

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: **Mapping Harms, Gaps, and Pathways to Justice**



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About BBYDI

Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative (BBYDI) is a nonpartisan and not-for-profit civic organisation dedicated to fostering socio-political change and community development in Nigeria. Our primary focus is on equipping and empowering young people and local communities to drive sustainable development from the grassroots level.

Committed to promoting good governance, youth entrepreneurship, civic engagement, media literacy, techforgood and advancing civic liberties, we champion the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) within Nigerian communities. As a gender-inclusive youth advocacy group, BBYDI provides a platform for women to contribute to various socio-political spheres through social engagements, girl-child education, women's rights campaigns, and technology advocacy.

Over the past decade, we have earned a reputation as a leading civic engagement organisation, advocating for inclusive policies prioritising women and youth. Our work includes advocacy campaigns, social interventions, and collaborative projects with other civil society organisations. We rely on data-driven and evidence-based analyses to monitor government performance, demand transparency, and hold public officials accountable.

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Foreward



In an era where digital technologies permeate every facet of life, the promise of connectivity and empowerment has also exposed new frontiers of harm. The rise of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) stands as one of the most pressing yet under-acknowledged challenges confronting women and marginalised groups in Nigeria. As digital spaces become increasingly central to education, communication, commerce, and civic engagement, so too have they become battlegrounds where entrenched gender inequalities are replicated and amplified.

This comprehensive report provides a timely, critical, and data-informed insights into the manifestations, drivers, and consequences of TFGBV within Nigeria's complex sociopolitical and cultural landscape. Drawing on a wide range of case studies, legal frameworks, institutional responses, and survivor testimonies, the study not only map the scope and severity of the problem but also offers a roadmap toward a more equitable and secure digital environment for all.

What sets this work apart is its intersectional lens highlighting how gender-based violence in online spaces is shaped by power, identity, and access. From students and journalists to politicians and LGBTQ+ individuals, the report meticulously documents how TFGBV curtails freedom, inflicts harm, and reinforces silence or marginalised groups. It also examines the systemic gaps in law enforcement, judicial accountability, platform governance, and social attitudes that allow such violence to persist with impunity.

Most importantly, this report does not stop at critique. It proposes thoughtful, actionable recommendations grounded in local realities and global human rights standards. These include reforms in legal and regulatory frameworks, the strengthening of institutional capacity, the expansion of survivor-centred support services, and a call for multi-sectoral collaboration including digital platforms, civil society, and international partners.

As Nigeria continues its digital transformation, we must ensure that progress is not built on the continued marginalisation of vulnerable voices. This report is both a call to conscience and a call to action. It challenges policymakers, educators, technologists, and citizens alike to recognise that the fight against TFGBV is not only a gender justice imperative, but a democratic, developmental, and human rights necessity.

It is our hope that this important work will serve as a catalyst for sustained advocacy, informed policymaking, and inclusive digital governance laying the foundation for a safer and more inclusive digital future in Nigeria.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hussain'.

Hussain Taibat Aduragba
Programme Specialist,
TFGBV - Brain Builders Youth
Development Initiative



Executive Summary

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is a significant and growing threat in Nigeria, intensifying existing gender inequalities in both digital and physical spaces.



These digital attacks mirror and intensify offline violence, silencing voices, discouraging civic participation, and posing severe psychological, economic, and political consequences.

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) is a significant and growing threat in Nigeria, intensifying existing gender inequalities in both digital and physical spaces. As internet access expands, so too has the scale and complexity of online abuse targeting women and marginalized groups. TFGBV includes cyberstalking, image-based abuse, doxxing, false allegations, and online sexual harassment. Women in public-facing roles, such as journalists, activists, and politicians, are disproportionately affected. These digital attacks mirror and intensify offline violence, silencing voices, discouraging civic participation, and posing severe psychological, economic, and political consequences.

The report identifies deep-rooted patriarchy, digital anonymity, impunity, and limited digital literacy as key drivers of TFGBV. Perpetrators range from individuals and acquaintances to organized troll networks and political actors, with motivations spanning from control and revenge to ideological suppression. Victims often include female public figures, students, children, entertainers, religious leaders, traditional rulers, LGBTQ+ individuals, and everyday internet users. The mental health toll is significant, often leading to social withdrawal, trauma, and in extreme cases, suicide. Meanwhile, economic impacts include job loss, reputational damage, and withdrawal from digital entrepreneurship, while political repercussions suppress women's representation in governance.

Although Nigeria has adopted legal instruments such as the Cybercrimes Act (2015), the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act (2015) and

National Data Protection Act 2023, enforcement remains weak. Laws lack specificity regarding digital gendered harms, while cultural stigmas and institutional shortcomings impede justice. Civil society organizations and youth groups have stepped in to provide education, legal aid, and reporting tools, but these efforts are underfunded and limited in reach. Digital platforms, especially Meta and X, face criticism for inadequate moderation practices, while TikTok has shown relatively stronger enforcement. International and academic partners support advocacy, capacity-building, and data-driven interventions.

The response to TFGBV in Nigeria requires urgent legal reforms, including amending the Cybercrimes Act and other outdated laws to explicitly criminalize emerging digital harms like doxxing, sextortion, and deepfake pornography, while aligning with international standards such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol. Strengthening law enforcement and judicial capacity through specialized TFGBV training, fast-track courts, and survivor-centred response units is essential, alongside scaling public awareness, grassroots digital literacy, and youth-targeted education. A coordinated national approach anchored in multi-stakeholder collaboration, data tracking via a national TFGBV observatory, enhanced content moderation by tech platforms, and expanded funding for survivor support will ensure a more comprehensive and survivor-centred digital safety framework.

Introduction

Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) refers to acts of gender-based harm that are perpetrated, amplified, or abetted through digital technologies.



Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) refers to acts of gender-based harm that are perpetrated, amplified, or abetted through digital technologies. This includes violence that occurs via mobile phones, social media platforms, messaging apps, email, and other online forums. TFGBV encompasses a broad spectrum of abusive behaviours such as cyberstalking, online

harassment, doxxing, image-based sexual abuse (including so-called "revenge porn"), threats of physical or sexual harm, and the creation or dissemination of deepfake pornography.¹ These acts are highly gendered, often targeting women and gender-diverse individuals based on their sex, gender identity, or perceived social roles.

¹ https://igp.sipa.columbia.edu/sites/igp/files/2024-09/IGP_TFGBV_Its_Everyones_Problem_090524.pdf

156
million

Nigerians online
(2024)



70%

internet penetration



Urban areas &
youth = highest
digital adoption

In Nigeria, TFGBV has intensified alongside the rapid expansion of internet access and digital communication. While digital technologies have created new opportunities for expression, education, and civic engagement, they have also become tools for perpetuating misogyny, silencing dissent, and reinforcing patriarchal power structures. Women who are outspoken especially in politics, media, and activism are targeted, particularly when they engage with issues of gender justice. The digital sphere mirrors and amplifies the inequalities and violence experienced offline, transforming what should be spaces of empowerment into spaces of surveillance, control, and harm. TFGBV is not just a digital safety issue it is a human rights, public health, and development challenge.² It undermines women's autonomy, limits their digital participation, and severely impacts their physical and mental well-being. It also discourages political engagement and civic participation, further deepening the exclusion of women and marginalized groups from Nigeria's political, economic, and social arenas.³

Despite the urgency of the issue, documentation on TFGBV in Nigeria remains limited. Existing data are often fragmented, anecdotal, or fail to capture the complex intersections of gender, power, and technology. This research seeks to address these gaps through three primary objectives: (1) to map the typologies and platforms through which TFGBV occurs in Nigeria; (2) to assess the legal, institutional, and societal responses to this form of violence; and (3) to

identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities for action by policymakers, civil society, digital platforms, and international stakeholders.

Nigeria has experienced rapid growth in internet access over the past decade, becoming the largest internet market in Africa. As of 2024, over 156 million Nigerians more than 70% of the population have access to the internet, primarily via mobile phones. Urban areas have seen especially high rates of connectivity, with younger populations leading the adoption of digital technologies for education, business, and social interaction. Social media usage is widespread and diverse. Platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube are widely used for communication, news, entertainment, activism, and political engagement. Nigeria is particularly known for its vibrant social media activism, including movements like #EndSARS and #ArewaMeToo. However, these platforms also serve as arenas for misinformation, disinformation, hate speech, and gendered abuse. Despite this expansion, a significant digital gender divide persists. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to critically examine how technology-facilitated gender-based violence manifests within Nigeria's digital landscape, particularly in relation to sociopolitical participation, gender expression, and public discourse. Ultimately, the goal is to contribute to a safer and more equitable digital ecosystem in Nigeria one where all individuals can participate freely, without fear of violence or discrimination.

Common Platforms Used for TFGBV

WhatsApp Facebook
X (Twitter) Instagram
TikTok YouTube

Goal

A safe, inclusive, and equitable digital ecosystem in Nigeria where no one is silenced or abused online.

Who's Most Affected

1. Women in public roles:
 - Journalists
 - Activists
 - Politicians
2. Gender-diverse individuals
3. Those engaging with gender justice topics

Research Objectives

- 1 Map TFGBV types & platforms
- 2 Assess current legal/ societal responses
- 3 Identify action areas for government, civil society, platforms

² https://www.unodc.org/documents/southernafrica/Publications/CriminalJusticeIntegrity/GBV/UNODC_v4_121022_normal_pdf.pdf

³ <https://upeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Garrido-Mapping-Online-Gender-based-Violence.pdf>

Methodology

This study draws on secondary sources including academic literature, national laws and policy documents, media reports, civil society publications, and development partners reports.



This study draws on secondary sources including academic literature, national laws and policy documents, media reports, civil society publications, and development partners reports. Sources span from 2015 to 2025, a period marked by accelerated digital adoption in Nigeria and increased public awareness of online gender-based violence. Special attention is given to the post-2019 period, during which online feminist movements and digital rights advocacy gained momentum. The platforms

examined include X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube, as these are widely used in Nigeria and frequently associated with reported cases of TFGBV. Case studies highlight incidents involving female politicians, journalists, celebrities, activists, and everyday users. The study also explores responses by state actors and private sector platforms, including law enforcement efforts, legal reforms, and content moderation practices.

Forms and Manifestations of TFGBV in Nigeria



85%

of women worldwide have witnessed online violence, and 38% have been directly targeted.

TFGBV is a universal issue, with significant data stressing its scale. A 2020 report by Plan International, surveying 14,000 girls and young women across 22 countries, found that 58% had experienced some form of online harassment, including cyberstalking, abusive messages, and sexual harassment, including Nigeria.⁴ The study shows that platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp were common sites for such abuse, with 19% of respondents

reporting frequent harassment.⁵ The report also noted that 42% of victims experienced mental health impacts, such as anxiety or lowered self-esteem, illustrating the real-world consequences of digital abuse.⁶ A 2021 study by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) further quantified the global scope, revealing that 85% of women worldwide have witnessed online violence against other women, and 38% have been directly targeted.⁷ The study, which included

⁴ <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/02/sotwgr2020-execsummary-en-3.pdf>

⁵ <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/02/sotwgr2020-execsummary-en-3.pdf>

⁶ <https://plan-international.org/uploads/2022/02/sotwgr2020-execsummary-en-3.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.economistgroup.com/press-centre/economist-impact/85-of-women-have-witnessed-harassment-and-online-violence-finds-new-research>

42%

of victims experienced anxiety or lowered self-esteem due to online harassment (Plan International, 2020)

“

Cyberstalking and online harassment are pervasive forms of TFGBV in Nigeria, affecting women who are active in public discourse.

45%

of Nigerian women experienced cyberstalking in 2025

responses from women across various regions, found that TFGBV is often perpetrated through trolling, doxxing, or non-consensual sharing of intimate images as stated below.

Cyberstalking and Harassment

Cyberstalking and online harassment are pervasive forms of TFGBV in Nigeria, affecting women who are active in public discourse. These acts involve persistent, unwanted communication or surveillance that causes fear or distress. A recent study shows that 45% of Nigerian women experience cyberstalking in 2025. Women in public roles such as journalists, activists, and influencers are frequently targeted. For instance, Bilkisu Yero, known as "Arewa Queen" on Facebook, has faced repeated online attacks for expressing her views on social issues.⁸ She reported being labelled as lacking manners and deviating from societal norms, highlighting the challenges women face when voicing opinions online. Journalists, particularly women, are also frequent targets of cyberstalking and harassment. Kiki Mordi, a Nigerian journalist, faced a wave of online abuse after producing a documentary in 2019 for the BBC on sexual harassment in the country's university system.⁹ The smear campaign included threats and the publication of personal details, forcing her to change residences multiple times. Such attacks aim to discredit and silence women journalists, undermining their ability to work freely. The case studies illustrate distinct yet interconnected experiences of TFGBV, both shared patterns and significant differences in the nature, impact, and intent of the harassment they faced. The significant difference lies in the scale, severity, and political targeting of the abuse. Bilkisu Yero, as a social media influencer expressing her views on social issues, encountered gendered verbal abuse and reputational attacks largely aimed at policing her identity and social behavior framing her as deviant from societal norms. The harassment she faced was rooted in misogynistic efforts to silence outspoken women in culturally conservative spaces, reflecting social backlash against female visibility in digital discourse. In contrast, Kiki Mordi, a professional journalist, experienced a much more coordinated and escalated form of TFGBV following the release of a high-impact

investigative documentary. Her case involved doxxing, threats, and physical insecurity, compelling her to relocate multiple times an indicator of how TFGBV can cross over into offline danger when women challenge powerful institutions or expose systemic abuse. Moreover, while both cases demonstrate how digital spaces are weaponized to suppress women's voices, Kiki Mordi's experience reflects how institutional and political actors may indirectly or directly fuel backlash to suppress accountability journalism. Her harassment carried clear retaliatory intent to discredit her work and intimidate other whistleblowers. In contrast, Bilkisu's experience, while harmful, appears more as a reflection of widespread social misogyny and community-enforced gender norms.

Similarly, the experiences of TFGBV among Nigerian women across different public domains politics, entertainment, activism, education, professional sectors, and the LGBTQ+ community reveal critical differences in the nature and consequences of digital violence. For female politicians like Oby Ezekwesili, TFGBV is politically motivated and often deployed to delegitimize their leadership. The abuse includes sexist slurs and coordinated disinformation aimed at eroding public trust in their authority. In contrast, entertainers such as Funke Akindele and Toyin Abraham face TFGBV that is deeply personal and often moralistic. While Toyin Abraham was attacked for her political stance, the nature of the abuse curses directed at her child and defamatory posts shows how women in entertainment are penalized both for their visibility and for expressing political opinions, showing a gendered intersection of fame, morality, and speech. For activists like Aisha Yesufu and grassroots campaigners in the #ArewaMeToo movement, TFGBV is used as a tool of ideological suppression.¹⁰ These women are targeted because they challenge dominant power structures whether through protest or advocacy for survivors of sexual violence. Their digital abuse is often highly coordinated, involving threats, doxing, and attempts to delegitimize their causes. Meanwhile, female students and children are subjected to TFGBV in more exploitative forms, including sextortion and cyberbullying, as seen in the aftermath of the BBC Africa Eye "Sex for Grades" documentary. Their attackers are often peers or institutional

⁸ https://web.facebook.com/groups/155994282526506/?_rdc=1&_rdr#

⁹ <https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/nigeria-targeted-online-violence-against-kiki-mordi>

¹⁰ <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/fa/article/download/275764/260281/648067>



False allegations and gendered rumours represent a sophisticated form of online disinformation that weaponizes misogyny to undermine women's participation in public and professional life.

figures, and the abuse leaves long-lasting reputational and psychological harm, particularly as reporting often leads to further victimization rather than protection.¹¹

Among LGBTQ+ individuals, TFGBV represents the most existential threat. Documented by groups like The Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS), digital abuse in this context often includes forced outing, blackmail, and incitement to physical violence leading to job loss, displacement, and threats to personal safety.¹² The severity of this abuse is heightened by the criminalization of same-sex relationships in Nigeria, where online violence can directly result in offline persecution. Similarly, professional women like Adaora Umeoji, the first female CEO of Zenith Bank, experience TFGBV in the form of character defamation and misogynistic attacks following career advancements.¹³ These patterns of abuse reflect broader societal resistance to female authority and visibility, showing that while all these women experience TFGBV, its drivers and impacts are shaped by context-specific vulnerabilities, power dynamics, and the roles they occupy in society.

Online Sexual Harassment and Abuse

These abuses manifest through unsolicited sexual messages, coercion into sharing intimate images, and threats of exposure. The anonymity and reach of digital platforms make it easier for perpetrators to target victims and harder for victims to seek redress. A notable case highlighting the severity of online sexual harassment in Nigeria involves the "BM Boys," a network exploiting social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram to engage in sextortion schemes.¹⁴ These individuals pose as young women to lure victims into sharing explicit images, which are then used for blackmail. What begins as coercion into sharing intimate images escalates into calculated extortion, with victims often forced to pay

between \$500 and \$3,000 under threat of public exposure.¹⁵ Crucially, this is not a fringe activity: the display of luxury goods and aspirational lifestyles by perpetrators functions as both intimidation and recruitment, reinforcing a culture where exploitation is normalized and rewarded. The industrial scale of these operations is further evidenced by the use of call-center-like infrastructures, distribution of training manuals via Facebook, and the deployment of AI tools like deepfake avatars to enhance deception. These practices reflect not just moral decay but a failure of digital governance, where technological advancement outpaces regulatory capacity, and TFGBV becomes embedded in an informal economy of online crime.¹⁶

Non-consensual Image Sharing / Revenge Porn

Non-consensual image sharing (NCIS), commonly referred to as "revenge porn," is a significant and growing concern in Nigeria's digital landscape. It involves the distribution of intimate images without the subject's consent. The proliferation of smartphones and social media platforms has exacerbated this issue, making it easier for perpetrators to disseminate such content widely and rapidly. The motivations behind NCIS vary, including revenge, coercion, or the intent to embarrass the victim. Several high-profile cases have revealed the prevalence and impact of NCIS in Nigeria. In 2019, a 300-level student from Babcock University was expelled after a private video of her was leaked online, sparking widespread debate about victim-blaming and institutional responses to such incidents.¹⁷ Similarly, in 2020, veteran singer Salawa Abeni publicly shared her own intimate images to preempt a blackmail attempt, bringing attention to the lengths victims may go to protect themselves.¹⁸ Another victim Tiwa Savage recounted her experience in one of her songs:

¹¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=we-F0GiOLqs>

¹² <https://www.bisialisimifoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2021/02/not-dancing-to-their-music-main-copy.pdf>

¹³ <https://dailytrust.com/misogyny-and-sexism-deluxe-ada-zenith-and-other-stories-of-women/>

¹⁴ <https://www.business-humanrights.org/es/últimas-noticias/social-media-platforms-enable-nigerian-sextortion-network-targeting-teens-report-reveals/>

¹⁵ https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/may/11/sextortion-nigeria-bm-boys-tiktok?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁶ https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/2-nigerian-brothers-sentenced-sextortion-led-teens-death-113427868?utm_source=chatgpt.com

¹⁷ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/implications-babcocks-expulsion-300-level-student-ali-nnaemeka-o-m-i>

¹⁸ <https://www.pulse.ng/articles/entertainment/celebrities/veteran-singer-salawa-abeni-says-she-is-being-blackmailed-with-past-nude-photos-2024081700213608277>

'Awon blogger blogger ti won Fi mi gba star. Sex Tape o le baye mi je.,' which translates to 'Bloggers wanted to use me to shine but sex tape can not destroy my life.' 19

Another victim shared experience:

*"You're trying to have a good day, you wake up to messages from your team telling you to check your mail, you check your mail only to find this!! I have to deal with evil demeaning dms everyday!!! Every ***** day! "Talking about "we will publish them?" Publish what? Edited pictures? Publish pictures you edited? And I and my team should feel threatened? The hate I deal with, I pray for strength!!" 20*



Non-consensual image sharing (NCIS), commonly referred to as 'revenge porn,' is a significant and growing concern in Nigeria's digital landscape.



The proliferation of smartphones and social media platforms has exacerbated this issue, making it easier for perpetrators to disseminate such content widely and rapidly.

Another notable case involves Chrisland Schools. In April 2022, a 10-year-old student was reportedly coerced into engaging in a sexual act with fellow students during a school trip to Dubai. The incident was filmed and widely circulated on social media platforms in Nigeria. The school's initial response was to suspend the minor, accusing her of willingly participating in the act. The student's mother alleged that the school threatened her daughter to prevent her from speaking out.²¹

The Babcock University case (2019) underscores how institutional responses can perpetuate victim-blaming. The expulsion of the female student whose private video was leaked online reflects a punitive approach that shifts responsibility from the perpetrator to the victim. The university's action sparked public outrage and drew attention to the lack of survivor-centered protocols in educational institutions. In contrast, Salawa Abeni's 2020 case reveals a more empowered navigation of NCIS she preemptively shared her own intimate images to disrupt a blackmail attempt. This reversal of power illustrates how older, public-facing women may sometimes reclaim agency, though such a move also underscores the absence of adequate institutional or legal protections that should have shielded her from extortion in the first place. Also, Tiwa Savage's case adds another layer highlighting how female celebrities are uniquely vulnerable to NCIS because of their high visibility and perceived moral accountability. Her lyrical response

reframes the narrative from victimhood to resilience, yet the incident also reveals how public figures must endure both the emotional trauma and the spectacle of public scrutiny. This contrasts with the anonymous victim quoted above, whose case showcases the persistent psychological toll of everyday harassment faced by less prominent women "The hate I deal with, I pray for strength!" pointing to the compounded trauma of shame, fear, and helplessness that victims internalize in silence. In contrast, the Chrisland Schools case is particularly alarming due to the age of the victim and the institutional response. Unlike adult or adolescent victims, this case involved a minor coerced into sexual activity, which was then circulated digitally. The school's response to suspend the girl and blame her reflects a dangerous normalization of victim-shaming even in child protection contexts. Moreover, the digital circulation of such content involving minors also exposes serious gaps in Nigeria's enforcement of child online safety laws, raising ethical and legal questions about safeguarding and redress mechanisms. Taken together, these cases illustrate that NCIS in Nigeria is not a monolithic phenomenon. The motives (revenge, control, extortion), actors (former partners, strangers, institutions), and responses (punitive, proactive, silencing) vary widely. What unites them, however, is a common landscape of weak institutional protection, high social stigma, and inadequate legal deterrents.

¹⁹ <https://theradar.ng/entertainment/egungun-tiwa-savage-3-other-celebrities-with-leaked-private-videos>

²⁰ <https://naijalog.com/tacha-leaks-her-editted-nude-pictures-after-someone-tried-to-blackmail-her/>

²¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chrisland_Schools?



Doxxing and online threats are increasingly prevalent in Nigeria, targeting women, especially those in public-facing roles such as journalism, activism, and politics.

10%

of Nigeria women faced doxxing



False allegations and gendered rumours represent a sophisticated form of online disinformation that weaponizes misogyny to undermine women's participation in public and professional life.

Doxxing and Online Threats

Doxxing and online threats are increasingly prevalent in Nigeria, targeting women, especially those in public-facing roles such as journalism, activism, and politics. These malicious acts involve the unauthorized disclosure of personal information like home addresses, phone numbers, or private images with the intent to intimidate, harass, or silence individuals. Such tactics are frequently employed to suppress women's participation in digital spaces, leading to self-censorship and, in some cases, withdrawal from public life. For instance, an investigative journalist Ruona Meyer faced a coordinated campaign of online harassment after her 2018 BBC documentary exposed Nigeria's codeine cough syrup crisis.²² Following the documentary's release, Meyer was subjected to doxxing, with her personal information leaked online, and faced a barrage of misogynistic attacks questioning her credibility and patriotism. The harassment intensified when trolls created fake blogs in her name, posting defamatory content to tarnish her reputation both in Nigeria and abroad. This sustained online abuse forced Meyer to limit her online presence and take security precautions to protect herself and her family.²³ Currently about 10.6% of Nigeria women faced doxxing.²⁴

Impersonation and Identity Theft

These crimes involve the unauthorized use of an individual's personal information or online persona to deceive, defraud, or harm the victim. Women, particularly those in public or vulnerable positions, are targeted. Perpetrators often exploit social media platforms, dating apps, and other online spaces to create fake profiles, impersonate victims, and engage in fraudulent activities. These crimes often involve perpetrators creating fake online profiles to deceive victims, leading to emotional distress, financial loss, and reputational damage. A notable case is that of Chioma Atuonah, a 2019 graduate of Economics from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, who was arrested for

allegedly defrauding a 50-year-old German man of \$220,000.²⁵ She lured the victim on Instagram by feigning romantic intentions, gained his trust, and convinced him to relocate to Nigeria²⁶. The funds were used to purchase property and support her family. Also, in March 2023, Pul Dogun was sentenced to two years in prison for impersonating a U.S. military officer named "Gabby Mcquire" and engaging in an internet love scam. He used the fake identity to defraud women online.²⁷

In February 2025, TikToker Olamide Bello received three years for impersonating an American woman to scam victims, with his assets forfeited. Ohaguim Ifeayin Emmanuel, a Computer Science graduate, was jailed for one year in January 2024 for a dating scam as "Benjamin Valdez."²⁸ Nwaturuocha Linjunior Kelechi was convicted in Kaduna state in July 2021 for defrauding a victim Vennesa Rose, an American citizen of \$1,900 by posing as U.S. military personnel, with restitution and device forfeiture ordered.²⁹

False Allegations and Rumours: Gendered Disinformation

False allegations and gendered rumours represent a sophisticated form of online disinformation that weaponizes misogyny to undermine women's participation in public and professional life. This form of TFGBV is not merely about defamation—it is a strategic act of digital silencing that exploits the virality of platforms like Twitter, WhatsApp, and Instagram. Women in power, such as Aisha Buhari, or those with high visibility, such as actresses Regina Daniels and Hilda Baci, are frequent targets. These narratives often follow a pattern: leveraging sexualized tropes, fabricating scandals, and framing women as morally compromised or manipulative to delegitimize their influence. The case of Aminu Adamu Mohammed, who was arrested for allegedly defaming the First Lady, underscores how gendered disinformation intersects with state repression revealing both the fragility of public women's reputations and the

²² <https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/p07kj0gk>

²³ <https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/p07kj0gk>

²⁴ <https://bonewssng.com/how-cyberstalking-deepfakes-fuel-tech-facilitated-violence-against-women-in-nigeria-oladunjoye-reveals-in-report/>

²⁵ <https://punchng.com/unizik-graduate-arrested-for-220000-romance-scam-against-german/>

²⁶ <https://dailytrust.com/woman-arrested-for-collecting-220000-from-german-by-feigning-romance/>

²⁷ <https://thetstreetjournal.org/a-graduate-was-sentenced-to-two-years-in-prison-for-impersonation-and-an-internet-romance-scam/>

²⁸ <https://undercoverist.org/tiktok-olamide-bello-sentenced-to-3-years-for-impersonation/>

²⁹ <https://corruptioncases.ng/cases/frn-vs-nwaturuocha-linjunior-kelechi>

disproportionate backlash when narratives challenge patriarchal hierarchies.³⁰ At the same time, cases such as Regina Daniels' show how impersonation and false narratives are used to entangle public figures in fabricated scandals.³¹ Daniels was not only falsely accused of facilitating sexual exploitation but also had her identity weaponized by imposters to scam others. Despite her eventual exoneration, the reputational damage and emotional burden illustrate how rumour-based attacks disproportionately harm women through

mechanisms of shame, scandal, and social delegitimization. Recent smear campaigns against Edo and Hilda Baci led by anonymous bloggers like Gistlover reflect the ongoing normalization of misogynistic narratives that paint successful women as promiscuous or corrupt.³² These tactics blend online harassment with reputational warfare, reinforcing the need for digital governance frameworks that recognize gendered disinformation as both a violation of rights and a barrier to gender equality in digital spaces.

TABLE 1: Newspaper data source

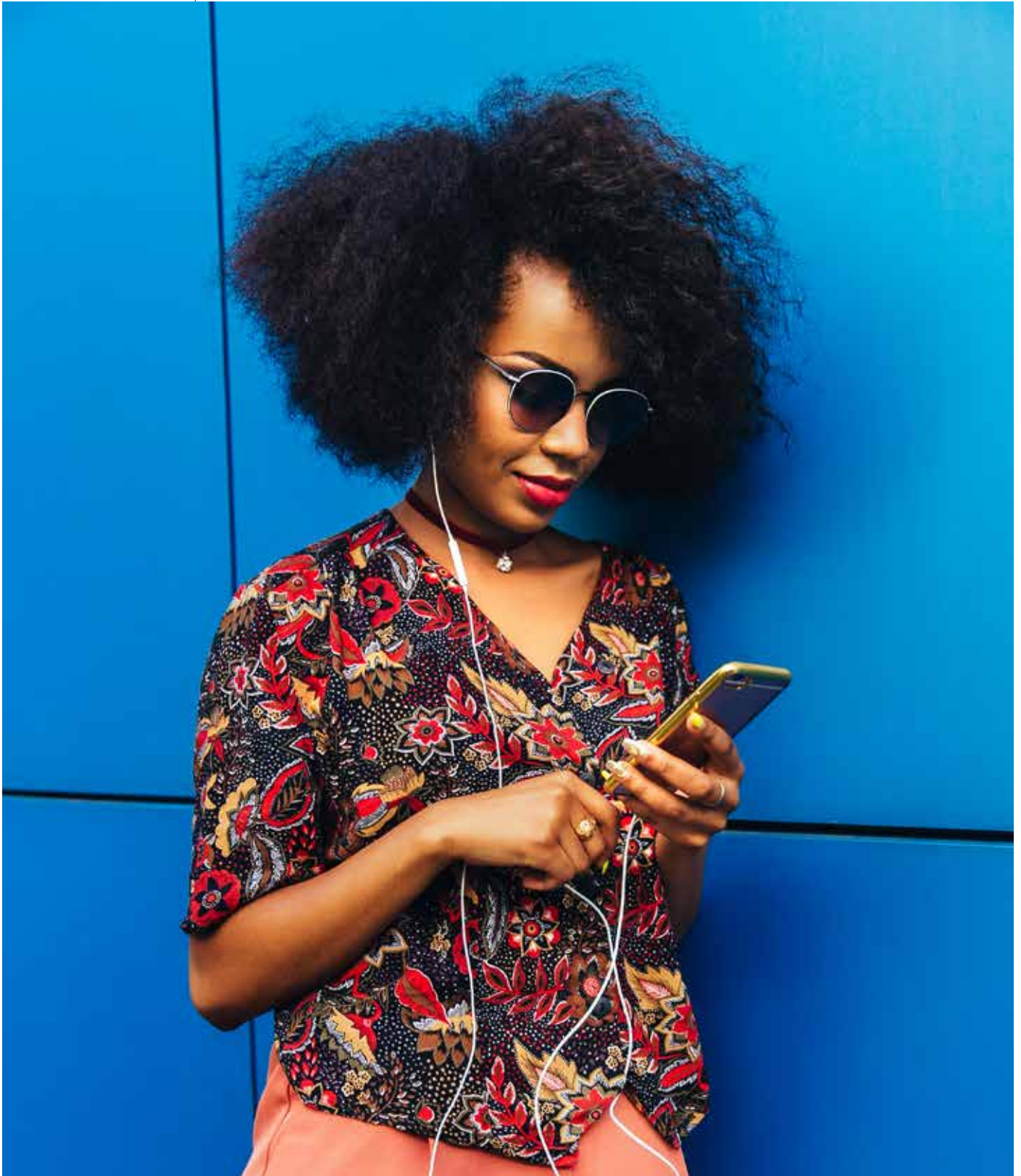
TFGBV Type	Victims	Target Profile	Tactics Used	Impact on Victim
Cyberstalking & Online Harassment	Bilkisu Yero, Kiki Mordi	Female activists, journalists, influencers	Verbal abuse, doxxing, threats, smear campaigns	Emotional trauma, fear, forced relocation (Mordi)
Online Sexual Harassment & Sextortion	"BM Boys" sextortion network	Young men and women (anonymous, public figures)	Grooming, blackmail, deepfakes, AI impersonation	Financial extortion, suicides, psychological damage
NCIS / Revenge Porn	Babcock student, Tiwa Savage, Salawa Abeni, Chrisland School case	Students, celebrities, minors	Leaked videos/images, blackmail, edited content	Reputation loss, anxiety, victim-blaming, child abuse trauma
Doxxing & Online Threats	Ruona Meyer	Journalists, public figures	Leak of personal info, creation of fake blogs	Withdrawal from online spaces, safety concerns
Impersonation & Identity Theft	Chioma Atuonah, Olamide Bello, Pul Dogun, others	Women in relationships, foreign nationals	Fake profiles, romance scams, identity theft	Financial loss, emotional damage
False Allegations & Gendered Disinfo	Aisha Buhari, Regina Daniels, Hilda Baci, Gistlover smear campaigns	Women in politics, entertainment, public life	Rumours, fake scandals, misinformation, defamation	Reputational damage, public scrutiny, discrediting of women's achievements
Targeted Ideological TFGBV	Aisha Yesufu, #ArewaMeToo activists	Feminist advocates, protest leaders	Threats, slurs, coordinated attacks	Delegitimization, public fear
Child Sexual Exploitation & Circulation	Chrisland Schools case	Minor children	Coercion, filming, viral circulation	Psychological trauma, institutional neglect
Professional Misogyny	Adaora Umeoji	Women in executive/professional roles	Sexist backlash, character assassination	Undermining credibility, stress

³⁰ <https://mediarightsagenda.org/police-arrest-university-student-for-tweet-considered-defamatory-to-nigerias-first-lady/>

³¹ <https://web.archive.org/web/20190507205251/https://www.gistreel.com/sex-for-movie-role-regina-daniels-arrests-guy-impersonating-her-video/>

³² <https://punchng.com/dakore-denies-rumoured-affair-with-akpabio-threatens-legal-action/>

Drivers and Enablers of TF-GBV





At the core of TFGBV in Nigeria is a patriarchal culture that resists women's visibility, autonomy, and power in both public and private spheres.



The structure of digital platforms allows perpetrators to operate with relative impunity, making it challenging to trace offenders and hold them accountable.

Deep-Rooted Patriarchy and Gender Norms

At the core of TFGBV in Nigeria is a patriarchal culture that resists women's visibility, autonomy, and power in both public and private spheres. Women who challenge traditional gender roles by occupying leadership positions, voicing opinions online, or expressing their sexuality are often targeted as a way of reasserting male dominance. The internet becomes an extension of offline gender discrimination, where female agency is policed through shaming, threats, and digital violence. These attacks are meant not only to humiliate individual women but to deter others from stepping out of socially sanctioned roles.

These power imbalances manifest in digital spaces, where women are targeted are not merely violations of privacy but are deliberate attempts to assert control and dominance over women. The societal tendency to blame victims further worsen the situation, discouraging many from reporting incidents due to fear of stigma and retribution. The normalization of gender-based violence in Nigeria is significantly influenced by patriarchal social and cultural norms. In these societies, women are often considered sexual objects and are less valued than men, which helps to normalize sexual harassment and discourage women from reporting it. This cultural backdrop creates an environment where gender-based violence is not only prevalent but also often goes unchallenged. Moreover, the underreporting of gender-based violence is exacerbated by a combination of factors, including victim-blaming, cultural taboos, and a lack of trust in the justice system. Victims often face stigma and blame when reporting incidents, further discouraging them from seeking justice. This systemic issue underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to address the root causes of gender-based violence and to create a safer environment for women in Nigeria

Digital Anonymity and Lack of Accountability

The structure of digital platforms allows perpetrators to operate with relative impunity, making it challenging to trace offenders and hold them accountable. This lack of accountability is further exacerbated by weak regulatory enforcement, which enables online abuse to persist without legal consequences. Even when victims report incidents, law enforcement agencies often dismiss them as "not serious" or lack the digital investigative capacity to prosecute cybercrimes effectively. The Nigerian Police Force has established specialized cybercrime units and reporting portals to address online crimes.³³ However, these efforts face significant challenges, including resource limitations, insufficient training, and a lack of collaboration with internet service providers. Many officers lack the necessary technical skills and knowledge to effectively investigate and combat cybercrime, and there is a shortage of trained cybercrime investigators and digital forensic experts.³⁴ The slow pace of judicial processes and the technical complexity of cybercrimes further hinder the effective prosecution of offenders.³⁵

Despite the enactment of the Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, Etc.) Act in 2015, which provides a legal framework for addressing cybercrimes, challenges persist in its application. The Act's provisions are often vague or overly broad, allowing for selective enforcement and potential misuse to suppress free speech. For instance, Section 24 of the Act, which penalizes "cyberstalking," has been criticized for its potential to punish legitimate expression. Moreover, the lack of specialized training for law enforcement personnel and judicial officers in handling cybercrime cases contributes to the ineffective application of the law.³⁶

Weaponization of Technology by Political and Ideological Interests

In many cases, TFGBV is often not spontaneous but strategically orchestrated by political actors, their supporters, or

³³ https://www.reddit.com/r/Nigeria_FreeSpeech/comments/jy3wf6?

³⁴ <https://professions.ng/nigerian-police-and-cybercrime/?>

³⁵ Webfala Foundation 2025

³⁶ <https://www.kwikattorneys.com/the-impact-of-the-cybercrimes-act-2015-on-cybercrime-prosecution-in-nigeria/?>



TFGBV is often not spontaneous but strategically orchestrated by political actors, their supporters, or organized online communities to silence women perceived as political threats.

organized online communities to silence women perceived as political threats. Female politicians, journalists, and activists frequently become targets during election cycles or following controversial public statements. These individuals face a range of digital abuses, including disinformation campaigns, doxxing, and identity theft, all designed to discredit and intimidate them. Such tactics serve to maintain existing power structures and discourage female participation in governance and public discourse. A good example is the case of Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, who accused Senate President Godswill Akpabio of sexual harassment. In response, Akpoti-Uduaghan faced a six-month suspension for unrelated disruptive behaviour, a move widely perceived as retaliation for her allegations.³⁷ Following her suspension, pro-Akpabio supporters initiated online campaigns to further malign her character, including spreading false rumours about her personal life. In one of the headlines in a Facebook platform “Senator Natasha Has Six Children with Different Men and Akpabio Never Touched Her’ Sen. Onyekachi Nwebonyi Opens Can of Worm.”³⁸ These actions show the intersection of digital harassment and institutional retaliation against women who challenge male-dominated political hierarchies.

The proliferation of disinformation against women is facilitated by coordinated online efforts, including the use of bots and fake accounts to amplify false narratives. During

and aftermath of the 2023 Nigerian elections, such tactics were employed to tarnish the reputations of female candidates and activists. For instance, manipulated images and fabricated audio recordings were circulated to discredit opposition figures, with some narratives focusing on their personal lives rather than their political platforms.³⁹ These strategies not only harm the targeted individuals but also create a chilling effect, deterring other women from engaging in political and public life.⁴⁰

Limited Digital Literacy and Safety Awareness

Many internet users in Nigeria, especially young women, lack the knowledge or resources to protect themselves online.⁴¹ From setting privacy controls to identifying phishing attempts or understanding platform reporting tools, digital safety remains a blind spot in education and social policy. Perpetrators exploit this gap by using social engineering tactics a form of psychological manipulation techniques used by perpetrators to trick individuals into revealing confidential information, granting access, or performing actions that compromise their safety, privacy, or security.⁴² In the Context of TF-GBV, individual are coerced or deceived victims into sharing personal data, images, or location information. This vulnerability increases the risk of TFGBV, especially among first-time or lower-income users.



³⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/mar/16/senator-sexual-harassment-claims-nigeria-natasha-akpoti-uduaghan?>

³⁸ <https://web.facebook.com/9NewsNG/posts/senator-natasha-has-six-children-with-different-men-and-akpabio-never-touched-he/655702330161582/?>

³⁹ <https://microsecondnews.com/2025/03/24/audio-leak-alleging-that-natasha-snatched-uduaghan-resurfaces-listen/>

⁴⁰ <https://blog.witness.org/2022/08/dangers-of-gendered-disinformation-in-african-elections/?>

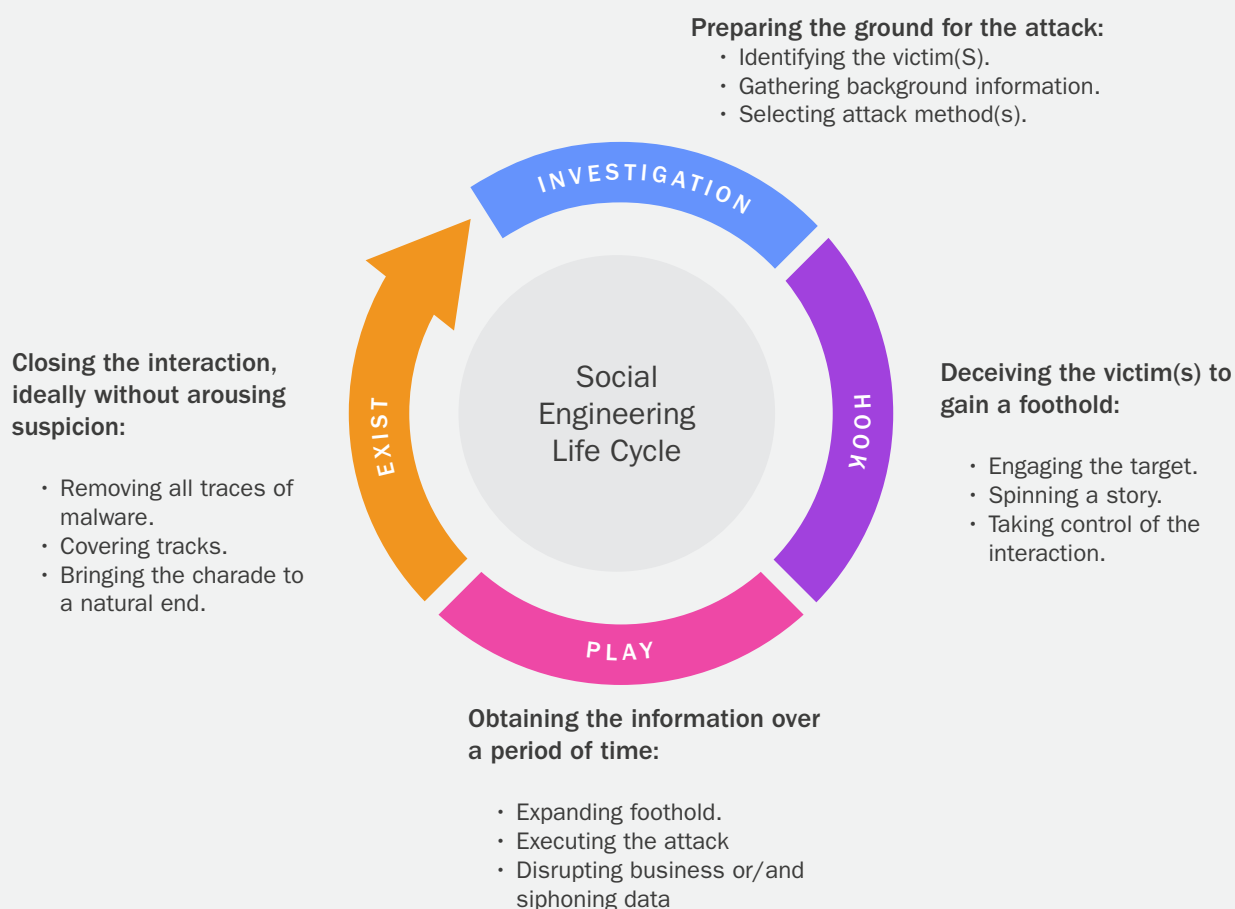
⁴¹ <https://businessday.ng/news/article/2000-students-benefit-from-ngos-digital-citizenship-online-safety-training/>

⁴² <https://dojah.io/blog/what-is-social-engineering-examples-techniques-and-prevention-tips>

TABLE 2: Social Engineering Techniques

Tactic	Description	Example
Catfishing	Pretending to be someone else often a romantic interest to lure victims into intimate exchanges.	A scammer impersonates a military officer on Instagram to trick women into sharing private photos.
Grooming	Gradual trust-building with the intent to manipulate the victim into disclosing personal or intimate information.	The “BM Boys” use this to engage teens, gain their trust, and eventually extort them with explicit content.
Impersonation	Using fake profiles or stolen identities to interact with victims or tarnish reputations.	Creating a fake account in the name of a female public figure to harass or scam others.
Pretexting	Creating a fabricated story or scenario to obtain information or influence a victim’s decision.	Claiming to be a charity worker or recruiter to gain access to contact details or photos.
Phishing & Link Baiting	Sending links or files that prompt users to enter login details or unknowingly share data.	Victims receive a fake media request and click a link that steals their personal data.
Emotional Manipulation	Exploiting feelings of love, shame, fear, or trust to coerce victims into compliance.	“If you love me, send me a private video” or “I’ll release your pictures unless you pay.”

FIGURE 1: Social Engineering Life Cycle



Source: <https://www.imperva.com/learn/application-security/social-engineering-attack/>

The Growing Deepfake Technology

Deepfake, AI-generated synthetic media that falsely depict individuals are being weaponized to harass, silence, and discredit women, particularly those in public life. A notable instance involves Anita Natacha Akide, popularly known as Tacha, a former Big Brother Naija contestant and media personality. In April 2020, Tacha's legal team publicly addressed attempts to blackmail her using fabricated nude images, asserting that the photos were fake and intended to extort money from her.⁴³ This case exemplifies how

deepfakes can be weaponized to target women, undermining their reputation and causing psychological distress. The proliferation of such technology poses challenges to data privacy and cybersecurity, as highlighted by experts who note the potential for deepfakes to facilitate identity theft, spread misinformation, and cause reputational damage. This trend has been documented in recent reports. For instance, a 2024 study by Journalists for Christ International Outreach found that deepfakes accounted for 6.1% of TFGBV incidents on Nigerian social media, alongside cyberstalking and doxxing.⁴⁴



⁴³ <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-52374643?>

⁴⁴ <https://bonewssng.com/how-cyberstalking-deepfakes-fuel-tech-facilitated-violence-against-women-in-nigeria-oladunjoye-reveals-in-report/>

Perpetrators of TFGBV

TFGBV in Nigeria is perpetrated by a diverse array of actors, ranging from individuals to organized groups, each with distinct methods and motives.



TFGBV in Nigeria is perpetrated by a diverse array of actors, ranging from individuals to organized groups, each with distinct methods and motives. Below is a detailed discussion of these perpetrators, supported by verifiable examples and recent reports. Individuals act alone to perpetrate TFGBV, engaging in behaviours such as cyberstalking, harassment, and spreading false information. Reports indicate that both men and women are responsible for TFGBV incidents, with a recent study showing male perpetrators in 28.8% of cases and female perpetrators in 25.8% in Nigeria.⁴⁵ A perpetrator Okoye Blessing Nwakaeg was convicted for cyberstalking Nollywood actress Eniola Badmus by repeatedly posting offensive and defamatory content about her on social media.^{46,47} The perpetrator pleaded guilty and was sentenced to three years in prison or a fine, illustrating how individuals can be held accountable for online abuse under Nigeria's Cybercrimes Act.

Moreso, Friends, acquaintances, and intimate partners are increasingly identified

as key perpetrators. These individuals often exploit trust and access to personal information or intimate content to harass, threaten, or blackmail women and girls online. In many cases, private images or conversations shared in confidence are later leaked, manipulated, or used for revenge commonly referred to as "revenge porn." Because these acts are committed by known individuals, victims may hesitate to report them due to emotional ties, fear of retaliation, or concern over social stigma. This form of TFGBV is especially damaging as it combines betrayal with abuse, often escalating from offline relationships into digital harassment. Motives often include jealousy, betrayal, or social clout, with perpetrators sometimes sharing content "for fun" or to gain approval within peer groups, a behaviour noted in studies where non-consensual sharing was not seen as problematic by some. The familiarity between victim and perpetrator also complicates legal responses, as evidence may be harder to obtain, and victims may be pressured by mutual networks to remain silent.

BOX 2

"3month later, one of my bestie friends came to me asking for forgiveness and I ask him what he did to me, he said my bestie did the video and sent it to him to send it to my mom cos my mom has her number saved and will know where it's came from, she denied everything." ⁴⁸

Similarly, organized groups, often referred to as troll networks, systematically target women especially those in public life or activism with coordinated online attacks, hate speech, and harassment. Bloggers, skit makers, and social media influencers have been identified as significant contributors, accounting for 22.7% of TFGBV cases in a 2024 report in Nigeria.⁴⁹ Reports and testimonies from Nigerian women activists and public figures describe being targeted by coordinated trolling and hate campaigns on platforms like Facebook and Twitter, aimed at silencing their voices and deterring their participation in public discourse.

Politicians and their supporters also use online abuse to discredit opponents, intimidate critics, or suppress dissent, with women activists and journalists being particularly vulnerable.⁵⁰ During election cycles and political debates, women in politics and advocacy have reported being subjected to orchestrated online harassment, including doxing, threats, and smear campaigns, often with the intent to undermine their credibility or force them out of public life. The underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics and the backlash against those who speak out on gender issues further highlight the political dimensions of TFGBV.

⁴⁵ <https://lightraymedia.org/2024/12/08/the-fight-against-tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence-empowering-women-in-the-digital-age>

⁴⁶ <https://tribuneonlineng.com/court-sentences-tiktok-to-3yrs-jail-term-for-cyberstalking-eniola-badmus/>

⁴⁷ <https://guardian.ng/life/tiktok-user-sentenced-to-jail-for-defaming-eniola-badmus/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.lindaikejisblog.com/2023/5/nigerian-lady-recounts-how-she-almost-committed-suicide-when-a-friend-leaked-her-nude-video-after-accusing-her-of-stealing-her-boyfriend.html.html>

⁴⁹ <https://lightraymedia.org/2024/12/08/facebook-tops-list-of-platforms-for-tech-facilitated-gender-based-violence-in-nigeria-report-reveals>

⁵⁰ <https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/gender-norms-media-narratives-and-women-appointive-positions-nigeria>

TABLE 3: Abuser of TFGBV

Abuser Type	Demographics	Common Motives	Examples	Distinctive Features
Individual Actors	Both men (28.8%) and women (25.8%) across age groups	Personal bias, jealousy, amusement	Okoye Blessing Nwakaeg harassing actress Eniola Badmus	Acts alone; may face legal consequences under cybercrime law
Friends, Acquaintances & Intimate Partners	Mostly youth/young adults; male-dominated	Revenge, betrayal, peer validation	NCIS shared by ex-partners; betrayal by “best friends”	Exploits trust; victims often silent due to social or emotional ties
Organized Online Troll Networks	Bloggers, influencers, skit makers; often anonymous males	Silencing dissent, gender bias, misogyny	Hate campaigns against women activists and journalists	Coordinated attacks; hard to trace or prosecute; foster toxic online culture
Politicians & Political Supporters	Mostly male, politically motivated actors	Discredit opponents, suppress dissent	TFGBV against female politicians during elections	Uses digital violence as a political weapon; merges power with gender-based silencing



Perpetrator Demographics

29%
male

26%
Female



Types of Perpetrators

1

Individuals

Lone actors spreading hate or misinformation

2

Friends/Partners

Leverage trust for harassment or “revenge porn”

3

Organized Troll Networks

Political or ideological targeting



Barriers to Justice

1

Emotional ties

2

Fear of retaliation

3

Social stigma

Known perpetrators often escape accountability due to victim pressure and legal complexity.”



Real Case Highlight

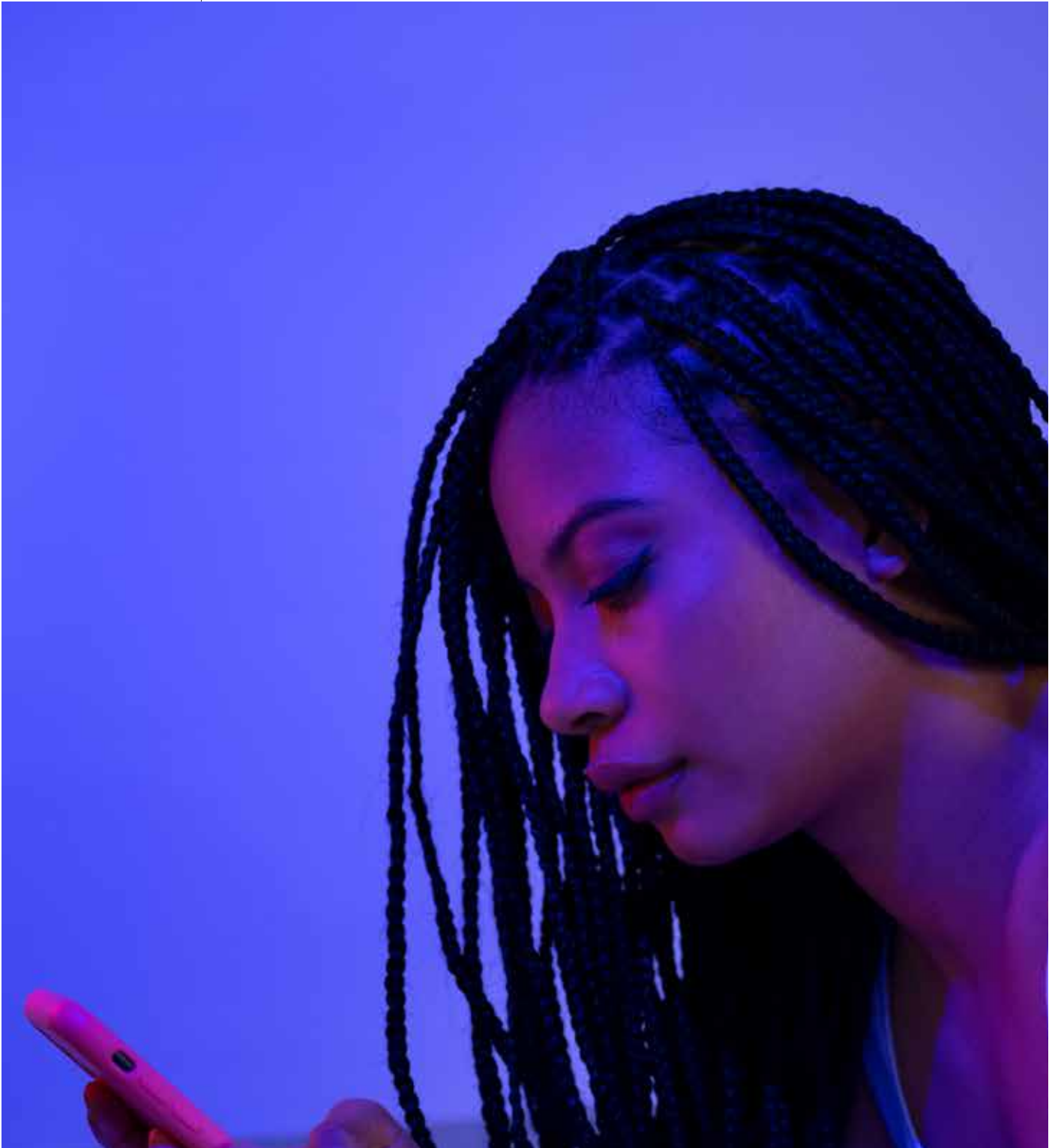


Case: Okoye Blessing Nwakaeg convicted under the Cybercrimes Act for cyberstalking actress Eniola Badmus – sentenced to 3 years or fine.



TFGBV thrives where there is silence. Legal awareness and survivor support are essential.

Impacts and Consequences of TFGBV



Psychological and Emotional Harm

TFGBV inflicts severe psychological trauma on victims, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The pervasive nature of online abuse, amplified by anonymity and widespread internet access (over 156 million users in 2024, per NCC), means victims face relentless harassment that invades their personal and professional lives. For instance, Kiki Mordi, a journalist targeted after her 2019 “Sex for Grades” documentary, reported experiencing severe

anxiety due to death threats and doxxing.⁵¹ A survey found that 51.6% of Nigerian women experiencing online abuse reported mental health impacts, with many feelings unsafe in digital spaces.⁵² This trauma is compounded for marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ individuals, who face outing and blackmail, as documented in a 2023 TIERS report, leading to long-term emotional distress and, in some cases, suicidal ideation. Sharing explicit content and then threaten to distribute it has led to tragic outcomes. A Nigeria lady shares her experience.

BOX 3

“...later on my mom called me showing me the video that an unknown number sent the video to her phone as a Muslim mother. I was beaten to a pulp that day and I ran out crying to my bestie told her somebody sent a video of me to my mom she was crying and cursing the person. Got suicidal and my father disowned me, my mom was the one that helped me pull through and I explained everything to her and told her I don’t know who did the video she thought I did the video so I could send to my bf or something. I always cry and curse the person.”⁵³

Another victim says:

"Instantly I became light, I felt my life had come to an end because, if you look at how my parents loved me, such disgrace was coming. It was very scary, and if I had had poison, I would have taken it to die. 'It occurred to me so many times to commit suicide, especially when my father found out and said I had disgraced the family; to drink poison and die or to travel far away from home.'"⁵⁴

Moreso, lin 2022, 17-year-old Jordan DeMay from Michigan, USA, took his own life after being blackmailed by Nigerian scammers posing as a young woman online. The perpetrators, Samuel and Samson Ogoshi, were later extradited to the U.S. and sentenced to 17.5 years in prison.⁵⁵ Similarly, Australian schoolboy Gavin Guffey died by suicide after being targeted in a sextortion scheme; a Nigerian man, Hassanbunhussein Abolore Lawal, was extradited to face charges related to the case.

Social Isolation and Stigmatization

TFGBV often leads to social isolation as victims withdraw from online and offline spaces to avoid further abuse. Patriarchal norms exacerbate this by victim-blaming, particularly in cases of image-based abuse, such as the 2022 case of a university student whose private photos were leaked by an ex-partner, resulting in public shaming and family ostracism (Stand to End Rape Initiative). Women in public roles, like

⁵¹ <https://www.icfj.org/news/icfj-stands-nigerian-journalist-kiki-mordi-against-unrelenting-misogynistic-attacks>

⁵² <https://thebrainbuilders.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Factsheet-Online-Gender-Based-Violence-4.pdf>

⁵³ <https://www.lindaikejisblog.com/2023/5/nigerian-lady-recounts-how-she-almost-committed-suicide-when-a-friend-leaked-her-nude-video-after-accusing-her-of-stealing-her-boyfriend.html.html>

⁵⁴ <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Leaked-nude-photos-I-wanted-to-commit-suicide-Victim-1721099>

⁵⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cr7xpdzy9yo>

activists in the #ArewaMeToo movement, face coordinated attacks that deter social engagement, as reported by Human Rights Watch (2021). For LGBTQ+ individuals, practices like “kito” (catfishing and outing) lead to forced displacement and loss of community ties, with a 2023 Reuters report noting cases of physical attacks following online exposure.

Economic Consequences

TFGBV has significant economic impacts, particularly for women in public-facing roles or those reliant on digital platforms for livelihoods. Online harassment can lead to job loss, reduced productivity, or withdrawal from professional opportunities. For

example, female journalists like Stephanie Busari of CNN Africa have reported scaling back public appearances due to online threats, affecting career progression (CPJ, 2019). The digital gender divide, with women 20–30% less likely to access mobile internet (GSMA, 2024), compounds economic vulnerability, as victims lack the resources to navigate or mitigate online abuse. A 2025 Webfala foundation report revealed how TFGBV, such as sextortion, forces women entrepreneurs to abandon online businesses, with some losing significant income due to reputational damage from deepfakes or smear campaigns, further entrenching economic disparities. Victim particularly sextortion, often find themselves coerced into paying perpetrators to maintain their privacy. A victim recounted,

BOX 4

“I pay it now and then two months down the line you’re gonna come back... and then who knows if I do sent you the money you probably will release it anyway. “I’m not going to allow anyone to blackmail me for doing something that is natural.”⁵⁶

Similarly, the Human Rights Watch survey, 73% of gay men in Nigeria reported experiencing threats related to kito, while 31% revealed they had been subjected to extortion involving money or other valuables.⁵⁷

Political Disempowerment

TFGBV undermines women’s political participation by silencing their voices and discouraging public engagement. Female politicians like Oby Ezekwesili, who faced sexist attacks during her 2019 presidential campaign (BBC News, 2019), often reduce their online presence to avoid harassment, limiting their ability to mobilize support. During the 2023 elections, the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Nigeria

documented rape threats targeting female candidates, deterring women from seeking office. This aligns with the patriarchal backlash against women in power, a key cause of TFGBV, and contributes to Nigeria’s low female representation in politics only 4% of National Assembly seats are held by women⁵⁸. Such attacks contribute to weakening democratic processes by excluding women’s perspectives from public discourse.

Cultural Reinforcement of Gender Norms

Digital platforms have become spaces where these norms are amplified, not dismantled. The 2024 UN Women report highlights the

⁵⁶ <https://www.theafricandream.net/tiwa-savage-blackmail/>

⁵⁷ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/10/20/tell-me-where-i-can-be-safe/impact-nigerias-same-sex-marriage-prohibition-act>

⁵⁸ <https://www.alignplatform.org/resources/gender-norms-media-narratives-and-women-appointive-positions-nigeria>

alarming rise of the “manosphere” a loosely connected online network of misogynistic content creators and communities that uses memes, fake accounts, and coordinated disinformation campaigns to ridicule, harass, and discredit women who challenge traditional gender roles.⁵⁹ Nigerian women who speak out on politics, sexuality, or feminism online are often met with targeted abuse that mirrors and reinforces offline gender inequalities. These forms of digital abuse are not isolated; they reinforce longstanding cultural attitudes that normalize violence against women and silence dissenting voices. In many parts of Nigeria, particularly rural and conservative regions, such attacks are seen as justified or even humorous, further perpetuating a culture where women are blamed for their own victimization. The normalization of online harassment under the guise of “jokes” or “free speech” blurs the line between opinion and abuse, making it more difficult for victims to seek redress or public sympathy. A study highlighted that male privilege, defined by gendered roles and expectations, along with religious beliefs and rape myths, contribute to Nigerian women's experiences of sexual abuse and violence.⁶⁰

Barriers to Justice and Systemic Impunity

The weak legal and institutional frameworks in Nigeria, a key cause of TFGBV, intensify its impact by denying victims access to justice. The Cybercrimes Act (2015) and VAPP Act (2015) lack specific provisions for TFGBV, and enforcement is inconsistent, with only 150 cybercrime convictions from 2015 to 2022 (EFCC data). Victims, like those in the 2021 #ArewaMeToo movement, often face police inaction or victim-blaming, as reported by Human Rights Watch, deterring reporting and retraumatizing survivors. The lack of gender sensitivity in laws like the Criminal Code, combined with emerging threats like AI-driven deepfakes (UNESCO, 2024), creates an environment of impunity, allowing perpetrators to continue targeting women and marginalized groups without consequence, further entrenching systemic inequalities.



⁵⁹ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-to-counter-the-manospheres-toxic-influence?>

⁶⁰ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350644102_The_Role_of_Cultural_Beliefs_Norms_and_Practices_in_Nigerian_Women%27s_Experiences_of_Sexual_Abuse_and_Violence?

Legal and Institutional Frameworks

Nigeria's legal and institutional frameworks for addressing TFGBV are shaped by a combination of domestic laws, international treaties, and policies, yet they face significant challenges in addressing the root causes of TFGBV, such as patriarchal norms and weak enforcement.



Nigeria's legal and institutional frameworks for addressing TFGBV are shaped by a combination of domestic laws, international treaties, and policies, yet they face significant challenges in addressing the root causes of TFGBV, such as patriarchal norms and weak enforcement. The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) provides a foundational framework, guaranteeing the right to dignity (Section 34) and prohibiting sex-based discrimination (Sections 15(2) and 42(1)). Nigeria is also a signatory to international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the Maputo Protocol, which mandate protections against gender-based violence. However, these constitutional and international commitments are undermined by cultural norms that normalize misogyny. The Constitution's broad provisions do not explicitly address TFGBV.

The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015 is Nigeria's primary legislation for digital offenses, criminalizing cyberstalking, identity theft, and unauthorized data access. It addresses some forms of TFGBV, such as online harassment. Section 24 of the Act is central to this, criminalizing acts of cyberstalking and online harassment. It prohibits the transmission of messages that are grossly offensive, indecent, obscene, or menacing in character, as well as knowingly false content intended to cause annoyance, insult, injury, or intimidation. Subsection 2 specifically addresses threats of violence, extortion, and harassment, prescribing penalties of up to

10 years' imprisonment and fines exceeding 25 million for the most severe violations. This section effectively captures behaviours such as cyberbullying, sextortion, doxing, and gendered disinformation. Other relevant provisions include Section 22(3), which criminalizes impersonation and identity theft commonly used in online attacks against women punishable by up to 5 years in prison or a 7 million fine. Section 23 prohibits the production, distribution, or possession of child pornography and non-consensual intimate content (e.g., revenge porn), carrying penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment or a 20 million fine. Together, these sections offer legal recourse for a wide range of TFGBV, including online sexual harassment, ideological attacks, and professional misogyny, even though they do not always explicitly name gendered violence. The Act also allows courts to issue protection orders to prevent further abuse, making it a key instrument for safeguarding digital spaces in Nigeria. The Act's enforcement is hindered by limited digital literacy among law enforcement, with only 150 cybercrime convictions recorded between 2015 and 2022 (EFCC data). This reflects the systemic issue of inadequate institutional capacity, which emboldens perpetrators exploiting anonymity on platforms like WhatsApp, as seen in cases of coordinated attacks on women. The Act's alignment with international standards, such as the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (to which Nigeria is not a signatory), is limited, reducing its effectiveness in addressing emerging threats like AI-driven deepfakes, noted in UNESCO's 2024 report.⁶¹

BOX 5

"Any person who knowingly makes or sends other pornographic images to another computer by way of unsolicited distribution shall be guilty of an offence and upon conviction shall be sentenced to One year imprisonment or a fine of Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Naira or both." Section 23 (2) of CPPA, 2015 as amended

⁶¹ <https://thenationonlineng.net/fg-unesco-partner-to-tackle-ai-misuse-deepfakes-on-social-media-minister/>

TABLE 4: CPPA Act 2015 as Amended, TVGBV Applicable Provisions

Category	Relevant Sections	Penalty Range
Cyberstalking/Harassment	24(1), 24(2)(a)	Up to N7M/3yrs or N25M–N?M/10yrs depending on severity
Online Sex Harassment/Sextortion	24, 23(2)	1yr/N250K (porn images), up to 17yrs via harassment charges
Revenge Porn	23(2), 24	1yr/N250K or 3yr/N7M
Doxxing/Threats	24(2)(b)(c)	Up to 10yrs + N25M fine
Impersonation	22(3)	Up to 5yrs/N7M; identity theft up to 7yrs/N5M
False/Gendered Disinformation	24(1)(b), 24(2)(c)	N7M/3yrs or N15M+ fines/5–10yrs
Ideological TFGBV	24 + protective orders	Same as above, with court orders
Child Exploitation	23	Up to 10yrs/N20M
Professional Misogyny	24, 23	As per harassment/defamation standards

Source: CPPA Act 2015 as Amended

The Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP)

Act of 2015 is a landmark law addressing GBV, criminalizing rape, spousal battery, and psychological abuse, with some provisions applicable to TFGBV, such as threats and intimidation. However, it is not domesticated in all 36 states, limiting its reach, and lacks specific clauses for digital harms like non-consensual image sharing.⁶² The VAPP Act aligns with CEDAW's call for comprehensive GBV protections but falls short in addressing intersectional vulnerabilities, such as those faced by LGBTQ+ individuals targeted with “kito” blackmail schemes (TIERS, 2023). Weak enforcement, driven by police inaction and societal stigma, leaves victims like the university student whose photos were leaked in 2022 (Stand to End Rape Initiative) without recourse, perpetuating the cycle of impunity fuelled by patriarchal norms.

The National Gender Policy (2021-2026) mainstream gender equality and address GBV, including digital forms, through digital literacy and safety. It reflects commitments under CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol but remains underfunded and aspirational, with limited implementation at state levels. The

policy's focus on empowering women through education and economic opportunities seeks to counter the digital gender divide (GSMA, 2024), which exacerbates TFGBV vulnerabilities for rural women. However, its lack of enforceable mechanisms fails to address the misogynistic online subcultures, such as the manosphere, which amplify harassment, as seen in attacks on journalists like Kiki Mordi (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2019). The policy's goals are undermined by societal attitudes that normalize TFGBV, limiting its impact on fostering a safer digital environment.

The Nigeria Data Protection Act (2023)

safeguards personal data and privacy, aligning with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by protecting against unauthorized data access, a key enabler of TFGBV like doxxing. It establishes the Nigeria Data Protection Commission to regulate data processing. Section 30 protect individual sensitive personal data, but its enforcement is nascent, and it does not explicitly address gendered data abuses, such as sextortion cases reported by NAPTIP in 2023. The Criminal Code (applicable in southern states) and Penal Code (northern states) address assaults and sexual offenses but are outdated, with provisions like Section 211 of

⁶² <https://nitda.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Updated-OHP-WHITE-PAPER-copy-compressed.pdf>

the Evidence Act allowing defences based on a victim's "immoral character," reinforcing patriarchal biases.

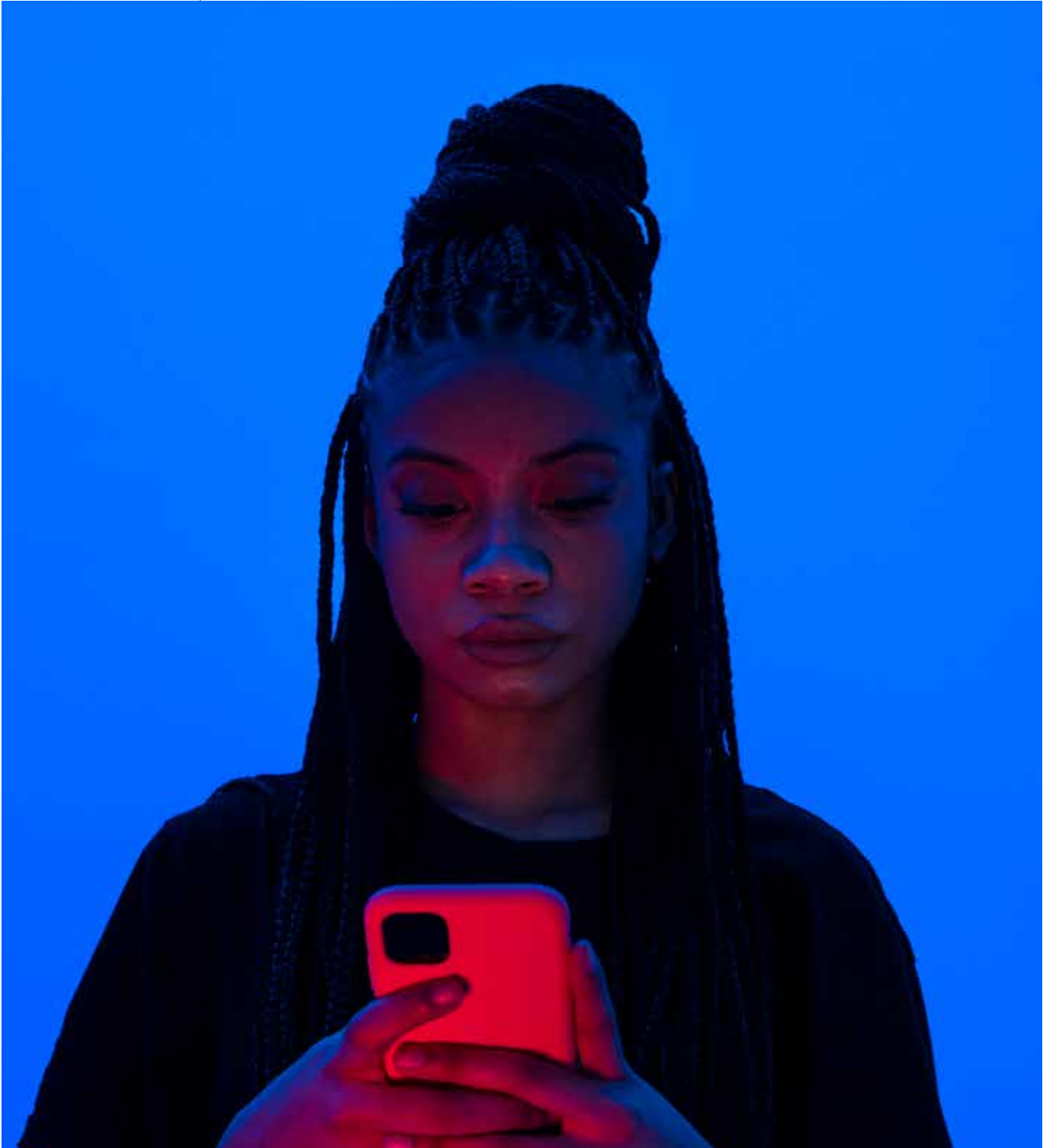
The Child Rights Act (2003) and the Sexual Harassment in Tertiary Educational Institutions Prohibition Act (2016) provide targeted protections but have limited scope. The Child Rights Act, adopted by 35 states, protects children under 18 from sexual exploitation, applicable to online grooming, but its inconsistent domestication (e.g., not in Gombe) weakens its impact. The 2016 Act, still awaiting presidential assent in 2023, addresses sexual harassment in universities but does not cover digital platforms, despite cases like the 2019 "Sex for Grades" scandal (BBC Africa Eye). Both laws align with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Under the **Criminal Code Act** (applicable in southern Nigeria), it is an offence to threaten a person's life, property, or reputation, to persistently follow or stalk someone, or to engage in defamation. These actions whether offline or online fall within criminal definitions of harassment or libel.⁶³ Similarly, the **Penal Code** (for northern regions) contains provisions criminalizing stalking and threats, which can be invoked for repeated digital harassment, including cyberbullying, hate-filled messages, or identity-based attacks. This layered legal framework allows victims to pursue criminal charges whether it's a Whatsapp barrage, threatening social media posts, or repeated doxxing through traditional statutes alongside newer cybercrime laws as seen in several case studies above.



⁶³ https://www.mondaq.com/nigeria/libel-defamation/1371492/-from-tik-tok-to-trial-decoding-defamation-and-cyberstalking-in-the-social-media-era?utm_source=chatgpt.com

Stakeholder Responses and Interventions



The response to TFGBV in Nigeria involves a range of stakeholders, each contributing to mitigation efforts with varying degrees of effectiveness. These responses address the causes (e.g., weak legal frameworks, platform moderation gaps) and impacts (e.g., barriers to justice, psychological harm)

discussed previously, reflecting a multi-stakeholder approach to tackle the issue. Below is a detailed breakdown of the contributions from government, civil society, the private sector, and international partners, supported by verifiable examples and insights from credible sources.

1 Government Response

Law enforcement, judiciary, and ministries play critical roles, though their effectiveness is limited by systemic challenges. The Nigeria Police Force, tasked with investigating cybercrimes under the Cybercrimes Act (2015), has recorded only 150 convictions from 2015 to 2022 (EFCC data), reflecting low digital literacy and enforcement capacity. The judiciary struggles with outdated laws and gender-insensitive

provisions, as seen in cases dismissed due to victim-blaming (Amnesty International, 2021). The Ministry of Women Affairs advocates for gender policies like the National Gender Policy (2021-2026), while the Ministry of Digital Economy oversees digital infrastructure, but coordination remains weak, leaving gaps in addressing TFGBV, such as sextortion cases reported by NAPTIP in 2023.

2 Civil Society Organizations

CSOs play key role in combating TFGBV through advocacy, education, legal support, and technological innovation. These organizations often fill critical gaps where governmental responses are inadequate, addressing the multifaceted nature of TFGBV and supporting survivors through community-based and tech-driven interventions. One of the leading CSOs in this space is TechHerNG, based in Abuja, which focuses on digital inclusion and gender equality. TechHerNG has been instrumental in raising awareness about the growing incidence of TFGBV in Nigeria and advocates for stronger data collection and legal reforms. Led by Chioma Agwuegbo, the organization emphasizes the chronic underreporting of online abuse due to poor documentation systems and societal distrust. TechHerNG's work includes developing resources to promote digital safety and pushing for policy reforms that better protect women in online spaces. Similarly, the Gender Mobile Initiative, founded in 2017, addresses sexual and gender-based violence within tertiary institutions. Its flagship innovation, the "CampusPal" mobile app, enables anonymous reporting of sexual harassment cases in universities.⁶⁴ The initiative collaborates with the Nigerian Ministry of Education and the National Universities Commission to implement

policy and technological safeguards against abuse in higher education.

Other significant actors include the Women's Technology Empowerment Centre (W.TEC), which has been empowering women and girls through technology education since 2008. W.TEC runs coding camps, after-school tech clubs, and online safety campaigns that equip participants with digital skills and tools for secure internet use. The Devatop Centre for Africa Development contributes through its "TALKAM" mobile app, which allows users to report cases of human trafficking and gender-based violence while serving as a national data portal. Devatop complements its digital work with media outreach via weekly radio and TV programs. Also, the Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC) provides comprehensive legal aid, counseling, and policy advocacy. Since 2000, WARDC has supported survivors of GBV with pro bono legal services and played a major role in pushing for social accountability and women's rights legislation. Together, these organizations form a vital ecosystem addressing TFGBV through prevention, reporting, support, and systemic change.

⁶⁴ <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/10/3/51>

private sector responses has been inconsistent, with major digital platforms like Meta (Facebook, Instagram), X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok implementing content moderation policies that often fall short in addressing the unique linguistic, cultural, and gendered contexts of the country. Meta has faced significant criticism for its inadequate content moderation practices. In October 2024, Meta's Oversight Board highlighted the company's failure to remove a graphic video depicting violence against LGBTQ+ individuals in Nigeria. Despite multiple reports and reviews by human moderators, the video remained on Facebook for about five months, violating several community standards. The board attributed this lapse to Meta's inability to accurately detect and moderate content in local languages like Igbo, underscoring the platform's lack of localized moderation capabilities.⁶⁵ Further aggravating

concerns, Meta's decision to terminate partnerships with third-party fact-checkers and reduce content moderation efforts has been condemned by various civil society organizations.⁶⁶ The National Online Safety Coalition warned that such policy shifts could amplify misinformation and hate speech, particularly in regions like Nigeria where misinformation has previously led to violence and societal instability.⁶⁷ In contrast, TikTok has demonstrated a more proactive approach to content moderation in Nigeria. Between July and September 2024, TikTok removed over two million videos from its platform in Nigeria for violating community guidelines.⁶⁸ Notably, 99.1% of these videos were removed within 24 hours, and 92.1% were taken down before any user reports, reflecting the platform's commitment to maintaining a safe digital environment through advanced content moderation technologies.⁶⁹

BOX 6

"We've removed around 63,000 Instagram accounts in Nigeria attempting to target people with financial sextortion scams, including a coordinated network of around 2,500 accounts. We've also removed a set of Facebook accounts, Pages and Groups run by Yahoo Boys – banned under our Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policy – that were attempting to organize, recruit and train new scammers."

(Meta, July 2024)



⁶⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/nigeria-meta-faecbook-video-lgbtq-human-rights-7ba99f53c18bb962dba49f1488162725>

⁶⁶ <https://dailytrust.com/fake-news-metas-action-on-fact-checking-ll-worsen-insecurity-in-nigeria-africa-coalition/?>

⁶⁷ <https://thenationonlineeng.net/coalition-seeks-action-against-metas-content-moderation-rollback/?>

⁶⁸ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/10/tiktok-removes-over-2-1m-videos-in-nigeria-in-q2-2024-report/?>

⁶⁹ <https://punchng.com/tiktok-deletes-2-1-million-violating-videos-in-nigeria-report/?>

International Partners

They provide technical expertise, funding, policy guidance, and platforms for cross-border collaboration. These partners support local civil society organizations, government institutions, and digital platforms in building capacities, raising awareness, and developing holistic responses to TFGBV. Organizations such as UN Women, UNICEF, and UNFPA have implemented programs that strengthen legal frameworks, improve survivor services, and integrate digital safety into broader gender equality initiatives. For instance, UN Women has worked with Nigerian stakeholders to promote the domestication of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act and to advance research on online gender-based violence. Similarly, the European Union and the British Council, through the Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption (RoLAC) programme, have supported institutional reforms that address sexual and digital violence against women and girls.⁷⁰ Donor agencies like USAID, Global Affairs Canada, and the MacArthur Foundation fund initiatives focused on women's digital rights, digital literacy, and TFGBV prevention. These international actors also help local NGOs implement digital safety training, advocacy campaigns, and legal aid projects.

Academic and Research Institutions

They contribute critical insights that inform policy, advocacy, and prevention strategies. These institutions conduct empirical research, provide training for future professionals, and collaborate with civil society and international partners to deepen understanding of the socio-cultural and technological drivers of TFGBV. Universities such as Obafemi Awolowo University, University of Jos, University of Lagos, and Ahmadu Bello University have supported gender studies departments or research centres that explore digital forms of violence and their intersection with gender, media, and law. These institutions often conduct fieldwork, host conferences, and publish findings that help to quantify the prevalence of TFGBV, understand its psychological and legal impacts, and recommend

evidence-based responses. For example, research conducted at the Centre for Gender Studies at Bayero University Kano has highlighted the role of online spaces in exacerbating gender inequalities and facilitated policy dialogues with state actors. In addition, academic researchers frequently partner with CSOs and international agencies to co-design tools such as digital safety curricula, survivor support protocols, and monitoring frameworks

Community Leaders and Youth Groups

Traditional and religious leaders have significant influence in shaping societal attitudes. For instance, initiatives like those by the Brain Builders Youth Development Initiative have involved community leaders in crafting GBV advocacy messages tailored to their unique contexts, promoting awareness and encouraging reporting. Such involvement ensures that anti-TFGBV messages resonate culturally and are more effectively disseminated. Similarly, young people are increasingly taking active roles in addressing TFGBV through education and advocacy. Organizations like the Centre for Information, Technology, and Development (CITAD) have trained youth to sensitize communities on issues related to TFGBV, leveraging their familiarity with digital platforms to spread awareness. Programs like the "Safe Kicks Initiative" have empowered young women to advocate against sexual violence, reaching thousands through community action plans and outreach efforts.⁷¹ When sensitized and empowered, they become powerful advocates for digital safety and gender equality, using their platforms to condemn TFGBV and support survivors. Any local youth-led organizations and student unions are actively involved in awareness campaigns and digital literacy initiatives. These groups leverage social media, community radio, and peer education to educate their peers about online consent, cyberbullying, and reporting mechanisms. For instance, initiatives like #SayNoToOnlineAbuse and community digital safety clubs in schools and tertiary institutions have mobilized young people to speak out against TFGBV and demand accountability from both perpetrators and platforms.

⁷⁰ https://www.justice-security.ng/sites/default/files/rolac_newsletter_dec2018-february2019.pdf

⁷¹ <https://www.womenstrong.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Full-Book-WSI-Strong-Girls.pdf>

Challenges to Preventing and Addressing TFGBV





Access to psychosocial support for survivors of TFGBV in Nigeria remains critically low, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Low Access to Psychosocial Support

Access to psychosocial support for survivors of TFGBV in Nigeria remains critically low, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Mental health services are heavily concentrated in urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt, leaving women and girls in rural communities with limited or no access to trauma counselling, mental health professionals, or support groups. This urban-rural divide exacerbates the psychological toll of TFGBV, as survivors often face their trauma in isolation, without access to professional help. According to a 2024 WHO report, only about 10% of Nigeria's mental health services are accessible to rural populations, leaving a vast majority of survivors unsupported.⁷²

Compounding this issue is the chronic underfunding of civil society organizations (CSOs) that provide trauma care, legal aid,

and victim support services. Many grassroots organizations that offer psychosocial assistance are dependent on short-term donor funding, making it difficult to sustain long-term interventions or expand to high-need areas.⁷³ Despite increasing reports of online harassment, doxxing, sextortion, and cyberstalking, few CSOs have the resources to train dedicated trauma counsellors or invest in mobile mental health clinics that could reach remote communities. The lack of sustained investment in survivor-centered services undermines national efforts to respond effectively to the growing threat of TFGBV. Few existing programs integrate psychosocial support with digital literacy and cybersecurity training, even though such a combined approach is essential for empowering survivors. Many women and girls continue to face re-victimization online because they lack the digital skills to protect themselves or report abuse effectively or counter the perpetrator. This is clearly demonstrated by a victim.

BOX 9

Is this really how low we've become? I understand that things are hard, I get that feeding off each other and scamming people will be on the rise but I've never and would never negotiate with con artists/scammers, "I am sharing this ahead of your threats to release these edited/false images cos this is disappointing, this is not humanity, there is a pandemic killing people and there's also certain human beings wanting to exploit people in a time when we should all spread love and kindness."⁷⁴

Stigma and Victim-Blaming

One of the most pervasive barriers to addressing TFGBV in Nigeria is the deep-rooted stigma and culture of victim-blaming that surrounds survivors. Women and girls who experience online harassment, sextortion, or the non-consensual sharing of intimate images are frequently blamed for the abuse, often being accused of “inviting” it through their clothing, online behaviour, or social media presence. This harmful narrative discourages victims from coming forward, reporting incidents, or seeking support, as they fear judgment rather than justice. In a 2025 report of TVGB in Nigeria, respondents said

they would hesitate to report online abuse due to fear of being blamed or disbelieved.⁷⁵

Cultural and religious norms in several regions of Nigeria compound the issue by downplaying the seriousness of digital violence. In many communities, TFGBV is not recognized as a legitimate form of harm because it does not involve physical contact, and is often perceived as a private or moral issue rather than a criminal offense. As a result, survivors receive minimal sympathy or support from their communities and religious institutions, which may advise them to simply “forgive and forget” or to be more discreet online. This cultural minimization perpetuates impunity for perpetrators and

⁷² <https://www.medicalresearchfoundation.org.uk/news/changes-needed-to-address-migration-of-psychiatrists-out-of-nigeria-new-study-finds>

⁷³ <https://banyanglobal.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/USAID-Nigeria-Gender-Analysis-Report-508c-Final.pdf>

⁷⁴ <https://www.pulse.ng/articles/entertainment/celebrities/toke-makinwa-says-she-is-being-blackmailed-with-photoshopped-nude-photos-shares-them-2024081702281457746>

⁷⁵ Webfala Digital Skills for All Initiative. (2025). Dynamics and Impacts of Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria: Challenges and Pathways to Prevention. Webfala Foundation.

creates an environment where digital violence is normalized rather than condemned.

The social consequences for survivors who disclose TFGBV can be severe. Many face ostracization, public shaming, or even rejection by their own families. In conservative communities, where honor and family reputation are paramount, survivors may be silenced or pressured into secrecy to avoid bringing “shame” to their household. This social isolation compounds the trauma of the abuse itself and reinforces a cycle of silence, invisibility, and vulnerability.

Limited Access to Justice

Survivors of TFGBV in Nigeria often encounter significant barriers when seeking justice, primarily due to inadequate training among law enforcement personnel. Many officers lack the necessary skills to handle digital abuse cases effectively, leading to the mishandling or trivialization of complaints. This gap in expertise results in a lack of confidence among survivors, who may feel that their experiences are not taken seriously or understood by the authorities. Efforts to address this issue, such as specialized training programs, have been initiated but are not yet widespread or consistently implemented across the country.

Corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies within the Nigerian legal system further deter survivors from pursuing legal action. Bribery, prolonged court processes, and a lack of transparency can make the justice system seem inaccessible and untrustworthy. These systemic issues not only delay the resolution of cases but also contribute to a culture of impunity, where perpetrators are rarely held accountable for their actions. Such an environment discourages survivors from coming forward, fearing that their efforts will be futile or even detrimental to their well-being.⁷⁶

Additionally, the fear of retaliation or further abuse significantly impacts survivors' willingness to seek justice. In some cases, reporting incidents of TFGBV can lead to social ostracization, threats, or even physical harm, especially in communities where victim-blaming is prevalent. This fear is compounded by the lack of protective measures and support systems for those

who choose to come forward. Without assurances of safety and confidentiality, many survivors opt to remain silent, allowing perpetrators to continue their abusive behavior unchecked.

Resistance to Cultural Change

In many communities, digital harassment is dismissed as humour or defended under the guise of “free speech,” rather than being recognized as a serious violation of human rights. This cultural minimization perpetuates a hostile online environment for women and girls, where misogynistic behaviours are not only tolerated but often go unchallenged. Such attitudes are reinforced by societal structures that uphold male dominance and discourage accountability for perpetrators. Compounding this issue is the lack of engagement with youth and community leaders in dialogues about online gender-based violence. Young people, who are among the most active users of digital platforms, are frequently excluded from conversations and initiatives aimed at combating TFGBV. Similarly, community leaders, who hold significant influence over local norms and behaviours, are often not involved in awareness campaigns or educational programs. This disconnect means that opportunities to challenge harmful beliefs and promote positive change at the grassroots level are missed, allowing regressive attitudes to persist unaddressed.⁷⁷

Inadequate Platform Accountability

Victims often encounter prolonged delays when seeking the removal of harmful content or the suspension of abusive accounts. This sluggishness not only prolongs the trauma experienced by survivors but also emboldens perpetrators, who operate with a sense of impunity. The lack of timely intervention from platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp undermines trust in digital safety mechanisms and leaves victims feeling unsupported. Meta’s 2023 Transparency Report shows only 43% of reported content is removed within 24 hours, but lacks specifics on Nigerian cases, such as coordinated attacks on Obi Ezekwesili.⁷⁸ This opacity prevents accountability and hinders



Survivors of TFGBV in Nigeria often encounter significant barriers when seeking justice, primarily due to inadequate training among law enforcement personnel.

⁷⁶ <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2025/04/causes-consequences-of-failing-justice-system-in-nigeria/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.awesomefoundation.org/en/projects/51151-engaging-youth-against-gender-violence?>

⁷⁸ https://www.instagram.com/reel/DH0vz5IMUW3/?locale=pt_PT



A significant barrier to addressing TFGBV in Nigeria is the limited digital literacy among women and girls.

efforts to address platform-specific abuses like sextortion or deepfakes (UNESCO, 2024), exacerbating the cause of inadequate moderation.

A significant barrier to effective content moderation is the insufficient support for Nigeria's linguistic diversity. With over 500 languages spoken across the country, including widely used ones like Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, the absence of moderation tools and personnel proficient in these languages hampers the detection and removal of harmful content. This linguistic gap allows abusive material to persist online, particularly in non-English-speaking communities, where users may lack the resources to report violations effectively. Efforts to develop datasets for offensive language detection in these languages are underway, but widespread implementation remains limited.

Furthermore, the opaque nature of reporting and content takedown processes on these platforms contributes to the vulnerability of victims. Users often face unclear guidelines, lack of feedback on report outcomes, and inconsistent enforcement of community standards. This lack of transparency and accountability discourages victims from reporting incidents and fosters a sense of helplessness.

Limited Digital Literacy

A significant barrier to addressing TFGBV in Nigeria is the limited digital literacy among women and girls. Many lack the necessary skills to recognize, prevent, or respond to online threats such as cyberstalking, phishing, and privacy breaches. This gap is more pronounced in rural and underserved areas, where access to digital education is scarce. Without adequate digital literacy, women and girls are more vulnerable to online exploitation and less equipped to navigate the digital landscape safely. Awareness of online safety tools and reporting mechanisms remains low, particularly in remote regions. Many women are unaware of how to adjust privacy settings, report abusive content, or utilize security features on digital platforms. This lack of knowledge hinders their ability to

protect themselves online and contributes to the perpetuation of TFGBV. Furthermore, the absence of digital safety education in both formal and informal educational settings means that many girls grow up without the foundational knowledge needed to engage safely in digital spaces.

To bridge this gap, several initiatives have been launched to enhance digital literacy among Nigerian women and girls. Programs like the World Bank's 'Gina Mata, Gina Al-Umma' have trained over 1,200 young women in Northern Nigeria, focusing on digital skills and online safety.⁷⁹ Similarly, the Digital Skills Accelerator for Women and Girls (DSA) by AREAi offers tailored digital literacy programs for girls aged 13 to 25, emphasizing both basic and advanced digital competencies. Organizations like Webfala have also conducted online safety workshops in rural communities, educating students, teachers, and parents about responsible online behaviour. Despite these efforts, the reach of such programs remains limited, underscoring the need for more widespread and sustained digital literacy initiatives to empower women and girls across Nigeria.

Legal, Policy and Institutional Gaps

Nigeria's legal framework for addressing TFGBV is hindered by outdated and vague legislation. The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, while addressing certain cyber-related offences, does not comprehensively cover the nuanced forms of TFGBV such as doxxing, deepfake pornography, and online blackmail. Although the Act was amended in 2024 to strengthen cybercrime penalties, it still lacks explicit provisions targeting these emerging threats. Similarly, the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (VAPP Act) of 2015, primarily focused on physical and sexual violence, does not adequately address the complexities of digital abuse, leaving significant gaps in protection for victims of online gender-based violence. Even in areas where relevant laws exist, enforcement remains weak due to insufficient training and a lack of institutional commitment. Law enforcement agencies often lack the

⁷⁹ <https://www.banquemoniale.org/fr/news/series/people-first-podcast>; <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/nasikiliza/transforming-futures-digital-skills-for-girls-and-women-in-northern-nigeria>



Efforts to prevent and respond to TFGBV in Nigeria are significantly hampered by chronic underfunding.



A significant challenge in addressing TFGBV in Nigeria is the lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data.

necessary expertise to handle digital abuse cases effectively, leading to mishandling or trivialization of complaints.

Funding Constraints

Efforts to prevent and respond to TFGBV in Nigeria are significantly hampered by chronic underfunding. Both non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government agencies often rely heavily on donor funding, which is frequently short-term and project-specific. This dependency creates a precarious situation where essential services, such as survivor support, legal aid, and digital literacy programs, face interruptions or cessation when donor priorities shift or funds are withdrawn. The lack of sustained investment is particularly detrimental in rural and conflict-affected regions, where the need for TFGBV prevention and response is often greatest. These areas frequently lack the infrastructure and resources necessary to implement long-term prevention strategies. Moreover, the volatility of funding streams makes it challenging to develop and maintain programs that require consistent engagement and community trust. Without reliable financial support, initiatives aimed at educating communities, empowering women, and building local capacities struggle to achieve lasting impact.

Furthermore, the competitive nature of securing funding often favours larger, international organizations with established donor relationships, leaving smaller, local NGOs at a disadvantage. These local entities, despite their deep understanding of community dynamics and needs, may lack the administrative capacity to meet stringent donor requirements. This disparity not only limits the effectiveness of TFGBV interventions but also undermines the potential for locally driven solutions that are culturally sensitive and sustainable. Addressing these funding constraints requires a concerted effort to diversify funding sources, streamline grant application

processes, and prioritize long-term investments in community-based organizations.

Data and Research Gaps

A significant challenge in addressing TFGBV in Nigeria is the lack of comprehensive, disaggregated data. Existing research often fails to categorize incidents by key factors such as age, location, or specific type of violence, making it difficult to understand the full scope and nuances of TFGBV. This data deficiency hinders the development of targeted interventions and policies. For instance, a 2024 UN Women report highlighted the absence of comparable, reliable data on the prevalence, forms, impact, and drivers of TFGBV across different regions and populations.⁸⁰ Thus, the absence of national studies or centralized reporting systems exacerbates the problem. While some initiatives, like the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative's dashboard, have attempted to document cases of gender-based violence, these efforts often suffer from inconsistent data collection methods and lack of integration across various platforms. As a result, the data collected is fragmented and not representative of the national situation. A report from The Guardian in 2025 noted that despite the launch of a national dashboard, the implementation has been ineffective, and the data collected is likely an underrepresentation of the actual cases due to poor inter-agency documentation and a lack of trust in the system.⁸¹

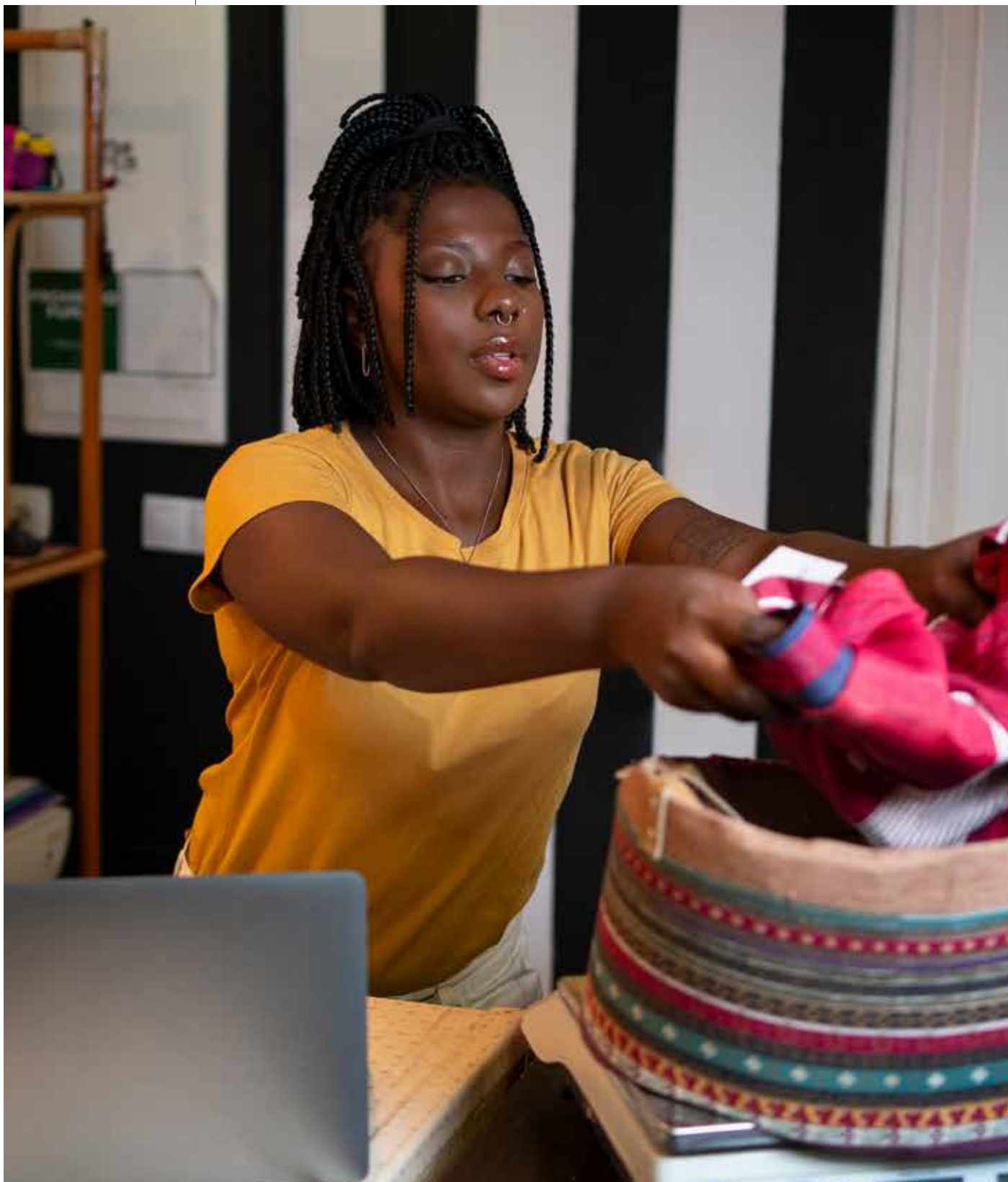
Furthermore, underreporting remains a significant barrier to accurate data collection. Cultural stigma, fear of retaliation, and lack of awareness about reporting mechanisms discourage many survivors from coming forward. A study by Sharda et al, (2024) emphasized that the prevalence estimates of TFGBV are largely under-reported and under-researched, particularly among women with marginalized identities.⁸²

⁸⁰ <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-shared-research-agenda-en.pdf?>

⁸¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/feb/25/activists-call-state-emergency-gender-based-violence-nigeria?>

⁸² https://journals.lww.com/mhnb/fulltext/2024/07000/technology_facilitated_gender_based_violence_in.11.aspx

Recommendations



Legal Reform and Policy Alignment

The Cybercrimes (Prohibition, Prevention, etc.) Act of 2015, while addressing certain cyber offenses, lacks explicit provisions for emerging forms of TFGBV such as doxxing, deepfake pornography, and sextortion. Although the 2024 amendment to the Act introduced clarifications, it did not specifically tackle these evolving threats. Therefore, further amendments are necessary to explicitly criminalize these acts, ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable and victims are adequately protected. Aligning these laws with international standards, such as the CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, would reinforce Nigeria's commitment to safeguarding women's rights in digital spaces.

Moreover, the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act of 2015, designed to address various forms of violence, has not been uniformly adopted across all Nigerian states. As of recent reports, while 35 states have adopted the Act, its implementation remains inconsistent, with over half of the Nigerian population unaware of its provisions. This lack of awareness and uneven enforcement undermines the Act's effectiveness in protecting individuals from TFGBV. Furthermore, certain provisions in existing laws, such as Section 211 of the Evidence Act, which allows defences based on a victim's "immoral character," perpetuate patriarchal biases and hinder justice for survivors. Revising such outdated legal provisions is crucial to eliminate systemic biases and ensure a more equitable legal framework that supports

victims of TFGBV

Law Enforcement and Judicial Capacity-Building

This begins with the development and institutionalization of specialized training programs for police officers, prosecutors, and judges. These modules should focus on digital forensics, survivor-centered investigation practices, and gender sensitivity, enabling frontline responders to handle TFGBV cases with the competence and empathy required. To operationalize these reforms, dedicated TFGBV response units should be established within existing cybercrime and family support divisions. These units must be staffed with personnel trained in both digital investigation techniques and trauma-informed care, ensuring survivors receive appropriate legal and psychological support from first contact. The creation of fast-track judicial mechanisms or specialized courts for TFGBV will help reduce case backlogs, address the time-sensitive nature of digital evidence, and build survivor trust in the justice system.

Also, a robust monitoring and accountability frameworks must be introduced to oversee law enforcement and judicial handling of TFGBV cases. Independent oversight bodies or internal auditing mechanisms should track case outcomes, identify gaps, and ensure that responses are prompt, fair, and survivor-focused. By improving both capacity and accountability, the justice system can become a more reliable avenue for redress and deterrence.



Digital Literacy and Safety Education

A foundational step is integrating TFGBV awareness and online safety into national education curricula, particularly within ICT and civic education subjects at secondary and tertiary levels. This approach will ensure young people gain early exposure to digital rights, consent, and protective practices, equipping them to recognize and avoid online threats. At the community level, expanding grassroots digital literacy programs is critical especially in underserved and rural areas where women, girls, and marginalized groups face the greatest vulnerabilities. CSOs should lead localized trainings in indigenous languages to improve accessibility and cultural relevance. These efforts must be complemented by national public awareness campaigns that challenge stigma around reporting and inform the public about the legal consequences of TFGBV, fostering a more informed and protective digital culture. To deepen community engagement, it is vital to involve religious and traditional leaders in disseminating digital ethics and safety messages. As trusted voices in many Nigerian communities, their endorsement can shift harmful norms and promote respectful online behavior. Training these leaders to advocate for digital responsibility helps ensure that messages of safety and respect are not only widespread but also grounded in culturally resonant narratives.

Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

A National TFGBV Multi-Sector Taskforce should be established, bringing together key actors across government, CSOs, technology companies, academic institutions, survivor representatives, and donor agencies. This taskforce would serve as a centralized coordination body to align strategies, share best practices, and drive unified national responses to TFGBV across sectors and regions. The private sector, particularly digital platforms, must be held accountable through enforceable frameworks. These should include mandatory transparency reporting on content moderation efforts and user safety

policies, as well as requirements to collaborate with Nigerian CSOs for improved moderation in local languages and cultural contexts. Strengthening these mechanisms ensures platforms are responsive to TFGBV in a manner that reflects Nigeria's unique digital and social landscape.

At the grassroots level, support should be directed toward community-led initiatives, especially those led by youth and women. Localized action plans that incorporate peer education, advocacy, and survivor support are essential for fostering sustainable change. Donor coordination should be streamlined through pooled funding mechanisms that prioritize long-term investments in survivor services, research, and capacity building ensuring efforts are consistent, scalable, and impactful over time.

Research and Data Systems to Track TFGBV Trends

key step is the creation of a National TFGBV Observatory an independent, publicly accessible database managed by a neutral body such as the National Bureau of Statistics. This platform would systematically track reported incidents, emerging trends, and institutional responses, serving as a central hub for data-driven decision-making and policy development. Ensuring the reliability and relevance of collected data requires the development and adoption of standardized TFGBV-specific indicators. These tools must be disaggregated by gender, age, location, and digital platform to capture the nuanced experiences of different groups. Equally important is the integration of participatory approaches through partnerships between academic institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs). Such collaborations can generate context-sensitive, survivor-informed research that accounts for intersectional vulnerabilities and local realities. To maintain transparency and drive accountability, the observatory should produce an annual national TFGBV report.

Strengthening Social Support Systems and Survivor Empowerment

It is essential to scale up access to trauma-informed psychosocial care. This can be achieved by expanding the reach of mobile mental health clinics, teletherapy services, and deploying trained community-based mental health workers, particularly in rural and conflict-affected areas where services are scarce. These interventions will help address the emotional and psychological toll of digital abuse, offering survivors a critical pathway to healing and recovery. Empowering survivors to become part of the solution is another vital strategy. Survivor advocacy programs should be implemented to train individuals with lived experience as peer educators and community advocates. Such programs should offer stipends, security support, and leadership development opportunities, enabling survivors to speak out, support others, and influence policy while maintaining their safety and well-being. This survivor-led approach not only fosters resilience but also builds a more inclusive and responsive support network. Comprehensive reintegration and safety support must be prioritized. Economic empowerment initiatives, including microgrants, vocational training, and digital entrepreneurship programs, can help survivors regain financial stability and rebuild their lives after reputational harm or income loss. Alongside this, the establishment of 24/7 digital safety support hotlines staffed by trained counsellors and digital navigators will provide immediate guidance on online protection and legal recourse. Together, these strategies create a holistic support ecosystem that centres survivors' agency, dignity, and long-term security.

Enhancing Content Moderation Practices

It's imperative that digital platforms implement robust content moderation strategies. This includes investing in localized moderation teams proficient in Nigeria's diverse languages and cultural contexts, such as Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, to accurately identify and manage harmful content. Platforms should also adopt transparency in their algorithms and moderation policies, ensuring users understand how content is evaluated and decisions are made. Collaborating with local civil society organizations can provide valuable insights into the nuances of TFGBV, enabling platforms to tailor their approaches effectively. Furthermore, establishing clear, accessible reporting mechanisms will empower users to report abuse confidently, knowing that their concerns will be addressed promptly and appropriately.

Increasing Funding for TFGBV Initiatives: Addressing TFGBV requires substantial investment in both preventive and responsive measures. Government and private sector stakeholders should allocate increased funding to support initiatives such as digital literacy programs, particularly targeting women and girls in rural and underserved communities. These programs can equip individuals with the skills to navigate online spaces safely and recognize potential threats. Funding should be directed toward strengthening support services for survivors, including counselling, legal assistance, and safe shelters. Investing in research to gather comprehensive data on TFGBV will also inform policy development and intervention strategies.



LEGAL & SYSTEMIC RESPONSES TO TFGBV IN NIGERIA



Legal Reform & Policy Alignment

- 1 **Gaps in the Cybercrimes Act (2015 & 2024)**
 - No coverage for doxxing, sextortion, deepfake porn
 - Requires amendment to criminalize emerging digital violence
 - Align with CEDAW & Maputo Protocol
- 2 **VAPP Act (2015)**
 - Adopted in 35 states
 - Poor implementation & low public awareness
 - Reform Section 211 of Evidence Act – eliminate “immoral character” defence



Law Enforcement & Judicial Capacity

- 1 **Specialized Training for Police, Prosecutors & Judges**
 - Digital forensics
 - Survivor-centered investigations
 - Gender sensitivity
- 2 **Establish TFGBV Units**
 - In cybercrime/family divisions
 - Trauma-informed teams
 - Fast-track courts for TFGBV
- 3 **Monitoring & Oversight**
 - Independent bodies & audits
 - Track outcomes & ensure survivor-focused justice



Digital Literacy & Safety Education

- 1 **In Schools**
 - ICT & Civic Education integration
 - Early exposure to online safety, consent & digital rights
- 2 **Community-Level Outreach**
 - Local CSO-led grassroots training
 - Indigenous languages for inclusion
- 3 **Mass Awareness & Cultural Engagement**
 - Media campaigns
 - Train religious/traditional leaders to spread digital ethics

COLLABORATION, SUPPORT & SAFETY FRAMEWORKS



Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration

- 1 Create National TFGBV Taskforce**
 - Govt + CSOs + Tech Platforms + Academia + Donors + Survivors
 - Unified national strategy
- 2 Private Sector Accountability**
 - Transparency reports on moderation
 - Partner with CSOs on local content
- 3 Grassroots Action**
 - Youth/women-led initiatives
 - Pooled donor funds for long-term impact



Data, Research & Monitoring

- 1 National TFGBV Observatory**
 - Independent, public database
 - Track incidents, trends, responses
- 2 Use Disaggregated Indicators**
 - By gender, age, location, platform
- 3 Academic & CSO Partnerships**
 - Survivor-informed, contextual research
 - Publish annual TFGBV reports



Survivor Support & Empowerment

- 1 Access to Psychosocial Care**
 - Mobile clinics & teletherapy
 - Rural mental health outreach
- 2 Survivor Advocacy Programs**
 - Peer educators
 - Leadership + stipend + safety support
- 3 Reintegration Support**
 - Vocational training, microgrants
 - 24/7 digital safety hotlines



Platform Moderation & Funding

- 1 Enhance Content Moderation**
 - Local language moderators
 - Transparent algorithms
 - Accessible abuse reporting
- 2 Increase TFGBV Funding**
 - Digital literacy for rural women/girls
 - Safe shelters, legal aid, survivor services
 - Invest in long-term data-driven interventions

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