Research Roadmap for OGBV Perpetrator Data: Working Draft

Background note

The Perpetrator research sub-group reviewed and analysed 50+ resources to gain a better understanding of the current state of research on Online- Gender- Based- Violence (OGBV) perpetrators.[1] Existing resources highlight that research in this field is challenging and that there is a need for further research.

The sub-group developed a research methodology to identify and collect existing data from different actors[2] from across the globe. This constituted phase 1 of an ongoing process and towards facilitating a collective and global effort to design a research roadmap. Phase 1 aimed to gather data produced over the past three years and with the overall objective of:

- To propose a methodology to conduct in-depth and innovative research related to the experiences, methods, ideal types, and modeling the modus operandi of perpetrators of OGBV.
- To collect and analyse the existing research methodologies - quantitative and qualitative - related to perpetrators of OGBV.
- To collect the existing information on the behaviours, identities, and methods of OGBV perpetrators.

The data collection and subsequent collation fed the production of two sets of workshops conducted throughout February and March. Such a set of workshops constituted phase 2 of the efforts towards a research roadmap. This phase entailed for the sub- group to engage in open conversations with representatives from civil society organisations as well as tech-sector and government representatives from West Africa, North America, Central America, East Africa, Europe, South America and Southern Africa, with the goals of:

- Explore the overview of the current landscape of perpetrator research and existing challenges.
- Identify and understand different perpetrator "types" and define research and data gaps.

---

[1] Predominantly researchers from academia and civil society previously mapped by the Perpetrator research sub- stream group. For more details check point 7. See: Data Collation Document

[2] It particularly focused on Civil society, esp. those focusing on GBV, domestic violence, digital rights, security and safety, judiciary and law enforcement; - International and regional organisations (e.g. UNESCO, CEDAW); International CSOs (i.e., APC); - Tech companies (ISPs and Social media companies); Academia; Governmental data and publications (e.g. Gender equality bodies, Ministry of Justice, Prosecution, etc.)

- Identify key research priority areas, aspects, and partners to include in a perpetrator research roadmap.
- Develop considerations and guidelines for safe future research in this space.

This document serves as a synthesis and triangulation of phase 1 & 2, with the intention of facilitating one final conversation before the final production of a Perpetrator Research Roadmap Document.

Types of methodology and the way forward

The 50+ resources collected during phase 1 evidenced a richness of methodologies used by different actors when trying to explore, characterise and understand OGBV and its perpetrators. Such initial exploration can be contrasted with other methodologies presented during the conversations and useful data that will be useful to think about when closing the knowledge- gaps in a Perpetrator Research Roadmap.

Identified methodologies during data collection (Phase 1)	Methodologies identified during different conversations (Phase 2)	Moving forward when thinking in different methodologies (Phase 2)
Quantitative *Desk- research, survey data using qualtrics panel system, social media data- analysis, monitoring and data- analysis.* **Qualitative** *Desk-research, literature review, interviews with survivors and care-givers,* **Mixed- methods** *Cross- sectional studies, surveys, deep interviews in combination with social media data analysis, desk research + interviews, literature review of mixed- methods approach articles.*	• Snowballing techniques with survivors • Nudge-based approaches, • Ecosystem mapping • Network analysis	• Snowballing technique to gather information from survivors who may be hesitant to share openly, allowing for a more extensive understanding of the experiences. • Snowballing to identify survivor experiences and be able to identify potential victims and types of perpetrators. • OGBV cannot be studied in isolation; contextual factors, both digital and offline, significantly impact online behaviors and for us to tailor interventions and policies, it requires a deep understanding of these the cultural and social contexts • Accessing perpetrators directly is/ may be a challenge, and crowd-sourced data through survivor interviews emerges as a potential methodology.

		● Anonymous surveys on the dark web

One key focus emphasized throughout the different methodological strategies at disposition to conduct research on OGBV perpetrators was the need for ethical and community-based considerations, given the sensible nature of the topic. Thus, considerations such as fair compensation for participants of different types of research and recognising their contributions, and the need to ensure community building to establish trust from people affected by the phenomena, were key points highlighted during the discussion. These factors are important for adopting a more collaborative and informed approach, aiming to prevent re- victimisation and ensure ethically driven research processes. Approval of ethical review boards were also discussed.

Current gaps & challenges

Both phase 1 & 2 point to different gaps when thinking in perpetrator research. and its broader understanding from different stakeholders. Such gaps span from issues pertaining lack of awareness of public officials on the manner, lack of applied knowledge in very specific contexts of GBV in general (and thus arguably also perpetrators of OGBV) as well as challenges in terms of identifying perpetrators in judiciary systems or understanding specific types of perpetrators (i.e., children). Below a table summarising data found on both phases for comparability purposes.

Phase 1	Phase 2
● There is a lack of Gender- Based Violence (GBV) research methodologies in the context of humanitarian settings that affects, amongst others, a better understanding of perpetrators in this particular setting. This ends- up affecting standardized definitions and measurement tools for researching specific forms of GBV that allow for comparability within and across settings. ● There is a huge difficulty in certain regions in the trials and prosecutions in the cases of GBV especially in how to identify and bring charges against perpetrators. ● There are challenges in the judiciary in terms of them not knowing the perpetrators (Thus direct effects in the capacity of the State in offering reparation mechanisms in the context of OGBV) ● There are challenges in the judiciary in terms of them not knowing the perpetrators (Thus direct effects in the capacity of the State in offering	● More quantitative data on perpetrator demographics,along with the nature of the abuse they engage in. ● Insights into where perpetrators get their ideas and inspiration, as well as their media consumption and online habits. ● The journeys of reformed perpetrators. Adjacent spaces, like countering religious extremism and how they handle perpetrators. ● Non- English datasets to be able to train models to detect this type of behavior (conversations, phrases, etc.) across tech platforms. ● Data on perpetrators as human beings with offline experiences, data about their background, motivations, offending techniques and psychometric details. ● Different range of perpetrators and different range of harms ● Overlap between victims and offenders. ● Platform data and victim-reported data to understand appeal mechanisms. ● Data on payment systems' and their role in OGBV

reparation mechanisms in the context of OGBV)	• Ethical considerations, especially concerning the associated risks and triggering aspects.
• A very important finding that is also a gap is evidence that some victims of OGBV end up as perpetrators themselves. There is a gap in understanding why that is also very linked with the psychological effects of OGBV in survivors	• Experiences and motivations of trolls, especially trolling for fun and potential age-related influences.
	• Data on how OGBV is committed within social groups, including conservative LGBTQIA community members
• More than one report shows a big challenge that victims have in reporting perpetrators, and the fact that reports are downplayed or even ignored on the few occasions the reports get made. The report also highlights that 53.5% of the respondents indicated experiencing online abuse from male perpetrators with 11.3% experiencing it from women.	• There is a need for a broader perspective on perpetrators beyond individual actions.
	• Given the challenges in identifying and understanding those behind individual behaviours, there is a need to expand the scope of what constitutes a perpetrator.
• There are differences in the percentage of participation between males and females in certain perpetrator behaviours. More data is needed to understand the percentages and differences	• The significance of platform data was underscored, with a recognition that it could provide essential insights and complement other data sources.
• Regional and Cultural Differences: A study acknowledges the importance of considering regional and cultural variations in online harassment experiences, highlighting the need for more localized research.	• The evolving nature of OGBV necessitates continuous monitoring and learning ideally annually to stay abreast of emerging trends and challenge
	• Researching child perpetrators still faces challenges due to the necessity of parental consent, necessitating the involvement of schools for data gathering.
• There is a lack of data on perpetrators when thinking in minors to understand how cyberbullying affects specific age cohorts.	• Challenges in capturing data on certain demographics, such as the 45+ age group, highlight the digital divide and issues related to online engagement for specific populations. Overall the difficulties in accessing consolidated data on perpetrators pose a challenge, hence the need for more targeted sampling strategies.

Factors and types of perpetrators driving OGBV

Phase 1	Phase 2
• Perpetrators of harassment and violence are identified, and particularly in the cases of women in politics suffering OGBV, as political opponents and colleagues of such women.	• Lack of employment, economic status, and social conditions such as isolation, economic uncertainty, and vulnerability to radicalization further contribute to the weaponization of vulnerabilities that fuel online abuse.
• A need of understanding OGBV in the context of patriarchal structures and the evolution in the portrayal of	• The power of anonymity as a factor enabling online abuse.

- perpetrators- from juvenile pranksters to inflammatory alt- right actors across platforms
- Women as perpetrators is also a topic to bare in mind, regardless of the percentages being much more reduced vis-a-vis male perpetrators
- State actors and state officials as perpetrators of OGBV is also a topic that emerged in more than one document and thus suggests an urgent need to explore this topic in more depth
- Perpetrators of TFVAWG are men unknown to victim-survivors as well as men known to them including partners and ex- partners.
- Unlike other types of OGBV, for the case of perpetrators of human trafficking via digital means, it appears that such violence committed against victims of trafficking is done by an unknown person. In this context, an unknown person is considered a person whom the victim first met via the Internet. In the second place are perpetrators known to the victim, i.e. partners (20%), wider social group (8%), family members (8%), and helpers (4%).
- There are some instances where OGBV perpetrators are people who are freelancers and consultants hired to attack an individual at a price, as well as political parties and their supporters.
- A particular document highlights that among state actors as perpetrators of OGBV, some of them even include police officers
- Reasons for being a perpetrator: for fun, revenge, insecurities, jealousy, power play and transfer of emotions
- Perpetrators motivations are directly linked with cultural expectations of masculinity and new norms of digital society
- There is also a growth in coordinated groups engaging in sexual harassment against women, including men's rights activists, incels (involuntary celibates), and other groups engaging in the

- Specific instances of hate, such as the targeted abuse towards the LGBTQI+ community, particularly trans women with the desire to erase their online participation.
- The growing attention economy, optimized for outrage, and algorithms pushing individuals into more extreme content.
- The power of AI, as seen in cases like the Almendralejo case in Spain, where deepfakes are used to undress teenagers, and how they raised concerns about the misuse of technology for online abuse.
- The emergence of groups sharing explicit images and young people being trained for sextortion.
- The rise of intolerance to non-traditional views, coupled with insufficient digital literacy and online safety education.
- The lack of sanctions and regulations in most regions, as well as the absence of education on online safety in national curricula.
- Intersectionality, observing connections between various forms of oppression, marginalization, discrimination (e.g., racism and misogyny, ableism and misogyny), and inequality.
- Consumption of masculinist content on social media and affiliations with ideologically-focused organizations were identified as influential factors shaping perpetrator's attitudes and behaviours.
- Anonymity provided by online platforms gives perpetrators a sense of power and detachment from their victims.
- The example from ATINA research emphasized the complexity of perpetrator-victim relationships, particularly in human trafficking where perpetrators may not be known to the victims as opposed to other sectors, and the ethical considerations surrounding interventions, for example, where some young people stated that police officers and authorities became the perpetrators

'manosphere' and there is growing evidence of links to extremist groups." ● There are two levels of perpetrators: You have the initial perpetrator and then the secondary perpetrators who participate in the continuation and spread of violence by sharing harmful information without the victims consent ● A study in Latin America points that a relatively low percentage of students exhibited a critical perspective towards the violence, with the majority being indifferent or even endorsing it (Regarding cyberbullying). This highlights a concerning normalization and lack of awareness regarding the impact of violence. ● Perpetrators in the context of telework is also a topic that emerged in one particular research. According to a survey in Mexico, Colombia and Ecuador, the majority of identified perpetrators (55%) hold higher-ranking positions, including directors (14%) and supervisors (41%). The study also mentions that peers accounted for 27% of perpetrators, while clients accounted for 18%. ● Gender, age and political beliefs of perpetrators are important aspects for understanding patterns and trends related to online harassment	using pornographic photos of girls to catch perpetrators. ● There appears to be a clear connection between online and offline behaviours, particularly among younger generations, requiring research that transcends digital boundaries.

Behaviour change mechanisms

Phase 1 did not prove to be particularly useful when identifying specific behavioural change mechanisms in different GBV and OGBV research. It did point to some literature highlighting the specific need of tech companies to be transparent and proactive in preventing and tackling online violence against women, girls and LGTBQI+ individuals, being one of the proactive measures the inclusion of meaningful sanctions for perpetrators.

Phase 2 did point to several interventions and strategies on the matter. Concretely:

● Encouraging outreach from trusted loved ones to provide support and guidance.
● Utilising law enforcement for intervention.
● Representation of a range of healthier masculinities in media.
● Mental health focus.

- Enhancing content moderation mechanisms with more local context. improving reporting channels and due process mechanisms within platforms.
- Designing "nudges" towards help/resources on platforms.
- Reviewing the nature of the "gig economy" and its operations to address associated challenges.
- Implementing safety by design principles in online spaces.
- Recognising OGBV within a legal framework.
- Employing reputational damage strategies, such as naming and shaming. Engaging with platforms.
- Utilising counternarratives and harsher punitive measures. raising awareness of how OGBV affects victims-survivors.
- Implementing men's behaviour change programs with tech-abuse components and virtual reality applications.
- Integrating education about online behaviours, digital sexual ethics, in schools from early ages.
- Establishing peer support programs.
- Promoting diversity in tech.
- Legislation on deep fake nudes and high fines.
- Need for combined efforts and collective action. Examples like Men Can Stop Rape (MCSR) working with online gamers.
- Collecting data on the influence behind misogynistic ideas, media consumption, and online habits, with awareness of balancing privacy and re-victimization concerns.
- Mobilising people for mass reporting.
- Advocating for strong and effective platform responses.
- Learning from existing programs designed to address perpetration.
- Addressing funding challenges for larger movements.
- Leveraging workshops and programs that involve young people to explore opportunities for education and behaviour change, shifting the focus from punishment to constructive interventions.
- A discussion on perpetrator reform programs revealed mixed results and a cautious approach, emphasising the necessity to assess the effectiveness of such initiatives before allocating resources as some of these programs never really work
- A discussion around engagement with perpetrators highlighted the importance of reaching beyond the current focus on women as the primary audience and using communication as an educational tool.
- Understanding socio-demographic characteristics, motivations, behaviours, and online strategies of perpetrators is crucial since factors like age, status, and education level play pivotal roles in shaping online behaviours. Additionally, understanding how perpetrators are attracted to online spaces, particularly exploring the dynamics around platforms like manosphere websites, is critical for countering harmful narratives online.

Potential partners and commitments[3]

The above collated information allows to identify a number of stakeholders that are directly or indirectly linked to OGBV and perpetrators. Thus, it is crucial to think in ways in which such stakeholders can help move forward a research roadmap for perpetrator research, to fill the numerous gaps, and generate yearly data on the matter to stay on top of the evolving nature of OGBV and its perpetrators, to mitigate harm and protect victims across time.

Stakeholders	Commitment	Strategies to push for commitment
Government (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary)		
Private technology sector		
Civil society organisations		
Academia		
Schools		

---

[3] This last section will be developed after round 3 of the TPDL is finalised. This to reflect collective definitions of how these commitments should and will look like in the final research roadmap.