

Protecting Women's Rights in School System, Digital Space, and ICT- Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

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Abstract

The digital age has ushered in new forms of GBV, necessitating a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by women in educational institutions and digital spaces. Protecting women's rights in these realms is essential for fostering gender equality and creating a safe and inclusive society. This work identifies various forms of GBV experienced by women in educational settings, digital spaces, and through ICT, analyses the impact of GBV on women's rights, well-being, and participation, and explores strategies to protect women's rights and combat gender-based violence. Drawing on liberal feminism theory and feminist technology studies, the paper examines the interplay of gender and technology. The methodology comprises a comprehensive literature review, synthesising findings into coherent sections to formulate recommendations. Findings reveal that women face various forms of GBV in educational institutions, including physical, sexual, and psychological harassment, resulting in adverse consequences for their well-being and academic progress. Addressing these challenges requires gender-sensitive policies, awareness campaigns, and collaboration. In conclusion, safeguarding women's rights is an ethical and societal imperative. Achieving gender equality, access to education, and digital safety is crucial for a just and equitable future. The study recommends among other things that policymakers, educational institutions, digital platforms, and civil society can collectively contribute to a safer, more equitable digital environment by enhancing and enforcing laws against digital gender-based violence, creating confidential reporting spaces for victims of gender-based violence, strengthen and implement reporting mechanisms for online harassment, advocate for gender equality and women's rights.

Keywords: Gender-based violence, Women's rights, Educational institutions, Digital spaces, ICT-facilitated violence, Gender equality

Introduction

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive issue that affects women worldwide, transcending physical and geographical boundaries. In recent years, the rise of digital spaces and information and communication technology (ICT) has given rise to new forms of gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence is not a new phenomenon, but it has evolved with society's technological advancements. Historically, gender-based violence has been entrenched in societal norms and practices, often with impunity. Women and girls have been vulnerable to various forms of violence, such as physical abuse, sexual harassment, and psychological aggression, especially in educational settings (Smith, 2017). With the advent of digital technology, these issues have extended to the online realm, where women may experience harassment, cyberbullying, and non-consensual sharing of intimate content (Henry, 2020).

Gender-based violence has significant consequences for women's physical and mental health, educational attainment, and overall well-being. In educational institutions, women may face harassment from peers, educators, or administrative staff, leading to higher dropout rates and reduced opportunities for personal and professional growth (United Nations, 2019). Online, cyberbullying and ICT-facilitated GBV can have detrimental effects on women's mental health, self-esteem, and their freedom to participate in the digital world (UN Women, 2022).

Information and communication technology, while promising tremendous opportunities, has also become a space where gender-based violence proliferates. The anonymity provided by digital platforms can embolden perpetrators, making it essential to understand how ICT facilitates new forms of gender-based violence (Jane, 2019). The rise of social media, online forums, and dating apps has created new avenues for stalking, harassment, and the dissemination of explicit content without consent (Smith & Brown, 2021).

Educational institutions play a pivotal role in addressing gender-based violence, both in physical and digital spaces. They must not only provide a safe learning environment but also promote awareness and education about gender-based violence (UNICEF, 2020). However, addressing these challenges effectively requires a comprehensive understanding of the issues women face in educational institutions and the digital sphere.

Protecting the rights of women in the school system, digital spaces, and ICT-facilitated environments is essential to ensure gender equality and create a safe and inclusive society. This research will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges women face and provide insights into effective strategies to combat gender-based violence in the 21st century.

This work aims to explore the multifaceted challenges women face within educational institutions, digital platforms, and ICT-facilitated spaces, and to identify the strategies and mechanisms that can protect their rights and combat gender-based violence. This paper seeks to specifically identify the various forms of gender-based violence experienced by women in educational settings, digital spaces, and through ICT, analyse the impact of GBV on women's rights, well-being, and participation in education and online activities, and explore the strategies and mechanisms that can protect women's rights, and combat gender-based violence in the school system and digital space.

Conceptual Clarification

Women's Rights

Women's rights refer to the legal, social, and political entitlements and protections that women have in society. These rights encompass areas such as equal access to education, freedom from discrimination, and the ability to participate fully in all aspects of public and private life (United Nations, 1979).

School System

The school system encompasses all educational institutions, from pre-schools to higher education, and the policies and practices that govern them. It includes both formal and informal education settings, such as public and private schools, as well as vocational and technical institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Digital Space

Digital space refers to the virtual environment created by the internet and electronic devices. It encompasses websites, social media platforms, online forums, and other digital spaces where users interact, share information, and engage in various online activities (Hargittai, 2018).

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence refers to any harmful act that is perpetrated against an individual's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It encompasses physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence and can occur in various settings, including the home, community, and online environments (United Nations, 1993).

ICT-Facilitated Gender-based Violence

ICT-facilitated gender-based violence refers to acts of harassment, bullying, or violence against individuals, primarily women that are facilitated or amplified through information and communication technologies (ICT). This can include online harassment, cyberstalking, non-consensual distribution of intimate images (revenge porn), and other digital forms of gender-based violence (World Health Organization, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Liberal Feminism Theory

Liberal feminism is a prominent feminist theory that focuses on achieving gender equality through legal and policy reforms within existing social and political systems. It advocates for equal rights, opportunities, and protections for women in various aspects of life, including education, employment, and political participation. This approach emphasises the importance of dismantling discriminatory laws and policies that limit women's opportunities and reinforce gender-based disparities (Sen, 2001).

Liberal feminists argue that women should have the same legal and political rights as men, including the right to vote, run for office, and participate fully in the workforce. They advocate for policies that ensure women have equal access to education, employment, and career advancement, addressing issues like pay equity and gender-based discrimination in the workplace (O'Reilly, 2021). Liberal feminists work to change discriminatory laws and regulations, seeking to eliminate gender-based discrimination in areas such as family law, property rights, and divorce proceedings.

They encourage women to participate in politics and advocate for policies that promote gender equality. Liberal feminists support women's autonomy to make choices about their lives, including decisions about their bodies, family planning, and career paths (Maugashca, 2018).

In the context of this work, liberal feminism is highly relevant. It advocates for equal educational and career opportunities for women and calls for legal reforms to address gender-based violence in digital spaces. It also encourages women's political engagement and respects their autonomy in decision-making, contributing to the broader goal of gender equality and women's rights protection.

Feminist Technology Studies

Feminist Technology Studies is an interdisciplinary field that merges feminist theory with the study of technology. It explores how technology is influenced by, and in turn influences, gender dynamics, power structures, and the experiences of individuals based on their gender (Wajcman, 2018).

Feminist Technology Studies emerged from the broader field of feminist science and technology studies. It delves into how technologies are designed, produced, and used in ways that may uphold or challenge existing gender norms and inequalities. The core of this theory is to critically examine the relationship between technology and gender, with a focus on various intersections such as race, class, and sexuality (Haraway, 2016). This theory acknowledges that technology is not neutral; it is shaped by societal values and can impact different groups in diverse ways (Klein & Dechaine, 2021).

Feminist Technology Studies can be applied to understand how technologies, particularly in the school system and digital space, can either empower women or reinforce gender-based disparities. It provides a framework for analysing representation, access, power dynamics, and the impact of technology on women's rights and experiences.

Methodology

The paper's methodology primarily comprises a comprehensive literature review. We systematically searched academic databases such as PubMed, JSTOR, Google Scholar, and ProQuest using keywords like "women's rights," "gender-based violence," "digital spaces," "educational institutions," "online harassment," and "gender equality" to identify relevant scholarly articles, books, reports, and research studies.

The collected literature underwent in-depth analysis, focusing on identifying key findings, arguments, and best practices. Relevant statistical data and case studies are also reviewed to enhance the narrative and provide supporting evidence.

After the analysis, we synthesised the information into coherent sections within the paper, logically categorising and organising key findings and arguments. This synthesis was pivotal in formulating recommendations and solutions for policymakers, educational institutions, digital platforms, and civil society organisations.

Literature Review

Women's Rights in Educational Institutions

In contemporary society, the preservation and enhancement of women's rights have become a paramount concern across various domains, from educational institutions to the digital sphere, and the concerning rise of ICT-facilitated gender-based violence. The pursuit of gender equality within educational institutions is an evolving challenge characterised by the distressing persistence of gender-based violence.

Recent studies reveal that women, particularly students, continue to endure various forms of gender-based violence within the educational domain, encompassing physical and sexual harassment, bullying, and psychological aggression (Smith, 2017). The repercussions of such violence on women's educational attainment and overall well-being are profound (United Nations, 2019). It perpetuates a detrimental cycle leading to higher female student dropout rates and hindrances to their personal and academic development.

Equally significant are the disparities women encounter in accessing quality education, with these disparities often rooted in marginalised communities. In addition, the underrepresentation of

women in STEM fields, crucial for advancing gender equality, signifies enduring challenges in sectors where women's historical undervaluation persists (UNESCO, 2020).

Amid these challenges, several promising opportunities and initiatives provide hope for the advancement of women's rights within educational institutions. Programmes, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, have gained traction by focusing on reducing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality in education. These initiatives are dedicated to creating safe and inclusive learning environments, curbing dropout rates among female students, and encouraging their active participation in all aspects of education (UNESCO, 2020).

Advocacy campaigns, both within and beyond campuses, play a pivotal role in raising awareness and combating gender-based violence. Women's rights advocacy groups, in collaboration with dedicated faculty members and students, collectively work to create a more inclusive and equitable educational environment (Smith & Brown, 2021). These collective efforts underscore the importance of dismantling the barriers perpetuating gender-based violence.

Despite substantial progress, gender disparities and challenges persist in the school system. Gender-based violence, including harassment and bullying, continues to affect female students (Smith, 2017), jeopardising their safety and academic progress (United Nations, 2019). Disparities in educational access persist, especially among women from marginalised communities, reflecting socioeconomic inequalities (UNESCO, 2020).

The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles in educational institutions further perpetuates gender imbalances (Blickenstaff, 2005). Efforts to address these challenges have led to various policies and initiatives promoting gender equality in education.

At the global level, organisations like the United Nations and UNESCO emphasize equal access to quality education regardless of gender (United Nations, 2020). National governments have developed strategies addressing gender-based violence, educational access, and STEM education for women (UN Women, 2021). Many institutions have introduced gender-sensitive policies, awareness campaigns, and safe reporting mechanisms for gender-based violence. Mentorship programs and support networks aid women in navigating the academic landscape (Blickenstaff, 2005).

While progress has been made, certain areas require further attention. Potential solutions include comprehensive gender education programs, support for female faculty development, strategies to encourage women in STEM fields, clear and confidential reporting mechanisms for gender-based violence, ongoing policy evaluation, and increased collaboration among institutions, governments, civil society, and international organisations to advance gender equality and women's rights in education.

Women's Experiences in the Digital Space

In our increasingly digitised society, women confront distinct challenges in the digital realm due to persistent gender disparities in digital access and usage, primarily influenced by socio-economic factors and entrenched cultural norms. These disparities curtail women's full participation in the digital world, limiting their access to information, job opportunities, and digital tools that could empower them (Hargittai, 2018).

One significant challenge women face in the digital space is online harassment, encompassing cyberbullying, online stalking, and the distribution of non-consensual intimate images, often termed "revenge porn." These experiences yield profound psychological and emotional consequences, including anxiety, depression, and self-censorship (Jane, 2019).

Furthermore, the underrepresentation of women in the tech and digital industries is an enduring concern. Ongoing gender-based discrimination and pay disparities in these sectors obstruct women's career advancement and opportunities for leadership roles (Smith & Brown, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the digital space offers noteworthy opportunities and initiatives for women's empowerment. Efforts to bridge the digital gender gap gain momentum through digital literacy programs, mentorship opportunities, and interventions promoting gender equity in the tech industry. These initiatives aim to enhance women's digital skills and foster their active participation in the digital economy (Hargittai, 2018).

Online platforms and social media networks also acknowledge the importance of addressing online harassment, implementing policies and reporting mechanisms with a specific focus on safeguarding women in digital spaces (Jane, 2019). Organisations and individuals actively advocate for greater representation and gender equality in the tech and digital sectors, creating opportunities for more women to participate and excel in these fields (Smith & Brown, 2021).

The digital space, with its transformative impact on how people connect and access information, presents both opportunities and challenges for women. Examining women's online experiences reveals a range of gender-specific concerns:

1. **Online Harassment:** Women frequently encounter gender-based harassment online, including cyberbullying, trolling, and sexual harassment (Jane, 2019). These online experiences inflict severe psychological, emotional, and physical consequences on victims (Henry, 2020).
2. **Online Discrimination:** Online discrimination, including sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia, significantly affects marginalised women (Herring, 2018). The intersection of these discriminatory behaviours exacerbates the challenges women face online.

3. **Social Media and Online Platforms:** Social media platforms play a crucial role in shaping women's online experiences. Anonymity often encourages harmful behaviors, contributing to gender-based violence (Jane, 2019). The design and policies of these platforms can either exacerbate or mitigate these issues.

Empowering women in digital spaces involves promoting digital literacy and citizenship, including education on online security, privacy settings, and reporting harassment and discrimination (Jane, 2019). Creating online communities and support networks is another strategy, providing women with a platform to share experiences, offer support, and combat online harassment. Women's rights organisations effectively leverage the digital space for advocacy (Henry, 2020).

Advocating for changes in the design and policies of online platforms is crucial to ensure safer digital environments for women (Herring, 2018). Ultimately, recognising the digital world as an extension of real life is essential. Laws, policies, and social norms that protect women in physical spaces should be extended to the digital realm. This includes strict regulations against online harassment and discrimination, legal action against perpetrators, and addressing the culture of anonymity that enables gender-based violence online (Henry, 2020).

ICT-Facilitated Gender-based Violence

The digital age has given rise to a concerning frontier in the struggle for women's rights: ICT-facilitated gender-based violence. This phenomenon encompasses a spectrum of violence and harassment carried out through information and communication technologies. It includes online harassment, cyberbullying, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, doxxing, and other forms of digital aggression (Henry, 2020).

The anonymity and connectivity offered by digital platforms have emboldened perpetrators, intensifying the harm inflicted on victims. The consequences for women's psychological and emotional well-being are severe, leading to feelings of fear, vulnerability, and self-censorship (Jane, 2019).

To counteract this emerging form of gender-based violence, legal reforms and robust enforcement mechanisms are imperative. Advocates and policymakers are calling for stricter legislation to address online harassment, cyberbullying, and the distribution of non-consensual intimate images. Establishing explicit legal frameworks to address these issues is a critical step in safeguarding women in digital spaces (Henry, 2020).

International and national efforts are also underway to tackle ICT-facilitated gender-based violence. These endeavors aim to raise awareness, establish support networks for victims, and foster collaboration among governments, tech companies, and civil society. Combining legal measures with public awareness campaigns and support systems can mitigate the prevalence and impact of ICT-facilitated gender-based violence (Smith & Brown, 2021).

Understanding ICT-facilitated gender-based violence requires delving into various forms of digital aggression:

1. **Online Harassment and Cyberbullying:** This includes persistent stalking, harassment through messages, and cyberbullying, all of which subject victims to harmful or threatening behavior in digital spaces (Jane, 2019).
2. **Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images (Revenge Porn):** Perpetrators share explicit images or videos of individuals without their consent, often with the intent to cause harm. Digital platforms facilitate these acts (Henry, 2020).

3. Online Sexual Harassment: Unwanted sexual advances or comments in digital environments, including explicit messages, unwanted advances, and sexual coercion (Smith & Brown, 2021).
4. Digital Stalking and Surveillance: Perpetrators use technology to monitor and stalk their victims, often employing location data, spyware, or hacking into personal accounts (Smith, 2017).

ICT-facilitated gender-based violence inflicts severe psychological, social, and legal consequences on victims: Victims endure emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues due to harassment, humiliation, and privacy violations. These emotional scars can have lasting effects on well-being and self-esteem (Henry, 2020).

Victims may isolate themselves from social activities, online platforms, or even their careers to escape online abuse, leading to social isolation and further emotional distress (Smith, 2017).

Legal systems often struggle to keep up with evolving technology and offenses, resulting in inconsistent protection for victims. Effective legislation, enforcement mechanisms, and international cooperation are crucial for providing legal recourse and protection (United Nations, 2019).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of ICT-facilitated gender-based violence, case studies and statistics offer valuable insights:

Case studies can be conducted on online harassment on social media platforms; examining the experiences of women targeted on these platforms through interviews, surveys, and analysis of the types and frequency of harassment they face (Smith & Brown, 2021).

Providing statistics on the non-consensual distribution of intimate images illustrates the scale of the issue, involving data on reported cases, legal actions taken, and the psychological impact on victims (Henry, 2020).

Highlighting legal cases related to ICT-facilitated gender-based violence showcases the complexities of pursuing legal action against perpetrators and the potential outcomes for victims and aggressors (United Nations, 2019).

The Impact of Intersectionality and Vulnerable Groups

Acknowledging the profound impact of intersectionality on women's experiences within educational institutions, the digital space, and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence is crucial. Intersectionality recognises that individuals possess multiple social identities that converge to shape their experiences and vulnerabilities. Within these contexts, intersectionality plays a significant role in shaping women's encounters:

1. **Women of Colour and Ethnic Backgrounds:** The convergence of gender with racial or ethnic identity gives rise to distinctive challenges, marked by increased rates of discrimination and diverse experiences of violence (Crenshaw, 1991).
2. **Economically Disadvantaged Women:** Socioeconomic factors intersect with gender, leading to unique challenges. These women may encounter obstacles in accessing quality education and face an elevated risk in digital spaces (Davis, 2019).
3. **LGBTQ+ Women:** Discrimination and violence experienced by LGBTQ+ women are intertwined with both their gender and sexual orientation or gender identity, resulting in distinct manifestations of gender-based violence and discrimination (Bowleg, 2008).

4. Women with Disabilities: These women confront the intersection of gender and disability, encountering systemic barriers in educational settings and digital spaces. Limited accessibility may render them more susceptible to gender-based violence (Morris, 1991).

Marginalised and vulnerable groups, often at the nexus of multiple social identities, experience unique challenges:

1. Indigenous Women: Historical marginalisation has led to educational disparities. The digital divide and cultural insensitivity compound their experiences in the digital space (Smith & Johnson, 2020).

2. Immigrant and Refugee Women: Language barriers, discrimination, and limited access to education affect their experiences, while their exposure to violence in their home countries influences their digital interactions (Kaguyutan & Fontes, 2021).

3. Transgender Women: Discrimination and violence linked to their gender identity are compounded by transphobia in educational settings and the digital space, resulting in unique challenges (Testa et al., 2012).

4. Women with Disabilities: Challenges are compounded in educational institutions due to physical and digital accessibility issues. They face an increased risk of ICT-facilitated gender-based violence (Hassouneh-Phillips et al., 2020).

To gain insights into the complexities of intersectionality, case studies and research focused on marginalised and vulnerable groups provide valuable perspectives:

1. Experiences of Indigenous Women in Online Education: An examination of cultural and technological factors can unveil the profound impact of intersectionality (Smith & Johnson, 2020).

2. Digital Experiences of Refugee Women: Research into their exposure to online gender-based violence demonstrates how multiple identities intersect, shaping their encounters in the digital realm (Kaguyutan & Fontes, 2021).

3. LGBTQ+ Students' Experiences: Investigating the interplay of gender and sexual orientation helps uncover unique challenges in educational settings and online spaces (Testa et al., 2012).

4. Digital Accessibility and Safety for Women with Disabilities: An inquiry into the compounded vulnerabilities they face highlights the imperative need for enhanced safety measures (Hassouneh-Phillips et al., 2020).

Legal Framework and International Instruments

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): This treaty, adopted in 1979, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets out an agenda for national action to end such discrimination (Nnadi, 2016).

2. Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): Although not exclusive to women's rights, the UDHR, adopted in 1948, underscores fundamental human rights and freedoms, with several articles pivotal in addressing gender-based violence and promoting women's rights.

3. Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993): This declaration was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and defines gender-based violence as a violation of human rights. It calls for the elimination of such violence and the protection of women's right (Nnadi, 2016).

4. Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention): This treaty, adopted in 2011, comprehensively addresses gender-based violence, including its facilitation through information and communication technologies (ICT). It obligates states to prevent violence, protect victims, and prosecute perpetrators (Ricci, 2022).

These international conventions are upheld through various enforcement and compliance mechanisms (Ricci, 2022).

- a. **Committees and Reporting Procedures:** International treaties typically have oversight committees to review states' compliance. State parties regularly submit reports on their progress in implementing the conventions. Committees offer recommendations and engage in dialogues with state representatives.
 - b. **Optional Protocols and Additional Mechanisms:** Some conventions establish optional protocols, creating additional enforcement mechanisms, including individual complaints procedures. These mechanisms allow individuals to bring violations to international bodies.
 - c. **Awareness and Advocacy:** Civil society organisations, advocacy groups, and NGOs play a crucial role in raising awareness of international instruments and monitoring state compliance. They advocate for implementation and may submit alternative perspectives through shadow reports.
 - d. **Domestic Legislation and Courts:** Effective enforcement often requires integrating international obligations into domestic law. Many states pass legislation that aligns with international conventions to strengthen women's rights and address gender-based violence. National courts provide venues for pursuing justice when violations occur.
- These international instruments, combined with their enforcement mechanisms, form a critical framework for protecting women's rights and addressing gender-based violence on a global scale. They bridge the gap between international standards and national legal systems.

Best Practices and Solutions for Protecting Women's Rights in Educational Institutions and Digital Spaces

Numerous best practices and solutions have emerged to protect women's rights in educational institutions and digital spaces, showcasing valuable models for promoting gender equality and addressing challenges. These include:

Educational institutions have created confidential safe spaces for reporting gender-based violence, such as the “Red Zone” initiative in universities, which raises awareness about the heightened risk of sexual violence during the start of the academic year (Potter, 2017).

Initiatives like the “Green Dot” programme train individuals to intervene in situations involving or indicating gender-based violence, empowering bystanders to take preventive actions (Coker, Cook-Craig, Williams, Fisher, Clear, Garcia & Hegge, 2017).

Social media platforms have introduced reporting mechanisms, like Facebook's “Safety Check” and Twitter’s “Report Abuse,” enabling users to report online harassment and abuse (Henry, 2020).

Comprehensive sex education in educational institutions covers topics such as consent, healthy relationships, and the consequences of gender-based violence. It equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate situations involving harassment and violence (Baker-Whitton Thi & Handcock, 2020).

Institutions and online platforms are emphasising digital literacy programs, particularly for women and vulnerable groups, to educate users on online safety, privacy, and responsible digital citizenship (Lenhart, 2018).

In addition to these best practices, proposed solutions for addressing the challenges faced by women in educational institutions and digital spaces include:

Launching tailored awareness campaigns in educational institutions and online platforms to raise consciousness about gender-based violence (Potter, 2017).

Implementing gender-sensitive training for educators and students, enabling educators to recognise and address gender-based violence and empowering students to identify and respond to online harassment and discrimination (Coker et al., 2017).

Encouraging institutions to strengthen their policies regarding gender-based violence, including improving reporting mechanisms, disciplinary procedures, and prevention strategies. Advocate for legislation addressing online harassment and violence (Henry, 2020).

Collaborating with tech companies and social media platforms to ensure they enforce community guidelines and provide robust reporting and prevention tools. Encourage investment in AI and algorithms that detect and mitigate harmful online behaviour (Lenhart, 2018).

Developing policies and initiatives that address the unique challenges faced by women from diverse backgrounds, recognising the intersectionality of their experiences (Potter, 2017).

The Role of Technology in Empowering Women

Technology's impact on empowering women in educational institutions and digital spaces is profound and multifaceted. It provides opportunities for women to access education, gain skills, network, advocate for their rights, and participate in the digital economy. Digital technology has democratised education, offering online courses and e-learning platforms that enable women to pursue learning without geographical constraints (Warschauer, 2017).

Furthermore, technology equips women with skills crucial in the digital age, including coding, graphic design, and data analysis, fostering employability and entrepreneurship (Reynolds & Capon, 2019).

Digital platforms facilitate global networking, allowing women to connect with peers, mentors, and professionals, while online communities provide spaces for sharing experiences and opportunities (Hargittai, 2018).

Social media and online spaces empower women to raise their voices and advocate for their rights, exemplified by movements like #MeToo that leverage technology to address gender-based violence and harassment (Henry, 2020).

Digital technology enables women to participate in the digital economy through e-commerce, freelancing, and online businesses, providing economic inclusion and entrepreneurship opportunities (Reynolds & Capon, 2019).

However, technology also plays a vital role in addressing ICT-facilitated gender-based violence in the digital age:

Tech companies are developing tools and algorithms to detect and prevent online harassment. Reporting mechanisms and safety features on digital platforms ensure victims can seek help and protection (Henry, 2020).

Empowering women with digital literacy and education is an effective strategy against online harassment. Understanding how to navigate online spaces safely and responsibly reduces risks (Lenhart, 2018).

Technology offers encryption and security solutions to safeguard women's online privacy, such as encryption apps and privacy settings on social media platforms (World Bank, 2019).

Online communities and social networks provide emotional and practical support to victims of online violence, offering solidarity and advice to those affected (Hargittai, 2018).

Technology can support the legal framework in combating ICT-facilitated gender-based violence by addressing issues like revenge porn and online stalking, allowing for the prosecution of perpetrators (World Health Organization, 2020).

Findings of the Work

Findings and insights on women's rights in educational institutions, the digital space, and ICT-facilitated gender-based violence reveal as follows:

In educational institutions perspective findings revealed that gender-based violence, including physical and sexual harassment, remains a significant issue, affecting women's educational attainment and well-being. Disparities persist in accessing quality education, particularly for marginalised communities, and in women's representation in STEM fields. Promising initiatives in low- and middle-income countries aim to reduce gender-based violence and promote gender equality in education. Advocacy campaigns are crucial for raising awareness and addressing gender-based violence. International organisations and national governments are working on policies and initiatives to improve gender equality in education.

In the digital space domain, findings have demonstrated that gender disparities in digital access result in challenges for women, limiting access to information and opportunities. Online harassment, including cyberbullying and non-consensual image distribution, has severe psychological consequences for women. Underrepresentation of women in tech hinders their career advancement. Efforts are underway to bridge the digital gender gap through digital literacy programs and mentorship. Social media platforms have introduced policies to combat online harassment.

For ICT-Facilitated gender-based violence, it is unraveled that ICT-facilitated gender-based violence includes various forms of harassment through technology, with severe psychological

consequences for victims. Legal reforms and enforcement mechanisms are essential to address this type of violence. Forms of ICT-facilitated violence include online harassment, cyberbullying, non-consensual image distribution, online sexual harassment, and digital stalking. Victims experience severe psychological, emotional, and legal consequences.

Intersectionality shapes women's experiences in various contexts, and vulnerable groups face unique challenges. Indigenous women, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ women, and women with disabilities experience distinct forms of gender-based violence.

On the legal framework and international instruments, international instruments like CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention provide a framework for protecting women's rights and addressing gender-based violence. Civil society organisations play a crucial role in advocating for these instruments.

Best practices include safe reporting spaces, bystander training, comprehensive sex education, and digital literacy programmes. Proposed solutions involve tailored awareness campaigns, gender-sensitive training, policy improvements, collaboration with tech companies, and recognising diverse challenges women face.

Technology empowers women by providing access to education, skills, networking, and advocacy. Technology can also help address ICT-facilitated gender-based violence through detection tools, digital literacy, online privacy, and support networks.

Conclusion

This paper underscores the critical link between women's rights and their experiences in educational institutions and digital spaces. Persistent gender disparities, the digital gender gap, online harassment, and discrimination necessitate urgent attention and action. Safeguarding

women's rights in these domains is both an ethical and societal imperative. Gender equality, access to education, and digital safety are crucial for progress and justice. The findings emphasise the need for further research and action, adapting strategies to the evolving digital landscape. This paper is a call to action for scholars, policymakers, activists, and society to recognise ongoing challenges and untapped opportunities. Protecting women's rights and promoting gender equality are foundational principles for a just and equitable future, demanding collective commitment and unwavering action.

Recommendations

Policymakers should:

1. Enhance and enforce laws against digital gender-based violence, including online harassment, cyberbullying, and revenge porn.
2. Develop policies promoting gender equality, prevention of violence, and support for victims.
3. Collaborate with tech companies to create safer digital environments.

Educational institutions should:

1. Create confidential reporting spaces for victims of gender-based violence.
2. Include comprehensive sex education to address gender-based violence.
3. Develop strong support systems for victims.
4. Partner with tech companies for digital literacy programs.

Digital platforms should:

1. Strengthen and implement reporting mechanisms for online harassment.
2. Enforce clear community guidelines to prevent online harassment.
3. Promote online communities for victims of online violence.

Civil Society:

1. Advocate for gender equality and women's rights.
2. Establish support networks for women facing online harassment.
3. Conduct educational programmes and awareness campaigns.

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