

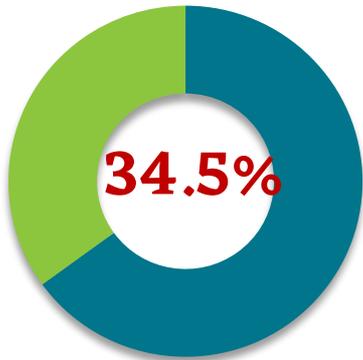
ONLINE VIOLENCE: AN ALARMING CALL

**THE STUDY WAS LED BY
WOMEN'S RIGHT TEAM
OF ACTIONAID NEPAL
SUNITA TIWARI
RENU SHRESTHA**

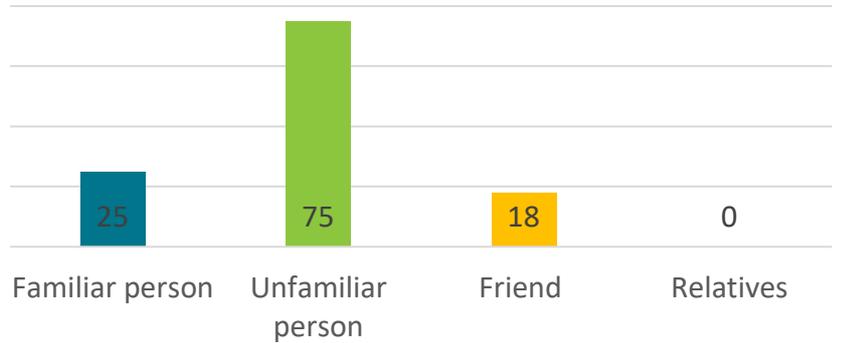


ONLINE VIOLENCE

ONLINE VIOLENCE OFFENDER (%)

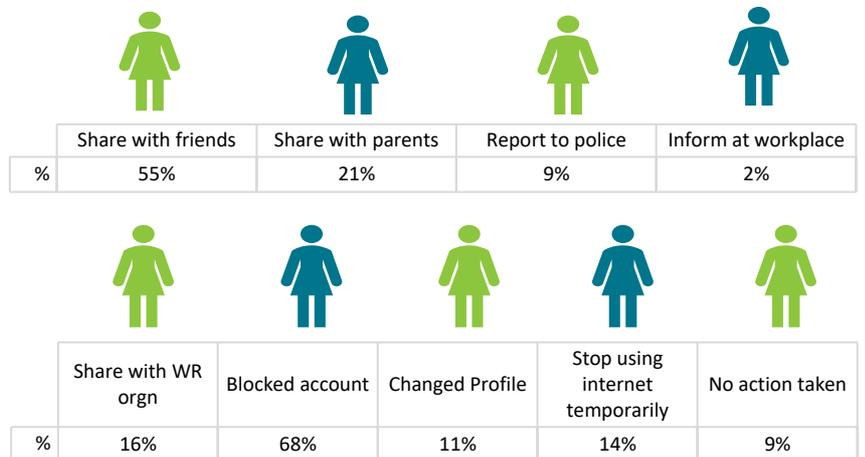
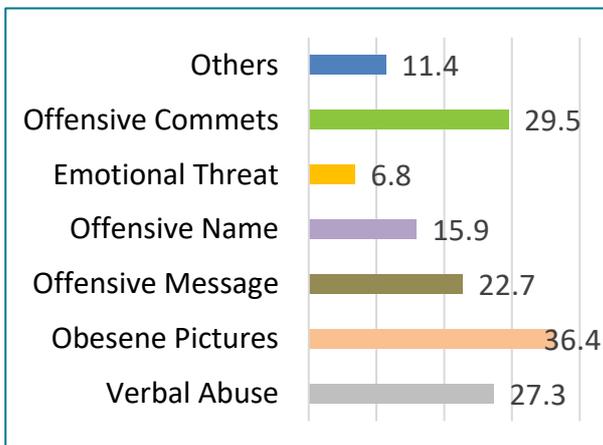


34.5% Young women and girls are facing violence through Internet

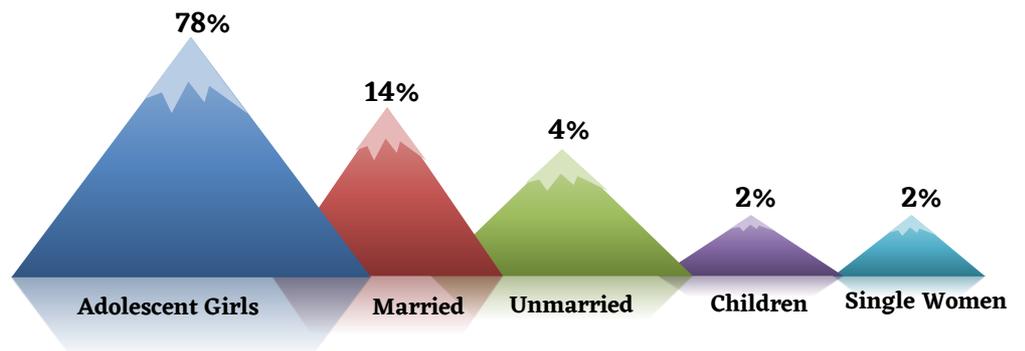
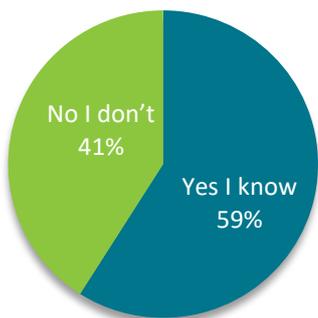


ONLINE VIOLENCE (%)

STEPS TAKEN TO AVOID VIOLENCE

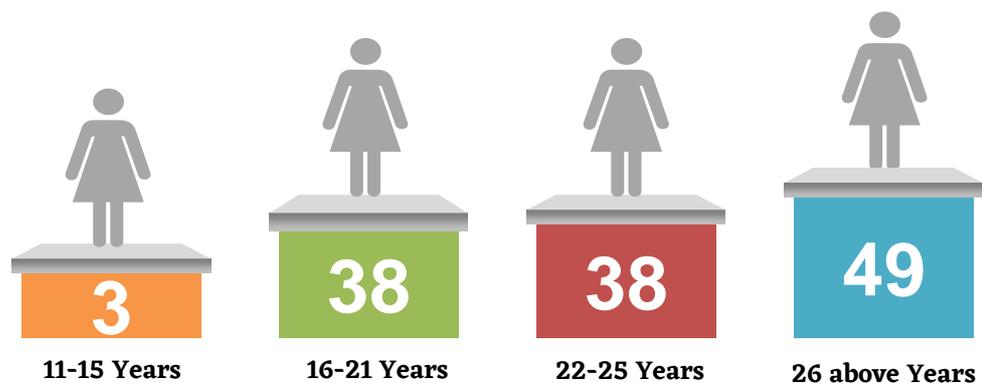


SOMEONE YOU KNOW HAS EVER EXPERIENCED VIOLENCE ONLINE



IMPACT OF ONLINE VIOLENCE

RESPONDENTS AS PER AGE GROUP

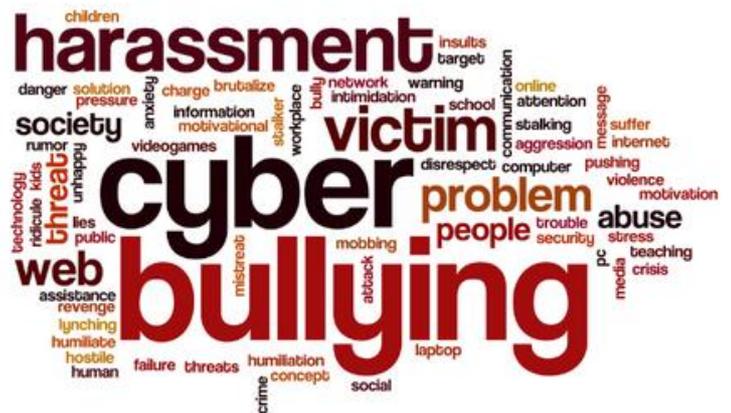


HOW ONLINE VIOLENCE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED?

CONTEXT



The COVID-19 pandemic has had the worst impact on the health of people and the world economy. In this pandemic, globally including Nepal, women and girls' safety is at a high risk and they are facing different forms of violence. The lockdown situation created by the pandemic has restricted the mobility of all so mostly young people are using social media and the internet for entertainment, communication, and information more than ever. Since Gender Based Violence (GBV) is seen in most of the sectors, so internet is also not far from it and most of the cases are not registered or reported.



METHODOLOGY



- Discussion with Gender focal Person of AAN partners regarding the context
- Questionnaire-based survey within ActionAid Nepal and partner organisations
- Online data collection from internet users, mainly young women and girls; confidentiality of the collected data has been maintained
- Data analysis

OBJECTIVE



- To generate an overview of how safe the internet is for young women and girls in Nepal
- To identify the risks of abuse, harassment or violence against young women and girls on social media and internet during Covid- 19 lockdown
- Provide recommendations to combat the online violence against young women and girls

RESPONDENTS



- 128 young women and girls who use the internet and social media
- Young women and girls between the age group of 15-30 years

SURVEY AREA AND LIMITATION



This survey was done in 13 working districts of ActionAid Nepal (AAN) limiting to the working areas of the districts.

Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Bajura, Doti, Bardiya, Palpa, Siraha, Shakhwashava, Terahathum, Parsa, Makwanpur & Chitwan.



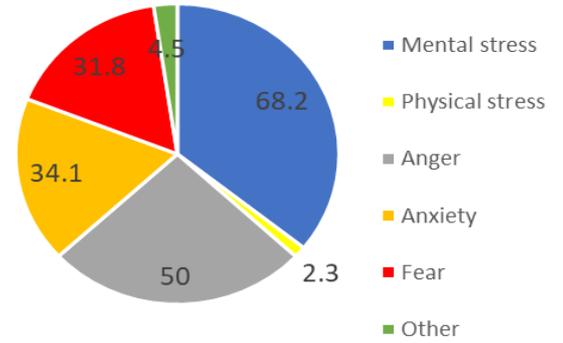
1. Violence Against women and girls

The survey results revealed that 34.5% of the participating females reported exposure to online violence during the lockdown period. This shows that in every 3 young women and girls, 1 is facing online violence.

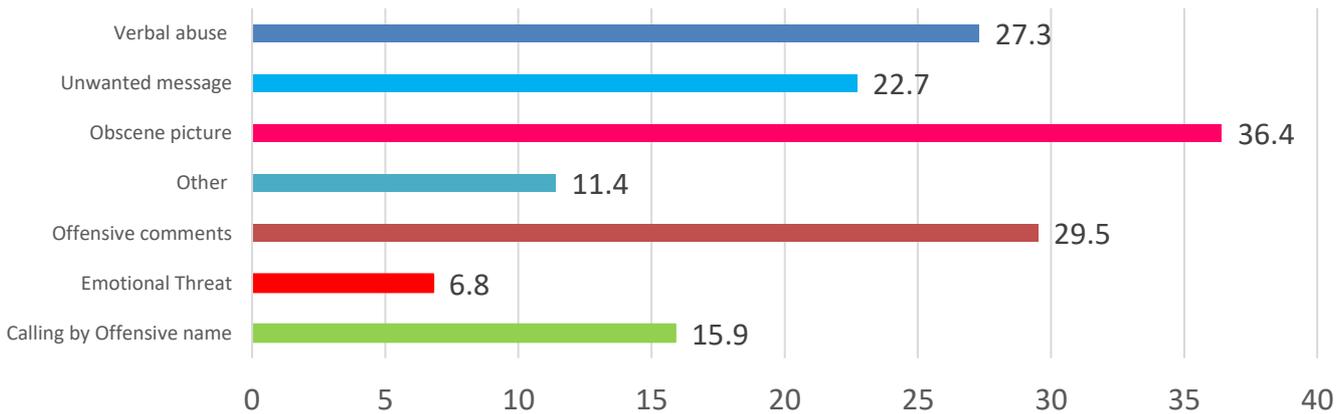
Those who faced violence on the internet, 75 % said it was from strangers whereas 25 % stated it was from familiar people and 18.2 % said it was from their friends. None of the participants faced violence from immediate relatives.



Impact of online violence in (%)



Online Violence activities in (%)



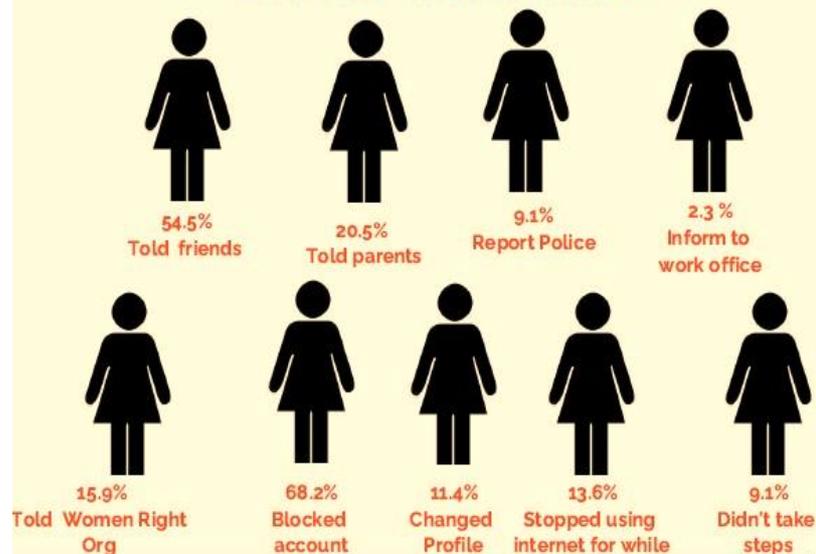
The above chart shows that 36.4% of the survey respondents reported receiving images or symbols with sexual contents. Similarly, 29.5% got offensive or humiliating posts or comments, 27.3% faced verbal abuse, 22.7% received unwanted messages, 15.9% reported being called by offensive names or character. Among these 6.8% faced emotional threat whereas 11.4% respondents reported other types of activities than above.

Regarding the impact of online violence faced by young women and girls, majority (68.2%) of them are experiencing mental stress in the form of anger (50%), anxiety (34.1%), fear (31.8%), physical stress (2.3%) and other forms of impact other than above is 4.5%. Based on the data obtained from the multiple answers, it can be said that the impact of online violence is multi-dimensional.

About 9.1 % young women and girls who have faced violence did not take any action to avoid violence whereas only 9.1 % reported to the police. 75% of the respondents shared this information with their friends, family members and 2.3% to their offices. 15.9 % reported to one or another organisations working for women rights. About 68.2 % blocked the offender account and 13.6 % stopped using the internet for a while.

The survey results show that the tendency of young women and girls is more towards inaction rather than confronting the perpetrator of violence. The Nepal Government passed Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) 2063 in the year 2004, but still most of the respondents do not prefer to seek legal support and/or they are unaware about the law.

Steps taken to avoid Violence



The respondents were asked if someone they knew had either experienced violence or if they had been abused online? All 128 young women and girls responded the question. 59.4 % of them said Yes, they know that some of their friends, relatives or coworkers are facing online violence. Among those who they know have faced violence through the internet- 59.4 % said it was from strangers whereas 26.6 % said it was from familiar people and 20.3 % stated it was from their friends. 6.3% said their friends, relatives or coworkers are facing violence from their own relatives and 3.1 % are from coworkers. This shows that out of every 100 offenders, 41 people are familiar and known to them.



Analyzing the data- 32.8 % faced verbal abuse which occupies around one-third of the total respondents. Similarly, 24.2 % received unwanted messages, 20.3 % got offensive or humiliating posts or comments, 18.8% reported receiving images or symbols with sexual content, 10.9% reported being called by offensive names or character. Among them, 10.9 % faced emotional threat whereas 1% respondents reported other types of activities than above.

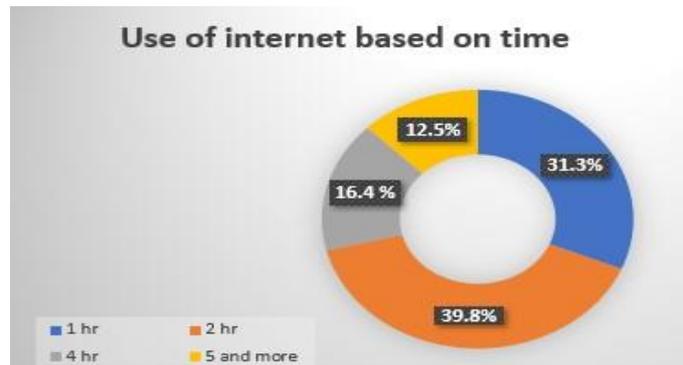
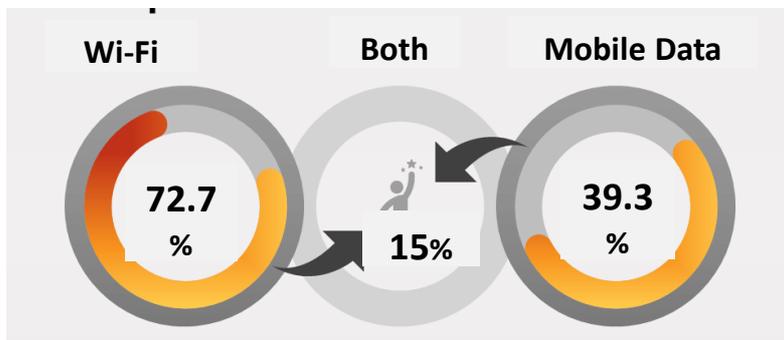
13.3 % who have faced violence to whom the respondents knew did not take any action to avoid violence whereas 16.4 % reported to the police. 45.3 % of them stated that the information was given to friends, 26.6% told to their parents 5.5% informed in their offices. 10.9% reported to Women Rights Organizations. About 41.4 % blocked the account of the perpetrator, 9.4 % changed their profile and 5.5 % stopped using the internet for a while.

In response to the question, "Who do you think is at the most risk of online violence?"- 78.1% agreed that adolescent girls are at the highest risk, 14.1% said married women, 3.9% said unmarried women, 2.3% said children, and 1.6% said single women (divorced and widowed) are at the risk.

In response to the question, "Do you think using the Internet is safe for young girls and women?"- 64.8% said No, it is not safe for young girls and women; whereas, 19.8% said Yes, it is safe and 15.6% said they do not know about it. From the perception of the respondents it can be said that adolescent girls are at high risk of online violence.

2. Access and preferences of using the internet

Regarding the status of internet access, 70.3% mentioned that they have good access to the internet, whereas 28.1% can have access sometimes and 1.6% of the respondents have very rare access to the internet. Following their use based on time, 31.3% are using around one hour per day, 39% are tentatively using for 2 hours, 16.4% are using for four hours whereas 12.5% are using more than 5 hours a day. Young women and girls are using various means for internet, among them 98.4% are using from their mobile phones, 9.4% are using laptop and only 0.8% are using desktop computers to use the internet. A majority of the respondents (72.7%) are using mobile data for their internet connection, 39.3% are using Wi-Fi, and 15% are using both Wi-Fi and mobile data.



98.4%



9.4%



0.8%

Social media to chat & talk with friends and relatives

Get updated on News

Get update about other people

Study purpose

Official work

Others

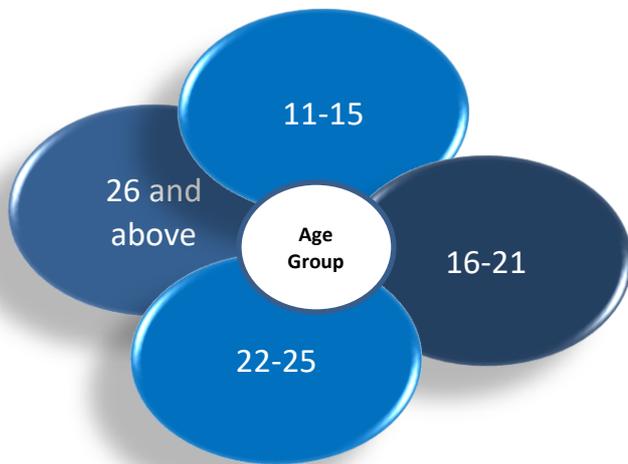
The respondents were asked to prioritize their use of the internet based on purpose. Most of the respondents are using the internet for social media to chat and talk with friends and relatives. Then they are using to get updated on news, to get update about other people, use for their study purpose, use for office work and they listed others at last. Analyzing the data, the preferences of most of the respondent is to have informal communication with friends and relatives through social media.

Based on the use of the social networks and media, young girls and women have prioritized Facebook as their first choice following YouTube as second, Instagram as third, TikTok as fourth, Twitter as fifth, WhatsApp as sixth, Viber as seventh and others as eighth.

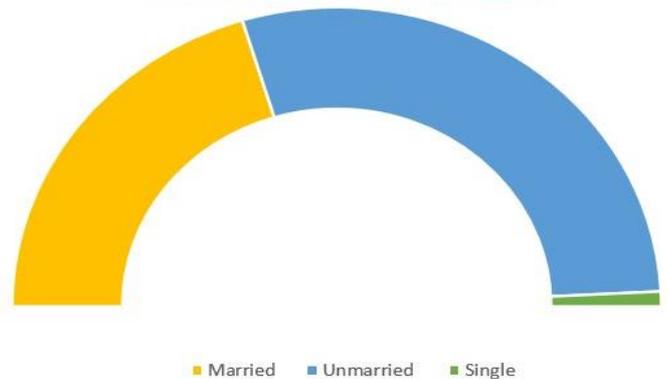


3. Details of respondents (Young women and girls)

Out of total 128 respondents- 38.3% are from 16-21 years age group, 29.7% are from 22-25 years, 29.7% are from 26 and above years group, whereas 2.3% are from 11-15 years group. Among them 35.2% are ethnic and indigenous, 35.2% are Brahmin and Chettri, 18% are Dalit and 11.7% are from others. Among the respondents, 57.8% are unmarried, 40.6% married and 1.6% are single. Regarding the education background of the respondents, 9.4% have completed grade 8, 20.3% completed Secondary Education Examination (SEE), 38.3% completed grade 12, 30.5% have graduated whereas 1.6% have taken informal education.



Marital status of Respondent



4. Recommendations

The survey shows that 1 in every 3 of the young women and girls have experienced online violence. This shows that larger number of young female populations have experienced harassment and violence thus awareness regarding the safer way of using internet and social media is essential.

9.1% of young women and girls who have faced violence did not take any actions whereas 13.3% women whom respondents knew did not take any actions against violence. Mostly young women and girls should be aware about the processes and mechanisms for reporting and how to maintain their online personal safety, protect their identity, and how to deal with online violence.

Nepal has passed its cyber law, "Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) 2063" in 2004 to deal with many cyber related crimes including harassment. But analyzing the data only 9.1% of respondent and 16.4% of women whom respondents knew reported to police regarding the violence they faced through internet. Hence, effective implementation of the law is a must. The reporting process should be accessible to young women and girls and should be gender-friendly and sensitive while dealing with the cases.

Larger number of the offenders (75%) are strangers so, mass awareness and campaign should be done by Government and concern organisations to change the attitude of society towards women and girls. Should provide awareness on legal provisions if someone found engaged in harassment and violence through the internet. Wider society should be made aware about the psychosocial impact of online violence on women and girls.