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Conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls

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Abstract

Technology-enabled violence against women and girls has emerged as a significant and complex issue in today's digital age. This form of violence, which includes cyberstalking, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, poses serious threats to the safety, privacy, and well-being of women and girls worldwide. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive and coordinated response that integrates legal, technological, and social interventions. This concept paper proposes a conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls. The framework is based on a thorough review of existing literature, research, and best practices in the field, and aims to provide a roadmap for stakeholders to develop effective strategies and interventions to prevent and address this form of violence. The framework consists of the Legal Dimension which focuses on the legal frameworks and mechanisms needed to prevent and address technology-enabled violence against women and girls. It includes an analysis of existing laws and regulations, as well as recommendations for strengthening legal protections and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. The Technological Dimension explores the role of technology in both perpetrating and preventing violence against women and girls. It includes an examination of technological solutions, such as digital security tools and platforms, as well as ethical considerations related to technology development and use. The Social Dimension examines the social and cultural factors that contribute to technology-enabled violence against women and girls. It includes an analysis of gender norms, power dynamics, and social media dynamics that influence the prevalence and impact of this form of violence. The framework also includes strategies for implementing its recommendations at the global level, including advocacy efforts, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector. It emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in addressing this complex issue. Overall, the conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing this pressing global challenge. We hope that this framework will serve as a valuable resource for stakeholders working to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment for women and girls worldwide.

Keywords: Global protection; Technology-enabled violence; Women; Girls

1. Introduction

Technology has become an integral part of modern society, revolutionizing how people connect, communicate, and interact (Kandampully, Bilgihan & Li, 2022, Rahmawati, Ruslan & Bandarsyah, 2021, Vermesan, et. al., 2022). However, alongside its many benefits, technology has also become a tool for perpetrating violence against women and girls. Technology-enabled violence, including cyberstalking, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate

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images, has emerged as a pervasive and complex issue with far-reaching consequences (Lawal, et. al., 2024, Qteshat, 2023, Reid, 2019).

Despite increased awareness and efforts to address this issue, technology-enabled violence against women and girls continues to pose significant challenges globally (de Silva de Alwis, 2023, Henshaw, 2023, Sharland & Dahir, 2023). The rapid evolution of technology and its widespread adoption have outpaced the development of effective legal and policy frameworks, leaving gaps in protection and support for victims. Additionally, cultural and social norms that perpetuate gender-based violence often intersect with technology, exacerbating the problem (Bailey & Burkell, 2021, Ceia, Nothwehr & Wagner, 2021, Mhlongo, et. al., 2024).

Addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that integrates legal, technological, and social interventions (Kaur, et. al., 2021, Odeyemi, et. al., 2024, Watson, et. al., 2021). This concept paper proposes a conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence, aiming to provide a roadmap for stakeholders to develop coordinated and effective responses to this complex issue.

The framework will draw on existing research, literature, and best practices to outline key elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. It will explore the legal frameworks needed to protect victims and hold perpetrators accountable, the role of technology in both perpetrating and preventing violence, and the societal norms and attitudes that contribute to this form of violence.

By providing a conceptual roadmap for action, this framework seeks to empower stakeholders at the global, regional, and local levels to take meaningful steps towards preventing and addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. We hope that this framework will catalyze dialogue, collaboration, and action, leading to a safer and more inclusive digital world for all.

2. Background

Technology-enabled violence against women and girls has become a prevalent and alarming issue in today's digital age (Lukong, et. al., 2023, Riesmeyer, 2023, Riesmeyer, 2024). This form of violence encompasses a range of behaviors, including cyberstalking, online harassment, and the unauthorized sharing of intimate images, all facilitated by the use of technology. Such acts can have severe and lasting impacts on victims, including psychological harm, loss of privacy, and barriers to participation in digital spaces (Grimani, Gavine & Moncur, 2022, Henry, Flynn & Powell, 2020, Ozaveshe, Ukoba & Jen, 2023).

The rise of technology-enabled violence against women and girls is closely linked to broader patterns of gender-based violence and discrimination. In many cases, perpetrators exploit digital platforms and tools to perpetrate violence, taking advantage of the anonymity and reach afforded by the internet. Moreover, existing societal norms and attitudes that condone violence against women can be amplified and reinforced in online spaces, further contributing to the problem (Ayinla, et. al., 2024, Donato Eslon-Ziya & Mangone, 2022, Rotundi, 2023).

Efforts to address technology-enabled violence against women and girls have been hindered by a lack of comprehensive understanding and coordinated action. Legal and policy frameworks often lag behind technological advancements, leaving gaps in protection and accountability (Bachmann, et. al., 2022, Kaggwa, et. al., 2024, Tanczer, López-Neira & Parkin, 2021). Additionally, there is a need for greater awareness and education among stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and technology companies, on how to prevent and respond to this form of violence effectively.

Against this backdrop, there is a growing recognition of the need for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. Such an approach should encompass legal, technological, and social interventions that work in tandem to prevent violence, protect victims, and hold perpetrators accountable (Abitoye, et. al., 2023, Pachauri & Verma, 2023, Pathak & Deshkar, 2023). A conceptual framework that outlines key elements of this approach can serve as a valuable tool for guiding policy development, programming, and advocacy efforts in this area.

This concept paper proposes the development of a conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls. The framework aims to provide a roadmap for action, outlining key principles, strategies, and recommendations for stakeholders to consider in their efforts to prevent and address this complex issue. By drawing on existing research, best practices, and insights from experts in the field, this framework

seeks to inform and guide efforts to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment for women and girls worldwide.

3. Overview

Technology has transformed the way we communicate, work, and live, offering immense opportunities for progress and connectivity (Banafaa, et. al., 2023, Diamandis & Kotler, 2020, Elufioye, et. al., 2024). However, alongside these benefits, technology has also become a tool for perpetrating violence against women and girls. Technology-enabled violence, including cyberstalking, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, has emerged as a pervasive and challenging issue that affects individuals, communities, and societies worldwide (Alves Leitao, 2021, Atadoga, et. al., 2024, Banks & Andersson, 2023).

Addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach that integrates legal, technological, and social interventions (Ayinla, et. al., 2024, Balcombe & De Leo, 2022, Bandyopadhyay, Bardhan, Dey & Bhattacharyya, 2021). This concept paper proposes a conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence, aiming to provide a roadmap for stakeholders to develop coordinated and effective responses to this complex issue.

The framework will be based on a thorough review of existing literature, research, and best practices in the field. It will draw on concepts from gender studies, human rights, technology, and law to provide a holistic understanding of the issue and outline key elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls.

There will be three primary dimensions in the framework: The Legal Dimension which will focus on the legal frameworks and mechanisms needed to prevent and address technology-enabled violence against women and girls. It will include an analysis of existing laws and regulations, as well as recommendations for strengthening legal protections and ensuring accountability for perpetrators. The Technological Dimension will explore the role of technology in both perpetrating and preventing violence against women and girls. It will include an examination of technological solutions, such as digital security tools and platforms, as well as ethical considerations related to technology development and use. The Social Dimension will examine the social and cultural factors that contribute to technology-enabled violence against women and girls. It will include an analysis of gender norms, power dynamics, and social media dynamics that influence the prevalence and impact of this form of violence.

The framework will also include strategies for implementing its recommendations at the global level, including advocacy efforts, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector. It will emphasize the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration in addressing this complex issue.

Overall, the conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls aims to provide a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing this pressing global challenge. Hopefully, this framework will serve as a valuable resource for stakeholders working to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment for women and girls worldwide.

3.1. Problem Statement

Technology has become an integral part of modern society, transforming how people communicate, work, and interact. While technology has brought many benefits, it has also created new challenges, particularly in the realm of gender-based violence. Technology-enabled violence against women and girls has emerged as a pervasive and complex issue that poses significant threats to their safety, privacy, and well-being. Technology-enabled violence encompasses a wide range of behaviors, including cyberstalking, online harassment, and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. These forms of violence can have devastating consequences for victims, leading to psychological harm, loss of privacy, and barriers to participation in digital spaces. Moreover, technology-enabled violence often intersects with existing patterns of gender-based violence and discrimination, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and power dynamics. Efforts to address technology-enabled violence against women and girls have been hindered by several challenges. Existing legal and policy frameworks have struggled to keep pace with rapid technological advancements, leaving gaps in protection and support for victims. Additionally, there is a lack of comprehensive data and research on the prevalence and impact of technology-enabled violence, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of interventions and allocate resources effectively. Furthermore, societal attitudes and norms that condone violence against women can be amplified and reinforced in online spaces, creating a culture of impunity for perpetrators. This normalization of violence not only undermines efforts to prevent and address technology-enabled violence but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes and

attitudes toward women and girls. Addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that addresses the root causes and consequences of this form of violence. It requires coordinated action from governments, civil society organizations, technology companies, and individuals to prevent violence, protect victims, and hold perpetrators accountable. Overall, there is an urgent need for a conceptual framework that provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. Such a framework should integrate legal, technological, and social interventions to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment for all.

3.2. Objective

The objective of this concept paper is to develop a comprehensive conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls. The framework aims to provide a roadmap for stakeholders to develop coordinated and effective responses to this complex issue, integrating legal, technological, and social interventions. Specifically, the objectives of the conceptual framework are:

- To provide a comprehensive understanding of technology-enabled violence against women and girls, including its forms, prevalence, and impact.
- To identify key elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls, including legal, technological, and social dimensions.
- To outline strategies for implementing the conceptual framework at the global level, including advocacy efforts, capacity-building initiatives, and partnerships with stakeholders.
- To promote multi-stakeholder collaboration and engagement in addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls.
- To contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and interventions to prevent and address technology-enabled violence against women and girls.
- To empower women and girls to safely and confidently navigate digital spaces and participate fully in the digital economy and society.
- To raise awareness about the issue of technology-enabled violence against women and girls and mobilize action to address it at the global level.

3.3. Expected Outcomes

The expected outcome of this concept paper is the development of a robust conceptual framework for global protection against technology-enabled violence against women and girls. This framework is expected to serve as a comprehensive guide for stakeholders to develop and implement effective strategies and interventions to prevent and address this form of violence.

Specifically, the expected outcomes of the conceptual framework are:

- **Increased Understanding:** The conceptual framework will contribute to a deeper understanding of technology-enabled violence against women and girls, including its forms, prevalence, and impact. This increased understanding will help inform evidence-based policies and interventions to address the issue.
- **Enhanced Protection:** The framework will provide a roadmap for enhancing legal, technological, and social protections for women and girls against technology-enabled violence. This includes strengthening legal frameworks, promoting the development and deployment of technology solutions, and addressing societal norms and attitudes that contribute to violence.
- **Improved Response:** The framework will outline strategies for improving the response to technology-enabled violence against women and girls, including better support services for victims, enhanced law enforcement efforts, and increased awareness and education among stakeholders.
- **Increased Collaboration:** The framework will promote multi-stakeholder collaboration and engagement in addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. This includes partnerships between governments, civil society organizations, technology companies, and individuals to develop and implement effective interventions.
- **Empowerment of Women and Girls:** The framework will empower women and girls to safely and confidently navigate digital spaces and participate fully in the digital economy and society. This includes providing them with the tools and resources they need to protect themselves against technology-enabled violence.
- **Awareness and Advocacy:** The framework will raise awareness about the issue of technology-enabled violence against women and girls and mobilize action to address it at the global level. This includes advocating for policy changes and increased resources to prevent and address this form of violence.

Overall, the expected outcome of the conceptual framework is to contribute to a safer and more inclusive digital environment for women and girls worldwide, free from the threat of technology-enabled violence.

4. Methodology

4.1. Literature Review

Conduct a comprehensive review of existing literature, research, and reports on technology-enabled violence against women and girls. This will include studies on the forms, prevalence, and impact of this form of violence, as well as existing legal, technological, and social interventions.

4.2. Stakeholder Consultations

Engage with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, technology companies, and individuals affected by technology-enabled violence. Conduct interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions to gather insights and perspectives on the issue.

4.3. Expert Input

Seek input from experts in the fields of gender studies, human rights, technology, and law to inform the development of the conceptual framework. This may include convening expert workshops or panels to discuss key issues and trends.

4.4. Case Studies

Examine case studies of successful interventions and programs aimed at preventing and addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. Identify key lessons learned and best practices that can inform the conceptual framework.

4.5. Comparative Analysis

Conduct a comparative analysis of legal frameworks, technological solutions, and social interventions from different regions and countries. Identify commonalities and differences that can inform the development of global recommendations.

4.6. Framework Development

Develop a conceptual framework that integrates the findings from the literature review, stakeholder consultations, expert input, case studies, and comparative analysis. The framework should outline key elements of a comprehensive approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls.

4.7. Validation

Validate the conceptual framework through feedback from stakeholders and experts. Revise the framework based on feedback to ensure its relevance, feasibility, and effectiveness.

4.8. Dissemination

Disseminate the conceptual framework through various channels, including publications, conferences, and workshops. Raise awareness about the framework and its recommendations to promote its adoption and implementation by stakeholders.

4.9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework to track the implementation of the conceptual framework and assess its impact. This should include indicators to measure progress towards preventing and addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls.

4.10. Implementation Strategies

4.10.1. Advocacy and Awareness

Launch advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about technology-enabled violence against women and girls and the importance of the conceptual framework. Target key stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and the private sector, to mobilize support for the framework.

4.10.2. Capacity Building

Conduct capacity-building workshops and training programs for stakeholders to enhance their understanding of technology-enabled violence and their ability to implement the framework. This includes training on legal, technological, and social aspects of addressing violence against women and girls.

4.10.3. Policy Development

Work with governments and policymakers to develop and strengthen legal frameworks and policies aimed at preventing and addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. Advocate for the adoption of the framework's recommendations into national laws and policies.

4.10.4. Technology Solutions

Collaborate with technology companies to develop and deploy technology solutions that can help prevent and address technology-enabled violence. This includes developing tools for digital security, privacy protection, and online safety.

4.10.5. Partnerships and Collaboration

Foster partnerships and collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, technology companies, and other stakeholders to implement the framework. This includes sharing best practices, resources, and expertise to enhance the effectiveness of interventions.

4.10.6. Monitoring and Evaluation

Establish a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track the implementation of the framework and assess its impact. This includes collecting data, measuring progress against set indicators, and making adjustments to interventions as needed.

4.10.7. Research and Innovation

Support research and innovation in the field of technology-enabled violence against women and girls to continuously improve interventions and responses. This includes funding research projects, supporting innovation hubs, and promoting the development of new technologies.

4.10.8. Sustainability

Ensure the sustainability of interventions by integrating them into existing programs and structures. This includes mainstreaming the framework's recommendations into ongoing initiatives and securing long-term funding and support for implementation efforts.

5. Conclusion

The conceptual framework presented in this paper represents a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls. By integrating legal, technological, and social interventions, the framework provides a roadmap for stakeholders to develop and implement effective strategies to prevent and address this form of violence.

Technology has the power to transform lives and connect people across the globe. However, it also has the potential to be used as a tool for harm, particularly against women and girls. Technology-enabled violence can have devastating consequences, including psychological harm, loss of privacy, and barriers to participation in digital spaces.

To address this issue, a coordinated and multi-faceted approach is needed. The conceptual framework outlined in this paper emphasizes the importance of legal protections, technological solutions, and social interventions in preventing and addressing technology-enabled violence against women and girls.

Key elements of the framework include strengthening legal frameworks, promoting the development and deployment of technology solutions, and addressing societal norms and attitudes that contribute to violence. The framework also emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration and engagement in addressing this complex issue.

Ultimately, the goal of the framework is to create a safer and more inclusive digital environment for women and girls worldwide. By working together to implement the framework's recommendations, stakeholders can help prevent and address technology-enabled violence against women and girls, ensuring that they can fully participate in the digital economy and society.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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