



BEHIND THE SCREEN

Understanding Online Gender-Based Violence in Cambodia

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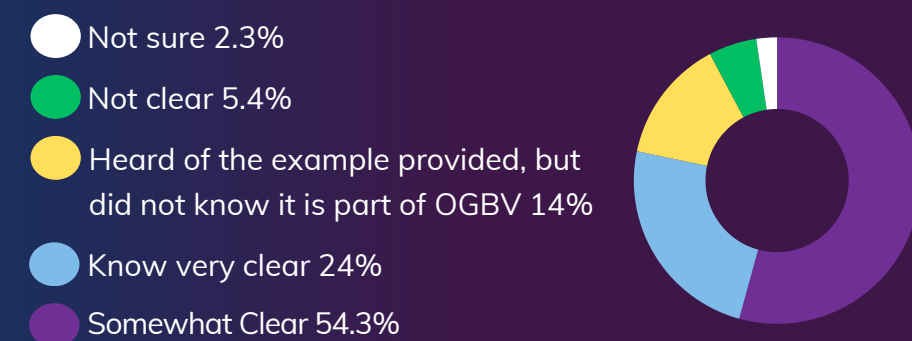


1. Current Understanding of OGBV



In general, the understanding of OGBV remains limited, with only 7% of the survey participants thinking that Cambodian people have a clear understanding of the topic. While 14% of the respondents have heard of some forms of OGBV, most have not heard of the term "OGBV" nor the online-offline continuum of the OGBV. Some participants also expressed confusion about the distinction between "GBV" and "OGBV."

Figure 4: Percentage of survey respondents who have heard of OGBV (e.g. cyberbullying, hate comments, leaking of non-consensual intimate images, etc.)

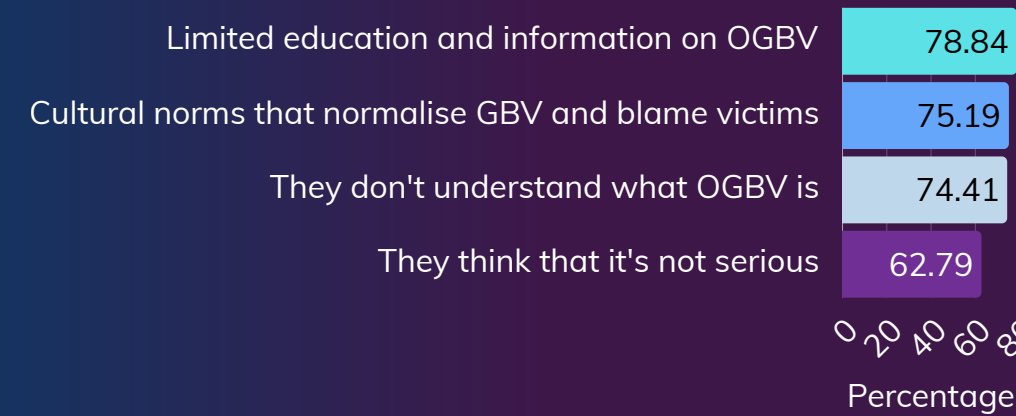


The level of understanding also varied among different groups. Most LGBTQIA+ participants were more aware of or had direct experience with the phenomenon. As such, women, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities were considered by most participants as the groups that are disproportionately affected by OGBV due to structural discrimination and social stigma that shape the digital space.

They [LGBTQIA+ people] encounter it [OGBV] so many times that it becomes a normal thing. When they speak up, people say, 'that's normal, your group is like that.' Because society sees LGBTQIA+ people as overly sexual, their concerns about online harassment are often ignored. (YM7)

Perceived root causes of OGBV

Figure 8: Perception of survey respondents on the main factors explaining why people don't have a good understanding of OGBV



Four main root causes of OGBV were identified: (1) limited digital literacy, (2) power dynamics, (3) social gender norms and expectations, and (4) anonymity and social media characteristics.

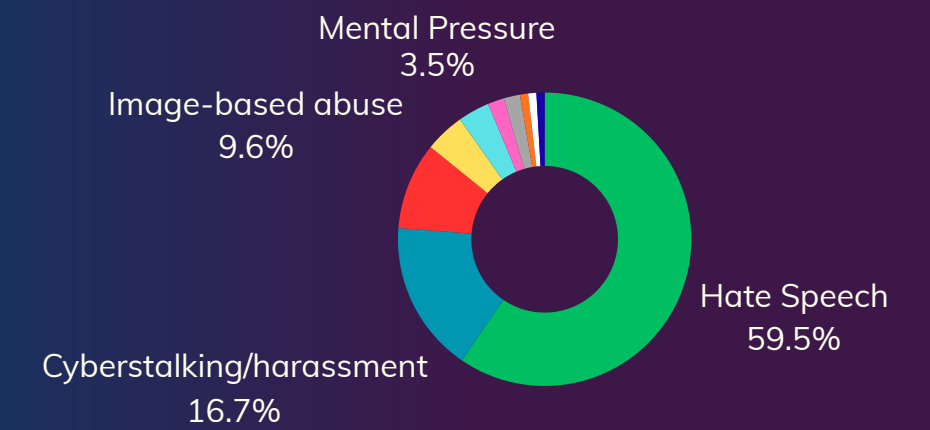
Low media literacy and a lack of education on OGBV lead to the inability to identify violence and reporting avenues, as well as the contribution and normalisation of OGBV. Furthermore, power imbalances that are rooted in gender norms and expectations reproduce the offline hierarchies and transmit the patriarchal beliefs into the online spaces. As a result, those who are in power tend to exploit those they perceive as weaker online, while women and LGBTQIA+ individuals tend to face judgment, stereotyping, and stigma online. Finally, anonymity, the absence of face-to-face interactions, and the accessibility of social media embolden violence and challenge existing reporting mechanisms and regulations.

Some people think that those born different from them are bad people. These conservative ideas harm others and lead to OGBV. (YW1)

2. Experience of OGBV

31.78% of survey respondents have experienced OGBV, and 55.04% know someone who has experienced OGBV. The three most common forms identified are (1) cyberbullying and hate speech, (2) online sexual exploitation and/or harassment, and (3) online scams, i.e. being financially manipulated and romance scams.

Figure 13: Forms of OGBV experienced by survey respondents or someone they know (n=114)



These forms are perpetrated by not just acquaintances and ex-partners of the victims-survivors, but also by strangers online. Certain groups of people or types of individuals also experience these forms of OGBV differently.

Yes, I have. I had one experience with someone I used to live with. After we stopped living together, he shared our explicit intimate photos online and even used them on his social media profiles. I mean, I think that is an act among many others related to online violence. (YL-SR9).*

*This quote has been slightly edited for safeguarding; identifying details and explicit wording were modified without changing the participant's meaning.

People with diverse experiences

"When I see a woman wearing clothes she likes, but they're a bit short, most men will go and comment, 'Oh, this girl is like a prostitute, (....)'. They blame women, even though they are the ones thinking that way." (ZM-SR14)

"When LGBT(QIA+) people marry each other, almost 50-60% of the comments say things like the oil price has increased because of them." (YL-C5)

"We've been insulted online just because we're Bunong. People say hurtful things (.....) by comparing their husband's bad behaviour to us Bunong People. That kind of comment really hurts. (....) it's painful to be treated with such disrespect." (ZM-IP2)

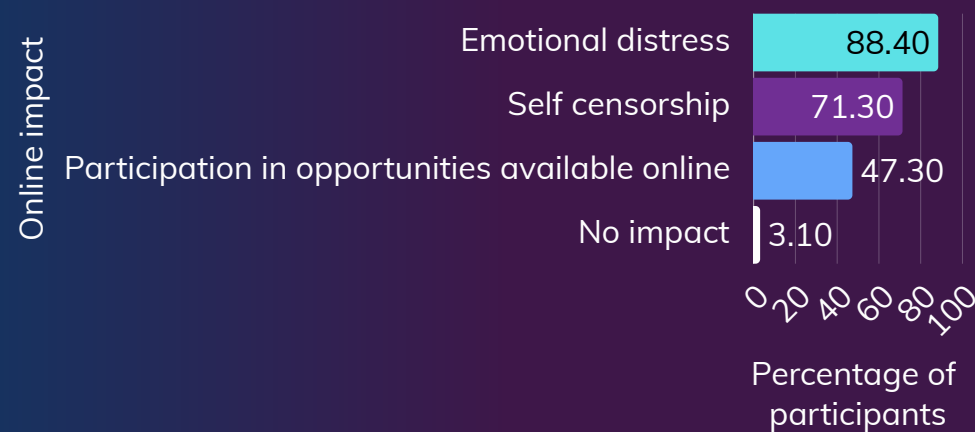
"I have seen bullying on social media based on my disability. When people disagree with a personality online, they mock or insult the appearance instead of discussing the issue." (YW-PwD3)

3. Impacts and consequences of OGBV

OGBV has both online and offline impacts, including emotional and mental health impacts, self-censorship and isolation, online and offline discrimination, economic exclusion, and offline physical threats and harassment.

Online impact

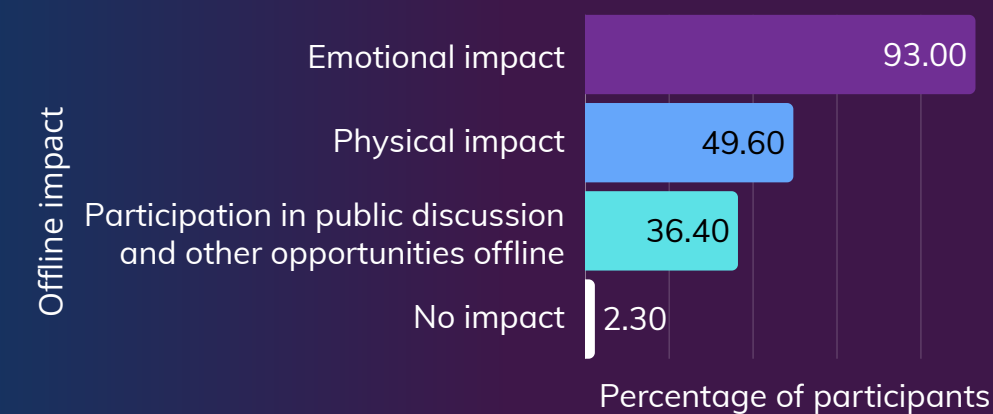
Figure 14: Perception of survey respondents on how OGBV impacted them or the person they knew (who experienced OGBV) online



“Because of their experience of harassment online, they stay low profile, don’t want to go outside or join activities. It’s a loss of freedom in daily life.” (YW-C3)

Offline impact

Figure 15: Perception of survey respondents on how OGBV impacted them or the person they knew (who experienced OGBV) offline

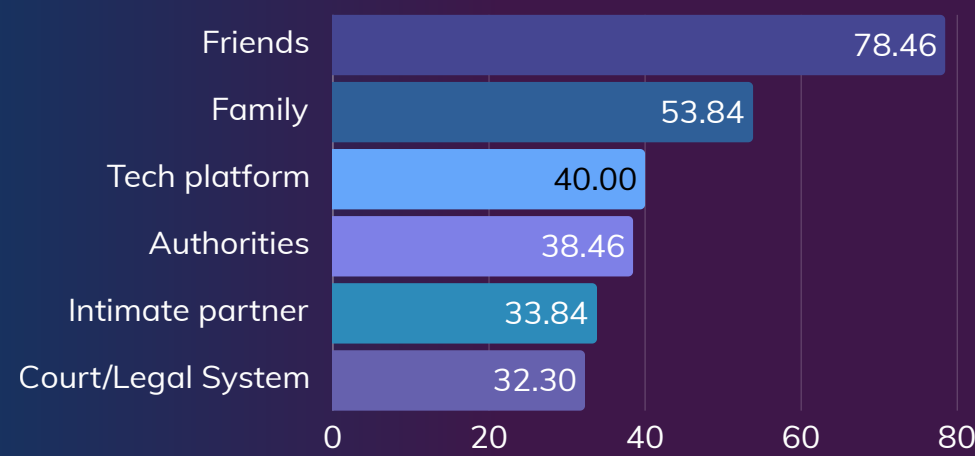


It affects my self-confidence and creates safety concerns because I don’t know how people on social media will respond. I’ve been shamed before. It feels very restricting.” (ZW-16)



4. Supporting systems and challenges in seeking support

Figure 18: Support systems respondents who experienced OGBV (or someone they knew) sought help from (n=65)



The go-to support systems are family and friends for psychological support, while fewer than half of respondents sought help from authorities. NGOs and civil society play a crucial role by offering legal and emotional assistance, though many survivors are unaware of these services. Some institutions provide safeguarding policies and internal reporting systems, yet such mechanisms are uncommon.

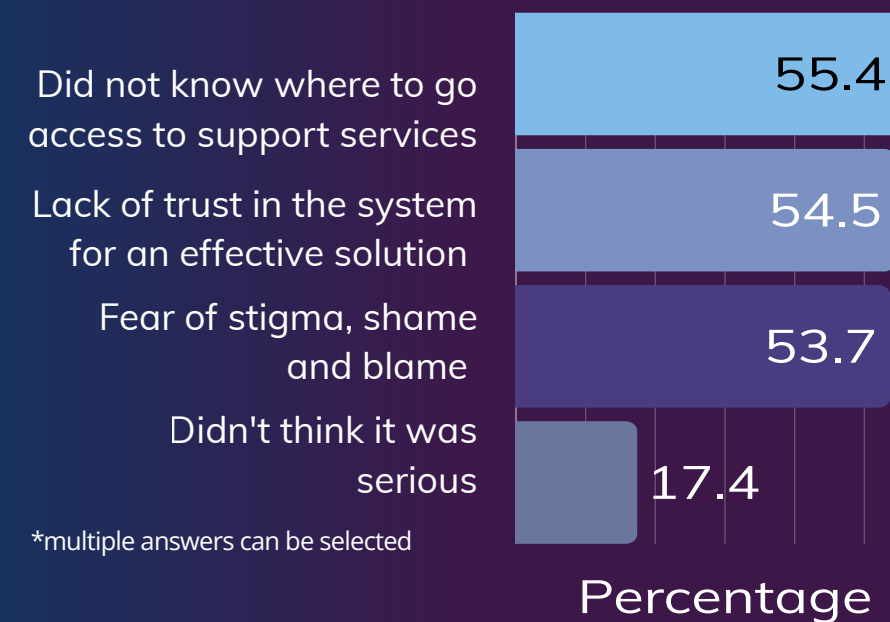
Barrier in seeking support

Figure 19 Main challenges faced by respondents or someone they knew who experienced OGBV when seeking help



*multiple answers can be selected

Figure 20: Reasons cited by survey respondents for not seeking help



*multiple answers can be selected

When seeking support, survivors/victims of OGBV face barriers such as receiving uneven informal support, existing weaknesses of the formal systems, and a lack of information on where to seek support.

“Sometimes, their family blames them. Even if they want to report, they don’t know who to go to or whether people will believe them.” (YL-C5)

“It is difficult because I don’t think there are authorities helping with that (OGBV), especially in rural areas. (...) There is no law governing OGBV, and there is no case that authorities deal with this (...).” (ZW14)



Where to seek help

If you or someone you know has experienced technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV), the following virtual help desk is available to help.

You can reach out whenever you feel ready and in a way that feels safe for you.

Karpeer women

Please send your request to

- Phone number: 015 404 500
- Telegram: @KarpeerWomen
- Signal: +855 15 404 500
- Email: karpeer-women@opendevcam.net

*We will respond to your request within 24 hours

Technical support:

- Online gender-based and sexual harassment
- Online account attacks/compromised/disabled
- Cyberbullying/stalking
- Impersonation
- Doxxing
- Sextortion (threats and blackmail)
- Hate Speech

What we do

- Recover online accounts
- Report to social media platforms
- Monitor, document, and analyse online attacks

Who we support

- Women and girls
- LGBTQIA+ community



For more information:

Website: <https://www.klahaan.org/>

Email: info@klahaan.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/klahaankh/>