behaviour.

This interplay of feminist theory and social norms underscores the crucial need for **community-based responses**. Feminist activists often advocate for collective strategies to disrupt harmful narratives and foster alternative discourses centered on respect, equality, and empowerment (Jaggar, 2013). For example, social media campaigns—such as #MeToo—have provided spaces for survivors to share experiences, catalysing shifts in public consciousness and forcing institutions to reckon with entrenched gender biases. Such movements illustrate how digital platforms can be harnessed to challenge, rather than perpetuate, violent and discriminatory norms.

Addressing TFGBV through a feminist lens therefore requires a **multi-pronged approach**. Legal reforms alone cannot eradicate deeply ingrained patriarchal values or transform harmful cultural scripts (Henry & Powell, 2018). Instead, a comprehensive response demands educational initiatives, supportive digital communities, and platform-level accountability measures. This integrated perspective ensures that social norms are actively challenged rather than passively reproduced, thus laying the groundwork for sustained cultural change in both online and offline contexts.

Routine Activity Theory

Routine Activity Theory (RAT) offers a criminological framework that helps explain the conditions under which criminal or deviant acts—such as technology-facilitated GBV—are most likely to occur (Cohen & Felson, 1979). According to RAT, three elements must converge for a crime to take place: (1) a motivated offender, (2) a suitable target, and (3) the absence of a capable guardian. In the context of digital violence, online platforms have increased the frequency and ease with which these elements align, thereby heightening the likelihood of abuse.

Motivated Offenders: The relative anonymity afforded by many digital platforms can encourage individuals who might not engage in face-to-face confrontations to participate in online harassment or other forms of abuse (Freed et al., 2017). Social media, instant messaging, and discussion forums allow perpetrators to interact with targets around the clock, often with limited risk of detection or immediate consequence. These factors can embolden offenders and may contribute to an escalation of aggressive behaviours—especially when perpetrators perceive virtual environments as less regulated than physical spaces.

Suitable Targets: As global internet penetration expands, a growing number of individuals—especially women and marginalized groups—are engaged in online activities, making them visible and, at times, vulnerable to malicious actors (Cohen & Felson, 1979). Public profiles on social media platforms can expose personal information, including geographic location, workplace details, or family structures, inadvertently transforming users into "suitable targets." In some instances, the very tools intended for social connection, such as geolocation features or contact syncing, can be weaponized for stalking or invasive surveillance (Henry & Powell, 2018).

Absence of Capable Guardians: The third component in RAT is the lack of an entity or mechanism that can deter or disrupt potential abuse. Within digital platforms, "capable guardians" might include automated detection algorithms, platform moderators, or law enforcement agencies specialized in cybercrime (Powell & Henry, 2016). However, the rapid pace of technological change often outstrips the capacity of these guardians. Human moderators may be overwhelmed by high volumes of content, and algorithms frequently struggle to differentiate between context-specific references and genuine threats. Furthermore, legal enforcement against perpetrators can be hindered by transnational jurisdictional boundaries, insufficient cybercrime legislation, and limited training among law enforcement personnel (Freed et al., 2017).

RAT also underscores the influence of **routine digital activities**, which have become embedded in daily life. For instance, checking email, updating social media profiles, and interacting in virtual workspaces are now commonplace routines for many (Cohen & Felson, 1979). These routine activities increase the opportunities for perpetrators to identify targets and carry out harassment with minimal effort. Moreover, if community norms (as discussed under feminist and social norms theories) either tacitly endorse or

fail to condemn aggressive conduct, the offender is less likely to face immediate social censure.

From a policy and practical standpoint, applying RAT to TFGBV suggests that effective prevention strategies should aim to disrupt at least one element of this triad. For instance, if platforms enhance moderation (thus introducing capable guardians), perpetrators may be deterred by the heightened risk of detection and penalty (Freed et al., 2017). Alternatively, educating users about privacy settings and safe online conduct may render them less "suitable" or accessible as targets. In essence, RAT shifts the conversation toward structural interventions and proactive measures that can significantly reduce the frequency and severity of technology-facilitated abuse.

Intersectionality and Technology-Facilitated Violence

While feminist and criminological theories elucidate many dimensions of TFGBV, **intersectionality** highlights the overlapping and interlocking systems of oppression that compound individuals' vulnerabilities (Crenshaw, 1991). The intersectional framework posits that categories such as race, gender, class, and sexual orientation are not merely additive but intersect in unique ways that shape lived experiences. Consequently, a woman of colour who identifies as LGBTQ+ and has a low-income background may encounter multiple layers of discrimination, each intensifying her susceptibility to both offline and online violence (Dragiewicz et al., 2018; Crenshaw, 1991).

Intersectionality is particularly crucial for understanding TFGBV in a globalized digital context. Women from marginalized communities often face systematic barriers to technology access, such as lower levels of digital literacy or inadequate internet infrastructure (Henry & Powell, 2018). This "digital divide" exacerbates their risk of abuse while also limiting their ability to navigate technological platforms safely or report incidences of violence. In some cultures, social stigmas related to being a victim of sexual or domestic violence can be intensified by digital shaming tactics, making survivors even more reluctant to seek help (WHO, 2021).

Additionally, intersectional perspectives underscore how social media algorithms and content moderation policies may inadvertently disadvantage certain groups. Studies have shown that online abuse directed at Black women, Indigenous women, or trans individuals can go under-reported or under-moderated due to implicit biases in platform governance systems (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Consequently, the burden often falls on survivors to gather evidence, navigate reporting processes, and advocate for themselves within platforms that may not be structurally equipped to protect them.

Culturally sensitive and intersectionally informed interventions are therefore paramount. Policymakers and technology companies must recognize that the "one-size-fits-all" approach to combating TFGBV can fail to address the specific needs of vulnerable populations (Crenshaw, 1991). For example, providing bilingual or multilingual reporting channels, collaborating with local grassroots organizations, and training law enforcement in cultural competency are all measures that can enhance the

responsiveness of systems designed to address TFGBV (Henry & Powell, 2018). Intersectionality also underscores the importance of survivor-centered approaches that respect diverse experiences and needs, rather than imposing rigid, universal solutions.

Through an intersectional lens, it becomes clear that gender-based violence in digital spaces is not merely a product of technological misuse; it is also a manifestation of broader social inequities (Crenshaw, 1991). By linking race, class, sexuality, and other identity markers with gender, intersectionality helps researchers and practitioners formulate more targeted, equitable interventions. In turn, this holistic perspective fosters a more inclusive understanding of TFGBV, recognizing that the violence directed at individuals cannot be disentangled from the interrelated power structures that shape their lives.

Drawing on these four theoretical vantage points—defining TFGBV, feminist theory and social norms, Routine Activity Theory, and intersectionality—provides a nuanced conceptual toolkit for understanding how digital spaces can become sites of both empowerment and harm. TFGBV cannot be isolated as a purely technological problem; it is deeply entwined with patriarchal ideologies, social norms, and systemic inequalities that predate the advent of the internet (Butler, 1990; Hooks, 1984). While the digital realm may intensify or accelerate acts of violence, it is also true that these platforms offer opportunities for education, collective resistance, and survivor support.

Addressing TFGBV therefore calls for a **multi-dimensional strategy**. A purely legalistic approach, while necessary for deterrence, will not suffice unless complemented by educational programs, community-driven initiatives, and structural transformations in how digital platforms function. Inspired by feminist and intersectional insights, stakeholders must look beyond punitive measures to foster inclusive online communities that actively challenge and deconstruct harmful gender norms (Jaggar, 2013; Crenshaw, 1991). Routine Activity Theory underscores the significance of controlling the environment—by enhancing the presence of "guardians" such as effective moderators and supportive communities—to make online spaces less conducive to abuse (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Freed et al., 2017).

Ultimately, these theoretical frameworks converge on a critical message: technology, by itself, neither causes nor eradicates gender-based violence. Rather, digital tools and platforms can be harnessed in ways that either uphold entrenched injustices or catalyze social change. Recognizing this dual potential is the first step toward developing targeted, evidence-based interventions that mitigate the risks of TFGBV while leveraging the empowering capabilities of digital technologies (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2016). Such an approach affirms the importance of continued research, interdisciplinary dialogue, and policy innovation to ensure that as digital technologies evolve, they do so in the service of equity, safety, and respect for all.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a **desk review** (also referred to as a **systematic literature review**) to investigate the role of technology in perpetuating gender-based violence (GBV). This methodological choice emphasizes the critical evaluation of existing academic and policy-related works to derive informed conclusions. By systematically collating, organizing, and analyzing a breadth of scholarly outputs and expert commentaries, the desk review allows for a robust and comprehensive examination of the interplay between digital technologies and GBV (Bryman, 2012). Below, each step of the methodology is discussed in detail to clarify the processes and criteria that guided the review.

Search Strategy

The first stage involved formulating a **search strategy** to capture the most relevant literature on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). Specific keywords—such as "technology-facilitated gender-based violence," "cyberbullying," "revenge pornography," "online harassment," and "social media and GBV"—were carefully chosen to reflect the breadth of issues encompassed by TFGBV. These terms were then entered into multiple interdisciplinary databases, including **Google Scholar**, **EBSCOhost**, **JSTOR**, and **ScienceDirect**. The rationale for selecting these databases was their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed journal articles, conference proceedings, and policy documents spanning various academic disciplines such as sociology, gender studies, criminology, and information technology.

To enhance the comprehensiveness of the search, Boolean operators (e.g., AND, OR, NOT) were utilized to refine results. For instance, combinations like ("online harassment" OR "cyber harassment") AND ("gender-based violence") were employed to retrieve a broad spectrum of articles addressing technology's role in GBV. Additionally, truncation techniques (e.g., using "cyber*" to account for "cyberbullying," "cyber-harassment," and "cybercrime") ensured that variations of specific search terms were captured. Hand-searching the references of key articles further expanded the pool of potentially relevant studies, as seminal works often reference other foundational publications that might not appear in the initial results (Jesson, Matheson, & Lacey, 2011). Through this iterative and multi-pronged approach, the search strategy aimed to minimize publication bias and ensure that diverse perspectives on TFGBV were considered.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Establishing clear **inclusion and exclusion criteria** was critical to maintaining consistency and reliability throughout the review process (Bryman, 2012). Articles, policy documents, and organizational reports were included if they met the following conditions:

1. **Temporal Range**: Published primarily between 2010 and 2023. This timeframe captures the evolving nature of digital technologies over the last decade while ensuring that discussions reflect contemporary realities.

2. **Relevance to TFGBV**: Studies needed to focus on the intersection of gender-based violence and digital technologies. Works that elaborated on technology-facilitated abuse forms—such as cyberstalking, doxing, online sexual harassment, or revenge pornography—were automatically deemed relevant.

3. **Insights on Policy and Intervention**: Publications offering policy recommendations, legal frameworks, or best-practice interventions were prioritized, given the practical application of such knowledge in addressing TFGBV.

4. **Publication Type**: Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, institutional or NGO reports, and reputable media analyses were included. This diversity of sources aimed to capture both academic rigor and on-the-ground perspectives.

Conversely, studies were **excluded** if they did not explicitly address gender-based violence in a digital context, focused solely on male victimization unrelated to gendered inequalities, or presented theoretical models with no empirical or contextual grounding in TFGBV (Henry & Powell, 2018). Moreover, publications dealing exclusively with non-gender-based forms of cybercrime—such as financial fraud or espionage—were excluded to retain a clear focus on how technology perpetuates or intersects with GBV. Lastly, older works that predated 2010 were generally omitted unless they provided foundational theories critically relevant to contemporary discourse (Powell & Henry, 2016).

Data Extraction and Analysis

Once the initial corpus of literature was compiled, a systematic **data extraction** process was undertaken. This involved creating a standardized template or coding sheet to record essential information from each source, including authorship, publication year, research objectives, methodological approach, key findings, and relevance to TFGBV (Gough, Oliver, & Thomas, 2017). This structured approach allowed for uniformity in data collection, making it easier to compare and contrast different studies.

Following data extraction, the material was **analysed thematically**. Thematic analysis is a qualitative method that identifies, organizes, and interprets patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, an open-coding process was employed to highlight recurrent concepts—such as cyberstalking techniques, legislative loopholes, or the psychological impact on survivors. These concepts were subsequently grouped into broader thematic categories:

1. **Forms of Technology-Facilitated Violence**: Detailed the specific tactics perpetrators employ, including cyberbullying, doxing, and image-based sexual abuse.

2. **Socio-Cultural Implications**: Explored how societal norms and cultural attitudes toward gender intersect with technology to exacerbate or mitigate violence.

3. **Policy and Legal Frameworks**: Examined existing laws, international conventions, and institutional guidelines pertinent to TFGBV, while identifying gaps in enforcement or awareness.

4. **Survivor Support and Empowerment**: Focused on the role of digital platforms and community networks in offering resources, counselling, and advocacy channels for survivors.

After clustering the extracted data around these key themes, the analysis involved synthesizing overarching insights and identifying divergences or gaps within the literature. For example, some reports highlighted robust legislative actions in certain countries but noted weak enforcement mechanisms, reflecting discrepancies between policy formulation and practical application.

Reliability and Validity

Ensuring **reliability and validity** was pivotal throughout the review process, particularly as TFGBV is a multifaceted issue spanning multiple disciplines (Bryman, 2012). The following measures were integrated to enhance the credibility of findings:

1. **Triangulation**: The review adopted a triangulation approach by consulting different types of sources—academic journal articles, policy papers, NGO reports, and expert commentaries. This strategy minimized the risk of relying on a single perspective or methodological bias, enabling a more well-rounded understanding of how technology intersects with GBV (Bryman, 2012).

2. **Cross-Verification of Data**: Findings gleaned from policy documents were cross-checked against qualitative studies and empirical research to verify consistency. For instance, claims regarding the prevalence of "revenge pornography" were corroborated with relevant statistical data and corroborative case studies from different regions (Henry & Powell, 2018).

3. **Reflexivity**: The researcher remained conscious of personal biases, continuously questioning and reviewing assumptions made during the literature review process (Jesson et al., 2011). This reflexive stance helped guard against selective interpretation, ensuring that opposing viewpoints and conflicting data were duly considered.

4. **Peer Consultation**: Preliminary findings were discussed with colleagues and peers specializing in gender studies and digital ethics. These consultations allowed for external scrutiny of the review's methodology and interpretations, bolstering its robustness (Powell & Henry, 2016).

By embedding these reliability and validity measures, the review sought to produce findings grounded in a balanced, evidence-based synthesis of the available literature. While the approach primarily relied on secondary data, the extensive range of sources— spanning academic, institutional, and civil society materials—provided a multifaceted perspective that enriched the analysis of TFGBV.

RESULTS

Gender-based violence (GBV) in the digital era has multiple dimensions, as demonstrated by a growing corpus of interdisciplinary research. The discussion below expands on four central findings: (1) how digital technologies reinforce harmful gender norms; (2) the various manifestations of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV); (3) the role of online communities and social media in survivor support; and (4) the existing gaps in both awareness and policy responses to TFGBV. Collectively, these findings underscore the complexity of addressing GBV in online settings and highlight the need for comprehensive strategies that involve policymakers, technology companies, and civil society organizations.

Technology and Reinforcement of Harmful Gender Norms

A central theme emerging from the literature is the manner in which digital platforms and social media environments can both **challenge and reinforce patriarchal structures** (Henry & Powell, 2018). While it is true that the internet has democratized information sharing—offering marginalized voices new opportunities for visibility—these same spaces frequently serve as conduits for misogynistic ideologies, which can proliferate uncontested. As Citron (2014) and Jaggar (2013) observe, certain online forums and social media networks effectively operate as "echo chambers," wherein individuals who share harmful beliefs about women's roles and identities reinforce one another's prejudices.

To understand why this occurs, it is useful to consider the specific affordances of digital technology. The **anonymity** provided by many online platforms allows users to post provocative or hateful content with minimal fear of real-world repercussions (Citron, 2014). In these environments, hateful language, sexist jokes, and objectifying images of women can become normalized. Moreover, the **viral nature** of online content amplifies the speed and scope with which harmful narratives circulate. Misogynistic memes or degrading comments can quickly accumulate "likes," shares, and comments, intensifying their visibility and, in some cases, conferring a semblance of legitimacy upon them. This phenomenon often targets women who deviate from traditional gender norms—such as women in leadership positions, outspoken activists, or public figures— subjecting them to relentless scrutiny and harassment (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

Additionally, research suggests that **algorithmic biases** on social media sites may inadvertently facilitate the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. Platforms typically rely on proprietary algorithms designed to maximize user engagement, often prioritizing content that elicits strong emotional reactions (Henry & Powell, 2018). Because incendiary or polarizing content tends to attract more clicks, likes, and comments, misogynistic narratives can gain wider traction. This feedback loop thus encourages the production and dissemination of content that upholds harmful tropes about women's bodies, intelligence, and societal roles (Powell & Henry, 2016).

The digital reinforcement of **patriarchal norms** has tangible, real-world consequences. Studies indicate that online hostility can spill over into offline environments, fuelling a

climate of fear and potential physical harm for targeted individuals (Citron, 2014). It can also discourage women and other marginalized genders from participating in online debates, undermining their ability to exercise digital citizenship. This "silencing effect" is particularly evident in male-dominated internet subcultures, where female users often face organized campaigns of harassment or are met with dismissive attitudes that trivialize their experiences of online violence (Henry & Powell, 2018). Consequently, the internet, despite its potential for progressive change, sometimes replicates offline hierarchies of power and exclusion.

Nonetheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that digital platforms can also serve as **spaces of resistance**. Grassroots movements, feminist hashtags, and survivor-led campaigns frequently arise in online environments, challenging sexist norms and advocating for institutional reforms (Jaggar, 2013). The #MeToo movement is a prime example of how social media can galvanize global attention around issues of sexual harassment and assault, shifting cultural understandings of accountability. Thus, the capacity for the internet to reinforce harmful gender norms exists in tension with its ability to mobilize communities against such injustices.

Given these dual roles, addressing how technology reinforces harmful gender norms calls for **multifaceted interventions**. These might include educating users about digital ethics, rethinking content moderation strategies to reduce the spread of hate speech, and encouraging technology companies to refine their algorithms so that they do not inadvertently reward divisive content (Henry & Powell, 2018). Furthermore, there is a need for national-level or global coalitions that recognize the cultural and legal complexities involved in responding to TFGBV. When viewed through this holistic lens, it becomes clear that mitigating online patriarchal discourses requires more than punitive legal measures; it demands systemic shifts in both technological design and societal attitudes.

Forms of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

The literature unequivocally shows that TFGBV manifests in multiple **distinct yet often overlapping forms**. These include, but are not limited to, cyberstalking, revenge pornography (also known as image-based sexual abuse), and online harassment or trolling (Henry & Powell, 2018; Powell & Henry, 2016). Each form exhibits unique characteristics, yet all exploit the **affordances** of digital technologies—such as anonymity, global reach, and instant communication—to inflict harm on survivors.

Cyberstalking

Cyberstalking is defined as the repeated use of electronic communications to harass, threaten, or otherwise elicit fear in a target (Reyns et al., 2012). Through platforms like social media, email, or messaging apps, perpetrators can track victims' online activities and sometimes even acquire personal information—such as addresses, phone numbers, or workplace details—that can be leveraged for intimidation purposes. In some cases, cyberstalking culminates in offline harm, as the perpetrator may use the obtained data to approach the survivor physically (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). The **psychological toll**

of cyberstalking can be severe, creating an enduring sense of vulnerability that affects victims' mental health, social relationships, and professional lives. Additionally, cyberstalking disproportionately targets women, as well as individuals from marginalized identities who may already face systemic discrimination (Powell & Henry, 2016).

Revenge Porn (Image-Based Sexual Abuse)

Revenge pornography, or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, represents another insidious form of TFGBV (Henry & Powell, 2018). Perpetrators often obtain images or videos from previous romantic or sexual relationships—sometimes through hacking—and then disseminate them across websites, social media platforms, or even direct messaging channels. The primary intent is to **humiliate** and **psychologically harm** the target, exploiting cultural stigmas surrounding sexuality, nudity, or intimate behaviour. Because the internet has a virtually limitless capacity for data storage and exchange, these images can resurface repeatedly, traumatizing survivors long after the initial posting (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). The rapid proliferation of revenge porn sites and the ease of image-sharing exacerbate this violence, making it extraordinarily difficult for survivors to regain control over their personal data. This violation of privacy can also lead to **secondary victimization**, where survivors face blame or judgment from peers, employers, or law enforcement, instead of empathy and support (Citron, 2014).

Online Harassment and Trolling

Online harassment—encompassing trolling, threatening messages, and hate speech—constitutes one of the most prevalent forms of TFGBV (Powell & Henry, 2016). Women who are vocal on social media or occupy public-facing roles—politicians, activists, journalists—are prime targets for trolls seeking to discredit or intimidate them (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Trolling can be orchestrated by **individuals acting alone**, as well as by **coordinated groups** that bombard victims with offensive content, rendering online platforms hostile and, at times, unusable. This orchestrated harassment can take numerous forms, including the creation of fake profiles impersonating the victim, the spread of defamatory rumours, or the dispatch of personal threats (Henry & Powell, 2018). Such harassment often converges with offline discrimination, particularly in countries where patriarchal attitudes predominate. Consequently, the perceived anonymity and "gaming" culture of certain online spaces emboldens perpetrators to engage in behaviour that they might not carry out in face-to-face encounters.

Collectively, these forms of TFGBV illustrate how **digital platforms can be weaponized** to perpetuate violence. As each form capitalizes on the anonymity, accessibility, and permanence of online interactions, survivors struggle with seeking redress. Indeed, many are unaware of their legal options or face significant hurdles in reporting abuse, partly due to gaps in law enforcement's technical capacity and partly due to the global, borderless nature of the internet (Powell & Henry, 2016). Understanding these forms is therefore vital for developing targeted interventions—

from specialized training for police and judiciary to community-based awareness campaigns that discourage victim-blaming and encourage reporting.

Online Communities and Social Media Support

Despite the grim realities of TFGBV, the literature also underscores the **positive potential** of online spaces. Digital platforms can serve as **sites of solidarity**, enabling survivors to access resources and support systems that may be difficult to find in their immediate offline environments (Henry & Powell, 2018). These virtual communities often manifest in the form of survivor-centered forums, social media hashtags, advocacy campaigns, and peer-support networks, providing crucial emotional and informational support.

Hashtag activism—exemplified by movements like #MeToo, #TimesUp, and #NiUnaMenos—has proven especially influential (Mendes et al., 2018). These movements harness collective power by uniting survivors and allies under a shared digital banner, amplifying personal experiences to generate widespread awareness. The global reach of hashtags can dismantle the isolation survivors often feel, creating a sense of community that spans geographic and cultural boundaries. In addition, public narratives of survival can empower those who might otherwise remain silent for fear of judgment or disbelief. By sharing testimonies, survivors collectively **challenge stigmatization** and shift societal perceptions of gender-based violence, often compelling policymakers and stakeholders to take note.

Beyond these large-scale movements, **smaller, specialized online groups** offer more focused forms of support. On private message boards or invite-only social media groups, survivors exchange coping strategies, recommend legal resources, and share mental health advice (Henry & Powell, 2018). Many also facilitate direct connections to pro bono legal services, shelters, or therapists, bridging gaps that conventional systems may fail to address. For instance, in regions where domestic violence shelters are scarce, digital platforms might provide the only immediate means to reach out for assistance or devise an exit strategy from an abusive environment (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, it is critical to note that these supportive spaces can themselves become sites of **secondary victimization**. Adversarial users or "trolls" may infiltrate support groups to harass survivors further, sometimes sharing survivors' personal information elsewhere online, a practice known as doxing (Citron, 2014). This risk compounds the vulnerability survivors already face, emphasizing the need for **privacy protections**, careful moderation, and robust reporting mechanisms within digital support communities. Additionally, survivors may encounter scepticism or victim-blaming, even from individuals purporting to offer support. This underscores the importance of **trauma-informed moderation**, in which group administrators are trained to recognize signs of distress and mitigate re-traumatization.

From a broader perspective, the success of online communities in aiding survivors reveals **the dual nature** of technology. As technology can be exploited to commit acts

of TFGBV, it also provides critical resources for healing, advocacy, and justice. Achieving a safer digital environment involves leveraging online communities' strengths while minimizing vulnerabilities—through improved platform governance, transparent privacy tools, and educational campaigns that encourage empathy and bystander intervention (Mendes et al., 2018). In this sense, online communities represent a lifeline for many survivors, but one that must be safeguarded and optimized to fulfil its transformative potential.

Existing Gaps in Awareness and Policy

Despite growing global recognition of TFGBV, considerable **gaps** remain in both public awareness and the legal-institutional infrastructure required to address it effectively (United Nations, 2020). Many survivors, for instance, are unfamiliar with their rights under existing laws or remain unsure how to pursue legal recourse. These challenges are compounded by the **transnational nature** of the internet, wherein websites hosting harmful content might operate in countries with weak or nonexistent legislation against TFGBV (Freed et al., 2017). Even in jurisdictions with robust legal frameworks, survivors may struggle with law enforcement procedures that are not adequately equipped to handle digital evidence or trace anonymous perpetrators (Powell & Henry, 2016).

One critical issue is the **lack of specialized training** among law enforcement agencies and judicial authorities. Officers who are not versed in cybercrime often fail to grasp the severity of TFGBV, dismissing cases as mere "internet drama" or attributing blame to survivors for posting personal information online (Henry & Powell, 2018). This response not only discourages survivors from reporting abuse but can also exacerbate trauma, as individuals feel disbelieved or shamed by the very institutions meant to protect them. Beyond frontline responses, legal systems are frequently slow to adapt to **emerging forms of digital violence**—such as deepfake pornography or AI-assisted harassment—leaving significant legislative gaps that perpetrators can exploit.

The role of **technology companies** in addressing TFGBV is another point of contention. Social media and online platform providers may prioritize user engagement over content moderation, for fear that stringent enforcement policies might deter users (Freed et al., 2017). Algorithms designed to maximize screen time can inadvertently promote sensationalist or hateful content, thereby increasing the visibility of misogynistic or violent material. Moreover, user-reporting systems are often opaque and inconsistent, causing survivors to spend countless hours navigating convoluted processes with uncertain outcomes (Henry & Powell, 2018). In many instances, abusive content remains online even after repeated reports, leaving survivors feeling helpless and re-traumatized by the platform's apparent indifference.

Policy debates also revolve around balancing freedom of expression with the need to protect individuals from harm. Some critics worry that overzealous regulation of online speech might curtail legitimate discourse, while others argue that the failure to curb dangerous content disproportionately harms marginalized groups (Citron, 2014).

Striking the right balance requires nuanced, context-specific legislation coupled with **transparent oversight** of tech companies' moderation policies. Increasingly, experts advocate for robust frameworks that combine criminalizing certain forms of digital harm (e.g., revenge pornography, cyberstalking) with preventative measures, such as mandatory corporate reporting on the prevalence of harassment and the efficacy of removal systems (Tugyetwena, 2023).

Finally, **public awareness campaigns** remain insufficient in many regions. While some governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have launched educational initiatives targeting youth and adults, these efforts often lack sustained funding and long-term strategic vision (United Nations, 2020). In certain cultural contexts, strong taboos around discussing sexuality, domestic violence, or personal autonomy further inhibit open conversations about TFGBV (Henry & Powell, 2018). As a result, survivors may not recognize the abuse they are experiencing, or they may believe they have no avenues for redress.

Addressing these **awareness and policy gaps** requires coordinated efforts across multiple sectors. Education systems can incorporate digital literacy programs that teach young people about consent, online ethics, and respectful communication. Legislators can craft bills with clear definitions of TFGBV and explicit penalties for perpetrators, ensuring that law enforcement agencies receive dedicated resources for cybercrime units. Tech companies, in turn, can strengthen community guidelines, invest in advanced moderation technologies, and establish clearer channels for survivor support and redress. By tackling these issues from legal, technological, and societal angles, stakeholders can begin to reduce the institutional blind spots that have allowed TFGBV to flourish online (Freed et al., 2017).

DISCUSSION

The findings presented in this study underscore the deeply intertwined relationship between technology and gender-based violence (GBV). On one level, digital tools and platforms can reproduce the same patriarchal structures that exist offline, intensifying harm through anonymity, speed of information exchange, and global reach (Butler, 1990; Hooks, 1984). On another level, however, technology offers new opportunities for survivors, activists, and allies to challenge GBV, access resources, and raise public awareness. This duality reflects the inherent complexity of digital spaces, which can simultaneously enable both oppression and empowerment.

Technology as a Conduit for Patriarchal Norms
From a **feminist theoretical standpoint**, digital platforms often mirror and magnify gender inequalities embedded in broader social structures (Butler, 1990). Traditional gender roles, power imbalances, and sexist ideologies do not disappear in online environments; rather, they adapt to and exploit the features of emerging technologies. As Hooks (1984) argues, patriarchal power thrives in environments where women and marginalized genders are not only underrepresented but also systematically trivialized or silenced. In many social media networks and online forums, such silencing is

facilitated by **anonymity** and **pseudo-anonymity**, allowing perpetrators to harass or threaten their targets without facing immediate accountability (Citron, 2014).

These online environments can also function as **echo chambers**, wherein participants who share harmful beliefs about gender roles reinforce one another's prejudices and perpetuate a culture of misogyny (Henry & Powell, 2018). Under these circumstances, patriarchal discourses that justify or trivialize violence against women gain traction faster than they might in offline environments. Misogynistic content can be produced, shared, and amplified in real time, reaching a global audience with minimal resistance (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). This dynamic underscores how digital spaces, far from being neutral, can become crucial sites where patriarchal norms are not merely reproduced but intensified, often with devastating consequences for individuals subjected to online abuse.

Social Norms in Digital Contexts

The role of **social norms** in shaping online interactions further elucidates how these harmful behaviours become normalized. Social norms theory posits that individuals' actions are influenced by their perceptions of what is accepted or expected within their community (Berkowitz, 2004). Within digital environments, norms can shift rapidly. For example, an inflammatory post targeting women may receive "likes" and comments that signal approval from certain community members. This reaction emboldens others to post similar or more extreme content. As a result, online spaces risk perpetuating a **cycle of normalization**, where misogynistic language and threats become ordinary elements of daily discourse (Citron, 2014).

Compounding the problem is the **algorithmic curation** of social media feeds. Platforms often prioritize content that drives engagement—likes, shares, and comments—thus giving extreme or sensational material higher visibility (Henry & Powell, 2018). In effect, harmful content becomes more readily discoverable, shaping the social norms of the online community by projecting the illusion that such views are mainstream or acceptable. This can create a feedback loop: the more attention such content receives, the more it is amplified, pushing individuals with moderate views to the periphery and reinforcing the dominance of hostile or abusive rhetoric. Over time, this environment influences how new users behave or express themselves, raising the risk that harmful behaviours will spread (Berkowitz, 2004).

Technology as a Toolkit for Survivors and Activists

Despite these challenges, **technology also offers significant tools** for those seeking to combat GBV. From social media campaigns and online support forums to instant messaging platforms that facilitate rapid resource-sharing, survivors and activists can use digital technologies to circumvent traditional barriers to outreach and mobilization (Henry & Powell, 2018). One important benefit lies in the potential for **community-building** among survivors who may be geographically dispersed or who lack supportive offline environments. Digital forums and private groups can provide a sense of

solidarity, allowing survivors to share experiences and coping strategies, and to validate each other's struggles.

Campaigns such as #MeToo and #TimesUp exemplify the **global resonance** that social media activism can achieve (Mendes et al., 2018). These movements rallied millions of individuals to voice personal narratives of sexual assault and harassment, thus compelling institutions—ranging from corporations to universities—to confront entrenched patterns of abuse. By employing popular platforms like Twitter, survivors and allies effectively leveraged the viral nature of digital communication. In doing so, they challenged social norms that previously silenced victims, reframing GBV as a widespread societal problem rather than an individual grievance (Citron, 2014).

Moreover, technology can also serve as a **lifeline** in immediate, high-risk situations. Encrypted messaging apps allow survivors to discreetly contact friends, family, or law enforcement, mitigating some of the dangers posed by an abusive partner who monitors phone calls or text messages (Freed et al., 2017). Websites and chatbots hosted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or healthcare providers guide survivors to local legal or psychological services, bridging gaps in information and access. For individuals living under oppressive regimes or in rural areas with limited resources, these digital platforms can be a critical portal to safety and support (Powell & Henry, 2016).

Nonetheless, these virtual spaces are not without their **shortcomings**. As the findings indicate, the same platforms that provide refuge can also expose survivors to secondary victimization, trolling, or privacy breaches (Henry & Powell, 2018). Balancing the potential for healing and empowerment against the risk of further harassment remains a delicate task. Effective interventions must consider the **design** of digital tools and the **policies** regulating their use, ensuring that survivors have control over their data and that perpetrators cannot exploit platform features to inflict more harm.

Routine Activity Theory and the Digital Environment

The observed phenomenon of **pervasive online violence** also aligns with **Routine Activity Theory (RAT)**, which posits that crime is more likely to occur when a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian converge (Cohen & Felson, 1979). In digital contexts:

1. **Motivated Offenders**: The internet's relative anonymity and the global scope of platform user bases create fertile ground for motivated offenders to operate. These individuals often experience minimal immediate repercussions for their actions, emboldening them to continue or escalate harassment (Freed et al., 2017).

2. **Suitable Targets**: Survivors and potential victims are more easily identified and contacted online. Social media profiles reveal a wealth of personal data—locations, interests, friendship circles—that perpetrators can weaponize. The sheer volume of personal information accessible on public accounts increases

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the likelihood that individuals can be targeted for abuse (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

3. **Limited Guardianship**: The guardians in this environment—platform moderators, automated content filters, law enforcement—are often outpaced by the rapid evolution of digital trends and the high volume of user-generated content (Henry & Powell, 2018). Platform policies frequently lack the nuance required to address complex forms of tech-facilitated GBV, while legal systems may not have the resources or expertise to handle online harassment cases effectively.

By revealing how digital environments fulfil each of these conditions, RAT highlights the **systemic vulnerabilities** that reinforce TFGBV. Consequently, addressing one or more of these components—through stronger moderation policies, user education, or specialized cybercrime units—can mitigate the prevalence and severity of tech-facilitated abuse. Yet, these interventions require sustained collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, technology firms, and civil society organizations.

Importance of Intersectionality in Policy and Platform Governance

A further dimension that complicates any intervention is **intersectionality**. As Crenshaw (1991) posits, different identity markers—race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation—intersect to shape distinct forms of oppression and vulnerability. Applying this lens to TFGBV reveals that not all survivors face equal risks or have equal access to resources. For instance, a low-income woman of colour may lack the digital literacy or stable internet connection needed to report abuse, while also grappling with systemic racism and classism when seeking help from law enforcement (Henry & Powell, 2018).

This **multilayered vulnerability** underscores why a singular, "one-size-fits-all" approach to addressing TFGBV can be ineffective. If policy directives or platform guidelines do not account for the specific challenges faced by different demographic groups, the outcomes may unintentionally exacerbate inequalities. For example, legal reforms that focus solely on prosecuting individual offenders might overlook the broader structural barriers—such as poor infrastructure, limited legal aid, or cultural stigmatization of victims—that deter survivors from engaging with the criminal justice system (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

Similarly, platform governance policies frequently adopt broad definitions of harassment that fail to capture the subtleties of racialized or transphobic abuse (Citron, 2014). Those who exist at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities may encounter cumulative or compound forms of violence, such as racist and sexist slurs woven together. Without adequate recognition of these overlapping prejudices, content moderation systems and user-reporting mechanisms may not provide timely or meaningful redress. Indeed, some survivors report repeated attempts to flag harmful content, only to be told it does not violate community guidelines—an outcome often

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rooted in the algorithmic and human biases that shape these platforms' moderation processes (Powell & Henry, 2016).

In light of these intersectional considerations, **policy measures** and **platform interventions** must be diversified to address the range of user experiences and socio-cultural contexts in which TFGBV occurs. Community-based initiatives—like digital literacy programs developed in partnership with local advocacy groups—can ensure that survivors from marginalized backgrounds receive the support they need in a format that resonates with their linguistic and cultural realities (Henry & Powell, 2018). Online platforms can further refine their moderation tools by integrating nuanced cultural and linguistic data into their algorithms, while also training human moderators on the nuances of intersectional abuse.

Taken together, the discussion reveals that **technology's influence on GBV is multi-dimensional**. On one side, it poses significant risks, extending patriarchal ideologies and harmful social norms into an ever-expanding digital public sphere. On the other side, it functions as a powerful resource, enabling collective action, survivor support, and global awareness campaigns. The challenge for researchers, policymakers, and technology companies is to navigate this tension effectively, harnessing the positive potential of digital platforms while curtailing their capacity to perpetuate violence.

To do so, **sustainable multi-stakeholder partnerships** are essential. Policymakers and law enforcement agencies must be willing to recognize the gravity of TFGBV and allocate resources accordingly—whether through specialized training for officers, cyber-forensics teams, or updated legislation that specifically addresses evolving forms of online violence (Freed et al., 2017). Technology companies, meanwhile, must acknowledge their role as gatekeepers of online discourse and continuously refine their moderation policies, user-reporting tools, and algorithmic designs to minimize the spread of harmful content (Henry & Powell, 2018). Civil society organizations, including feminist and intersectional advocacy groups, play a pivotal role in holding both governments and corporations accountable while offering direct support to survivors.

Lastly, the **research community** must continue to examine TFGBV through various theoretical and methodological lenses—quantitative studies to measure incidence and prevalence, qualitative analyses to capture the lived experiences of survivors, and action research models to evaluate interventions in real-time (Mendes et al., 2018). Intersectional analyses are particularly crucial for illuminating the compound vulnerabilities that can exacerbate the impact of online violence on specific populations (Crenshaw, 1991).

In conclusion, while the internet undeniably transforms the landscape of GBV, it also opens the possibility for collective solidarity and innovative strategies to dismantle patriarchal norms. By integrating feminist theory, social norms theory, Routine Activity Theory, and intersectional perspectives, this discussion emphasizes the multifaceted and interconnected nature of TFGBV. Going forward, a holistic approach that unites

technological advances, legal reforms, and grassroots activism offers the most promising avenue for reducing harm and empowering survivors in an increasingly digitized world.

IMPLICATION TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The findings presented in this study underscore the deeply intertwined relationship between technology and gender-based violence (GBV). On one level, digital tools and platforms can reproduce the same patriarchal structures that exist offline, intensifying harm through anonymity, speed of information exchange, and global reach (Butler, 1990; Hooks, 1984). On another level, however, technology offers new opportunities for survivors, activists, and allies to challenge GBV, access resources, and raise public awareness. This duality reflects the inherent complexity of digital spaces, which can simultaneously enable both oppression and empowerment.

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By illuminating how digital environments fulfil each of these conditions, RAT highlights the **systemic vulnerabilities** that reinforce TFGBV. Consequently, addressing one or more of these components—through stronger moderation policies, user education, or specialized cybercrime units—can mitigate the prevalence and severity of tech-facilitated abuse. Yet, these interventions require sustained collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including policymakers, technology firms, and civil society organizations.

Importance of Intersectionality in Policy and Platform Governance

A further dimension that complicates any intervention is **intersectionality**. As Crenshaw (1991) posits, different identity markers—race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation—intersect to shape distinct forms of oppression and vulnerability. Applying this lens to TFGBV reveals that not all survivors face equal risks or have equal access

to resources. For instance, a low-income woman of colour may lack the digital literacy or stable internet connection needed to report abuse, while also grappling with systemic racism and classism when seeking help from law enforcement (Henry & Powell, 2018).

This **multilayered vulnerability** underscores why a singular, "one-size-fits-all" approach to addressing TFGBV can be ineffective. If policy directives or platform guidelines do not account for the specific challenges faced by different demographic groups, the outcomes may unintentionally exacerbate inequalities. For example, legal reforms that focus solely on prosecuting individual offenders might overlook the broader structural barriers—such as poor infrastructure, limited legal aid, or cultural stigmatization of victims—that deter survivors from engaging with the criminal justice system (Dragiewicz et al., 2018).

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In light of these intersectional considerations, **policy measures** and **platform interventions** must be diversified to address the range of user experiences and socio-cultural contexts in which TFGBV occurs. Community-based initiatives—like digital literacy programs developed in partnership with local advocacy groups—can ensure that survivors from marginalized backgrounds receive the support they need in a format that resonates with their linguistic and cultural realities (Henry & Powell, 2018). Online platforms can further refine their moderation tools by integrating nuanced cultural and linguistic data into their algorithms, while also training human moderators on the nuances of intersectional abuse.

CONCLUSION

This literature review underscores the paradoxical nature of technology in the realm of gender-based violence (GBV). On one hand, digital platforms, social media channels, and communication applications offer perpetrators unprecedented opportunities to engage in abusive behaviours such as cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse (often referred to as revenge pornography), and other forms of online harassment (Henry & Powell, 2018). The anonymity and global reach characteristic of these platforms can embolden individuals to enact misogynistic attacks, thereby amplifying harmful patriarchal norms in ways that were not previously possible (Powell & Henry, 2016). On the other hand, the same technologies can be harnessed to build support networks, raise awareness, and facilitate advocacy campaigns that empower survivors. As

illustrated throughout this review, technology is therefore best understood as a **double-edged sword**: it is simultaneously a vehicle for perpetuating GBV and a resource for its prevention and redress.

One of the most significant challenges in confronting technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) lies in its complex interconnection with existing socio-cultural norms. Although abusive behaviours manifest in digital environments, they are rooted in longstanding inequalities offline (Hooks, 1984). This interplay suggests that purely technical solutions—such as stronger privacy settings or more sophisticated content moderation algorithms—cannot alone eradicate TFGBV. Rather, these solutions must be paired with deeper cultural change that challenges patriarchal ideologies, fosters respect for bodily autonomy, and encourages bystander intervention (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). Educational initiatives, beginning in early schooling and extending into workplace training programs, can foster digital citizenship and create a cultural atmosphere that rejects harassment as a tolerable norm (Berkowitz, 2004).

Moreover, the review shows that **collaboration among multiple stakeholders** is essential for any meaningful reduction in TFGBV. As Tugyetwena (2023) highlights, policymakers are tasked with crafting comprehensive and up-to-date legislation that encapsulates emerging forms of online abuse, including deepfake pornography and doxing. These laws must be rigorously enforced by law enforcement agencies trained to handle the unique evidentiary and investigative challenges presented by digital crimes (Freed et al., 2017). Additionally, platform providers such as social media companies, messaging apps, and online forums hold a sizable share of responsibility. By adopting user-friendly reporting systems, employing real-time detection algorithms, and consistently refining their community guidelines, they can play a powerful role in reducing the anonymity and impunity that perpetrators often rely on (Henry & Powell, 2018).

Another critical element that emerged from the literature is the **importance of intersectionality**. As Crenshaw (1991) argues, individuals who belong to multiple marginalized groups—based on race, class, sexual orientation, or disability—can be disproportionately affected by technology-facilitated abuse. A nuanced response to TFGBV must therefore address this complexity. For instance, interventions should consider cultural differences in how abuse is understood or reported, as well as disparities in access to reliable internet services and digital literacy programs. Local community organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and survivor advocacy groups often have specialized knowledge regarding these intersectional challenges and can contribute invaluable expertise to policy formulation and implementation (Henry & Powell, 2018).

Survivor-centered approaches must remain at the forefront of any strategy aimed at eliminating TFGBV. When survivors' voices and experiences shape both policy decisions and technological innovations, the focus shifts to ensuring that interventions are practical, trauma-informed, and accessible (Powell & Henry, 2016). By offering

secure online hotlines, private chat groups, and technology safety planning resources, support organizations can empower survivors while mitigating the risks of secondary victimization (Citron, 2014). Parallel to this, robust referral networks that connect survivors to legal aid, mental health services, and protective shelters are crucial to safeguarding survivors' physical and emotional well-being.

Ultimately, **multifaceted strategies** that interlink education, legislation, platform governance, and survivor empowerment are the most likely to succeed in reducing and eventually eliminating TFGBV. In many respects, technology can be a catalyst for positive social change—if harnessed with ethical intention and guided by equitable policies. Collaborative interventions, as Tugyetwena (2023) emphasizes, hold the key to preventing abuses, protecting those at risk, and prosecuting offenders. By strengthening policy frameworks, demanding accountability from technology companies, and foregrounding survivors' needs, stakeholders can create digital ecosystems that minimize harm and maximize the constructive possibilities of the internet.

Looking forward, further **research** is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of ongoing interventions and to keep pace with the rapid emergence of new technologies. Artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and other immersive digital tools have the potential to introduce both novel risks and innovative solutions to GBV (Freed et al., 2017). Continuous, interdisciplinary research—grounded in feminist, intersectional, and criminological frameworks—can guide agile policy responses that protect individuals without curtailing freedom of expression. Equally imperative is the cultivation of broader **public awareness** that recognizes TFGBV as a serious societal concern, rather than relegating it to a mere "online issue."

In conclusion, eliminating technology-facilitated gender-based violence necessitates an **integrated approach** that tackles the interplay of social norms, technical infrastructures, legal frameworks, and survivor advocacy. While there is no single solution for a problem as diverse and complex as TFGBV, collective efforts can substantially reduce its prevalence and impact. By realigning digital tools toward empowerment rather than abuse—through legislative reform, platform accountability, educational programs, and survivor-centered support—society can ensure that the "dark side of digitization" becomes significantly less potent. Ultimately, only a long-term commitment to transforming both digital and offline environments will realize the full potential of technology as a force for justice, safety, and equality.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Although scholarship on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) has grown in recent years, there remain significant gaps in understanding its full scope and complexity. To build more robust and comprehensive strategies for prevention and intervention, further research is warranted in several key areas.

First, **assessing the efficacy of platform policies** should be a top priority. While many social media companies have introduced moderation tools and reporting mechanisms to curb harassment and abuse, limited empirical data exist on how consistently and effectively these measures are enforced (Freed et al., 2017). Rigorous, data-driven evaluations could uncover discrepancies between policy intentions and actual outcomes, guiding the revision of community standards and spurring improvements in automated detection systems.

Second, **investigating intersectional vulnerabilities** is crucial. Despite mounting evidence that women with disabilities, Indigenous women, and LGBTQ+ individuals often experience higher rates of digital abuse, comparative studies examining their unique barriers and coping mechanisms are relatively scarce (Henry & Powell, 2018). Targeted inquiries could illuminate the cultural, socio-economic, and infrastructural factors that either exacerbate or mitigate TFGBV within these diverse communities. By highlighting these nuanced realities, researchers can inform more tailored and inclusive interventions.

Third, the **role of emerging technologies**—such as artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), and augmented reality (AR)—merits closer examination. As these tools become increasingly embedded in everyday life, they may introduce both new risks and new forms of support. AI-driven deepfake technology, for instance, can be used to create non-consensual imagery, whereas virtual or augmented reality platforms might offer safe, simulated spaces for therapeutic or educational programs aimed at survivors (Freed et al., 2017).

Lastly, **longitudinal impact studies** that track survivors' psychological, social, and economic well-being over time would provide critical insights. Understanding how TFGBV affects survivors' recovery trajectories, career advancement, and interpersonal relationships can guide the development of long-term support services and policies that address sustained needs.

Taken together, these avenues for future research can refine policy frameworks, improve platform accountability, and deepen theoretical understandings of TFGBV. Through systematic, multidisciplinary exploration, stakeholders can ultimately devise more effective strategies to minimize harm and empower survivors in an increasingly digital world.

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