A Scoping Review of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Findings from Asia

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Abstract : As digital usage becomes increasingly ubiquitous worldwide, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (GBV) has garnered increasing attention in the recent years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This form of violence is defined as "action by one or more people that harms others based on their sexual or gender identity or by enforcing harmful gender norms. This action is carried out using the internet and/or mobile technology that harms others based on their sexual or gender identity or by enforcing harmful gender norms".Common forms of technology-facilitated GBV include cyberstalking, cyberbullying, sexual harassment, image-based abuse, doxing, hacking, gendertrolling, hate speech, and impersonation. Most literature on this pervasive yet complex issue has emerged from high-income countries, and few studies comprehensively summarize its prevalence, manifestations, and implications. This rigorous scoping review examines the evidence base of this phenomenon in low and middle-income countries across Asia, summarizing trends and gaps to inform actionable recommendations. The research team developed search terms to conduct a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed and grey literature. Query results were eligible for inclusion if they were published in English between 2006-2021 and with an explicit emphasis on technology-facilitated violence, gender, and the countries of interest in the Asia region. Title, abstracts, and full-texts were independently screened by two reviewers based on inclusion criteria, and data was extracted through deductive coding. Of 2,042 articles screened, 97 met inclusion criteria. The review revealed a gap in the evidence-base in Central Asia and the Pacific Islands. Findings across South and Southeast Asia indicate that technology-facilitated GBV comprises various forms of abuse, violence, and harassment that are largely shaped by country-specific societal norms and technological landscapes. The literature confirms that women, girls, and sexual minorities, especially those with intersecting marginalized identities, are often more vulnerable to experiencing online violence. Cultural norms and patriarchal structures tend to stigmatize survivors, limiting their ability to seek social and legal support. Survivors are also less likely to report their experience due to barriers such as lack of awareness of reporting mechanisms, the perception that digital platforms will not address their complaints, and cumbersome reporting systems. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated perpetration and strained support mechanisms. Prevalence varies by the form of violence but is difficult to estimate accurately due to underreporting and disjointed, outdated, or non-existent legal definitions. Addressing technology-facilitated GBV in Asia requires collective action from multiple actors, including government authorities, technology companies, digital and feminist movements, NGOs, and researchers.