

SOCIAL MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

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Abstract

Digitalization has ingrained itself in all walks of life of a human being, from banking to shopping to studying this technical revolution has played a significant role in our day to day lives and has become inseparable part. It has its own pros and cons, and it's on us human beings to make sure to avoid and abstain from falling prey to this peculiar yet astonishing thing called technology. Nevertheless human beings often fail to remember that it's more essential being a human .therefore as of February 2025, the most recent data indicates that the proportion of women globally utilizing the internet remains comparatively lower than that of men. Specifically, 65.7 percent of women accessed the internet, in contrast to 70 percent of men. This emphasizes on the ongoing disparity in the internet usage between genders. While this virtual cyber space pledges evolution it fails to bridge the gender gaps. Global statistics show that 16% to 58% of girls and women have fallen prey to online violence. Various legal frameworks have been laid down for the betterment and protection of the women.

Keywords: Digitalization, Online Violence, Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence, Harassment, Cyber bullying, Women's Rights, Artificial intelligence, Deep Fake

Introduction

Technology and digital platforms have today become a strange routine and have intertwined with our daily lives, it's the new normal. Nonetheless as per the data as of February 2025, the global proportion of women utilizing the internet remained comparatively lower than that of men. According to the most recent statistics from the international telecommunication union (ITU), 65.7%¹⁶⁹ of women worldwide accessed the internet, whereas the percentage of men online was 70%, highlighting the disparity and indicating a persistent gender gap in internet access. Amongst which studies across the globe also show that 16% to 58% of girls and women face online violence. Amid this, globally approximately 736 million women i.e. every one in three women suffer and has encountered violence at least once in their life time. Howbeit, this bone of contention eclipses and surpasses, the interpersonal relationships and extends to

manifold domains and environments including online platforms, which has been, seeing a rapid shoot up.

Technology facilitated gender based violence

Social media, digital platforms, technology are double edged sword and thus have its boons and banes. It brings a fair share of exceptional opportunities and modernization to the table. Nevertheless a small crack in the system can penetrate atrocious and revolting harm. The most common harms seeping through these cracks today is technology facilitated gender based violence or *TFGBV* which in common terms translates to¹⁷⁰ an act of violence carried out by one or more individuals which is facilitated, intensified or exacerbated in whole or in part through the utilization of information and communication technologies or digital media, directed at an individual based on their gender and *TFGBV* has mainly been targeted towards women on a wide scale. Especially

¹⁶⁹ <https://dig.watch/topics/gender-rights-online>

¹⁷⁰ <https://www.unfpa.org/TFGBV>

certain classes of women are more susceptible to it which mainly comprises of lawmakers, women activists, actresses, social media influencers, journalists. For instance 73% of female journalists have experienced online violence.

Forms of online violence against women

Online violence targeted towards women has not been the most recently developed or newly discovered happening. It has been observed since the dawn of this technical evolution which is unendingly shifting. Since arrival of emails and chat rooms women have been confronted with online violence. The following are some types of online violence¹⁷¹

Cyber stalking: Cyber stalking is a crime in which someone harasses or stalks a victim using electronic or digital means such as social media ,emails ,instant messaging or messages posted to a discussion group or a forum. Cyber stalkers take advantage of anonymity provided by the internet to stalk or harass their victims, sometimes without being caught, punished or even detected.

Online harassment: Online harassment is used as an umbrella term to describe the use of the internet to harass, threaten or maliciously embarrass another party. It can be in the form of verbal, sexual, emotional or social abuse aimed at a person, a group of people or even an organization. Online harassment not only violates a person's right to live free from violence and to participate online but also undermines their democratic exercises and good governance.

Revenge porn & nonconsensual image sharing: During 2010's¹⁷², image exploitation of women through various social platforms had taken a center stage. These unauthorized, forbidden nonconsensual sharing of photos was an act that was backed by various underlying motives including rebel, revolt and the want to take control over things and such acts became

damaging and unfavorable weapons against women's security .

Deep fake technology and AI generated abuse: a synthetic media image, also known as deep fake, is a kind of video or image that is generated using AI. These videos or images created are identical and almost undistinguishable from the real ones. These are usually induced with the intention to exploit, create false narratives and for defamation.

Doxxing & privacy breaches:¹⁷³ The term "doxxing" is derived from the word "dropping box" or "documents". It is mainly a form of privacy violation and cyber bullying where confidential, restricted, private and intimate data and information is circulated with the intent to cause harm and distress, mentally or financially, upon the targeted individual.

Legal frameworks for the protection of women in technology and social media

The Information Technology Act, 2000¹⁷⁴

Section 66(e): any individual who intentionally or knowingly captures, publishes, or transmits an image of another person's private area without their consent, in a manner that infringes upon that person's privacy, shall be subject to imprisonment for a term that may extend up to three years or a fine not exceeding 200,000 rupees or both.

Section 67 & 67(a): prohibits the publications or transmission of obscene and sexually explicit material in electronic form. The punishment for the first conviction includes imprisonment up to 3 years and a fine up to 5 lakhs rupees. And the punishment for the second conviction under sec 67 includes imprisonment up to 5 years and fine of 10 lakh rupees.

Section 69(a): under this section the government possesses the authority to obstruct information that is created, transmitted, received, stored or hosted on any computing resource. It can instruct any agency or

¹⁷¹ <https://lawcrust.com/>

¹⁷² <https://unric.org/>

¹⁷³ <https://www.fortinet.com/>

¹⁷⁴ <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>

intermediary to restrict access to such information. Intermediaries' that fail to adhere to the government's directives may face fine and imprisonment for a duration up to seven years.

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Section 78 (stalking): This section of the BNS addresses the crime of stalking. Stalking refers to the persistent harassment or following of an individual by another person.

This behavior may encompass the surveillance of a woman's online activities, including her use of the internet, email, digital platforms or other forms of electronic communication.

The first offence of stalking may lead to a prison term up to three years accompanied by a monetary penalty. In the case of the second or further offence the individual may face a prison up to 5 years along with a fine.

Section 79: this section addresses the crime of offending a women's modesty. This encompasses the use of language, gestures, sounds or objects intended to demean a woman as well as any invasion of her privacy. The penalty for this offence consists of a simple imprisonment of 3 years along with monetary fine.

Section 356: this section addresses defamation. It protects women from false and harmful content shared online.

Section 351: this section establishes penalties for the acts of intimidation in which the offender conceals their identity to instill fear in another individual.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

The Act addressee's harassment in the workplace, primarily concentrating on physical environments. However, its application also extends to online harassment occurring on

social media platforms and remote work environments.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

This act established in 1986 was designed to prevent the negative depiction of women in advertisement, publication and various forms of media.

Conclusion

Social media and technology serve as very prestigious, predominant and influential instruments, however, in the absence of powerfully built legal safeguards and provisions they can metamorph into hazardous and vulnerable environments for women. Although India has established laws to combat online violence, harassment and abuse, the enforcement and fulfillment of this law is lacking. To effectively shield women's digital rights it is paramount that legal reforms, enhanced law enforcement and corporate responsibility are implemented concurrently. Until such measures are taken, women in India will persist in maneuvering through a digital landscape that frequently neglects their safety. Addressing these gaps is essential for transforming social media and technology into instruments of equality instead of tools of exploitation. And we should not lose sight of the fact and remember that we are the catalyst for transformation and we are the change.

¹⁷⁵ <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/>