Understanding Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence among Women and Girls in South Sudan

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Research Study by Ma'Mara Sakit Village in collaboration with GoGirls ICT Initiative

Juba, South Sudan

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ICT Initiative

Understanding Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Among Women and Girls in South Sudan

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This research was led by a multidisciplinary young feminist research team from Ma'Mara Sakit Village and GoGirls ICT Initiative, with the support of a dedicated field research team working across the seven states and one administrative area.

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List of Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
CIRT	Computer Incident Response Team
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GSMA	GSM Association
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
ISP	Internet Service Provider
KII	Key Informant Interview
NCA	National Communication Authority
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PDF	Portable Document Format
S4YE	Solutions for Youth Employment
SIM	Subscriber Identity Module
SMS	Short Message Service
SS-CIRT	South Sudan Computer Incident Response Team
TFGBV	Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
VAWP	Violence Against Women in Politics
WHO	World Health Organization

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Our appreciation extends to the government institutions, regulatory bodies, educational institutions, telecommunications and technology actors, civil society and women's rights organizations, international organizations, UN agencies, legal practitioners, youth and women leaders, digital safety practitioners, gender experts, and development partners who generously shared their knowledge and institutional perspectives throughout the research. Their contributions enriched the study and strengthened its analysis and recommendations.

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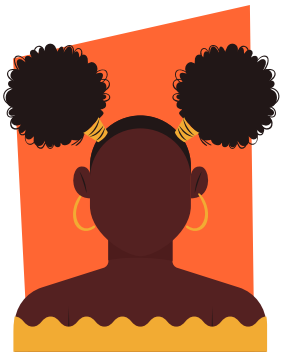
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) has become an increasingly important challenge as digital technologies reshape how people communicate, learn, work, organize, and participate in public life. While digital spaces have created new opportunities for education, entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and social connection, they have also become spaces where existing gender inequalities are reproduced and new forms of violence emerge. Around the world, women and girls are increasingly experiencing online harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, image-based abuse, blackmail, and other forms of violence that undermine their safety, participation, and rights.

In South Sudan, however, understanding of these emerging forms of violence has remained limited.



Around the world, women and girls are increasingly experiencing online harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, image-based abuse, blackmail, and other forms of violence that undermine their safety, participation, and rights.

Although mobile phones, social media platforms, and messaging applications are becoming increasingly integrated into everyday life, little locally generated evidence exists to explain how technology-facilitated gender-based violence manifests, who is most affected, how survivors respond, or how institutions address these harms.

Unlike many studies that begin as purely academic inquiries, this research emerged directly from practice. It grew out of years of accompanying young women and girls through community-based feminist organizing, where digital violence consistently emerged as a growing concern affecting their safety, participation, leadership, and wellbeing.

This research was jointly undertaken by Ma'Mara Sakit Village (the Village) and GoGirls ICT Initiative, two South Sudanese sister organizations working to advance gender equality, girls' and women's leadership, and digital inclusion. The study was led by a multidisciplinary feminist research team drawn from both organizations, bringing together expertise in gender and feminist research, community organizing, digital safety, and technology. The Village creates community-led spaces where girls and young women organize, build leadership, strengthen collective wellbeing, and generate knowledge rooted in their lived experiences. Since 2022, it has convened Feminist Talking Circles, bringing together young women from diverse backgrounds to reflect on leadership, identity, participation, and the challenges affecting their lives. Across these conversations, concerns about digital safety emerged consistently. Participants described experiences

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GoGirls ICT Initiative, through its work promoting girls' and young women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and digital innovation

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of online harassment, intimidation, impersonation, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, digital surveillance, and coordinated attacks, particularly against young women engaged in public life, advocacy, and community leadership.

On the other hand, GoGirls ICT Initiative, through its work promoting girls' and young women's participation in science, technology, engineering, and digital innovation, was encountering similar concerns around online safety and the gendered risks associated with increasing digital participation. Although the two organizations approached these issues from different areas of work, they recognized a shared pattern: digital technologies were becoming another space through which women and girls experienced discrimination, intimidation, and violence.

To better understand these concerns, the two sister organizations collaborated in 2023 to convene a roundtable on feminism and digital safety, bringing together 56 young women and feminists in Juba, alongside an online survey completed by 32 participants. The initial intention was to generate insights that would inform the development of a feminist digital safety curriculum for the GoGirls ICT Initiative and Ma'Mara Sakit Village communities. However, the findings revealed a much broader challenge. Rather than identifying isolated digital safety concerns, participants described a wide range of technology-facilitated abuses and highlighted significant barriers to reporting, limited institutional responses, and the absence of public understanding about these forms of violence. The organizations recognized that before designing interventions, there was a need to better understand the nature, manifestations, and impacts of TFGBV within the South Sudanese context more broadly.

This realization prompted the Village and GoGirls ICT Initiative to pause curriculum development and instead invest in a comprehensive national research study. Throughout 2024, the two organizations designed the research, refined its scope, and developed the methodology. With financial support from Numun Fund to the Village**,** the study commenced in 2025 following the necessary ethical and institutional approval processes. Data were collected across seven states and one administrative area through surveys, focus group discussions, key informant interviews, and analysis of institutional data. Preliminary findings were subsequently shared through public engagements, policy dialogues, and awareness initiatives before undergoing validation through consultations with the National GBV Sub-Cluster, a multi-stakeholder validation workshop, and technical review by the National Bureau of Statistics to strengthen the quality, accuracy, and relevance of the final report.

1.2 Background

TFGBV has become an increasingly important area of scholarship within research on violence against women and girls, digital rights, and human rights governance. As digital technologies become

embedded in everyday social, economic, educational, and political life, they have created new opportunities for communication, learning, and participation while also providing additional pathways through which gender-based violence can occur. Rather than creating new forms of inequality, digital technologies often reproduce and amplify existing gendered power relations, allowing abuse to extend beyond physical spaces into online environments.

Feminist and socio-legal scholarship increasingly understands TFGBV as part of the broader continuum of violence against women and girls rather than as a separate or purely digital phenomenon. Henry and Powell (2018) describe technology-facilitated sexual violence as encompassing behaviors such as online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual abuse, and gender-based online harassment. Similarly, Hinson et al. (2018) define TFGBV as acts of gender-based violence that are committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified through the use of digital technologies. These perspectives emphasize that technology is not the root cause of violence but a medium through which existing inequalities, discrimination, and coercive control are expressed and intensified.

Despite growing international attention to TFGBV, significant evidence gaps remain. UN Women (2023a; 2023b) highlights persistent challenges arising from inconsistent definitions, fragmented measurement approaches, and widespread under-reporting, making it difficult to compare findings across countries and contexts. Emerging evidence nevertheless demonstrates that TFGBV has serious consequences for women's safety, mental health, freedom of expression, economic participation, and civic engagement. Forms of abuse such as cyberstalking, online harassment, image-based sexual abuse, impersonation, doxxing, and technology-enabled coercive control increasingly limit women's ability to participate safely in public and digital spaces.

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Research also shows that TFGBV is experienced unevenly across different groups of women and girls. Young women and girls, women in public life, journalists, human rights defenders, political actors, activists, and women with disabilities often face heightened exposure because of their visibility, intersecting identities, or public engagement. Plan International's (2020) multi-country study found that online harassment discourages girls' participation, limits their confidence, and restricts their willingness to express themselves online. Similarly, UN Women (2023b) has highlighted that intersecting forms of discrimination can increase vulnerability to digital violence while simultaneously reducing access to reporting mechanisms and support services.

Although the global evidence base continues to grow, comparatively little research has examined TFGBV within fragile, conflict-affected, and humanitarian settings. Much of the existing literature originates from relatively stable contexts, leaving important questions about how conflict, displacement, humanitarian crises, institutional weakness, and uneven digital access shape experiences of technology-facilitated violence. These conditions may influence not only the forms of abuse women experience but also their willingness to report, the availability of support services, and the capacity of institutions to respond effectively.

These gaps are particularly relevant to South Sudan. The country continues to experience the long-term effects of conflict, displacement, humanitarian pressures, limited infrastructure, and deeply entrenched gender inequalities. Women and girls continue to face high levels of offline gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence, child marriage, and conflict-related sexual violence (Ellsberg et al., 2020; UN Women & Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, 2024). At the same time, the use of mobile phones, social media platforms, messaging applications, and other digital technologies is expanding, particularly among young people. As women's digital participation increases, so too does the potential for technology to be used as a tool of harassment, intimidation, surveillance, exploitation, and abuse.

TFGBV affects women and girls unevenly, with young women and girls, women in public life, journalists, activists, political actors, human rights defenders, and women with disabilities facing heightened risks due to their visibility, intersecting identities, and public engagement.



However, institutional responses have not evolved at the same pace as digital participation. While South Sudan has made progress in expanding digital access and strengthening aspects of its cyber governance framework, limited evidence exists on the prevalence, manifestations, impacts, reporting pathways, and institutional handling of technology-facilitated gender-based violence. This evidence gap constrains the ability of policymakers, regulators, educational institutions, service providers, telecommunications actors, and civil society organizations to develop coordinated, survivor-centered responses that reflect the realities experienced by women and girls. It is within this context that the present study is situated.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite the rapid expansion of digital technologies in South Sudan, there is limited context-specific evidence on the nature, manifestations, impacts, reporting pathways, and institutional responses to TFGBV. While digital technologies have become increasingly important for education, entrepreneurship, employment, civic engagement, and political participation, they have also created new avenues through which women and girls experience harassment, intimidation, surveillance, exploitation, and abuse. Yet these emerging forms of violence remain largely absent from national research, policy discussions, and programming.

Existing research on violence against women and girls in South Sudan has focused primarily on offline forms of violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, intimate partner violence, child marriage, and other harmful practices. Although this body of work has significantly advanced understanding of gender inequality and violence, it provides limited insight into how violence is increasingly mediated through digital technologies. Consequently, there is little evidence on the forms of TFGBV experienced by women and girls, the impacts on their wellbeing and participation, the barriers survivors face in seeking support, or the effectiveness of existing institutional responses.

The absence of locally generated evidence has important implications for policy and practice. Without a clear understanding of how TFGBV manifests within South Sudan's social, political, and humanitarian context, government institutions, regulators, educational institutions, telecommunications actors, law enforcement agencies, civil society organizations, and development partners are limited in their ability to develop coordinated, survivor-centred responses. Technology-facilitated violence may therefore continue to be treated primarily as a technical or cybercrime issue rather than as a form of gender-based violence requiring coordinated prevention, protection, accountability, and survivor support.

This study responds to four interconnected gaps.

First, there is an evidence gap, with limited nationally generated data documenting the prevalence, forms, manifestations, and impacts of TFGBV in South Sudan.

Second, there is a knowledge gap, as little is known about survivors' reporting experiences, help-seeking behaviors, and the barriers that discourage disclosure and access to services.

Third, there is an institutional gap, with limited understanding of the preparedness and capacity of government institutions, telecommunications actors, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and justice systems to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated violence.

Finally, there is a policy and programming gap, as the absence of context-specific evidence limits the development of effective laws, policies, prevention initiatives, and survivor-centered interventions.

By addressing these gaps, this study contributes one of the first comprehensive analyses of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan. It seeks to generate evidence that informs policy, strengthens institutional responses, supports prevention and survivor-centered programming, and contributes to safer and more inclusive digital spaces for women and girls.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The overall aim of this study is to examine the nature, manifestations, impacts, reporting pathways, and institutional responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan in order to generate evidence that informs policy, strengthens institutional responses, and supports survivor-centered prevention and protection efforts.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

1. Examine the forms and manifestations of technology-facilitated gender-based violence experienced by women and girls in South Sudan.
2. Assess the prevalence and patterns of technology-facilitated gender-based violence among different groups of women and girls, including students, women leaders, women activists, and women with disabilities.
3. Examine the social, psychological, educational, economic, and civic impacts of technology-facilitated gender-based violence on women and girls.
4. Explore survivors' reporting pathways, help-seeking behaviors, and the barriers to reporting and accessing support services.
5. Assess the effectiveness of institutional, legal, educational, community, and digital platform responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
6. Develop evidence-based recommendations to strengthen prevention, policy, institutional coordination, survivor support, and future research on technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan.

1.6 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What forms of technology-facilitated gender-based violence are experienced by women and girls in South Sudan?
2. What is the prevalence and pattern of technology-facilitated gender-based violence among different groups of women and girls?
3. What social, psychological, educational, economic, and civic impacts does technology-facilitated gender-based violence have on women and girls?
4. How do survivors report technology-facilitated gender-based violence, and what barriers influence disclosure, reporting, and access to support?
5. How effective are existing institutional, legal, educational, community, and digital platform responses in preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?
6. What actions are needed to strengthen policy, institutional responses, prevention, and survivor support for technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan?

1.7 Conceptual and Theoretical Framing

This research is informed by three complementary conceptual lenses: the continuum of violence, intersectionality, and the ecological model.

The **continuum perspective**, most closely associated with Kelly's foundational feminist work, emphasises that different forms of violence against women should not be treated as wholly discrete phenomena but as interconnected expressions of gendered domination that vary in form, severity, and recognisability across contexts (Kelly, 1988; Kelly, 2019). More recent scholarship has extended this insight into digital contexts, arguing that image-based abuse and other technology-mediated harms should be

understood as continuous with, rather than separate from, wider forms of sexual and gender-based violence (McGlynn, Rackley, and Houghton, 2017; Henry, Flynn, and Powell, 2020). For this study, TFGBV is therefore conceptualised as part of a broader continuum linking online abuse, social control, reputational harm, coercion, and offline violence.

Crenshaw's work on **intersectionality**, adopted as this research's intersectional framework, demonstrates that experiences of oppression cannot be adequately explained through single-axis categories such as gender alone; rather, social harms are shaped by the interaction of multiple identities and power structures (Crenshaw, 1989). Applied to TFGBV in South Sudan, this means that women's experiences are likely to differ according to age, disability status, educational location, public visibility, and broader conditions of displacement, poverty, or social marginalisation. An intersectional lens is therefore necessary not only for analysing risk but also for understanding why some women are less able to report abuse, access remedies, or remain active in digital spaces.

The **ecological perspective** provides a third analytical lens. Heise's integrated ecological framework explains violence as the outcome of interacting factors at individual, relationship, community, and societal levels (Heise, 1998). Subsequent work has shown that this approach remains highly useful for analysing violence against women across diverse contexts, including low- and middle-income settings (Fulu and Miedema, 2015). In this research, the ecological model helps connect personal vulnerability, relationship dynamics, local norms, institutional weakness, and broader political conditions to the emergence and effects of TFGBV.

Simply, TFGBV for this research is used to refer to acts of harassment, abuse, intimidation, coercion, exploitation, or control that are committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified through digital technologies. In this study, 'technology' is understood broadly to include mobile phones, phone calls, SMS, social media platforms, messaging applications, email, image-sharing platforms, online forums, connected devices, and emerging tools such as AI-enabled image manipulation. This includes, but is not limited to, abusive messaging, sexual harassment, impersonation, account takeover, non-consensual sharing of content, stalking, blackmail, doxxing, threats, coordinated online attacks, and manipulated or synthetic intimate images. This broad formulation reflects current scholarly and policy efforts to move beyond narrow labels such as cyberbullying or revenge porn towards a more comprehensive understanding of gendered digital harm (Hinson et al., 2018; UN Women, 2023a).

TFGBV for this research is used to refer to acts of harassment, abuse, intimidation, coercion, exploitation, or control that are committed, assisted, aggravated, or amplified through digital technologies.



1.8 Overview of the Methodological Approach

Although the full research design is presented in Chapter Four, it is important to note at this stage that the study employs a feminist-informed mixed-methods approach. Quantitative survey data are used to identify patterns in exposure, impacts, reporting, and respondent characteristics, while qualitative material is used to illuminate meanings, perceptions, silences, and contextual nuances. The analysis also draws on institutional materials where available. This approach is suitable for TFGBV because the phenomenon is both measurable and interpretive: it involves identifiable acts and frequencies, as well as social meanings, emotional consequences, and institutional dynamics that are not easily captured by structured questions alone.

The integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence is especially important in TFGBV research because survey responses alone may understate harms that participants normalise, minimise, or find difficult to name. Conversely, qualitative accounts benefit from being read alongside broader descriptive

patterns. The mixed-methods design, therefore, supports both analytical and explanatory depth.

1.9 Significance

This research makes four main contributions.

1. **First**, it contributes original empirical evidence to a field where data remain uneven, especially in fragile and conflict-affected settings. UN Women has repeatedly emphasised the global scarcity of comparable evidence on TFGBV, and this scarcity is even more pronounced in contexts such as South Sudan (UN Women, 2023a; UN Women, 2024). The research, therefore, fills an important geographical and contextual gap.

2. **Second**, it contributes to scholarship on the relationship between online and offline violence. By situating TFGBV within a broader continuum of gendered harm, it avoids treating digital abuse as a superficial or secondary issue. Instead, it examines how digital abuse may deepen existing inequalities, extend coercive control, and shape women's participation in public and private life.

3. **Third** is significant changes for policy and practice in South Sudan. The lack of local evidence limits the capacity of state institutions, schools, universities, civil society organisations, and digital rights advocates to design prevention, reporting, and response mechanisms that reflect survivors' actual experiences. In a context where gender inequality, child marriage, intimate partner violence, and humanitarian risk are already pronounced, the failure to recognise technology-mediated harms may further marginalise survivors and normalise abuse (Ellsberg et al., 2020; UN Women, n.d.; UNFPA, 2025).

4. **Fourth** is an inclusion-oriented significance. By attending to young women, girls, women leaders, activists, and women with disabilities, it foregrounds the fact that digital safety is not experienced uniformly. The research, therefore, supports more differentiated, feminist, and rights-based approaches to digital governance and violence prevention.

1.10 Scope and Delimitations

This research focuses specifically on technology-facilitated gender-based violence affecting women and girls in South Sudan, with particular attention to young women, girls, women in public-facing roles, and women with disabilities. It is bounded by the datasets generated within the broader project and therefore does not claim to produce nationally representative prevalence estimates for the country as a whole. Respondents were treated as members of the sampled research populations rather than as a statistically representative national sample. The findings are therefore best read as a rigorous analysis of patterns and meanings within the project sample, alongside policy-relevant interpretation grounded in South Sudan's wider social and institutional context.

Thematically, the research is limited to digital or technology-mediated forms of abuse and their relationship to broader gendered harms. It does not attempt to provide a general theory of all violence against girls and women in South Sudan, though it necessarily engages that literature to contextualise findings. The research is further delimited by the available data, meaning that rural populations, host communities, IDPs, refugees, male victims, perpetrator profiles, and some platform-specific experiences may remain underrepresented. These delimitations do not weaken the research's value. Rather, they clarify its analytical purpose, indicate where caution is required, and point to priorities for future research.

This research focuses specifically on technology-facilitated gender-based violence affecting women and girls in South Sudan, with particular attention to young women, girls, women in public-facing roles, and women with disabilities.



1.11 Structure of the Report

The report is organised into multiple chapters.

- **Chapter One** introduces the research, establishes the background and context, states the research problem, presents the objectives and questions, and outlines the conceptual framing and significance of the research.

- **Chapter Two** reviews the literature on gender-based violence, digital harm, and TFGBV, with attention to African, humanitarian, and developing-country contexts, and then presents the conceptual framework.

- **Chapter Three** presents comparative African case studies on technology-facilitated gender-based violence and draws out policy lessons relevant to South Sudan.

- **Chapter Four** sets out the methodology, including research design, data sources, sampling, ethics, and analytical procedures.

- **Chapter Five** presents the quantitative and qualitative findings.

- **Chapter Six** discusses the findings in relation to the literature and interprets their implications.

- **Chapter Seven** presents institutional recommendations for prevention, response, accountability, coordination, and implementation.

- **Chapter Eight** concludes the report by drawing together the central findings, contributions, limitations, and final implications of the study.

1.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter has established the rationale for examining technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan as an urgent scholarly and policy issue. It has been argued that TFGBV should be understood as part of a broader continuum of violence against women and girls, shaped by intersecting inequalities and intensified in contexts of fragility, weak protection systems, and uneven digital access. It has also shown that, while South Sudan already presents high levels of gendered vulnerability, there remains limited context-specific evidence on how digital technologies are implicated in abuse, control, and exclusion. The chapter, therefore, provides the conceptual and contextual foundation for the literature review and the empirical analysis that follow.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature most relevant to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and develops the conceptual framework that guides the study. It begins by examining how TFGBV has been defined in the literature and why definitional choices matter for measurement, recognition and institutional response. It then explores feminist, intersectional and ecological perspectives as the main theoretical lenses for analysing gendered violence in digital environments. The chapter proceeds to review the main forms, affected groups, consequences and response debates in the TFGBV literature, before turning to African, humanitarian and South Sudanese contexts. It concludes by identifying the major gaps in existing knowledge and presenting a researcher-developed conceptual framework for the research.

2.2 Conceptualising Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

The literature on digital abuse has developed under a wide range of labels, including cyber violence, online abuse, cyber harassment, digital dating abuse, image-based sexual abuse, technology-facilitated sexual violence and online violence against women. These terms are useful because they identify specific dimensions of harm; however, they also reveal a fragmented field. Hinson et al. (2018) argue that narrow labels often fail to capture the range of behaviours that occur through digital technologies or the underlying gendered power relations that connect them. Similar concerns are reflected in wider policy literature, which stresses that inconsistent terminology makes it difficult to compare studies, estimate prevalence and design coherent response systems (EIGE, 2017; UNFPA, 2023; UN Women, 2023a).

A key distinction in the literature concerns whether digital abuse should be treated as a separate category of violence or as a modality through which pre-existing forms of violence are carried out. The latter position has become increasingly persuasive. Henry and Powell (2018) define technology-facilitated sexual violence as a set of behaviours in which digital technologies are used to enable both virtual and face-to-face harms. This is important as it challenges the idea that online violence is somehow less serious because it takes place through phones, devices or platforms. Rather, it shows that technologies can lengthen the reach of violence, extend its duration, increase its visibility and make it harder to contain. Henry, Flynn and Powell (2020) develop this argument further by demonstrating how digital communications technologies are now implicated in domestic and sexual violence through coercive monitoring, cyberstalking, image-based abuse and online sexual harassment.

The term technology-facilitated gender-based violence is particularly useful for this study because it directs attention not only to the means of harm, but also to the gendered structure of that harm. ICRW's definitional work explains TFGBV as violence that is motivated by, or organised through, gender norms

According to Henry, Flynn and Powell (2020), technology can extend, amplify, and prolong violence, making it harder to control. Digital tools can facilitate domestic and sexual violence through coercive monitoring, cyberstalking, image-based abuse, and online sexual harassment.



and inequalities and that disproportionately affects women, girls and minorities (Hinson et al., 2018). Dunn (2020) similarly emphasises that digital technologies may be used to monitor, control, threaten and silence victim-survivors, while the UNFPA (2023) discussion paper stresses that measurement tools must account for both the technological means and the gendered nature of the violence. TFGBV, for the research, is therefore used as an umbrella concept for acts of harassment, intimidation, coercion, exploitation and control that are committed, assisted, aggravated or amplified through digital technologies and that operate within broader systems of gender inequality.

The definitional debate is not simply a matter of terminology. How TFGBV is defined affects what is counted, who is recognised as harmed, which institutions feel responsible and what remedies are considered appropriate. If digital abuse is framed only as bullying, interpersonal conflict or a technical cyber incident, its gendered and structural dimensions may be missed. When it is approached as a form of gender-based violence, the analysis becomes wider and includes power, inequality, coercive control, stigma, public silencing and failures of institutional protection. This wider framing is especially critical in contexts such as South Sudan, where public and private harms are deeply connected and where formal response systems are already constrained.

2.3 Theoretical Perspectives on TFGBV

2.3.1 Feminist perspectives and the continuum of violence

Feminist scholarship has long argued that violence against women should not be treated as a series of isolated incidents, but as an expression of gendered power relations. Kelly's formulation of the continuum of sexual violence remains important because it shows how different forms of harm can be linked by the same underlying structure of male entitlement, control and appropriation (Kelly, 1988; Kelly, 2019). The continuum concept does not suggest that all forms of violence are identical. Rather, it helps explain how they are connected in survivors' lives, in social meanings and in institutional responses. This is particularly useful regarding TFGBV, because it allows online abuse to be analysed not as a detached digital problem, but as part of a wider pattern of harassment, surveillance, coercion, sexual humiliation and exclusion.

This feminist insight has been extended in digital violence scholarship. McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton (2017) argue that so-called revenge pornography should be understood as part of a wider continuum of image-based sexual abuse. Their critique demonstrates how legal and public discourse often isolates one highly visible form of abuse while ignoring related practices such as threats to share images, voyeurism, non-consensual image creation and digitally mediated sexual violation. Powell and Henry (2017) and Bailey, Flynn and Henry (2021) similarly show that technology-facilitated abuse cannot be separated from broader histories of sexual violence, gendered surveillance and social control. Jane's (2017) work on online misogyny also demonstrates that digital abuse is not merely expressive hostility; it can operate as a disciplinary practice that limits women's public participation.

Feminist scholarship has long argued that violence against women should not be treated as a series of isolated incidents, but as an expression of gendered power relations.



For the present research, the continuum perspective offers two analytical advantages.

- **First**, it allows the research to treat technologies as part of the changing infrastructure of violence, rather than as the origin of violence itself.
- **Second**, it makes it possible to examine how digital abuse in South Sudan may overlap with reputational control, social monitoring, intimate partner domination and exclusion from public life.

In this sense, rather than TFGBV being an imported or detached digital issue, it is one modality through which historically rooted gender hierarchies may be reproduced and intensified.

2.3.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality adds a crucial second dimension to analysis. Crenshaw's foundational intervention showed that social harms cannot be adequately explained through single categories such as gender or race taken separately, because structures of domination interact to produce differentiated experiences of vulnerability and exclusion (Crenshaw, 1989). In relation to TFGBV, this matters because digital harms are not evenly distributed. Global evidence identifies young women and girls, women in public life, women with disabilities, migrant and displaced women and other marginalised groups as facing heightened risks of online harassment, threats and silencing (Plan International, 2020; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021; Tyabashe-Phume et al., 2025).

Intersectionality is especially relevant to this research because the South Sudanese case cannot be explained through gender alone. Young women, girls, students, women leaders, activists and women with disabilities may encounter digital risks differently because of age, educational status, shared devices, uneven digital literacy, public visibility and limited access to institutional remedies. Intersectionality also matters for understanding silence. Some women may be less able to report abuse because of family backlash, educational loss, stigma or retaliation from perpetrators who are socially connected to them. An intersectional approach therefore strengthens the analysis of exposure and response by showing how digital violence is filtered through several overlapping lines of power.

> Crenshaw's intersectionality framework demonstrates that overlapping structures of power shape differentiated experiences of vulnerability and exclusion, meaning TFGBV is not evenly distributed but disproportionately affects young women and girls, women in public life, women with disabilities, migrant and displaced women, and other marginalised groups who face heightened risks of online harassment, threats, and silencing
>
> (Crenshaw, 1989; Plan International, 2020; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021; Tyabashe-Phume et al., 2025).



This research uses age (girls and young women), disability, and public or social visibility as the main intersectional variables linked to the study design. Poverty is not treated as a stand-alone methodological category in the conceptual framework; instead, economic constraint is discussed where it shapes device access, privacy, reporting options or dependence on others.

2.3.3 The ecological model

A third important theoretical perspective comes from the ecological tradition. Heise's (1998) integrated ecological framework conceptualises violence against women as the product of interacting forces at individual, relationship, community and societal levels. The value of this model lies in its capacity to connect immediate acts of violence to the wider social arrangements that enable them. Later work by Fulu and Miedema (2015) shows that the ecological model remains powerful, but benefits from being read in relation to broader global and political processes.

Applied to TFGBV, the ecological approach helps explain why digital harms cannot be reduced either to individual perpetrator behaviour or to platform design alone.

Applied to TFGBV, the ecological approach helps explain why digital harms cannot be reduced either to individual perpetrator behaviour or to platform design alone.



- At the **individual level**, age, digital literacy, disability, previous exposure to violence and control over devices may shape vulnerability.
- At the **relationship level**, intimate partner monitoring, peer abuse, family surveillance and social dependency may structure the forms violence takes.
- At the **community level**, schools, neighbourhoods, religious institutions and peer networks can either reinforce or challenge norms of gendered control.
- At the **societal level**, legal frameworks, digital infrastructure, patriarchal norms, conflict legacies and platform governance shape the conditions under which abuse occurs and is responded to.

The ecological perspective is especially suited to South Sudan because it creates analytical space for conflict, displacement, institutional fragility and digital inequality without losing sight of interpersonal dynamics. It therefore complements the continuum and intersectional perspectives by showing how gendered digital harm emerges from multiple levels of social life at once.

2.4 Forms and Manifestations of TFGBV

The literature identifies a broad range of acts that fall within the ambit of TFGBV. These include repeated abusive or threatening messages, online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, impersonation, account takeover, unauthorised access to devices or accounts, non-consensual monitoring or sharing of personal content, image-based sexual abuse, doxxing, blackmail, unwanted sexual solicitation, phone-call harassment, email-based abuse, AI-generated deepfakes or image manipulation and coordinated networked attacks designed to intimidate, humiliate or silence women in digital spaces (Henry and Powell, 2018; Hinson et al., 2018; Dunn, 2020; UNFPA, 2023).

One important strand of the literature examines image-based abuse. McGlynn, Rackley and Houghton (2017) show that public discourse has often reduced this problem to the figure of the vengeful ex-partner who distributes intimate images after a relationship ends. They argue that this narrow frame obscures the wider range of practices and perpetrators involved. Image-based abuse may include threats to share images, sexually explicit manipulation, coerced image production, non-consensual image capture and circulation by peers or unknown actors. The significance of this argument for TFGBV research is that it shifts attention from spectacular instances to a broader field of routine, gendered and technologically enabled violations.

Another strand concerns coercive monitoring and surveillance. Woodlock (2017) demonstrates that technology can be used in domestic violence and stalking to extend perpetrators' reach, while Dragiewicz et al. (2018) show that digital media platforms can play competing roles: they can provide connection and evidence, but they can also be used for coercive control. Henry, Flynn and Powell (2020) similarly observe that domestic and sexual violence increasingly involves tracking, persistent messaging, device monitoring and the use of digital communications to extend intimidation beyond physical proximity. Such practices are often under-recognised because they are normalised as jealousy, care or ordinary relationship conflict. Yet their cumulative effect may be profound, especially where women already have limited privacy, social autonomy or confidence in help-seeking systems.

The literature also emphasises the networked and amplifying properties of digital abuse. Compared with many offline acts, online abuse can be persistent, rapidly reproduced, difficult to escape and visible to multiple audiences at once. EIGE (2017) and Dunn (2020) both highlight the ways in which social media, mobile connectivity and the circulation of private information can intensify harm. Hinson et al. (2018) similarly stress that violence may be aggravated by the speed and scale with which harmful material circulates. This matters particularly in contexts where reputation carries acute social consequences, because digital exposure may translate into offline

consequences, family conflict, school withdrawal or social isolation.

Emerging technologies add additional complexity to this pattern. AI-enabled image manipulation and synthetic sexual images can make reputational harm easier to produce and harder to disprove, while doxxing can expose survivors to offline surveillance, stigma or retaliation. These forms of abuse are not yet consistently measured in many TFGBV studies, but they are increasingly important for prevention, evidence preservation and platform accountability (Bailey, Flynn and Henry, 2021; UNFPA, 2023).

2.5 Patterns, Prevalence and Affected Groups

A persistent challenge in the TFGBV field is that prevalence remains difficult to estimate with precision. UN Women (2023a) and UN Women (2024) both note that the evidence base is expanding, but not in a sufficiently standardised manner to support reliable cross-context comparison. UNFPA (2023) echoes this concern, arguing that measurement remains complicated by differences in definitions, timeframes, platforms and forms of violence. Studies vary in whether they focus on public or private abuse, whether they measure specific acts or broad experiences and whether they capture the relationship between digital abuse and offline violence. As a result, the literature is stronger on patterns and manifestations than on globally comparable prevalence.

Even so, some patterns are consistent. Available evidence shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected and that risk intensifies at the intersection of gender with age, disability, public visibility and other axes of marginalisation (Plan International, 2020; The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2021; Tyabashe-Phume et al., 2025). Plan International's State of the World's Girls report, based on the experiences of more than 14,000 girls and young women, is especially important because it demonstrates both the scale and everydayness of online harassment. The report shows that girls are often targeted because they are young and female, and that the abuse they encounter shapes how freely they speak, post, organise and participate online (Plan International, 2020).

The literature on women with disabilities and other marginalised groups remains comparatively limited, especially in low- and middle-income countries. A recent scoping review by Tyabashe-Phume et al. (2025) underscores this gap while showing that the intersection of ableism, gender inequality and digital exclusion likely intensifies harm and constrains access to remedy. This emerging body of work is highly relevant for the South Sudan case because it suggests that vulnerability cannot be treated as uniform across women and girls. Instead, social position shapes exposure to abuse and the resources available for resistance, reporting and recovery.

For disability inclusion, the question is not only whether women with disabilities experience TFGBV, but whether reporting systems, referral pathways and prevention messages are accessible to them. This includes sign-language interpretation, accessible formats, mobility support, trusted intermediaries and disability-sensitive case handling. The principle is consistent with disability rights approaches to participation: digital safety for women with disabilities should not be designed without their involvement.

Patterns of exposure are also linked to digital inequality. GSMA's 2025 report shows that women in low- and middle-income countries remain less likely than men to use mobile internet and that progress in closing the gap has stalled. This is significant for TFGBV research because digital exclusion and digital risk can coexist. Limited access may reduce some forms of exposure, but it can also increase dependence on shared devices, constrain privacy and limit access to support, information and alternative

Women with disabilities must be able to access reporting, referral and prevention systems for TFGBV. This requires accessible formats, sign-language interpretation, mobility support, trusted intermediaries and disability-sensitive case handling. Their participation should be central to designing digital safety interventions.



online communities. In short, being less connected does not necessarily mean being safer.

2.6 Consequences and Harms

The literature increasingly rejects the suggestion that digital abuse is less serious than offline abuse. Harms associated with TFGBV include fear, humiliation, anxiety, shame, social withdrawal, self-censorship, reputational injury, economic and educational disruption and, in some cases, escalation into offline stalking, threats or physical violence (Henry and Powell, 2018; Hinson et al., 2018; Amnesty International, 2018; Dunn, 2020). These harms may be intensified by the fact that digital violence can be constant, difficult to contain and visible to multiple audiences simultaneously.

One major consequence discussed across the literature is the reduction of women's participation in digital and public life. Plan International (2020) shows that online harassment can make girls and young women less willing to express opinions or remain visible online. Amnesty International (2018) and UNESCO (2021) similarly link online abuse to self-censorship, avoidance and withdrawal from public-facing work, especially among women journalists and women who speak publicly. The significance of these findings is that TFGBV affects not only individual well-being but also voice, representation and democratic participation. In other words, digital abuse can function as a mechanism of exclusion.

The literature also stresses the relational and

One major consequence discussed across the literature is the reduction of women's participation in digital and public life.



cumulative nature of harm. For women in controlling relationships, digital abuse may be experienced as an extension of offline coercion rather than as a separate category of victimisation. Henry, Flynn and Powell (2020) argue that technologies often become integrated into wider patterns of domestic and sexual violence, making the boundary between online and offline analytically unstable. Woodlock (2017) and Dragiewicz et al. (2018) similarly show that digital monitoring can extend perpetrators' control over survivors' movements, communications and social networks.

For contexts such as South Sudan, where social stigma and family honour may be especially consequential, reputational harm deserves particular attention. While much international literature has been developed in urban, highly connected settings, its insights remain relevant: when abuse is witnessed, circulated or believed by known others, the consequences may extend into schooling, family relations, social standing and marriage prospects. This suggests that TFGBV in South Sudan may have effects that are at once psychological, social and material.

2.7 Response Debates: Law, Platforms and Survivor Support

The literature on response remains less developed than the literature on harms. UN Women (2024) notes that little is yet known about what works to deter abusive behaviour online or how effective legal and regulatory responses are in practice. UNFPA (2023) also highlights the need for clearer measurement and reporting approaches so that institutions can recognise TFGBV as more than a technical cyber incident. Even where legislation exists, enforcement is uneven, institutional knowledge may be limited, and survivors may face significant procedural barriers. This is particularly relevant in low-capacity settings, where police, courts, schools and community institutions may have limited experience in recognising digital forms of gender-based violence.

Comparative African legal developments show that cybercrime, harassment and data protection laws are increasingly being used to address online harm, including through frameworks in Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda and South Africa (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2015; Kenya Law, 2018; Republic of Uganda, 2011; Republic of South Africa, 2020). However, the existence of cybercrime law does not by itself guarantee survivor-centred protection. TFGBV often involves rapidly evolving technologies, cross-platform circulation and perpetrators embedded in everyday social relationships. For this reason, criminal law may be necessary but insufficient.

Scholars and practitioners therefore caution against

over-reliance on criminal law alone. Hinson et al. (2018), Dunn (2020) and UNFPA (2023) all emphasise the need for broader response ecosystems that include survivor-centred reporting pathways, digital literacy, psychosocial support, safer platform design, education, content removal support and community accountability. This broader approach is consistent with feminist understandings of violence as structural rather than incidental.

In practice, this means linking TFGBV to existing GBV systems rather than treating it only as a technical cyber incident. Relevant response pathways may include GBVIMS adaptation, psychosocial hotlines, one-stop centres, safe houses, digital rights clinics, legal aid, content removal support, digital evidence preservation guidance and disability-accessible referral systems. The point is not to create parallel systems, but to ensure that existing systems can recognise and respond to digital forms of abuse.

A significant challenge in addressing this issue is institutional recognition. If teachers, administrators, police officers, service providers or community leaders treat TFGBV as trivial, private or beyond their responsibility, survivors may be less likely to disclose their experiences or may encounter secondary harm when they do. The literature therefore points not only to the need for legal reform but also to the need for conceptual reform: institutions must recognise technology-mediated abuse as a serious form of gendered harm with real-world consequences.

If teachers, administrators, police officers, service providers or community leaders treat TFGBV as trivial, private or beyond their responsibility, survivors may be less likely to disclose their experiences or may encounter secondary harm when they do.



2.8 TFGBV in African, Humanitarian and Developing-Country Contexts

The growth of literature on TFGBV has been uneven across regions. Much early research emerged from Europe, North America and East Asia, often focusing on image-based abuse, digital dating violence or online harassment in relatively high-connectivity settings. UN Women (2024) argues that there remains too little comparable data across global regions and social intersections, while UNFPA (2023) notes that measurement tools must be sensitive to context, technology access and survivor safety. This matters because the forms, meanings and consequences of TFGBV are likely to vary across political economies of connectivity, legal systems and gender regimes.

African scholarship and policy research are growing but remain uneven. Studies from Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya show that online harassment, disinformation, image-based abuse and politically targeted attacks can be used to silence women, particularly students, activists, journalists and women in public life (Kakande et al., 2021; Paradigm Initiative, 2021; Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development and University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment Hub, 2024; Poskitt, 2025). These studies are important for South Sudan because they show that TFGBV in African contexts cannot be understood only as an individual digital safety issue. It is also shaped by education systems, electoral politics, institutional capacity, affordability, device access and the social consequences of public visibility.

In Africa and other low- and middle-income contexts, digital violence must be analysed alongside questions of affordability, device ownership, platform dependence, infrastructural inequality and language accessibility. GSMA (2025) demonstrates that women in low- and middle-income countries continue to face disadvantages in mobile internet use and smartphone ownership. These inequalities shape both opportunity and risk. They affect the platforms women use, the privacy they have, the time they spend online, the skills they develop and the routes through which support can be accessed. The literature therefore suggests that TFGBV in such contexts cannot be understood purely through the lens of platform content; it must also be situated within digital inequality, connectivity gaps and uneven access to devices and networks.

Studies from Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya show that online harassment, disinformation, image-based abuse and politically targeted attacks can be used to silence women, particularly students, activists, journalists and women in public life

(Kakande et al., 2021; Paradigm Initiative, 2021; Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development and University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment Hub, 2024; Poskitt, 2025).



The humanitarian literature adds another important layer. While research on GBV in emergencies is extensive, it has focused predominantly on conflict-related sexual violence, intimate partner violence, child marriage, service delivery and coordination. Digital harms have received far less sustained attention. Yet there are strong reasons to believe that conflict and displacement alter the conditions of digital vulnerability. Disruption of family structures, heightened surveillance, weak institutions, aid dependency, displacement-related social stress and limited reporting pathways may all intensify risk. In fragile settings, technologies can be lifelines for communication and access to services, but they can also become tools of monitoring, harassment, extortion and reputational attack.

This underdevelopment of humanitarian TFGBV literature is analytically significant for South Sudan. It means that existing frameworks for violence in emergencies cannot simply be assumed to capture digital harms. Instead, research into TFGBV in such settings requires a synthesis of digital violence scholarship with conflict, humanitarian and gender literature.

2.9 South Sudan in the Literature

The existing South Sudanese literature provides important context but only limited direct engagement with TFGBV. The strongest body of research concerns offline violence against women and girls. Ellsberg et al. (2020) document high levels of physical and sexual violence in conflict-affected areas and identify restrictive gender norms, conflict exposure and poverty-related stresses as significant correlates. This literature demonstrates that South Sudan is already characterised by a severe gender violence environment in which women's safety, mobility and negotiating power are deeply constrained.

Country-level gender data reinforce this picture. According to UN Women's South Sudan data hub, 51.5 per cent of women aged 20 to 24 were married before the age of 18, and 26.7 per cent of women aged 15 to 49 reported physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months (UN Women, n.d.). The same source stresses that large gender data gaps persist, including in relation to information and communications technology skills. The Country Gender Equality Profile for South Sudan similarly identifies media, access to information and digitisation as an important domain of gender analysis, indicating that digital participation is already recognised as a policy issue even if dedicated TFGBV evidence remains limited (UN Women and Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare of South Sudan, 2024).

The humanitarian context sharpens these concerns. UNFPA's 2025 situation reporting describes a worsening crisis marked by displacement, insecurity and severe pressure on health and protection services. In such a context, the consequences of digital abuse may be amplified by the scarcity of support systems, the social embeddedness of communities and the broader normalisation of gender inequality. Yet the intersection of digital harm and humanitarian fragility remains largely absent from published scholarship on South Sudan.

What can reasonably be inferred from the current literature is that TFGBV in South Sudan is likely to be shaped by at least five related conditions. First, patriarchal norms and existing forms of gender violence create fertile ground for technology-facilitated abuse. Second, uneven connectivity and device access mean that digital participation itself is stratified. Third, institutional response systems are already under strain, making digital harms easy to dismiss or difficult to address. Fourth, the reputational and relational consequences of digital abuse may be particularly acute in closely connected social

environments. Fifth, the absence of standardised TFGBV data systems means that the harms that do occur may remain invisible to policymakers, GBV actors and cyber-response institutions.

2.10 Gaps in the Existing Literature

The literature reviewed above reveals several gaps that justify the present research.

- The **first** is a **definitional and measurement gap**. Although the field has advanced substantially, there remains no universally adopted definition or standard measurement framework for TFGBV. Studies still vary widely in terminology, scope and methodology, making comparisons difficult and contributing to under-recognition (Hinson et al., 2018; UNFPA, 2023; UN Women, 2023a).

- The **second** is a **contextual gap**. Research remains concentrated in a limited set of geographical and social settings, with relatively little work on fragile, conflict-affected or low-connectivity environments. The implications of humanitarian fragility, institutional weakness and uneven digital infrastructures for TFGBV are not yet well theorised or well evidenced.

- The **third** is an **intersectional gap**. Young women, girls and women with disabilities are regularly identified as high-risk groups, yet the literature rarely analyses these populations together in a specific national context. Nor does it sufficiently explore how digital access, device dependence, disability, student status and visibility interact to shape both vulnerability and help-seeking.

- The **fourth** is a **relational gap** concerning online and offline violence. While the literature increasingly recognises that these cannot be neatly separated, much empirical work still studies them in parallel rather than in relation to one another. More context-specific research is needed to examine how digital abuse intersects with coercive control, intimate partner violence, public shaming and wider structures of gender domination.

- The fifth is a **response gap**. There is limited evidence on what institutional, educational, legal and community responses are available or effective, particularly in low-capacity settings. This is a major policy problem because institutions cannot respond adequately to harms they have not conceptualised clearly.

- **Finally**, there is a **South Sudan-specific gap**. At present, there is almost no dedicated empirical literature on TFGBV in South Sudan. Existing work provides vital context on offline GBV and gender inequality, but not on how digital technologies are implicated in abuse, exclusion and control. This research therefore addresses a clear lacuna in both scholarship and policy-relevant evidence.

A further gap concerns perpetrator profiles and gender scope. The present study centres on women and girls because that is the focus of the available dataset and the wider GBV mandate. This focus does not imply that men and boys cannot experience technology-facilitated abuse, nor does it assume that all perpetrators share the same profile. Future research should examine perpetrator characteristics, victim-perpetrator relationships and experiences across genders while preserving the gendered analysis supported by the current evidence.

2.11 Conceptual Framework for the Research

Conceptual frameworks are valuable because they organise relationships among key concepts, clarify assumptions and guide both data analysis and interpretation. The framework developed for this research is not borrowed wholesale from a single source. Rather, it is researcher-developed from the literature reviewed above. It integrates the continuum perspective, intersectionality and the ecological model with TFGBV-specific insights from digital violence scholarship.

The framework proposes that technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan is produced at the intersection of structural context, social position, digital mechanisms and institutional response. At the structural level, patriarchal gender norms, conflict legacies, humanitarian insecurity, digital inequality and weak institutional protection shape the environment in which violence occurs. These conditions do not automatically produce abuse, but they shape the possibilities for both perpetration and vulnerability.

At the level of social position, women's experiences are differentiated by age, disability and public or social visibility. These intersections influence

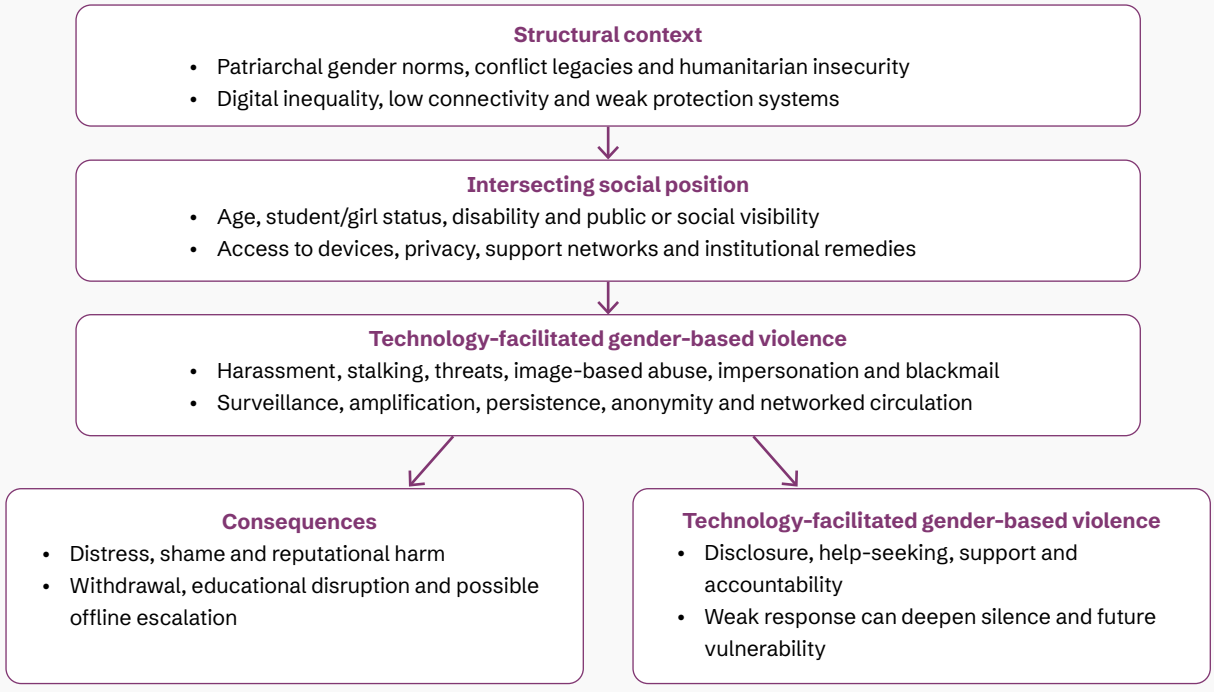
exposure to abuse, access to devices, control over privacy, dependence on perpetrators and the capacity to seek support. The framework therefore resists the assumption that all women experience digital spaces in the same way.

At the centre of the framework are the forms and mechanisms of TFGBV itself. These include harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, blackmail, stalking, image-based abuse, doxxing, AI-enabled manipulation and other forms of digitally mediated coercion. Their effects are amplified by technological attributes such as persistence, replicability, anonymity, visibility, searchability and network circulation.

The framework then maps the consequences of TFGBV across emotional, social, educational, participatory and safety domains. It assumes that digital abuse may lead to distress, shame, reputational harm, educational or social withdrawal, reduced digital participation and, in some cases, escalation into offline violence. Finally, the framework incorporates responses and outcomes: whether survivors disclose, whom they turn to, how institutions interpret the abuse, whether response pathways are accessible and whether available responses produce support, prevention, accountability or continued impunity.

The feedback loop built into the framework is especially important. Weak response systems do not simply fail to solve the problem; they can deepen silence, reinforce exclusion and normalise future abuse. In this context, response is not an afterthought but part of the social reproduction of TFGBV itself.

FIGURE 2.1.
Researcher-developed conceptual framework for analysing technology-facilitated gender-based violence in South Sudan.



2.12 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the major bodies of literature relevant to TFGBV in South Sudan. It has been shown that the field has moved towards understanding digital abuse as part of a broader continuum of gender-based violence rather than as a discrete online anomaly. It has also demonstrated the importance of intersectional and ecological approaches for explaining how digital harms are patterned by age, disability, visibility, institutions and wider social context. The review identifies major gaps in relation to measurement, humanitarian settings, institutional response and South Sudan-specific evidence. The researcher-developed conceptual framework presented here provides the analytical bridge between the literature and the empirical chapters that follow.

CHAPTER THREE

Comparative African Case Studies on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence

3.1 Introduction and Analytical Framing

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) is best understood not as a discrete or purely virtual category of abuse, but as an extension of the wider continuum of violence against women and girls. Digital platforms do not generate gendered inequality independently of social context. Rather, they intensify and reconfigure pre-existing relations of power by enabling surveillance, harassment, reputational harm, sexual exploitation, coercion, and exclusion to occur at greater speed, scale, and persistence (UNFPA, 2021; University of Melbourne and United Nations Population Fund, 2023). From a research perspective, this conceptual framing is important because it resists the analytical error of treating online violence as secondary to, or less serious than, embodied forms of gendered harm. The evidence reviewed in this chapter suggests that online abuse produces deeply material offline consequences, including psychological distress, withdrawal from education and politics, damage to reputation, economic losses, and diminished confidence in institutions mandated to provide protection.

This chapter develops a comparative analysis of TFGBV in four African contexts: Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa. These cases have been selected not because they are identical, but because each illuminates a distinct dimension of the same problem.

- **Kenya** demonstrates the relationship between TFGBV, higher education, and women's public visibility.
- **Uganda** illustrates how digital abuse is used as a mechanism of political silencing during election periods.
- **Nigeria** reveals the gap that can persist between statutory development and access to justice and support.
- **South Africa** offers the clearest example among the four of a more explicit and layered remedial architecture, particularly in relation to image-based sexual abuse.

Read together, these cases make it possible to move beyond descriptive cataloguing and towards a more analytically dense account of how TFGBV operates across sectors, how institutions respond, and what kinds of policy lessons may be adapted for South Sudan.

The central argument advanced in this chapter is that TFGBV in African contexts is not just marginal to governance, democratic participation, or gender justice, but a mechanism of social control that constrains women's presence in educational, political, professional, and civic spaces by weaponising shame, visibility, intimacy, and public scrutiny. The comparative evidence further suggests that legal reform, while necessary, is never sufficient on its own. Where survivor-centred reporting pathways are weak, digital evidence handling remains underdeveloped, public authorities lack capacity, or institutions normalise abuse as an inevitable feature of online life, law has limited practical meaning. A robust response, therefore, requires not only statutory recognition but also institutional design, implementation planning, and sustained collaboration between government, civil society, educational institutions, justice actors, and digital platforms.

The central argument advanced in this chapter is that TFGBV in African contexts is not just marginal to governance, democratic participation, or gender justice, but a mechanism of social control that constrains women's presence in educational, political, professional, and civic spaces by weaponising shame, visibility, intimacy, and public scrutiny.



3.2 Rationale for Comparative Case Selection

In many African settings, rapid digital expansion has occurred alongside fragile regulation, uneven data-protection enforcement, and deeply entrenched patriarchal norms. As a result, the case studies reviewed here are useful not because they provide a single model for replication, but because they demonstrate how similar structural conditions can produce different patterns of harm depending on the sector involved, the visibility of the women targeted, and the maturity of available legal and institutional responses.

The cases also support a layered comparative method. Kenya and Uganda are especially helpful for examining how TFGBV restricts women's participation in public-facing institutional environments, including universities and electoral politics. Nigeria is analytically important because it reveals the limits of formal legislative development when implementation systems remain weak. South Africa, by contrast, demonstrates the potential value of combining criminal, civil, protective, and regulatory mechanisms rather than relying on a single legal pathway. These cases are not presented as perfect contextual matches for South Sudan. Rather, they are used as forward-looking comparators that show what legal, institutional, and survivor-support choices can look like in African settings where digital governance is more developed or more visible. More directly comparable fragile-context studies, including those from Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic, should be prioritised in future research where reliable TFGBV evidence becomes available.

Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and South Africa provide forward-looking African comparators showing how legal, institutional and survivor-support approaches to TFGBV can vary, while more comparable fragile-context evidence from Sudan, DRC and CAR should be prioritised as it becomes available.



3.3 Kenya: TFGBV in Higher Education and Women's Public Participation

Kenya provides one of the strongest case studies in this chapter because it combines emerging empirical evidence on prevalence with a relatively developed legal architecture for cyber harms. The Kenyan material is especially significant in showing that TFGBV is not confined to a single sphere of life. Instead, it affects women in higher education and in public and political spaces, thereby demonstrating how digital abuse can undermine both individual well-being and broader forms of social participation.

A 2024 rapid study conducted in Nairobi's higher learning institutions found that 39.3 per cent of respondents had personally experienced TFGBV, while 89.8 per cent had witnessed it. Harassment emerged as the most common form of abuse, and the study documented a multidimensional harm profile, including psychological, social, economic, and physical consequences (Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development and University of Nairobi Women's Economic Empowerment Hub, 2024). These findings are analytically important for two reasons. First, they demonstrate that TFGBV in educational spaces is not a peripheral issue of interpersonal conflict but a substantial barrier to wellbeing and participation. Second, they illustrate the continuum thesis clearly: harms initiated through digital means spill into offline educational, social, and bodily consequences.

A 2024 study in Nairobi's higher learning institutions found that 39.3% of respondents had experienced TFGBV and 89.8% had witnessed it, with harassment being the most common form and causing psychological, social, economic and physical harms.



The Kenyan case also underscores the limits of visibility without access to justice and support. Awareness of reporting pathways appears uneven, and many survivors do not pursue institutional redress even where harm is acknowledged. This suggests that prevalence alone tells us little about institutional effectiveness unless reporting systems are trusted, accessible, and capable of acting without reproducing shame or retraumatization. The Kenyan example, therefore, demonstrates that institutional design is as important as legal recognition. More than just general codes of conduct are required, as there is also a need for confidential complaint mechanisms, survivor-sensitive referral pathways, procedures for preserving digital evidence, and functional links to legal aid and psychosocial support.

Kenya is equally important because it shows how TFGBV can be used to police women's visibility in public life. The wider literature and legal record indicate that cyberstalking, impersonation, and the wrongful distribution of intimate images have become common tools of gendered control through which women are threatened and disciplined online (Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018; Data Protection Act, 2019; Republic v Ahmed, 2022). The case study demonstrates that TFGBV affects the quality of democratic life by making public participation more costly for women than for men, rather than just harming individual women.

In comparative terms, Kenya holds an important position: it has more developed legal frameworks than some other jurisdictions, but still experiences significant gaps in implementation and reporting. For South Sudan, the key takeaway is that sector-specific prevention, institutional accountability, and legal reform must occur simultaneously rather than sequentially.

3.4 Uganda: Election-Period Abuse and the Digital Policing of Women in Politics

Uganda offers the clearest case in this chapter of TFGBV functioning as a technology-mediated instrument of political exclusion. Whereas Kenya highlights both educational and public-facing harms, Uganda centres more directly on electoral visibility and the disciplining of women's presence in formal politics, making it particularly relevant for analysing how digital spaces can be weaponised during moments of heightened democratic contestation.

A policy study on Uganda's 2021 general election analysed approximately 70,006 Facebook comments and 298,571 Twitter replies from candidate and high-profile accounts. It found that women candidates were disproportionately targeted with trolling, sexualised abuse, and body shaming, while men were comparatively more likely to receive hate speech or satire (Kakande et al., 2021). The comparative significance of this pattern lies not only in differential exposure but also in the gendered form of the abuse. Rather than being merely criticised as political actors, women were subjected to attacks that sought to reduce them to bodies, sexual morality, and perceived respectability, thereby undermining their legitimacy as public leaders.

A 2021 Uganda election study analysing 70,006 Facebook comments and 298,571 Twitter replies found that women candidates were disproportionately targeted with trolling, sexualised abuse and body shaming, while men were more likely to receive hate speech or satire.



This distinction is critical for analysis because it demonstrates that TFGBV during elections operates through specifically gendered repertoires of humiliation. Such abuse is designed to delegitimise women's authority, increase the social cost of candidacy, and signal that public leadership remains a male domain. In that sense, TFGBV should be understood not simply as online hostility, but as a democratic governance problem. Formal rights to participate in politics are weakened when women who exercise those rights face persistent, targeted digital intimidation aimed at forcing self-censorship or withdrawal.

The case study also places this abuse within a broader digital governance environment shaped by civic restrictions and communication controls during the 2021 election period. This wider context matters analytically because it shows that TFGBV can become embedded in broader patterns of democratic closure. In restrictive environments, online violence against women may intersect with state and non-state forms of control over communication infrastructures, amplifying the silencing effect. The harm is therefore not only interpersonal; it can become structurally political.

Uganda's Computer Misuse Act of 2011 establishes a legal framework for criminalising cyber harassment, offensive communication, and cyberstalking. However, the Ugandan case also underscores a significant issue relevant to South Sudan: cyber regulations intended to combat harmful behaviour can become overly broad or selectively enforced. While a law aimed at protecting women from digital abuse is important, it can also be misused against lawful speech, different opinions, or women's human rights defenders, creating new forms of vulnerability.

For South Sudan, the key takeaway is that digital protections for women in politics should be integrated into electoral governance, party accountability, and rights-respecting legal frameworks, rather than being addressed solely through general cybercrime legislation.

3.5 Nigeria: Statutory Development Amid Uneven Reporting and Weak Access to Justice and Support

Nigeria is analytically significant because it exposes one of the most common weaknesses in responses to TFGBV: the existence of relevant laws without a consistent pathway to access to justice and support. While Kenya and Uganda illustrate specific sectors in which women are targeted, Nigeria highlights the implementation gap that can persist even where formal legal development is more advanced. This makes it an essential case for any research concerned with the difference between legal recognition and lived protection.

The Nigeria case study highlights the risks of expanding digital participation without parallel safeguards. During the COVID-19 period, a civil society analysis argued that women's increased dependence on digital platforms heightened exposure to online harm while support mechanisms remained weak or difficult to access (Paradigm Initiative, 2021). This is especially important in comparative terms because it complicates celebratory narratives of digital inclusion. Connectivity may expand opportunities for women, but where governance frameworks are inadequate, it may also widen the spaces in which abuse can occur.

The Nigeria case study found that during COVID-19, women's increased reliance on digital platforms heightened their exposure to online harm, while support mechanisms remained weak or difficult to access (Paradigm Initiative, 2021).



At the same time, World Bank and S4YE insights on online violence against young female workers point to under-reporting, uneven measurement, and the difficulty of capturing harms that are intimate, stigmatised, or normalised (World Bank, 2022). This is particularly important in contexts where shame, stigma, and fear of repercussions discourage disclosure, meaning that lower survey prevalence may mask rather than reflect the true scale of violence.

On paper, Nigeria has a meaningful statutory foundation. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015, is relevant to cyberstalking and harassing communications, while the Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023, addresses issues of privacy and the misuse of personal data (Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act, 2015; Nigeria Data Protection Act, 2023). Yet the Nigerian evidence also makes clear that formal legal availability does not ensure practical usability. Survivors still require public awareness of available mechanisms, straightforward reporting processes, trained officials, confidentiality safeguards, and confidence that digital harms will be taken seriously. Without those elements, legislation risks becoming largely symbolic.

For South Sudan, the takeaway is that implementation planning must not be deferred until after legislative reform. Complaint intake, digital evidence preservation, privacy protection, public legal education, and coordination with gender-based violence service providers must be built into reform design from the beginning.

3.6 South Africa: Explicit Recognition of Image-Based Abuse and Multiple Support (Remedy) Pathways

South Africa stands apart from the other cases because it provides the strongest example in this chapter of explicit legal and judicial recognition of image-based sexual abuse. Whereas Kenya and Uganda primarily illustrate prevalence and public-participation harms, and Nigeria shows the implementation deficit, South Africa is the most useful case for examining what a more layered response framework can look like in practice.

The Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020 criminalises the unlawful disclosure of intimate images without consent. In addition, the Films and Publications Amendment Act 11 of 2019 and the Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011 provide further routes to protection (Cybercrimes Act 19 of 2020; Films and Publications Amendment Act 11 of 2019; Protection from Harassment Act 17 of 2011). This multiplicity matters because TFGBV often produces overlapping harms that cannot be adequately addressed by a single criminal offence. Survivors may require criminal accountability, urgent protection from ongoing harassment, removal or restriction of harmful content, and recognition of dignity- and privacy-based injury.

The jurisprudential importance of South Africa is further strengthened by the High Court judgment in KS v AM and Another, in which civil damages were awarded for the non-consensual recording and publication of intimate images, together with the creation of a fake social media profile (KS v AM and Another, 2024). The significance of this case lies in its recognition that TFGBV can cause substantial and compensable injury, including effects on employment, mental health, privacy, and personal dignity. In other words, the case broadens the legal imagination beyond punishment to include compensation, restoration, and enforceable accountability.

Compared with other countries, South Africa illustrates the advantages of a mixed response model. Unlike Nigeria, where the material highlights the gap between statutory presence and access to justice and support, South Africa demonstrates how multiple avenues of redress can be considered. Unlike Uganda, where concerns remain about overbroad cyber regulation in politically sensitive environments, South Africa's contribution here is less about the tension between harm and expression and more about what a practical and survivor-centred response framework can look like. For South Sudan, South Africa offers the clearest illustration in this chapter of why TFGBV reform should not be confined to criminalisation alone.

3.7 Comparative Synthesis and Implications for South Sudan

The comparative evidence reviewed in this chapter supports four major conclusions.

First, TFGBV should be conceptualised as a cross-sectoral mechanism of gendered control rather than a purely technical cyber issue. In Kenya, it affects women's educational participation and public visibility; in Uganda, it is closely tied to election-period political exclusion; in Nigeria, it is shaped by the disjuncture between legal form and institutional practice; and in South Africa, it is recognised through increasingly explicit and layered legal response frameworks. The common thread across these cases is that digital abuse exploits existing gender hierarchies while magnifying their reach and persistence.

Second, the cases show that visibility does not automatically generate access to justice and support. Kenya's exposure figures, Uganda's large-scale monitoring of election-period abuse, and Nigeria's persistent reporting and access barriers all demonstrate that the existence of evidence or public awareness does not itself create accessible justice. Reporting is mediated by trust, stigma,

fear of reprisal, institutional culture, and beliefs about whether action will follow. For South Sudan, this means that any legal reform agenda that does not simultaneously address survivor confidence, complaint pathways, and service coordination is likely to produce a significant implementation gap.

Third, the comparison reveals that TFGBV is deeply implicated in the governance of women's public participation. This is most visible in Uganda's election-period abuse and in Kenya's evidence on public-facing harms, but the broader point extends further. TFGBV is a way of policing who can appear, speak, lead, and remain visible. It therefore belongs analytically within debates about democracy, representation, institutional legitimacy, and civic inclusion, not solely within debates about cybercrime or communications law.

Fourth, the cases indicate that effective reform requires a mixed structure of law, institutions, and support systems. Kenya demonstrates the importance of sector-specific protocols in universities and public institutions. Uganda underscores the need for pre-election monitoring, rapid response, and rights-protective legislative drafting. Nigeria shows that implementation planning is crucial if legal reform is to become usable in practice. South Africa illustrates the value of multiple support pathways, including criminal, protective, privacy-based, and civil responses. Taken together, these cases suggest that South Sudan should pursue an integrated framework that explicitly addresses cyber harassment, cyberstalking, doxxing, impersonation, unlawful disclosure of personal data, and non-consensual intimate imagery, while also investing in digital evidence procedures, judicial and police training, psychosocial support, legal aid, and public awareness.[1]

The comparative analysis also has implications for civil society and non-state actors. Across all four cases, civil society organisations appear as critical intermediaries in awareness-building, survivor accompaniment, documentation, monitoring, and advocacy. This is particularly relevant for South Sudan, where trust in public institutions may be limited and where women's rights organisations, youth groups, digital rights advocates, and service providers may become the most accessible entry points for survivors. In the current South Sudan context, the comparative evidence suggests that these actors should not be viewed as secondary partners, but as central to an effective response.[2]

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter has argued that comparative African case studies provide more than an illustrative background for analysing TFGBV in South Sudan. They offer a regional evidence base for understanding how digital gendered harm is structured, how institutions fail or respond, and what kinds of reform may be cautiously adapted for South Sudan. Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, and South Africa each illuminate a different part of the problem. Still, they converge on a common conclusion: TFGBV is a serious form of gendered violence that constrains women's participation across multiple domains of life, and any meaningful response must move beyond narrow criminalisation towards survivor-centred, institutionally grounded, and context-sensitive systems of protection, access to justice, and support.

Explanatory Footnotes

1 Comparative reform lessons should be adapted rather than transplanted directly.

2 In low-trust settings, civil society may be the most accessible first point of support.

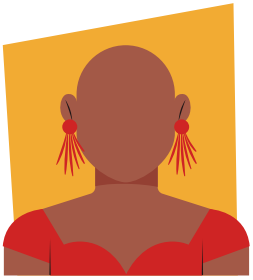
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the methodological approach used in this research on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). The study adopted a feminist-informed mixed-methods design because TFGBV is both measurable and interpretive. It can be examined through prevalence, frequency, platform use, reporting behaviour, and patterned association, but it also requires attention to survivors' narratives, the social meanings attached to online abuse, and the institutional contexts that shape protection, reporting, and redress. Put simply, the study needed quantitative evidence to show the distribution of experiences and qualitative evidence to explain how those experiences are lived, normalised, resisted, or reported. Mixed-methods research is particularly useful where a study seeks to bring together breadth and depth, allowing the researcher to move between numerical distribution and contextual explanation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). In the context of TFGBV, this is especially important because recent research has highlighted the need for more comparable data and more grounded qualitative accounts, particularly for groups facing intersecting vulnerabilities (Henry and Powell, 2018; UN Women, 2023; UN Women et al., 2024).

The study needed quantitative evidence to show the distribution of experiences and qualitative evidence to explain how those experiences are lived, normalised, resisted, or reported.



The chapter therefore sets out the research design and epistemological position, the study area and school sites, the study population and sampling strategy, the survey and qualitative data collection methods, the preparation of data collectors, the approach to data management and harmonisation, the quantitative and qualitative analytical strategies, the integration of evidence, ethical and safeguarding arrangements, trustworthiness, and the limitations of the research. The structure is designed to show not only what was analysed, but also how evidence was generated, prepared, interpreted, and protected. It also explains how the post-analysis data validation workshop and stakeholder validation workshop were used to review, validate, and refine the interpretation of the findings after the data had been gathered and analysed.

4.2 Research Design and Epistemological Position

The research was underpinned by a pragmatic mixed-methods orientation combined with a feminist concern for power, voice, safety, and representation.

- A **pragmatic approach** was suitable because the research questions required several complementary forms of evidence rather than a single methodological tradition. Surveys were needed to capture patterns of online safety, exposure, reporting, and perceived institutional response. Focus group discussions and open-ended responses were needed to understand the meanings attached to harassment, blackmail, image-based abuse, cyberstalking, impersonation, stigma, and silence. Key informant interviews were necessary to examine legal, technical, regulatory, and service-provider perspectives. The comparative case studies and administrative annex supported the contextual interpretation of the South Sudan evidence base.

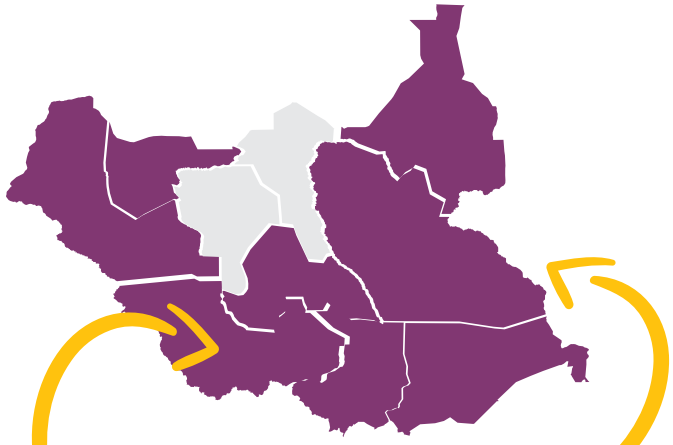
- The **feminist orientation** of the study was equally important. TFGBV is not a neutral technological problem. It is shaped by gendered power relations, social norms, unequal access to digital literacy, reputational control, economic dependence, political intimidation, disability-related exclusion, and weak reporting systems. The study, therefore, approached TFGBV as part of a continuum of gendered violence that moves across online and offline spaces, rather than as a detached online anomaly (Henry and Powell, 2018; Henry, Flynn, and Powell, 2020). This perspective enabled the research to examine not only whether participants experienced harm but also how that harm affected mobility, education, leadership, mental well-being, social relationships, and trust in institutions.

- **Epistemologically,** the research adopted a critical-interpretive stance. Quantitative findings were treated as indicators of pattern, scale, and variation, but not as self-explanatory facts. Their meaning emerged from the qualitative evidence, particularly FGD themes, open-ended survey responses, KII narratives, and cross-source matrices. This stance was important because similar percentages may conceal different lived realities. For instance, a respondent may report feeling relatively safe online while also witnessing routine harassment, avoiding certain platforms, or believing that formal reporting will not produce action. The methodological task was therefore to interpret patterned inconsistency, not merely to list percentages.

The design is best described as a convergent mixed-methods research design. Quantitative and qualitative materials were first considered within their respective analytical logics and then brought together through comparison, confirmation, and expansion. This strategy is widely used where researchers need to compare descriptive prevalence with narrative explanation and institutional interpretation (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018; Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, 2014). In this research, convergence did not mean forcing all sources into one dataset. Rather, it meant using each source to illuminate the others while preserving the boundaries of each instrument, cohort, and field context.

4.3 Study Area and Research Sites

The study focused primarily on South Sudan, with evidence gathered across seven states and one administrative area. The South Sudan locations were Central Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Upper Nile, Jonglei, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Lakes State, and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. This geographic spread was important because TFGBV is shaped by differences in connectivity, digital access, language, gender norms, institutional presence, and the availability of reporting or psychosocial support services.



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The educational component of the study was based on five anonymised schools or educational sites used for the Students/Girls survey and student FGDs. These sites included three Juba-based secondary schools and two universities. The sites were treated as purposely selected educational settings and to source information regarding TFGBV in girls, rather than as a statistically representative sample of all schools or universities. The selected secondary schools provided access to girls' experiences of TFGBV. Their value lies in allowing the study to examine TFGBV among students and girls in institutional environments where mobile phone use, social media participation, peer relationships, gender norms, and safeguarding concerns intersect.

The focus on both state-level and school-level sites allowed the study to examine TFGBV as a layered problem. At the broader geographic level, the research considered how online harm is shaped by state-level variation, digital connectivity, and institutional reach. At the educational-site level, it examined how harassment, rumour, image-based abuse, blackmail, and digital control affect students' safety, participation, and reporting choices.

4.4 Study Population

The study population comprised women, girls, and other relevant stakeholders in South Sudan whose experiences, work, or institutional roles were connected to digital technology and gender-based violence. Throughout this study, the term "young women" refers to women aged 15–35 years, consistent with the African Union's definition of youth. The primary participant groups included students, young women, women with disabilities, women leaders and feminist or gender activists, women using social media or messaging applications, and respondents reached through general and Google Forms surveys. The wider study population also included civil society actors, international non-governmental organisations, United Nations agencies, GBV service providers, legal and justice-sector actors, digital safety practitioners, regulators, academics, technology experts, activists, and other key informants whose professional expertise or lived experience was relevant to technology-facilitated gender-based violence.

This population boundary was appropriate because the research questions were concerned with more than individual exposure to online abuse. They also examined the social and institutional environments

The study focused on women and girls in South Sudan, particularly young women aged 15-35, alongside stakeholders whose lived experiences or professional roles relate to digital technology and GBV, including students, women with disabilities, leaders, activists, service providers, justice actors, regulators, academics, and technology experts.



that shape vulnerability, silence, reporting, and response. TFGBV may involve direct threats, sexual harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, impersonation, doxing, blackmail, gendered disinformation, cyberstalking, and platform-based humiliation. It may also produce offline consequences such as stigma, family conflict, school withdrawal, fear of public participation, psychological distress, and reduced use of digital spaces. The study population was therefore defined broadly enough to capture both experience and response systems.

4.5 Sampling Strategy and Sample Composition

The sampling strategy was purposive and project-based rather than nationally probabilistic. Participants were selected because they belonged to relevant groups, held relevant institutional roles, or were based at sites where the research could safely explore TFGBV. The sample, therefore, provides strong baseline evidence across multiple participant groups and research instruments, but it should not be interpreted as a nationally representative sample of all women and girls in South Sudan.

Survey recruitment drew on separate instruments and analytical datasets for Students/Girls, the broader TFGBV Google survey, the preliminary digital safety survey, women with disabilities, and the multi-state women survey. The qualitative sample included FGDs with Students/Girls, young women, women with disabilities, and technology experts. It also included thirty-seven (37) unique substantive

key informant interview documents reviewed, four comparative African case studies, and twenty-one (21) potential TFGBV-related cases drawn from the National Communication Authority's South Sudan Computer Incident Response Team (NCA/SS-CIRT) administrative record for 2024-2025. The FGD material is especially important because TFGBV is often normalised or underreported in formal channels. Group discussion can reveal shared language, peer norms, and collective understandings of harm, while interviews with key informants can explain legal, institutional, and technical constraints.

Table 4.1. Shows Survey instruments and recorded response counts

Survey/analytical source	Analytical n	Main methodological contribution
Preliminary digital safety survey	32	Baseline indicators on digital safety, online behaviour, cyberlaw awareness, platform reporting, and open-ended concerns.
Broader TFGBV Google survey	99	Survivor prevalence, forms of TFGBV, perceived safety, reporting pathways, platform response, and policy attitudes.
Multi-state young women's survey	172	State/location young women and girls survey rows across six states plus Pibor Administrative Area. Used for geographic comparison and statistical tests.
Disabled women survey	10	Intersectional evidence on accessibility, disability, online harm, digital safety barriers, and response gaps.
Students/Girls survey and FGD dataset	142	Student online safety, TFGBV exposure, impacts, reporting, and education-site comparison across five anonymised educational sites.
Updated age/location analytical cohort	424	Cleaned and deduplicated cross-instrument analytical cohort used only for age and state/location comparisons; not added to the instrument-specific counts above.

Table 4.2. Qualitative, comparative, and administrative corpus as shown below

Source	Analytical size	Main methodological contribution
Students/Girls FGDs	Combined FGD corpus across five anonymised educational sites	Student narratives, peer dynamics, harassment, reporting barriers, and school-based safety concerns.
Young women's FGDs	99 recorded responses/ contributions	Collective accounts of forms of TFGBV, social stigma, coping, and preferred interventions.
Disability FGD	1 FGD; 10 recorded responses/ contributions	Intersectional evidence on disability, accessibility, vulnerability, and reporting.
Technology expert FGD	1 FGD; 4 expert contributions	Technical, platform, training, and digital safety perspectives.
Key informant interviews	37 unique substantive KII documents reviewed	Institutional, legal, regulatory, civil society, GBV service, women leaders/activists, and technical perspectives; duplicate documents were not double-counted.
Comparative African case studies	4 cases	Regional contextualization of law, policy, programming, and institutional response.
NCA/SS-CIRT administrative annex	21 potential TFGBV-related cases, 2024-2025	Indicative institutional record of reported incidents, platforms, pathways, and responses.
Post-analysis validation workshops	2 workshops	A data validation workshop and stakeholder validation workshop were used after data gathering and analysis to review the interpretation, denominators, institutional findings, and recommendations.

Table 4.3. Shows the student survey and FGD educational sites

No.	Educational site
1	High School A
2	High School B
3	High School C
4	University A
5	University B

Table 4.4. Geographic coverage recorded in the methodology data is shown below

Country/area	Locations or responses recorded
South Sudan	Central Equatoria; Western Equatoria; Eastern Equatoria; Upper Nile; Jonglei; Lakes State; Western Bahr el Ghazal; Pibor Administrative Area
Ethiopia	1 Google Forms survey response
Uganda	1 Google Forms survey response

4.6 Data Collection Methods

Four main data collection methods were used: structured surveys, open-ended survey questions, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews. The study also drew on four comparative African case studies and the NCA/SS-CIRT administrative annex on potential TFGBV-related cyber incidents. After the data had been gathered, cleaned and analysed, the study also included a data validation workshop and a stakeholder validation workshop. These validation workshops were not treated as new prevalence datasets; rather, they served as review and validation steps to test the clarity, accuracy and practical relevance of the analysis.

- The **structured surveys** captured demographic information, patterns of internet access, digital literacy, platform use, perceived online safety, exposure to harassment or TFGBV, forms of abuse, reporting behaviour, coping strategies, and perceptions of institutional or platform response.

- Closed questions supported descriptive comparison across cohorts, while **open-ended questions** captured experiences, fears, desired training topics, reporting outcomes, and participants' recommendations. The student survey and FGDs were linked to the educational sites listed above, while the young women, women with disabilities, Google Forms, and preliminary and multistate surveys helped broaden the evidence base beyond students alone.

- **Focus group discussions** were used to explore shared understandings of online harm, social norms, stigma, blackmail, harassment, image-based abuse, digital control, peer-to-peer abuse, reporting gaps, and preferred interventions. The Students/Girls component was read as an education-site qualitative corpus across five anonymised educational sites. Young women's FGDs generated ninety-nine (99) recorded responses or contributions. A disability-focused FGD generated ten (10) responses, and a technology expert FGD generated four expert contributions. These discussions were not treated as statistically generalizable units; rather, they were interpreted as qualitative evidence of recurring themes, social meanings, and group-level concerns.

- **Key informant interviews** were used to gather institutional, legal, technical, civil society, and service-provider perspectives. The updated analysis records thirty-seven (37) unique substantive KII documents reviewed. Interviewees were selected because of their professional, institutional, or lived-experience relevance to TFGBV. Their accounts helped contextualise survey and FGD findings by explaining why reporting pathways may be weak, why victims may not trust formal mechanisms, how legal frameworks are interpreted, how platforms and regulators respond, and what capacity gaps exist in prevention, investigation, and survivor support.

The comparative case study component consisted of four African cases. These cases were used to situate South Sudan's emerging TFGBV challenges within wider regional experience. Their objective was not to replace primary evidence from South Sudan, but to provide comparative insight into legal reform, digital safety programming, survivor-centred response, platform governance, and institutional coordination. Comparative case analysis was therefore used as a contextual method.

Finally, the study drew on an anonymised administrative annex supplied by the National Communication Authority and the South Sudan Computer Incident Response Team. This annex contained 21 potential TFGBV-related cases recorded during 2024-2025 (NCA/SS-CIRT, 2026). The annex provided an institutional view of reported incidents, platforms or channels involved, referral pathways, and response patterns. Because administrative reporting captures only cases that reach formal or technical systems, this evidence was interpreted as indicative institutional data rather than as a measure of population prevalence.

4.7 Data Collector Preparation and Field Procedures

Data collection was preceded by preparatory training for the fifteen members of the field research team involved in administering surveys, facilitating focus group discussions (FGDs), and conducting key informant interviews (KIIs).

The training served two purposes:



first, to familiarise the research team with the study instruments; and



second, to strengthen understanding of ethical, safeguarding, and survivor-centred principles before engaging with participants.

Facilitation guides were developed for each participant group, together with definitions of key TFGBV concepts, fieldwork guidance, informed consent materials, and referral pathways for participants requiring psychosocial support. Throughout the research process, a dedicated GBV social worker from Women for Justice and Equality (WOJE) provided psychosocial support and referral services for participants who experienced distress or required additional assistance. These measures promoted consistency across the field research team while helping to minimise the risk of harm or retraumatisation during data collection.

This preparation was essential because research on technology-facilitated gender-based violence involves sensitive disclosures, potential trauma, digital traceability, reputational harm, and the possibility of retaliation. The training therefore equipped the field research team to understand the purpose and boundaries of each research tool, obtain informed consent, respond appropriately to participant distress, avoid unnecessary probing, and safeguard participants' privacy and confidentiality. The availability of a dedicated GBV social worker further strengthened the study's survivor-centred approach by ensuring that participants who required psychosocial support were referred safely and appropriately. The role of the research team extended beyond gathering data to protecting the dignity, safety, and wellbeing of everyone who participated in the study.

For school and educational sites, field procedures required particular attention to safeguarding. The student survey and FGDs dealt with experiences that could involve peer harassment, sexualised rumours, blackmail, pressure to share images, threats, and fear of punishment or stigma. Participation, therefore, was voluntary, confidential, and managed in a way that did not expose students to further harm. Where age, institutional rules, or vulnerability required additional protections, consent and assent procedures were handled in line with the approved fieldwork protocol and school-based safeguarding requirements.

Where the source materials contained date information, the preliminary digital safety survey was collected in late 2023, while the main interviews and FGDs were conducted in 2025. The technology expert FGD was conducted around October 2025, and the KII registry included interviews conducted mainly between October and November 2025. The data validation workshop and stakeholder validation workshop took place after the main data-gathering and analytical phases in 2026, so they are reported as post-analysis validation steps rather than primary data-collection instruments.

4.8 Data Management, Preparation, and Harmonisation

The data were managed through a process of instrument-specific preparation followed by careful harmonisation. The quantitative instruments were not merged into a single dataset in the strict statistical sense because they were administered to different groups and did not use identical wording for every item. Instead, indicators were compared only where question wording, response options, and substantive meaning were close enough to support descriptive comparison. This was especially important for constructs such as perceived online safety, experience of harassment or TFGBV, witnessing of

abuse, knowledge of reporting channels, and actual reporting behaviour.

The research, therefore, preserved the distinction between data source and analytical theme. A student survey response was not assumed to be equivalent to a Google Forms response or a disability survey response unless the relevant item measured a sufficiently similar construct. Similarly, FGD contributions were not counted as survey prevalence. This approach reduced false comparability while still allowing the study to identify recurring forms of harm and response gaps across instruments.

For the student and young women materials, harmonisation was particularly important because the study included cross-site and cross-location comparison. The student component used a common direct TFGBV core to compare experiences across the educational sites; the age/location analysis had a data cohort of 424 responses. Because the cohort pools comparable items from several survey instruments, it was treated as a descriptive analytical dataset with item-specific denominators rather than as a new nationally representative sample. The analysis retained the original logic of each instrument while making clear that site-level and state/location findings were descriptive and sample-specific.

The NCA/SS-CIRT annex was treated differently from the survey and FGD data. It was an administrative source, not a participant survey. The relevant information on annual case totals, typologies, platforms, demographic notes, geographic patterns, reporting pathways, and response actions was extracted and interpreted as indicative institutional evidence. Because the annex did not use a fully standardised TFGBV taxonomy or consistently disaggregate the demographic structure, its contents were not treated as directly comparable to participant-reported prevalence data (NCA and SS-CIRT, 2026).

Qualitative data were prepared through thematic reading of FGD notes, coded matrices, open-ended responses, quote banks, KII summaries, and case study notes. Existing coded outputs and summary matrices were retained where available. Following Saldaña (2021), codes were treated as analytical devices that reveal patterns, emphases, and silences, rather than as fixed truths. This approach enabled comparison across sources while preserving context and avoiding over-generalisation.

4.9 Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis was primarily descriptive and comparative. The purpose was to identify patterns of TFGBV exposure, platform use, reporting behaviour, perceived safety, and institutional response across the survey instruments. Descriptive statistics were used because the sampling approach was purposive rather than probabilistic and because some subgroup samples were small. Frequencies and percentages were therefore interpreted as indicators of distribution within the analysed samples, not as national prevalence estimates.

The analysis proceeded in three stages.

- **First**, each survey instrument was examined separately to understand its own target group, sample size, denominators, and item structure.
- **Second**, comparable indicators were reviewed across survey families to identify recurring patterns and differences.
- **Third**, where the workbooks contained cross-tabs or inferential analyses, including chi-square tests and Cramer's V for state/location comparisons, these outputs were interpreted with caution as indicators of association within the relevant analytical sample. They were not treated as evidence of causation.

Denominators were read carefully because not every respondent answered every question. Where percentages were already calculated in the source workbooks, they were retained where appropriate and reported consistently. Where item-level non-response affected interpretation, the chapter avoided presenting percentages without reference to the relevant base. This was especially important for sensitive questions on harassment, image-based abuse, reporting, disability, psychosocial impact, and institutional trust.

The NCA/SS-CIRT administrative data were analysed separately from participant survey data. The annex identified twenty-one (21) potential TFGBV-related cases recorded during 2024-2025, with eight (8) cases in 2024 and thirteen (13) cases in 2025. The indicative typology classified the 21 cases into impersonation or account takeover, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, hate speech or gendered disinformation,

and sextortion. Because administrative reporting depends on whether incidents are recognised, reported, and recorded, these figures were used to illuminate institutional patterning rather than to estimate the true scale of TFGBV. This strategy aligns with using quantitative content and survey summaries to map emphasis and distribution before deeper interpretation (Bryman, 2016).

4.10 Qualitative and Comparative Analysis

The qualitative analysis drew on FGD notes, open-ended survey responses, KII summaries, thematic matrices, quote banks, technology expert inputs, the disability-focused narrative, and the four comparative African case studies. Thematic analysis was appropriate because it allowed the study to identify recurrent meanings across diverse qualitative sources while preserving sensitivity to context and difference (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Narrative attention was also retained because TFGBV often appears as a sequence of events rather than a single isolated incident: contact, coercion, threat, exposure, humiliation, family reaction, withdrawal, reporting, and sometimes retaliation.

The qualitative analysis proceeded in three stages.

- First, **each qualitative source was read within its own structure.** Student FGDs were read as evidence of peer dynamics and school-based digital safety concerns. Young women's FGDs were read as evidence of everyday online participation, gendered harassment, social norms, and reporting choices. Disability-focused evidence was read for intersectional barriers, accessibility concerns, and heightened risks linked to dependency, communication barriers, and exclusion. Technology expert contributions were read for platform, digital literacy, capacity, and technical response issues. KIIs were read for institutional, legal, regulatory, government, CIRT/NCA, GBV service-provider, academic, digital-rights, women-leader, and feminist activist perspectives.

- Second, **themes were compared across sources.** This produced cross-source themes on routine harassment, image-based abuse, sexualised blackmail, impersonation, psychosocial harm, silence and stigma, lack of trusted reporting pathways, gaps in digital literacy, weak platform response, limited institutional coordination, and intersectional exclusion.

- Third, **the four comparative African case studies were used to interpret these themes in relation to wider regional practice.** The comparative cases helped identify areas where South Sudan's response could benefit from clearer legal categorisation, stronger survivor referral pathways, institutional coordination, and digital safety education.

The qualitative analysis did not attempt to quantify every narrative theme as if it were a survey item. Instead, qualitative evidence was used to explain mechanisms and meanings. For example, a survey pattern of low reporting may be explained by FGD and KII accounts of stigma, lack of feedback, fear of blame, weak preservation of digital evidence, and limited trust in authorities. Similarly, patterns of image-based abuse and blackmail are better understood through narratives that show how online threats move into offline shame, family pressure, and withdrawal from education or public participation.

4.11 Integration of Mixed-Methods Evidence

Integration was performed through triangulation and complementarity. Quantitative findings identified distribution and pattern, while qualitative findings explained mechanisms, meanings, and institutional context. Administrative data showed how a small number of cases entered formal reporting or technical response systems, while comparative case studies helped situate South Sudan within broader African debates on TFGBV prevention and response.

Triangulation was used cautiously. Where findings converged across sources, they were treated as stronger evidence of recurring patterns. Where they diverged, the difference was interpreted rather than ignored. Divergence can reveal important methodological and substantive issues, such as under-reporting, normalisation of harassment, differences in digital literacy, fear of disclosure,

or varying definitions of what counts as violence online. This is particularly important in TFGBV research because existing global work stresses that the field suffers from fragmented evidence, limited comparability, and insufficient attention to how online harms intersect with offline harms and structural inequalities (UN Women, 2023; UN Women et al., 2024).

The integrated analysis, therefore, asked three questions of each major theme.

- **First**, what do the survey responses show about frequency, perceived safety, or reporting?
- **Second**, what do the FGDs, open-ended responses, and interviews show about lived experience, meaning, and institutional response?
- **Third**, how do administrative and comparative sources help contextualise the pattern?

This process allowed the research to move beyond a single-instrument reading of TFGBV and to examine it as a social, legal, technological, and institutional problem. The data validation and stakeholder validation workshops formed a final interpretive check by allowing the research team and stakeholders to review whether the integrated findings, institutional gaps and recommendations were consistent with the cleaned data and with stakeholder knowledge of the South Sudan context.

4.12 Data Validation and Stakeholder Validation Workshops

After data collection, cleaning, and analysis, the research process included a data validation workshop and a multi-stakeholder validation workshop. The data validation workshop focused on checking the internal consistency of the analysis, including whether the updated counts, denominators, state and location comparisons, coding categories, and cross-source interpretations were presented accurately. This was particularly important because the study brought together multiple, non-equivalent data collection instruments and because the updated Chapter Five findings distinguish between instrument-specific datasets and the cleaned 424-response analytical dataset used for age and location analyses.

The multi-stakeholder validation workshop provided an opportunity to assess whether the emerging findings, institutional gap analysis, and recommendations were understandable, credible, and practically relevant to stakeholders working across gender-based violence prevention and response, digital safety, education, justice, telecommunications, government, civil society, and survivor support. In addition to the workshop discussions, the research team received technical feedback from the National Bureau of Statistics on the presentation and interpretation of the quantitative findings, particularly regarding the reporting of comparative analyses and the appropriate interpretation of state-level data. This feedback informed revisions to the presentation of the statistical findings and strengthened the methodological rigor of the final report.

Feedback from the validation workshops and subsequent technical review was used to clarify terminology, refine the presentation of quantitative findings, strengthen the explanation of institutional roles, improve the interpretation of comparative analyses, and ensure that the report did not overstate the representativeness of the data. These processes enhanced the credibility, methodological rigor, and practical relevance of the study while remaining analytically distinct from the primary survey, focus group discussion, key informant interview, comparative, and administrative data sources

4.13 Ethical Considerations and Safeguarding

Ethical considerations were central to the study because TFGBV involves violence, fear, coercion, stigma, sexuality, reputation, and the potential silencing of survivors. The research, therefore, used a survivor-centred approach throughout data collection, analysis, and presentation. Participants informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, their right to decline questions, confidentiality arrangements, and available support pathways. Consent was incorporated at the beginning of participant-facing tools. Existing methodology materials also indicated attention to translated consent materials in Juba Arabic and other relevant languages, as well as disability-accessible communication where needed.

Confidentiality and anonymity were treated as practical safeguards, not merely formal promises. Identifying details were removed or avoided where possible, and participant codes or summary-level outputs were used to reduce the risk of recognition. This was especially important in small communities, educational settings, women's leadership spaces, and disability-focused discussions, where deductive disclosure can occur even when names are removed. Quotations and examples were therefore to be presented carefully, without unnecessary identifying detail or sensational description.

Trauma-informed practice was also essential. Data collectors needed to recognise distress, avoid judgmental or intrusive questioning, and provide information about psychosocial or GBV support services where participation caused discomfort. The tools were expected to avoid questions that could criminalise participants or expose them to legal, social, or family risk. Ethical compliance was therefore understood broadly: it included informed consent, careful wording, privacy protection, safe referral, non-judgmental interaction, and avoidance of unnecessary probing.

Digital safety created an additional ethical concern. TFGBV research can itself create risk if messages, forms, screenshots, recordings, names, or digital traces are mishandled. The study, therefore, required careful storage, restricted access, and anonymisation of digital data. Participants were not expected to provide evidence in ways that could expose them to further harm. The analysis also avoided reproducing graphic or traceable details of abuse. This approach is consistent with methodological guidance on TFGBV, which emphasises that research and reporting must attend to stigma, digital traceability, and intersectional vulnerability (UN Women, 2023; UNICEF, UNFPA, and Save the Children, n.d.).

A final ethical issue concerned representation. Writing about TFGBV can reproduce harm if survivor accounts are reduced to dramatic examples or if institutional perspectives overwhelm lived experience. The research, therefore, reports patterns without dwelling on graphic detail and pairs prevalence with interpretation of social, emotional, and institutional consequences.

4.14 Trustworthiness, Validity, and Reliability

The trustworthiness of the study was strengthened through triangulation across surveys, open-ended responses, FGDs, KIIs, comparative case studies, and administrative evidence. This made it possible to compare prevalence patterns with lived-experience accounts and institutional perspectives. Where a pattern appeared in multiple sources, it was treated as stronger evidence of a recurring issue. Where findings differed, the inconsistency was examined as part of the analysis rather than treated as an error. Trustworthiness was further strengthened through the post-analysis data validation workshop and stakeholder validation workshop, which provided a structured opportunity to review the consistency of the cleaned data, the plausibility of the integrated interpretation, and the practical relevance of the institutional findings.

Reliability was supported by structured tools, common question areas, prepared facilitation guides, and documented data-collector training. Data preparation also maintained an audit trail through cleaned sheets, denominator notes, coded outputs, thematic matrices, and source-specific summaries. These records allowed the analysis to preserve the logic of the original instruments while documenting the limits of comparison.

Validity was strengthened by preserving the distinction between source types. Survey data were used to describe distribution and pattern; FGDs and open-ended responses were used to interpret experience and meaning; KIIs were used to understand institutional, legal, and technical response; comparative case studies were used for regional contextualization; and the administrative annex was used as indicative evidence of formal reporting patterns. This separation reduced the risk that one type of evidence would be overstated or asked to answer questions it could not support.

Reflexivity was also important. TFGBV is shaped by power, silence, and unequal capacity to name harm. Some participants may minimise abuse because harassment has become normalised; others may avoid disclosure because of shame, fear of blame,

or lack of trust in confidentiality. The interpretation of findings, therefore, remained attentive to under-reporting, social desirability bias, institutional mistrust, and the possibility that the most vulnerable participants may be the least visible in digitally mediated research.

4.15 Methodological Limitations

The research has several limitations.

- **First**, the datasets were drawn from different instruments, populations, and field moments. Cross-instrument comparison is, therefore, concept-driven rather than perfectly standardised.
- **Second**, the sample was purposive and project-based rather than nationally probabilistic. The findings should not be presented as national prevalence estimates for South Sudan as a whole.
- **Third,** the updated counts should be interpreted carefully: the multi-state women survey is recorded as n=172 in the dataset/source profile, while the cleaned age/location analytical cohort contains 424 deduplicated responses pooled across eligible survey rows. The 424 cohort is therefore an analytical dataset for age/location comparison and should not be added to the instrument-specific survey counts.
- **Fourth**, some subgroups were small. The disabled women survey recorded ten (10) responses, while the disability FGD recorded eleven (11) responses or contributions. These data are analytically important because they highlight intersectional vulnerability and accessibility barriers, but they are not statistically large enough for strong subgroup generalisation.
- **Fifth**, the student component covered five anonymised educational sites, including three High Schools and two Universities. The chapter can therefore report the total Students/Girls survey and FGD counts and anonymised site comparisons, but it should not present the schools as a statistically representative sample of all education institutions in South Sudan.
- **Sixth**, the research was weighted toward digitally connected participants and sites that could be reached through the project instruments. Rural women and girls, people without reliable connectivity, those with lower literacy, displaced populations and participants outside formal institutions may therefore be underrepresented.
- **Seventh**, several findings rely on self-reported experiences, perceptions and witnessing rather than independently verified incidents. In TFGBV research, however, perception-based evidence remains important because fear, withdrawal and silencing are themselves part of the harm (Henry, Flynn and Powell, 2020). The limitation is therefore not that perception data are irrelevant, but that they should be interpreted as reported experience and risk perception rather than verified case counts.
- **Eighth**, the NCA/SS-CIRT annex was scanned, aggregated and based on best-effort classification rather than a fully standardised TFGBV taxonomy. It also lacked consistent demographic and state-level disaggregation. The annex is therefore valuable for understanding institutional reporting patterns, but not suitable for fine-grained incidence estimation (NCA and SS-CIRT, 2026).
- **Finally**, because the research brings together survey data, qualitative discussion, interviews, case studies and administrative records, the analysis depends on careful triangulation. The strength of the design lies in breadth and contextual depth; its limitation is that not every source answers the same question in the same way.

4.16 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the mixed-methods design, study sites, sampling approach, data collection processes, analysis strategy, validation process, ethical safeguards and methodological limitations that guided the study. These methodological choices provide the basis for interpreting the results presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results

5.0 Introduction

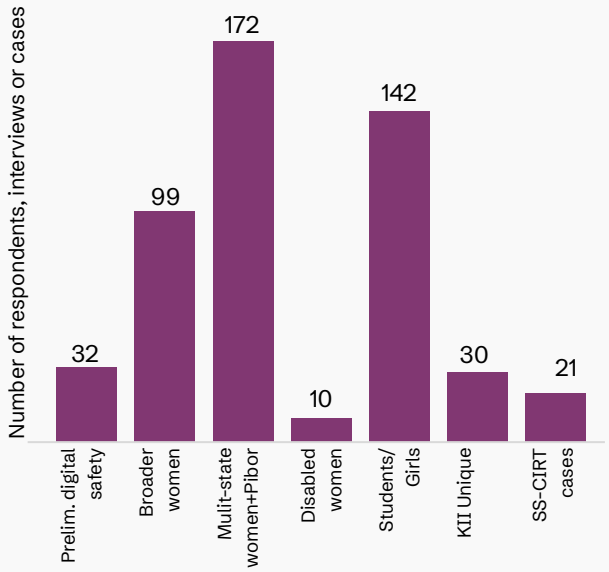
Chapter Five presents the empirical results of the study on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in South Sudan. Because the uploaded materials were collected through different instruments, sites and respondent groups, the chapter presents each dataset separately before drawing together comparable patterns. This structure avoids treating non-equivalent instruments as a single prevalence survey while still allowing cross-dataset comparison. The chapter begins with the preliminary digital safety survey, followed by the broader women's TFGBV survey, the multi-state women's survey, the Students/Girls survey and FGDs, the disabled women results, the key informant interview analysis, the SS-CIRT/NCA administrative data and the integrated cross-dataset results. The results are descriptive, and denominators are stated wherever possible.

Table 5.1. Dataset/source profile and analytical role

Dataset	Analytical n	Population/scope	Main outputs used in this chapter	Analytical role
Preliminary digital safety survey	32	Preliminary digital safety survey of women	Quant summary, crosstabs, open-ended thematic coding	Useful as a baseline risk-and-awareness profile; not directly equivalent to later TFGBV prevalence surveys.
Broader TFGBV Google survey	99	Broader TFGBV survey of mostly young adult women	Formula-driven summary tables and open-ended thematic coding	Best for survivor prevalence, forms, reporting pathways, and policy attitudes.
Multi-state women's survey	172	State/location women and girls survey rows across six states plus Pibor Administrative Area	Survey tables, location comparison, statistical tests, coded FGDs	Best for geographic comparison
Disabled women survey	10	Disabled women TFGBV survey	Survey tables plus one qualitative narrative / coded themes	Small sample; strongest for disability-specific barriers and response gaps.
Students/Girls survey and FGDs	142	Student survey and FGDs across five sites	Site-level tables, subgroup tables, thematic coding	Best for education-related harms and school/site comparison.

Dataset	Analytical n	Population/scope	Main outputs used in this chapter	Analytical role
Key informant interviews (KIIs)	37 documents reviewed	Unique substantive institutional and expert interviews	NVivo-style coding, case typology, institutional gaps, cross-theme matrices	Best for institutional, legal, platform and service-response analysis; duplicate documents were not double-counted.
SS-CIRT/NCA administrative data	21	Potential TFGBV-related incident records, 2024-2025	Indicative case aggregation, platform/channel notes, demographic/geographic summary where recorded	Useful as administrative signal data; not a complete standardised TFGBV prevalence dataset.

FIGURE 5.1.
Analytical sample sizes by dataset/source.



The dataset overview shows that the chapter combines several types of evidence: survey datasets, qualitative interview material and administrative case data. The largest quantitative source is the Students/ Girls survey, while the KII workbook provides the main institutional and expert evidence stream.

5.1 Preliminary Digital Safety Survey Results

The preliminary digital safety survey contained 32 valid respondents. It is presented first because it predated the main survey instruments and provided an initial profile of online safety, gendered targeting, platform reporting and cyberlaw awareness. These results are not used as the main TFGBV prevalence estimate; instead, they establish the baseline risk-and-awareness context that informed the later instruments.

Table 5.2. Preliminary digital safety survey: core quantitative indicators

Indicator	Count	Denominator	Percent
Experienced online harassment because of gender	11	32	34.4%
Received threatening or abusive messages online	19	32	59.4%
Felt safe online	10	32	31.2%
Felt unsafe online	20	32	62.5%
Had enough digital safety information	8	32	25.0%
Thought platforms are doing enough	11	32	34.4%
Had reported abuse to a platform	12	32	37.5%
Believed women are more likely to be targeted online	30	31	96.8%
Supported stricter laws	32	32	100.0%
Any cyberlaw awareness (specific or partial)	5	30	16.7%

Percentages use the denominator shown for each indicator. This preliminary dataset predates the main survey instruments.

FIGURE 5.2.
Preliminary digital safety survey indicators.

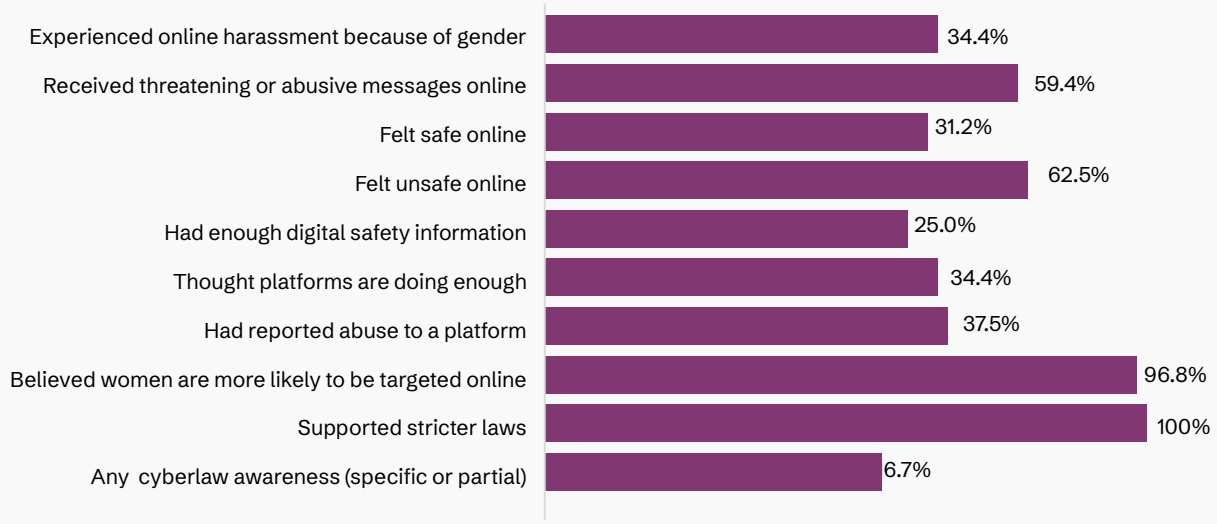


Table 5.3. Preliminary digital safety survey: open-text thematic summary

Theme	Coded mentions	Result statement
Hacking, privacy breaches, and scams	8	Unsafe feelings linked to hacking, scams, and misuse of personal information.
Harassment, bullying, and abusive messages	7	Bullying, negative messages, and abusive contact were major reasons for feeling unsafe.
Low cyberlaw awareness	25	Most respondents did not know the Cyber Crimes and Computer Misuse Provisional Order 2021.
Blocking and restricting access	13	The dominant coping strategy was blocking, unfollowing, or restricting the abuser.
Training demand for cybersecurity and reporting	13	Respondents wanted practical protection skills and clearer reporting guidance.

Open-ended responses were coded into overlapping themes; coded mentions are not respondent prevalence estimates.

Read together, the preliminary findings point to three issues that recur throughout the chapter: routine online insecurity, low awareness of formal cyberlaw protections and reliance on informal self-protection strategies such as blocking or restricting abusers.

5.2 Survey Results among Women

This section presents two survey datasets with women and young women. The broader TFGBV survey that was administered online contained 99 respondents, and the multi-state women's survey contained 96 respondents. The two datasets are retained as separate result streams because their sampling frames and questionnaire structures were not identical. The broader survey is used mainly for survivor prevalence, forms of TFGBV and reporting pathways, while the multi-state survey provides the strongest state/location comparison.

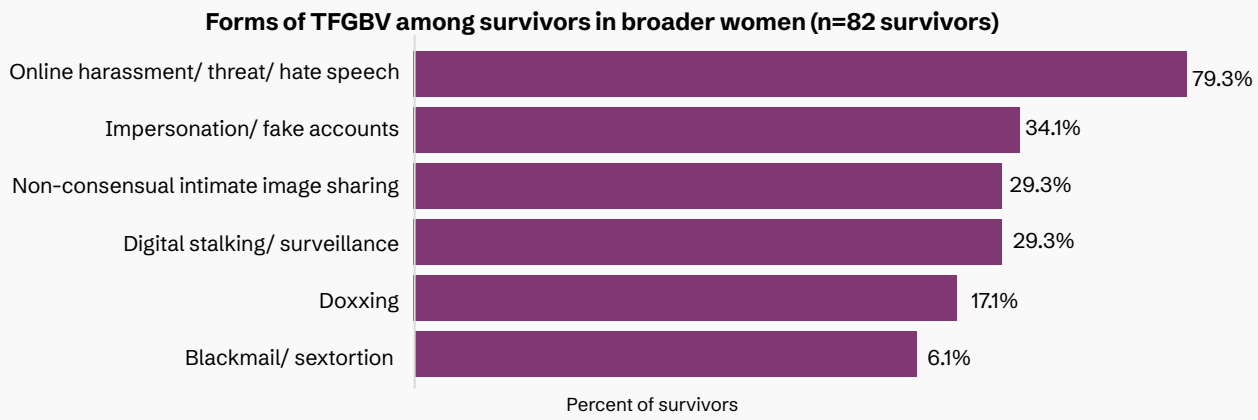
5.2.1 Broader TFGBV survey of women (n=99)

In the broader TFGBV survey, 82 of 99 respondents were recorded in the synthesis workbook as having experienced TFGBV, while 90 of 99 had witnessed TFGBV against another woman or girl. Among survivors, the most frequently reported forms were online harassment, threats or hate speech, followed by impersonation or fake accounts, non-consensual sharing of intimate images and digital stalking or surveillance. The open-ended responses placed these experiences within a wider demand for stronger laws, better platform accountability and more practical digital-safety information.

Table 5.4. Broader women's survey: core indicators and forms among survivors

Indicator	Count	Denominator	Percent
Experienced TFGBV	82	99	82.8%
Witnessed TFGBV against another woman or girl	90	99	90.9%
Rated TFGBV as common (scores 8-10/10)	71	99	71.7%
Changed online behaviour after TFGBV (survivors only)	62	82	75.6%
Online harassment/threats/hate speech among survivors	65	82	79.3%
Impersonation / fake accounts among survivors	28	82	34.1%
Non-consensual intimate image sharing among survivors	24	82	29.3%
Digital stalking/surveillance among survivors	24	82	29.3%
Doxxing among survivors	14	82	17.1%
Blackmail/sextortion among survivors	5	82	6.1%
Survivors who did not report	40	82	48.8%
Survivors who reported to a platform	31	82	37.8%
Survivors who reported to family/friends	20	82	24.4%

FIGURE 5.3.
Forms of TFGBV among survivors in the broader young women's survey.



The broader women's survey therefore establishes the main survivor-level pattern: exposure and witnessing were high, harassment was the most common reported form, and reporting pathways were weaker than the scale of harm indicated by respondents.

Table 5.5. Broader women survey: open-ended thematic summary

Theme	Coded mentions	Result statement
Stronger laws, enforcement, and accountability	43	The most common open-ended theme: respondents called for legal reform, sanctions, and justice.
Seriousness, urgency, and rights framing	37	Respondents framed TFGBV as real violence with real consequences.
Institutional and platform responsibility	30	Government and tech platforms were expected to act more decisively.
Awareness, training, and digital literacy	21	Practical protection knowledge and awareness were frequently requested.
Support, reporting, and access to justice	18	Survivor support and safer reporting pathways remained visible priorities.

5.2.2 State/location survey results and comparison (combined age/location cohort, n=424)

The updated survey workbook retains 424 cleaned age/location survey responses after deduplication. The state/location comparison below now includes the seven main state/location groups. Because the workbook pools items from several survey instruments, denominators vary by indicator; the tables therefore report count/valid denominator wherever this is needed.

Table 5.6. Updated survey age/location cohort: selected overall indicators

Indicator	Count	Denominator	Percent
Cleaned survey responses retained after deduplication	424	424	100.0%
Experienced/exposed to TFGBV	384	424	90.6%
Witnessed TFGBV	343	423	81.1%
Felt safe online	200	423	47.3%
Adjusted online behaviour	267	421	63.4%
Reported incident	69	135	51.1%
Knows where to report	50	230	21.7%

Table 5.7. Updated state/location comparison

State/ location	n	Any direct TFGBV	Witnessed TFGBV	Felt safe online	Adjusted online behaviour	Knows where to report	Reported incident
Central Equatoria	224	198/224 (88.4%)	172/223 (77.1%)	108/223 (48.4%)	139/221 (62.9%)	16/52 (30.8%)	40/88 (45.5%)
Eastern Equatoria	32	32/32 (100.0%)	27/32 (84.4%)	10/32 (31.2%)	26/32 (81.2%)	2/27 (7.4%)	5/5 (100.0%)
Jonglei	30	26/30 (86.7%)	30/30 (100.0%)	18/30 (60.0%)	19/30 (63.3%)	1/25 (4.0%)	3/5 (60.0%)
Lakes State	26	22/26 (84.6%)	25/26 (96.2%)	11/26 (42.3%)	25/26 (96.2%)	1/26 (3.8%)	
Upper Nile	26	23/26 (88.5%)	12/26 (46.2%)	19/26 (73.1%)	9/26 (34.6%)	5/26 (19.2%)	
Western Bahr el Ghazal	29	27/29 (93.1%)	26/29 (89.7%)	10/29 (34.5%)	16/29 (55.2%)	11/26 (42.3%)	1/3 (33.3%)
Western Equatoria	26	26/26 (100.0%)	23/26 (88.5%)	18/26 (69.2%)	8/26 (30.8%)	0/23 (0.0%)	1/3 (33.3%)
Pibor Administrative Area	25	25/25 (100.0%)	22/25 (88.0%)	6/25 (24.0%)	22/25 (88.0%)	14/25 (56.0%)	15/25 (60.0%)

FIGURE 5.4.
Mean number of TFGBV forms by state/location.

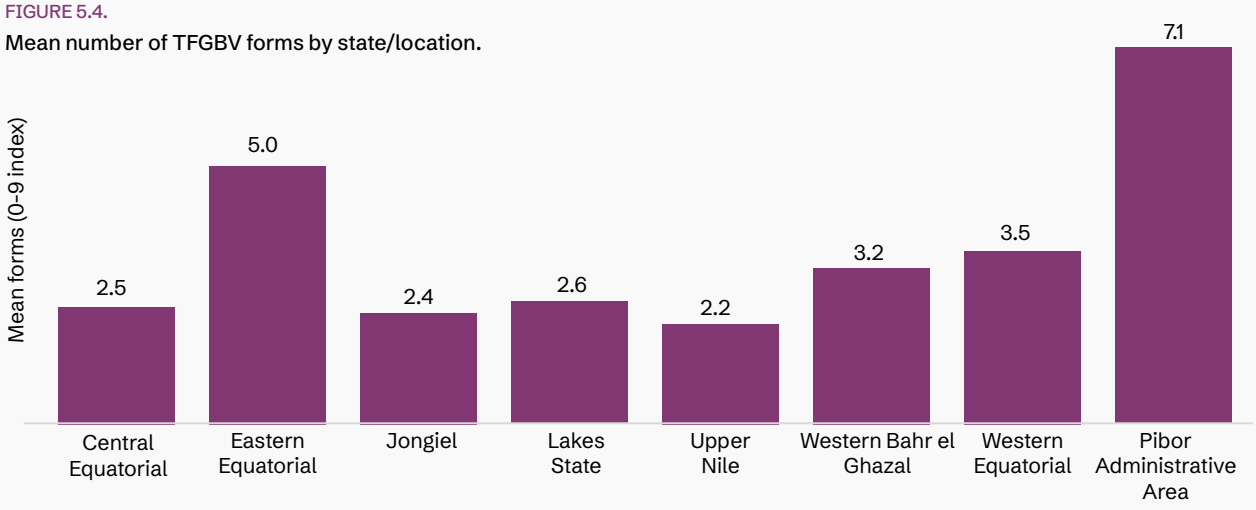
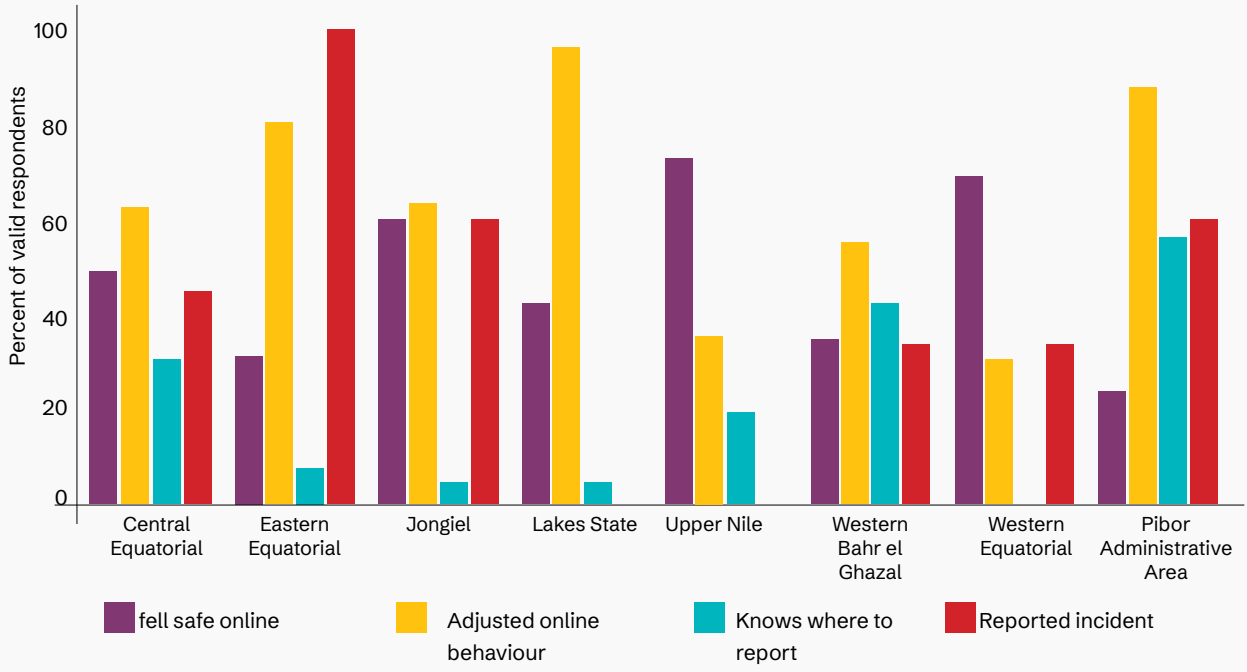


FIGURE 5.5.
State/location comparison of reporting and safety indicators



The statistical tests show that overall TFGBV exposure remained high across locations and was not significantly different by location. However, significant location differences were recorded for witnessing TFGBV, feeling safe online, adjusted online behaviour and knowing where to report. This supports retaining location as an important descriptive category in the results chapter, while noting that reporting denominators vary by questionnaire version.

Table 5.8. Multi-state survey: statistical tests

Outcome	Chi-square	df	p-value	Cramer's V	Workbook interpretation
Any direct TFGBV exposure	11.96	7	0.102	0.169	No statistically significant location difference
Witnessed TFGBV	36.70	7	5.34e-06	0.297	Significant location difference
Felt safe online	24.82	7	8.16e-04	0.244	Significant location difference
Adjusted online behaviour	45.12	7	1.29e-07	0.330	Significant location difference
Knows where to report	45.47	7	1.11e-07	0.445	Significant location difference
Reported incident	7.59	5	0.181	0.243	No statistically significant location difference (valid reporting denominators only)

5.3 Students/Girls Survey and FGD Results

The Students/Girls dataset contained 142 survey responses across five education sites and a combined FGD corpus. All education sites are anonymised in this chapter as High School A-C and University A-B. The results are presented in four steps: the survey sample profile and platform use; direct TFGBV experiences; perceptions, impacts and reporting responses; and then site, age and FGD thematic comparisons.

Table 5.9. Students/Girls survey: sample profile

Domain	Category	n	Percent
Age	18–24	85	59.9%
Age	Under 18	43	30.3%
Age	25–35	14	9.9%
Education level	Secondary	102	71.8%
Education level	Higher education	40	28.2%
Disability status	No disability reported	128	90.1%
Disability status	Disability reported	14	9.9%
Hours spent online	Less than 1 hour	50	35.2%
Hours spent online	1–3 hours/day	49	34.5%
Hours spent online	3–5 hours/day	22	15.5%
Hours spent online	More than 5 hours/day	19	13.4%

Education sites are anonymised. Percentages are based on the Students/Girls survey denominator available for each variable.

Table 5.10. Students/Girls survey: most common platforms used

Platform	n	Percent
Facebook	105	73.9%
WhatsApp	80	56.3%
TikTok	51	35.9%
Instagram	35	24.6%
Twitter/X	12	8.5%
Telegram	10	7.0%
Online forums/blogs	4	2.8%
Signal	1	0.7%

Multiple platform selections were possible; percentages may sum to above 100%.

Table 5.11. Students/Girls survey: direct experiences of TFGBV

Experience	Yes n	Valid n	Percent
Experienced online harassment	74	140	52.9%
Received unwanted messages / explicit content/threats	103	142	72.5%
Added to groups/chats without consent	115	142	81.0%
Pressured to share private images / personal information	56	142	39.4%
Hacked or impersonated	58	141	41.1%
Threatened online	62	92	67.4%
Experienced misogynistic hate speech	58	139	41.7%
Experienced image/video abuse	32	142	22.5%
Experienced sextortion	34	142	23.9%

The common 8-item direct TFGBV core was used for cross-site comparability.

FIGURE 5.6.
Students/Girls' direct experiences of TFGBV.

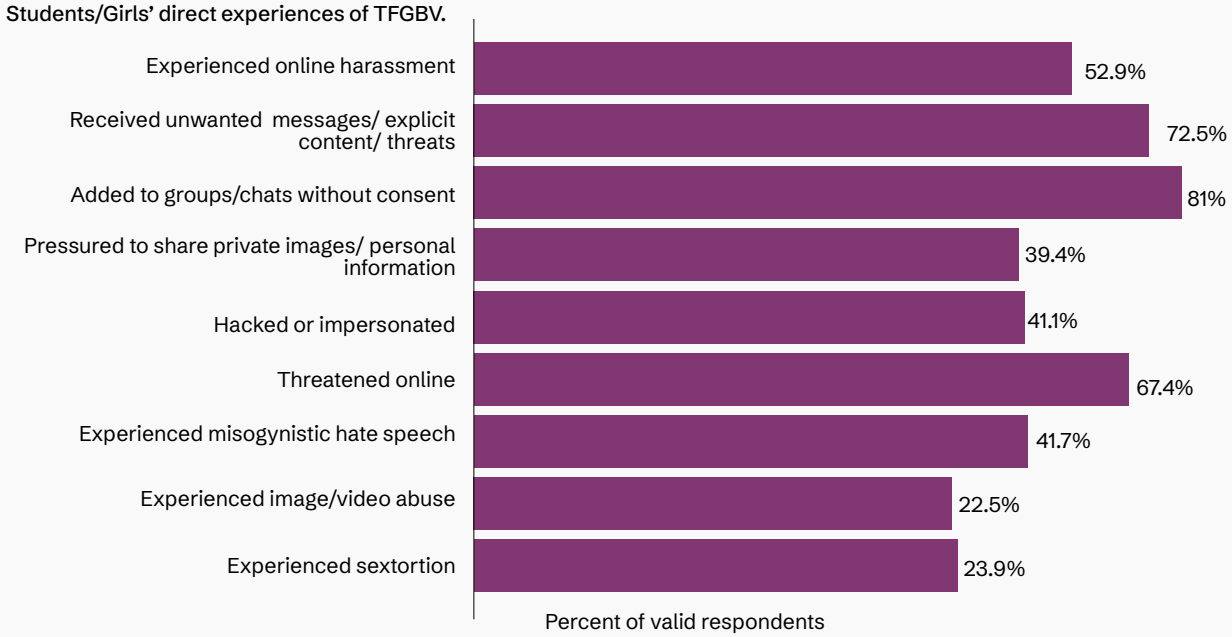


Table 5.12. Students/Girls survey: perceptions, impacts, and behavioural responses

Indicator	Yes n	Valid n	Percent
Feels safe online	101	142	71.1%
Adjusted online behaviour due to safety concerns	83	139	59.7%
Believes female students experience TFGBV	105	129	81.4%
Witnessed/heard of another student experiencing TFGBV	95	141	67.4%
Noticed an increase in recent years	103	139	74.1%
Believes TFGBV affects emotional/mental well-being	118	142	83.1%
Avoided social media/websites due to TFGBV	80	141	56.7%
Lost concentration in class due to TFGBV	88	140	62.9%
Believes TFGBV affects self-esteem/confidence	116	141	82.3%
Believes students dropped out/changed schools due to TFGBV	98	141	69.5%
Seen impact on friendships/social interaction	101	138	73.2%
Seen TFGBV used as bullying	96	140	68.6%
Afraid to participate in online activities	85	139	61.2%

Percentages use each item's valid denominator.

Table 5.13. Students/Girls survey: reporting and institutional response

Indicator	Yes n	Valid n	Percent
Knows where to report	10	47	21.3%
Reported to the school authorities/law enforcement	9	47	19.1%
Satisfied with the response after reporting	49	110	44.5%
Believes police take cases seriously	42	140	30.0%
Believes platforms act quickly/effectively	47	139	33.8%

Indicator	Yes n	Valid n	Percent
Student-led initiatives exist	44	140	31.4%
Teachers/administrators trained	37	90	41.1%
Trust authorities/platforms to protect students	71	141	50.4%

Some reporting questions had smaller denominators because they appeared only in the longer survey version.

Overall, the Students/Girls survey shows that TFGBV in education settings is not only a digital safety issue. The indicators link online abuse to classroom concentration, confidence, friendship networks, school change, and online participation.

5.3.1 Students/Girls site comparison (anonymised)

Table 5.14. Students/Girls survey: anonymised education-site comparison

Anonymised site	Survey n	Any direct TFGBV	Mean direct forms (0–8)	Avoided social media	Lost concentration	Afraid to participate online
High School A	32	90.6%	2.91	41.9%	67.7%	48.4%
High School B	30	83.3%	2.43	36.7%	36.7%	34.5%
High School C	40	97.5%	5.65	80.0%	66.7%	82.5%
University A	23	100.0%	3.22	56.5%	73.9%	65.2%
University B	17	94.1%	3.76	64.7%	76.5%	75.0%

FIGURE 5.7.
Students/Girls direct TFGBV impacts through an anonymised education site.

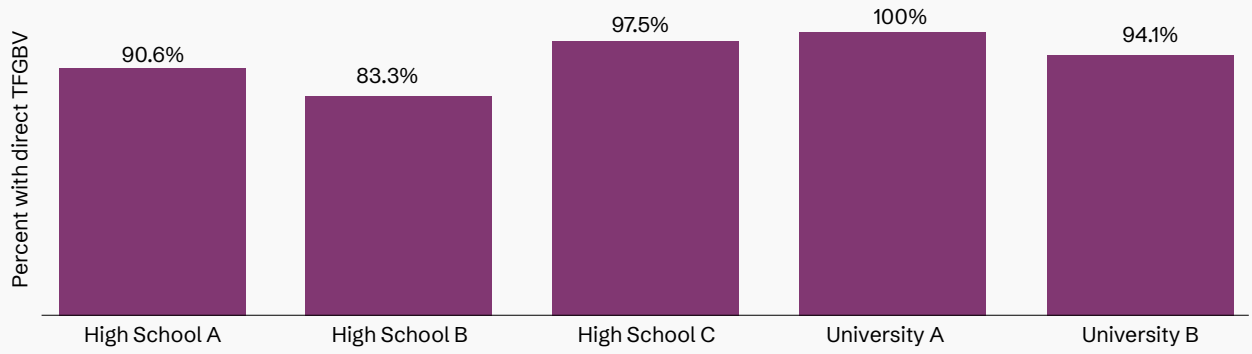
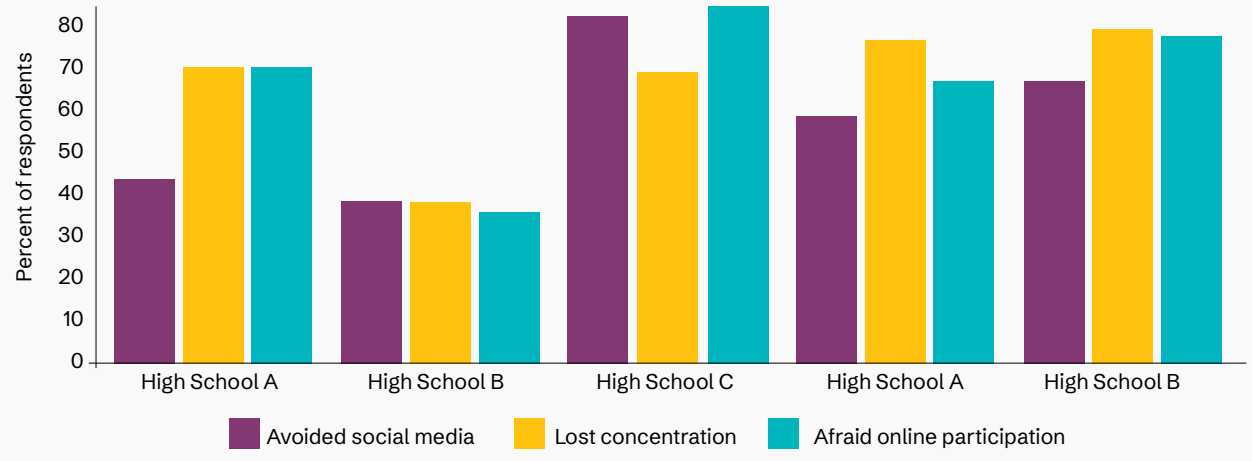


FIGURE 5.8.
Students/Girls impacted by an anonymised education site.



5.3.2 Students/Girls age comparison

Table 5.15. Students/Girls survey: age comparison

Outcome	Age group	Yes/Valid	Percent yes	p-value
Any direct TFGBV (8-item common core)	Under 18	37/43	86.0%	0.086
Any direct TFGBV (8-item common core)	18-24	81/85	95.3%	0.086
Any direct TFGBV (8-item common core)	25-35	14/14	100.0%	0.086
Avoided social media/websites due to TFGBV	Under 18	19/42	45.2%	0.029
Avoided social media/websites due to TFGBV	18-24	49/85	57.6%	0.029
Avoided social media/websites due to TFGBV	25-35	12/14	85.7%	0.029

FIGURE 5.9.

Students/Girls age comparison of direct exposure and avoidance.

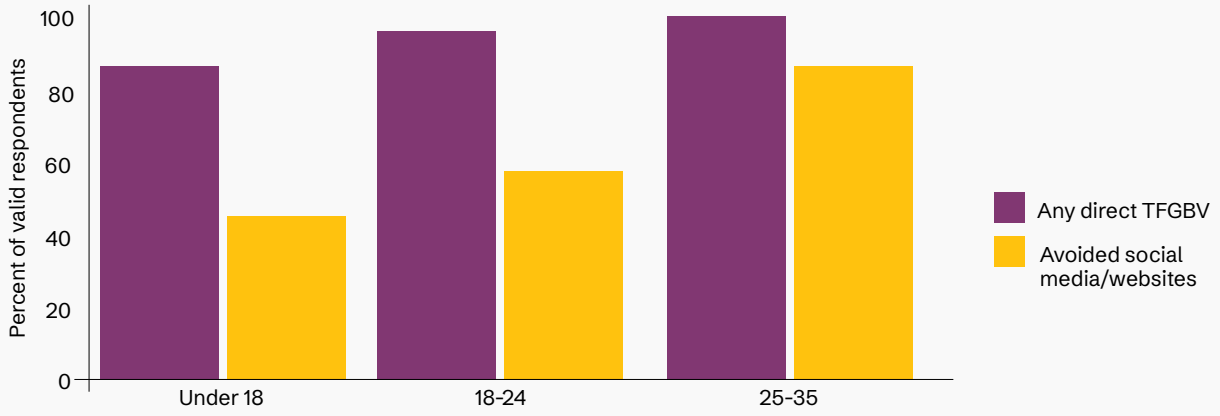


Table 5.16. Students/Girls FGD qualitative theme coding summary

Theme	FGD rows coded	Sites with theme	Anonymised sites	Illustrative evidence
Routine harassment and unwanted contact	18	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"A man was added, and he started sharing naked pictures … [and] threatened me online" (FGD, University B)
Image-based abuse, blackmail, and coercion	43	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"A lady had a boyfriend [who] blackmail[ed]—using her pictures against her" (FGD, High School A)
Hacking, impersonation, and privacy invasion	25	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"She had to lock her account and not use Facebook again" (FGD, High School A)
Gendered power and perpetrator abuse	57	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"The students reported that the male teachers also want to date them" (FGD, High School C)
Psychosocial and educational harm	10	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"trauma among students … low self-esteem" (FGD, High School C)
Reporting and trust gaps	12	4	High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"They have no way to report" (FGD, High School C)

Theme	FGD rows coded	Sites with theme	Anonymised sites	Illustrative evidence
Student self-protection and digital coping	5	3	High School A, High School B, University B	"I used different passwords... Don't accept friend requests. Lock your profile" (FGD, University B)
Preferred responses: awareness, counselling, and accountability	34	5	University A, High School A, High School B, University B, High School C	"The government [should] put some laws to protect us and punish the person who commits TFGBV" (FGD, High School A)

Table 5.17. Students/Girls cross-thematic integrated matrix

Cross-thematic finding	Quantitative evidence	Qualitative evidence	Integrated result statement
Every day, platform use is the main risk environment	Facebook use 73.9%; WhatsApp use 56.3%; added to groups without consent 115/142 (81.0%); unwanted messages 103/142 (72.5%).	FGDs repeatedly linked harms to Facebook and WhatsApp, including unwanted messages, unsolicited images, and non-consensual addition to groups.	The most common harms are occurring on the same mainstream platforms students use every day, indicating that TFGBV is embedded in routine digital life rather than isolated extreme events.
Sexualised abuse and privacy abuse often escalate as a chain	Pressured to share private images/information 56/142 (39.4%); image/video abuse 32/142 (22.5%); sextortion 34/142 (23.9%).	FGDs described intimate pictures being shared, edited, or used for blackmail, often by current or former partners.	Students do not experience these harms as separate categories; harassment, image-based abuse, and coercion often escalate into a connected sequence.
Online abuse becomes offline educational harm.	Emotional/mental impact 118/142 (83.1%); self-esteem impact 116/141 (82.3%); lost concentration 88/140 (62.9%); dropout/change school 98/141 (69.5%).	FGDs referenced trauma, shame, crying, isolation, avoiding Facebook, and even school dropout after exposure.	TFGBV is affecting well-being, classroom attention, peer relationships, and school retention, making it an education and protection issue, not only a digital-safety issue.
The problem is strongly gendered and tied to power	Female students perceived as affected 105/129 (81.4%); young women more affected = 99/142 (69.7%).	FGDs named boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, husbands, male peers, and, in one site, male teachers as perpetrators or sources of pressure.	The data frame TFGBV is an expression of unequal gendered power relations rather than neutral online conflict.
Institutional response is lagging behind lived experience	Know where to report 10/47 (21.3%); reported to authorities 9/47 (19.1%); police take cases seriously 42/140 (30.0%); student-led initiatives 44/140 (31.4%).	Students asked where to report, doubted whether they would be protected, and called for laws, counselling, and stronger school action.	Exposure is widespread, but trusted and accessible response pathways are weak, which likely suppresses help-seeking and accountability.

This integrated student matrix closes the education-site results by showing where quantitative patterns and FGD evidence converge. It also provides a bridge to the following disability, KII and administrative sections, where reporting systems and institutional capacity are examined more directly.

5.4 Disabled Women Results

The disabled women dataset contained 10 analytical respondents. Because of the small sample size, the results are presented as a focused vulnerability profile rather than a generalizable prevalence estimate. The table and chart below, therefore, highlight disability-specific risks, psychosocial impacts, access barriers, and reporting gaps rather than population-level proportions.

Table 5.18. Disabled women survey: core quantitative indicators

Indicator	Count	Denominator	Percent
Any direct TFGBV incident (4-item direct index)	8	10	80.0%
Disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV	10	10	100.0%
TFGBV cases have increased recently	8	10	80.0%
Feel safe online	7	9	77.8%
Received unwanted messages	5	9	55.6%
Online stalking	3	10	30.0%
Private information shared without consent	2	10	20.0%
Photos used uncomfortably online	1	10	10.0%
TFGBV impacts mental health	10	10	100.0%
Developed anxiety or fear	9	10	90.0%
Self-isolation	10	10	100.0%
Negative effects on education/work	6	10	60.0%
Impacted relationships	9	10	90.0%
Economic consequences	8	10	80.0%
Changed online behavior	7	10	70.0%
Aware of laws or policies	2	10	20.0%
Know where to report	5	10	50.0%
Reported TFGBV	3	10	30.0%
Authorities took the complaint seriously	3	9	33.3%
Reporting mechanisms are disability-friendly	3	10	30.0%

FIGURE 5.10.
Disabled women survey indicators.

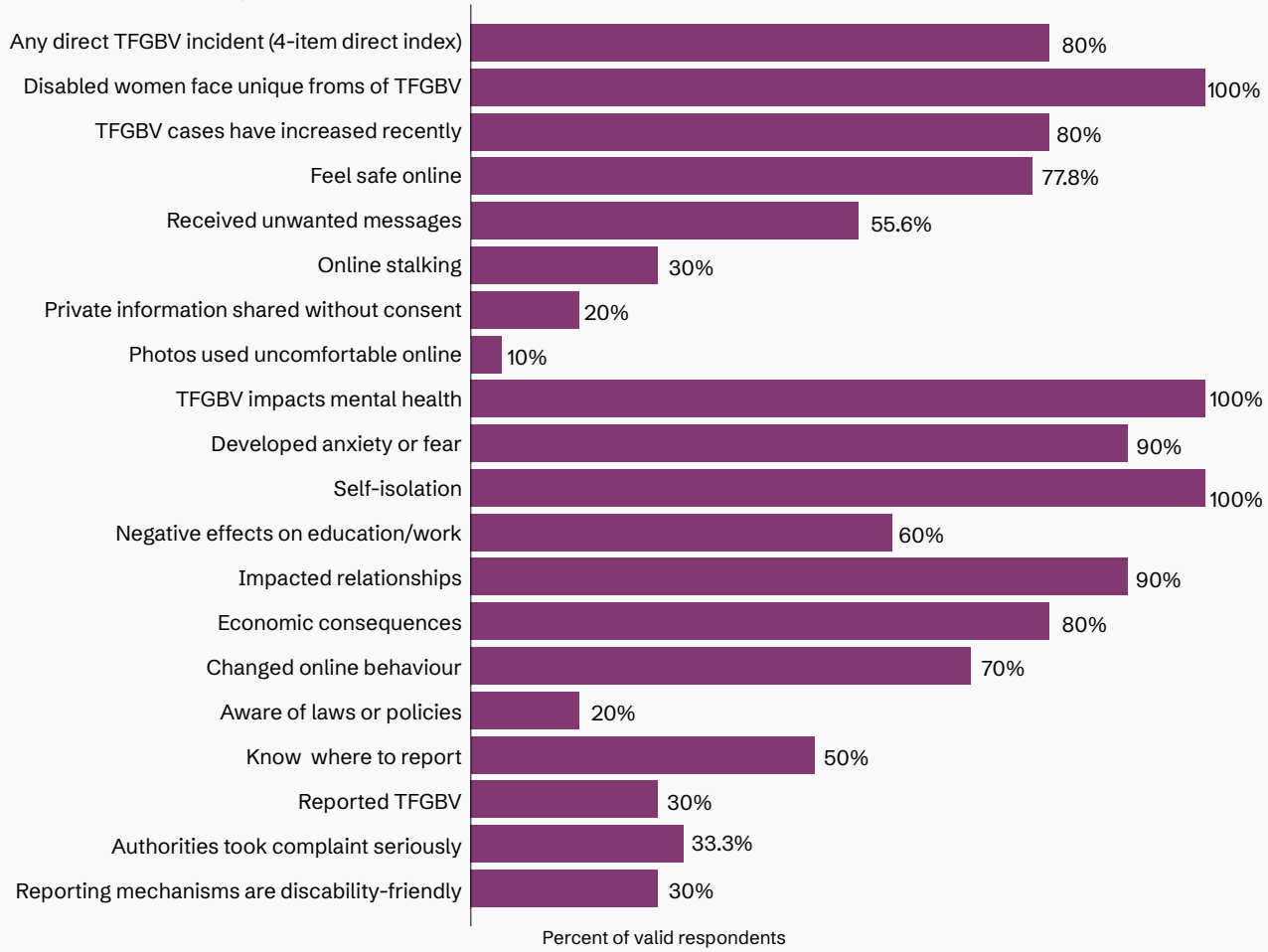


Table 5.19. Disabled women qualitative thematic summary

Theme	Result statement
Disability-specific targeting and dehumanisation	Abuse was explicitly shaped by disability status, including ridicule and dehumanising language.
Public humiliation and image-based abuse	The qualitative material described degrading content and public sharing on social media.
Silencing of advocacy and participation	Harassment was narrated as an attempt to stop public advocacy by women with disabilities.
Trauma, fear, and the need for counselling	The narrative linked online abuse to trauma and the need for psychosocial support.
Weak family and institutional support	The account suggested inadequate family backing and a limited effective formal response.

5.5 Key Informant Interview Results

The KII workbook reviewed 37 interview documents and coded 30 unique substantive KIIs. The KII findings are presented as NVivo-style qualitative case coverage and weighted intensity results, not as a survey of institutional prevalence.

The workbook used a structured NVivo-style framework with parent nodes, child nodes, indicator keywords, coded extracts, and intensity scores. The counting rule was to count each unique substantive interview once per code; duplicate copies and the non-substantive transcript were retained only for audit purposes and were not allowed to inflate frequencies.

Stakeholder coverage included GBV and humanitarian service providers/institutions, government and regulatory actors, CIRT/NCA-related perspectives, legal and justice actors, academia and ICT education, digital rights and technology actors, and women leaders and gender/feminist activists/advocates. The KII results, therefore, provide institutional and expert evidence to complement the survey and FGD findings presented earlier in the chapter.

Table 5.20. KII NVivo code frequency summary

Code ID	NVivo node	Parent theme	KIIs present	% KIIs	Weighted intensity sum
S09	Digital literacy/awareness/curriculum gap	Systems/response	30	100.0%	81
S07	Platform, telecom and content-takedown accountability	Systems/response	29	96.7%	81
R06	Improve platform/telecom cooperation	Recommendations	30	100.0%	80
S03	Reporting mechanism/trust / underreporting gap	Systems/response	29	96.7%	76
S01	Legal framework gap / pending laws	Systems/response	30	100.0%	75
M01	Online harassment/cyberbullying/threats	Manifestations	28	93.3%	73
S08	Coordination and multi-stakeholder partnerships	Systems/response	26	86.7%	59
S04	Case management / GBVIMS / documentation gap	Systems/response	30	100.0%	57
S12	Gender-sensitive or survivor-centred protocol gap	Systems/response	27	90.0%	50
R02	Train frontline, justice and tech actors	Recommendations	26	86.7%	50
A02	Women leaders/feminists/activists / human rights defenders	Affected groups	22	73.3%	48
M10	Data protection and privacy harms	Manifestations	23	76.7%	47
I02	Stigma / social isolation/family or marriage breakdown	Impacts	25	83.3%	45
M04	Cyberstalking/doxing/surveillance/privacy invasion	Manifestations	25	83.3%	44
I01	Psychological distress/trauma/fear	Impacts	24	80.0%	44

FIGURE 5.11.
KII code frequencies by weighted intensity.

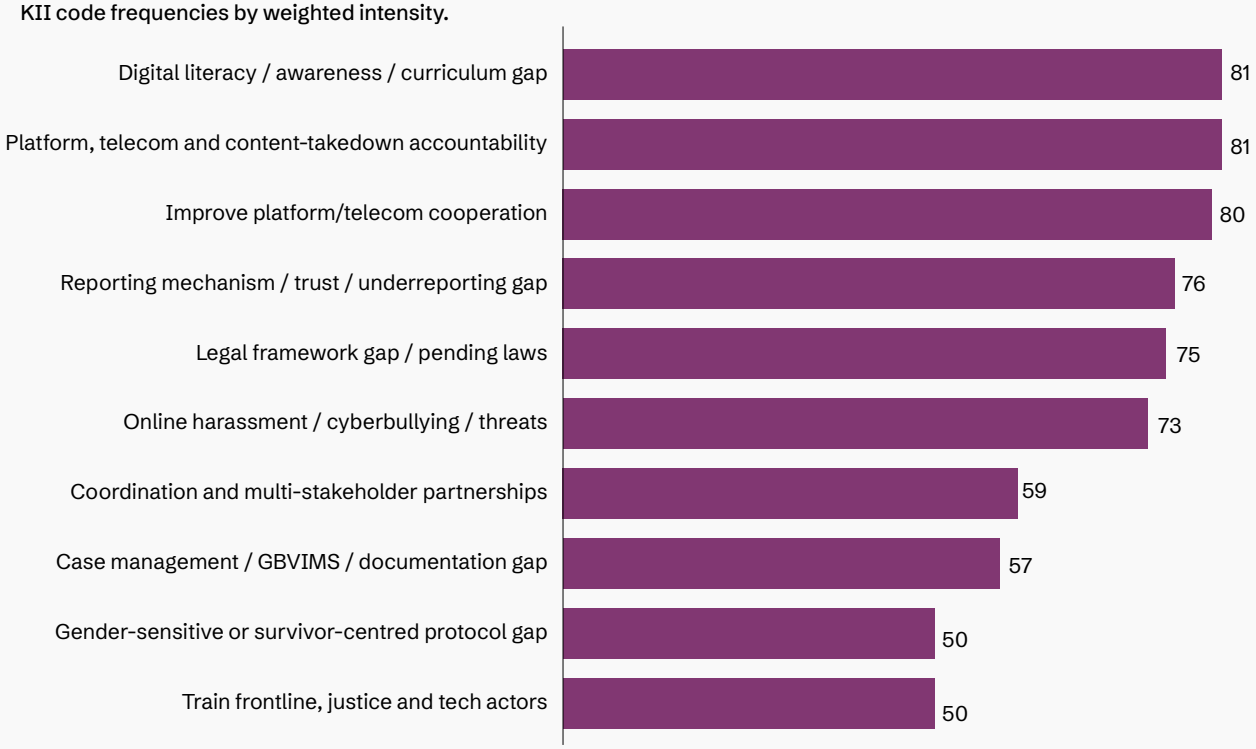


Table 5.21. KII harm typologies and platform/tool references (case coverage)

Type	Item	KIIs present	% KIIs	Weighted intensity sum
Harm typology	Online harassment/cyberbullying/threats	28	93.3%	73
Harm typology	Cyberstalking/doxing/surveillance/privacy invasion	25	83.3%	44
Harm typology	Data protection and privacy harms	23	76.7%	47
Harm typology	Image-based abuse / non-consensual sharing/ deepfakes	23	76.7%	36
Harm typology	Technology-enabled offline GBV or escalation	20	66.7%	32
Harm typology	Blackmail/extortion / economic scams	17	56.7%	30
Harm typology	Impersonation/hacking/account compromise/catfishing	14	46.7%	20
Harm typology	Sexual harassment / unsolicited sexual content	14	46.7%	19
Harm typology	Grooming/exploitation/trafficking or luring	12	40.0%	17
Harm typology	Hate speech/misinformation/disinformation	10	33.3%	15
Platform/tool	Facebook	24	80.0%	41
Platform/tool	WhatsApp	19	63.3%	26
Platform/tool	Messaging/phone calls / SMS	15	50.0%	29
Platform/tool	TikTok	15	50.0%	22
Platform/tool	X / Twitter	8	26.7%	9
Platform/tool	Instagram	7	23.3%	7

FIGURE 5.12.

KII-reported harm typologies by case coverage.

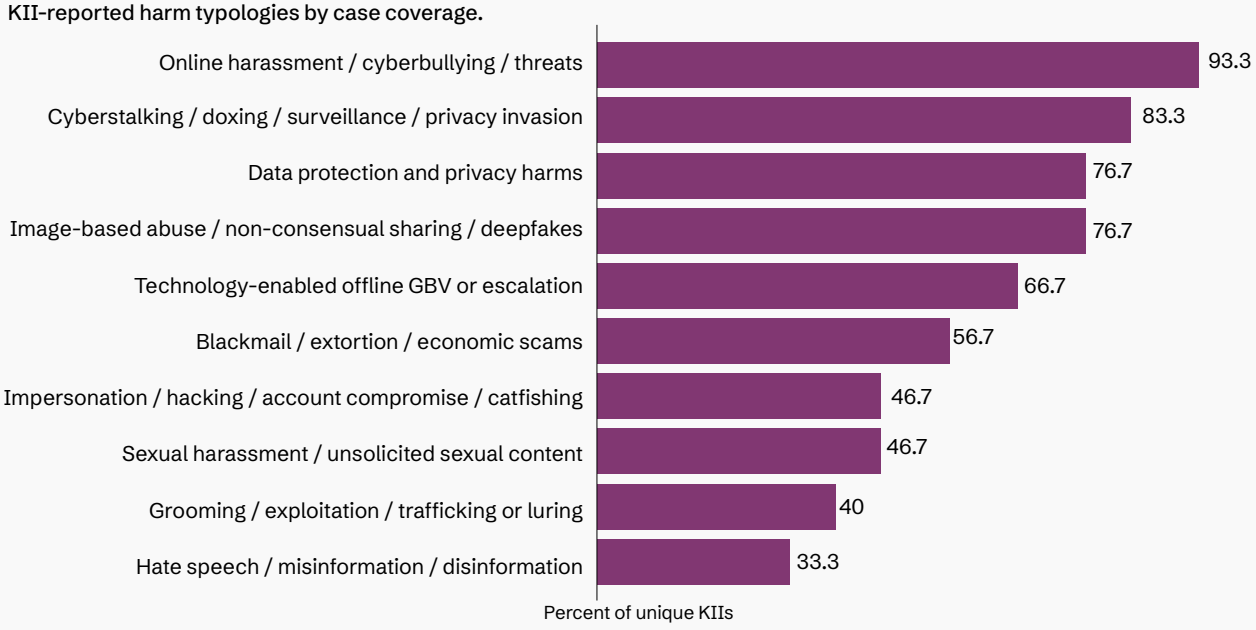


Table 5.22. KII institutional barrier and response gap summary

Institution/ sector	Main gap	Evidence from KIIs	Related NVivo codes
Government regulator / NCA / CIRT	No finalised TFGBV-specific framework; cybercrime and data protection laws still central to future response; limited reach beyond urban centres.	NCA-related KIIs describe online abuse, harassment, exploitation and CIRT/SAT referral efforts, but also note the absence of active law or specific TFGBV policy.	S01; S03; S06; S07; S09
Law enforcement/ judiciary/ prosecution	Justice actors lack consistent training on digital evidence, online harassment, non-consensual image sharing, and survivor-sensitive handling.	Legal and digital rights interviews highlight slow or inconsistent police response, gaps in digital investigation, and unclear legal provisions.	S01; S02; S06; R02
GBV one-stop centres / safe houses / GBV case management	TFGBV cases are often informally recognised but not consistently captured in intake forms, GBVIMS classifications, or referral pathways.	One-stop centres and humanitarian interviews repeatedly mention informal recognition of cyberbullying, image-based abuse, child marriage/ rape coordination, and online exploitation without formal documentation fields.	S03; S04; S05; S12
Women's rights CSOs and feminist activists	CSOs support survivors and advocacy but face funding, security and capacity constraints; women leaders also experience direct online attacks and self-censorship.	Activist interviews describe harassment, doxing/ stalking, threats, social backlash, and reduced online participation; CSOs mention limited emergency programming and safety concerns.	M01; M04; I01; I03; S10
Academia / ICT departments / online learning institutions	Digital safety is usually folded into ethics or technical courses rather than a standalone gender-responsive curriculum; institutions lack trusted anonymous reporting channels.	University and ICT-department KIIs report gaps in curriculum, dedicated offices, staff capacity, anonymous reporting, and gender-sensitive case handling.	A05; S03; S09; R05; S12
Tech community / private sector/ platforms/ telecoms	Technical actors recognise online harms, but TFGBV is sometimes treated as a social issue; platform escalation, local moderation and telecom cooperation remain insufficient.	Tech experts and digital inclusion actors call for centralised reporting, anonymous cyber incident platforms, localised platform support, and telecom/platform partnerships.	S06; S07; S08; R03; R06
Community/ schools/families	Low awareness and social stigma mean survivors often do not name TFGBV as GBV; harmful norms and victim-blaming translate from offline to online spaces.	Interviews consistently connect online abuse to offline patriarchy, victim blaming, child marriage, harassment and backlash against women speaking publicly.	A01; I02; S09; R04; R05

Across the KIIs, institutional stakeholders described TFGBV as both a manifestation of existing gender inequality and a technical, legal and service-delivery challenge. The coding strengthens the institutional findings by bringing together government, CIRT/NCA, GBV service-provider, legal, academic, digital-rights and women-leader perspectives.

Table 5.23. KII case typology and integrated interpretation

TFGBV case type	Description	Related NVivo codes	Analytic interpretation
Online harassment/ cyberbullying	Abusive comments, threats, trolling and backlash against women leaders, activists and girls.	M01; A02; I03	Often leads to self-censorship, reduced public participation and fear of backlash.
Image-based abuse	Non-consensual sharing or threat of sharing intimate/private photos/videos, including AI-altered images.	M02; I01; I02	Creates stigma, trauma, reputational harm and family/ community consequences.
Impersonation/ hacking/catfishing	Hacked accounts, fake profiles and social engineering are used to damage reputations or scam contacts.	M03; M05	Can be used for fraud, harassment and reputational attack.
Cyberstalking/ doxing/surveillance	Monitoring, tracking, sharing contacts/ locations, unwanted following and invasion of privacy.	M04; M10	Raises offline safety concerns and causes women to limit their digital presence.
Blackmail/extortion/ economic scams	Threats to release images, money scams, fraudulent requests and digital coercion.	M05; I01	Survivors may experience financial loss, fear and reluctance to report.
Grooming/ exploitation/luring	Online contact or job/modeling offers used to lure young girls/women; exploitation concerns for minors.	M06; A01	Requires child safeguarding, platform escalation and community awareness.
Tech-enabled offline GBV	Use of phones or platforms to coordinate child marriage, rape, harassment or offline retaliation.	M08; I04	Shows TFGBV is not separate from offline GBV; online harm can trigger or facilitate physical violence.
Campus/student digital harm	Harassment via class groups, non-consensual sharing, sex-for-grades concerns and weak campus reporting.	A05; S03; S09	Requires institutional reporting, faculty training and curriculum integration.

Table: 5.24 Institutional gaps and FGD/KII evidence

Institution/ sector	Institutional gap	What was said in the FGDs	What was said in the KIIs	Institutional implication
Ministry responsible for gender / national GBV coordination	TFGBV is not yet fully anchored in national GBV policy, referral SOPs, service standards or coordinated implementation. State-level, rural, youth and disability-inclusive rollout risks being left behind.	FGDs called for government action, including statements that "the Government should look at the root causes of TFGBV" and references to "coordination and networking with the Ministry of GCSW in addressing TFGBV." Some FGD analysis also noted that survivors often prefer informal coping networks over formal services.	KIIs repeatedly linked legal/policy gaps, reporting/referral gaps, survivor-support gaps and platform-governance gaps as connected cross-sector issues. The KII materials emphasise that TFGBV is visible in practice but not consistently named, documented or routed through formal systems.	A national TFGBV response framework is needed, with clear institutional roles, minimum service standards, referral maps and implementation review.

Institution/ sector	Institutional gap	What was said in the FGDs	What was said in the KIIs	Institutional implication
GBV One-Stop Centres, psychosocial services, safe houses and women-friendly spaces	Existing GBV tools are mainly designed for offline violence. TFGBV is not consistently captured in intake forms, case notes, psychosocial assessments, safe-house protection planning or referral templates.	FGD participants linked digital abuse to shame, school disruption and emotional harm, including: "Frustration, leaving school. Shame and guilt" and "TFGBV has caused trauma and depression to many young women." Other accounts referred to blackmail and the use of photos against women/ girls.	KII evidence from one-stop centre/service actors shows that medical, psychosocial and legal support exists, but TFGBV documentation remains weak. AMREF-linked KII material noted a lack of formal recording despite increased cases such as cyberbullying and online exploitation.	GBV services need TFGBV screening questions, non-graphic coding categories, digital safety planning, safe evidence guidance and warm referrals to legal/technical actors.
Law enforcement, legal aid, prosecutors and judiciary	Legal provisions, digital evidence standards and investigation capacity are weak or unclear. Survivors may not know where to report and may fear blame, exposure or inaction.	FGD evidence captured reporting uncertainty: "I want to know when someone gets harassed, where do I report?" Other FGD entries referred to "online threats and harassment" and called for a stronger government response.	RIWA-linked KII excerpts identified underreporting due to survivor insecurity, law enforcement's lack of education on TFGBV, and an unclear legal framework for GBV. Legal reform/ stronger enforcement was recommended in 12 of 16 KIIs.	Justice actors need survivor-centred reporting procedures, trained focal points, digital evidence protocols, privacy-protective evidence storage and legal aid pathways.
NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, platforms, ISPs and ICT/digital safety actors	Platform reporting, content moderation, account recovery, telecom escalation and technical response are not yet consistently connected to GBV support. Local-language abuse, coded slang and urgent takedown pathways remain weak.	FGDs described account misuse, image misuse and uncertainty about platform response: "account and took my picture," "Lock your account," and "Free access to report to Facebook admin." The FGD summary coded platform governance/moderation as one of the most frequent institutional gaps.	KII coding identified platform/telecom accountability in 7 of 16 KIIs. Technical and regulatory evidence emphasised the need for complaint classification, anonymous reporting, digital-safety tools, platform escalation, and lawful evidence handling that protects dignity and trust.	NCA/SS-CIRT and ICT actors should develop a TFGBV taxonomy, survivor-centred complaint desk, trusted escalation channels and localised reporting guidance.
Schools, universities and education authorities	Digital safety, consent, TFGBV reporting and survivor referral are not consistently embedded in safeguarding, curricula, campus welfare systems or student disciplinary procedures.	FGDs called for education-based prevention, including a "course for all students talking about cyber security" and "Teaching children in schools also on how to protect..." Student accounts also linked digital harm to school distress and withdrawal.	KII materials identify curriculum gaps, weak anonymous reporting, limited trained personnel and low female ICT participation. Young girls/ minors/ordinary women at risk appeared in 10 of 16 KIIs, while education-oriented recommendations included digital safety orientation and campus reporting mechanisms.	Schools and universities should adopt TFGBV safeguarding policies, confidential reporting channels, student welfare referral pathways and digital safety modules.
Women-led CSOs, community GBV actors, traditional/ religious/ community leaders	Women-led CSOs and trusted community actors fill survivor-support gaps but often lack formal authority and resources. Community norms can also blame or silence survivors.	FGD evidence linked TFGBV to family conflict, relationships and social pressure, including the statement "Causing family problems between the couples." The FGD gap summary identified family/ community norms and victim-blaming as a recurrent institutional problem.	KII synthesis shows that civil society and women leaders often provide awareness, documentation, accompaniment, advocacy and peer support before survivors reach formal systems. It also notes that survivors frequently rely first on informal networks, blocking/reporting tools and trusted community actors.	Community and CSO roles should be formalised in referral pathways, funded, and guided by confidentiality, non-blaming practice, survivor dignity and protection from retaliation.

Institution/ sector	Institutional gap	What was said in the FGDs	What was said in the KIIs	Institutional implication
Disability inclusion actors and accessible service providers	Reporting, counselling, legal aid, telecom complaints, school/ university mechanisms and data systems are not consistently accessible to women and girls with disabilities.	FGD evidence included a disability-specific statement: "My disability, I wasn't happy about this..." Although the count was small, it signals the need to make disability inclusion explicit rather than treating it as an afterthought.	KII materials link heightened vulnerability with disability, rural/urban divides, uneven digital literacy and unequal ICT access. Disability inclusion is framed as a requirement across reporting, referral, counselling, education, technical response and monitoring.	Institutions should co-design accessible reporting tools with disability actors, provide accessible formats/interpreters where needed, and include disability-disaggregated monitoring safely.
Data, research, donors and humanitarian coordination structures	TFGBV evidence is fragmented across surveys, KIIs, FGDs, administrative complaints, service records and platform reports. Funding risks remaining short-term or workshop-based.	FGDs noted that "There is an increase of TFGBV among the youth" and called for "more awareness among young ladies." The FGD workbook also identifies local-language/coded abuse and research evidence as under-documented.	The KII materials warn that coding counts should be treated as analytic salience indicators, not prevalence estimates. They call for ethical, anonymised, disaggregated monitoring and for multi-year institutional strengthening rather than one-off sensitisation.	A minimum TFGBV data module, safe storage protocols, trend reporting and sustained donor support should be built into GBV, education, ICT, justice and disability systems.

5.6 SS-CIRT/NCA Administrative TFGBV-Related Data

The SS-CIRT/NCA administrative material provides high-level, aggregated and anonymised information on potential TFGBV-related incident reports for 2024-2025. The administrative note states that SS-CIRT's incident reporting framework was not structured to capture a standardised TFGBV taxonomy or fully disaggregated demographic fields. The results are therefore presented as indicative administrative aggregation rather than a complete national incident database.

Table 5.25. SS-CIRT annual case overview (indicative aggregation)

Year	Total cyber incidents reported	Cases identified as potential TFGBV-related
2024	2	8
2025	4	13

Values are transcribed from the uploaded SS-CIRT/NCA PDF and should be read as administrative categories exactly as supplied in the aggregate document.

FIGURE 5.13.
SS-CIRT potential TFGBV-related cases by year.

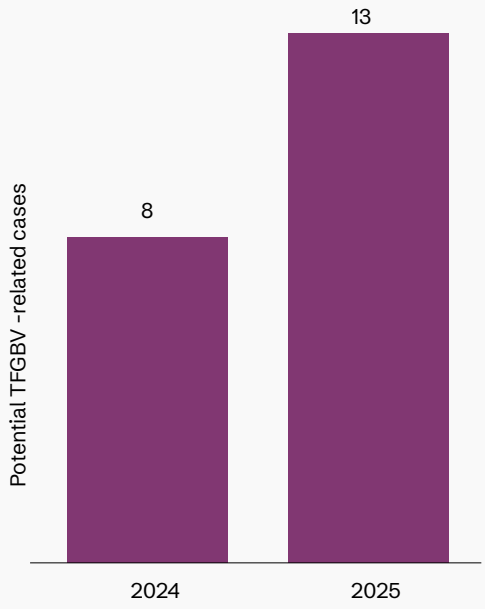


Table 5.26. SS-CIRT indicative case typology, 2024-2025

Case type (non-standardised classification)	Approximate frequency
Online harassment/threats	0
Non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCII)	6
Cyberstalking	0
Hate speech / gendered disinformation	5
Impersonation/account takeover	9
Sextortion	1
Deepfake / AI-generated content	Limited

The SS-CIRT document described these as non-standardised classifications based on available case descriptions and internal records.

FIGURE 5.14.
SS-CIRT indicative TFGBV typology frequencies.

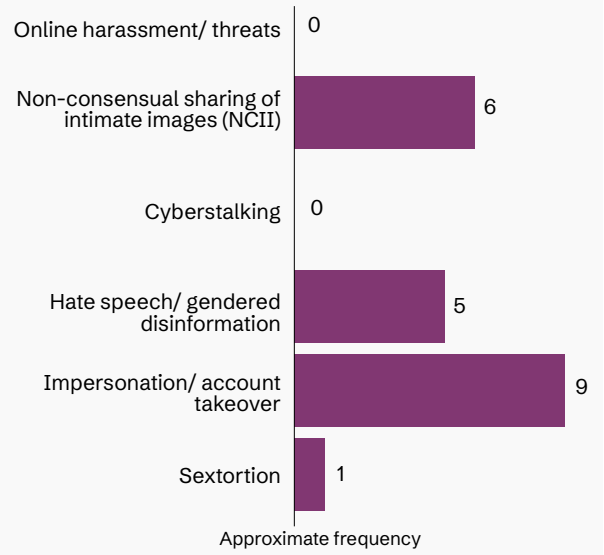


Table 5.27. SS-CIRT platforms/channels involved were recorded

Platform/channel	Observed in cases
Social media platforms (e.g., Facebook)	High frequency
Messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp)	Moderate frequency
Mobile phone / SMS	Moderate frequency
Email/websites	Limited

The administrative note reported platform/channel involvement qualitatively rather than as precise percentages.

Table 5.28. SS-CIRT demographic and geographic information

Administrative field	Recorded result
Sex/gender information	The majority of reported victims in identifiable TFGBV-related cases were female.
Age information	Age fields were not consistently structured; a notable proportion appeared within the 18-35 age range.
Reporting type	Reports included direct victim reports, third-party reports from family/friends, and limited institutional referrals.
Geographic trend	The majority of cases originated from Juba; rural reporting appeared significantly lower.
Data limitation	Precise percentage breakdowns could not be reliably provided due to historical data-capture inconsistencies.

This table reports the administrative summary as provided in the uploaded SS-CIRT/NCA material.

The administrative data are therefore useful as a signal of recorded incident types, but the lack of standardised TFGBV coding means they should be read alongside the survey, FGD and KII evidence rather than treated as a standalone prevalence source.

5.7 Integrated Cross-Dataset Results

The following tables bring together comparable indicators and cross-thematic patterns across the uploaded workbooks. They are included to show convergence across datasets, not to duplicate the earlier dataset-specific sections. The pooled figures use only indicators with sufficiently similar wording or meaning and are not presented as national prevalence estimates.

5.7.1 Combined survey age, location and TFGBV exposure patterns

The following tables and figures present the updated combined survey cohort by age, state/location, exposure, reporting and online safety indicators. The analysed workbook retains 424 cleaned responses. Where a table overlaps with earlier state or age

results, it is retained here only to support cross-dataset comparison. These figures remain descriptive survey results rather than population prevalence estimates.

Table 5.29. Age distribution of survey responses in the combined survey cohorts

Age band	Count	Percent
Under 18	51	12.0%
18-24	196	46.2%
25-34/35	142	33.5%
35-44	25	5.9%
Above 35	7	1.7%
45+	1	0.2%
45-54	1	0.2%
55+	1	0.2%

Table 5.30. Location distribution of survey responses in the combined survey cohort

State/location	Count	Percent
Central Equatoria	224	52.8%
Eastern Equatoria	32	7.5%
Jonglei	30	7.1%
Western Bahr el Ghazal	29	6.8%
Lakes State	26	6.1%
Upper Nile	26	6.1%
Western Equatoria	26	6.1%
Pibor Administrative Area	25	5.9%
Outside South Sudan	4	0.9%
Abyei Administrative Area	1	0.2%
Warrap	1	0.2%

Table 5.31. Aggregate state/location comparison of TFGBV exposure, witnessing and online safety

State/location	n	Exposure/ experience	Witnessed TFGBV	Feels safe online	Knows where to report
Central Equatoria	224	198/224 (88.4%)	172/223 (77.1%)	108/223 (48.4%)	16/52 (30.8%)
Eastern Equatoria	32	32/32 (100.0%)	27/32 (84.4%)	10/32 (31.2%)	2/27 (7.4%)
Jonglei	30	26/30 (86.7%)	30/30 (100.0%)	18/30 (60.0%)	1/25 (4.0%)
Lakes State	26	22/26 (84.6%)	25/26 (96.2%)	11/26 (42.3%)	1/26 (3.8%)
Upper Nile	26	23/26 (88.5%)	12/26 (46.2%)	19/26 (73.1%)	5/26 (19.2%)
Western Bahr el Ghazal	29	27/29 (93.1%)	26/29 (89.7%)	10/29 (34.5%)	11/26 (42.3%)
Western Equatoria	26	26/26 (100.0%)	23/26 (88.5%)	18/26 (69.2%)	0/23 (0.0%)
Pibor Administrative Area	25	25/25 (100.0%)	22/25 (88.0%)	6/25 (24.0%)	14/25 (56.0%)

Table 5.32. Age group comparison of TFGBV exposure, witnessing and online safety in the combined survey cohort

Age group	n	Exposure/ experience	Witnessed TFGBV	Feels safe online	Adjusted online behaviour
Under 18	51	43/51 (84.3%)	29/51 (56.9%)	38/51 (74.5%)	29/51 (56.9%)
18-24	196	179/196 (91.3%)	161/195 (82.6%)	114/196 (58.2%)	117/193 (60.6%)
25-34/35	142	130/142 (91.5%)	123/142 (86.6%)	43/142 (30.3%)	100/142 (70.4%)
35+	35	32/35 (91.4%)	30/35 (85.7%)	5/34 (14.7%)	21/35 (60.0%)

FIGURE 5.15.
Multistate survey: age composition by location

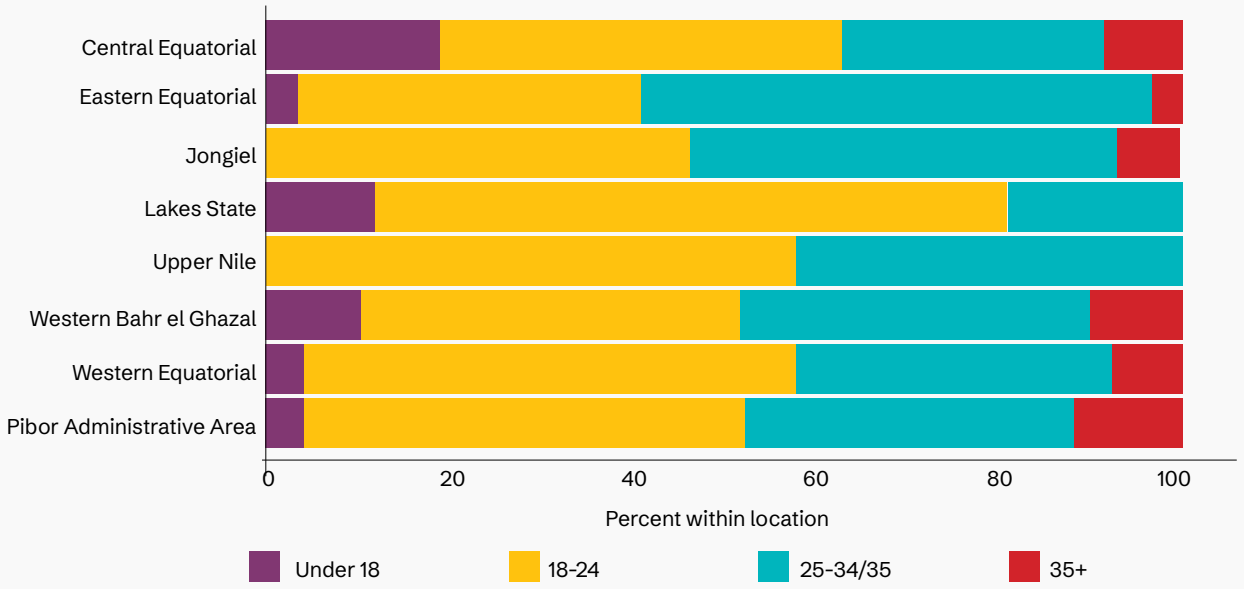


Table 5.33. Prevalence of direct TFGBV indicators in the combined survey cohort

TFGBV indicator	Yes N	Valid N	Yes %
Added to online groups/chats	241	313	77.0%
Received unwanted messages/images	190	271	70.1%
Threatened or stalked online	153	275	55.6%
Experienced online harassment	171	322	53.1%
Misogynistic hate speech	145	311	46.6%
Impersonation or account hacking	132	323	40.9%
Pressured to share private images/personal information	102	313	32.6%
Image/video abuse or private information misuse	79	325	24.3%
Sextortion	74	314	23.6%

FIGURE 5.16.
TFGBV experience and reporting outcomes by location

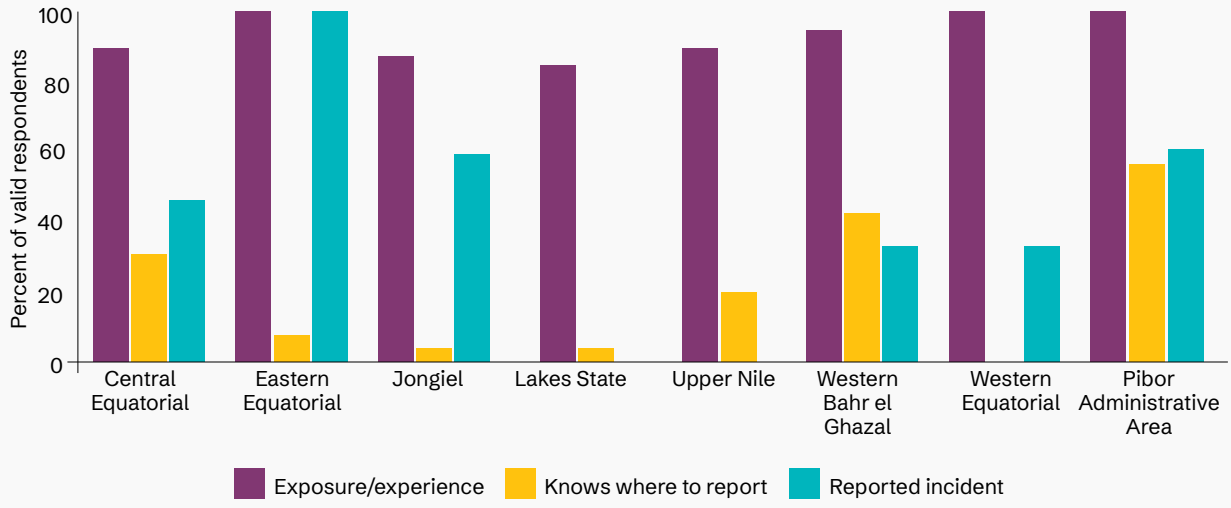


Table 5.34. Statistical analysis results and interpretation for combined survey patterns

Finding	Statistical result	Interpretation	Caution/limitation
Overall TFGBV exposure	384/424 respondents (90.6%; 95% CI 87.4%–93.0%) reported exposure/experience.	TFGBV exposure remains high in the updated combined survey cohort after adding Pibor.	The sample is purposive/available rather than nationally representative.
Age pattern	Age × exposure: $\chi^2(3, N=424)=2.66$, $p=0.448$, Cramer's $V=0.079$.	Overall exposure was high across all age groups; the updated test does not show a statistically significant age-based difference for any exposure.	Older age groups remain small and should be treated as indicative.
Location pattern	Location × exposure: $\chi^2(7, N=418)=11.96$, $p=0.102$, Cramer's $V=0.169$.	Exposure was high across the seven state/location groups plus Pibor; the updated location test for overall exposure was not statistically significant.	Central Equatoria dominates the sample, and small location groups reduce inferential strength.
Age differences in safety and witnessing	Age × witnessed TFGBV: $\chi^2(3, N=423)=23.12$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.234$; age × feeling safe online: $\chi^2(3, N=423)=55.42$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.362$.	Age differences were more visible for witnessing and online-safety perceptions than for overall exposure.	Some items were answered by subsets of respondents, so denominators vary.
Location differences in safety/reporting	Location × feeling safe online: $\chi^2(7, N=417)=24.82$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.244$; location × knows where to report: $\chi^2(7, N=230)=45.47$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.445$; location × adjusted behaviour: $\chi^2(7, N=415)=45.12$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.330$.	Location appears important for safety, reporting knowledge and behavioural response patterns.	Associations are descriptive/exploratory and should not be interpreted as causal.

Table 5.35. Statistical analysis of age group and location of TFGBV exposure

Test	Result	Interpretation
Overall TFGBV exposure	384/424 respondents, 90.6%	TFGBV exposure was very high across the updated combined survey sample.
Age × TFGBV exposure	$\chi^2(3, N=424)=2.66$, $p=0.448$, Cramer's $V=0.079$	No statistically significant difference in overall TFGBV exposure by aggregated age group.
Location × TFGBV exposure	$\chi^2(7, N=418)=11.96$, $p=0.102$, Cramer's $V=0.169$	No statistically significant difference in overall exposure across the seven states/location groups plus Pibor.
Age × witnessed TFGBV	$\chi^2(3, N=423)=23.12$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.234$	Age differences were significant for witnessing TFGBV.
Location × knows where to report	$\chi^2(7, N=230)=45.47$, $p<.001$, Cramer's $V=0.445$	Reporting knowledge varied significantly by location, with Pibor and Western Bahr el Ghazal higher than several other locations.

Table 5.36. Combined survey age group TFGBV prevalence

Age group	Valid N	TFGBV yes	TFGBV no	Prevalence	95% CI
Under 18	51	43	8	84.3%	72.0%–91.8%
18-24	196	179	17	91.3%	86.5%–94.5%
25-34/35	142	130	12	91.5%	85.8%–95.1%
35+	35	32	3	91.4%	77.6%–97.0%

Table 5.37. Combined survey of TFGBV prevalence by location

Location	Valid N	TFGBV yes	TFGBV no	Prevalence
Central Equatoria	224	198	26	88.4%
Eastern Equatoria	32	32	0	100.0%
Jonglei	30	26	4	86.7%
Lakes State	26	22	4	84.6%
Upper Nile	26	23	3	88.5%
Western Bahr el Ghazal	29	27	2	93.1%
Western Equatoria	26	26	0	100.0%
Pibor Administrative Area	25	25	0	100.0%

FIGURE 5.17.
TFGBV prevalence by location

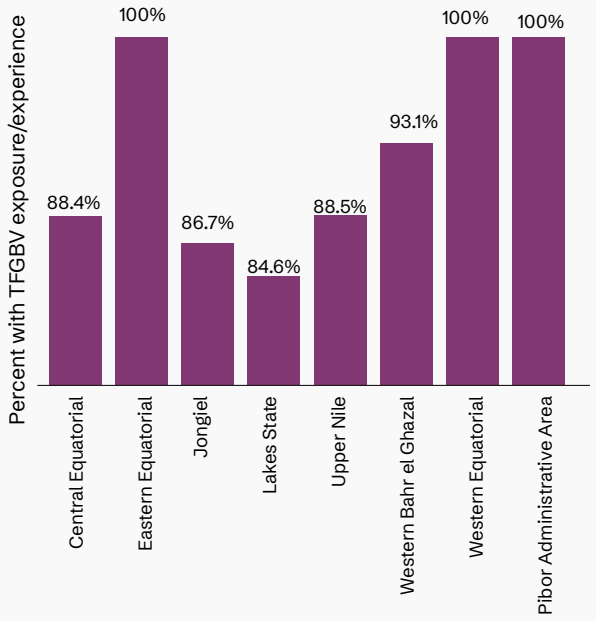


FIGURE 5.18.
TFGBV prevalence by age group

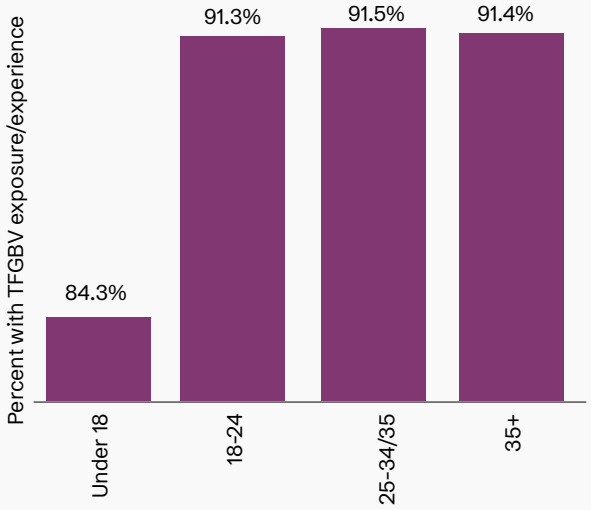


Table 5.38. Multi-state survey: state/location comparison of direct TFGBV and reporting outcomes

State/ location	Any direct TFGBV	Witnessed TFGBV	Felt safe online	Knows where to report	Reported incident	Adjusted online behaviour
Central Equatoria	198/224 (88.4%)	172/223 (77.1%)	108/223 (48.4%)	16/52 (30.8%)	40/88 (45.5%)	139/221 (62.9%)
Eastern Equatoria	32/32 (100.0%)	27/32 (84.4%)	10/32 (31.2%)	2/27 (7.4%)	5/5 (100.0%)	26/32 (81.2%)
Jonglei	26/30 (86.7%)	30/30 (100.0%)	18/30 (60.0%)	1/25 (4.0%)	3/5 (60.0%)	19/30 (63.3%)
Lakes State	22/26 (84.6%)	25/26 (96.2%)	11/26 (42.3%)	1/26 (3.8%)		25/26 (96.2%)
Upper Nile	23/26 (88.5%)	12/26 (46.2%)	19/26 (73.1%)	5/26 (19.2%)		9/26 (34.6%)
Western Bahr el Ghazal	27/29 (93.1%)	26/29 (89.7%)	10/29 (34.5%)	11/26 (42.3%)	1/3 (33.3%)	16/29 (55.2%)
Western Equatoria	26/26 (100.0%)	23/26 (88.5%)	18/26 (69.2%)	0/23 (0.0%)	1/3 (33.3%)	8/26 (30.8%)
Pibor Administrative Area	25/25 (100.0%)	22/25 (88.0%)	6/25 (24.0%)	14/25 (56.0%)	15/25 (60.0%)	22/25 (88.0%)

Table 5.39. Comparable indicators across survey files

File	Population	n	Direct TFGBV/direct harassment	Unwanted/ abusive messages	Feels safe online	Knows where to report	Ever reported	Mental/ emotional harm	Changed online behaviour
File 1	Preliminary digital safety	32	34.4%	59.4%	31.2%		37.5%		
File 2	Broader TFGBV survey	99	83/99 (83.8%)				51/99 (51.5%)		68/99 (68.7%)
File 3	Multi-state women with Pibor	172	161/172 (93.6%)	114/166 (68.7%)	91/172 (52.9%)	34/172 (19.8%)	15/25 (60.0%)		108/172 (62.8%)
File 4	Disabled women	10	9/11 (81.8%)	6/10 (60.0%)	8/10 (80.0%)	6/11 (54.5%)	3/11 (27.3%)	100.0%	8/11 (72.7%)
File 5	Students/ Girls	142	131/142 (92.3%)	70/95 (73.7%)	101/142 (71.1%)	10/47 (21.3%)	9/47 (19.1%)	118/142 (83.1%)	83/139 (59.7%)

Note: blank cells indicate that a comparable indicator was not available in the relevant workbook or was not measured with sufficiently similar wording. The table is intended to show where indicators align across files and where they do not; percentages are not harmonised prevalence estimates.

Table 5.40. Pooled descriptive estimates for comparable indicators

Indicator	Yes	Denominator	Pooled percent
Broad direct TFGBV exposure	384	424	90.6%
Witnessed TFGBV	343	423	81.1%
Unwanted/abusive messages/images	190	271	70.1%
Feels safe online	200	423	47.3%
Knows where to report	50	230	21.7%
Ever reported/reported an incident	69	135	51.1%
Changed online behaviour	267	421	63.4%
Experienced online harassment	171	322	53.1%

Note: pooling is descriptive only and uses survey items judged comparable in the uploaded synthesis workbook. Denominators vary because the same questions were not asked in every survey file; the pooled estimates should therefore be read as a synthesis of available survey evidence rather than as a merged national sample.

FIGURE 5.19.
Pooled descriptive estimates across comparable survey items.

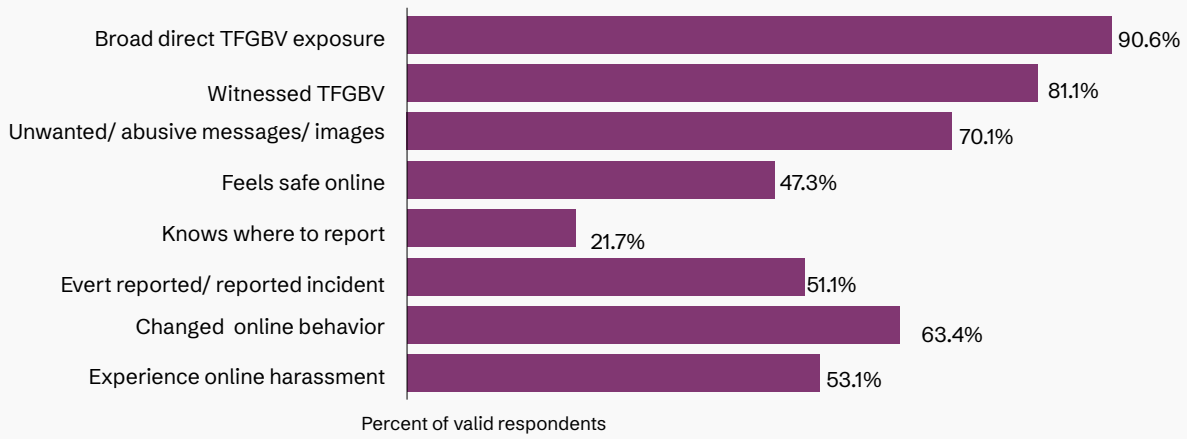


Table 5.41. Integrated cross-survey thematic results matrix

Integrated theme	Analytical description	Evidence across files	Integrated result statement
This sheet synthesises overlapping qualitative themes across the five workbooks and links them to the quantitative findings.			
Everyday digital spaces are the main risk environment	Abuse is embedded in routine platform use, especially mainstream social media and messaging tools.	File 1: “bullying”, “negative messages”, hacking and scams; File 2: Facebook dominated survivor reports (75/82); File 5: Facebook used by 73.9% and addition to groups without consent affected 81.0%.	Risk is produced through ordinary digital participation, not just rare extreme events.
TFGBV is strongly gendered and tied to power	Across files, respondents described women and girls as targeted because of gender, status, or unequal power relations.	File 1: patriarchy, inferiority, and social judgment; File 5: male peers, boyfriends/ex-boyfriends, and even male teachers were named in FGDs.	The data support interpreting TFGBV as a gendered power problem rather than neutral online conflict.
Privacy abuse and coercive contact are recurrent mechanisms	Unwanted messages, non-consensual group additions, impersonation, stalking, privacy violations, and image-based coercion recur across datasets.	File 3: unwanted groups/chats 76.0%, threats 51.0%; File 4: unwanted messages 55.6%, stalking 30.0%; File 5: unwanted messages 72.5%, hacked/impersonated 41.1%, sextortion 23.9%.	Harms often escalate as a chain, linking harassment, privacy abuse, and coercion.
Psychosocial harm and withdrawal are the dominant consequences	Fear, anxiety, low self-esteem, self-isolation, reduced posting, and avoiding digital participation are recurrent outcomes.	File 3: mental-health harm 90.6%, afraid to go online 72.9%; File 4: anxiety/fear 90.0%, self-isolation 100%; File 5: emotional/mental impact 83.1%, avoided social media 56.7%.	TFGBV spills offline into wellbeing, relationships, participation, and daily functioning.
Education and participation are materially affected	Student and youth datasets show TFGBV reducing concentration, participation, and school retention.	File 5: lost concentration 62.9%, dropout/change school 69.5%, fear of participating online 61.2%; File 4 also recorded education/work harm at 60.0%.	The problem should be treated as an education and participation issue, not only a digital-safety issue.
Reporting pathways are poorly known and weakly trusted	Across comparable surveys, few respondents knew where to report, even fewer reported, and institutional response was widely viewed as inadequate.	Pooled comparable results: 22.2% knew where to report; 21.6% had ever reported. File 3 police seriousness 3.1%; File 5 police seriousness 30.0%; File 1 reports to platforms often ended with no action.	Exposure is high, but remedies are weak, creating a structural under-reporting problem.
Respondents call for law, awareness, and support	Open-ended responses consistently demanded stronger laws, awareness, practical digital safety skills, counselling, and safer reporting systems.	File 1: training demand on cybersecurity and reporting; File 2: the strongest theme was laws and accountability (43 coded mentions); File 5 FGDs asked for laws, counselling, and stronger school action.	Policy action needs to combine legal reform, institutional response, and survivor-facing prevention/support.

5.8 Chapter Summary

Chapter Five presented descriptive results across the preliminary digital safety survey, broader women survey, multi-state age/location survey, Students/Girls survey, FGDs, disabled women survey, KIIs and SS-CIRT/NCA administrative data. Across these sources, the results show repeated TFGBV exposure, varied forms of harm, low reporting knowledge and institutional gaps, while also confirming that the datasets should be interpreted separately because of different instruments and denominators.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results presented in Chapter Five and interprets them in relation to the literature on technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), gender-based violence (GBV), digital rights, and feminist theories of violence. While Chapter Five presented the findings descriptively by dataset, this chapter draws the results together analytically. The purpose is not to repeat the results, but to explain what the patterns suggest about the nature, impacts, and response environment of TFGBV in South Sudan.

The discussion is framed by three linked ideas developed in the earlier chapters.

- **First**, TFGBV is treated as part of a continuum of violence against women and girls, rather than as a minor or separate form of online misbehaviour (Kelly, 1988; Kelly, 2019; Henry and Powell, 2018).
- **Second**, the analysis is intersectional, recognising that age, disability, education, public visibility, location, and access to institutions shape both vulnerability and response (Crenshaw, 1989; UN Women, 2023b; Tyabashe-Phume et al., 2025).
- **Third**, the ecological model is used to connect individual experiences to relationship, community, institutional, and societal factors (Heise, 1998; Fulu and Miedema, 2015).

These frameworks are useful because the findings show that TFGBV in South Sudan is not only about technology. It is also about social power, stigma, weak reporting systems, limited digital literacy, gaps in institutional capacity, and unequal access to protection.

6.1 Overview of the Main Results

Across the study, the most consistent finding is that TFGBV is a widespread and normalised feature of women's and girls' digital participation within the sampled populations. The preliminary digital safety survey already suggested a risk environment in which 59.4% of respondents had received threatening or abusive messages, 62.5% felt unsafe online, only 25.0% reported having enough digital safety information, and only 16.7% had any specific or partial awareness of cyberlaw. These preliminary findings anticipated the later results by showing that online harm, limited legal awareness, and demand for stronger protection were already visible before the main study instruments were implemented.

The broader women's survey and the multistate age/location survey data then showed higher direct exposure across the sampled groups. In the broader TFGBV survey, 82.8% of respondents were recorded as having experienced TFGBV, and 90.9% had witnessed TFGBV against another woman or girl. The most common form among survivors was online harassment, threats, and hate speech, reported by 79.3% of survivors. In the multistate survey data,

384 of 424 respondents (90.6%) reported direct TFGBV exposure, 343 of 423 (81.1%) had witnessed TFGBV, and 267 of 421 (63.4%) had adjusted their online behaviour. At the same time, only 50 of 230 respondents (21.7%) knew where to report. This contrast between high exposure, widespread behavioural adjustment and limited reporting knowledge is one of the central discussion points of the study.

The Students/Girls survey and FGD data similarly showed that TFGBV is embedded in everyday educational and social life. Facebook and WhatsApp were the leading platforms used by students/girls, while 81.0% had been added to groups or chats without consent, 72.5% had received unwanted messages, explicit content, or threats, 52.9% had experienced online harassment, 41.1% had been hacked or impersonated, and 39.4% had been pressured to share private images or personal information. These figures matter because they show that many students/girls are not encountering TFGBV as a rare or exceptional incident, but through routine platform use, social messaging, and peer or relationship networks.

The disabled women dataset, though small, provided important intersectional evidence. Eight of ten respondents recorded a direct TFGBV incident, all ten believed disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV, all ten believed TFGBV affects mental health, and all ten reported self-isolation. The qualitative narrative described harassment as an attempt to stop advocacy by women with disabilities; disability inclusion must not be treated as an add-on, but as a core part of TFGBV analysis and response.

The KIIs and SS-CIRT/NCA administrative material deepen the interpretation by showing that TFGBV is recognised across civil society, service providers, legal, regulatory, academic and technology stakeholders, but is not yet matched by a coherent institutional response. Chapter Five reviewed 37 KII documents and coded 30 unique substantive KIIs. Across this material, digital dependence and platform exposure, legal and policy gaps, institutional response gaps, curriculum gaps, platform accountability gaps and low digital literacy appeared as recurring concerns. Administrative data recorded 21 potential TFGBV-related cases across 2024-2025, but the classifications were non-standardised, indicating that formal systems are beginning to see these harms while still lacking consistent recording categories.

Table 6.1. Summary of key discussion issues arising from Chapter Five

Discussion issue	Main empirical evidence from the results	Interpretive meaning
High exposure but non-representative prevalence	Direct exposure ranged from 34.4% gender-based online harassment in the preliminary survey to 82.8% in the broader women's survey, 90.6% in the multistate survey, and 93.0% in the Students/Girls index.	The results indicate a serious problem within sampled groups, but should not be read as national prevalence because the instruments and samples differed.
Every day, platforms as risk environments	Facebook and WhatsApp were dominant platforms across women's and Students/Girls datasets; Students/Girls reported unwanted group additions at 81.0% and unwanted messages at 72.5%.	TFGBV is embedded in routine digital participation, not only in unusual or extreme online spaces.
Online-offline continuum	Students/Girls reported lost concentration, dropout/change of school, and fear of online participation; KIIs documented offline escalation, reputational harm, and threats.	Digital violence has material offline effects on education, safety, advocacy, relationships, and social standing.
Low reporting and weak trust	Only 21.7% of respondents with a valid answer in the multistate knew where to report, and only 21.3% of eligible Students/Girls respondents knew where to report; Students/Girls' confidence in police and platforms also remained limited.	Underreporting is structural, shaped by institutional weakness, fear, stigma, and uncertainty about where to seek help.
Intersectional vulnerability	Young women, students/girls, women in public roles, and disabled women appeared as heightened-risk groups in the survey, FGD, and KII.	TFGBV is not experienced evenly; response systems need to be age-sensitive, disability-inclusive, education-linked, and locally adapted.

Discussion issue	Main empirical evidence from the results	Interpretive meaning
Institutional ecosystem gap	KII and FGD evidence linked policy coordination, reporting/referral, GBV services, justice, platform/ telecom, education and data gaps.	The response gap is not only legal; it requires a coordinated survivor-centred system that links GBV, digital safety, justice, education and platform actors.
Location differences within sampled groups	The multistate survey included Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes State, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Western Equatoria and Pibor Administrative Area.	Location should guide programming, but the results remain sample-based and should not be read as state-level prevalence.

6.2 TFGBV as a Continuum of Online and Offline Violence

One of the strongest findings is that TFGBV in South Sudan cannot be understood as separate from offline gendered violence. This supports the continuum perspective developed by Kelly (1988; 2019) and extended into digital contexts by McGlynn, Rackley, and Houghton (2017), Henry and Powell (2018), and Henry, Flynn, and Powell (2020). The results show that abuse begins or circulates through phones, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, group chats, or private messages, but its consequences extend into fear, shame, school attendance, family relationships, community reputation, advocacy, public leadership, and institutional trust.

Across the survey streams, psychosocial harm and withdrawal were recurrent. The synthesis recorded high mental-health harm in the women/young women survey stream, while the disabled women dataset recorded mental-health impact among 10 of 10 respondents, anxiety or fear among 9 of 10, and self-isolation among all 10 respondents. The Students/ Girls data showed that 83.1% believed TFGBV affects emotional and mental well-being, 82.3% believed it affects self-esteem and confidence, 62.9% reported lost concentration in class, and 69.5% believed students had dropped out or changed schools because of TFGBV. These results make it difficult to sustain a distinction between online harm and real harm. Instead, they show that online abuse produces offline insecurity and social consequences.

The qualitative data make the same point more directly. The strongest cases do not describe isolated online embarrassment. They describe image-based abuse, sextortion, account misuse, edited images, threats and reputational attacks that moved into school withdrawal, family conflict, intimate-partner violence, forced decisions and severe psychological harm. These narratives show why TFGBV should be analysed as GBV mediated by technology rather than as general cybercrime without gendered meaning.

> "I have a friend who is a choir leader in our church. She met with a guy online, and they started a relationship through social media the guy requested me to share with him some naked photos, and he will send her some money. The guy sent her good money after the lady sent the pictures while she was naked. Then he started sending these pictures to all the friends of this lady through the account of the lady. After seeing these photos when the guy sent them to me, I had to go and see the lady. When I reach to her house I found her sleeping, and the phone was charging. There, I have noticed it wasn't the lady who is sending her pictures to us. When I told her about this, the lady was so frustrated, and she was full of guilt, to the point she can't come to school or go anywhere, to the point she was not able to go back to school until this day, and her life completely changed."

This case gives the context that was missing in the earlier draft. The survivor's distress followed the non-consensual circulation of intimate images through her own account, which created guilt, reputational fear and school withdrawal. The harm, therefore, became an education-retention and safeguarding issue, not only an online privacy incident.

> "During the Christmas, we went to the village. The ladies in the village, when they see men who are coming from the town they think they are the right husbands, happened one of the ladies started a relationship with the guy from the town. The guy requested the lady that they should take a romantic pictures together, some naked pictures. When the guy came back to Juba and the lady left behind in the village, he started sending these pictures of him with the lady on all social

> media and community groups Platforms. When something like this happened to a lady, people will think that she is not a good lady. When her family learned about this, they forced the lady to marry an old man, and it wasn't her wish. Because she was hoping to marry the guy, she was not having any choice, and her mother can't say anything about this. The lady thought she is useless now to the point she committed suicide and died."

This account should not be read as a prevalence claim. It is included as a serious qualitative case showing the possible escalation of TFGBV when intimate images circulate through community platforms and intersect with stigma, family control and limited protection pathways. The sequence is important: digital circulation produced community judgement; community judgement produced family pressure; and family pressure produced severe psychological harm.

The KIIs further confirm this continuum. One KII excerpt noted that online threats often escalate to offline violence, particularly for women leaders, feminists, and activists. Another KII described a case where online harassment escalated into offline physical violence. The chapter five cross-thematic matrix, therefore, correctly identified online-offline violence as a core relationship in the data. This is consistent with UN Women's argument that the links between online and offline violence remain under-researched globally, despite being clearly present in many women's experiences (UN Women, 2024). It is also consistent with Ellsberg et al.'s (2020) evidence that violence against women and girls in South Sudan is shaped by conflict histories, patriarchal norms, and social control. TFGBV is not replacing those existing structures; it is extending them through new channels.

The findings show that TFGBV extends existing offline violence and social control into digital spaces, reflecting the links between online and offline violence identified by UN Women (2024) and the influence of conflict, patriarchal norms, and social control documented in South Sudan by Ellsberg et al. (2020).



The online-offline continuum is particularly important in South Sudan because reputation, family standing and community judgement can intensify the harm of digital exposure. The effects document also includes a case where an edited image was used to make a married woman appear to be having an affair, after which she experienced beating, family rejection and divorce proceedings. This shows that TFGBV can damage relationships and physical safety even when the digital material is false or manipulated.

> "One of the co-wives took the picture of the other wife from Internet and edited that picture to add a man is like the woman having an affair with that man. Then she shared this picture on the group, one of the ladies contacted the wife that her picture was edited and used against her to inform her that someone posted her picture on the group and is a bad picture. She had to check and the husband also checked and found that is her. But she did not do anything like this. However this thing has caused her pain, when the husband learned about this he started beating her and sending her out of the house, her family did not accept her back because they think their daughter did bad thing to the family and also the husband refused to take her back. She reached to the point to commit suicide, because the husband jailed her, rejected her and now they are in process of divorce."

The significance of these cases is that online harm becomes socially credible before institutions can intervene. Survivors may then face shame, violence, exclusion, divorce, school withdrawal or self-censorship. The speed and persistence of digital circulation mean that families, partners and communities may respond to the image or accusation before the survivor has a safe opportunity to explain, seek support or preserve evidence.

This finding also helps explain why survivors may withdraw from platforms even when digital access is important for education, work, advocacy, and social support. In one KII, a participant said:

> "After the incident, I took off from social media... I had to deactivate my Messenger account... I was off social media for at least a week."

This is a form of self-protection, but it also shows how TFGBV can narrow women's digital citizenship. The

harm is therefore not only the original abuse but the forced restriction of women's public and private digital participation.

6.3 Everyday Digital Spaces as the Main Risk Environment

A second major discussion point is that the risk environment is ordinary and everyday. The data do not suggest that TFGBV is confined to obscure websites or highly technical cyberattacks. Instead, it occurs on mainstream platforms that participants use for social interaction, school, work, advocacy, news, and communication. Facebook was the primary platform across several datasets, while WhatsApp appeared as both a direct channel and a redistribution channel. In the Students/Girls survey, Facebook was used by 73.9% of respondents and WhatsApp by 56.3%. In the broader women's survey, Facebook dominated survivor reports, and in the KIIs, Facebook, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, TikTok, and other platforms were repeatedly mentioned.

TFGBV is an everyday risk occurring on mainstream digital platforms used for social interaction, education, work, advocacy, news, and communication, rather than being limited to obscure websites or sophisticated cyberattacks.



This pattern supports the argument made by Hinson et al. (2018) and UNFPA (2023) that TFGBV is not defined only by the device or platform, but by the way digital technologies are used to assist, aggravate, or amplify gendered harm. Ordinary platform design features such as group invitations, private messaging, image sharing, screenshots, forwarding, fake accounts, and public comment threads become mechanisms through which harassment, intimidation, and surveillance occur. The Students/Girls finding that 81.0% had been added to groups or chats without consent is particularly important because it points to the everyday social architecture of risk: harm often begins through routine contact rather than highly technical intrusion.

The findings also show that platform exposure is gendered. The preliminary digital safety survey found that 96.8% of respondents believed women are more likely to be targeted online. The Students/Girls data found that 81.4% believed female students experience TFGBV, and 69.7% believed young women are more affected. The qualitative material repeatedly named boyfriends, ex-boyfriends, husbands, male peers, and, in one Students/Girls FGD, male teachers as sources of pressure or perpetration. This pattern challenges any interpretation of the results as gender-neutral online conflict. Instead, it shows that digital harms are linked to unequal gendered power relations and to social norms that police women's visibility, sexuality, voice, and autonomy.

Emerging risks such as AI-generated abuse, deepfakes, image manipulation, and doxxing were less frequent in the current datasets than harassment, abusive messaging, image-based abuse, or impersonation. However, their presence in the zeitgeist is important because it indicates that the technological landscape is changing faster than current legal and service systems. This mirrors UN Women's (2024) concern that TFGBV research and response must be broad enough to capture evolving technologies while remaining clear enough for measurement and accountability.

The findings show that platform exposure to TFGBV is gendered, with 96.8% believing women are more likely to be targeted, 81.4% reporting that female students experience TFGBV, and 69.7% indicating that young women are more affected.



6.4 The Gendered Structure of TFGBV: Patriarchy, Visibility, and Control

The results suggest that TFGBV operates as a form of gendered discipline. Women and girls were targeted when they were visible, outspoken, socially active, politically engaged, studying, advocating, working, or navigating intimate relationships. This is consistent with feminist scholarship that treats violence against women not as a set of isolated events, but as part of broader social arrangements that maintain gender hierarchy (Kelly, 1988; Heise, 1998; Fulu and Miedema, 2015). It is also consistent with Plan International's (2020) finding that online harassment restricts girls' willingness to speak and participate online.

The KII cross-thematic matrix described a clear pathway from patriarchal norms to online abuse and then to self-censorship. Women leaders, feminists, and advocates were described as being targeted through insults, trolling, sexualised comments, and reputation attacks. One KII excerpt stated that women leaders and feminists face disproportionate attacks, while another explained that public figures face increased online risks. These findings resonate with UNESCO's (2021) work on online violence against women journalists and with wider TFGBV literature showing that women in public life are often attacked not only for what they say, but for being women who speak publicly.

The qualitative material from KIIs shows that public visibility is double-edged. The two quotations below are presented as related excerpts from the public/professional-life KII material, not as separate prevalence cases. One excerpt describes social media as economically and professionally necessary: "This is a platform that sells me out here. It's a platform that I get to get the gigs that I get, the opportunities I get." The other shows the sexualised reputational attack that can attach to that same visibility: "She posted on social media and said, 'I sleep with men to get the opportunities.'" Together, they capture the paradox of women's digital participation in the study: digital platforms create opportunities, networks and visibility, but that visibility also exposes women to gendered attacks.

> "This is a platform that sells me out here. It's a platform that I get to get the gigs that I get, the opportunities I get."

> "She posted on social media and said, 'I sleep with men to get the opportunities."

This is why TFGBV should be understood as a rights and participation issue. It does not only injures individuals emotionally. It also shapes who feels able to speak, lead, study, organise, work and be visible. In Chapter Five synthesis, psychosocial harm and withdrawal appear as dominant consequences across the survey, FGD, KII, disabled women and administrative evidence streams. This finding is central to the research because it links digital abuse to gender equality, civic participation and public life. The harm is not only that women receive abuse, but that abuse is used to narrow their social and political presence.

6.5 Students/Girls: Education, Social Development, and Digital Safety

The students'/girls' results are among the most important findings of the study because they show that TFGBV is directly connected to education, peer relationships, and school/university participation. The high rates of unwanted messages, non-consensual group additions, harassment, impersonation, threats, and pressure to share private images indicate that students/girls are exposed to multiple forms of harm while using the same platforms that connect them to friends, information, and learning.

The impacts reported by students/girls show that TFGBV should not be treated as a minor school discipline issue. Emotional or mental well-being impact was reported by 83.1%; self-esteem and confidence impact by 82.3%; lost concentration in class by 62.9%; fear of participating in online activities by 61.2%; and belief that students had dropped out or changed schools by 69.5%. The fuller FGD case quoted above, in which image-based abuse was followed by guilt, isolation and school withdrawal, gives concrete meaning to these figures. These results suggest that TFGBV is both a safeguarding issue and an education-retention issue.

FGD references to trauma, low self-esteem and lack of reporting options are therefore treated here as summary evidence of broader student harm, while the full case narrative is used above to show the context behind these impacts.

The student evidence also shows a practical institutional gap: students/girls need confidential school-based reporting routes, counselling, digital evidence guidance and clear referral pathways beyond informal peer support.

This finding aligns with Plan International's (2020) evidence that online harassment shapes girls' participation and voice. It also supports the recommendation that digital safety should be integrated into schools and community programmes. The school environment is important because students/girls may experience TFGBV from peers, intimate partners, teachers, community members, or strangers, and the consequences may appear in the classroom as loss of concentration, absenteeism, social conflict, shame, or withdrawal.

Students/girls need confidential school-based reporting routes, counselling, digital evidence guidance and clear referral pathways beyond informal support.



The age comparison adds further nuance. The common direct TFGBV index was high across all age groups, rising from 86.0% among respondents under 18, to 95.3% among those aged 18-24, and 100.0% among those aged 25-35. The difference in this broad exposure measure was not statistically significant at conventional levels ($p = 0.086$) and should therefore be interpreted with caution. However, avoidance of social media differed significantly by age group ($p = 0.029$), rising from 45.2% among those under 18 to 57.6% among those aged 18-24 to 85.7% among those aged 25-35. This does not prove that age causes avoidance, but it suggests that older students/girls or young adult respondents in the sample may have accumulated more exposure, greater risk awareness, or stronger reasons to withdraw from online spaces.

The educational interpretation should therefore be carefully understood. The data do not show that TFGBV alone causes school dropout or school transfer. They do show, however, that participants perceive a strong link between TFGBV, concentration, fear, self-esteem, social relationships, and school continuation. In a context where girls' education is already affected by poverty, insecurity, child marriage, household responsibilities, and GBV, TFGBV may become another mechanism through which girls' participation in education is restricted (Ellsberg et al., 2020; World Bank, 2022). This makes school-based digital safety and confidential reporting pathways a necessary part of GBV prevention.

6.6 Young Women, Public Participation and Self-Censorship

The young women's results show that TFGBV affects not only private emotional well-being but also public participation. In the multistate cohort, 267 of 421 respondents (63.4%) adjusted their online behaviour because of digital safety concerns, while the Students/Girls survey recorded avoidance of social media or websites among 80 of 141 respondents (56.7%) and fear of participating in online activities among 85 of 139 respondents (61.2%). The qualitative themes from young women included direct TFGBV experiences, solutions and accountability demands, awareness and digital literacy gaps, coping strategies, psychological and social harm, reporting barriers, institutional weakness, gender norms, victim-blaming and social control.

The open-ended and FGD materials indicate that young women often respond to TFGBV by limiting their presence, depending on peers, blocking perpetrators, changing privacy settings, or avoiding platforms. These strategies are rational in the absence of reliable institutional support. However, they also transfer the burden of safety to the survivor. The result is a form of constrained participation in which women remain responsible for reducing their visibility while perpetrators and systems face limited accountability.

The qualitative quote that "young women are silenced because of blame" is particularly important. It shows that harm is intensified by victim-blaming norms. When women fear being blamed for the abuse they experience, they are less likely to report, less likely to seek counselling or legal support, and more likely to manage the harm privately. This supports Hinson et al.'s (2018) and UN Women's (2023b) argument that TFGBV must be analysed through gender norms and power relations, not merely as isolated online incidents.

> "Young women are silenced because of blame"

This also helps explain the gap between exposure and reporting knowledge. In the multistate cohort, 90.6% reported direct TFGBV exposure, but only 21.7% of those knew where to report. In the Students/Girls survey, only 21.3% of eligible respondents knew where to report, and only 19.1% had reported to school authorities or law enforcement. If survivors expect blame, disbelief, loss of confidentiality or no meaningful action, non-reporting becomes understandable. It is therefore more accurate to discuss underreporting as a structural issue rather than a lack of awareness alone. Awareness matters, but awareness without trustworthy response pathways is insufficient.

6.7 Disability, Intersectionality, and Accessible Response

The dataset of disabled women adds an important intersectional dimension to the discussion. Although the sample was very small, the results are analytically significant because they show that disability shapes both exposure and response. All ten respondents believed disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV. All ten believed TFGBV affects mental health, and all ten reported self-isolation. Nine of ten reported anxiety or fear, and nine of ten reported relationship impacts. These findings are consistent with the emerging literature on TFGBV against women with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries, which emphasises the combined effects of ableism, gendered violence, and limited access to remedy (Tyabashe-Phume et al., 2025).

The qualitative narrative from the disabled women dataset described harassment that attempted to stop advocacy. The participant said the harassment was "stopping me from advocating" for women with disabilities, reported that she "was not supported by the family," and stated that survivors need counselling for trauma. This illustrates that TFGBV against women with disabilities may be both personal and political. It attacks the individual, but it also seeks to silence disability advocacy and public participation.

Participants emphasised the need for full disability integration, interpreters, accessible communication, mobility support, disability-sensitive service delivery, inclusive communication strategies, disability-sensitive referral systems, and targeted data capture on persons with disabilities. The phrase "Nothing for us without us" summarised this position. This feedback is crucial because it challenges research and programming that mention disability without designing access around disabled women's realities.

The disability findings also reveal a tension in the survey results. A relatively high proportion of disabled women respondents reported feeling safe online (77.8%), while the same dataset showed high direct TFGBV, high anxiety, universal self-isolation, and universal perceived mental-health impact. This suggests that standard safety questions may not fully capture risk for disabled women. Some respondents may interpret online safety in relation to broader offline insecurity, or they may feel technically confident yet still experience social harm. This underlines the need for disability-sensitive tools that distinguish platform confidence, social vulnerability, accessibility, autonomy, and response options.

Participants called for full disability inclusion, including interpreters, accessible communication, mobility support, disability-sensitive services and referrals, inclusive communication, and targeted disability data, emphasising the principle "Nothing for us without us."



6.8 Location, Urban Bias, and Unequal Risk Environments

The multistate survey cohort provides the strongest location comparison in the study because it retains 424 responses, including Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, Lakes State, Upper Nile, Western Bahr el Ghazal, Western Equatoria and Pibor Administrative Area. Overall, direct TFGBV exposure was high at 90.6% and did not differ significantly by location in the chi-square test ($p = 0.102$). However, statistically significant location differences were recorded for witnessing TFGBV ($p = 5.34e-06$), feeling safe online ($p = 8.16e-04$), adjusted online behaviour ($p = 1.29e-07$) and knowing where to report ($p = 1.11e-07$). This means that location did not explain whether TFGBV exposure existed in the sample, but it did shape how respondents reported safety, witnessing, behavioural change and reporting knowledge.

The state/location patterns should be interpreted as sample-based patterns rather than definitive state-level prevalence estimates. Direct exposure was 100.0% in Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria and Pibor Administrative Area, but was also high in Central Equatoria (88.4%), Jonglei (86.7%), Lakes State (84.6%), Upper Nile (88.5%) and Western Bahr el Ghazal (93.1%). Pibor recorded the highest mean number of TFGBV forms in the Chapter Five figure, while Eastern Equatoria also showed a high mean number of forms. At the same time, Pibor recorded the lowest feeling of safety online (24.0%) but the highest knowledge of where to report (56.0%). Western Equatoria recorded 0.0% knowing where to report despite 100.0% direct exposure, and Lakes State recorded very high adjusted online behaviour (96.2%) alongside very low reporting knowledge (3.8%).

These differences matter for programming because they show that one-size-fits-all interventions would be inadequate. Pibor's high burden, low felt safety and higher reporting knowledge suggest a need for rapid survivor-centred support linked to reporting channels that can actually act. Lakes State and Eastern Equatoria show high behavioural adjustment, suggesting that women and girls may be changing online behaviour even where reporting knowledge is limited. Western Equatoria's zero reporting knowledge points to a major access and referral gap. Upper Nile's comparatively higher feeling of safety and lower adjusted online behaviour should not be read as absence of risk; it may reflect different digital access, disclosure patterns, humanitarian conditions or lower recognition of certain TFGBV forms.

Urban and digitally connected bias must therefore be treated as both a limitation and a substantive finding. The data is wider than the earlier state comparison, but it still captures respondents who were reachable through the study's survey and institutional networks. Higher recorded exposure may reflect greater digital use, greater willingness to disclose, stronger recognition of TFGBV, or actual differences in risk. Lower recorded exposure may reflect lower access, lower recognition, fear of disclosure or underreporting. Rural women, older women and women with limited digital access may face different risks that this study could not fully capture, including phone sharing, surveillance by family members, lower privacy, limited online reporting capacity and reduced access to digital evidence support.

6.9 Reporting, Trust, and Institutional Response Gaps

The most consistent structural gap across the results is the mismatch between exposure and response. In the multistate age/location data cohort, only 21.7% of respondents with a valid answer knew where to report. In the Students/Girls dataset, only 21.3% of eligible respondents knew where to report, and only 19.1% had reported to school authorities or law enforcement. In the preliminary digital safety survey, only 34.4% believed platforms were doing enough. These figures suggest that the main problem is not only individual reluctance to report but a wider trust and visibility deficit across reporting systems.

The institutional gaps document helps explain this deficit. It states that TFGBV in South Sudan is not yet fully located within one coherent national response system. FGD participants looked to government and public institutions for action, but also showed uncertainty about where responsibility sits. KII coding sharpened the issue: legal/policy gaps and reporting/referral gaps each appeared in 12 KIIs, while digital literacy/awareness deficits appeared in 15. This means the institutional problem is systemic. Even where a survivor identifies harm, there may be no clear pathway through GBV services, law enforcement, digital evidence support, platform reporting and psychosocial care.

This is why the FGD statement, *"what I want to know is when someone gets harassed, where do I report,"* is analytically important. It captures the public-facing side of the institutional gap. Survivors and students may experience online harassment, blackmail, image misuse or impersonation, but the next step remains unclear. Where reporting systems are unclear, survivors are pushed toward silence, blocking, deleting evidence, asking peers for help or withdrawing from online spaces. These coping strategies may reduce immediate exposure, but they do not create accountability, preserve evidence safely or connect survivors to counselling and legal support.

The KII evidence also shows that reporting systems need to be confidential, accessible, non-blaming and linked to real support. Institutions should not only collect complaints; they should explain options, protect privacy, preserve evidence safely, provide updates and make warm referrals. Without these features, formal reporting can feel risky or useless, especially where survivors fear family blame, public exposure, retaliation or mishandling of images.

GBV One-Stop Centres, psychosocial actors, legal aid providers, schools, universities, NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, platforms and CSOs therefore need to be treated as one protection ecosystem rather than separate response silos. Existing GBV tools were mainly designed for offline violence; without TFGBV categories in intake forms, psychosocial assessments and referral templates, digital abuse may be recorded only as general emotional abuse, interpersonal conflict or cyberbullying. This weakens monitoring, referral and service planning.

The conceptual implication is that TFGBV cannot be routed only through a cybercrime channel or only through a GBV channel. If it is recognised only as cybercrime, survivors may be sent toward technical reporting systems that do not provide psychosocial, legal or safety support. If it is recognised only as GBV, responders may fail to secure digital evidence, request takedowns, understand platform reporting or assess ongoing digital risk. The findings, therefore, point toward an integrated response model that links GBV services, digital safety expertise, regulators, law enforcement, legal aid, schools, universities, CSOs and platform escalation channels.

Table 6.2. Institutional response gaps emerging from FGDs and KIIs

Institution/sector	Institutional gap discussed in the data	Discussion implication
Ministry responsible for gender / national GBV coordination	TFGBV is not yet fully anchored in national GBV policy, referral SOPs, service standards or coordinated implementation.	A national TFGBV response framework should define institutional roles, referral maps, minimum service standards and state-level rollout.
GBV One-Stop Centres, psychosocial services and safe spaces	Existing GBV tools are mainly designed for offline violence and do not consistently capture digital abuse, image misuse, impersonation or online threats.	TFGBV categories should be added to intake, psychosocial assessment and referral templates without unsafe storage of harmful images.
Law enforcement, legal aid and justice actors	Justice actors may lack training on digital evidence, online harassment, non-consensual image sharing, privacy-sensitive interviewing and survivor-centred case handling.	Legal reform must be paired with implementation capacity, evidence protocols, privacy safeguards and trained referral to cyber specialists when needed.
NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, platforms and ICT actors	Platform reporting, account recovery, technical escalation and lawful data handling are not yet consistently connected to GBV support.	Technical response should be linked to survivor consent, confidentiality, takedown/ escalation pathways, legal support and psychosocial referral.
Schools, universities and education authorities	Students/girls face curriculum gaps, weak anonymous reporting, unclear campus governance and limited trained personnel.	Digital safety, consent, online harassment prevention, bystander responsibility and survivor-centred reporting should be integrated into safeguarding systems.

6.10 Law, Policy, and Platform Accountability

The results show strong demand for legal and policy reform. In the preliminary survey, 100.0% supported stricter laws. In the broader women's survey, the most common open-ended theme was stronger laws, enforcement, and accountability, with 43 coded mentions. Students/Girls FGDs similarly called for the government to create laws that protect students/girls and punish perpetrators. One FGD quote stated that 'the government [should] put some laws to protect us and punish the person who commits TFGBV'.

> "The government should put some laws to protect us and punish the person who commits TFGBV"

However, the findings also show that the law alone is insufficient. The existing laws may be passed but not operationalised, and the KII cross-thematic matrix noted that legal reform without implementation capacity will be insufficient. This is consistent with wider GBV literature, which shows that formal legal change often fails survivors when police, courts, prosecutors, health providers, and community institutions are not trained or resourced to respond in survivor-centred ways (WHO, 2001; UN Women, 2023a). In the TFGBV context, implementation capacity also requires digital evidence rules, privacy protection, rapid takedown pathways, cross-platform coordination, cybercrime expertise, and accessible reporting systems.

Platform accountability is equally important. Across the data, Facebook, WhatsApp, and TikTok appear not only as sites of social life but as spaces where abusive content can be created, circulated, and amplified. Platform responses were viewed as weak, slow, or unreliable. This aligns with UNFPA's (2023) emphasis that TFGBV measurement and response must consider how digital tools facilitate harm through scale, speed, anonymity, persistence, and replicability. There is also a concern that local language, coded abuse, and the South Sudanese context may not be adequately understood by global content moderation systems.

The SS-CIRT/NCA administrative data illustrate both progress and limitations. The identification of 21 potential TFGBV-related cases in 2024-2025 indicates that formal cyber response systems are encountering this issue. However, the non-standardised classification, limited demographic fields and qualitative platform information show that administrative systems are not yet designed to generate robust TFGBV evidence. This supports the recommendation for a standardised TFGBV taxonomy, safe digital evidence preservation guidance and coordinated institutional data systems that can inform services without exposing survivors to further harm.

6.11 Digital Literacy, Legal Literacy, and Prevention

Digital literacy is a major cross-cutting theme. The preliminary survey showed that only 25.0% of respondents felt they had enough digital safety information, and only 16.7% had any specific or partial awareness of cyberlaw. The KII analysis found that low digital literacy and gaps in public awareness were evident across all KIIs. Students/Girls FGDs included self-protection strategies such as using different passwords, refusing friend requests from unknown users, and locking profiles. These strategies show that participants are not passive. They are already developing practical coping mechanisms, but these remain individualised and uneven.

The discussion should therefore avoid treating digital literacy as a simple technical training problem. Passwords, privacy settings, and reporting tools are important, but they cannot address victim-blaming, perpetrator impunity, weak law enforcement, or platform inaction by themselves. Digital literacy must be linked to legal literacy, consent education, gender norms, bystander responsibility, counselling, safe reporting, and digital evidence preservation. This reflects the ecological model: risk and protection operate at multiple levels, from individual skills to institutional systems and societal norms.

Digital literacy must go beyond technical skills to integrate legal literacy, consent education, gender norms, bystander responsibility, counselling, safe reporting, and evidence preservation, recognising that TFGBV risk and protection operate across individual, institutional, and societal levels.



In schools and universities, digital safety should be integrated into safeguarding and curriculum structures rather than offered as occasional awareness events. The KII and institutional-gap evidence identified curriculum gaps, weak anonymous reporting, unclear campus governance and limited trained personnel. Students/girls need to know not only how to secure an account but also how to identify coercion, where to report, how to safely preserve evidence, how to support peers and how to seek psychosocial help without being blamed. University policies should also cover class WhatsApp groups, online learning platforms, student association pages and other university-affiliated digital spaces.

6.12 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge in several ways.

1. **First**, it provides context-specific evidence on TFGBV in South Sudan, a setting where published empirical evidence remains limited. Global literature increasingly documents TFGBV, but UN Women (2023a; 2024) notes that evidence remains fragmented, especially across regions and intersectional groups. The present research addresses that gap by integrating surveys, FGDs, KIIs, disabled women, and administrative data.

2. **Second,** the study shows that TFGBV in South Sudan should be understood through an online-offline continuum. The results demonstrate that digital abuse affects emotional well-being, self-esteem, educational participation, public voice, advocacy, relationships, and perceptions of physical safety. This contributes to theoretical debates by showing how the continuum of violence operates within a fragile, institutionally constrained context.

3. **Third**, the study contributes an intersectional account. It does not treat women and girls as a single uniform category. Students/girls, young women, disabled women, and women in public roles appear in different ways across the data. This is important because TFGBV prevention and response will fail if it assumes that all women have the same access to devices, reporting, family support, privacy, platform literacy, or institutional trust.

4. **Fourth**, the study contributes to policy knowledge by showing that the central response gap is not only the absence of law but the weakness of the overall response ecosystem. The findings point to a need for legal reform, but also for trained responders, accessible reporting, school and university safeguarding, disability-sensitive referral pathways, platform escalation mechanisms, digital evidence protocols, psychosocial support, and community awareness.

6.13 Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study are important and should be read together with the findings.

- The first limitation is **representativeness**. The data are not fully representative of all women, girls, or communities in South Sudan. The study mostly targeted girls and women, with more focus on young women, and therefore does not adequately capture male victims, boys, many perpetrators, family members, or community actors. This focus is justified by the research aim, which centred on women and girls, but it means the findings should not be interpreted as a complete national picture of all TFGBV experiences.

- Second, there is an **urban and digitally connected bias in the results**. It should be especially noted that TFGBV is likely concentrated among urban, educated, and digitally connected populations, and that the study should avoid generalising to rural realities. The sample included respondents who were reachable through online or in-person research processes linked to schools, universities, civil society, urban communities, service providers, and digitally active groups. Rural women, women with low connectivity, women without smartphones, women using shared devices, and women with limited privacy are therefore likely underrepresented.

- Third, **sample size** remains a limitation at the disaggregated level. The multistate is larger with 424 responses, but several location cells remain small, including groups of around 25-32 respondents. The preliminary survey had 32 respondents; the disabled women survey had 10; the broader women's Google survey had 99; and the Students/Girls survey had 142. This limits statistical power for subgroup comparisons

and means that age, disability, site and location differences should be interpreted as exploratory patterns rather than definitive population-level estimates.

Fourth, **older women were underrepresented**. The samples mainly captured girls, students, young women, and digitally active women, primarily women leaders and feminists/gender activists. Older women may have different patterns of access, lower social media use, different forms of technology-mediated control, greater reliance on shared phones, or different barriers to reporting. Their underrepresentation limits the ability of the study to discuss TFGBV across the full life course (UNICEF, UNFPA, and Save the Children, n.d.).

Fifth, **women in rural areas** were less well represented than urban respondents. Rural women may experience TFGBV differently due to network coverage, lower digital literacy, shared devices, stronger community surveillance, transport barriers, limited service availability, language barriers, and lower access to formal reporting systems. The study, therefore, likely captures the experience of women and girls who are already more digitally connected, rather than those who are digitally excluded or only indirectly exposed through shared technology.

Sixth, the study **relied partly on self-reported data**. TFGBV is sensitive, stigmatised, and sometimes difficult to name. Respondents may underreport due to shame, fear of blame, trauma, mistrust, or uncertainty about whether an experience counts as TFGBV. Others may report based on broad understandings of harm. This does not weaken the value of the data, but it means the results should be interpreted as reported experiences and perceptions within the study sample.

Seventh, the **datasets were not fully equivalent**. The preliminary digital safety survey, broader TFGBV survey, multi-state survey, disabled women survey, Students/Girls survey, FGDs, KIIs, and SS-CIRT/NCA administrative data used different instruments, sampling frames, denominators, and levels of detail. Chapter Five, therefore, correctly avoided treating them as one single prevalence survey. The integrated findings are useful for identifying patterns, but the pooled figures remain descriptive and not harmonised national estimates.

Eighth, some **qualitative data were uneven in depth**. Certain FGD and narrative materials were rich, while others were summarised notes or coded extracts. The quotations used in this chapter are therefore illustrative, not representative of all respondents. They help explain mechanisms behind the quantitative findings, but should not be read as the only experiences present in the data.

Ninth, **administrative data were incomplete and non-standardised**. SS-CIRT/NCA records provided useful evidence that potential TFGBV-related incidents are reaching formal cyber response systems. However, categories were non-standardised, demographic fields were limited in scope, and platform information was not consistently quantified. Administrative figures should therefore be treated as indicative evidence of institutional visibility rather than as a full case-counting system.

Finally, the statistical tests in the workbook were exploratory. This chapter, therefore, uses statistical differences to identify where patterns appear to vary, but it does not claim that location, age, or other variables cause TFGBV. More representative, longitudinal, and disaggregated research would be required to make stronger causal claims.

Table 6.3. Study limitations and implications for interpretation

Limitation	How it affects interpretation	How this chapter responds
Non-representative sample	Findings cannot be generalised to all women, girls, men, boys or communities in South Sudan.	Treats results as strong sample-based evidence, not national prevalence.
Women/girls-centred design	Male victims, boys, and perpetrator dynamics are not sufficiently captured.	Keeps the discussion focused on women and girls while recommending future broader research.

Limitation	How it affects interpretation	How this chapter responds
Urban and digitally connected bias	Rural women, older women and less-connected populations may be underrepresented, even in the age/location data.	Discusses urban/digital access bias directly and avoids national or state-level generalisation.
Small samples within some datasets and disaggregated cells	Overall evidence is strong across the sample, but some age, disability, site and state/location cells have limited statistical power.	Uses cautious language and treats subgroup and location tests as exploratory.
Older women underrepresented	Findings mainly reflect girls, students, young women, and digitally active women.	Identifies older women as a future research priority.
Uneven instrument structure	Datasets cannot be merged into one harmonised prevalence survey.	Integrates findings thematically rather than as a single prevalence estimate.
Sensitive self-reporting	Stigma, fear, and trauma may produce underreporting or incomplete disclosure.	Interprets underreporting as structural and links it to trust and support gaps.
Incomplete administrative data	SS-CIRT/NCA data show visibility but not full national case counts.	Uses administrative data as indicative evidence of system gaps.

6.14 Chapter Summary

The findings show that TFGBV in South Sudan is best understood as part of a continuum of gendered violence that connects digital abuse to offline harm, reputational injury, fear, silence, educational disruption, self-censorship, and institutional mistrust. The results also show that TFGBV occurs through everyday digital spaces, especially Facebook, WhatsApp, and other mainstream platforms, rather than only through exceptional cyber incidents.

The discussion has shown that TFGBV is strongly gendered and shaped by unequal power relations. Students/girls, young women, women in public roles, and disabled women all appear as important groups within the data, though their experiences are not identical. The findings reinforce the need for intersectional and survivor-centred responses that recognise age, disability, location, education, public visibility, and digital access.

The chapter has also shown that the most serious response gap is the mismatch between high exposure and weak reporting knowledge, trust and institutional support. Legal reform is necessary, but not sufficient. Effective response requires trained GBV and justice actors, accessible and confidential reporting, digital evidence protocols, platform and telecom escalation, psychosocial support, school and university safeguarding, disability-inclusive referral systems, community-based prevention and a coordinated national framework that links these institutions together.

The study's limitations are significant and clearly stated. The findings are not nationally representative, are biased toward urban and digitally connected populations, and underrepresent older women, rural women, and male victims. Nevertheless, the study provides important foundational evidence. It demonstrates that TFGBV is already affecting women and girls in South Sudan and that coordinated policy, institutional, educational, and survivor-support responses are urgently required.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Institutional Recommendations for Responding to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in South Sudan

7.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out institutional recommendations for strengthening the prevention of response to, and accountability for, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) in South Sudan. It is grounded in the KII coding workbooks, the institutional analysis, the institutional gaps and weaknesses paper, and the updated institutional gaps and recommendations matrix. The chapter uses functional institutional labels such as GBV One-Stop Center (OSC), women-led civil society organization, cyber incident-response actor, legal sector actor, communications regulator/NCA, ICT sector actor, university, education authority, disability inclusion actor, and community leader. This approach preserves the confidentiality and integrity of the research while still making the recommendations practical and institutionally targeted.

The central finding informing this chapter is that South Sudan does not lack all institutional foundations for responding to violence against women and girls. Rather, the evidence points to a mismatch between existing GBV response systems and the specific and fast-growing realities of digital abuse. One-stop centers, safe houses, psychosocial support actors, legal aid providers, regulators, women-led organizations, universities, telecom actors, and technical responders already exist in partial form. However, their tools, forms, procedures, referral routes, legal assumptions, and data systems remain primarily designed for offline violence. TFGBV therefore appears in institutional practice before it is

fully recognized in institutional systems. Protection services for GBV response need to catch up with the exponential pace at which technology uptake is increasing across the country.

TFGBV cannot be addressed solely through safeguarding measures, reporting mechanisms, or online safety protocols. While these remain essential for prevention and response, they are fundamentally reactive. A transformative approach requires ensuring that women and girls are not merely protected in digital spaces but are empowered to own, shape, and lead them. Digital spaces have become critical arenas for education, economic participation, civic engagement, political leadership, innovation, and social influence. When women and girls are excluded or driven offline by harassment, abuse, misinformation, or intimidation, societies lose their voices, leadership, and contributions.

Addressing TFGBV therefore requires shifting the narrative from protection to power by investing in digital literacy, leadership, entrepreneurship, content creation, safe innovation, and meaningful participation in technology governance. Women and girls should be recognized not only as users of technology but as creators, decision-makers, and leaders who influence how digital platforms are designed, governed, and utilized. Building their confidence, agency, and digital citizenship is essential to closing the gender digital divide, advancing gender equality, and ensuring that digital transformation becomes a force for empowerment rather than exclusion. Ultimately, success will not be measured only by reducing online harm, but by increasing the number of women and girls who confidently occupy, influence, and thrive in digital spaces.

The recommendations below therefore should be read as a systems-strengthening agenda rather than a simple call for a single new institution or law. The purpose is to adapt existing GBV, justice, education, ICT, telecommunications, disability inclusion, and community systems so that they can recognize, document, refer, investigate, prevent, and monitor TFGBV without exposing survivors to further harm. The structural recommendations focus on adopting transformational approaches to women and girls' leadership building, i.e., shifting from a primarily *protective and reactive* model to a more *transformative* one that actively dismantles patriarchal power dynamics and centers women's autonomy by promoting women's independent access to and ownership of technology.

7.2 Evidence Base for the Recommendations

The broader research materials reinforce the need for an institutional response that is both survivor-centered and operational. Across the survey, FGD, KII, and administrative materials, TFGBV was reported as a recurrent form of gendered harm involving harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, non-consensual circulation of intimate content, sextortion, cyberstalking, doxxing, gendered hate speech, privacy invasion, and platform-based humiliation. Reporting remained low in comparison with exposure, and the KII-informed matrix shows that survivors often rely first on informal networks, blocking or reporting tools, women-led organizations, and trusted community actors before reaching formal systems.

The updated institutional gaps matrix adds five important clarifications to the chapter.

- **First**, legal reform is necessary but insufficient unless it is accompanied by trained investigators, digital evidence standards, survivor-sensitive procedures, and legal aid.
- **Second**, TFGBV produces online and offline consequences, including reputational harm, withdrawal from public voice, family or community pressure, relationship strain, and physical-safety risks.
- **Third**, schools and universities require dedicated attention because curriculum gaps, weak anonymous reporting, low female participation in ICT, and unclear campus governance leave students exposed.
- **Fourth**, platforms, telecoms, ISPs, and digital safety actors are part of the protection ecosystem rather than external technical actors.
- **Fifth**, KII coding counts should be treated as indicators of analytic salience, not as population prevalence.

The recommendations, therefore, combine prevention, service delivery, case management, legal accountability, technical escalation, evidence preservation, education reform, disability inclusion, and data strengthening. They also assume that implementation must be phased, because the institutional environment is resource-constrained and because the sectors involved do not yet routinely work together on TFGBV.

Table 7.1. Shows KII-Informed Evidence Summary Informing Institutional Recommendations

Evidence area	Findings from research materials	Implication for recommendations
KII recommendation pattern	Digital literacy, legal reform, plus implementation capacity, frontline training, clear referral pathways, psychosocial support, digital evidence procedures, curriculum integration, platform localisation, and telecom accountability recur across the institutional evidence.	The response agenda must combine prevention, case handling, legal reform, survivor support, ICT accountability, and education-system reform.
Dominant institutional gap pattern	TFGBV is visible in practice but is not yet consistently named, documented, or routed through formal response systems.	Institutions need operational readiness: revised intake tools, complaint classifications, referral protocols, focal points, staff training, and minimum data systems.
Online-offline continuum	Harassment, image-based abuse, impersonation, cyberstalking, doxxing, and platform-based attacks can produce reputational harm, self-censorship, family/community pressure, and physical-safety risks.	Referral systems must handle reputational harm, evidence preservation, content circulation, ongoing digital risk, and offline protection together.
Education and the ICT ecosystem	Schools, universities, telecom operators, platforms, ISPs, technology hubs, and digital rights actors are repeatedly implicated in prevention, reporting, escalation, and accountability.	TFGBV cannot be left solely to GBV actors or cyber actors; it requires shared institutional responsibility across sectors.
Data and evidence	KII coding counts are useful indicators of analytic salience but should not be treated as prevalence estimates.	Monitoring systems should gather ethical, anonymised, and disaggregated data while avoiding unsafe storage of harmful content or unsupported prevalence claims.

7.3 Guiding Principles for Institutional Response

Any institutional response to TFGBV should be grounded in the following principles. These principles are not separate recommendations; they should guide all policy, service-delivery, education, ICT, justice, disability inclusion, and community interventions described in this chapter.

1. **Survivor-centred practice:** responses should prioritise the safety, dignity, informed consent, confidentiality, and agency of survivors. Survivors should not be blamed for being online, using social media, having relationships, participating in public life, studying, working, organising, or reporting harm.

2. **Do-no-harm digital response:** institutions should avoid actions that further expose survivors, reproduce harmful content, force unnecessary retellings, or circulate private images or messages within institutions.

3. **Online-offline continuum:** TFGBV should be treated as part of the wider continuum of violence against women and girls because online abuse can produce offline fear, reputational damage, educational disruption, family conflict, social exclusion, and physical insecurity.

4. **Operational readiness:** awareness must translate into concrete procedures, tools, referral routes, staff training, evidence standards, case documentation, focal points, service standards, and monitoring systems.

5. **Intersectional inclusion:** response systems should be accessible to young women, girls, women with disabilities, women in public life, students, displaced populations, rural communities, and women with limited digital literacy or limited access to devices.

6. **GBV actors alone cannot handle shared institutional responsibility:** TFGBV or by cybersecurity actors alone. It requires coordinated action across GBV services, regulators, law enforcement, judiciary, ICT actors, telecoms, platforms, education authorities, universities, disability actors, community leaders, and civil society.

7. **Context-specific accountability:** imported platform standards and general cyber-safety messages should be adapted to South Sudanese realities, including language, literacy, stigma, infrastructure limitations, rural-urban divides, disability access barriers, and low trust in formal systems.

8. **Digital Citizenship for women and girls:** Addressing TFGBV is also shifting from a primarily protective and reactive model to a transformative one that actively dismantles patriarchal power dynamics and centers women's autonomy by promoting women's independent access to and ownership of technology. Digital participation is not just a space of risk that needs safeguarding but is a fundamental human right.

7.4 Recommendations for GBV One-Stop Centers, Health/ Psychosocial Service Points, Safe Houses, and Women-Friendly Spaces

GBV One-Stop Centers (OSC), health and psychosocial service points, safe houses, and women-friendly spaces should be positioned as core entry points for TFGBV survivors, but their tools and protocols need revision. The institutional evidence shows that these actors already offer medical, psychosocial, legal, referral, and protection support for offline GBV. However, TFGBV is often recognised informally through survivor narratives rather than systematically captured through intake forms, GBVIMS-style categories, psychosocial assessments, protection plans, or referral templates. This creates a documentation gap and makes it difficult to track prevalence, plan services, understand continuing online risk, or refer survivors to technical actors. Psychosocial counseling and legal assistance can have a specific component on addressing online violence. The OSCs can also be a site to promote online/ digital sisterhood amongst the survivors of GBV by creating a basic digital literacy platform/ desk for all the survivors (including online and in-person violence survivors) at the One Stop Centers.

7.4.1 Integrate TFGBV into intake, documentation, and case management

GBV One-Stop Centres should revise intake forms, case notes, GBVIMS-aligned tools, and referral templates so that TFGBV is recorded as a distinct category while still being linked to existing GBV categories. The revised tools should include non-graphic categories such as online harassment, trolling, threats, impersonation, account takeover, image-based abuse, digital blackmail, cyberstalking, doxxing, platform-based humiliation, extortion, sextortion, and technology-enabled coercive control. The purpose is not to create a separate silo but to ensure that digital harms do not disappear into general emotional abuse, cyberbullying, or unspecified interpersonal conflict.

- Add TFGBV screening questions to the GBV intake, psychosocial assessment, referral, and case management forms.
- The majority of the cases are not just online or offline violence; they are a combination of both. There is a need to understand these nuances more.
- Create non-graphic TFGBV coding categories that capture the platform or tool, type of harm, risk level, perpetrator relationship where known, survivor support needs, and referral pathway.
- Nominate a TFGBV focal point at each centre to support caseworkers, monitor referral routes, and coordinate with technical or legal actors.
- Use a minimal data module for anonymised trend monitoring without unnecessarily storing sensitive images, videos, or identifying details.
- Ensure that all documentation complies with survivor consent and confidentiality rules, especially when digital content is sensitive, intimate, or reputationally harmful.
- CSOs should also promote digital innovation to contribute to building local and context specific digital infrastructures

7.4.2 Build digital case-management and psychosocial capacity among frontline staff

Frontline GBV, health, and psychosocial staff require training that goes beyond basic awareness. The updated institutional gaps matrix shows that counselling models are often designed for offline GBV and may not fully address reputational harm, public shaming, repeated exposure, fear of content resurfacing, anxiety, shame, self-censorship, social

withdrawal, or family/community pressure. Training should therefore cover the nature of TFGBV, trauma-informed interviewing in digital abuse cases, safe documentation, confidential follow-up, referral to technical support, and survivor-centred safety planning for ongoing online harm.

- Train case workers and counsellors on recognising TFGBV as gender-based violence rather than as ordinary online conflict or improper online behaviour.
- Develop TFGBV-informed counselling protocols that recognise anxiety, shame, public humiliation, fear, reputational harm, and withdrawal from public voice.
- Provide practical training on privacy-sensitive case documentation and avoiding unnecessary forwarding, copying, saving, or displaying of harmful content.
- Create referral scripts that explain survivor choices, evidence risks, platform reporting limits, legal options, and safe communication preferences.
- Provide confidential follow-up options that reflect survivor preferences for phone, WhatsApp, email, in-person contact, or communication with a trusted contact.

7.4.3 Embed digital safety into protection planning and safe spaces

Safe houses and women-friendly spaces should not treat physical safety and digital safety as separate issues. Physical protection planning often omits access to location-tracking devices, account monitoring, abusive messaging, partner or family surveillance, class or community WhatsApp groups, and shared devices. Survivors may therefore remain reachable by perpetrators even after entering a physical support space. Digital safety should be integrated into protection planning in a simple, survivor-centred, and non-technical way.

- Use a simple digital safety checklist at intake for safe houses, women-friendly spaces, and protection services.
- Develop safe communication plans with survivors, including preferred phone, WhatsApp, and email channels, trusted contact preferences, and awareness of the risks associated with shared devices.
- Create procedures for urgent risk where online threats, doxxing, impersonation, stalking, or image-based abuse may lead to offline harm.
- Partner with trusted digital safety actors for account recovery, privacy settings, device checks, platform reporting, and safe evidence preservation.
- Avoid confiscating devices or restricting online access in ways that isolate survivors unless this is requested by the survivor and clearly linked to safety planning.

7.4.4 Establish survivor-centred referral pathways for digital cases

Existing GBV referral pathways should be widened to include digital, regulatory, legal, telecommunications, education, and platform actors. A survivor who reports TFGBV at a one-stop centre, counselling point, or safe house may need psychosocial care, legal advice, technical guidance, content-removal support, telecommunications intervention, police protection, university support, child protection, disability accommodation, or community protection, depending on the case. Referral systems should therefore be based on consent, clarity, and warm handover rather than informal personal contacts.

- Develop a TFGBV referral map linking GBV services, psychosocial support, legal aid, NCA/SS-CIRT, police/cyber units, telecom focal points, trusted digital safety actors, platform escalation channels, universities, schools, and disability inclusion actors.
- Obtain the survivor's consent before any referral, and explain the risks, limitations, and likely timelines for each pathway.
- Create a fast-track referral route for cases involving ongoing threats, repeated harassment, doxxing, public circulation of private content, impersonation, account takeover, or offline safety risks.
- Ensure referral pathways are disability-inclusive, including accessible communication formats, interpreters where needed, and mobility-sensitive access arrangements.

7.5 Recommendations for Women-Led Civil Society Organisations, Community GBV Actors, and Community Leaders

Women-led civil society organisations, survivor networks, feminist groups, community-based GBV actors, and trusted community leaders are essential, as evidence shows that survivors frequently rely on these structures for support. These actors often fill gaps left by state and technical systems through awareness, documentation, accompaniment, advocacy, and formal and informal support. However, their role should not remain informal, under-resourced, or disconnected from official referral systems. They should be integrated into national and local TFGBV response systems without losing their survivor-centred and community-trusted essence.

7.5.1 Formalise community-based referral and survivor accompaniment

- Mainstream TFGBV into existing GBV prevention, awareness, case accompaniment, advocacy, and referral programmes rather than treating it as a separate digital-only issue.
- Formalise CSO roles in national and state referral pathways, including referral to one-stop centres, legal aid, NCA/SS-CIRT, police/cyber units, telecom focal points, and trusted digital safety actors.
- Fund community focal points, peer-support networks, and survivor accompaniment so that response does not rely only on unpaid or informal women leaders.
- Develop survivor peer-support and trauma-informed psychosocial spaces for women affected by public shaming, online harassment, account compromise, blackmail, and reputational harm.
- Collect anonymised service data on TFGBV trends and feed it into a coordinated national evidence system while protecting survivor confidentiality.

7.5.2 Build community digital safety awareness without victim-blaming

Community awareness should not focus only on warning women and girls against online participation. The evidence indicates that victim-blaming, reputation policing, and pressure to stay silent remain barriers to help-seeking. Community-level digital safety education should therefore frame TFGBV as violence and rights abuse, not as evidence of improper female behaviour online.

- Develop local-language awareness materials on consent, privacy, reporting, safe evidence preservation, account security, blocking/reporting tools, and protection against victim-blaming.
- Use community dialogues to challenge victim-blaming narratives and to explain how online harassment, threats, blackmail, image-based abuse, doxxing, and impersonation produce real harms.
- Engage men, boys, parents, student leaders, youth groups, and community influencers in prevention messages that address bystander responsibility and non-retaliation.
- Ensure that awareness materials are accessible to women and girls with disabilities and to communities with limited literacy, connectivity, or access to devices.

Women-led civil society organisations, survivor networks, feminist groups, community-based GBV actors, and trusted community leaders are essential, as evidence shows that survivors frequently rely on these structures for support



7.5.3 Engage traditional, religious, and community leaders to prevent secondary harm

Traditional, religious, and community leaders can either reduce harm or intensify harm. Where community responses normalise blame, pressure survivors into silence, marriage, school withdrawal, or informal settlements, TFGBV becomes both an online and offline protection risk. Community leaders should therefore be engaged through women-led organisations and GBV actors so that prevention messaging protects survivors rather than controlling them.

- Train leaders on confidentiality, referral, survivor dignity, child protection, disability inclusion, and the risks of community retaliation.
- Link community actors to formal referral pathways rather than informal settlement of harmful cases involving threats, blackmail, doxxing, image-based abuse, stalking, or coercion.
- Use community dialogues, radio, local-language materials, and women-led facilitation to protect survivors from secondary harm.
- Clarify that online harassment, threats, blackmail, image-based abuse, doxxing, and impersonation are serious harms, not private misbehaviour.
- Community dialogues that aim to dismantle the root causes of reputation policing and male entitlement. These dialogues must be designed, facilitated, and led by local feminist and women-led organizations to ensure the narrative does not default to patriarchal "protectionism" where women are shielded by control, but instead focuses on women's bodily autonomy and unconditional right to public voice.

7.6 Recommendations for the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare

The research points to the need for national coordination. TFGBV cannot be addressed sustainably through isolated workshops, informal referrals, or one-off awareness campaigns. The ministry responsible for gender, child and social welfare, in collaboration with the Ministry of Information, Communication, Technology and Postal Services, justice-sector actors, education authorities, ICT actors, universities, GBV service providers, disability inclusion actors, and women-led civil society, should develop a coordinated national TFGBV response framework. This should connect policy, service delivery, prevention, reporting, evidence, data protection, platform accountability, and state-level implementation.

7.6.1 Lead a national TFGBV response framework or action plan

- Conduct a further country-wide study to better understand TFGBV in South Sudan
- Develop a national TFGBV action plan or policy framework that defines institutional roles, referral pathways, minimum service standards, and implementation responsibilities.
- Integrate TFGBV into national GBV strategies, referral SOPs, protection planning, safeguarding systems, and capacity-building packages.
- Ensure that cybercrime, data protection, child protection, GBV, education, and communications policy frameworks are aligned with survivor-centred TFGBV response.
- Make disability inclusion, youth protection, women-in-public-life safety, and state-level rollout explicit design requirements rather than optional add-ons.
- Establish independent oversight mechanisms to ensure that cybercrime laws (like the Computer Misuse Act) are not weaponized against women speaking out against the government or patriarchal norms.

7.6.2 Establish inter-agency coordination and service mapping

- Create an inter-agency TFGBV taskforce involving gender, justice, ICT, NCA/SS-CIRT, education, police, disability actors, universities, telecom actors, platform/digital safety partners, GBV actors, and women-led CSOs.
- Create a national referral map, service directory, and annual implementation review process.
- Use national coordination to harmonise training content, intake categories, evidence guidance, referral forms, and ethical data standards.

- Ensure that state-level and rural actors are included so that TFGBV response does not remain concentrated in Juba or among urban digitally connected populations.

7.6.3 Budget for implementation, not only policy drafting

- Allocate resources for staff training, data systems, legal aid, disability-accessible reporting, survivor-centred monitoring, referral coordination, and safe reporting infrastructure.
- Support implementation pilots at the state level and in selected schools, universities, one-stop centres and community GBV networks.
- Fund the integration of TFGBV into GBVIMS-style or equivalent national case-management systems while protecting survivor privacy.
- Develop public education campaigns that are locally grounded, linguistically accessible, and specifically address victim-blaming.

7.7 Recommendations for the Ministry of Information, Communication Technology and Postal Services

- Develop a National TFGBV Strategy. Actions include developing a 5-year National TFGBV Strategy, integrating TFGBV into digital transformation policies, and establishing a multi-stakeholder taskforce.
- Establish a national online safety center. Its functions could include a public reporting portal, a helpline, incident response, and digital evidence preservation.
- Develop Digital Safety Standards. Create guidelines on privacy, online consent, digital footprints, and AI safety.
- Invest in the national ICT infrastructure. Use this as a gateway to formalize partnerships with platform companies, as this would influence and guide the development of protocols for content removal, escalation procedures, and evidence preservation based on local context.
- Collaboration. Cross-ministry collaboration between the Ministry of ICT and Postal Services and the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare for both entities to empower each other on the intersectionality of ICT, Gender, and Violence.
- Building the technical capacity of ICT officers, investigators, and digital forensic experts on TFGBV to be in a position to handle such cases with dignity and preserve evidence.

7.8 Recommendations for the Communications Regulator/NCA and Cyber Incident-Response Structures

The communications regulator (NCA) and cyber incident-response structures occupy a strategic position because they can link technical response, telecom regulation, platform engagement, data systems, and policy development. However, the updated institutional gaps matrix indicates that technical complaint handling is not yet fully integrated with survivor-centred GBV support. Digital investigation and platform escalation also remain constrained by law, resources, localisation, and coordination gaps. The regulator should therefore serve as a bridge between digital harm reporting and survivor-centred GBV referral, rather than functioning solely as a technical complaint-handling body.

7.8.1 Develop a standard TFGBV taxonomy and complaint classification system

NCA/SS-CIRT should develop a standard TFGBV taxonomy for complaint intake and administrative data. This taxonomy should align with GBV terminology and should include online harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, image-based abuse, privacy invasion, doxxing, sextortion, cyberstalking, platform-based humiliation, and technology-enabled coercive control. A standard classification system would improve administrative data, reveal patterns, support referral, and enable anonymised public reporting without exposing survivors.

- Create complaint categories that distinguish between harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, image-based abuse, sextortion, doxxing, cyberstalking, and platform-based attacks.

- Link complaint categories to risk levels, referral options, evidence needs, and survivor support pathways.
- Use the taxonomy consistently across NCA/SS-CIRT, telecom escalation, GBV referral partners, and trend reporting.

7.8.2 Create a survivor-centred technical referral protocol

The regulator should not be expected to provide all psychosocial or legal services directly. However, it should have a formal protocol for identifying TFGBV complaints that require referral to GBV services, legal aid, police/cybercrime units, telecom operators, platform channels, universities, or child protection authorities. This protocol should be developed with women-led organisations and GBV service providers to ensure that technical responses do not unintentionally expose survivors or minimise the gendered nature of harm.

- Create a TFGBV complaint desk or focal point within the regulator/cyber-response structure.
- Train technical staff on GBV principles, confidentiality, trauma-informed communication, disability inclusion, and survivor consent.
- Develop a standard referral form that records the survivor's preferred contact method, immediate risk, type of digital harm, support needs, and consent for referral.
- Produce anonymised quarterly or annual TFGBV trend summaries to support policy, prevention, public education, and resource planning.

7.8.3 Strengthen platform and telecom escalation pathways

NCA/SS-CIRT should strengthen structured engagement with telecom providers, internet service providers, and platforms. Research consistently shows that the speed of content circulation intensifies harm, particularly when abusive content is redistributed via WhatsApp, Facebook, X/Twitter, TikTok, or other platforms. The regulator should therefore pursue formal escalation arrangements for urgent TFGBV cases while also protecting due process, privacy, and data protection principles.

- Establish trusted escalation channels for urgent impersonation, account takeover, harassment, threats, doxxing, and non-consensual intimate image circulation.
- Develop escalation agreements with telecoms, ISPs, and platforms for urgent harms and lawful data requests.
- Develop clear service standards for acknowledging complaints, making referrals, and following up with survivors or referring organisations.
- Use regulatory convening power to support national guidelines on online safety, survivor privacy, platform accountability, and lawful evidence handling.

7.9 Recommendations for Law Enforcement, Prosecutors, Legal Aid, and the Judiciary

Law enforcement, prosecutors, legal aid providers, and the judiciary remain central to accountability, but the evidence shows that current justice pathways are weak for TFGBV. Digital cases may be dismissed as personal disputes, minor online conflicts, or reputation issues. They may also be poorly documented, inadequately investigated, or weakened by the absence of clear digital evidence standards. Survivors face mistrust, fear of blame, fear of exposure, slow response, and concern that reporting will not lead to meaningful remedy. Justice-sector reform should therefore focus on legal clarity, specialist capacity, evidence handling, and survivor-sensitive procedure.

7.9.1 Develop specialised TFGBV training for justice actors

- Train police, cyber units, prosecutors, magistrates, judges, and legal aid providers on TFGBV as a form of gender-based violence, not simply a private dispute or online argument.
- Include common forms of digital harm, the online-offline continuum, survivor-centred interviewing, privacy and confidentiality, disability inclusion, child protection, and the risks of victim-blaming.

- Establish confidential reporting procedures and, where possible, female- or survivor-centred focal points.
- Develop protocols for urgent risk where online threats, doxxing, stalking, or image-based abuse may escalate to offline harm.

7.9.2 Establish digital evidence standards that protect survivors

South Sudan should develop practical standards for the collection, preservation, authentication and presentation of digital evidence in TFGBV cases. These standards should be simple enough for frontline actors to understand but robust enough to support legal accountability. They should also prevent harmful practices, such as unnecessary circulation of private content within police stations, court files, or informal networks.

- Create a national digital evidence protocol for TFGBV cases, including chain-of-custody principles, secure storage, survivor consent, and restricted access.
- Use digital evidence checklists and survivor-safe documentation guidance at police, legal aid, and GBV service points.
- Train police and legal aid actors on when to refer questions about evidence to specialised digital investigators or cyber units.
- Develop survivor-friendly guidance on what information may be useful for reporting without requiring survivors to repeatedly display harmful content.
- Ensure that courts and prosecutors can handle digital evidence in ways that maintain dignity, privacy, and admissibility.

7.9.3 Strengthen legal guidance, legal aid, and survivor-sensitive proceedings

Existing legal provisions may not clearly address non-consensual image sharing, sextortion, cyberstalking, impersonation, doxxing, digital coercive control, or platform-enabled harassment. Legal reform should therefore be linked to operational guidance, legal aid, survivor privacy, and court procedures that prevent further stigma or repeated disclosure.

- Develop legal guidance on framing TFGBV within the Cybercrime and Computer Misuse Act 2026, privacy, GBV, child protection, and evidence law.
- Create model case-handling protocols and evidence presentation standards for prosecutors, legal aid providers, and courts.
- Fund legal aid pathways for young women, students, women with disabilities, women leaders, and women in public life.
- Use closed or protected procedures where appropriate and maintain dignity in handling sensitive digital content.
- Advocate for operationalisation of cybercrime and the Computer Misuse Act 2026, data protection, digital evidence, and survivor-protection frameworks.

7.9.4 Improve survivor trust in justice pathways

Trust cannot be built through legal reform alone. Survivors need to see that institutions respond without blame, maintain confidentiality, protect against retaliation, and provide clear updates. Justice institutions should therefore create confidential reporting options, female focal points where possible, legal accompaniment through women-led organisations, and procedures for cases involving students, women with disabilities, women in public life, young women, and minors.

7.10 Recommendations for the ICT Sector, Telecoms, Platforms, and Digital Safety Actors Informed on the Cybercrimes and Computer Misuse Act 2026.

The ICT sector is not peripheral to the TFGBV response. It is part of the environment in which harm is produced, circulated, reported, mitigated, and documented. The updated matrix shows that telecom operators, ISPs, platforms, cybersecurity actors, tech hubs, and digital rights organisations can support escalation, account safety, complaint routing, privacy protection, user education, lawful evidence handling, and anonymous reporting. However, their work must be linked to survivor-centred GBV practice so that

technical response does not replace psychosocial care, legal referral, or protection planning.

7.10.1 Create telecom and ISP accountability standards

- Appoint TFGBV/digital safety focal points within telecom and ISP structures.
- Create privacy-sensitive escalation routes for urgent cases referred by NCA/SS-CIRT, GBV actors, or law enforcement.
- Agree on response timelines and lawful data-sharing protocols with the regulator and justice actors.
- Train customer care and compliance teams on survivor confidentiality, non-blaming practice, and safe referral.
- Provide public guidance for users on reporting abuse, protecting accounts, SIM safety, blocking, account recovery, and safer online communication.

7.10.2 Integrate survivor-centred standards into cybersecurity and digital safety work

- Adopt survivor-centered technical assistance standards for TFGBV cases.
- Offer practical digital safety clinics, account security support, incident triage, and safe reporting guidance through trusted referral pathways.
- Develop a vetted digital safety referral roster that can support GBV actors, universities, schools, and community organisations.
- Train ICT responders on trauma-informed practice, confidentiality, gender sensitivity, disability inclusion, and the gendered dynamics of online abuse.
- Contribute technical expertise to anonymous reporting pilots, evidence-preservation protocols, and public education campaigns.

7.10.3 Strengthen platform reporting and local escalation

Platform governance should be made more locally responsive. Survivors in South Sudan may not know how to report abuse, may lack confidence that platforms will act, or may be unable to navigate reporting tools because of language, literacy, connectivity, disability, or evidence-preservation barriers. Platforms and digital safety partners should therefore support local-language reporting guidance, trusted flagger arrangements, emergency escalation routes, and collaboration with women-led civil society organisations and the regulator.

- Develop accessible local-language reporting guidance for Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, X/Twitter, email, and other commonly used digital spaces.
- Support trusted flagger or urgent escalation arrangements for impersonation, image-based abuse, threats, harassment, doxxing, account compromise, and repeated impersonation.
- Develop localised harmful-content taxonomies that recognise South Sudanese language, coded abuse, gendered slurs, and context-specific risk.
- Improve user-facing guidance on preserving evidence while reducing exposure to harmful content.
- Support research and data-sharing partnerships that protect privacy and do not expose survivors.

7.10.4 Support public digital safety campaigns

- Use SMS, radio, social media, and community channels to share prevention messages on consent, privacy, account security, blocking, reporting, bystander responsibility, and help-seeking.
- Co-design tools and awareness materials with GBV actors, women-led CSOs, student groups, rural users, and disability representatives.
- Ensure that digital safety messages do not shift responsibility onto women and girls for violence committed against them.

7.10.5 Recommendations for the Cybercrimes and Computer Misuse Act 2026

A particular strength of the legislation is its recognition of digital evidence and the investigative mechanisms it supports. Authorities have powers, subject to the relevant legal procedures, to search, seize and examine data, while courts can compel the production of data and authorise real-time interception of communications. The recognition of digital forensic experts is also significant because TFGBV cases frequently depend on evidence such as messages, images, account information, traffic data and other electronic records.

Service providers are required to retain user and traffic data for 180 days and assist law enforcement during investigations. Nevertheless, these mechanisms require specialised institutional capacity. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to establish specialised, gender-sensitive police and investigative units dedicated to combating TFGBV. These officers should receive training in digital investigation techniques and evidence preservation, alongside vital training on communicating with survivors in a respectful, empathetic, and non-judgmental manner. This nuanced approach is vital, as survivors often experience feelings of shame, fear, or vulnerability when reporting online abuse. The rapid preservation of evidence is paramount, especially in cases involving cyberstalking, threats, cyber extortion, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, where digital information can be easily erased or altered.

There is a need to enhance the accountability of technology companies and internet service providers. While the current law requires service providers to retain data, report abuses, and cooperate with investigations, more explicit procedures are necessary for handling serious TFGBV cases. Authorities should establish clear, practical guidelines for addressing issues like revenge pornography, non-consensual intimate images, cyberstalking, and other online sexual and gender-based abuses. These guidelines should clarify how survivors can report harmful content, how to preserve evidence, and how to act swiftly to prevent further spread of abusive material. Privacy protections for survivors should be maintained throughout this process. The goal is not to remove harmful content outright but to protect survivors and preserve evidence for investigation and prosecution of perpetrators.

Cross-border cooperation is another important area for strengthening the implementation of cybercrime legislation. TFGBV can be perpetrated by individuals located outside South Sudan, while harmful content, accounts and digital evidence may be hosted in other jurisdictions, as demonstrated through one of our focus group participants. The 2026 law provides mechanisms for mutual legal assistance, spontaneous information sharing, expedited preservation of data and certain forms of cross-border access to stored information. South Sudan should therefore develop practical procedures for using these mechanisms specifically in TFGBV cases. This could include designated focal points within law enforcement and prosecution services, standard procedures for urgent requests to preserve digital evidence, and strengthened cooperation with relevant regional and international authorities. Cross-border mechanisms are particularly important where perpetrators target South Sudanese women and girls from abroad or use platforms and services located outside the country.

Implementation of cybercrimes and computer misuse legislation should be integrated into existing GBV prevention, referral and survivor-support systems rather than treated exclusively as a criminal justice issue. Survivors may face stigma, intimidation, fear of exposure and limited knowledge of available legal remedies, which can discourage reporting. Civil society organisations can therefore provide confidential reporting mechanisms and act as trusted intermediaries between survivors and formal justice institutions through:

- Creating safe spaces: Allow trusted community groups and civil society organisations (CSOs) to act as confidential bridges between survivors and the justice system.
- Providing holistic care: Integrate cybercrime support into existing programs for gender-based violence, ensuring survivors get psychological first aid while investigations happen.
- Educating the public: Run community safety campaigns so everyone, especially young women and girls, is aware that online harassment is a grave crime, and that help is available.

The priority should therefore be to move from the existence of a legal framework to effective implementation through specialised enforcement,

digital forensic capacity, accountable service providers, cross-border cooperation, confidential reporting mechanisms, survivor-centred procedures and sustained public awareness

7.11 Recommendations for Education Authorities, Schools, Universities, and Higher Education Institutions

Educational institutions require dedicated attention because girls, students, and young women are central to the research population and because digital technologies are increasingly embedded in learning, social life, activism, and professional development. Schools and universities should not treat TFGBV only as a disciplinary problem, a cyberbullying issue, or an ICT misuse issue. It should be integrated into safeguarding, campus GBV policy, student welfare, digital literacy, curriculum, research ethics, ICT services, and academic support systems.

7.11.1 Integrate digital safety into school safeguarding and curricula

- Integrate age-appropriate digital safety, consent, online harassment prevention, bystander responsibility, and reporting into school safeguarding systems.
- Train teachers, safeguarding leads, and counsellors on a survivor-centred response to cyberbullying, image-based abuse, grooming, blackmail, peer-led harassment, and abuse in class messaging groups.
- Create confidential referral routes from schools to psychosocial support, one-stop centres, child protection, digital safety support, and legal services.
- Develop school digital safety codes of conduct for students and staff.
- Use clubs, assemblies, parent meetings, and local-language materials for prevention without victim-blaming.
- Ensure procedures for minors prioritise child protection, confidentiality, consent, and do-no-harm.
- Apply transformational approaches to digital literacy amongst girls and boys, and promote women in STEM.

7.11.2 Adopt campus TFGBV policies linked to GBV and student welfare systems

Each university should adopt or revise its campus GBV and digital safety policy to explicitly recognise TFGBV. The policy should define TFGBV, prohibit online harassment, threats, impersonation, non-consensual sharing of private content, cyberstalking, digital blackmail, and technology-enabled coercion, and set out confidential reporting and referral procedures. The policy should cover students, staff, lecturers, administrators, student leaders, online learning groups, and university-affiliated digital spaces.

- Create confidential and anonymous TFGBV reporting routes through student welfare, GBV focal points, counselling services, or trusted digital platforms.
- Ensure that disciplinary processes do not replace survivor support, psychosocial care, or legal referral where needed.
- Appoint trained campus TFGBV focal persons or small response teams within student affairs, counselling, security, and ICT departments.
- Develop rules for safe management of class WhatsApp groups, online learning platforms, student association pages, and university-affiliated digital spaces.

7.11.3 Build digital safety education into orientation and curricula

- Introduce a mandatory digital safety orientation for first-year students, including guidance on how to seek help on campus.
- Train student leaders, peer educators, club leaders, lecturers, ICT staff, and counsellors to identify TFGBV and refer survivors safely.
- Include TFGBV case studies in law, ICT, social work, education, journalism, gender studies, and public health courses.
- Develop peer-led campaigns that challenge victim-blaming and encourage safe bystander action.

- Support women-in-ICT retention measures so that fear, harassment, and reputational harm do not push young women out of digital participation.

7.11.4 Establish university-linked survivor support and digital rights clinics

Universities can play a practical role in service innovation by developing supervised digital rights and GBV referral clinics. These clinics could connect law students, ICT students, social work students, counselling services, women-led organisations, and NCA/SS-CIRT under professional supervision. Their purpose would not be to replace formal institutions, but to provide accessible first-line guidance, referral, rights education, and community outreach.

- Create campus digital rights/GBV clinics that provide non-judgmental guidance and referral for students affected by TFGBV.
- Link counselling services with trusted GBV One-Stop Centres, legal aid providers, NCA/SS-CIRT, telecom focal points, and digital rights actors.
- Develop academic accommodations for survivors whose studies are disrupted by TFGBV, including flexible deadlines and confidential support planning.
- Support student-led research on TFGBV while enforcing ethical safeguards, informed consent, and safe data management.
- Partner with telecoms, ICT hubs, and women-led CSOs to deliver campus digital safety events and practical reporting guidance.

7.12 Recommendations for Disability Inclusion and Accessible Services

Disability inclusion should not be treated solely as a cross-cutting statement. The updated institutional gaps matrix shows that reporting tools may lack interpreters, accessible formats, assistive communication, mobility-sensitive access, or disability-disaggregated monitoring. Women and girls with disabilities may experience TFGBV and service exclusion at the same time. Institutions should therefore build accessibility into reporting, referral, counselling, legal aid, education, digital safety, and monitoring systems from the start.

- Co-design accessible TFGBV reporting, referral, and awareness tools with persons with disabilities and representative organisations.
- Ensure sign language, accessible formats, safe transport referrals, assistive communication, and disability-sensitive counselling where needed.
- Audit reporting channels for accessibility, including one-stop centres, hotlines, NCA/SS-CIRT complaint channels, telecom complaint systems, police reporting desks, and university reporting mechanisms.
- Train GBV, telecom, police, university, justice, and ICT focal points on disability-sensitive response.
- Include disability representatives in the national TFGBV taskforce, validation processes, and tool design.
- Include disability-disaggregated data in ethical monitoring while protecting confidentiality and avoiding unnecessary exposure.

7.13 Data, Monitoring, Research, and Learning Recommendations

A recurring institutional weakness is that TFGBV is not consistently visible in institutional data. Weak documentation means weak policy prioritisation. However, data collection must not become extractive or unsafe. The goal should be to build ethical, anonymised, disaggregated, and useful evidence systems that improve services without exposing survivors. The KII coding workbook offers useful analytic salience indicators, but such counts should not be treated as population prevalence estimates, especially when samples skew toward connected or institutional perspectives.

- Create a standard TFGBV data module for GBV services, NCA/SS-CIRT, universities, schools, CSOs, legal aid providers, and other service providers.

- Develop standard TFGBV indicators and ethical data collection protocols for South Sudan.
- Disaggregate data by age group, disability, location, student status, platform or tool, type of harm, and broad perpetrator relationship where safely available.
- Avoid storing harmful images, videos, or identifying details unless legally necessary and supported by secure protocols, restricted access, and informed consent.
- Produce periodic institutional learning reports that identify trends, referral gaps, response times, service needs, and state-level disparities.
- Use participatory review with survivors, disability groups, student groups, and women-led organisations to assess whether services are trusted and accessible.
- Clearly state sampling limits in research and avoid causal or prevalence claims not supported by the data.
- Develop research ethics guidance for future TFGBV studies, including trauma-informed data collection, referral information, informed consent, and safe storage.

7.14 Recommendations for Funders, UN Agencies, and Humanitarian Coordination Structures

The recommendations above require sustained resourcing. The updated institutional gaps matrix indicates that funding can remain short-term, workshop-based, or concentrated in urban areas. It also shows that the multi-sector needs exceed current self-funded civil society efforts, especially in legal aid, curriculum pilots, platform-regulator convening, grassroots digital literacy, safe reporting infrastructure, digital evidence capacity, and forensic support. Donors, UN agencies, and humanitarian coordination structures should therefore support durable institutional systems rather than treating TFGBV as an add-on activity.

- Resource more research on TFGBV in South Sudan to generate more evidence
- Fund multi-year institutional strengthening rather than one-off sensitisation activities.
- Provide core, unrestricted, and flexible funding directly to South Sudanese grassroots feminist organizations.
- Recognize women-led and women's rights organizations as the primary experts and drivers of systemic change, not only service implementers or gap-fillers.
- Resource feminist movements to independently hold both the state and tech platforms accountable.
- Support integration of TFGBV into GBV case management, education, safeguarding, ICT accountability, justice-sector reform, disability inclusion, and platform accountability.
- Resource state-level pilots, rural outreach, disability inclusion, survivor-centred monitoring, and university/school prevention programmes.
- Use flexible funding for referral systems, training, data systems, legal aid, digital evidence capacity, and safe reporting infrastructure.
- Require coordination between GBV, ICT, telecom, education, disability, community, and justice partners.
- Support evaluation of what works in South Sudan rather than relying only on imported models.

7.15 Institutional Gaps, Weaknesses, and Recommendations Matrix

The matrix below translates the analysis into a practical implementation tool. It uses functional institutional labels rather than naming individual service providers. It also separates weaknesses, recommendations, implementation actions, and priority timing so that stakeholders can discuss responsibilities without exposing particular interviewees or service providers.

Institution / Sector	Weaknesses and Gaps	Specific Recommendations	Implementation Actions
GBV One-Stop Centres	• TFGBV is not consistently captured in intake forms, GBVIMS-style tools, or routine case notes. • KII synthesis points to fragmented survivor support, with women often relying on informal networks, blocking/reporting tools, or CSO accompaniment before reaching formal services. • Digital abuse may be treated as emotional abuse, cyberbullying, or interpersonal conflict rather than a GBV case requiring a specialised response.	• Add TFGBV screening and non-graphic coding categories to intake, referral, and case-management tools. • Include core harm types identified in the KII synthesis: harassment/trolling, image-based abuse, impersonation/account abuse, cyberstalking, doxxing, and extortion. • Train case workers on digital safety planning, safe documentation, confidentiality, survivor consent, and referral thresholds.	• Nominate a TFGBV focal point in each centre. • Use a minimum data module that records the type of digital harm, platform/tool, risk level, and referral pathway without storing sensitive images or videos unnecessarily. • Create warm referral links to NCA/SS-CIRT, legal aid, police/cyber units, telecom focal points, women-led CSOs, and trusted digital safety actors.
Health and Psychosocial Service Points	• Counselling models are often designed for offline GBV and may not fully address reputational harm, public shaming, repeated exposure, fear of content resurfacing, or pressure to self-censor. • KII synthesis links TFGBV with anxiety, shame, withdrawal from public voice, relationship stress, family/community pressure, and fear of offline consequences. • Weak follow-up systems may leave survivors unsupported where abuse continues after the first report.	• Develop TFGBV-informed psychosocial protocols that recognise anxiety, shame, fear, self-censorship, social withdrawal, and reputational harm linked to digital abuse. • Include online safety questions in psychosocial assessment where safe and appropriate. • Provide confidential follow-up options that account for survivor preferences on phone, WhatsApp, email, or in-person contact.	• Train counsellors on digital trauma and the online-offline violence continuum. • Create referral scripts explaining survivor choices, evidence risks, platform-reporting limits, and legal options. • Ensure counsellors do not request, save, or circulate harmful content unless legally necessary and safely managed.
Safe Houses and Women-Friendly Spaces	• Physical safety planning often omits digital risks such as location-sharing, device access, account monitoring, abusive messaging, and partner/family surveillance. • KIIs describe online disputes and threats moving into offline conflict, family/community pressure, relationship strain, and social exclusion. • Survivors may remain reachable by perpetrators through phones, social media, messaging groups, or shared devices.	• Integrate digital safety assessment into protection planning. • Create procedures for urgent risk where online threats, doxxing, impersonation, or image-based abuse may lead to offline harm. • Provide safe referral for account security, device safety, platform reporting, evidence guidance, and legal support.	• Use a simple digital safety checklist at intake. • Develop safe communication plans with survivors, including phone, WhatsApp, email, and trusted-contact preferences. • Partner with trusted digital safety actors for account recovery, privacy settings, device checks, and safe evidence preservation.
Women-Led CSOs and Community GBV Actors	• High community trust but limited formal authority, staffing, and resources for TFGBV response. • KII synthesis shows civil society and women leaders often fill gaps through awareness, documentation, accompaniment, advocacy, and informal peer support. • Community awareness is uneven, and victim-blaming, reputation policing, and pressure to stay silent remain barriers to help-seeking.	• Mainstream TFGBV into GBV prevention, outreach, case accompaniment, advocacy, and referral programming. • Lead community dialogues that frame TFGBV as violence and rights abuse, not as improper female behaviour online. • Develop survivor peer-support and accompaniment models for reporting, legal aid, psychosocial referral, and platform escalation.	• Formalise CSO roles in national and state referral pathways. • Fund community focal points, peer-support networks, and survivor accompaniment. • Produce local-language awareness materials on consent, privacy, reporting, safe evidence preservation, and protection against victim-blaming.

Institution / Sector	Weaknesses and Gaps	Specific Recommendations	Implementation Actions
Ministry Responsible for Gender / National GBV Coordination	• TFGBV is not yet fully anchored in national GBV policy, coordination, and service-delivery systems. • KII synthesis highlights legal/ policy gaps, curriculum gaps, survivor-support gaps, and platform-governance gaps as connected cross-sector priorities. • State-level, rural, youth, and disability-inclusive implementation risks being under-resourced or left behind.	• Lead a national TFGBV response framework or action plan with clear roles, referral pathways, and minimum service standards. • Integrate TFGBV into national GBV strategies, referral SOPs, protection planning, safeguarding systems, and capacity-building packages. • Ensure disability inclusion, youth protection, women-in-public-life safety, and state-level rollout are explicit design requirements.	• Convene an inter-agency TFGBV task force with gender, justice, ICT, NCA/ SS-CIRT, education, police, disability actors, universities, and women-led CSOs. • Create a national referral map, service directory, and annual implementation review. • Budget for implementation, training, data systems, legal aid, and survivor-centred monitoring, not only policy drafting.
Communications Regulator / NCA / SS-CIRT	• Technical complaint handling is not yet fully connected to survivor-centred GBV support. • KII synthesis suggests the online-safety mandate exists but lacks a specific TFGBV framework, common taxonomy, gender-sensitive investigation capacity, and formal platform escalation routes. • Digital investigation and platform escalation remain constrained by law, resources, localisation, and coordination gaps.	• Create a TFGBV complaint classification system covering harassment, threats, impersonation, account takeover, image-based abuse, sextortion, doxxing, and cyberstalking. • Establish a survivor-centred complaint desk or focal point with referral protocols to GBV, legal, police, telecom, and platform actors. • Use regulatory convening power to negotiate local or regional platform focal points and rapid escalation pathways for urgent harms.	• Train technical staff on GBV principles, confidentiality, trauma-informed communication, disability inclusion, and survivor consent. • Develop escalation agreements with telecoms, ISPs, and platforms for urgent harms and lawful data requests. • Establishment of a digital forensic lab to handle digital evidence and investigation. • Publish anonymised trend summaries to support policy, prevention, public education, and resource planning.
Telecommunications Operators / Mobile Network Operators / ISPs	• TFGBV-related issues may be treated as ordinary customer-service complaints rather than safety risks. • KII synthesis points to messaging tools, email/work tools, account misuse, SIM-related risks, and harmful communications as part of the TFGBV ecosystem, not only social media posts. • Weak survivor-centred escalation channels and limited transparency on complaint handling, response times, and referral pathways remain concerns.	• Appoint TFGBV/digital security focus within telecom and ISP structures. • Create privacy-sensitive escalation routes for urgent cases referred by NCA/ SS-CIRT, GBV actors, or law enforcement. • Provide public user guidance on reporting abuse, protecting accounts, SIM safety, blocking, account recovery, and safer online communication.	• Agree on response timelines and lawful data-sharing protocols with the regulator and justice actors. • Train customer care and compliance teams on survivor confidentiality, non-blaming practice, and safe referral. • Support SMS/radio/digital literacy campaigns on TFGBV prevention, bystander responsibility, and reporting. • Improve reporting channels, including toll-free numbers, SMS, and USSD options for survivors to lodge complaints anonymously. • Content moderation collaboration with digital platforms to detect and remove harmful materials

Institution / Sector	Weaknesses and Gaps	Specific Recommendations	Implementation Actions
ICT Sector, Cybersecurity Actors, Tech Hubs, and Digital Rights Organisations	• Technical response capacity exists in pockets but is not consistently integrated with GBV survivor-support systems. • KII technology stakeholders propose anonymous reporting and digital-safety tools, but stress that tools must protect trust, language access, anonymity, dignity, and evidence integrity. • Limited structured engagement with women-led CSOs, disability actors, rural users, student groups, and universities weakens adoption.	• Adopt survivor-centred technical assistance standards for TFGBV cases. • Offer practical digital safety clinics, account security support, incident triage, and safe reporting guidance through trusted referral pathways. • Co-design tools and awareness materials with GBV actors, women-led CSOs, student groups, rural users, and disability representatives.	• Develop a vetted digital safety referral roster. • Train ICT responders on trauma-informed practice, confidentiality, gender sensitivity, and disability inclusion. • Contribute technical expertise to anonymous reporting pilots, evidence-preservation protocols, and public education campaigns.
Social Media Platforms and Digital Service Providers	• Reporting systems may be difficult for survivors to navigate, especially where language, literacy, connectivity, disability, or evidence-preservation barriers exist. • KII synthesis repeatedly identifies Facebook, X/Twitter, WhatsApp, and TikTok as important spaces/tools of harm, while localisation, coded-language detection, and takedown remain weak. • Content takedown may occur without survivor support, legal accountability, local referral, or transparent outcomes.	• Develop accessible local-language reporting guidance for common platforms and messaging applications. • Support trusted flagger or urgent escalation arrangements for impersonation, image-based abuse, threats, harassment, doxxing, and account compromise. • Develop localised harmful-content taxonomies that recognise South Sudanese language, coded abuse, gendered slurs, and context-specific risk.	• Partner with NCA/SS-CIRT, telecom actors, women-led CSOs, universities, and digital rights organizations. • Improve user-facing guidance on preserving evidence while reducing exposure to harmful content. • Strengthen response to non-consensual intimate-image abuse, manipulated images, coordinated attacks, and repeated impersonation.
Law Enforcement and Cybercrime Units	• Digital abuse may be dismissed as a personal dispute, minor online conflict, or reputation issue. • KII synthesis stresses that law reform will not protect survivors without trained investigators, digital forensics, survivor-centred evidence handling, and gender-sensitive reporting desks. • Survivors may mistrust police due to fear of blame, exposure, slow response, weak confidentiality, or poor case outcomes.	• Create specialised TFGBV training for police, cyber units, and frontline reporting desks. • Establish confidential reporting procedures and female/survivor-centered focal points where possible. • Develop protocols for urgent risk where online threats, doxxing, stalking, or image-based abuse may escalate to offline harm.	• Train officers on non-blaming interviewing, privacy, survivor consent, disability inclusion, and child protection. • Use digital evidence checklists, chain-of-custody procedures, and survivor-safe documentation guidance. • Coordinate with one-stop centres, legal aid, NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, universities, and women-led CSOs.
Prosecutors, Legal Aid, and Judiciary	• Existing legal provisions may not clearly address non-consensual image sharing, sextortion, cyberstalking, impersonation, doxxing, digital coercive control, or platform-enabled harassment. • KII legal and regulatory perspectives point to pending cybercrime/data-protection reforms but also to weak operational capacity, evidence standards, and survivor-sensitive proceedings. • Legal processes may expose survivors to further stigma, repeated disclosure, or circulation of sensitive digital content.	• Develop legal guidance on framing TFGBV within cybercrime and computer misuse, privacy, GBV, child protection, and evidence law. • Provide specialised training for prosecutors, legal aid lawyers, magistrates, and judges. • Ensure survivor privacy, closed or protected procedures where appropriate, and dignity in handling sensitive digital content.	• Create model case-handling protocols and evidence presentation standards. • Fund legal aid pathways for young women, students, women with disabilities, women leaders, and women in public life. • Advocate for the enactment and operationalisation of the Cybercrime and Computer Misuse Act, data protection, digital evidence, and survivor-protection frameworks.

Institution / Sector	Weaknesses and Gaps	Specific Recommendations	Implementation Actions
Education Authorities and Schools	• Digital safety, consent and online abuse are not consistently embedded in safeguarding policy or curricula. • KII synthesis identifies curriculum and digital-safety gaps as recurrent barriers, especially for girls, young people, rural learners, and those with uneven digital literacy. • Teachers may lack training, capacity, and skills to respond to cyberbullying, image-based abuse, grooming, blackmail, peer-led harassment, or abuse in class messaging groups.	• Integrate age-appropriate digital safety, consent, online harassment prevention, bystander responsibility, and reporting into school safeguarding systems. • Train teachers, safeguarding leads, and counsellors on a survivor-centred response to online abuse. • Create confidential referral routes from schools to psychosocial support, one-stop centres, child protection, digital safety support, and legal services.	• Develop school digital safety codes of conduct for students and staff. • Use clubs, assemblies, parent meetings, and local-language materials for prevention without victim-blaming. • Ensure procedures for minors prioritise child protection, confidentiality, consent, and do-no-harm.
Universities and Tertiary Institutions	• Student-facing TFGBV policies and reporting channels are often absent, unclear, or not trusted. • KII academic/ICT perspectives suggest TFGBV is often discussed through ethics or professional conduct, but standalone modules, anonymous reporting, and trained personnel are limited. • Young women may withdraw from digital participation, classes, leadership, ICT pathways, or public engagement due to fear and reputational harm.	• Adopt campus TFGBV policies linked to sexual harassment, safeguarding, student welfare, and disciplinary procedures. • Create confidential and anonymous student reporting channels with survivor-centred referral pathways. • Include digital safety orientation and mandatory TFGBV modules for first-year students, student leaders, lecturers, ICT staff, and counsellors.	• Establish campus digital safety focal points or small response teams. • Partner with NCA/SS-CIRT, telecoms, ICT hubs, women-led CSOs, and digital rights actors for clinics and campaigns. • Create student peer educator programs, women-in-ICT retention measures, and digital rights/GBV clinics where feasible.
Disability Inclusion Actors and Accessible Service Providers	• TFGBV response systems are not consistently accessible for women and girls with disabilities. • KII synthesis links heightened vulnerability with disability, student status, rural/urban divides, uneven digital literacy, and women's unequal ICT access. • Reporting tools may lack interpreters, accessible formats, assistive communication, mobility-sensitive access, or disability-disaggregated monitoring.	• Co-design accessible TFGBV reporting, referral, and awareness tools with persons with disabilities and representative organisations. • Ensure sign language, accessible formats, safe transport referrals, assistive communication, and disability-sensitive counselling where needed. • Include disability-disaggregated data in ethical monitoring while protecting confidentiality and avoiding unnecessary exposure.	• Audit reporting channels for accessibility. • Train GBV, telecom, police, university, and ICT focal points on disability-sensitive response. • Include disability representatives in the national TFGBV taskforce, validation processes, and tool design.
Traditional, Religious, and Community Leaders	• Community responses may normalise victim-blaming or pressure survivors into silence, marriage, withdrawal from school, or informal settlements. • KII synthesis frames patriarchal norms, reputation policing, and backlash against women's public voice as drivers of online abuse and self-censorship. • Online harm can trigger offline retaliation, family conflict, relationship strain or social exclusion.	• Engage leaders in prevention messaging that condemns TFGBV and rejects victim-blaming. • Clarify that online harassment, threats, blackmail, image-based abuse, doxxing, and impersonation are serious harms, not private misbehaviour. • Link community actors to formal referral pathways rather than informal settlement of harmful cases.	• Use community dialogues, radio, and local-language materials. • Train leaders on confidentiality, referral, survivor dignity, child protection, and disability inclusion. • Coordinate with women-led CSOs to protect survivors from secondary harm and community retaliation.

Institution / Sector	Weaknesses and Gaps	Specific Recommendations	Implementation Actions
National Statistics, Research and Data Actors	• TFGBV evidence remains fragmented across KIIs, surveys, administrative data, service-provider records, platform data, and regulatory complaints. • The KII coding workbook offers useful analytic salience indicators but should not be treated as prevalence, especially where samples skew toward connected or institutional perspectives. • Limited standard indicators, disaggregation, and safe data-sharing protocols constrain planning and trend analysis.	• Develop standard TFGBV indicators and ethical data collection protocols for South Sudan. • Disaggregate data by age, disability, location, student status, platform/tool, type of harm, and broad perpetrator relationship where safely available. • Produce periodic anonymised trend reports to guide policy and programming while protecting survivors.	• Create a shared minimum dataset for GBV actors, NCA/SS-CIRT, universities, CSOs, and service providers. • Use trauma-informed research ethics, consent, referral information, secure storage, and strict limits on storing harmful content. • Clearly state sampling limits and avoid causal or prevalence claims not supported by the data.
Donors, UN Agencies, and Humanitarian Coordination Structures	• Funding can remain short-term, workshop-based, or concentrated in urban areas. • KII synthesis points to multi-sector needs that exceed current self-funded civil society efforts, including legal aid, curriculum pilots, platform-regulator convening, grassroots literacy, safe reporting infrastructure, and forensic capacity. • TFGBV may be treated as an add-on rather than integrated into GBV, education, child protection, digital inclusion, disability inclusion, and rule-of-law programming.	• Fund multi-year institutional strengthening rather than one-off sensitisation activities. • Support integration of TFGBV into GBV case management, education, safeguarding, ICT accountability, justice-sector reform, and platform accountability. • Resource state-level pilots, disability inclusion, survivor-centred monitoring, and university/school prevention programmes.	• Use flexible funding for referral systems, training, data systems, legal aid, digital evidence capacity, and safe reporting infrastructure. • Require coordination between GBV, ICT, telecom, education, disability, community, and justice partners. • Support evaluation of what works in South Sudan rather than relying only on imported models.

7.16 Implementation Roadmap

The recommendations above should be implemented through a phased approach. This is important because South Sudan's institutional environment is resource-constrained and because TFGBV response requires coordination across sectors that may not yet routinely work together. The roadmap below should therefore be read as a sequencing tool rather than as a rigid timetable.

Phase	Priority actions	Lead coordination and partners
Immediate priorities (0-6 months)	Create or update national TFGBV coordination arrangements; revise GBV intake and referral tools; nominate TFGBV focal points in one-stop centres, NCA/SS-CIRT, universities, and police/cyber units; begin survivor-centred training; audit reporting channels for disability access; develop local-language awareness messages that reject victim-blaming.	Ministry responsible for gender, child, and social welfare, NCA/SS-CIRT, GBV actors, women-led CSOs, police/cyber units, universities, disability inclusion actors, and donors.
Short-term priorities (6-18 months)	Develop a national referral map and service directory; establish telecom/ISP escalation routes; train legal aid and justice actors in digital evidence; introduce school and university digital safety codes; create campus reporting channels and peer educator programmes; develop safe-house digital safety checklists; build a vetted digital safety referral roster.	Gender coordination structures, education authorities, telecom operators, ISPs, platforms, legal aid providers, universities, ICT/digital rights actors, safe houses, and community leaders.

Phase	Priority actions	Lead coordination and partners
Medium-term priorities (18-36 months)	Operationalise national TFGBV action plan; integrate TFGBV data module into GBVIMS-style systems; support state-level pilots; develop curriculum modules; publish anonymised trend reports; strengthen legal and policy frameworks; evaluate what works in South Sudan and scale effective models.	National taskforce, statistics and research actors, ministries, universities, donors, UN agencies, justice sector, NCA/ SS-CIRT, and state-level coordination structures.
Continuous cross-cutting requirements	Maintain survivor consent, confidentiality, do-no-harm practice, disability inclusion, child protection, safe evidence handling, local language access, rural/state-level inclusion, and protection against victim-blaming across all phases.	All implementing institutions and coordination partners.

7.16 Indicators for Monitoring Institutional Progress

Monitoring should focus not only on the number of activities delivered, but also on whether survivors experience response systems as safer, clearer, and more useful. Suggested indicators include:

- Number of institutions with TFGBV categories integrated into intake, case management, complaint, or safeguarding systems.
- Number and percentage of GBV, cyber-response, police, legal aid, judiciary, university, school, telecom, and ICT staff trained on survivor-centred TFGBV response.
- Number of institutions with nominated TFGBV focal points or response teams.
- Number of TFGBV cases referred through formal pathways with survivor consent.
- Average response time for urgent technical referrals involving impersonation, account takeover, threats, doxxing, or harmful content circulation.
- Percentage of survivors who report being treated with confidentiality, dignity, and without blame.
- Number of universities with campus TFGBV policy, confidential reporting channels, digital safety orientation, and digital rights/GBV referral support.
- Number of schools or education programmes integrating age-appropriate digital safety, consent, online harassment prevention, and reporting guidance.
- Availability of disability-accessible reporting and referral channels, including accessible formats, interpreters where needed, and mobility-sensitive arrangements.
- Publication of anonymised trend reports or learning briefs that inform policy and programming without exposing survivors.
- Evidence that rural and state-level actors are included, rather than concentrating all response capacity in Juba.
- Evidence that telecom, ISP, platform, and digital safety actors are participating in formal escalation, prevention, and referral systems.
- Evidence that donor or UN funding supports multi-year institutional strengthening rather than only short-term workshops.

7.17 Conclusion

The institutional evidence shows that TFGBV in South Sudan is already present in survivor experiences, community responses, and institutional practice, but it is not yet consistently named, documented or routed through formal systems. The challenge is therefore not only a gap in awareness. It is a gap in operational readiness, coordination, legal clarity, survivor trust, digital evidence handling, platform and telecom accountability, educational safeguarding, disability accessibility, and ethical data systems.

The recommendations in this chapter respond to that challenge by treating TFGBV as part of the wider continuum of gender-based violence and by locating responsibility across multiple institutions. GBV One-

Stop Centres, psychosocial services, safe houses, women-led organisations, community leaders, the ministry responsible for gender, child, and social welfare, NCA/SS-CIRT, justice actors, telecoms, platforms, ICT actors, schools, universities, disability actors, data institutions, and donors all have distinct but connected roles. No single institution can prevent, respond to, or account for TFGBV alone.

A credible institutional response should begin with practical steps: Naming TFGBV in intake and complaint systems, training frontline actors, creating referral pathways, protecting digital evidence without exposing survivors, strengthening legal and technical escalation, embedding digital safety in education, ensuring disability inclusion, and producing safe anonymised data for policy learning. Over time, these steps can build a survivor-centred system in which women and girls can participate in digital spaces without being blamed, silenced, exposed, or excluded.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

The central conclusion is that TFGBV is already part of the lived digital environment of women and girls in the research population, even though it is still not consistently named or handled as a distinct form of gender-based violence within many response systems. The study therefore contributes to a more grounded understanding of how online harassment, threats, impersonation, image-based abuse, blackmail, cyberstalking, doxxing, account misuse and platform-based humiliation operate in a South Sudanese context. These harms are digital in method, but their effects are not confined to digital spaces.

A cautious reading is necessary. The study does not claim to produce a national prevalence figure for South Sudan. The samples were purposive, uneven across locations and shaped by the realities of access, safety, institutions and digital connectivity.

The study deepens understanding of how online harassment, threats, impersonation, image-based abuse, blackmail, cyberstalking, doxxing, account misuse, and platform-based humiliation affect women in South Sudan, demonstrating that while these harms are digital in method, their impacts extend beyond online spaces.



However, the evidence is still significant. It shows that TFGBV is not an abstract future risk. Women and girls are already experiencing, witnessing, normalising, fearing and managing it, often without clear institutional pathways for support or accountability.

8.1 Overall Conclusion of the Study

The overall conclusion of the study is that TFGBV in South Sudan should be understood as gender-based violence mediated through technology, rather than as a minor form of online misconduct or a purely technical cyber problem. This distinction matters because it affects how the problem is recognised, where survivors are referred, what evidence is preserved, which institutions take responsibility and whether survivors are believed.

Across the datasets, the clearest pattern was not simply that digital abuse occurred, but that it occurred in ways that affected safety, dignity, education, relationships, mental wellbeing, advocacy and public participation. In the preliminary digital safety survey, more than half of respondents had received threatening or abusive messages, and nearly two-thirds felt unsafe online. In the broader women's survey, the recorded level of direct TFGBV experience and witnessing was high, with online harassment, threats and hate speech appearing as the most frequent form among survivors. In the multistate age and location cohort, 384 of 424 cleaned responses recorded direct TFGBV exposure, while only 50 of 230 respondents with a valid answer knew where to report. This gap between exposure and reporting

knowledge is one of the strongest findings in the study.

The Students/Girls evidence makes the issue especially concrete. Students/Girls described unwanted group additions, unwanted messages, online harassment, hacking, impersonation and pressure to share private images or personal information. These experiences were not presented as rare or exceptional. They were connected to ordinary use of Facebook, WhatsApp, phones, social media accounts, peer networks and school or community relationships. As a result, TFGBV becomes part of everyday digital participation. For some girls and young women, being online means weighing communication, learning and social life against the risk of humiliation, exposure, pressure or threat.

The disability dataset, although small, also matters. Eight of the ten disabled women respondents recorded direct TFGBV experience, and all ten believed that disabled women face unique forms of TFGBV and that TFGBV affects mental health. This finding should not be treated as a statistical prevalence estimate, but it should be treated as an important warning. Any TFGBV response that is not disability-inclusive from the beginning will reproduce the very exclusions that make digital spaces unsafe.

8.2 What the Research Adds

The main contribution of this research is not that it offers a single national figure. It does not. Its contribution is that it makes visible a set of harms that are often absorbed into other categories: general GBV, cybercrime, school discipline, family conflict, private shame, platform misuse or ordinary online behaviour. The study shows this uptake is part of the problem. When TFGBV is not named, it is difficult to count. When it is not counted, it is difficult to plan services. When services are not prepared for it, survivors are left to manage the abuse through silence, blocking, withdrawal, informal support or unsafe evidence sharing.

The research also brings together groups that are often studied separately: young women, girls, students, women with disabilities, women in public-facing roles, feminist and civil society actors, legal and policy stakeholders, ICT actors, GBV service providers and education-related respondents. This wider view is crucial because TFGBV does not sit neatly within one sector. A survivor may need psychosocial support, digital safety advice, legal guidance, school-based protection, platform escalation, police assistance and family or community mediation at the same time. The evidence therefore points to a problem of coordination as much as a problem of awareness.

Methodologically, the mixed-methods approach was useful because the quantitative and qualitative evidence complemented each other. The percentages showed patterns of exposure, perceived safety, reporting knowledge and behavioural change. The qualitative evidence explained why those patterns exist: stigma, shame, fear of blame, weak trust in police or platforms, uncertainty about where to report, fear of reputational damage and the expectation that survivors should simply leave the platform or block the abuser. Without the qualitative data, the numbers would have been too flat. Without the quantitative data, the narratives would have been harder to situate within wider patterns.

8.3 Conclusions on the Nature and Impact of TFGBV

The study confirms that TFGBV operates through a continuum of online and offline harm. A message, post, image, hacked account or fake profile may begin

The study's main contribution is making TFGBV visible as a distinct form of harm, showing that when it is not recognised or counted, services cannot be adequately planned or delivered, leaving survivors to rely on silence, blocking, withdrawal, informal support, or unsafe evidence sharing.



online, but the consequences can move quickly into offline life. Respondents described fear, shame, loss of concentration, reduced confidence, changes in school participation, relationship strain, reputational harm, self-isolation and withdrawal from digital spaces. In several parts of the evidence, the effect of abuse was not only emotional distress but a narrowing of women's and girls' freedom to communicate, study, organise, lead, speak and be visible.

A message, post, image, hacked account or fake profile may begin online, but the consequences can move quickly into offline life.



This is why the study rejects the idea that TFGBV is less serious because it is mediated by technology. In practice, digital abuse can be persistent, repeatable and difficult to contain. Content can be copied, forwarded, stored, edited, re-uploaded and circulated beyond the survivor's control. The fear that harmful content may resurface can continue long after the initial incident. In a context where reputation, family standing and community perception carry serious consequences, this makes digital harm materially important.

The findings also show that TFGBV is shaped by social position. Young women and girls may face pressure from peers, partners or unknown online users. Students may experience digital abuse through school and class networks. Women with disabilities may face targeting linked to disability, advocacy or dependence on intermediaries. Women leaders, activists and public-facing women may be attacked because of their visibility. Location also matters, not because the data can prove state-level prevalence, but because connectivity, institutional access, reporting knowledge and social norms are not evenly distributed.

8.4 Conclusions on Reporting, Institutions and Accountability

The study finds that reporting remains one of the weakest parts of the response environment. The evidence repeatedly shows a gap between exposure to TFGBV and knowledge of where to report. This gap is not simply an information problem. It is also a trust problem. Survivors may doubt that police, schools, platforms or formal institutions will act. They may fear being blamed, exposed, disbelieved or asked to produce evidence in unsafe ways. They may also worry that reporting will make the abuse more visible.

For that reason, awareness-raising on its own will not be enough. Survivors need reporting systems that are confidential, practical, accessible and safe. Frontline actors need to know what TFGBV is, how to ask about it without blame, how to document it without spreading harmful content, how to preserve relevant digital evidence, and when to refer to technical, legal, psychosocial or protection actors. The study shows that institutions are beginning to encounter these cases, but their tools and categories have not fully caught up with the reality of digital abuse.

The key informant interviews and institutional analysis point to the same conclusion. South Sudan does not need a response that treats TFGBV as belonging only to GBV actors or only to cyber actors. The response must link GBV services, education institutions, civil society, legal aid, police, regulators, digital safety actors, telecom and platform-related actors, disability inclusion stakeholders and community leaders. Without this shared responsibility, survivors will continue to move between systems that each see only part of the harm.

8.5 Policy and Practice Implications

The **first policy implication** is that TFGBV should be explicitly recognised in GBV, cybercrime, digital rights, child protection, education, disability inclusion and humanitarian protection frameworks. If it remains unnamed, it will remain difficult to document and easy to dismiss. Naming TFGBV does not mean creating a completely separate system. It means adapting existing systems so that digital forms of gendered harm can be recognised, recorded, referred to and addressed safely.

The **second implication** is that law reform must be matched by implementation capacity. Legal recognition is important, but it will have limited value if survivors cannot report safely, if police and justice actors lack digital evidence procedures, if service providers do

not know how to respond, or if schools and universities treat digital abuse as a private matter rather than a safeguarding concern. The evidence supports a practical response: revised intake tools, survivor-centred referral pathways, trained focal points, digital safety guidance, psychosocial support, accessible reporting routes and ethical data systems.



The **third implication** concerns education. Schools and universities should be treated as central sites for prevention and response, not peripheral settings. Students/Girls need age-appropriate digital safety education, confidential reporting options, clear anti-harassment rules, referral links and practical support when abuse affects learning, attendance or wellbeing. Digital safety should not be taught only as technical caution. It should be connected to consent, respect, gender equality, privacy, peer behaviour, evidence safety and help-seeking.



The **fourth implication** is that disability inclusion must be operational, not rhetorical. Information should be available in accessible formats. Reporting pathways should not rely only on written forms, online forms or physically inaccessible offices. Women and girls with disabilities should be involved in designing prevention messages and response tools. If accessibility is added later, the system will already have excluded many of the people it claims to protect.

8.6 Limitations and Future Research

The data are not nationally representative. The sample was shaped by access to respondents, project networks, available locations, digital connectivity and the safety constraints of researching gender-based violence. Some groups are better represented than others, and rural women, older women, displaced women, women with limited internet access and women outside the selected research sites require further study. The results therefore show serious patterns within the research population, but they should not be used as national prevalence estimates.

The study was also limited by differences between instruments. Not every survey asked the same questions in the same way, and not every dataset had the same denominators. This required careful separation of datasets in the results chapter and cautious interpretation in the discussion. That choice reduced the risk of overstating the findings, but it also means that some comparisons remain indicative rather than definitive.

Future research should build on this study by using more standardised tools, larger and more geographically balanced samples, disability-accessible methods, rural and displacement-site research, and closer examination of perpetrator behaviour. More work is also needed on platform-specific abuse, the role of AI-enabled image manipulation, the experiences of women in politics and public life, male and boy victims where relevant, and the effectiveness of institutional responses after reforms are introduced.

8.7 Final Concluding Statement

The final conclusion of the study is that digital safety for women and girls in South Sudan cannot be separated from gender justice. TFGBV is not only about devices, platforms or online behaviour. It is about power, visibility, silence, reputation, institutional trust and the ability of women and girls to participate in social, educational, political and public life without fear of being humiliated, threatened or controlled through technology.

The research, therefore, calls for a response that is practical and grounded. Survivors need support that reflects how digital abuse actually happens. Institutions need tools that allow them to recognise and document TFGBV without causing further harm. Schools and universities need safeguarding systems that include online abuse. Legal and cyber actors need survivor-centred procedures. GBV actors need digital safety capacity. Platforms and telecom-related actors need to be treated as part of the protection ecosystem. Community actors need to challenge the stigma and blame that keep many survivors silent.

This study has shown that the problem is already visible. The task now is to ensure that it is no longer treated as invisible, private or secondary. A credible response to TFGBV in South Sudan must recognise digital abuse as real violence with real consequences, and must build the institutional, legal, educational and community systems needed to prevent it, respond to it and support those affected by it.

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