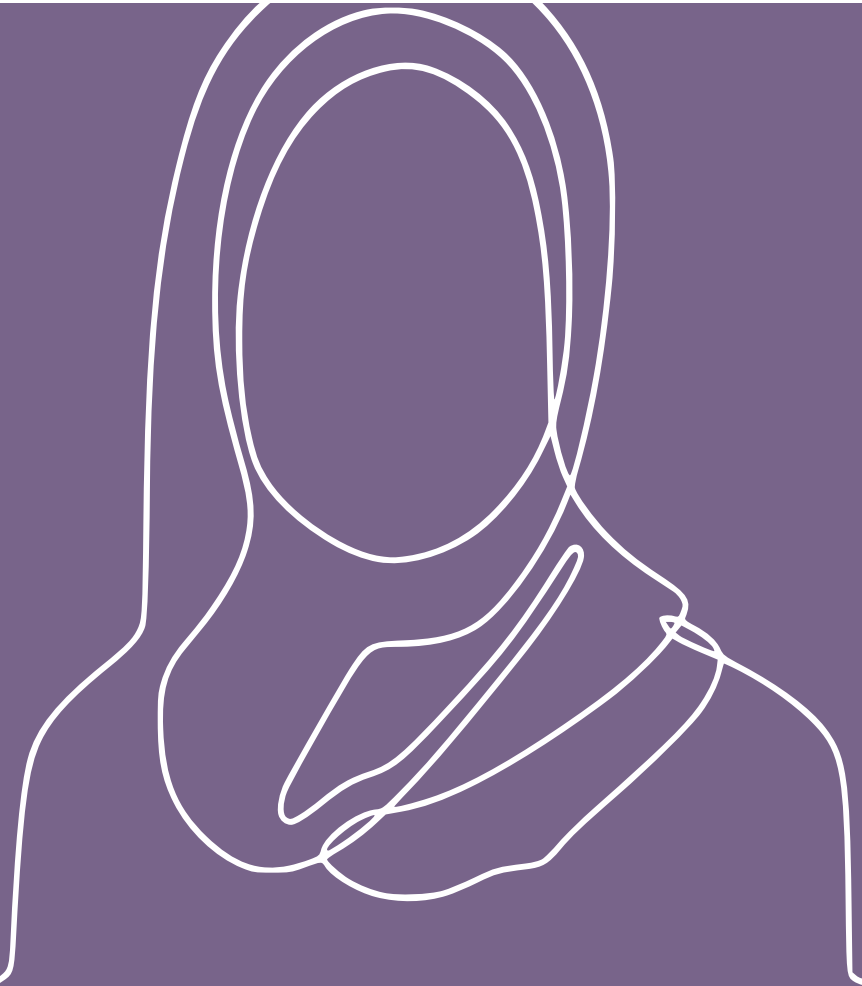




The Impact of Technology- Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) on Survivors in Jordan

Foreword

This study explores the impact of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) on survivors in Jordan, including feminist human rights activists and politicians, highlighting some of the challenges posed by digital forms of abuse. While technology offers many opportunities for connection and empowerment, it also creates new avenues for harassment, hate and misogyny.

Drawing on qualitative research, this study examines the lived realities of survivors, the social and psychological consequences of TFGBV, the spillover effects into physical violence, and the gaps in legal and institutional responses. It underscores the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that address prevention, protection, and support for this type of violence.

By documenting these experiences, it is our aim to alert policymakers, practitioners, and civil society actors about the serious challenge that TFGBV represents, thus hopefully contribute to more effective measures to put an end to TFGBV. We see this as crucial, since preventing TFGBV, protecting survivors and promoting digital safety is essential, not only for individual well-being but also for fostering an inclusive, equal and democratic society in Jordan.

The study was prepared between May 2024 and February 2025 by Jordan Open Source Association (JOSA) within the frames of the Human Rights and Inclusion Consortium (HRIC) under the Danish Arab Partnership Programme (DAPP), in cooperation with KVINFO - Center for Gender and Equality, funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

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Research Question and Objective

What is the social, psychological and political impact on Survivors of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Jordan?

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence presents a growing challenge in the digital age, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized communities in Jordan. This research aims to explore the multi-faceted impacts of TFGBV, particularly its psychological, social, and political consequences, while examining its influence on survivors' participation in public and digital spaces.

Research Objectives

1. To uncover and thoroughly acknowledge the psychological, and social repercussions of TFGBV on survivors.
2. To understand how TFGBV influences women's public and political engagement, both online and offline.

Executive Summary

This report explores the prevalent and multifaceted impacts of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Jordan, shedding light on its psychological, social, and political consequences, focusing on survivors.

Furthermore, TFGBV affects women and marginalized groups, hindering their ability to participate in both public and digital spaces. Drawing on qualitative research through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), the study emphasizes the lived experiences of survivors while contextualizing findings within Jordan's socio-cultural and legal frameworks.

Psychological impacts of TFGBV include heightened anxiety, mistrust, and social withdrawal, exacerbated by the persistent and public nature of online abuse. Survivors frequently experience isolation due to community stigma and familial pressures that restrict their autonomy and reinforce harmful gender norms that impact their overall

wellbeing and safety. **Socially**, victims often face judgment, with many unable to seek support due to fears of reputational harm as per the embedded cultural norms and ideologies.

The impact of technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) on women's **political** life is significant and wide-ranging. In the political sphere, TFGBV takes the form of persistent, targeted harassment intended to erode women's agency, legitimacy, and authority in public positions. In order to intimidate, degrade, and silence their victims, perpetrators of this type of violence frequently use social media, emails, and other online platforms to launch digital campaigns that disparage female politicians, activists, and public figures.

These harassment campaigns, which aim to delegitimize women's contributions and reduce their political influence, frequently include sexual violence, misogynistic threats, and abusive content. Consequently, women encounter disproportionate difficulties when navigating the internet.

Many TFGBV survivors respond by engaging in defensive online conduct to safeguard their mental health. Limiting their online presence, using pseudonyms, turning off comments, or even removing themselves entirely from digital spaces are some examples of these strategies. These precautions have a high price tag even though they might help shield survivors from harm right away. Women unintentionally lose out on chances for involvement, visibility, and influence in political discourse when they withdraw from public engagement. Their retreat effectively marginalizes them from the very platforms that are crucial for influencing public opinion and policy by further isolating them from important digital spaces where policy debates, civic movements, and political discussions are becoming more prevalent.

The report identifies significant gaps in legal and institutional responses. Survivors encounter dismissive attitudes from authorities, inadequate

enforcement of existing cybercrime laws, and limited access to justice. Moreover, technology platforms fail to adequately moderate harmful content, leaving survivors vulnerable to re-victimization. Despite these challenges, digital tools hold transformative potential. Survivors and advocacy groups have used these platforms to raise awareness, build solidarity, and provide support **networks**.

The study underscores the urgent need for multi-stakeholder action to combat TFGBV in Jordan. Policy recommendations include strengthening legal protections, enhancing digital safety mechanisms, and implementing public awareness campaigns to destigmatize reporting and empower survivors. Collaborative efforts between government entities, civil society organizations, and technology companies are essential to creating a safer, more equitable digital environment for women and marginalized communities. These interventions aim to address systemic barriers and foster a society where survivors can reclaim their agency and participate fully in all aspects of life.

Key findings on Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV)

Prevalence of Online Violence

- 60% of women internet users in the region experienced online violence in the past year.
- TFGBV intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, worsening existing gender inequalities.

Targeting of Women in Public Roles

- Women in political and public life are disproportionately harassed and discredited online.
- These attacks undermine gender equality and discourage civic participation.

Psychological and Social Impact

- Survivors report anxiety, isolation, mistrust, and emotional distress.
 - Many experience self-blame, loss of confidence, and social withdrawal due to stigma and public exposure.
 - Family-imposed restrictions and societal judgment lead to isolation and discourage reporting.
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Underreporting and Trust Issues

- 80% of cybercrime victims are women, but only 8% feel comfortable reporting.
 - Honor-related stigma and fear of societal backlash inhibit access to justice.
 - Mixed trust between survivors in Jordan's Cybercrime Unit in confidentiality and lack of women case officers.
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Inadequate Legal and Platform Response

- Survivors face lengthy, unclear legal processes and a lack of awareness about their rights.
 - Digital platforms often fail to enforce community standards or remove abusive content effectively.
 - AI moderation lacks human oversight and struggles with the complexity of social
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Civil Society Challenges

- Organizations providing digital safety support face harassment, resource gaps, and repression.
 - Civic space in some countries (e.g., Egypt, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Bahrain) is hostile to rights-based work, forcing women defenders into exile.
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Digital Risks for Youth and Families

- 89% of Jordanian families have internet access; 65% of children (ages 5+) use the internet.
 - Women and girls report fear of sharing photos due to blackmail and harassment risks.
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Adaptive Behaviors and Missed Opportunities

- Survivors adopt digital security practices (e.g., encrypted apps, 2FA), yet lack comprehensive digital literacy.
 - Technology is both a tool of harm and a potential avenue for support, organizing, and awareness.
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Methodology and Research Limitations

1. Research Design

This research entailed solely qualitative data collection methods to gain in-depth insight and an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the impact of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Jordan. It focused on two elements: (1) What were the psychological, social, and economic consequences of TFGBV on survivors? And (2) Did TFGBV affect survivors' public and political participation, both in real-world spaces and online?

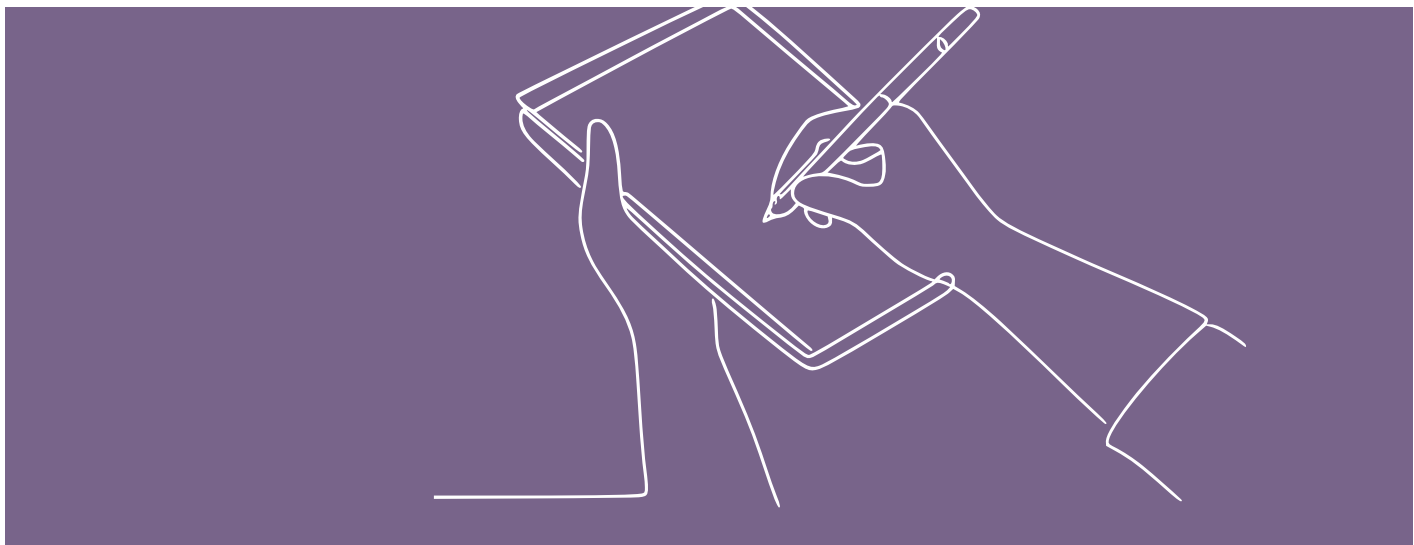
In line with feminist research principles, the qualitative interviews prioritized the voices and lived experiences of TFGBV survivors, ensuring that their narratives shaped the analysis and reflected

their diverse realities. A reflexive approach was employed throughout, recognizing the positionality of the researcher and mitigating power imbalances in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. For instance, emphasis was placed on the research team positionality and power dynamics, while also ensuring that participants' voices were centered. This involved fostering an empathetic, trauma-informed environment where participants shared their stories on their own terms, empowering them as co-creators of knowledge. Ethical considerations, including ongoing consent and confidentiality, were prioritized to mitigate power imbalances and ensure the research respected participants' agency and lived experiences. Moreover, the study fostered an ethical,

empathetic environment that encouraged participants to share their stories in their own words.

The research design also focused on co-constructing knowledge with participants, acknowledging their agency in shaping the findings. Furthermore, the study explored the implications of TFGBV on women's political involvement and participation, both in digital and real-life domains. To ensure that the intersectional experiences of marginalized groups were represented, the research team actively

recruited respondents from a wide range of backgrounds, including different socio-economic classes, ethnicities, regions, and abilities. Special efforts were made to engage those often excluded from research, such as rural women, women with disabilities, and minority groups, ensuring that their voices were heard and their experiences of TFGBV were captured. This commitment to diversity enriched the findings, providing a more nuanced understanding of the issue across different segments of society.



2. Study & Sampling Intended Population

- **The primary population** consisted of women and girls who had experienced TFGBV from various geographical locations across Jordan, including rural areas, towns, and cities. Areas that were covered in the KIIs are: Amman, Zarqa, and Karak, and areas that were covered in the FGDs are: Amman, Aqaba, Ajloun and Karak. Participants represented diverse socio-economic backgrounds and included one individual with disabilities. Particular attention was given to women and girls involved in political and economic spheres, as well as human rights

defenders, activists, journalists, and members of the LGBTQI+ community.

- **The stakeholders** included case managers, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and candidates in the 2024 parliamentary elections, which facilitated connections with survivors and provided relevant information reflecting their experiences with TFGBV.
- **The sampling method** involved identifying 10 survivors, who were either in contact with the research team or referred by other team members and the JOSA community. These survivors had either direct or indirect experiences with TFGBV.

The aim was to ensure diverse representation across socioeconomic backgrounds, geographic locations, and levels of political and digital engagement. The selection process was guided by three main factors:

- **Socioeconomic Backgrounds:** Survivors were selected to ensure representation across various socioeconomic groups, with particular attention to those at higher risk of experiencing TFGBV, such as journalists, lawyers, politicians, activists, and human rights defenders.
- **Diverse Experiences:** Survivors were chosen based on the different forms of TFGBV they had encountered, ensuring a wide spectrum of experiences was represented.
- **Inclusive Representation:** The selection included men and women from various geographic locations and those with different levels of political and digital engagement, people with disabilities as well as individuals of diverse sexual orientations.



3. Data Collection Methods

3.1. Secondary Resources

A thorough review of existing literature, reports, and data on TFGBV was conducted, including the following:

- **ACADEMIC PAPERS AND REPORTS:** Existing reports and studies from INGOs, CSOs, and UN agencies focusing on TFGBV globally and specifically in Jordan.
- **LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY DOCUMENTS:** Documents related to digital safety, cybercrime, and gender-based violence were reviewed to understand the legal and policy framework addressing TFGBV.
- **PREVIOUS RESEARCH:** Studies examining the impacts of TFGBV on women's political participation in Jordan, as well as globally and

within the MENA region, were analyzed to provide a contextual understanding of the issue.

3.2. Primary Resources

3.2.1. Four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The research team conducted four FGDs with different stakeholders as per the following:

- **Participants:** Respondents from various service-providing entities, and individuals with diverse backgrounds, such as those involved in politics, economics, journalism, and activism, to ensure a wide range of perspectives was represented. JOSA prioritized inclusivity by selecting participants from various socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, regions, and abilities, capturing the intersectional realities of TFGBV across different sectors and experiences. The participants included GBV and protection case managers, programs managers, researchers, digital safety experts, lawyers, From 2 INGOs, and 14 CSOs that provide legal services, and psycho-social, or economic support for TFGBV survivors.
- **Objective:** The study aimed to gather in-depth qualitative data reflecting participants' personal experiences of TFGBV, including its psychological, social, and economic implications. The discussions also explored the impact of TFGBV on participants' political participation and digital engagement.
- **Practice:** The FGDs were conducted online and in-person, in as safe and neutral environments as possible, with measures in place to ensure confidentiality and provide emotional support if deemed relevant, required, or requested by the

participants. Facilitators trained in gender-sensitive approaches guided the discussions, prioritizing the creation of an inclusive, non-hierarchical space where participants felt empowered to share their experiences. The facilitators adopted a trauma-informed practice¹, remaining mindful of the emotional and psychological impacts of TFGBV.

They actively worked to reduce power dynamics between themselves and the participants by emphasizing collaboration and mutual respect. Open-ended questions were used to encourage free expression and avoid leading the participants, ensuring that survivors' voices and lived experiences drove the conversation, centering their agency throughout the process.

3.2.2. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Based on the aforementioned, the research team identified a list of 10 TFGBV survivors who took part in the KIIs.

- **Participants:** Survivors of TFGBV from various backgrounds, five of whom were human rights defenders and activists, including LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities. The remaining five interviews were conducted with women and girls from diverse backgrounds, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, journalists, and university students. The participants represented a range of sectors and experiences, with nine women and one man from Amman, Zarqa, and Karak.
- **Objective:** Psychological implications of TFGBV are multifaceted, profound and long-lasting, affecting victims in various ways - anxiety, depression, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), isolation, disengagement from public life etc. are

¹ Trauma-informed practice is an approach that recognizes the profound and varied impacts of trauma, particularly in the cases of survivors that were subject to gender-based violence (GBV), online violence, intimate partner violence (IPV), and domestic violence. It acknowledges the short- and long-term effects of trauma, such as PTSD, anxiety, and emotional dysregulation, and integrates this understanding into all interactions. The approach prioritizes survivors' physical, psychological, and emotional safety, focuses on rebuilding their sense of control and empowerment, and meets them where they are without judgment.

all potential symptoms that may be evident in victims. Thus, disengagement from public life, including public and semi-public debates among survivors of TFGBV is included in order to highlight the implications for equal political participation. Therefore, it is important to capture detailed reflections and insights into the institutional and personal responses of TFGBV, challenges in providing required psychological support, in order to reach the broader implications on women's participation in political and economic life.

- **Procedure:** The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring different aspects of personal reflections, while ensuring the coverage of the main topics. The KIIs were conducted online and in-person, based on interviewee preference, in as safe and neutral environments as possible, with measures in place to ensure confidentiality and provide emotional support if deemed relevant, required, or requested by the participants.

3.3. Guidelines for Interviewing Survivors

The below guidelines have been taken from Feminist Interviewing Experience, Take and Knowledge by L. DeVault, and Gross paper, and from the experiences of feminist facilitators.

3.3.1 Ethical Considerations

- **Privacy:** Interviewers ensured the privacy and confidentiality of the information shared by survivors, in line with feminist perspectives. Additionally, verbatim information/quotes from participants were anonymized throughout the paper.
- **Informed Consent:** All participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. Written consent focusing on

confidentiality was obtained before participation. Moreover, the consent form ensured that participants were aware of the voice recording that took place during the session.

- **Confidentiality:** Data was anonymous, and participants' identities and personal information were protected throughout the research process. Sensitive information was stored securely and only accessible to authorized personnel. It is also important to emphasize that the data collected was and will not be used for any other research purposes.
- **Support Services:** Participants, especially survivors of TFGBV, were provided with information and access to psychological support services during and after the study, if needed.
- **Avoid Victim-Blaming Language:** Used language that avoided blaming the survivor, created a supportive environment.
- **Comfort in Setting:** Ensured that the setting, place, and time of the interview made the survivor feel comfortable.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Took into account the cultural background and context in both the questions and the conduct of the interview. We emphasized to have an equal relationship between the facilitator and the participants to create an environment of a safe space.
- **Active Listening and Empathy:** Adopted an active listening approach, demonstrating empathy rather than sympathy.
- **Openness:** informed participants that end results will be shared with them.

3.3.2. Handling Triggering Information

It is common during these interviews and sessions regarding personal experiences to have triggering information, and the interviewer needed to:

- **Recognize Triggers:** Acknowledge that discussions about personal experiences on TFGBV can be triggering, which may bring up memories of harassment, abuse, invasion of privacy, or online exploitation. These discussions may evoke feelings of fear, shame, or distress for survivors, as they recount incidents that deeply affected their sense of safety and well-being. Facilitators can recognize triggers by being attentive to both verbal and non-verbal cues, such as sudden changes in tone, body language, facial expressions, or withdrawal from the discussion. If a participant appears anxious, agitated, or emotional, this may indicate they are experiencing a trigger.

To respond appropriately, facilitators were prepared to

- **Pause / withdraw the session:** Offer the participant a break or check in with them privately to see if they need to withdraw completely from the interview at any time if they wish or continue at their own pace.
- **Create a supportive environment:** Remind participants that they are in control of what they choose to share, and it is fine to opt out of certain questions or discussions.
- **Provide emotional support:** Refer participants to available resources if needed.

- **Grounding techniques:** Encourage grounding techniques such as deep breathing or mindfulness exercises if participants become overwhelmed.
- **Follow up:** Ensure post-session follow-ups are available, allowing participants to process their emotions with professional support, if desired.

By remaining observant, empathetic, and flexible, facilitators can help mitigate the impact of triggers while ensuring participants feel safe and respected.

3.3.3. Maintaining Neutrality

- **Neutral Stance:** The interviewer should remain neutral and avoid sharing personal opinions during the interview, and show compassion.
- **Probing and Clarity:** Make sure to probe thoughtfully and ask straightforward, clear questions that do not come across as statements.

3.3.4. Body Language and Communication

- **Positive Non-Verbal Cues:** Pay attention to body language, such as maintaining eye contact, showing interest in the conversation, attentiveness, and actively listening.
- **Acknowledgement:** Thank participants for sharing their personal experiences, showing appreciation and respect for their openness.



4. Data Analysis

Qualitative Data: A thematic analysis was conducted to uncover patterns and key themes derived from the results and thorough conclusions of the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The analysis also examined the psychological, social, impacts, as well as the effects on political participation and engagement in civic spaces.

5. Expected Outcomes

- **Capacity Building:** Findings will be used to build the capacity of local organizations and government entities in addressing TFGBV. Moreover, findings will be used to help identify which topics need to be included in establishing curricula for service providers to build communities' capacities.
- **Awareness Raising:** The research will contribute to raising awareness about the impact of TFGBV, promoting advocacy efforts for greater protection of women and girls and other affected population groups in digital spaces.
- **Policy Recommendations:** Insights from the study will inform policy recommendations for improving responses to TFGBV, particularly in enhancing digital safety and supporting women's political participation and civic engagement more broadly.

6. Research Limitations

Cultural Sensitivity

Navigating cultural taboos around discussing gender-based violence, particularly within the digital sphere, was a significant consideration in the Jordanian context due to deep-rooted societal norms surrounding family honor and gender roles. We anticipated that fear of social stigma, potential dishonor to families, or even retaliation might make participants reluctant to openly discuss their experiences during Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

While we did encounter instances where participants initially hesitated to share their experiences, these challenges were mitigated through several proactive measures. First, we ensured that all participants were informed about the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Second, we provided participants with the option to seek support from protection service providers, either during or after the discussions, which helped alleviate concerns about potential repercussions.

As a result, while the challenge of cultural sensitivity was present, it did not significantly hinder the openness of participants. By implementing these measures, we were able to create a supportive space that encouraged honest dialogue while respecting cultural norms and safeguarding participants' well-being.

Prolonged Protocols

The research team initiated communication with local actors at an early stage to incorporate their input and insights into the research. However, due to extended approval protocols, we were unable to include their perspectives, resulting in no representation from these stakeholders in any of the conducted FGDs. A similar challenge was encountered with representatives from UN agencies, as there was a lack of response and follow-through from their side. To address this, the researchers followed up persistently by employing alternative communication methods, including emails, phone calls, and leveraging existing partnerships. These

efforts eventually resulted in their participation; however the process caused delays, pushing the FGD to late January. Despite the delays, the inclusion of these key stakeholders was achieved, ensuring their valuable input was captured.

The limited availability of service providers specializing in TFGBV

As the TFGBV sector is still emerging in Jordan, it was challenging to include representation of service providers across Jordan. Therefore, the research team engaged with existing coalitions, such as TAMAM Coalition² Information and Research Center – King Hussein Foundation (IRCKHF) to incorporate a diverse range of actors from different governorates across the country. This strategy aimed to ensure a more inclusive representation and foster a comprehensive understanding of the issue, while highlighting the services available to survivors of TFGBV.

7. Interview Challenges

The interview process presented both anticipated and unexpected challenges. While initial plans aimed to create a safe and comfortable environment, some participants remained hesitant to share details due to fears of repercussions or deep-seated trauma. Gaining trust required multiple interactions, and in some cases, participants were more open in informal settings rather than structured interviews. Additionally, logistical challenges, such as arranging safe and private locations for interviews, influenced the depth of conversations. Despite these difficulties, the interviews provided rich qualitative data, revealing the nuanced ways in which survivors navigate both institutional and societal barriers.

² TAMAM is a coalition for women rights organizations and digital safety and security organizations for the digital safety of women in Jordan, which JOSA is a part of.

Secondary Research

Responses to TFGBV: Regional and Local Perspectives

Since the early 2000s, digital technologies have vastly transformed the way the world functions and how we interact with one another. These advancements have reshaped social interactions, public debates, political discourse, and the organization and mobilization for social change. They also offer new avenues for innovation and alternative work methods. There is considerable excitement surrounding these platforms and tools, highlighting their potential for driving transformative change (Asmar, 2020, p. 5)³.

In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA)—a region marked by patriarchal societies, oppressive regimes, economic challenges, conflict, and displacement—the impact of digital tools on social change has already been evident during various waves of uprisings from 2011 through late 2019 and into 2020 (Asmar, 2020, p. 5). For instance, “social media has been highly emphasized as a tool for citizen journalism in the region” (Asmar, 2020, p. 5). During the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially in relation to physical distancing, the digital space

³ Claiming and Reclaiming the Digital World as a Public Space: Experiences and insights from feminists in the Middle East and North Africa, is a research paper by El Asmar, Francesca. This paper seeks to highlight the experiences and aspirations of young women and feminist activists in the MENA region around digital spaces, safety and rights. It explores individual women's experiences engaging with the digital world, the opportunities and challenges that women's rights and feminist organizations find in these platforms, and the digital world as a space of resistance, despite restrictions on civic space. Drawing on interviews with feminist activists from the region, the paper sheds light on women's online experiences and related offline risks, illustrates patterns and behaviours that prevailed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

has allowed new types of interactions to emerge at the personal and public levels, and it has expanded the world of virtual interactions.

Despite the enthusiasm and optimism surrounding the potential of digital spaces to create better futures and equitable societies, significant risks and limitations persist. During the COVID-19 pandemic, marked by lockdowns and quarantines—the gendered impacts of which have been extensively documented—the use of digital platforms surged, worsening existing risks for women. Additionally, the pandemic increased pressures on women offline, amplifying their caregiving responsibilities as entire families stayed home while managing remote work and homeschooling (Asmar, 2020).

In the MENA region, women—especially young women—are often confined to roles dictated by patriarchal norms, limiting their access to public spaces due to forced isolation, harassment, violence, and silencing. Their personal freedoms are significantly restricted, and their participation in the economy, politics, and other public domains

ranks among the lowest in the world (Asmar, 2020). According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2024, the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region continues to rank last among all regions, with a gender parity score of 61.7%. The report highlights that seven of the ten lowest-scoring countries globally are located in this region, this reflects persistent challenges in closing gender gaps. MENA also scored lowest in Political Empowerment, with a score of only 11.7%, and ranked seventh in Economic Participation and Opportunity, with a score of 43.1%. Fortunately, the region has seen some progress since 2006, with overall gender parity improving by 3.9 percentage points during this period (Forum, 2024).

UN Women reports that nearly 40% of women in the Arab States have experienced some form of violence, although the actual numbers are likely much higher. Moreover, in the Arab States, a regional study found that 60% of female internet users in the region have been exposed to online violence in the past year (UN Women, 2024).



Impact of COVID-19 on Gender-Based Violence

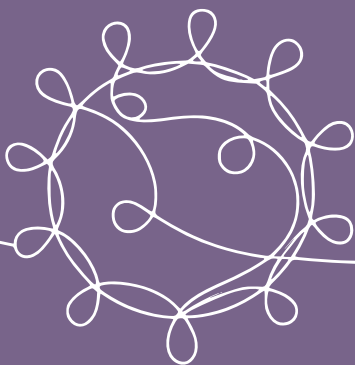
The COVID-19 pandemic is regarded as one of the most severe public health crises in history, significantly impacting the MENA region. These effects have been compounded by pre-existing inequalities, austerity measures, inadequate governance, and ongoing conflict, occupation, and displacement. Women and girls face the brunt of these challenges, as patriarchal norms and inequalities intensify in times of crisis. The pandemic's gender-specific consequences are well-documented: many women have lost jobs and income-generating opportunities due to lockdowns and economic downturns, while access to sexual and reproductive health services had been severely restricted. According to a recent 2023 Oxfam report, 41% of those expected to lose their jobs in the region are women, whose economic participation is already the lowest in the world at just 21%. Additionally, there has been a troubling increase in gender-based and domestic violence during the pandemic, with limited access to support services exacerbated by social distancing and lockdown measures (Salma Jrad, 2023).

Even before the pandemic, digital platforms had emerged as valuable, accessible, and cost-effective tools for feminist and women's rights organizations

(WROs) striving for social change. Throughout the pandemic, despite various restrictions, these organizations continued to provide essential support and services to meet the needs of women and their communities, greatly aided by online tools and platforms. For example, Women Media and Development (TAM) in the Occupied Palestinian Territories utilizes social media to disseminate information, raise awareness, and respond to women's inquiries. Similarly, organizations like Fe-Male in Lebanon and Asswat Nissa, a youth-focused feminist group in Tunisia, leverage social media to create and share daily content aimed at young people while promoting awareness of women's rights and feminism.

The COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted severe damage on women's rights globally, exacerbating risks for women during crises, such as increased violence and isolation from support systems. Notably, TFGBV surged during this period, transforming the internet—a space once considered a secure platform for expression and support—into an unsafe environment (Ingrid Brudvig, 2023, p. 2). Amnesty International also highlights a significant escalation in domestic violence, with its impact spilling into the digital realm.

To conclude, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the prevalence and impact of TFGBV, turning the digital space into a hostile environment for many women. The shift to online interactions offered vital connectivity but it has also intensified the risks of online harassment, doxxing, and non-consensual sharing of images, further entrenching existing gender inequalities. These acts of violence undermine women's access to essential resources, such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, perpetuating cycles of re-victimization due to the permanence of abusive content online.



The Role of Digital Technology in Gender-Based Violence

Sarra Ben Said, Executive Director of Asswat Nissa, highlighted that digital platforms have made it easier for young women to access information about socio-political events, economics, and culture. Similarly, Suhair Faraj, Director of (Women and Media Development TAM), noted that these platforms allow youth to explore topics often considered taboo, such as sexuality, love, and relationships. However, concerns were raised about potential misinformation spreading on such open platforms (Asmar, 2020, p. 11).

Despite the access limitations discussed earlier, digital platforms offer a cost-effective alternative to traditional campaigning methods, with enhanced potential for outreach, visibility, and engagement. Particularly, social media facilitates broader outreach to the youth and particularly to young women. Sarra Ben Said highlighted that Asswat Nissa primarily connects with young people through social media. “We created an Instagram campaign because this is where the youth are. These platforms give us more access to the population with whom we work, especially women and young women.” (Asmar, 2020, p. 11).

Digital division continues to face an increase, with men 21% more likely to be online than women. This cuts off vital access to services for women and other marginalized groups. The World Wide Web Foundation depicts an alarming rise in the rates of online gender-based violence during the pandemic, undermining women's access to information, health, and employment (Ingrid Brudvig, 2023, p. 2). Furthermore, it is a spectrum of harms, including non-consensual image sharing, online stalking, and threats – with the possibility of re-victimization because online content tends to be permanent. The

scale of the problem remains under-documented and inadequately addressed, with almost no effective legal response in place. Yet, not many law enforcement agencies address violence online, either by viable techniques or in support of a victim.

This evidence gap persists, prompting the Web Foundation to actively work on bridging it. Their research reveals that online harassment disproportionately affects young people and women, with greater online engagement by women correlating to increased risks of violence. This can lead to significant social and economic impacts, as well as adverse effects on mental health. The normalization of violence against women in both media and online platforms is particularly alarming. (Ingrid Brudvig, 2023, p. 5).

The increasing reliance on Artificial Intelligence for content moderation has exposed significant challenges in addressing online harassment and abuse. For instance, as Morgan Barbour's Community Standards illustrates, platforms often struggle to keep up with the volume and complexity of harmful content, particularly in the absence of sufficient human oversight (Barbour, 2020). Despite efforts by tech companies to tackle harassment, their responses remain inadequate, especially in combating gender-specific disinformation, which can undermine women's democratic participation. Furthermore, the evidence gap surrounding technology-facilitated gender-based violence persists, leaving many victims without effective reporting mechanisms or support. As technology becomes increasingly central to everyday life these ongoing issues underscore the urgent need for more comprehensive, responsive, and inclusive digital environments to protect women and marginalized communities.

Challenges for Women Locally and Regionally

While digital platforms serve as powerful tools for feminist change, they also expose organizations, the women involved, and their content to both individual and collective attacks. As Hayat Mershad, a prominent Arab feminist, activist, and journalist, pointed out, “there isn’t a single time that feminist content is posted online without facing bullying afterwards.” (Asmar, 2020, p.13) Organizations that share information about abuse or provide digital services often encounter harassment, victim-blaming, and mass attacks, mirroring the blame and shame women face offline. This was corroborated by interviewees and other studies, who noted that these attacks often extend to women working in these organizations, such as case workers and journalists.

All women interviewed in the studies cited in this section reported experiencing online and offline attacks, reflecting a broader regional trend across the MENA region. For instance, Sarra Ben Said from Tunisia faced an online smear campaign using photos from her organization’s Facebook page, while Lilav Ihsan from Iraq received personal threats that targeted her father as well due to her support for women affected by the conflict in Iraq. Hayat Mershad and members of the Fe-Male organization in Lebanon also endured threats to themselves and their loved ones, both online and offline. Similarly, Suhair Faraj highlighted that case workers at TAM, a women and media development organization in Palestine, regularly face threats and online harassment from abusers, including instances of men impersonating women on the organization’s hotline to gather information for defamation or to sexually harass staff (Asmar, 2020, p. 13).

Moreover, Radio Rozana’s Chief Editor; Loujeina Haj Yousef mentioned that “Every time Radio Rozana publishes anything related to gender issues or

women’s rights, we are attacked online. When we publish content on issues such as marital rape, cheaper alternatives to sanitary pads or women driving cars, we are accused of being indecent and of disrespecting Syrian culture and religion. The very worst attacks come when we publish about homosexuality.” (Refsing, 2023)

Despite these frequent forms of violence, women’s rights organizations and feminist groups persist in responding to incidents of violence, both online and offline, putting in protective measures. (Asmar, 2020, p. 13). They have implemented protective measures, such as separating their private lives and social media profiles from the organizations’ channels, to avoid being personally targeted

According to secondary sources, including studies such as those by Asmar (2020), cooperation with government cybercrime units and major tech companies in combating online violence presents significant challenges. While cybercrime units in countries like the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Lebanon have demonstrated efficiency in tracing perpetrators, these actions often come with substantial risks. In these contexts, the same governments and security forces that track online abusers also engage in repressive practices, using women’s data against them, suppressing dissent, and employing tactics of threat, blackmail, and extortion—as illustrated by the Occupied Palestinian Territories case (Asmar, 2020, p. 13).

Nevertheless, women’s rights and feminist movements remain a powerful force of social change in the MENA region. These movements are at the forefront of efforts against gender-based violence; advocating for the abolition of discriminatory laws and the dismantling of patriarchal social norms. Additionally they create alternative safe spaces

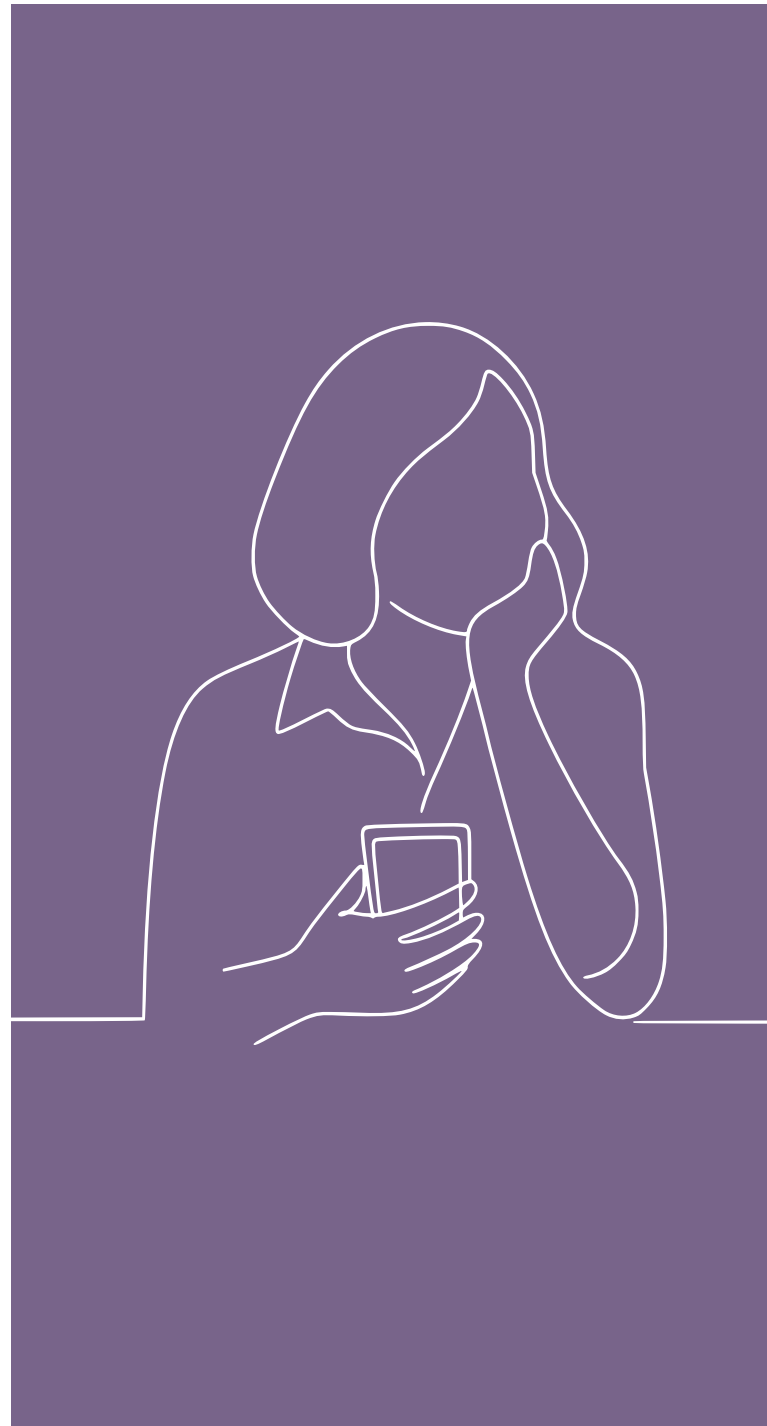
where women and other marginalized groups can organize and build solidarity, as well as re-imagine feminist futures grounded in social justice (Asfari Institute, 2023). Despite their efforts, the struggle for gender justice is constantly hampered by increased restrictions on civil society, as well as on freedom of assembly and expression in the region where civic space is closing up at an alarming rate (Middle East & North Africa - Civicus Monitor 2022, n.d.)).

As the women's rights organization Kvinna Till Kvinna noted in a 2018 report, "the reduction of civic space has dire consequences for the work of all civil society organizations and movements, but those fighting for the rights of women and working on feminist issues often bear the most dramatic consequences." (Asmar, 2020, p. 14). For instance, many Bahraini women human rights defenders are currently living in exile out of fear for their security after continuous threats. In Egypt, civic space is extremely repressive towards rights-based groups and activists, with bans and heavy sanctions imposed on organizations receiving foreign funding, while at the same time, activists suffer defamation campaigns and arrests. In Iraq, Jordan, and Palestine, women human rights defenders suffer from threats emanating from political parties and state and non-state actors perpetrating social norms that bind these women and hinder their ability to express themselves at the cost of their lives. For this reason, feminist movements have been able to devise new and adapted strategies for organizing and fighting for social justice; in many cases using digital means and platforms (Asmar, 2020, p. 14).

Particularly in contexts of health and economic crises, fragmentation, occupation, armed conflicts, and shrinking civic space, digital platforms play an important role in responding to challenges and offering an alternative space for discussion, mutual learning and support, as well as solidarity and resistance through amassing collective power.

As noted by interviewees from the studies referenced

in this section, digital platforms have given them a space to push back and fight against oppression, to shape and disseminate counter-narratives. They all considered online platforms as outlets for them to address critical issues they care about, to influence the discourse of people and communities around them, and to provide information about public policies and feminist change (Asmar, 2020, p. 15).



Digital Violence against Women Journalists in Jordan

“As gendered digital violence is becoming “a particularly dangerous” trend, Jordanian [women] journalists and digital violence experts provided a snapshot of the situation in the Kingdom” (Weldali, 2022). Women in journalism are influential, and for that reason they become targets for digital violence and start to feel intimidated online due to their work, as Jordanian journalist Shahed Jihad reported in an interview with The Jordan Times (Weldali, 2022).

“The situation remains complex in Jordan because most families deal with female survivors of digital violence in a negative manner”, Shahed Jihad said, meaning that they do not receive the support needed in order to open up and tackle such issues. “There is still this mentality that sees a woman’s place in her

husband’s house and no matter what she achieves in her life, she is confined to that home as a housewife.” (Weldali, 2022).

The same article also shares the viewpoint of Lina Momani, the Salam@ national coordinator, regarding the repercussions of TFGBV on activists and journalists in Jordan, she has emphasized that “digital violence is also moving offline and the trend is significantly increasing” adding that “Female journalists may be abused using harassment, hateful messages, extortion, privacy violations, doxxing — the collection of private information — and tracking. Additionally, they may receive threats to their professional standing and personal reputation or be a victim of digital security attacks” (Weldali, 2022).



The Escalating Threat of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence: Global and Jordanian Perspectives

TFGBV encompasses acts such as online harassment, doxxing, and the non-consensual sharing of images, often perpetuated by intimate partners or strangers. A key concern is the “permanence and virality” of abusive content, which subjects victims to continuous re-victimization. This form of violence has exacerbated existing gender inequalities, limiting women’s access to digital spaces essential for education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. addressing TFGBV remains

challenging due to legal grey areas, insufficient law enforcement training, and a lack of global policy frameworks (Ingrid Brudvig, 2021).

Efforts to combat TFGBV are hampered by an evidence gap, as data collection on the issue remains limited. Studies Reveal that in 74% of surveyed countries, law enforcement and judicial systems fail to adequately address tech-facilitated gender-based violence. Many victims are unaware of their legal rights, and the high costs of legal services further deter action. Findings from the Women's Rights Online research emphasize that the likelihood of TFGBV increases with women's digital engagement, often forcing them to withdraw from online platforms for safety. The report calls for comprehensive policy solutions, improved digital platform accountability, and global efforts to close the evidence gap, ensuring the internet becomes a safe, empowering space for all (Ingrid Brudvig, 2021).

TFGBV and cybercrime represent significant and escalating challenges in Jordan, disproportionately affecting women and marginalized groups. According to a survey conducted by Siren Associates, 80% of cybercrime victims are women, yet only 8% of women feel comfortable reporting such crimes on their own, compared to 40% of men. This disparity reflects deep-seated cultural norms and barriers, including fears of reputational damage and concerns about confidentiality. While 86% of respondents express willingness to report online crimes to the Cybercrime Unit, societal pressures and honor-related stigmas often discourage reporting, particularly in cases involving blackmail or gender-based crimes (Siren Associates, 2021).

Furthermore, 89% of families in Jordan now have internet access, and 65% of children aged five and above use the internet, underscoring the need for robust digital safety measures. Women and girls report heightened concern over sharing photos or videos due to the risk of blackmail and online sexual harassment, issues that have cascading effects, including verbal, psychological, and socioeconomic violence. These statistics highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions, including gender-sensitive reporting mechanisms, increased confidentiality guarantees, and the presence of female officers to address the specific vulnerabilities of women in Jordan's digital landscape (Siren Associates, 2021).

Efforts to combat TFGBV in Jordan must address systemic challenges while considering the cultural and legal context. Jordanian female journalists, for example, face threats such as extortion, doxxing, and harassment that often spill over into offline spaces. Families and communities often fail to provide support, reinforcing silence and isolation among victims. Limited legal protections and the normalization of gender-based violence online leave many women vulnerable, with inadequate enforcement mechanisms further deterring victims from reporting abuse. A multi-stakeholder approach is urgently needed, including the development of robust legal frameworks, digital safety initiatives, and public awareness campaigns that destigmatize reporting. By addressing these barriers and fostering an equitable online environment, Jordan can create a safer and more inclusive digital space for women, empowering them to participate fully in social, economic, and political life.

Primary Research

This section presents an analysis of data collected through 10 key informant interviews (KIIs) and four focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted to explore the social, economic, and political impacts of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) on survivors in Jordan. The KIIs included five survivors who were human rights defenders and activists that include LGBTQ+ individuals and people with disabilities, alongside five interviews with women and girls from diverse backgrounds, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, journalists, and university students.

Participants represented a range of sectors and experiences, with nine women and one man from Amman, Zarqa, and Karak. The FGDs engaged participants from civil society organizations addressing TFGBV, with contributors from Amman, Aqaba, Ajloun, and Karak. This diverse participant pool provided nuanced insights into the multifaceted impacts of TFGBV, as well as the institutional and community-level responses to it. The findings are analyzed across key themes to highlight recurring patterns, survivor experiences, and gaps in systemic support.

Key Informant Interviews

Analysis by Themes

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence continues to undermine the autonomy, safety, and well-being of women and marginalized groups in Jordan. This pervasive issue manifests in profound psychological, social, and political consequences for survivors, limiting their ability to participate in both public and digital spheres. Survivors frequently report psychological distress, such as anxiety, mistrust, and isolation, which is compounded by the persistent nature of online abuse and the public exposure of personal information. These challenges highlight the critical need for accessible mental health resources and survivor-centered interventions to mitigate the long-term impacts of TFGBV.

Socially, survivors face heightened family surveillance, judgment, and blame from their communities, which restricts their autonomy and reinforces harmful gender norms. The stigma surrounding online harassment amplifies the difficulties survivors face in seeking support, creating a cycle of silence and invisibility. Politically, women in public roles are disproportionately targeted with harassment that discredits their legitimacy and deters their participation in public discourse. These attacks, often rooted in gendered stereotypes, not only discourage political engagement but also undermine broader efforts toward gender equity in leadership and decision-making.

In response to TFGBV incidents and their consequences, survivors have adopted digital security practices, such as using encrypted messaging apps and enabling two-factor authentication, to protect themselves. However, these measures often come at the cost of their full participation in digital spaces, as many survivors also limit their online presence or use pseudonyms to avoid further harm. This highlights the need for systemic solutions that balance safety and digital autonomy. While authorities and digital platforms have taken steps to address these issues such as

implementing reporting mechanisms and content moderation policies, survivors still encounter dismissive attitudes and inaction in some cases. For example, reporting processes on social media platforms are reported to be sometimes slow and inadequate. This lack of accountability perpetuates survivor fatigue and deters further reporting of incidents.

Despite these obstacles posed by TFGBV incidents, technology also holds transformative potential as a tool for empowerment and solidarity. Survivors have used digital platforms to raise awareness, share their stories, and build supportive communities. However, to fully realize this potential, technology companies must adopt survivor-centric policies, enhance moderation practices, and create tools that prioritize user safety. While some digital platforms such as META have made efforts to improve responses such as increasing content moderation and implementing reporting mechanisms, the moderation is still wanting. For example, response times to the reports significantly vary. To address this issue, institutional and organizational reforms are essential, including the establishment of robust legal frameworks, trauma-informed training for law enforcement, and stronger accountability measures for platforms regarding harmful content

To address TFGBV effectively, a multi-stakeholder approach is needed. This includes strengthening legal protections, raising public awareness, and empowering survivors through education and access to support services. By addressing the intersection of psychological trauma, social stigma, and institutional inadequacies, Jordan can create a safer, more inclusive digital environment. These efforts are critical not only to combatting TFGBV but also to ensuring that women and marginalized groups can fully participate in public life, free from fear and discrimination. Through collaborative action, we can transform the digital space into one of opportunity and empowerment for all.

Psychological Impact

Key Insights

Survivors consistently reported significant psychological distress, including anxiety, fear, and mistrust. Many described feelings of isolation stemming from the persistent nature of online harassment and the public exposure of private information.

Illustrative Reflections

One participant, a university student, described the overwhelming psychological impact of being blackmailed online:

“I still don’t know how to solve my issue, and I don’t know what to do with the people who have violated my privacy. There were no consequences, and now I’m so scared to trust anyone to the point where I am so scared to take pictures and be comfortable.”

This vivid account underscores the long-lasting emotional toll of TFGBV. The fear of trust violations, loss of privacy, and the constant anxiety of being watched significantly alters how survivors interact with their environment.

Patterns Identified

- **Chronic Stress:** The recurring nature of threats and harassment led to heightened anxiety and difficulty coping.
- **Impact on Emotional Well-Being:** Survivors frequently expressed difficulty trusting others, with some withdrawing from public spaces, both online and offline.

Discussion

Psychological distress caused by TFGBV extends beyond the digital realm, affecting survivors’ ability to engage with family, community, and work. This harm is further compounded by societal stigma and cultural expectations, which often place additional social burdens on survivors. As we explore the social impact, we see how these cultural norms deepen survivors’ isolation and restrict their autonomy, creating interlinked cycles of psychological and social harm.

Social Impact

Key Insights

Social repercussions included increased familial control and isolation. Many survivors reported that their families imposed restrictions on their digital presence to mitigate perceived risks to family reputation. This not only limited survivors' access to online spaces but also strained their relationships with close circles, leading to diminished trust and emotional support. In many cases, victim-blaming further reinforced isolation, leaving survivors without essential social and familial connections.

Illustrative Reflections

One survivor shared how their family forbade them from using social media, citing safety concerns.

“My family told me to delete all my accounts. They think this will protect me, but it just makes me feel isolated.”

Others described how their communities treated them with skepticism or outright blame following incidents of TFGBV.

“People in my community blame me for what happened. They say I should have been more careful, as if it's my fault.”

Patterns Identified

- **Family Dynamics:** Survivors faced heightened surveillance and limitations on their online activities, often at the expense of their autonomy.
- **Community Stigma:** Survivors experienced judgment and blame, further isolating them from their social networks.

Discussion

Cultural norms surrounding honor and reputation exacerbate the social consequences of TFGBV, particularly for women. These social limitations often discourage survivors from seeking support and perpetuate harmful gender norms. This social silencing is especially significant when examining the political impact, where these same norms hinder women's participation in public life and political engagement.

Political Impact

Key Insights

Women in public and political roles were disproportionately targeted with harassment aimed at discrediting their legitimacy. Many participants reported gender-based attacks that questioned their abilities and right to participate in public life.

Illustrative Reflections

A participant who was a candidate for the parliamentary elections in Jordan recounted how online harassment during her electoral campaign focused on her identity, rather than her ideas or qualifications.

“I was harassed online during my campaign. The comments weren’t about my policies—they were personal, attacking me as a woman.”

Others described how the public sharing of personal information was used as a tool to intimidate and silence activists, as one activist who faced an online doxxing campaign against them said:

“They published my private information to intimidate me. It’s hard to continue speaking out when you feel unsafe.”

Patterns Identified

- **Gendered Nature of Harassment:** The attacks often targeted survivors’ identities, such as their gender or other personal characteristics, rather than their professional or political platforms.
- **Withdrawal from Political Engagement:** For some, the persistent harassment led to varying degrees of disengagement from political or public discourse. While some participants deactivated their social media accounts temporarily before returning with a low profile and reduced activity, others ceased their online engagement entirely but left their accounts active. Regardless of the extent, both forms of withdrawal reflect restrictions on digital rights and highlight the broader impact of harassment on survivors’ participation in public life.

Discussion

The silencing effect of TFGBV on women in politics not only restricts their voices but also reflects a broader systemic issue of inequity in digital and public spaces. Survivors frequently respond to these threats by altering their digital behaviors and adopting defensive strategies, as discussed in the next section.

Digital Behavior and Security Measures

Key Insights

Survivors altered their digital behavior in response to threats, often without consulting technical experts. These changes were not necessarily protective in a positive sense, as they limited their online presence while also reducing exposure to harm. Many participants in the KII's reported deactivating their accounts, using pseudonyms, or limiting engagement to encrypted platforms. However, only a few mentioned adopting digital security measures that could enhance their online safety, such as enabling two-factor authentication, setting up login alerts, or deactivating inactive accounts to reduce their digital footprint⁴.

Illustrative Reflections

One participant shared that they deleted all their social media accounts and now only communicate through secure apps.

"I deleted all my social media accounts and only use encrypted apps now. I feel like I've lost my voice, but it's the only way to feel safe."

Others described avoiding posting personal opinions or photographs online due to fear of exploitation.

"I changed my name online to avoid being tracked, but I still feel exposed. No matter what I do, I'm always worried."

Patterns Identified

- **Minimized Digital Presence:** Many survivors reduced their visibility online to mitigate further risks, often by limiting their engagement or avoiding certain platforms. However these actions did not necessarily remove traces of their digital footprint¹, leaving them potentially vulnerable to continued threats
- **Adoption of Security Practices:** Some sought to educate themselves on the basics of digital security, adopting tools like encrypted messaging apps such as Signal to safeguard their communications. Additionally, a few participants implemented measures like enabling two-factor authentication (2FA) and setting up login alerts to enhance their online safety.

Discussion

While these measures provide short-term safety, they also restrict survivors' ability to fully engage with the digital world, highlighting a need for systemic solutions that ensure safety without sacrificing agency.

⁴ Digital footprints are trails of data that people leave behind as they use the Internet. These footprints include all the digital interactions and information associated with a person across various online platforms and services, including social media, online purchases, web browsing history, app usage, and location data.

Barriers to Accessing Legal Support

Key Insights

Participants frequently criticized legal systems and digital platforms for their inadequate responses to TFGBV. While some survivors sought help through the Cybercrimes Law, they faced lengthy processes and complicated procedures when dealing with legal or official authorities. Additionally, a lack of awareness regarding rights, laws and reporting mechanisms further discouraged survivors from seeking justice. In many cases, reports to Cybercrime units were dismissed or met with inaction, exacerbating survivors' frustration.

Patterns Identified

- **Challenges in Legal and Organizational Responses:** While legal frameworks provide a pathway for addressing TFGBV, gaps in enforcement and procedural complexities often hinder effective outcomes. Survivors reported that bureaucratic hurdles, prolonged response times, and inconsistent handling of cases contributed to a sense of helplessness.
- **Survivor Fatigue:** Many survivors described feeling discouraged from seeking further assistance due to poor initial responses.
- **Stigma and Cultural Norms:** A survivor mentions that societal fears and pressures — often stemming from cultural norms about gender and behavior— impede many women from seeking help. This is evident in the case of the friend who refrained from reporting the crime because of her husband's objection to her going to the Cybercrimes department as a woman.
- **Fear of Social Repercussions:** Many survivors feel that they will face social stigma, judgment, or isolation if they speak out about their experiences. This fear of being socially ostracized influences their decision to stay silent, and in some cases, they prefer to minimize the problem or "walk away from it" rather than seek help.

Barriers to Accessing Legal Support (ctd.)

Illustrative Reflections

One of the survivors who was interviewed in the KII's shared the layered barriers to accessing justice and its connection to cultural barriers:

“The difficulty is not just that I’ve been subjected to online violence... It’s the societal fears and pressures that stop these women from reaching out. Sometimes, it’s not just the economic background but the social one that holds people back. For example, a friend of mine, who is supposed to be open-minded, did not file a complaint because her husband told her not to go to the Cybercrimes department as a woman. This shows how social barriers can be more limiting than financial ones.”

This testimony exemplifies how, despite access to technology and awareness of rights, societal pressures, family dynamics, and financial constraints hinder survivors from seeking justice. The pressure to remain silent or ignore their experiences due to cultural taboos and economic struggles further complicates the situation for many women, especially those from marginalized communities.

Discussion

These reflections shed light on the intersection of societal expectations, financial insecurity, and legal access. Survivors often face compounded barriers, particularly when social norms stigmatize their experiences, and financial challenges prevent them from pursuing legal action. This complex web of barriers underscores the need for comprehensive support systems that address both the social and economic factors affecting survivors' ability to seek justice.

Role of Technology

Key Insights

Technology served as both a tool for harm and a means of support. Survivors noted the failure of digital platforms to address abuse adequately but also highlighted the potential of technology to create safe spaces.

Illustrative Reflections

Some participants emphasized how social media platforms enabled the spread of harmful content, while others shared how encrypted communication tools helped them feel safer.

“Social media platforms don’t take harassment seriously. Reporting tools are useless — they never respond in time.”

A few described using technology to raise awareness and build solidarity among survivors.

“Technology can be empowering, but it’s also a weapon in the wrong hands. It feels like a double-edged sword.”

Discussion

Technology companies must adopt survivor-centric policies, enhancing moderation and creating tools that empower users to protect themselves.



Focus Group Discussions (FGD) Analysis by Themes

The findings from the four Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) underscore the pervasive and multi-faceted impacts of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) on women's psychological well-being, social standing, and political participation in Jordan. These discussions, conducted with participants from diverse backgrounds that were experts in the field of TFGBV in Jordan, whether they were reporting TFGBV incidents, providing legal, technical, psycho-social or financial support, or researching the phenomenon of TFGBV in Jordan, these participants—journalists, politicians, service providers, research centers, feminist organizations and a dedicated focus group with UN agencies—revealed the widespread nature of TFGBV and its profound consequences across different regions of Jordan, including Amman, Aqaba, Ajloun, and Karak.

The FGDs resulted in key points, similar to the KII's, as there were significant similarities in addressing psychological, social, and political consequences of TFGBV.

Stemming from their experience in TFGBV in Jordan, Participants from FGDs have highlighted that survivors of online abuse often endure significant distress, anxiety, and fear, compounded by the persistent nature of digital violence and the loss of control over their online spaces. Socially, they experience heightened surveillance, judgment, and blame from their communities, reinforcing harmful gender norms and exacerbating their isolation. The stigma surrounding online harassment further discourages survivors from seeking support, creating a cycle of silence and invisibility. Politically, women in leadership roles or public positions are disproportionately targeted, deepening systemic gender inequalities and limiting their participation in public life. While survivors adopt coping strategies such as limiting their online presence and implementing digital security measures, legal and institutional responses remain inadequate, often marked by dismissive attitudes and inaction.

Psychological Impact

Key Insights

- Participants highlighted significant psychological effects of TFGBV, including anxiety, fear, and emotional distress.
- Survivors often experience sleep disturbances, eating disorders, and in severe cases, suicidal ideation due to ongoing harassment and threats.
- Many survivors internalize societal blame, leading to feelings of guilt and shame. These emotions are particularly acute in conservative communities where survivors are held to rigid standards of behavior.
- Survivors report diminished self-esteem and a reluctance to participate in public or digital spaces, further isolating them from support networks and freedom of expression.

Patterns Identified

- **Impact of Social Stigma:** Survivors face compounded psychological pressures due to negative reactions from families and communities. Survivors face entrenched social stigmas that prevent them from seeking help. Moreover, participants highlighted how societal norms perpetuate victim-blaming, often discouraging survivors from reporting incidents. For instance, women in conservative communities avoid discussing digital violence due to fears of damaging families' reputations.
- **Variation in Reactions:** Psychological responses vary based on the survivor's resilience, nature of the incident, and social support system.

Psychological Impact (ctd.)

Illustrative Reflections

One participant described heightened anxiety and isolation, which extended to a fear of further harm to family members.

“Every message I get triggers anxiety. Even a normal notification feels like it could be something harmful.”

Another noted that survivors often lash out emotionally, showing signs of anger or frustration, stemming from unresolved trauma.

“I’ve stopped sleeping properly because I replay the threats in my mind. It’s exhausting and never-ending.”

Survivors expressed hesitation in approaching formal institutions due to fears of being blamed or not taken seriously. A participant recounted her experience, stating:

“The officer handling my case asked why I gave my phone number to a stranger, making me feel like it was my fault.”

Discussion

Psychological harm is not limited to the survivor; it affects their ability to engage with their family, community, and work. The social stigma attached to reporting TFGBV intensifies these effects, indicating an urgent need for accessible mental health services tailored to survivors.

Social Impact

Key Insights

- Survivors encounter increased familial and societal restrictions, including being silenced due to honor and reputational concerns.
- Fear of societal judgment discourages survivors from seeking help, perpetuating cycles of silence.
- Digital harassment often pushes survivors to retreat from both online and offline engagements.

Illustrative Reflections

A participant explained that cultural norms, especially in the south of Jordan, reinforce the idea that women should not publicly share their experiences of TFGBV.

“The community talks about me as if I’ve done something shameful just because I reported harassment.”

A politically active participant explained,

“I stopped posting on social media and attending events because the harassment was relentless. It felt like my voice was being erased.”

Another emphasized how victims internalize blame, further isolating themselves from their social networks.

“I’ve lost friends over this. They think associating with me will somehow tarnish their reputation.”

Patterns Identified

- Survivors encounter increased familial and societal restrictions, including being silenced due to honor and reputational concerns.
- Fear of societal judgment discourages survivors from seeking help, perpetuating cycles of silence.
- Survivors often face family-imposed restrictions on digital use to avoid further harm.
- Survivors are stigmatized, leading to a loss of trust in their community.

Discussion

Cultural norms surrounding honor and reputation amplify the social consequences of TFGBV. Interventions must address these systemic barriers and foster environments that encourage survivors to seek support without fear of judgment.

Political Impact

Key Insights

- Women in political and public roles are frequently targeted through widespread campaigns of harassment and defamation.
- Survivors report feeling discouraged from engaging in public discourse due to the persistent threats and personal attacks.
- Women active in political or public discourse are disproportionately targeted by digital campaigns aimed at silencing them. This deters participation and perpetuates gender inequality in public decision-making.

Illustrative Reflections

One participant recounted how a female politician was publicly harassed online, with attackers leveraging gendered stereotypes to discredit her.

“As a public figure, I’m constantly attacked online. It’s not about my work but about silencing me as a woman.”

Another noted that TFGBV campaigns are disproportionately harsher for women, as technology facilitates anonymous and large-scale abuse.

Patterns Identified

- **Gendered nature of attacks:** Harassment often focuses on a woman’s identity, family, or personal life rather than her public role or ideas.
- **Silencing effect:** Many women withdraw from political or public activities to avoid further harm on themselves and their loved ones.

Discussion

Cultural norms surrounding honor and reputation amplify the social consequences of TFGBV. Interventions must address these systemic barriers and foster environments that encourage survivors to seek support without fear of judgment.

Digital Behavior and Security Measures

Key Insights

- Survivors adopt defensive digital behaviors, including deleting social media accounts, using pseudonyms, or restricting online activity.
- Lack of awareness of digital risks and safety measures exacerbates vulnerability to TFGBV.

Illustrative Reflections

Participants mentioned cases where survivors deleted all online accounts, leaving only minimal communication methods like WhatsApp.

“I had to delete most of my social media accounts. It feels like I’ve disappeared from the world.”

Another participant highlighted the need for gender-sensitive digital safety training.

“I’ve started learning about digital safety, but I wish this kind of knowledge was shared before it was too late.”

Patterns Identified

- **Minimized digital presence:** Survivors limit their online visibility to reduce the risk of future abuse.
- **Need for education:** Participants noted a lack of awareness about secure digital practices among women.
- **Role of civil society in raising awareness:** FGD participants shared information related to their ability as service providers to educate rights holders on digital safety and TFGBV. They discussed their efforts to raise awareness among rights holders, providing them with knowledge about the risks associated with digital platforms and strategies to enhance their online safety. Participants emphasized the importance of empowering individuals with tools and resources to recognize and respond to TFGBV effectively, while also highlighting the challenges they face, such as limited resources and varying levels of digital literacy among rights holders.

Discussion

While these protective measures provide short-term safety, they restrict women’s ability to engage fully in digital spaces, underscoring the need for systemic solutions that prioritize both safety and agency.

Legal and Organizational Responses

Key Insights

- Participants expressed mixed views on the effectiveness of Jordan's Cybercrime Unit, with some CSO members and TFGBV experts trusting its confidentiality and others criticizing limited outreach and accessibility.
- Civil society organizations are seen as crucial intermediaries but lack the resources to provide comprehensive support.

Illustrative Reflections

One of the survivors interviewed in the KII's noted that women often refrain from reporting due to fears of societal backlash and reputational damage, saying:

“When I reported the abuse, they told me it wasn’t serious. How can I trust the system to protect me?”

Another emphasized the need for enhanced collaboration between civil society and government entities to address these gaps.

Patterns Identified

- **Barriers to reporting:** Survivors fear retaliation, loss of employment, or further exposure when seeking help.
- **Need for Digital Expertise:** Case managers and helpline staff require more training in digital protection measures.
- **Lack of Awareness:** FGDs revealed that many survivors are unaware that they are experiencing TFGBV. This lack of awareness extends to recognizing what constitutes digital violence and understanding available legal and social resources. The need for public awareness campaigns was a recurring theme, with participants emphasizing the importance of educating both survivors and communities.
- **Accessibility issues:** Challenges in accessing formal complaint mechanisms and support services were frequently mentioned. Participants noted that survivors often face procedural complexities, which deter them from pursuing legal action. Participants also highlighted that fear of re-victimization by law enforcement or service providers contributes to under-reporting.

Discussion

Strengthening institutional frameworks and providing survivor-centric services are critical to addressing the unique challenges posed by TFGBV. Training law enforcement and civil society organizations in trauma-informed care and digital safety is essential.

Role of Technology

Key Insights

- Technology serves as both a tool for harm and an opportunity for support and awareness-raising.
 - FGDs participants noted the failure of platforms to address abuse adequately, with minimal enforcement of community standards.
-

Illustrative Reflections

A participant shared how encrypted platforms provided a sense of safety for survivors seeking support.

Others highlighted the need for platforms to improve moderation and reporting mechanisms. They report:

“The lack of action from tech companies makes me feel helpless. They have the tools to stop this but don’t use them.”

Discussion

Technology companies must adopt survivor-centered policies, improve moderation, and provide tools to help users protect themselves. Public awareness campaigns on the risks and benefits of digital spaces are essential for fostering safer environments.

Challenges Preventing Survivors from Sharing Experiences

Social Constraints and Stigma

Survivors face societal judgments that label them as responsible for the violence they encounter, particularly when discussing sensitive topics like digital violence. For example, societal norms consider it inappropriate for women to speak out about their experiences due to fears of "shame" or "dishonor". These factors prevent women from accessing support services or legal mechanisms.

Lack of Awareness

Many survivors do not recognize digital abuse as a form of violence. They may dismiss threats, harassment, or exploitation as minor inconveniences rather than serious issues.

Accessibility Issues

Survivors reported difficulty navigating formal complaint mechanisms, as bureaucratic inefficiencies and the fear of being re-victimized discourage women from pursuing justice.

Fear of Economic Repercussions

Survivors, especially employees, fear losing their jobs or reputations if they report incidents. This is particularly pronounced for women in public-facing roles or those with significant professional responsibilities.



Interesting Findings

One of the most surprising findings from the research was the extent to which societal and familial pressures influenced survivors' willingness to report gender-based violence (GBV). While it was expected that stigma and fear of retaliation would play a role, the intensity of the backlash —both from close family members and the broader community— was more severe than initially anticipated. Another interesting finding was the discrepancy between formal support mechanisms and survivors' lived experiences. While institutional frameworks exist to provide assistance, many survivors found them inaccessible due to bureaucratic obstacles, lack of awareness, or mistrust in the system. Additionally, the psychological toll of navigating these barriers was significant, with survivors often expressing exhaustion and disillusionment, reinforcing the cycle of silence and under-reporting.

Recommendations by Survivors

1. Policy Recommendations

Mandate robust content moderation policies

Survivors recommended requiring digital platforms to implement stronger content moderation mechanisms, ensuring faster removal of harmful content. For example, platforms could employ advanced AI combined with human review to detect and address harassment promptly.

Enhance Cybercrime Laws

Participants emphasized the importance of updating cybercrime laws to better address TFGBV. This includes defining digital harassment and abuse clearly within legal frameworks and increasing penalties for perpetrators. Legal reviews show that clear definitions improve enforcement and accountability.

Strengthen Legal Protections and Support Services

A multi-stakeholder approach is essential to address TFGBV effectively. This includes strengthening legal protections, raising public awareness, and empowering survivors through education and access to support services. By addressing the intersection of psychological trauma, social stigma, and institutional inadequacies, Jordan can create a safer, more inclusive digital environment. Legal and

institutional reforms should ensure that women and marginalized groups can fully participate in public life, free from fear and discrimination. Collaborative action among policymakers, civil society, and the private sector is necessary to transform the digital space into one of opportunity and empowerment for all.

2. Community-Based Recommendations

Develop Awareness Campaigns

Survivors suggested public education campaigns to reduce stigma and inform individuals about TFGBV and its consequences. These campaigns could leverage community leaders and local organizations to build trust and accessibility. Similar initiatives in other regions have shown success in encouraging survivors to seek help.

Foster Survivor-Led Initiatives

Survivors proposed empowering fellow survivors to lead initiatives that provide peer-to-peer support and advocacy. Evidence from survivor-led programs highlights their efficacy in reducing stigma and fostering resilience.

3. Support Services Recommendations

Provide Free Legal Aid

Participants stressed the need for accessible legal aid tailored to TFGBV cases. They recommended partnerships between civil society organizations and legal experts to establish survivor-centric legal clinics.

Enhance Mental Health Support

Survivors highlighted the importance of specialized psychological services, such as trauma-informed counseling which can be accessed through community centers. Research emphasizes the necessity of integrating mental health services into GBV response systems to address long-term impacts.

4. Technology and Education Recommendations

Promote Digital Literacy Training

Survivors recommended targeted training programs to educate women and girls about online safety measures, such as using encrypted platforms and recognizing “phishing” attempts.

Develop Reporting Tools

Survivors called for creating user-friendly reporting mechanisms on digital platforms. Tools should provide clear guidance and prioritize confidentiality to encourage survivors to report incidents without fear of retaliation.

Recommendations from Previous Literature Review

To effectively combat Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Jordan and support survivors, a multi-pronged approach involving legal, institutional, community-based, and technological interventions is essential. The following recommendations are drawn from the literature review and research findings:

1. Strengthening the Legal Framework

- **Amendments to cybercrime and data protection laws:** Update existing laws to include explicit provisions addressing TFGBV forms such as “doxxing”, “sextortion”, and online stalking. Ensure clear definitions to eliminate misuse of broad legal terms.
- **Victim-Centered enforcement:** Train judicial and law enforcement personnel to adopt victim-sensitive approaches, prioritizing survivor safety and confidentiality.
- **Increased accountability:** Hold perpetrators accountable through transparent investigation and prosecution processes, emphasizing the importance of privacy and fair treatment during trials.
- **Inclusion of marginalized groups:** Ensure that legal protections encompass the needs of undocumented women, gender and sexual minorities, and individuals with disabilities who are often excluded from existing policies.

2. Enhancing Digital Literacy and Awareness

- **Public awareness campaigns:** Conduct nationwide awareness campaigns focusing on digital rights, online safety, and the dangers of TFGBV. Tailor these campaigns to reach rural and under-served communities.
- **Educational curricula:** Integrate TFGBV education into school curricula, starting from middle school, covering topics such as online harassment, responsible technology use, and reporting mechanisms.
- **Empowering women and girls:** Provide workshops and training programs to equip women and girls with digital literacy skills and cyber hygiene practices, enabling them to protect themselves from online threats.

3. Strengthening Support Systems for Survivors

- **Establish dedicated support services:** Create specialized centers offering legal, psychological, and technical support for TFGBV survivors. These services should be easily accessible, confidential, and tailored to individual needs.
- **Collaboration with civil society organizations:** Increase partnerships with CSOs to expand survivor-focused programs, including helplines, case management, and advocacy efforts.
- **Support networks:** Develop peer-support groups for survivors, creating safe spaces to share experiences and access resources.

4. Leveraging Technology to Prevent and Combat TFGBV

- **Content moderation and AI solutions:** Collaborate with social media platforms to enhance con-

tent moderation algorithms to detect and remove harmful content proactively.

- **Reporting mechanisms:** Advocate for improved online reporting systems that allow survivors to flag harmful content directly to platforms, with timely responses.
- **Digital safety tools:** Develop user-friendly apps and tools to help women secure their digital presence, detect potential risks, and report abuse.

5. Capacity Building for Service Providers

- **Technical training:** Equip service providers, including CSOs and government entities, with the skills and knowledge to address emerging threats, such as “deep fakes” and AI-driven harassment.
- **Interdisciplinary teams:** Establish interdisciplinary task forces comprising legal, technical, and psychological experts to address the multifaceted nature of TFGBV cases.
- **Resource allocation:** Ensure adequate resources for service providers, particularly in rural and under-served areas, to handle increasing cases effectively.

6. Advocacy for Cultural and Societal Change

- **Challenging Victim-Blaming norms:** Conduct community engagement initiatives to combat stigma and shift societal attitudes that blame survivors instead of perpetrators.
- **Promoting gender equality:** Advocate for policies and programs that challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality, creating an environment where survivors feel empowered to seek justice.

7. Strengthening Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- **Government and Private Sector Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between government entities, private sector players (e.g., tech companies), and civil society to develop holistic solutions to TFGBV.
- **Regional and International Cooperation:** Collaborate with regional and international bodies to share best practices, tools, and frameworks for addressing TFGBV.
- **Research and Data Collection:** Invest in ongoing research to identify emerging trends, document survivor experiences, and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

8. Long-Term Monitoring and Evaluation

- **Impact Assessments:** Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of implemented strategies and make adjustments as necessary.
- **Data Transparency:** Maintain open-access databases for tracking TFGBV cases, while ensuring survivor confidentiality.

Service Providers

Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence Service Providers:

1. Public Security Directorate (PSD) - Anti-Cyber Crimes Unit

- National police helpline number is 112.
- National women helpline number is 181
- Cyber Crime Helpline is 1930.

2. Jordan Open Source Association (JOSA)

Contact JOSA's helpline at <https://er.josa.ngo/>

3. Jordanian Women's Union (JWU)

Contact JWU's helpline at +962 (0)6 5675729

4. Institute for Family Health (IFH) - Noor Al Hussein Foundation

The IFH offers psychosocial services, GBV, and child protection case management, including individual counseling. They operate centers in various locations:

- Amman: Sweileh, Hay Al Sharqi, near the North Amman Police Station. Working hours: Sunday to Thursday, 8 AM to 3:30 PM. Hotline: 0799530746.
- Irbid: Princess Basma Development Center, Zahaa Al-Din School Street, next to Prince Rashid Military Hospital, opposite the Boys School, Aydoun. Contact: 0791369005 / 0791369004 / 0798758201.
- Ajloun: Almadina Almonawarah Street. Contact: 0790415453 / 0790415120 / 0795738150.
- Jerash: Al-Ketab Walsonah CBO, King Abdullah Street. Contact: 0790415453 / 0790415120 / 0795738150.

5. International Medical Corps (IMC)

IMC provides comprehensive case management and social services for children at risk. They operate a 24-hour hotline: 0795785095. Amman & Irbid (Eydoun).

6. Public Security Directorate (PSD) - Family and Juvenile Protection Department

They handle cases of domestic violence and provide necessary protection and support.

7. Justice Center for Legal Aid (JCLA)

JCLA provides legal consultations and representation to vulnerable individuals, including GBV survivors. They operate multiple clinics across Jordan's governorates, offering services to those unable to afford private lawyers.

8. Arab Women Organization (AWO)

AWO advocates for women's rights and provides support to GBV survivors. They operate centers in Irbid, Mafrq, and Zarqa, offering services to both Jordanian women and refugees.

9. Caritas Jordan

Caritas Jordan offers humanitarian assistance, including support for GBV survivors. They operate centers across various governorates, providing health, social, and educational services.

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