

# The Horror of Online - A Study on the Prevalence of Violence against Women through Online Platforms and its Preventive Measures

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**Abstract:** *Online Violence against women has been one of the major crimes that is spreading all over the globe. The foundation of this kind of violence begins from the negative influence of technology. It manifests itself in many forms such as online sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying, or threats of rape and death via email and other social media platforms, non-consensual image or video-sharing, cyber stalking (via tracking apps and other digital devices), etc. This study, therefore, seeks to find the prevalence and preventive measures of online violence against women. The study used a descriptive study design with a quantitative method and used a convenience sample technique to select the participants. It was managed to understand the perception of the participants on the prevalence and preventive measures for online violence. The analysis demonstrated that the majority of participants faced online violence with the highest percentage in online sexual harassment (sexualized comments, favors, trolling, etc) and it affected their health. Also, the majority of the people agreed on certain preventive measures that can be used to reduce the risk of online violence against women. The findings of the analysis highlighted the differences in the types of online violence faced by the participants, along with the online violence prevention actions that must be taken to decrease the cases.*

**Keywords:** Online, Violence, Women, Prevalence, Preventive Measures

## 1. Introduction

While the tech world has opened doors to connect, learn, establish, and consolidate businesses, forge relationships, share information and knowledge, and advocate for human rights, one cannot overlook the fact that it comes with its own trappings. The power of the virtual world is evolving into something more roguish as we interact with it more and more, further entrenching long-standing gendered disparities. It can take on many different forms, including non-consensual photograph or video sharing, cyberstalking (using monitoring apps and other digital devices), online sexual harassment, intimidation, bullying, or threats of death and rape through email and any other social media sites (Council of Europe, n.d.). In many cases, OGBV and offline GBV are on a continuum, with online harassment and threats that violate or chill the exercise of civic freedoms transitioning into actual physical violence (Tanisha Ranjit, 2023). Online gender-based violence increased dramatically over the world during the pandemic, and most countries found it difficult to address the violation of women's online lives in the lack of a robust legal framework. People of all genders are falling victim to online abuse but an overall majority of them happen to be women and girls.

There are many different types of violence against women, especially online, including cyberbullying, revenge porn, rape threats, and even sexual assault and murder (World wide web foundation, n.d.). Technology is one of the easiest resources use by perpetrators who target to defame women by abusing online, sending obscene pictures, mail, pornographic videos, etc. mostly created without their consent spoofing e-mails, morphing images for pornographic content by using various software available online (Sanjeev Kumar, 2019).The main causes of violence

against women and girls include discrimination, gender stereotypes, and sexism, which are all manifestations of gender inequality. Gender-based violence is a widespread problem that permeates digital spaces. It mainly affects women, but research has also demonstrated its impact on transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people (V, 2022). The study will try to focus on violence against women through online platforms. It will also try to understand the effect of online violence on women.

## 2. Methodology

The study was conducted using a descriptive study design with a quantitative approach. Women from Assam with the age group of 18 to 30 years were considered as the universe in this study.

The non-probability sample design was selected for the current study. The convenience sample technique was used for selecting 50 participants across Assam. The participants have given written informed consent for participation in the research study. The data was analyzed using SPSS version 25.

The inclusion criteria for this study are Women from Assam. The age group of the respondents was between 18 to 30 years.

The study excluded men from Assam; participants who don't fall into the age group of 18 to 30 years.

Tools of Data Collection: A structured questionnaire was administered to understand the prevalence and preventive measures of online violence against women.

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### 3. Results

In Table 1, it was seen that the majority of participants faced online sexual harassment, which include sexualized comments, favors, trolling etc., bullying, and cyberstalking as online violence against them. Due to this, the majority of the participants suffered from continuous fear and stress. The majority of the participants believe that adapting and applying strict laws & regulations in the use of online platforms will be effective in preventing online violence against women. Along with it, oversight and monitoring of online platforms and sensitization about online violence are a few other preventive measures that can help in the reduction of online violence

**Table 1:** Determining the prevalence of online violence and its preventive measures

Types of Online Violence	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Threat	8	16.0
Online sexual harassment (sexualized comments, favors, trolling, etc.)	12	24.0
Non-consensual image or video sharing	9	18.0
Bullying	11	22.0
Cyber stalking	10	20.0
<b>Effects of Online Violence</b>		
Stress	10	20.0
Depression	6	12.0
Insomnia	9	18.0
Fear	11	22.0
Anger	8	16.0
Objectified	6	12.0
<b>Preventive Measures Variables</b>		
Sensitization about online violence	11	22.0
Oversight & monitoring of online platforms	12	24.0
Adapting & applying strict laws & regulations	17	34.0
Awareness about digital safety	10	20.0

### 4. Discussions

This study demonstrates that there are certain kinds of online violence the majority of respondents have faced. Online sexual harassment, bullying, non-consensual image or video sharing, threat, and bullying reported in this study is similar to the findings of some studies which show that violence against women on online platforms is of different kinds and is rising each and every day. Sexist and misogynist comments or gender hate speech were rated as the most common form of online violence against women. Manifestations including digital voyeurism (the illicit filming, watching, and sharing online of films of women's bodies, through live or recorded streaming of the footage) is also another form of violence. It creates a risk for women to be present in an online environment as it develops potential violence and leave an effect on their mental as well as physical health (UN Women, 2020).

The findings in this study are also similar to that of Pasricha, where in her study she explains that online harassment affected mental health issues like depression, stress and insomnia (Pasricha). Another article by Mishra,

also relates to the findings of this study, where it is demonstrated that after such untoward incidents, many women either delete their social media accounts or reduce the activities of posting and expressing their personal views because of fear of further harassment (Mishra, 2021).

In another study by Aziz, the findings showed similar findings in this study that demonstrate how eliminating online violence against women is not only essential but also necessary to provide digital safety to every person. It stated that the Sustainable Development Goals recognize that "gender equality is not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Violence against women, offline and online, must be acknowledged as a manifestation of the systemic marginalization of women throughout society. Enhancing "the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women" requires the elimination of online violence against women (Aziz). The study by Sethi and colleague shows similar findings of preventive measures with this study that adapting strict legal laws and regulations, while awareness about digital safety is necessary. Identifying the act of online violence from complimenting is one's important task in understanding online violence. Sensitization about online violence to people specifically women is the first step to reducing cyber violence (Deepa Sethi, 2018).

### 5. Limitations

- The lack of substantial literature and data on online violence against women in Assam was an obstacle in collecting information specific to the study.
- Stipulated time constraint.

### 6. Implications

- The findings in this study can be used by the Women Safety organizations to access the online violence occurring in Assam.
- The findings in this study will add to the existing pieces of literature.
- The findings of the study can be used by the higher authorities to take actions and measures against online violence.
- The findings in this study will overall help in contributing to a greater awareness of the contemporary problem in the modern era of the online world.

### 7. Conclusion

Violence against women is a global crime that has been on the surge for many decades. Many criminal offenses and acts of violence are coming up, under which online violence against women is one of the most hidden yet forefront violence that takes place in an online environment. The safety of online platforms comes at risk due to these outbreaks of violence. Most violence that occurs online is on online platforms like social media. The violence targeted at women is irrespective of their age or location. Online

violence like threatening (death or rape), online sexual harassment that includes sexualized comments, favors, trolling, etc., non-consensual video or image sharing to or of the person, bullying, cyberstalking, and many more. This violence draw a huge impact on the victim and it affects their mental as well as physical health. Some of the effects of online violence can be stress, insomnia, depression, continuous fear, feeling disgusted about every person, anger, the feeling of being objectified as a woman, etc. Many cases of online violence go unnoticed due to various factors. But, women and other people in their surroundings can help them to overcome those obstacles and take proper preventive measures to reduce them in the future. In this contemporary online era, where majority of the things take place digitally, preventive measures like sensitization about online violence along with awareness of digital safety, continuous oversight and monitoring of online platforms and applying strict rules and regulations on the use of online platforms will be really helpful and must be dealt as a serious matter.

### Informed Consent Statements

The participants have given the written informed consent for participation in the research stud

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### Author Profile



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