Children Voices on Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Relation to Children and Adolescents in Kenya

STOP

TECH-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

Authors: Liz Amandla Busisa, Pheza Otieno, Irene Wali, and Jennifer Kaberi

Copyright and Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the contributions of Save the Children US and Save the Children Kenya for trusting Mtoto News to carry out this study, focusing on our strength of meaningful participation of children through child-focused and child-led research. This report will go a long way to contribute towards meaningful conversations among stakeholders in the tech space and influence policy developments around online safety for children and adolescents, with a focus on TFGBV.

In particular, we appreciate the contributions of the following individuals for making this project a success and to all the children who participated and lent their voices for meaningful impact:

Facilitators

Irene Wali- Save the Children Kenya
Joseph Atulo - Mtoto News
Purity Moraa - Mtoto News

Co-Facilitators

Liz Amandla Busisa - Mtoto News
Pheza Otieno - Mtoto News
Farida Abdalla - Mtoto News
Omar Hemed - Mtoto News
Eric Namayi - Mtoto News
Pauline Kihali - Mtoto News
Sharon Mayaka - Save the Children Kenya
Stephen Wambua - Save the Children Kenya

Safeguarding Officers

Purity Moraa

Funding

Save the Children US
Save the Children Kenya
USAID


HATE!!!

Acronyms

TFGBV	Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence
OCSEA	Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CSAM	Child Sexual Abuse Material
VPN	Virtual Private Network
2FA	Two-Factor Authentication
AI	Artificial Intelligence
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Definition of Terms

Child – A person under 18 years, entitled to special protection and care.

Online Safety – Protecting individuals from online risks like cyberbullying, hacking, and harmful content.

Technology – Tools, systems, and digital innovations that enhance human capabilities and solve problems.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) – Harmful acts based on gender, including physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse.

Social Media – Online platforms for sharing content and communication, such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok.

Doxing: Posting personal and sensitive information including home and work addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses and family names without permission.

Cyber Stalking Persistent, unwanted and/ or threatening surveillance, contact and/ or pursuit by technological means. Cyberstalking can turn to offline stalking and vice versa.

Cyber Bullying: A form of online harassment, the constant and intentional infliction of damage through digital technologies to undermine a target's self-esteem.

Online Harassment: Repeated conduct that threatens posters, scares, or abuses someone by sending degrading, offensive or insulting comments or images.

Online sexual harassment mainly affects women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals. Non-Consensual Ponography/ Revenge Porn. A form of image-based; a preferred term is non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery. While commonly used "Revenge porn" is objectionable as it suggests consent from and wrongdoing by the survivor to provoke retribution.

Sextortion: A form of online blackmail where perpetrators threaten to share intimate images or private information unless the victim provides more explicit content, money, or other favors.

Online impersonation: Creating a fake profile and assuming someone's identity for nefarious purposes, including destroying someone's reputation or threatening her safety.

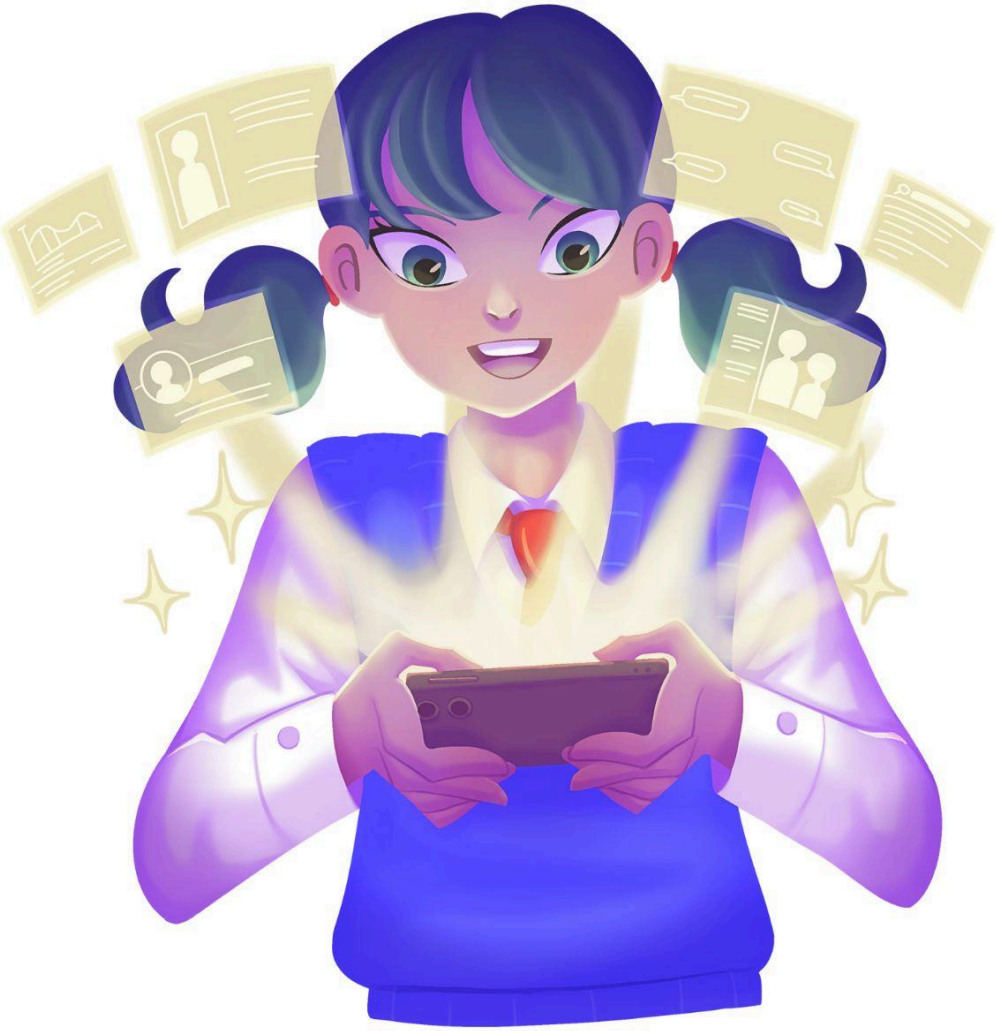
Online Sexual Exploitation This term encompasses a number of sexually exploitative and harmful behaviors that occur or are facilitated online and through the use of digital technologies. They include online grooming, live-streaming of sexual abuse, CSAM, online sexual coercion and extortion, online sex trafficking, and image-based sexual abuse.

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Table of Contents



1. Executive Summary

The rapid evolution and access to technology is both a blessing and a challenge among children in Kenya. Technology has allowed marginalized children access to high-quality education, has made health care more affordable and has made the world a small village where children from different parts of the world can interact. However, technology has also brought bad actors nearer to children, resulting in abuse and violation of children.

Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV) is a growing concern, with 64.4% of female students reporting that they have experienced some form of online abuse. Although there is research on TFGBV among adults, there is little literature on children. Hence Save the Children conducted a study of TFGBV from a children's perspective. The Kenya study was conducted by Mtoto News.

The Objective of the study was to investigate the following themes through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with key-informants:

- Digital socialization and literacy of adolescents and children
- General socialization and growing independence of adolescents and children
- Support networks and resources for adolescents and children experiencing violence
- Awareness of adolescents and children on violence and manipulation

Through participatory research methodology, the researchers worked with 50 children aged between 9-17 years to understand their tech world and the types of abuse they experience. This was through Focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with children.

Younger children aged 9-11 years trust their parents more to keep them protected and report incidences of their safety online. While the 12-14 year olds demonstrated knowledge in their interactions with different devices to access digital platforms, they trusted their parents/guardians, and the least trusted stakeholder was the teacher. The 15-17-year-old age group had knowledge and practical experiences in the digital world in terms of the platforms they engage in. They also demonstrated knowledge of online safety and knew how to protect themselves from online harm. The stakeholders they trusted the most were their siblings and close friends, and the least trusted stakeholders were the teacher/school official, family friend and the police.

Key Recommendations

- Scale up digital literacy programs for children.
- Strengthen reporting mechanisms for online abuse.
- Build trust between children and institutions like police and schools.
- Develop peer support programs to empower children to speak out.
- Enhance digital literacy programs for teens to improve online safety awareness.

- Strengthen online reporting mechanisms to address cyberbullying and harassment.
- Encourage open communication between teens and trusted adults.
- Increase trust in institutions like police and schools by improving support systems for victims

2. Introduction

Facilitated by the ubiquity of digital technologies, technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) has become a pervasive yet complex phenomenon that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. TFGBV is defined as an act of violence perpetrated by one or more individuals that is committed, assisted, aggravated and amplified in part or fully by the use of information and communication technologies or digital media, against a person based on their gender.[1] This action is carried out using the internet and/or mobile technology and includes stalking, bullying, sexual harassment, defamation, hate speech and exploitation."[2] While the evidence and research on TFGBV against adults has been more widely researched, the same cannot be said for the issue pertaining to adolescents and children. As technology becomes more ubiquitous in society, adolescents and children become more at risk of experiencing violence online or through mobile technology. This current scope of work presents a valuable opportunity to further the research on technology-facilitated GBV against adolescents and children to generate evidence, develop a framework, and offer recommendations for future policy, programming, intervention, and research.

TFGBV is a growing concern in Kenya, affecting women, gender minorities, and girls.[3] According to an article[4] by KICTANet, the most prevalent forms of TFGBV in Kenya include trolling, cyberbullying, cyber harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, doxxing, body shaming, and gendered disinformation and misinformation among other forms of TFGBV. Facebook and WhatsApp recorded the highest percentages of prevalence of TFGBV with rates of 69.4% and 55.6% respectively.[5]

UNESCO's report[6] Exposing TFGBV in the Era of Generative AI indicates that 58% of young women and girls all over the world have experienced online harassment on social media platforms. Though very little literature exists on TFGV affecting children and adolescents, young girls are seen to be the most affected, together with women. Women and girls are attacked for simply being online and for being women/girls.[7]

---

[1] chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.svriforum2024.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Connor-Roth-PS3-1.pdf

[2] Hinson L, Mueller J, O'Brien-Milne L, Wandera N. (2018). Technology-facilitated gender-based violence: What is it, and how do we measure it? International Center for Research on Women. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICRW_TFGBVMarketing_Brief_v8-Web.pdf

[3] https://www.kictanet.or.ke/tech-fueled-violence-a-threat-to-womens-rights/

[4] Ibid.

[5] Joint stakeholder report: Human rights in the digital context in Kenya https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/kenya-upr-joint-stakeholder-report-2024.pdf

[6] Chowdhury, Rumman [author] [3], Lakshmi, Dhanya "Your opinion doesn't matter, anyway": exposing technology-facilitated gender-based violence in an era of generative AI (UNESCO). https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387483

[7] Ibid.

Children and young people are increasingly exposed to TFGBV due to their growing digital presence.[8] They are disproportionately at risk of certain forms of TFGBV such as online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), cyberbullying and mis/disinformation.[9]

KICTANet's study found that 54% of respondents had experienced TFGBV, with nearly 90% of young adults in Nairobi's tertiary institutions witnessing such violence, while 39% of them have experienced it personally[10] (Nendo, 2023).

It is against this background that Save the Children partnered with Mtoto News to carry out a study on TFGBV from a children's perspective.

3. About the Research

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research was to generate qualitative evidence to advance the global understanding of TFGBV against adolescents and children. The evidence gathered will be used to summarize key findings, gaps, and recommendations to inform future research, programming, and policy.

Objectives:

The study will investigate the following themes through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with key-informants:

- Digital socialization and literacy of adolescents and children
- General socialization and growing independence of adolescents and children
- Support networks and resources for adolescents and children experiencing violence
- Awareness of adolescents and children of violence and manipulation

The study investigated the following themes through qualitative focus group workshops/in-depth interviews with youth, ages 9-17

- How do youth use technology and who are they interacting with while online and using technology?
- How do youth approach and perceive online safety?
- How do youth make and protect boundaries online and how are they broken?

---

8 chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://rutgers.international/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Decoding-TFGBV-Report-2024.pdf

9 Ibid.

10 The extent of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Kenya's higher learning institutionshttps://kenya.unfpa.org/en/news/new-study-reveals-extent-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-kenyas-higher-learning?

- What do youth do when their boundaries online and with their technology are crossed, and how does it impact their lives?

Methodology

The approach used for this study was participatory, where children would be asked to complete a survey and engage in one in-person workshop for about four hours, with other children, where they would complete a series of activities, including group discussions, workshops, and interactive activities.

Each workshop included 12-15 participants in total, varying in gender identity. Save the Children Kenya country office and Mtoto News staff would begin by gathering interest from children and parents using written text communication (emails, fliers, or on their website) or verbal communication (telephone calls or face-to-face conversations). For interested youth, before any involvement in the research, country specific staff would gather informed assent from youth and informed consent from a caretaker, aligned with the development stage of the child. Informed assent (verbal or written, dependent on development/ability) and consent would be done in a private space. Once the country staff has obtained assent and consent, country staff would deliver a short survey to potential participants in a private space in order to determine that the youth is comfortable participating in the workshop, group sorting accurately recognizes participants' gender identity, and gives the youth a space to discuss any concerns or ask questions about the workshop prior to deciding to participate. Sampling for recruitment would be conducted in batches, first with 15 interested youth, and then in batches of 5 additional interested youth at a time until the sample size is met.

Execution of the Methodology

a. **Mobilisation of Children**

50 children aged between 9 and 17 years were mobilised to participate in the workshops. Using the recruitment template for verbal text for phone conversations from Save the Children as a guide, all 50 children were mobilised by contacting their parents and signing the consent forms for their participation. The mobilisation was done in conformity with Mtoto News' Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

b. **Pre-Workshop Surveys**

After the sample size was met, the children were given the pre-workshop survey and were still interested and comfortable with participating, they were given the opportunity to participate through an in-depth interview.

To ensure that the children understood the requirements of the study. The children were taken through the pre-workshop surveys and allowed to fill them out to assess whether they would continue to the next stage of engagement through the workshops, or not. The analysis of the

pre-workshop surveys can be found in the Annex below. All 50 children participants were found fit to engage in the workshops.

c. The Workshops

The workshops were conducted from 3rd to 5th January 2025. 50 children aged 9-17 years participated in the research, Tech-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence in Relation to Children and Adolescents.

A total of 3 workshop sessions were completed and lasted up to 5 hours each. Each workshop included 12-15 participants of approximately equal gender identity, 5 facilitators, and one mental health professional.

Workshop sessions were organized by the following age groups: 9-11 years old, 12-14 years old, and 15-17 years old:

Date	Age group	Boys	Girls	Other gender	Total
3rd	9-11 years	6	6	0	**12**
4th	12-14 years	7	11	1	**19**
5th	15-17 years	9	10	0	**19**
Total number of children		22	27	1	**50**

Table 1: Number of Children Participants per age group

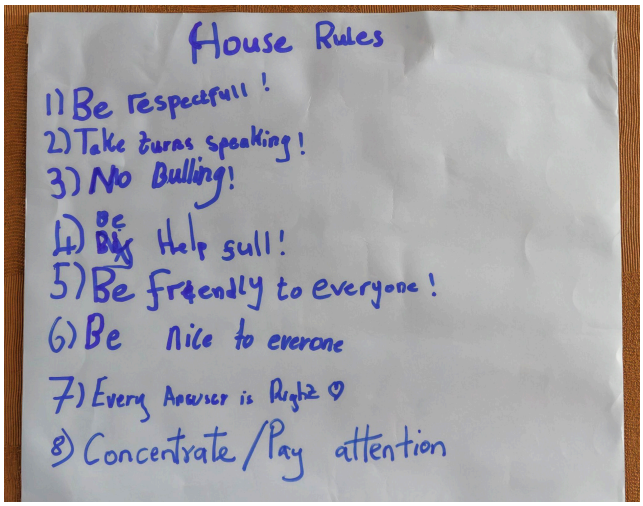
The workshops were adapted to ensure that it was age appropriate for each group. Participants completed the workshop activities in a group of 6-8 individuals of the same gender identity (girl or boy). Two facilitators worked with each group: one facilitated the workshop activities and discussions and one collected data using data collection worksheets. An additional facilitator and a mental health provider were available to float between groups and provide extra support as needed, as well as support participants that need to take a break from workshop activities or are feeling overwhelmed.

Each day began with an introduction of the children participants and the facilitators. The children were then reminded of the reason they were participating in the research and allowed to opt-out at any point should they wish to without any consequences. Further, the Facilitator sensitised them on safeguarding procedures and guidelines before they were split into groups by gender.

The children participants were split into two groups of girls and boys for all three days and were facilitated by facilitators of the same gender. Participation was entirely voluntary and informed consent and assent could be withdrawn at any time. Participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary at the beginning of the in-depth interview and throughout the workshop at the beginning of each activity.

Ethical Consideration and Safeguarding

We obtained ethical clearance from Daystar University (Annexe 5) that allowed us to proceed with the data collection with children.



Every child had a duly signed consent form from their parent/guardian that allowed them to participate in the study.

All facilitators were trained on Safeguarding and trauma-informed approaches. During the workshops in addition to facilitators, trained counselors were on standby to respond to any distress from the children.

We were keen to inform the Children that they were free to opt out if they did not feel comfortable and they did not have to respond to questions they did not feel comfortable responding to.

After the workshop, a debrief session was held to ensure all children were safe.

3. Key Findings

Analysis of the Findings

This analysis presents insights from children aged 9 to 17, exploring key areas such as online safety, technology use, and digital behaviors among boys and girls. The findings highlight differences in online trust, exposure to cyber risks, safety measures, and support systems. Below are the key findings:

a. Technology Usage and Online Interactions

Device Usage

Phones are the most used across all age groups for both boys and girls, with 99% of them saying they mostly use phones for online interactions.

> *"I use my phone to talk to my friends, once in a while." - Girl participant's response to Activity 2.1 Mind Mapping Technology Use, 9-11 years*

> *"I use my phone to talk to my parents on social media and send them reels." Girl participant's response to Activity 2.1 Mind Mapping Technology Use, 15-17 years*

> *" I use a mobile phone to talk to church fellowship members." Boy participant's response to Activity 2.1 Mind Mapping Technology Use, 12-14 years*

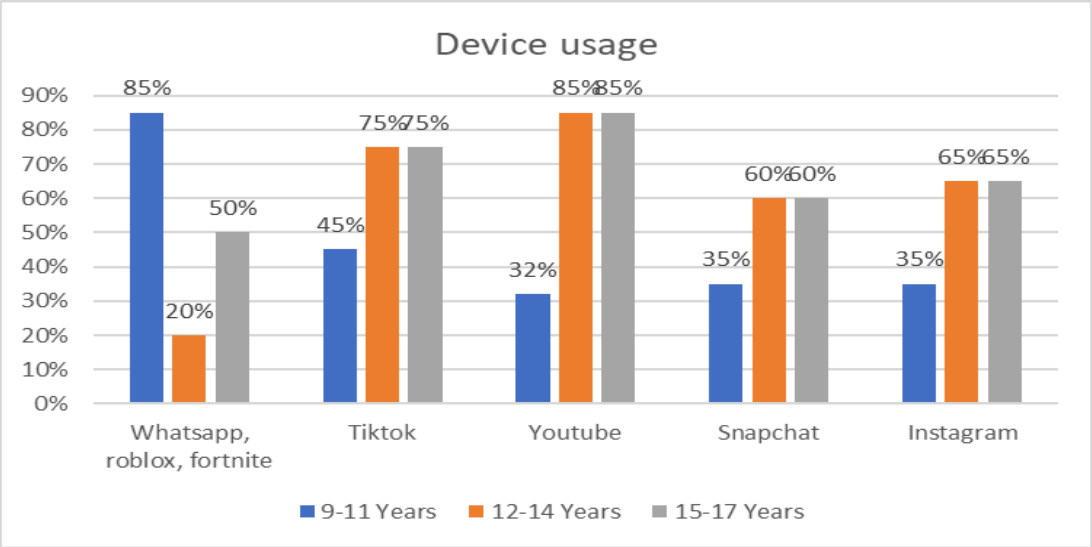


Fig.1: Device Usage for 9-17 year olds

This is followed by laptops and tablets. Girls between the ages of 9 and 11 rely more on TV, computers, and tablets. While 15-17-year-olds prefer smartphones and laptops, boys between the ages of 9 and 11 rely more on gaming consoles, VR, and YouTube. Older boys engage more in social media and gaming communities.

> *"I use a computer every day at school." Girl participant, 9-11 years*

> *"I use my laptop every day at home in case I am bored, and when doing my homework." Girl participant, 9-11 years*

In addition, in terms of gender, boys use more gaming PCs, virtual reality, and Nintendo Switch, while girls prefer social media platforms.

Popular app usage

The most frequently used apps amongst girls between 9-17 years is WhatsApp (85%), Roblox and Fortnite, while TikTok (75%) and YouTube (85%) is more common among 12-17-year-old girls, and snapchat (60%) and Instagram (65%) mostly used by girls between 12-17-year-olds.

> *"I feel excited when talking to my friend on Roblox because it is more fun as compared to WhatsApp" - Girl participant, 9-11 years"*

For boys, 9-11 year olds mostly use YouTube, Roblox, Fortnite, Truecaller, while 12-14 year olds mostly use TikTok, WhatsApp, Goojara, Snapchat, and 15-17 year olds use Instagram, TikTok, Discord, WhatsApp.

Feelings About Online Interactions

Online interaction is how children talk, play, and share with others using the internet, like on social media, games, or video calls. It helps children make friends and learn new things, but they should be careful because not everyone online is kind or safe.

Most girls between 9-17 years said they feel happy and entertained when interacting with people online.

> *"I feel uncomfortable and unsafe while talking to strangers online." - Boy participant, 9-11 years*

> *"I feel happy." - Girl participant, 9-11 years*

However, girls between 9-11 years have mixed feelings, with some unsure about their emotions. While those of 15-17-year-olds experience more social pressure and concerns about interactions with strangers.

“I feel safer chatting on WhatsApp than on TikTok. A friend of mine had her account hacked and all her information was made public.” - Girl participant, 15-17 years

Boys

Boys' feelings about online interactions changed with age. Among those aged 9–11, the majority said they feel happy, excited, and accomplished, though some expressed concerns about strangers online.

I feel informed.” - Boy participant, 12-14 years

By age 12–14, some boys felt informed, however feelings of discomfort and anger emerged, with 57% reporting unease due to cyberbullying or harassment. Older boys (15–17 years) felt more relaxed and comfortable (68%), though 32% of boys from this age group still experience shock from negative encounters. In addition, 73% of the boys in all age groups use blocking and reporting features.

Technology Use Frequency

There is a lower engagement in girls of younger age groups when it comes to the frequency of technology use, compared to 99% of girls between 15-17 years use technology daily, while only 67% of 9-11-year-old girls use technology daily.

“I use the computer when I need to listen to music or when I’m bored, 4 times a week.” - Girl participant, 9-11 years

“I use my computer thrice a week.” - Girl participant, 9-11 years

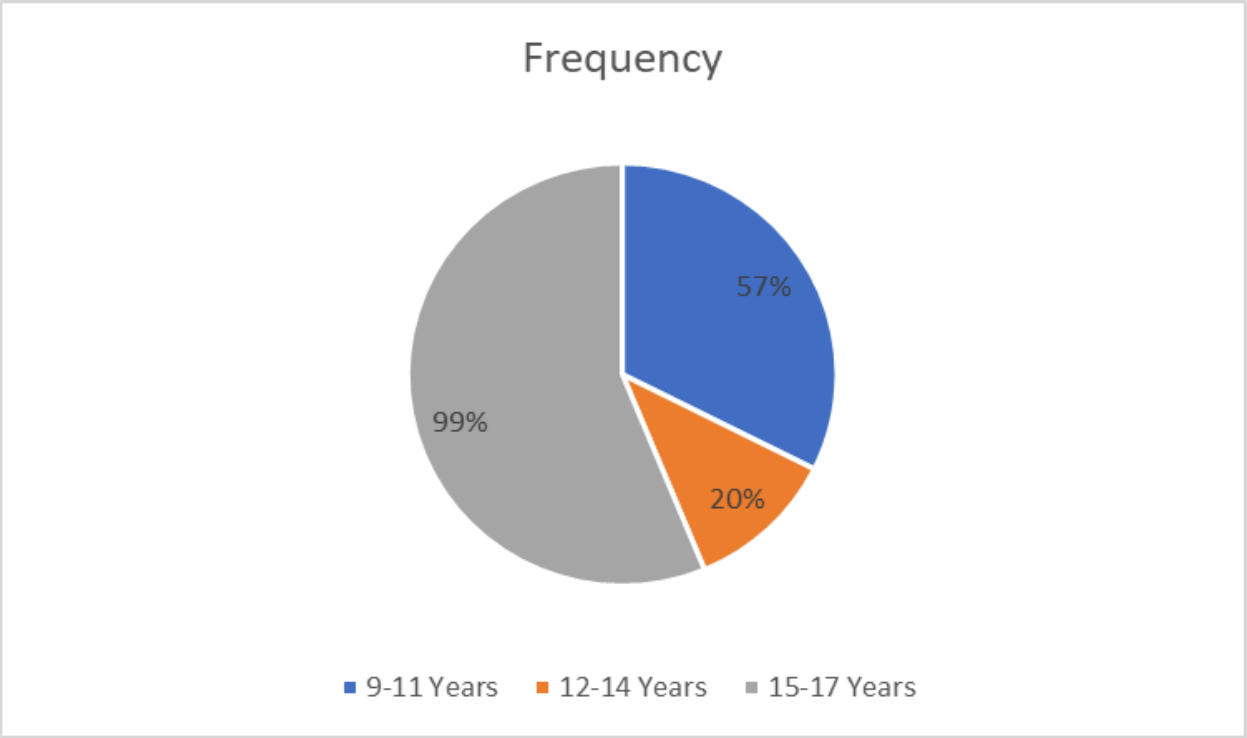


Fig. 2: Frequency of Technology use among 9-17 year olds

b. Online Trust & Safety Awareness

Both boys and girls equally trust strangers online as 11% of boys aged 15-17 trust strangers online compared to the same percentage in girls.

"I talk to random people." - Boy participant, 15-17 years

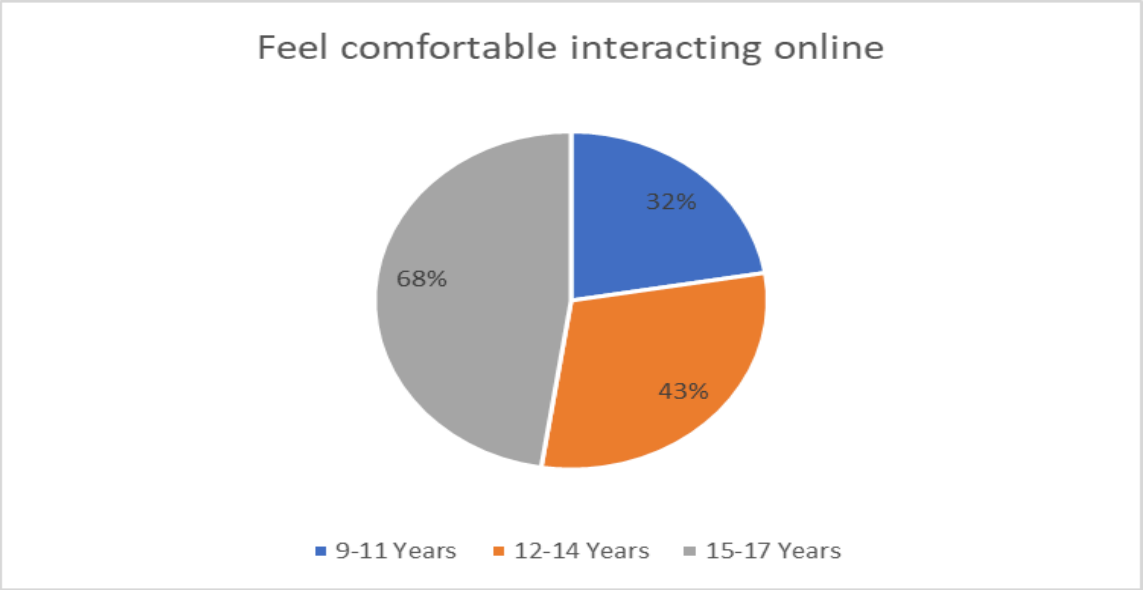
"I talk to online friends whom I have not met" - Girl participant, 12-14 years

However, younger boys (9-11) have more interactions with online friends than girls of the same age.

"I talk to my friends from different parts of the world " - Boy participant, 9-11 years

"I talk to online friends whom I have not met" - Boy participant, 9-11 years

It is evident that there is parental control at younger ages as 67% of 9-11-year-olds admit to knowing everyone they interact with online.



Comparing boys of different age groups, 11% of boys aged 15-17 trust strangers online than boys in the other age groups. Also, younger boys (9-11) have more interactions with online gaming friends than older boys. However, boys aged 15-17 feel more comfortable (68%) interacting online compared to 43% of the boys aged 12-14.

Parental Oversight & Privacy

Girls (33%) are more comfortable with parental oversight than boys (10%) in the 15-17 age group, boys tend to limit interactions to trusted people but may engage in online gaming communities.

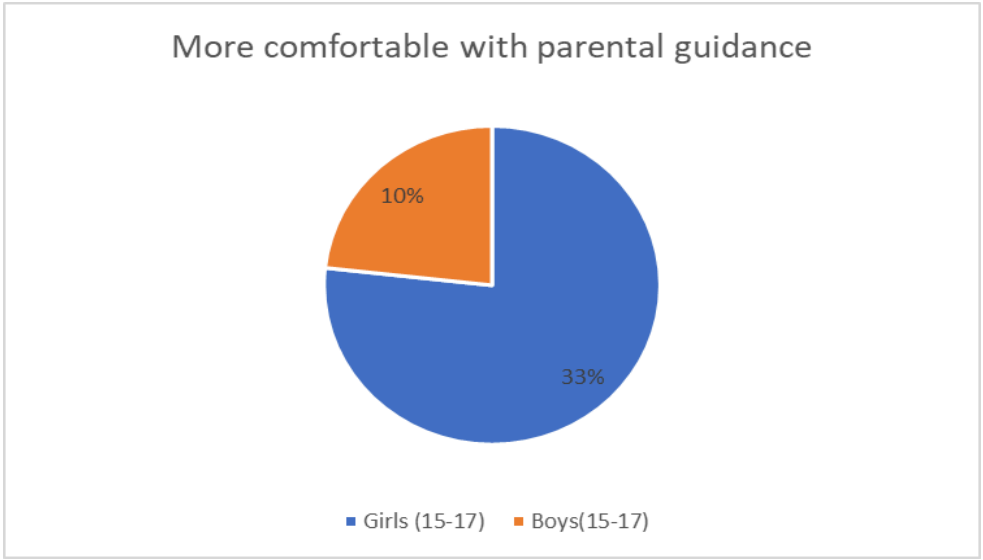


Fig. 3: Parental Oversight and Privacy

However, comparing girls in different age groups, girls between 15-17 years (10%) are the least comfortable with parents knowing their online activities, while 9-11-year-olds (33%) are more open to parental involvement. For the boys, 9-11-year-olds (33%) are more open to parental oversight, while only 10% of 15-17-year-olds feel comfortable with parental monitoring.

Blocking and Reporting Knowledge

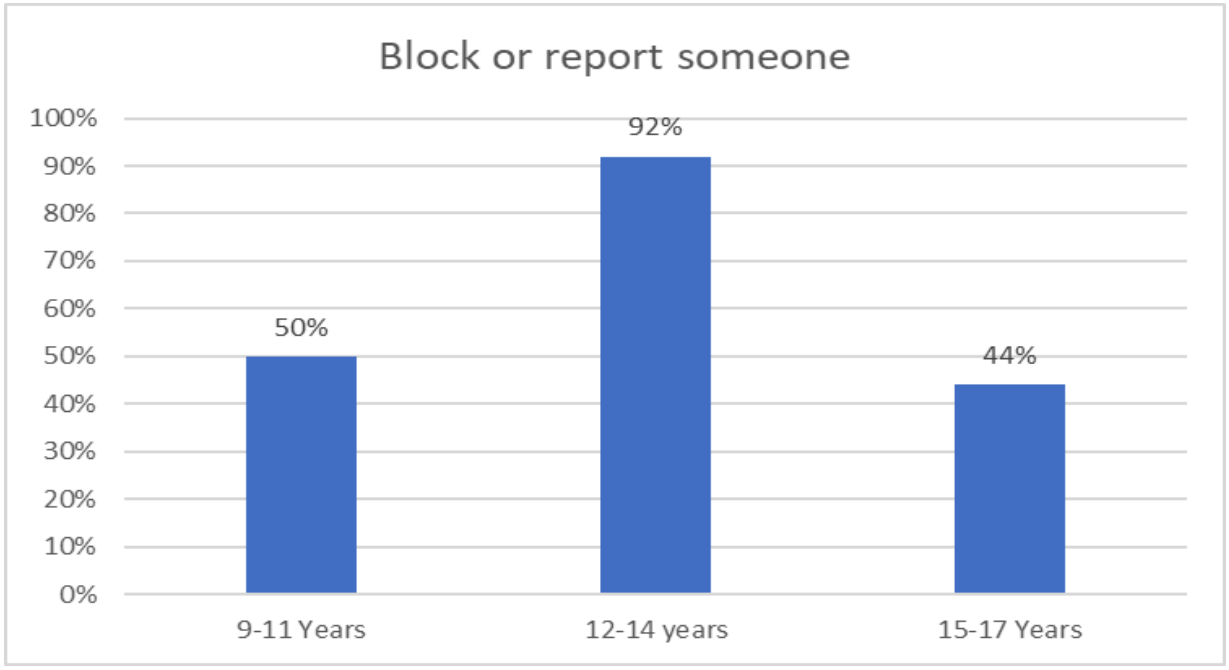


Fig. 4: Blocking and Reporting Knowledge

There is a learning curve in early adolescence as most girls (92%) of 12-14-year-olds know how to block or report someone, while only 44% of 15-17-year-old girls and 50% of 9-11-year-old girls know these safety measures.

Also, older boys (12-14) are more independent in handling online safety, with 75% telling a trusted adult, 80% reporting issues, and 70% blocking or cleaning up their space. In contrast, younger boys (9-11) rely more on adults for guidance, with 60% telling a trusted adult and 30% reporting issues directly.

> *"I follow the SAFE acronym to be safe Online." - Boy participant, 9-11 years*

> *"Don't tolerate the guy, just block, delete, restrict, and report." - Girl participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 1, 12-14 years*

> *"Leave you on read or block you." - Girl participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 2, 12-14 years*

“If they are older than me, I would block or report them.” - Girl participant’s response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 1, 9-11 years

“Tell the person to stop doing whatever they are doing and they should report to a trusted adults” - Boy participant’s response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 3, 9-11 years

Online Safety Feeling

There is a higher exposure to online risks among girls of 15-17 years old as 10% of them do not feel completely safe online, compared to 100% of girls of 9-11 years who feel completely safe online. Older boys (15–17) feel more relaxed (68%) but still face security threats, with 32% experiencing shock and 11% trusting strangers online. They adopt advanced safety measures like two-factor authentication and reporting fake accounts. Younger boys (9–11) feel unsafe around strangers but rely on parental control and trusted adults for protection.

“The friend can use two-factor authentication.” - Boy participant’s response to Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 4, 15-17 years

“”

c. Unwanted Online Experiences (Cyberbullying & Harassment)

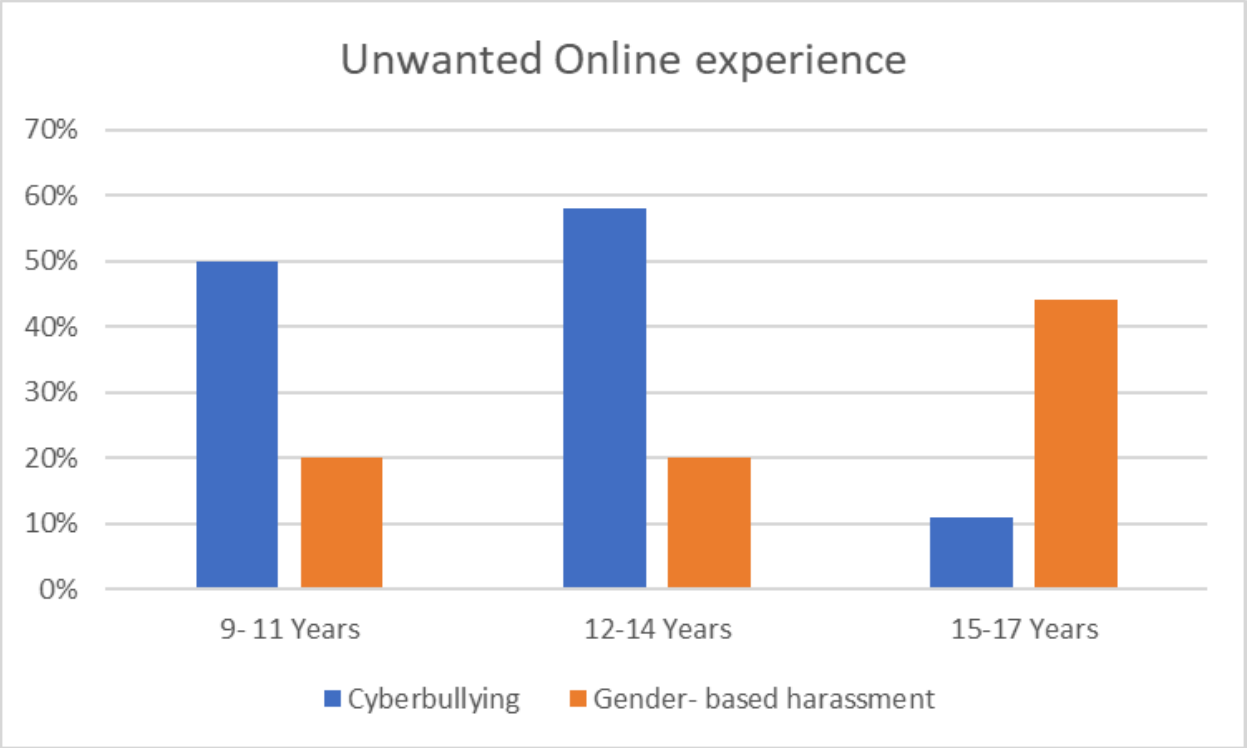


Fig. 5: Unwanted Online Experiences (Cyberbullying & Harassment)

Cyberbullying is more prevalent among girls aged 12-14 years than boys of the same age group. More girls (58%) aged 12-14 experience cyberbullying than boys (50%). However, boys aged 15-17 (11%) report less cyberbullying but more exposure to impersonation scams.

Narrowing it down to girls across different age groups, 77% of girls within 9-17 years have felt unsafe online, with 58% of 12-14-year-olds and 50% of 9-11-year-olds experiencing cyberbullying, and 15-17-year-olds reporting less direct cyberbullying (11%) but more gender-based harassment (44%). Also, girls of all age groups agreed to have blocked, reported, and sought help because of blackmail online with younger girls (9-11) more likely to report to parents or teachers, while older girls (15-17) feared judgment.

Online Harassment & Privacy Violations

While both boys and girls report feeling unsafe online (50-77%), boys are more likely to experience impersonation cases, while girls face gender-based harassment (44%). All girls from all age groups felt scared when pressured to share locations, with girls from 15-17-year-old groups more likely to block or avoid the person, while 9-11-year-olds leaned on parental guidance. While boys aged 15-17 face a higher risk of identifying theft and online

impersonation, 50% of boys from the 9-11 year old group and 12-14-year-olds report gender-based harassment.

Girls between 15-17 years old interact more with fake social media accounts and online impersonation, while younger girls (9-11) are less exposed to social media impersonation risks.

d. Trusted Support Systems

Younger children (9-11) trust parents more (100%) on online safety, as compared to teenagers (15-17) who prefer talking to friends (80%) over parents (50%).

For girls in different age groups:

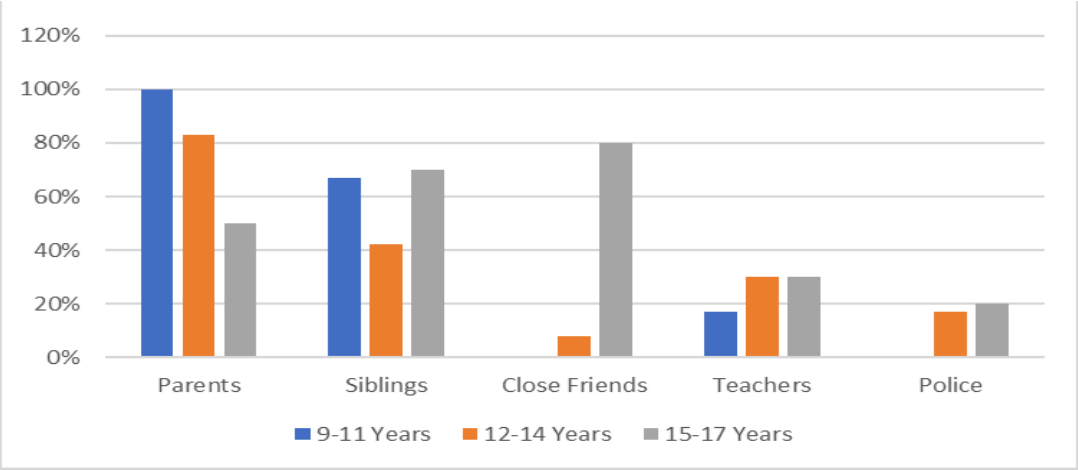


Fig. 6a: Trusted Support Systems - Girls

Younger girls (9-11) trust parents the most and avoid police and close friends for reporting, while older girls (15-17) rely more on friends (80%) and are less likely to involve parents or police.

> *"Parents should be told first." - Girl participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 2, 9-11 years*

> *"Report to a trusted parent" - Girl participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 1, 9-11 years*

> *"I would trust my friends more because they won't judge what I say." - Girl participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 3, 15-17 years*

For the boys within different age groups:

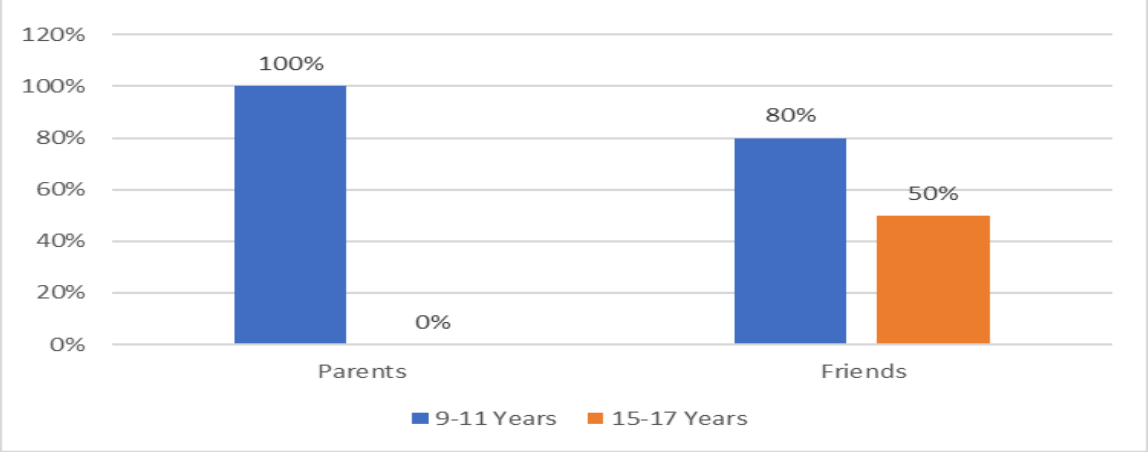


Fig. 6b: Trusted support Systems - Boys

Younger boys (9-11) rely on parents (100%) as their primary support system, while older boys (15-17) prefer talking to friends (80%) over parents (50%).

> *"I feel safe around them [parents]" - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 2, 9-11 years*

> *"The close friend will never judge." - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 1, 15-17 years*

> *"They are helpful" - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 2, 9-11 years*

> *"The friend will never overreact" - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 1, 15-17 years*

> *"My parents provide, and they have been there for me since I was born" - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 1, 9-11 years*

> *"I am more comfortable"- Boy participant's response from Activity 3.2 Scenario: Trusted Stakeholders, Scenario 1, 15-17 years*

e. Online Safety Measures Taken

While 92% of 12-14-year-olds (both boys and girls) know how to block/report threats, boys (50%) aged 9-11 are less aware of blocking tools than girls.

"Report, block and delete any suspicious person." - Girl participant's response from Activity 5.1 Facilitator Worksheet key take away, 12-14 years

"Block and report" - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, case 2, 12-14 years

"They should report to the police." - Boy participant's response from Activity 3.1 Scenario: Boundary Detectives, Case 3, 12-14 years

Online safety measures taken by girls of different age groups:

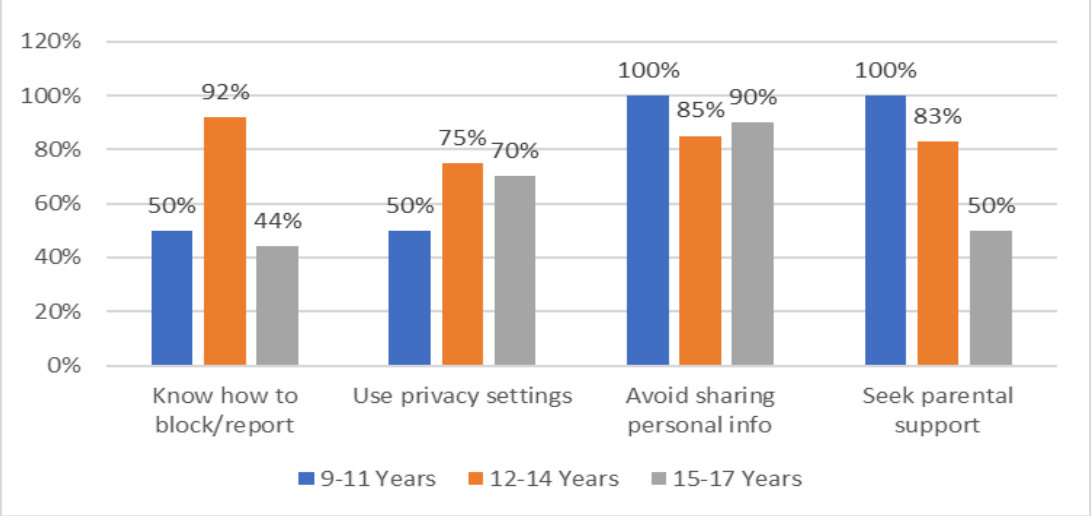


Fig. 7a: Online Safety Measures Taken - Girls

Knowledge of boys of different age groups on blocking and reporting online:

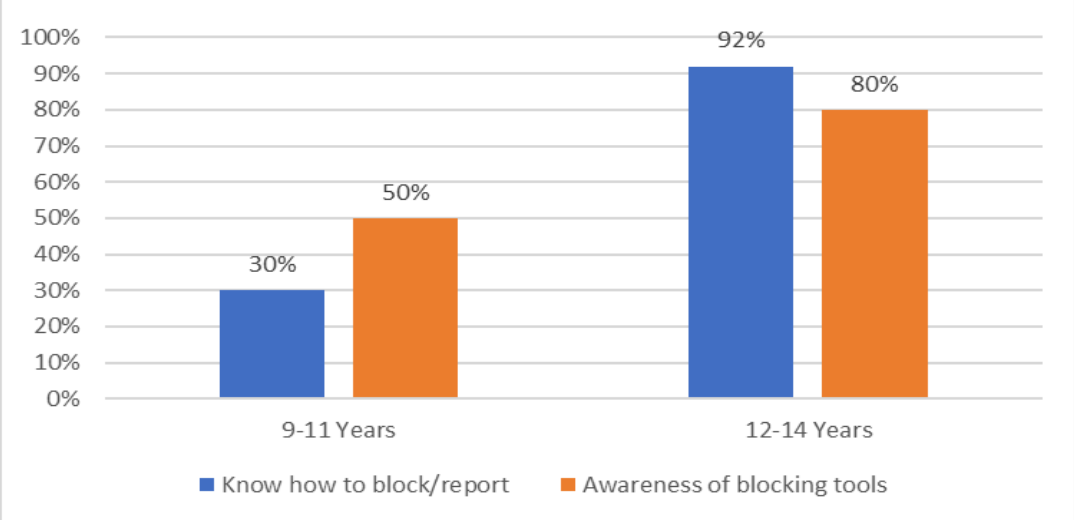


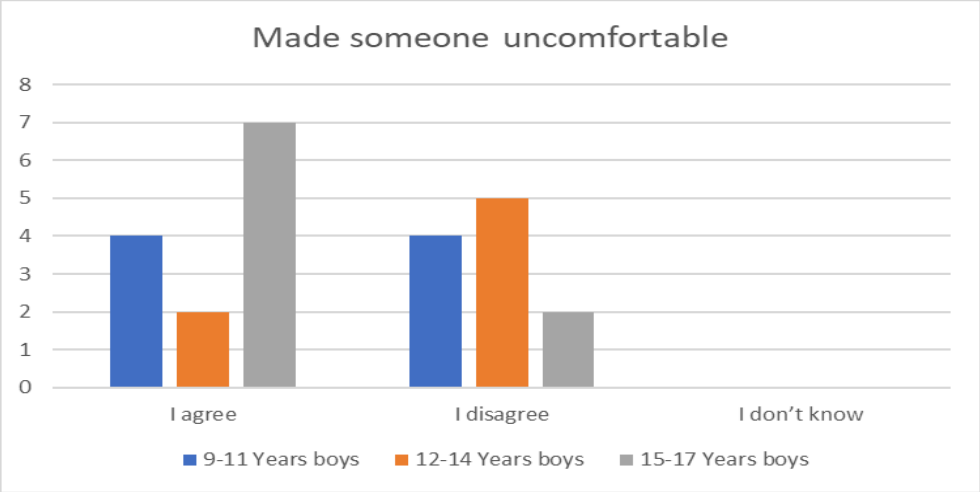
Fig. 7b: Online Safety Measures Taken - Boys

While 92% of boys between 12-14 years know how to block/report threats, 50% of boys aged 9-11 lack awareness of blocking tools.

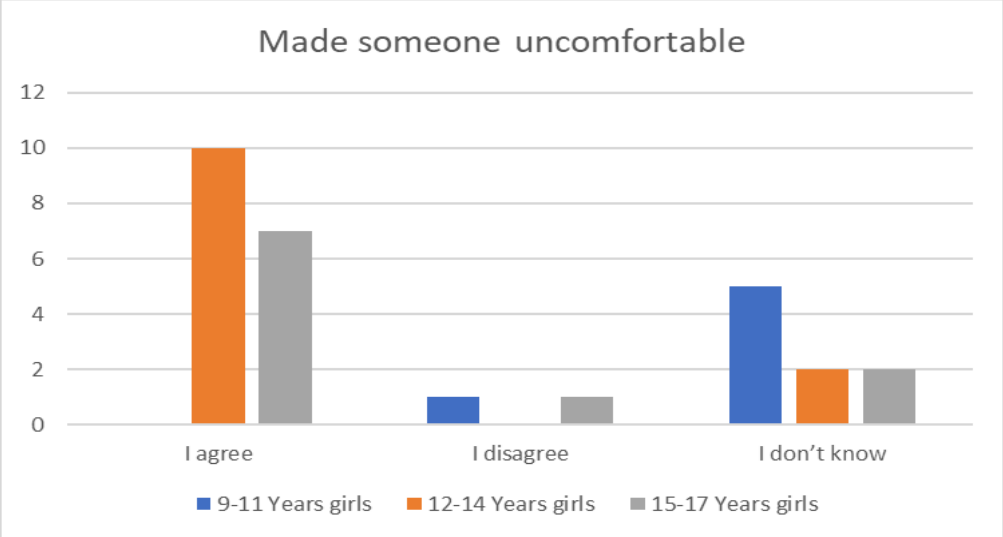
Admit to Making Someone Else Uncomfortable Online

There were differences in how boys and girls behave online as they grow older. Boys' behavior changed gradually, while girls' experiences shifted more suddenly. Boys were more likely to say they had not made someone uncomfortable online, while more girls, especially younger ones (83.3% at 9-11), were unsure.

Among boys, the number who admitted to making someone uncomfortable online increased with age from 50% of 9-11 years , to 28.6% of 12-14 years, and 77.8% of 15-17 years..



For girls, there was a sudden rise from 0% in 9-11 year olds, to 83.3% in 12-14 year olds, and 70% of 15-17 year olds.



3. Key Numbers Summary

a. 9-11 years (12 children)

Category	Boys (6)	Girls (6)
Daily Technology Use	4	4
Knowing All Online Contacts	2	4
Trusting Strangers Online *(Do Not Trust)*	6	6
Comfortable Sharing Online Activities with Parents	6	2
Have Felt Unsafe Online or Know Someone Who Has	5	5
Have Experienced/Witnessed Cyberbullying	2	1
Experienced Negative Comments Based on Gender	1	3
Admit to Making Someone Else Uncomfortable Online	4	2
Would Report Online Threats to a Trusted Adult	3	2
Would Block or Ignore an Online Threat	2	3
Trust Parents for Support	6	6
Trust Friends for Support	4	1
Trust Police for Support	2	0

Table 1: 9-11 years

b. 12-14 years (19 children)

Category	Boys (7)	Girls (12)
Daily Technology Use	6	10
Knowing All Online Contacts	3	2
Trusting Strangers Online *(Do Not Trust)*	7	12
Comfortable Sharing Online Activities with Parents	4	2

Have Felt Unsafe Online or Know Someone Who Has	4	6
Have Experienced/Witnessed Cyberbullying	6	7
Experienced Negative Comments Based on Gender	1	7
Admit to Making Someone Else Uncomfortable Online	4	10
Would Report Online Threats to a Trusted Adult	4	8
Would Block or Ignore an Online Threat	2	4
Trust Parents for Support	6	10
Trust Friends for Support	2	3
Trust Police for Support	1	1

Table 2: 12-14 years

c. 15-17 years (19 children)

Category	Boys (9)	Girls (10)
Daily Technology Use	9	10
Knowing All Online Contacts	5	1
Trusting Strangers Online *(Do Not Trust)*	9	9
Comfortable Sharing Online Activities with Parents	0	0
Have Felt Unsafe Online or Know Someone Who Has	6	7
Have Experienced/Witnessed Cyberbullying	9	10
Experienced Negative Comments Based on Gender	8	6
Admit to Making Someone Else Uncomfortable Online	7	7
Would Report Online Threats to a Trusted Adult	4	10
Would Block or Ignore an Online Threat	2	4
Trust Parents for Support	5	6

Trust Friends for Support	7	5
Trust Police for Support	1	2

Table 1: 15-17 years

4. Conclusion

This study revealed that while both boys and girls engage in digital spaces, their experiences, risks, and trust levels vary significantly. The findings indicate that children actively use technology and are increasingly exposed to both opportunities and risks online. While many have some understanding of online safety, gaps in knowledge and protective strategies persist. Strengthening digital literacy programs, improving support structures, and fostering a culture of safe online interactions are crucial in addressing these challenges.

Younger children (9-11) are more supervised online but need better understanding of privacy risks, while there is a learning curve in early adolescence (12-14), who know how to block or report someone as a way of curbing online risks. Further, teenagers (15-17) experience more complex online threats, including harassment and blackmail. Most girls across all age groups also take proactive safety measures, but reporting and trust levels vary.

The 12-14-year-old children actively engage with technology and face various online risks, including cyberbullying, privacy violations, and gender-based harassment. Most children have a basic understanding of online safety, but many lack knowledge of how to report or block harmful behavior. While parents remain the most trusted support system, trust in external stakeholders such as police and teachers is low.

Further, 15-17-year-olds use technology daily and are highly engaged on social media, but they face significant risks, including cyberbullying, privacy violations, and pressure to share personal content. In summary:

- Boys and girls generally do not trust strangers online and are not comfortable sharing their online activities with parents.
- Parents are the most trusted for support, but police and teachers are the least trusted due to concerns about corruption and judgmental attitudes.
- Cyberbullying and online gender-based discrimination are widespread issues.
- Many teens understand how to protect themselves online, but they need stronger reporting systems and better guidance from adults.

The sessions were quite informative and the findings of this study will be key to informing policies and programs on TFGBV and children's digital literacy and online safety in Kenya and globally.

5. Recommendations

As expressed by the children during their sessions, the following are their verbatim recommendations for combating TFGBV."

FOR PARENTS:

To make my account private

Parents should understand what being online is

PARENTS SHOULD BE TRAINED

They have to know not everyone is righteous, so some of the things we do might put us in a sticky situation, so they should guide us before giving us the phones.

An adult should follow up my online activities

They can engage with parents on how to parent in this day and age

Parents need to be involved in the digital space.

Parents should collaborate with other stakeholders to ensure children are safe online.

Parents should be strict and offer mental support from professionals

Parents should be respectful and trust their children. They should not assume the worst.

Parents must be understanding.

Parents should be ready to listen and not react. They should not lecture us.

HELP US MAKE ACCOUNTS

Parents should be involved in their children's lives in order to earn their trust; not to be too involved.

For Teachers

For social media or technology companies:

Always watch out for children.

Open up programs in schools to create awareness about online safety because children should not be restricted from getting into social media platforms but be made aware of how to keep themselves safe on the platforms

Have regulations and follow up on them

Ensure my algorithm doesn't go beyond my preferences

ADD MORE SAFETY FEATURES

They should be able to screen harmful words or content to know that the harmful content is directed to someone. Have an AI function which asks the receiver if they are familiar with a person or the content and information sent to them.

Tech companies should monitor the activities people post on their apps

Tech companies should monitor the activities people post on their apps

They should look out for people who receive negative comments on their posts and eventually delete their accounts and find out why in order to offer help.

They should regulate and restrict ads that are harmful to children.

Take action for the people that have been reported

6.References

Chowdhury, R., & Lakshmi, D. (2023). “Your opinion doesn’t matter, anyway”: Exposing technology-facilitated gender-based violence in an era of generative AI (Rep. No. CI/2023/PI/10). UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387483

Hinson, L., Mueller, J., O’Brien-Milne, L., & Wandera, N. (2018). Technology-facilitated gender-based violence: What is it, and how do we measure it? International Center for Research on Women. https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/ICRW_TFGBVMarketing_Brief_v8-Web.pdf

Joint stakeholder report: Human rights in the digital context in Kenya. (2024). APC. https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/kenya-upr-joint-stakeholder-report-2024.pdf

KICTANet. (2019). Tech-fueled violence a threat to women’s rights. https://www.kictanet.or.ke/tech-fueled-violence-a-threat-to-womens-rights/

UNFPA Kenya. (2023). New study reveals extent of technology-facilitated gender-based violence in Kenya’s higher learning institutions. https://kenya.unfpa.org/en/news/new-study-reveals-extent-technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-kenyas-higher-learning

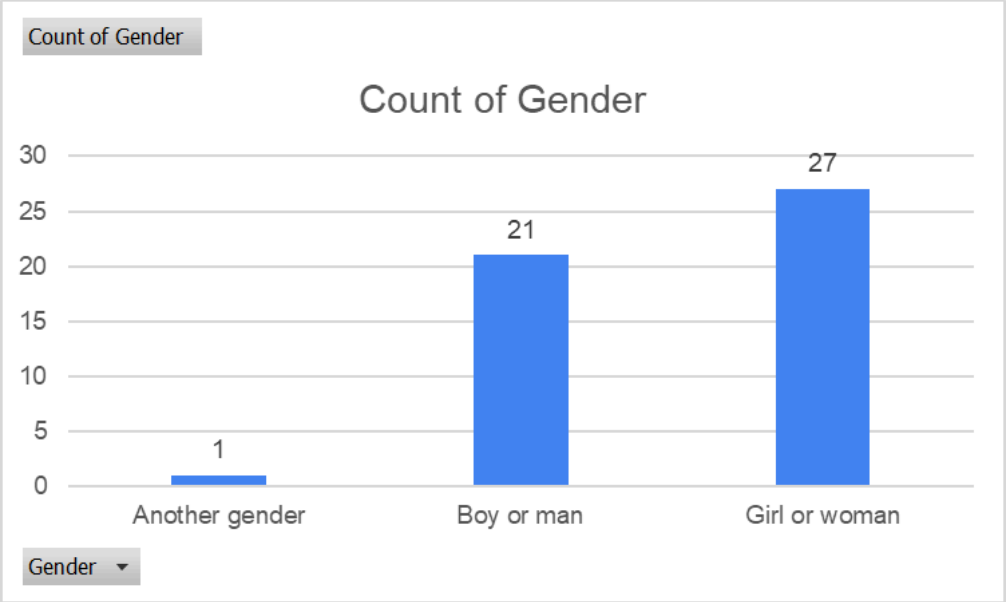
https://www.kictanet.or.ke/tech-fueled-violence-a-threat-to-womens-rights/

6. Annexes

Annex 1: Gallery

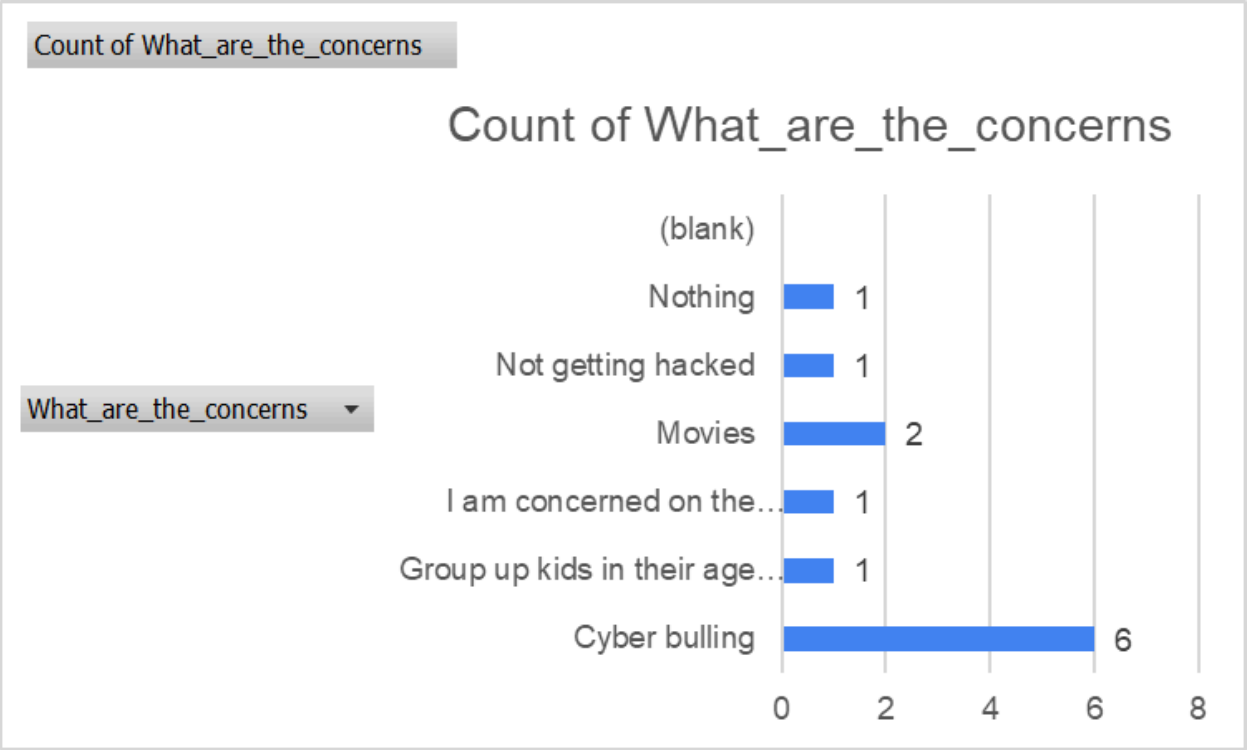
Annex 2: Analysis of the Pre-Workshop Surveys

1. There were a total of 50 children during the study.
2. Most children (27) were girls or women, while boys or men were 22 in number, and another gender was 1.
3. There were 12 children between 9-11 years, 19 children between 12-14 years, and 19 children between 15-17 years of age.

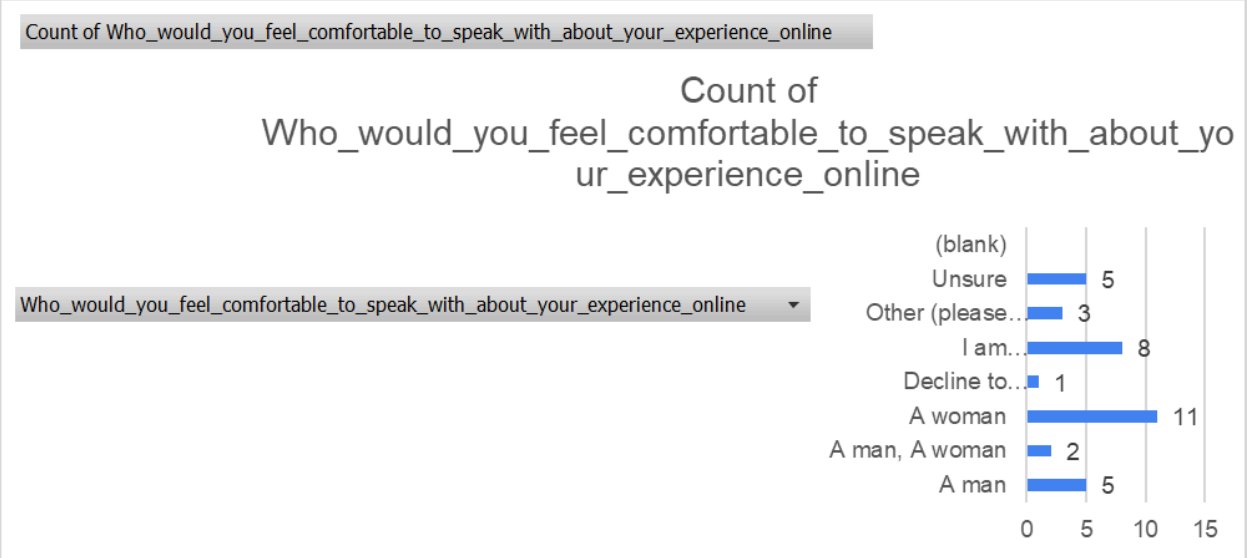


4. 19 had no concerns joining the workshop, similarly, 19 children had concerns joining the workshop.

5. Some of the concerns expressed by the children were cyberbullying (6 children), movies (2), the well-being of girls online (1), and not getting hacked (1)



6. Most children (11) said they would feel comfortable speaking with women about their experiences online, while 5 children said they would feel comfortable speaking with men about their experiences online.



Annex 3: Data Analysis Spreadsheet

Access the file using this link

Annex 4: Safeguarding Report

Facilitators for the sessions were identified by in-country staff and met the following criteria:

- Work approval from Save the Children and an employment/volunteer contract
- Certification in child safeguarding and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), as required by Save the Children.
- 1+ years experience in child protection, ideally with direct experience working with children and/or adolescents.
- Foundational training on technology-facilitated GBV, and safe recognition and referral training for survivors of GBV (focused on children and adolescents).
- Confidence to recognize signs of abuse and neglect in children, and how to safely refer them to specialized services
- Child- and survivor- centered communication skills
- Commitment to ensuring ethical and trauma-informed research with children and adolescents
- Capacity to nurture a safe, respectful, inclusive and supportive space
- Experience facilitating with children and adolescents
- A lively, engaging and upbeat facilitation style, especially for a long period of time (workshop will be around 5 hours)
- Ability to moderate and summarize discussion among children and adolescents

No.	SECTION	DETAILS
1.	**Study Title**	Technology Facilitated Gender-Based Violence (TFGBV) in Relation to Children and Adolescents Workshops
2.	**Date of Event**	3rd-5th January 2025
3.	**Location**	Mtoto News Office, HighView Phase 1, Hse No.2
4.	**Organization(s) Involved**	Save the Children & Mtoto News
5.	**Number of Participants**	Total Number of Children: 50 Boys: 22 Girls: 27 Other Gender: 1
6.	**Designated Safeguarding Lead**	Purity Moraa

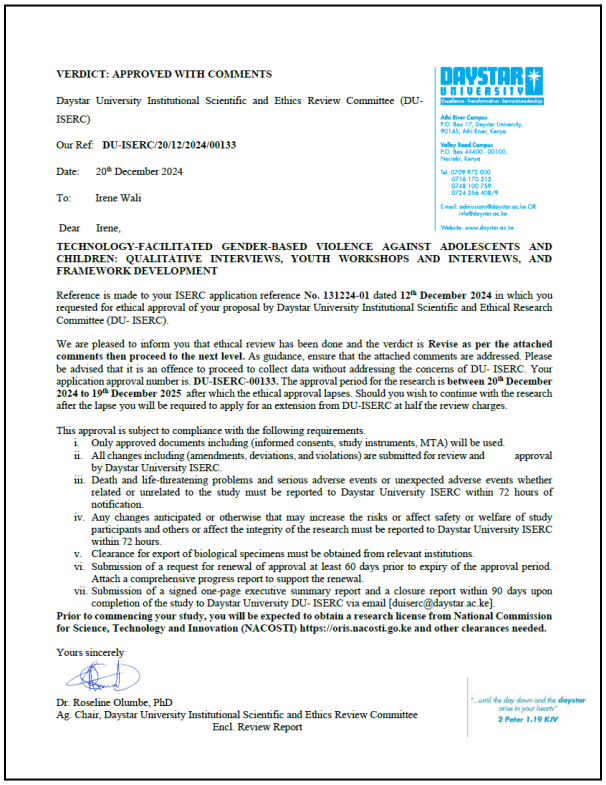
7.	**Key Safeguarding Measures**	**-We ensured the implementation of safeguarding protocols in the following ways:** • **Comprehensive Risk Assessment**: A thorough risk assessment was conducted, evaluating the venue, personnel in contact with the children, and the research topic itself, considering the sensitive nature of the discussion. • **Parental Consent and Child Assent**: Consent forms were obtained from parents, while assent forms were collected from the children, ensuring that both parties understood the research objectives and the safeguarding measures in place. • **Pre-Research Safeguarding Session**: A safeguarding session was held before the commencement of the research. Children were educated on their rights, the safeguarding procedures, and reassured of their safety throughout the process. • **Breaks for Well-being**: Adequate breaks were scheduled to accommodate the children's needs and ensure their comfort during the research. • **Clear Reporting Procedures**: Children were informed of the reporting mechanisms in place for any safeguarding concerns. This included the introduction of an anonymous reporting channel, referred to as a "safebox." • **Emotional Support and Engagement**: Extra support was provided to children in case the discussions became overwhelming. Activities such as games, play, and songs were incorporated to help ease any emotional intensity. • **Trained Safeguarding Personnel**: The staff involved in the research, including those interacting with the children, were thoroughly briefed and trained in safeguarding protocols to ensure they were equipped to handle any potential issues. • **Confidentiality and Data Protection**: Strict confidentiality protocols were implemented to protect the children's identities and personal information. All data collected was handled with utmost care, adhering to ethical guidelines and data protection laws. • **Designated Safeguarding Lead**: A designated safeguarding lead (DSL) was present throughout the research, serving as a point of contact for any immediate safeguarding concerns or incidents. • **Environment and Child Protection Measures**: The venue was designed and set up to create a child-friendly and safe environment,

		with controlled access and regular monitoring to prevent any unauthorized contact with the children. • **Debriefing and Feedback**: At the end of each research session, a debrief was conducted to gather feedback from the children on their experiences, ensuring they had a platform to voice any concerns or questions.
8.	**Incidents or Concerns Raised**	- There were **nil** safeguarding incidents/issues raised.
9.	**Child-Friendly Environment**	**- Ways We Ensured a Child-Friendly and Inclusive Environment:** • **Use of Child-Friendly Language**: Communication during facilitation was tailored using age-appropriate, simple, and clear language to ensure that children fully understood the discussions and activities. • **Interactive and Engaging Activities**: We incorporated fun and interactive activities, such as games, storytelling, and creative tasks, to keep children engaged and comfortable throughout the sessions. • **Encouraging Participation**: All children were encouraged to express their thoughts, ideas, and feelings in an open and supportive atmosphere, promoting active participation without fear of judgment. • **Flexible Approach**: We tried to adjust the activities to accommodate the varying attention spans and emotional states of the children, allowing for a more responsive and personalized experience. • **Inclusive Materials**: Resources, materials, and visual aids used during the sessions were designed to be inclusive, representing diverse backgrounds, abilities, and experiences to ensure all children felt represented. • **Safe Space for Expression**: A safe, non-intimidating space was created where children could freely voice their concerns, ask questions, and participate in discussions without pressure. • **Culturally Sensitive Approaches**: We were mindful of cultural differences, adapting our approach to be respectful and sensitive to the children's diverse backgrounds. • **Peer Support**: Children were encouraged to support one another, fostering a sense of community and collaboration within the group. • **Physical Comfort**: The physical environment was designed with comfortable seating, proper lighting, and adequate space to ensure children felt relaxed and safe.

10.	**Health and Safety Measures**	- There were **nil** medical incidents, accidents, or health-related concerns.
11.	**Feedback from Participants**	- The participants expressed **feeling safe** and **comfortable** throughout the study. - The participants suggested having regular training sessions on digital literacy and online safety to know how to keep themselves safe in digital spaces.
12.	**Challenges Faced**	- A key challenge identified was the complexity and volume of questions for younger children in the 9-11 age group. We recommend simplifying the questions to ensure they are age-appropriate and fully comprehensible. Additionally, the number of questions should be reduced to account for the shorter concentration span typically observed in this age group, ensuring better engagement and meaningful participation.
13.	**Follow-Up Actions**	While no follow-up activities were necessary due to the absence of reported incidents, conducting a debrief was essential to prioritize and assess the participants' mental and emotional well-being. This allowed us to ensure that any underlying concerns were addressed and that participants felt supported throughout the process.
14.	**Conclusion & Safeguarding Officer's Notes**	Reflecting on the safeguarding measures during the study, key lessons were learned, including the need for simplified, age-appropriate materials for younger children to enhance their comprehension and engagement. The comprehensive risk assessments, consent processes, and pre-event safeguarding sessions were effective, but continuous reinforcement of reporting mechanisms and clearer communication with parents would strengthen future activities. Regular breaks, emotional support through play, and post-event debriefs ensured children's well-being, though additional training for personnel on safeguarding best practices is recommended. Overall, these reflections will help enhance child-friendly, inclusive, and emotionally supportive environments in future events.
15.	**Report Prepared By:**	Purity Moraa, Safeguarding Officer, Mtoto News.
16.	**Signature & Date**	8/01/2025 

Annex 5: Ethical Clearance

The document can be accessed using this link.



VERDICT: APPROVED WITH COMMENTS

Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee (DU-ISERC)

Our Ref: **DU-ISERC/20/12/2024/00133**

Date: 20th December 2024

To: Irene Wali

Dear Irene,

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AGAINST ADOLESCENTS AND CHILDREN: QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS, YOUTH WORKSHOPS AND INTERVIEWS, AND FRAMEWORK DEVELOPMENT

Reference is made to your ISERC application reference **No. 131224-01** dated **12th December 2024** in which you requested for ethical approval of your proposal by Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethical Research Committee (DU- ISERC).

We are pleased to inform you that ethical review has been done and the verdict is **Revise as per the attached comments then proceed to the next level.** As guidance, ensure that the attached comments are addressed. Please be advised that it is an offence to proceed to collect data without addressing the concerns of DU- ISERC. Your application approval number is. **DU-ISERC-00133.** The approval period for the research is **between 20th December 2024 to 19th December 2025** after which the ethical approval lapses. Should you wish to continue with the research after the lapse you will be required to apply for an extension from DU-ISERC at half the review charges.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements.

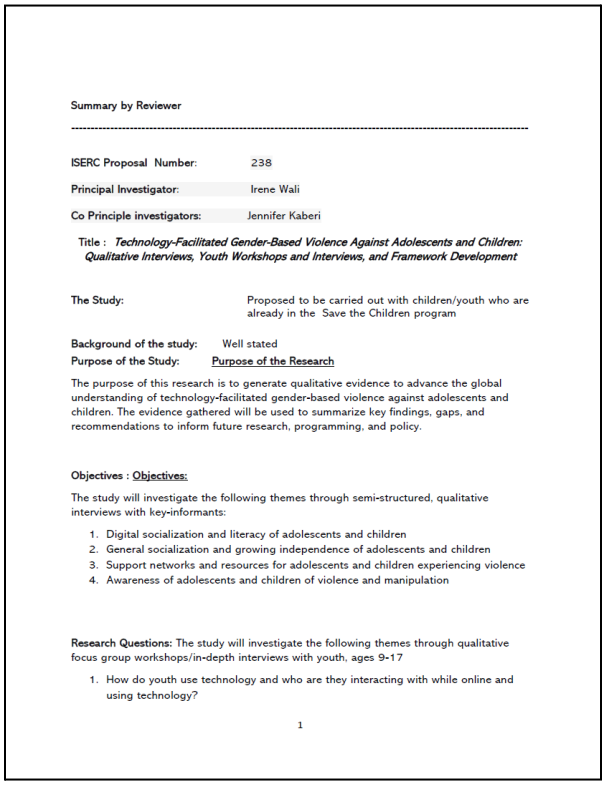
i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used.
ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by Daystar University ISERC.
iii. Death and life-threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to Daystar University ISERC within 72 hours of notification.
iv. Any changes anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affect safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to Daystar University ISERC within 72 hours.
v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
vii. Submission of a signed one-page executive summary report and a closure report within 90 days upon completion of the study to Daystar University DU- ISERC via email [duiserc@daystar.ac.ke].

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) https://oris.nacosti.go.ke and other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Roseline Olumbe, PhD
Ag. Chair, Daystar University Institutional Scientific and Ethics Review Committee
Encl. Review Report

"...until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts"
2 Peter 1.19 KJV



Summary by Reviewer

ISERC Proposal Number: 238

Principal Investigator: Irene Wali

Co Principle investigators: Jennifer Kaberi

Title : *Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Adolescents and Children: Qualitative Interviews, Youth Workshops and Interviews, and Framework Development*

The Study: Proposed to be carried out with children/youth who are already in the Save the Children program

Background of the study: Well stated

Purpose of the Study: Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to generate qualitative evidence to advance the global understanding of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against adolescents and children. The evidence gathered will be used to summarize key findings, gaps, and recommendations to inform future research, programming, and policy.

Objectives : Objectives:

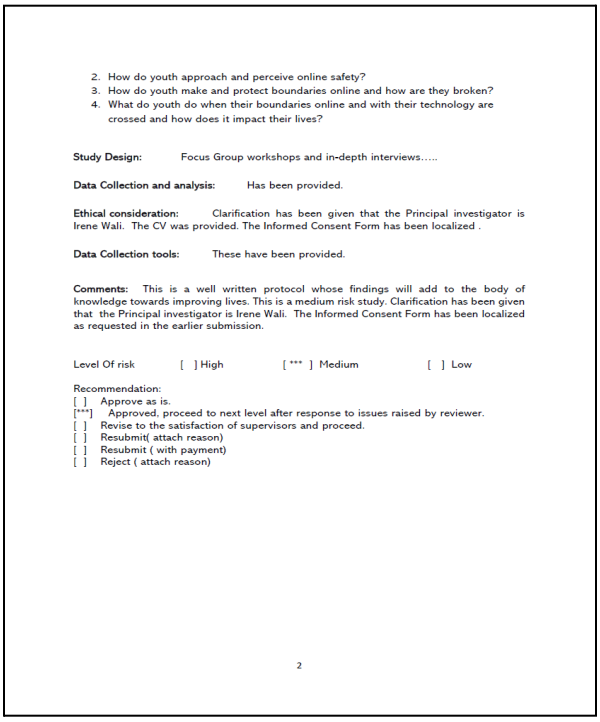
The study will investigate the following themes through semi-structured, qualitative interviews with key-informants:

1. Digital socialization and literacy of adolescents and children
2. General socialization and growing independence of adolescents and children
3. Support networks and resources for adolescents and children experiencing violence
4. Awareness of adolescents and children of violence and manipulation

Research Questions: The study will investigate the following themes through qualitative focus group workshops/in-depth interviews with youth, ages 9-17

1. How do youth use technology and who are they interacting with while online and using technology?

1



2. How do youth approach and perceive online safety?
3. How do youth make and protect boundaries online and how are they broken?
4. What do youth do when their boundaries online and with their technology are crossed and how does it impact their lives?

Study Design: Focus Group workshops and in-depth interviews.....

Data Collection and analysis: Has been provided.

Ethical consideration: Clarification has been given that the Principal investigator is Irene Wali. The CV was provided. The Informed Consent Form has been localized .

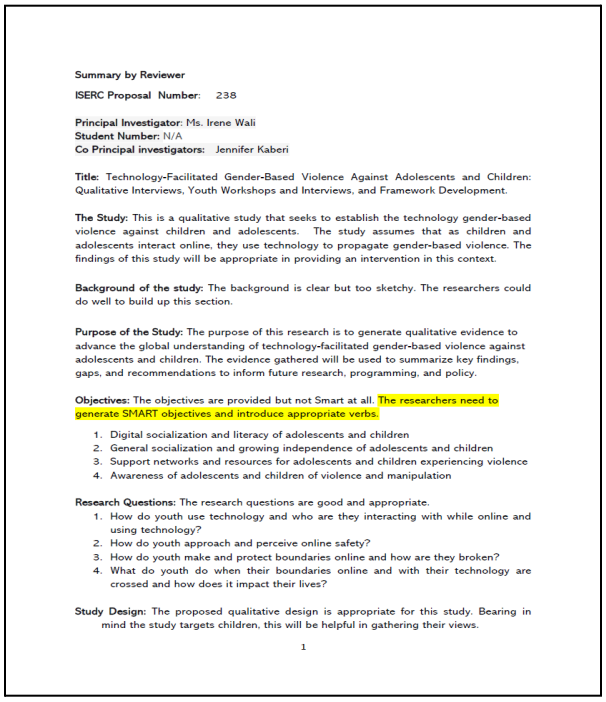
Data Collection tools: These have been provided.

Comments: This is a well written protocol whose findings will add to the body of knowledge towards improving lives. This is a medium risk study. Clarification has been given that the Principal investigator is Irene Wali. The Informed Consent Form has been localized as requested in the earlier submission.

Level Of risk [ ] High [***] Medium [ ] Low

Recommendation:
[ ] Approve as is.
[***] Approved, proceed to next level after response to issues raised by reviewer.
[ ] Revise to the satisfaction of supervisors and proceed.
[ ] Resubmit(attach reason)
[ ] Resubmit (with payment)
[ ] Reject (attach reason)

2



Summary by Reviewer

ISERC Proposal Number: 238

Principal Investigator: Ms. Irene Wali
Student Number: N/A
Co Principal investigators: Jennifer Kaberi

Title: Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Adolescents and Children: Qualitative Interviews, Youth Workshops and Interviews, and Framework Development.

The Study: This is a qualitative study that seeks to establish the technology gender-based violence against children and adolescents. The study assumes that as children and adolescents interact online, they use technology to propagate gender-based violence. The findings of this study will be appropriate in providing an intervention in this context.

Background of the study: The background is clear but too sketchy. The researchers could do well to build up this section.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to generate qualitative evidence to advance the global understanding of technology-facilitated gender-based violence against adolescents and children. The evidence gathered will be used to summarize key findings, gaps, and recommendations to inform future research, programming, and policy.

Objectives: The objectives are provided but not Smart at all. The researchers need to generate SMART objectives and introduce appropriate verbs.

1. Digital socialization and literacy of adolescents and children
2. General socialization and growing independence of adolescents and children
3. Support networks and resources for adolescents and children experiencing violence
4. Awareness of adolescents and children of violence and manipulation

Research Questions: The research questions are good and appropriate.

1. How do youth use technology and who are they interacting with while online and using technology?
2. How do youth approach and perceive online safety?
3. How do youth make and protect boundaries online and how are they broken?
4. What do youth do when their boundaries online and with their technology are crossed and how does it impact their lives?

Study Design: The proposed qualitative design is appropriate for this study. Bearing in mind the study targets children, this will be helpful in gathering their views.

1

Data Collection and Analysis: This has been clearly addressed and it is adequate.

Ethical consideration:

This section is sufficient and all the relevant ethical matters have been adequately addressed.

Data Collection Tools: They are comprehensive and adequate. However, the language used in some questions needs to be revised. E.g. Qn. 7 "… romantic partner of a friend…" This should be revised and contextualised to Kenya but also child-friendly language.

Comments:

This is a low-risk study whose findings are beneficial to children, parents and scholars in understanding how technology could promote gender-based violence. Appropriate interventions could be made to safeguard children and adolescents while navigating online space.

Apart from the comments raised above, the researchers need to address the following:

- Edit the proposal for spelling mistakes and grammatical errors.
- Present a good and comprehensive background of the study.
- Rephrase and present SMART objectives.
- Clearly indicate the location of the study. This has not been adequately presented.
- The section under population has not been adequately addressed. Instead, the researchers have discussed the data collection approaches and methodology.

Level Of risk:
High
Medium
Low

Recommendation:
[ ] Approve as is.
[✓] Approved, proceed to next level after response to issues raised by reviewer.
[ ] Revise to the satisfaction of supervisors and proceed.
[ ] Resubmit without payment
[ ] Resubmit (with payment)
[ ] Reject (attach reason)

2