

Original Article

Sexual Harassment through Social Media: A Case of Girls Students in Balkumari, Lalitpur, Nepal

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Abstract: Internet is the fastest growing thing in the whole world due to its useful technology and powerful means of technique for the communication. Sometimes referred to as a “network of networks,” the Internet emerged in the United States in the 1970s but did not become visible to the general public until the early 1990s. This study examined the sociological aspects of online sexual harassment via social media and its impact on college girls in Balkumari Lalitpur, Nepal. It is also the recipient of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens, Nepal and analyzed the physical, mental, and sociocultural effects on young female students in one college. It used an anti-categorical approach using intersectionality and mixed methods of data collection. Narration research method was used as qualitative method for in-depth interviews. Total N=25 respondents were surveyed for quantitative study using random sampling using social media inside Lalitpur district. Among them, 5 of them were taken as qualitative samples for in-depth interviews. Quantitative and qualitative findings are presented, with qualitative data gathered through Google Forms and in-depth interviews conducted through phone calls. The study revealed the profound impact of online sexual harassment on young girls and highlights the role of intersectionality, patriarchal society, and hegemonic masculinity. The study showed that young girls are highly susceptible to online sexual harassment, but many cases go unreported. The primary response is to ignore, block, and unfollow perpetrators. Perpetrators often display confidence due to patriarchal beliefs and a sense of entitlement from hegemonic masculinity. Online anonymity can encourage individuals to engage in harassing behaviors, exerting control and dominance. Online sexual harassment has long-term physical, mental, emotional, and social effects, leading to emotional breakdowns, disrupted relationships, and severe depression which remain from short to longer term in their personal, family and social life as well. To ensure safety, social media platforms should be made equitable, strong cybercrime laws should be implemented, and providers should actively monitor and minimize instances of online sexual harassment.

Keywords: sexual harassment, social media, girls’ students

1. INTRODUCTION

Internet is the fastest growing thing in the whole world due to its useful technology and powerful means of technique for the communication. Sometimes referred to as a “network of networks,” the Internet emerged in the United States in the 1970s but did not become visible to the general public until the early 1990s. By 2020, approximately 4.5 billion people, or more than half of the world’s population, were estimated to have access to the Internet [1]. Till April 2022, approximate of 5 billion people have access of internet which is 63.1% of the global population. Among them 4.7 billion people use social media [2]. As of April 2023, there were 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 64.6 percent of the global population. Of this total, 4.8 billion, or 59.9 percent of the world’s population,

were social media users [3]. As of January 2023, Northern Europe was the region with the highest social network penetration rate, with a reach of 83.6 percent. Western Europe followed closely with 83.3 percent, and Southern Europe ranked third with a penetration rate of 76.7 percent. In Eastern and Middle Africa, social media penetration stood at 8.4 percent and 7.4 percent, respectively. Globally, approximately six out of every ten people use social media [4]. Even though people use social media a lot in the U.S. and Europe, the people in Indonesia use social media the most from Asia [5]. It is estimated that there are nearly 4 billion social media users in 2022. There has been huge increase in past 5 years from 2.8 billion on 2017 [6]. 54% of men and 46% of women make up the global social media users as of 2022 [7]. Young people are more likely to use the social media account and people above age of 65 are less likely to have any social media account. 25-34 years of age group is the largest group of people and younger group of people are more on social media. For billions of people worldwide, the internet has become a necessary component of daily life. Several aspects of society, including communication, information access, entertainment, commerce, and more, have changed as a result of its widespread use. Women experience violation of human rights since beginning which is very sad reality of the world. World Health Organization have defined sexual violence, the most common form of violence against women globally as, “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work. Sexual harassment is also one form of sexual violence. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature in the workplace or learning environment, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). According to WHO Violence against women prevalence estimates 2021, 6% of women aged 15 years and older have been subjected to non-partner sexual violence at least once in their lifetime. This is also a major health problem and a violation of women’s human rights. Estimates published by WHO indicate that globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide have been subjected to either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime [8]. With the increase and shift of people being more involved in online from physical, sexual harassment pattern has also been shifted to online drastically. Online sexual harassment is defined as unwanted sexual conduct on any digital platform, and it is recognized as a form of sexual violence. Online sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of behaviors that use digital content (images, videos, posts, messages, pages) on a variety of different platforms (private or public). It can make a person feel threatened, exploited, coerced, humiliated, upset, sexualized or discriminated against [9]. There are multiple types of online sexual harassment, and they are non-consensual sharing of intimate videos and images, offensive name callings, purposeful embarrassment, stalking, sexual exploitation, coercion and threats, sexualized bullying and unwanted sexualization. Although sexual harassment used to be happened face to face (offline) but nowadays these kinds of sexual harassment has been done easily in various online mediums including chat rooms, e-mails, messaging platforms, advertising, social networking sites, news portals, online gaming portals, automatic linking sites, etc. It has been seen more in private communication mediums mostly in social media which has become new and easy means of sexual harassment. Online harassment is a particularly common feature of online life for younger adults, and they are especially prone to facing harassing behaviors that are more serious. COVID-19 pandemic-prompted remote work hasn’t done much to curb sexual or gender-based harassment among coworkers. In fact, data suggests that harassment has actually increased, despite offices being vacant for months because sexual harassment has been shifted to online platforms. During the pandemic, more than one-quarter of workers have experienced unwelcome sexual behavior online, via Zoom, email or other platforms [10].

The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has performed the first survey on the experiences of violence by women in the 28 EU member states. The FRA survey was based on personal interviews with 42,000 women across the EU who were selected based on random sampling. The research was focused on the young population under 30 years of age, which in the sample represents 16.3% of the total cohort, that is, 6827 young individuals. Similarly, research also presented results for the youngest cohort, between 18 and 24 years old, which comprises 9.0%, or 3775 interviewees, of the entire sample. In the FRA survey questionnaire, the interviewees were asked about their experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence. The results showed that more online harassment was experienced by the youngest groups (21.1%) and decreases significantly for the oldest group (9.4%). Among young women aged 18–24, online harassment was more prevalent than among young women aged 24–29, with a difference of 3.5 percentage points. The results of analysis of the FRA survey indicated a prevalence of harassment in general and of online harassment, which is significantly higher among European young women than among women 30 years or older or among adults generally. Particularly striking is the subdivision of young individuals between the two age groups (18–24 and 25–29 years), especially with respect to online harassment. Although the prevalence of face-to-face bullying is greater than online harassment at all ages, among the youngest, the intensity indicator for online harassment is greater than for face-to-face bullying. That is, although younger women suffer more from face-to-face harassment, those who suffer from online harassment suffer more intensely or frequently. European young women suffer from bullying and online harassment by individuals with less proximity than the older women in a statistically significant way. Although online harassment is inflicted by individuals closer to the victims than in the case of face-to-face bullying, new modalities and avenues of online anonymous harassment are linked to technological advances, increased literacy and the development of social engineering. The study summarized on the subject that reflect how harassing behaviors are increasingly supported by new technologies [11]. Roughly four-in-ten Americans have experienced online harassment, with half of this group citing politics as the reason they think they were targeted. Growing shares face more severe online abuse such as sexual harassment or stalking. A Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults in September finds that 41% of Americans have personally experienced some form of online harassment in at least one of the six key ways (physical threats, stalking, sustained harassment, sexual harassment, offensive name calling and purposeful embarrassment) that were measured and 25% have experienced more severe harassment [12]. Due to the seeming invisibility and anonymity of the Internet, online sexual harassment has become a serious and social concern. The solution is not necessarily to avoid the Internet and other digital technologies; rather, more Internet safety education and prevention information are needed to raise awareness for youths, adults and practitioners. This study addressed and analyzed the growing threat of sexual harassment in cyberspace. Digital transactions and communications have, over the past decade, been increasingly transpiring at an increasingly accelerated rate [14]. As of increase in the social media users in global world, it is also same in Nepal due to need of information and easy means of virtual communication. Among 11.51 million internet users, there were 13.70 million social media users in Nepal in January 2022 which is 45.7% of the total population of the country [9]. Facebook is the mostly used social media (46.5%), followed by Messenger (42.9%), Instagram (8%), and LinkedIn (3.7%) [6]. The study of Nepal also showed that more than half of male from total population use social media. People of 18 to 35 years of age are mostly active in social media. With the easy access of communication and exchange of information, there has also been increased online sexual harassment in Nepal. An OXFAM International study published in 2021 indicates that violence against women has moved out of the physical space and into the virtual realm, with reported cases increasing in cyber stalking, bullying and sexual harassment. Around 5 percent of the victims were below the age of 18 [15]. According to a 2015 UN report 'Cyber Violence against Women and Girls: a Worldwide Wake-Up Call', one in three women will experience some forms of violence in her lifetime and 73% of women have endured cyber

violence and that women are 27 times more likely than men to be harassed online [16]. This study was conducted to analyze the social media as emerging means of sexual violence against young girls.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Anti categorical approach of research was used as there was no boundaries and fixed categories beside young girls using social media. Complexity of online sexual harassment and its impacts was explored through individual experiences, perspectives, and narration. The narration of the respondent on their experience on online sexual harassment and perception on sociological aspects were studied. In this study, mixed method of research was used where both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection was used hence structured and semi structured questionnaire was developed. Self-administered questionnaire was developed in Google forms and shared with teenage girls and working women. The study was conducted using quantitative and qualitative methods, to determine the sociological reasons from the perspectives of survivors on online sexual harassment directed at young girls in the 18–24 years of age group. It was conducted in one college of Balkumari, Lalitpur, Nepal as this is the fourth most populous city of Nepal and it located in the south-central part of Kathmandu Valley. Similarly, this city has the high number of social media users after Kathmandu Valley. The major reason of selecting this area is the urban area where young girl students have access to internet, social media and also aware about the social structure and aspects. The Lalitpur city have a total population of 548,401 and have females 272,864. The study population comprised of young teenage girls of 18-24 years of age groups enrolled at bachelor's level in college were 100. The reason for selecting the young girls was the access to internet and taking more space in the virtual world. Similarly, girls in urban contexts have reported more against the online sexual harassment in recent days. All the 100 girls enrolled in one college of Balkumari, Lalitpur using social media were the universe of the study. The total sample size of 25% was taken with 25 young girls social media users from college. The sampling was done through random sampling method where 1 engineering and management college was selected for collecting data on young girls from age of 18 to 24 years of age using social media. Hence, the respondents talking about online sexual harassment was considered as samples. Firstly, the respondents were selected purposively for being social media user students. Then the list of 25 young girls using social media from college were obtained who were considered as the sample study population of the study. Snowball sampling method was used for the qualitative data collection using the in-depth interview as the survivor of online sexual harassment was identified from quantitative survey and each respondent led to another respondent. Mixed method of data collection (quantitative and qualitative) was used to collect the data. Demographic data of the young social media user girls along with their involvement on social media was collected as quantitative data. Their experience with online sexual harassment, their opinion and knowledge on its reason and sufferings they went was studied as qualitative data through narration method. Structured and semi structured questions were asked through questionnaire and in-depth interview was done with survivors of online sexual harassment. The questionnaire was shared through google forms and collected. Similarly, due to privacy matter of the survivor, in-depth interview was done through phone calls. Primary data are the first-hand data collected for the first time for a particular purpose of investigation. During my investigation/research, primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire included six sections: socio-demographic information; use of social media and experience of online sexual harassment; physical and mental impact; social impact; sociological reason; and long-term impacts. Data already collected used for any other purpose or investigation is the secondary data. As this research is based on description and analysis, secondary data was used to justify the findings of the study. Therefore, secondary data from Cyber Bureau Nepal played the role to add value and authenticate the data for this research. The various internal and external sources was used for acquiring the secondary data. The various sources involve i.e. Central Cyber Bureau Nepal Journal,

Bulletins, Reports, Articles etc, Internet sources such as Google, Martin Chautari. As it is a mixed type of study hence, a set of pretested structured questionnaire was used for collection of data. The questionnaire was cross-checked and verified by the supervisor and was also pre-tested before the data collection commencement through google forms. A phone interview technique and Google forms was used as the method of data collection. The questionnaires were filled by 25 respondents and 5 of them were personally contacted to collect the qualitative data. Similarly, phone interview was done with 5 respondents for the study. Those were some intense cases of harassment which needed further discussion and sociological analysis so in-depth interview was done through phone calls for those cases. During research period primary data were collected from the individuals personally and through Google forms with informed consent. In-depth interview was conducted with survivors of online sexual harassment.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Age is not just a biological function of the number of years one has lived or of the physiological changes the body experiences over the course of an individual's life. The social expectations and norms that are relevant to each stage of life also have an impact on it. The age also contributes on the use of social media and the harassment although young girls of all age have been harassed.

Table 01: Age group of respondents

Age (in years)	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage
18-24	25	100
Total	25	100

Regarding the age group of the respondents, all girls of 18 to 24 years of age were in social media by the population.

Table 01: Ethnicity of Respondent

Ethnicity	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Brahmin/Chhettri	16	64.0
Janajati	7	28.0
Dalit	1	4.0
Muslim	0	
Madhesi	0	
Others	1	4.0
Total		100

Brahmin/Chhetri was the major ethnic group during the study with 64% followed by Janajati, Other and Dalit with 28%, 4% and 4% respectively. The study also showed that 4% were from other community as well.

Table 02: Religion of respondent

Religion	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Hindu	18	72.0
Islam	0	
Christianity	6	24.0
Buddhist	1	4.0
Others	0	
Total	25	100

Table 03: Marital status

Marital status	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Unmarried	25	100.0

Table 04: Education Status

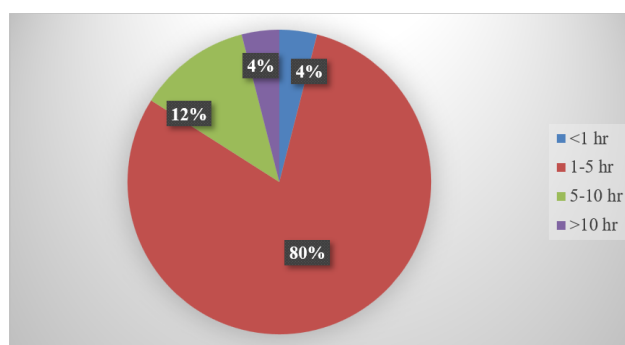
Education status	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Bachelors	25	100.0
Total	50	100

Table 05: Family Type of Respondents

Family Type	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
Nuclear	17	68.0
Joint	3	12.0
Staying Separate	5	20.0
Total	25	100

Table 06: Average monthly household Income of the household

Average Monthly Household Income	Frequency (n=50)	Percentage (%)
<Rs.10,000	2	8.0
Rs. 10,000-50,000	16	64.0
Rs. 50,000-100,000	5	20.0
>Rs. 100,000	2	8.0
Total	25	100

**Figure 01:** Time Spent on Social Media

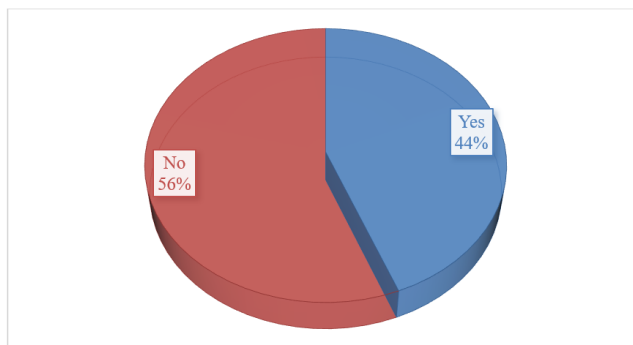


Figure 02: Accepted unknown friend requests on social media

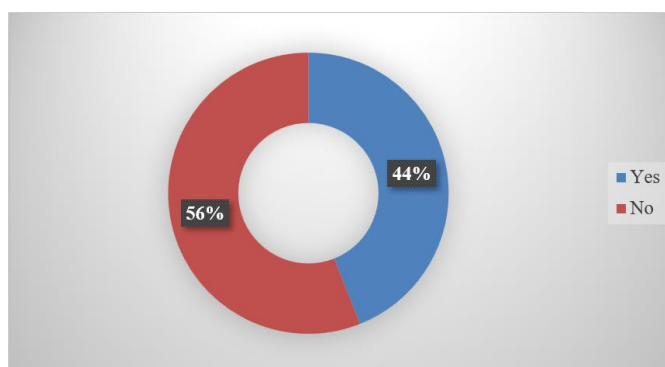


Figure 03: Viewed adult content

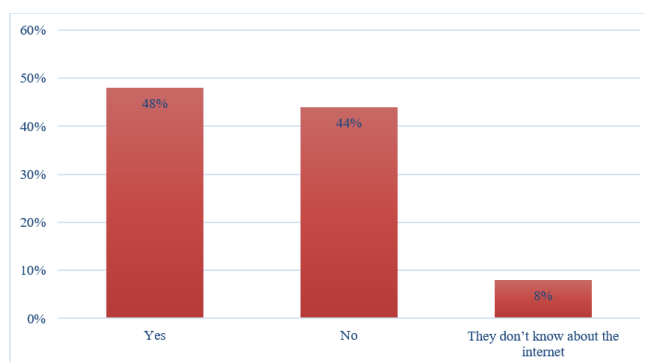


Figure 04: Received any rules/guidelines/warning from parents about how to use online media

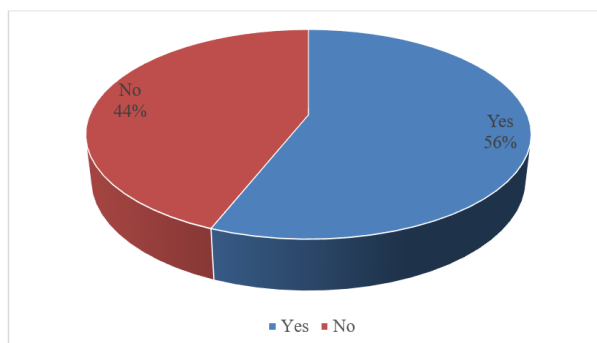


Figure 05: Experienced online sexual harassment as a woman or girl at least once

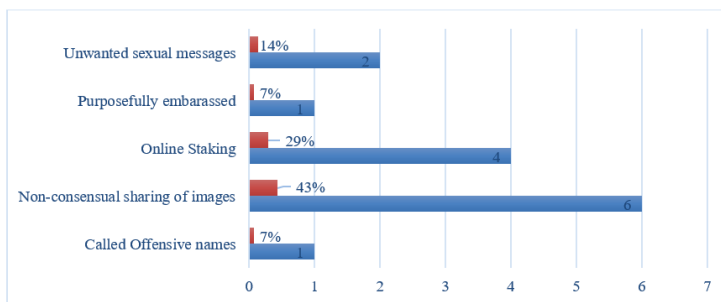


Figure 06: Forms of online sexual harassment

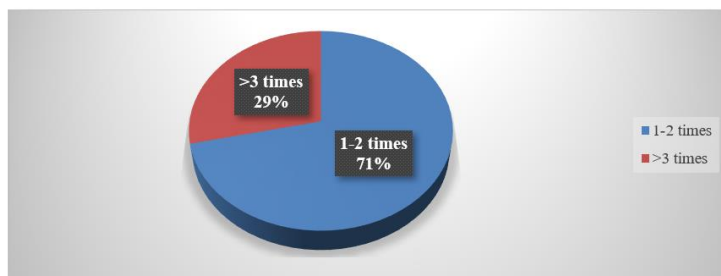


Figure 07: Frequency of online sexual harassment experienced

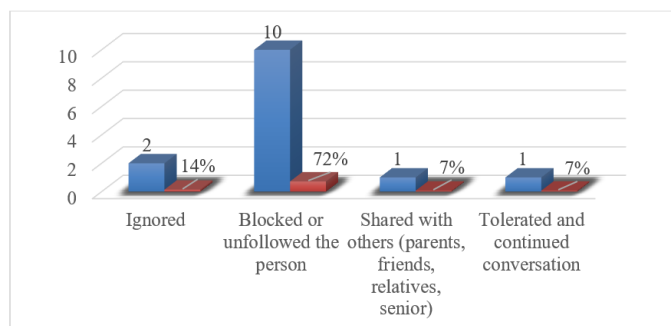


Figure 08: Response after facing the online sexual harassment

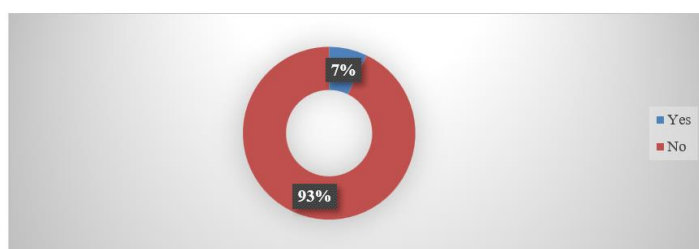


Figure 09: Report the harassment to police or any authority

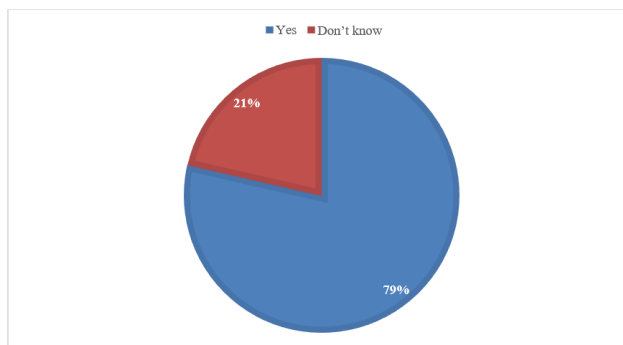


Figure 10: Faced any change or disturbance in mental state

There were multiple types of symptoms that young girls faced after experiencing sexual harassment through social media.

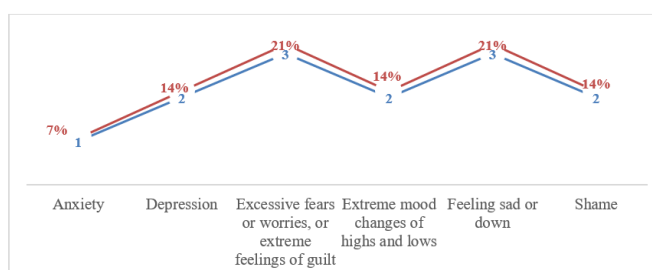


Figure 11: Symptoms of mental state disturbance

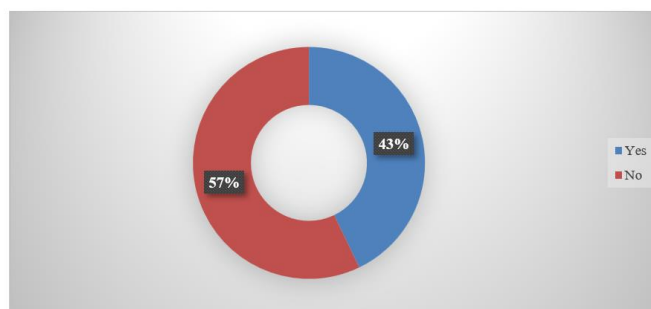


Figure 12: Faced any difficulty in health after the online sexual harassment

43% of the young girls reported that they faced health difficulties after facing online sexual harassment. Some of the medical issues are: headache, stomach pains and other unexplained aches and pains.

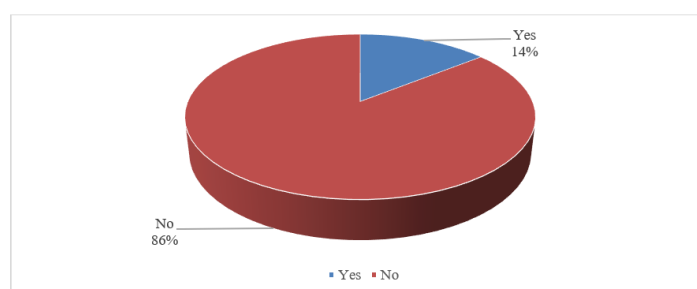


Figure 13: Sought medical check or professional help (e.g. counseling) to address the mental or emotional impacts of online sexual harassment

The figure shows that only 14% of young girls had sought medical check or professional help (e.g. counseling) to address the mental or emotional impacts of online sexual harassment. This shows that although more than half of the girls faced online sexual harassment and affected but only few of them reach out for the medical check or professional help [17].

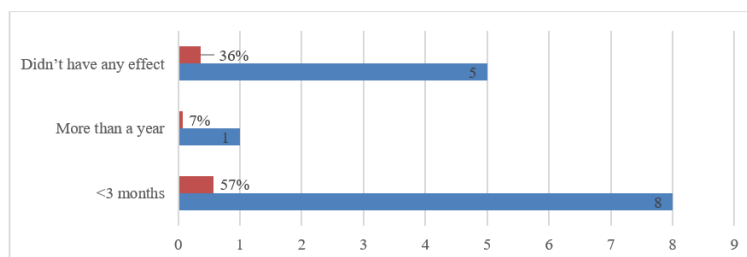


Figure 14: Duration of effects of online sexual harassment in health and mind

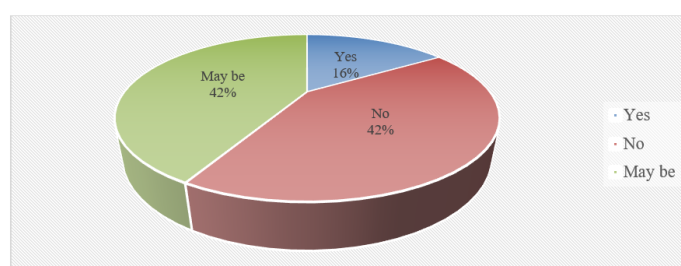


Figure 15: Skipped the family or social gatherings after facing online sexual harassment

16% young girls facing online sexual harassment reported that they skipped the family or social gatherings. This shows that online sexual harassment also affects the family relationships and young girls get away from their family and society which would affect in their socialization. There are large number of girls saying that may have skipped the gatherings as they had sometime before but now not been able to recall them [18].

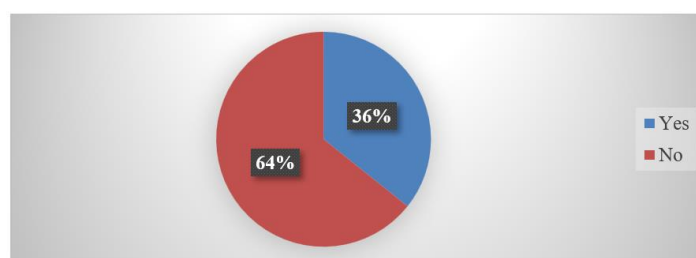


Figure 16: Survivors seeking family support

Only 36% young girls seek for family support after they faced sexual harassment through social media. Among them all of them (100%) found their family being supportive enough to listen or address the harassment they faced. Some of the suggestions and initiations their parents made are address the problem to concerned authority, Taught on how to deal with those issues, Dealt with perpetrator, Suggested not to talk with strangers, unknown person and not to accept the unknown friend request, Suggested to be aware on using social media and choose good friends circle only & Suggested to reduce using social media and choose selected friends only.

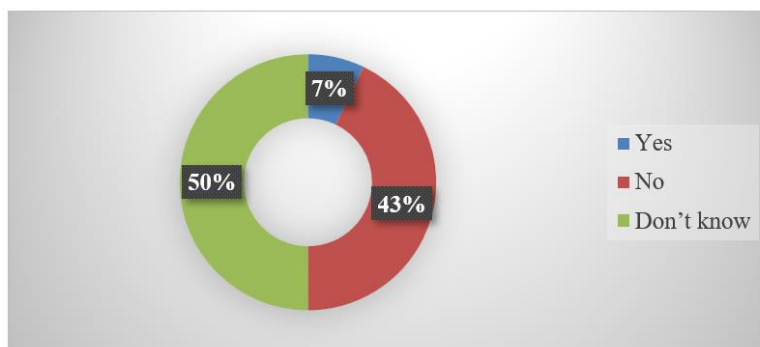


Figure 17: Faced strained relationships and reduced social support from family and friends

Only 7% of young girls claimed to have strained relationships and reduced social support from family and friends while 50% of them are not sure whether they had strained relationships. This shows that young girls were not able to understand why they had difficult relationship with friends and families [19].

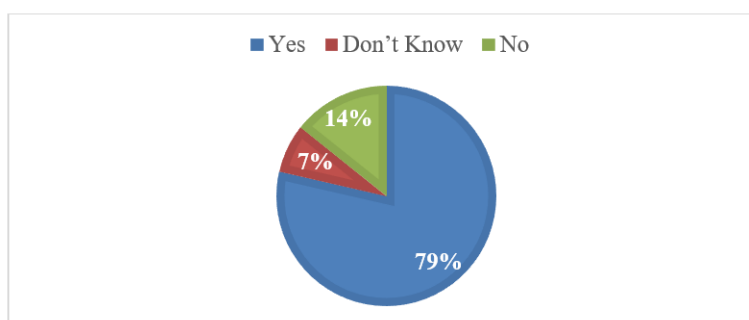


Figure 18: Avoided certain online activities or platforms because of the risk of online sexual harassment

79% of young girls experiencing online sexual harassment reported that they avoided certain online activities or platforms because of the risk of online sexual harassment. It shows that online sexual harassment made young girls decrease their online activities or reduced their participation on online platforms challenging their access to online knowledge sharing and learning [20].

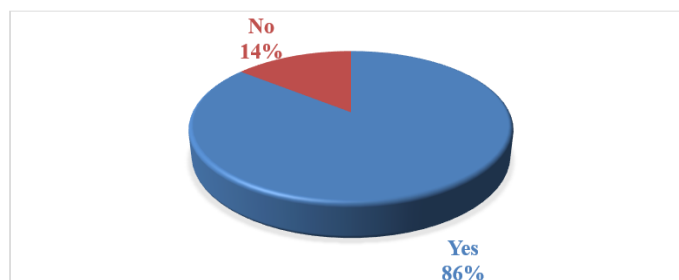


Figure 19: Changed behavior or appearance online to try to avoid online sexual harassment

86% young girls reported that they changed their behavior or online appearance to try to avoid online sexual harassment. As they were afraid of harassment and they changed their behavior or online appearance.

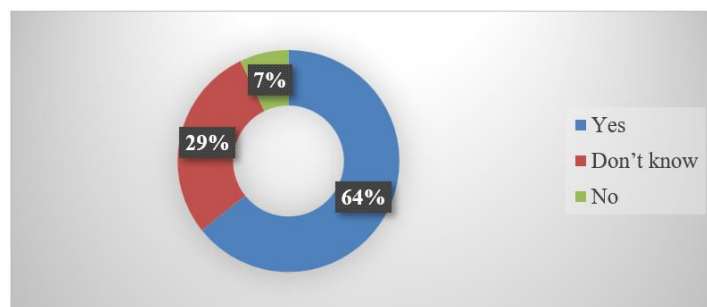


Figure 20: Ability to participate fully in online spaces (e.g. social media, online forums, etc.) has been impacted by online sexual harassment

64% young girls experiencing online sexual harassment felt that their ability to participate fully in online spaces (e.g. social media, online forums, etc.) have been impacted by online sexual harassment. Another majority of 29% expressed that they didn't figure out if they had impacted ability to participate in online spaces. This shows that young girls' ability to participate fully in online spaces were impacted after online sexual harassment [21].

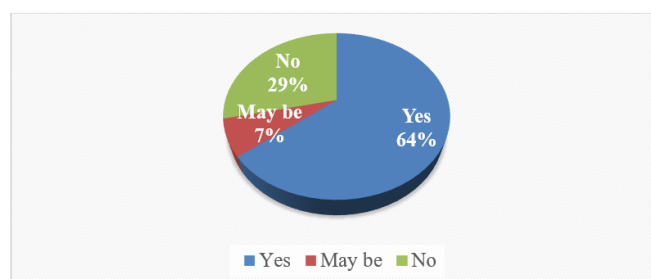


Figure 21: Girls felt physically unsafe or threatened as a result of online sexual harassment

64% among 14 young girls felt physically unsafe or threatened as a result of online sexual harassment (e.g. fear of being stalked or physically harmed). Feeling of unsafe and threatened was real which impacted their ability.

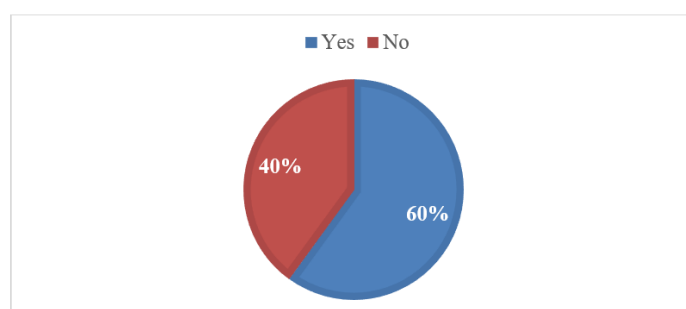


Figure 22: Changed behavior or appearance in society due to fear of harassment

Data showed that 60% of young girls facing online sexual harassment reported that they changed their behavior or appearance in society due to fear of harassment. They were compelled to change their appearance or behavior physically in front of society due to fear of harassment.

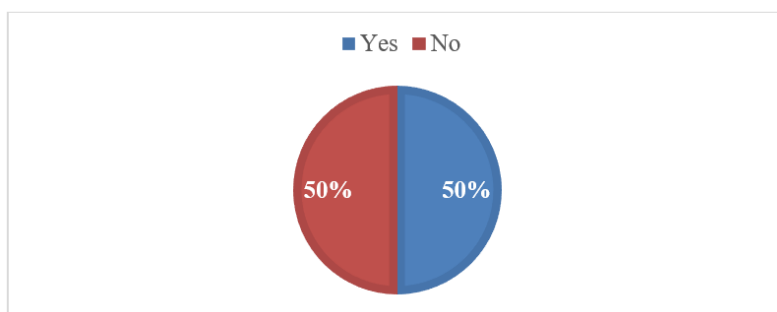


Figure 23: Negative impacts on academic or professional life as a result of online sexual harassment

Among 14 young girls facing online sexual harassment half of them agreed that they had negative impact on their academic or professional life as a result of online sexual harassment.

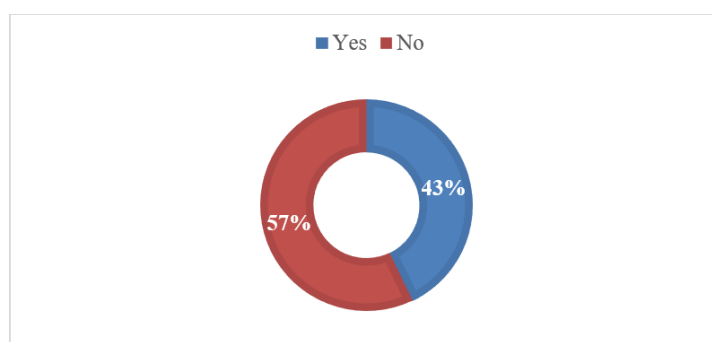


Figure 24: Impacted relationships with friends or family members by online sexual harassment

According to the data, 43% young girls facing online sexual harassment had their friends and family members relationships impacted by online sexual harassment.

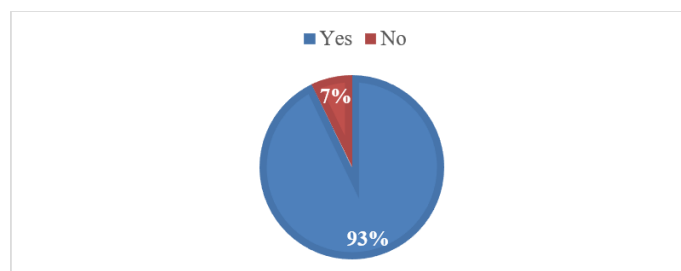


Figure 25: Difficulties trusting others in both online and offline

Almost all of the young girls i.e., 93% among 14 of them reported that they had difficulties trusting other in both online and offline. They survey shows that online sexual harassment results in young girls not being able to trust anyone in person or in virtual world shrinking their personal life in themselves and not enjoying their life fully [22].

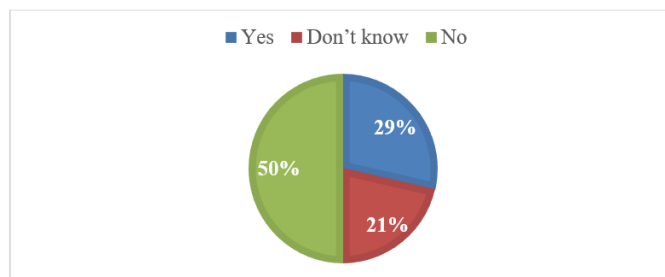


Figure 26: Impacted career or educational opportunities in the long term

29% of young girls found that online sexual harassment has impacted their career or educational opportunities in the long term. 21% of them were unaware about the long term impact of sexual harassment happened to them through social media.

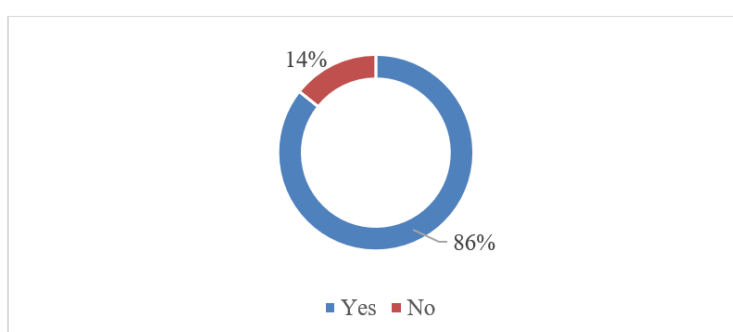


Figure 27: Impact a woman or girl's ability to participate fully in society

Majority of (86%) young girls facing online sexual harassment expressed that their ability to participate fully in society can be impacted in long term. This shows that future of young girls can be impacted to participate fully in society.

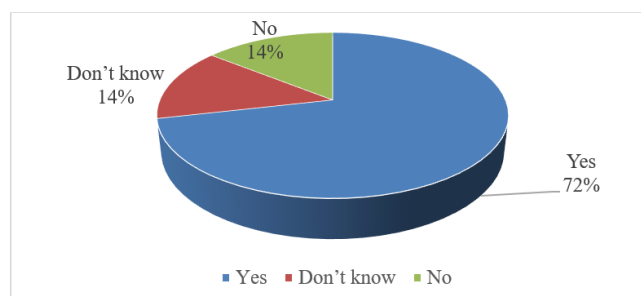


Figure 28: Traditional gender roles and expectations play a role in the incidence of online sexual harassment

Majority of the young girls (72%) facing online sexual harassment expressed that traditional gender roles and expectations play a role in the incidence of online sexual harassment. Traditional gender roles of young girls being nurturing role and being limited within corners of household and expectations that they should be under controlled made people commit online sexual harassment [23].

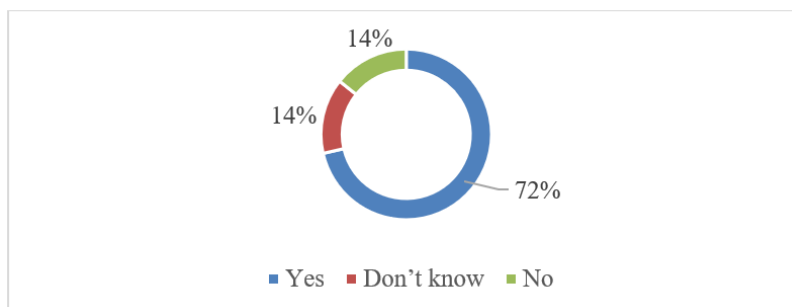


Figure 29: Societal attitudes towards women and teenage girls play a role in the prevalence of online sexual harassment

72% of young girls expressed that societal attitudes towards women and teenage girls play a role in the prevalence of online sexual harassment. Societal attitudes that female is weak and they cannot talk about injustice done with them also increased the attitude of perpetrator to commit online sexual harassment.

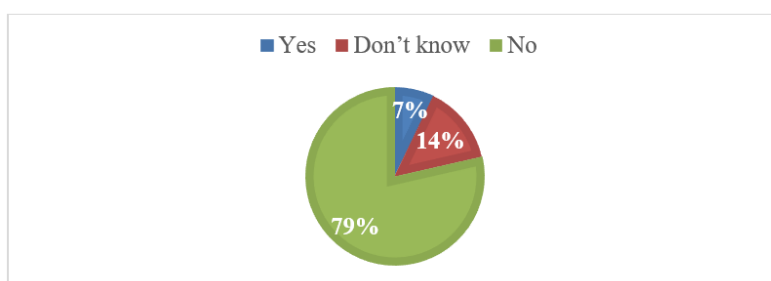


Figure 30: Women and teenage girls should be held responsible for facing online sexual harassment

Although Nepali societies have victim blaming attitudes but 79% of young girls facing online sexual harassment doesn't agree that women and teenage girls should be held responsible for facing online sexual harassment. Still 7% of them think that women and teenage girls should be held responsible, and they should be self-aware and stop social media activities [24].

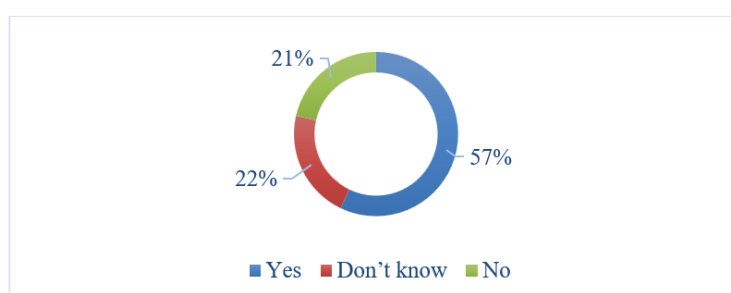


Figure 31: Culture of tolerance among young girls encouraged online sexual harassment

More than 57% young girls facing online sexual harassment expressed that culture of tolerance among young girls encouraged online sexual harassment. Young girls are raised with knowledge that they should be tolerant and not to raise their voice on anything bad or good. That culture has increased the confidence of men to commit online sexual harassment.

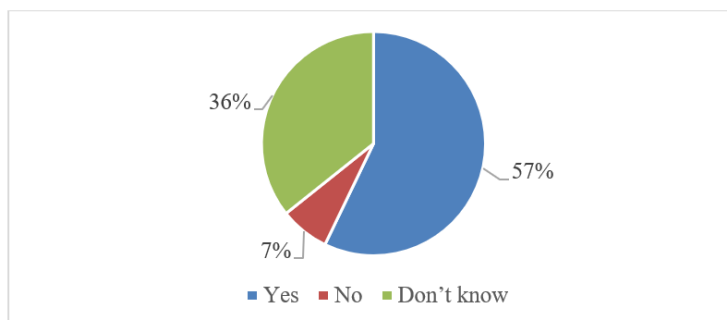


Figure 32: Cultural or social factors that contribute to the prevalence of online sexual harassment in Nepal

According to survey, 57% young girls agreed that cultural and social factors contribute to the prevalence of online sexual harassment in Nepal. Nepali culture and society always gave more priority and privilege to boys and men and they were meant to lead the society providing all power and authority which contributed on the confidence or perpetrator to commit sexual harassment behind social media. Among 25 young girls facing sexual harassment through social media, 5 of them were called for in-depth interview. Findings from the in-depth interviews done with 5 young girls' students are listed below: Can you please share your experience of using social media and how you experienced online sexual harassment? (Duration, Nature of harassment). In-depth interview participants expressed that they had strange call or strange friend request on Facebook. Some were not aware about the safe use of social media and while on them had sexual contents forcefully with very abusive language and nude pictures as well. The stranger kept on sending texts- normal ones at first and escalated to verbally abusive texts and stalking (calls/ in-person) when they didn't respond. The stalking and sexual harassment was done for almost 6 months where 4 of them blocked the perpetrator while one of them reported the case in Cyber Bureau. It was also seen that perpetrator was using fake id and continuously following the young girls. How did you respond to the harassment you faced. What was the role of family and friends in addressing the harassment you faced. Four respondents weren't aware on how to react on the situation and ignored the situation while one of them shared with parents and also tried to talk with perpetrator which didn't work well. She also reported the case to police, but no strict action was taken against the perpetrator. One of the women also accepted that it was her fault to accept the unknown friend request. What kind of physical, mental and emotional issues did you face due to online sexual harassment? Can you please share the impacts in your personal, educational, and professional life. There were physical, mental and emotional issues after they faced online stalking, sexual harassment and also threats through social media. They were very stressed especially when the abusive/ threatening texts started. The person with bigger reach and belonged to an influential family which further added to stress. She used to get anxious whenever going out and in groups only just to feel safe. They used to feel jumpy whenever a new person approached them since suspecting them to be linked with 'the person'. In addition, they also skipped many outings with friends and stayed home so as to minimize the risk of meeting 'the person'. On a retrospection, those incidents added to stress and anxiety. Their day-to-day activities had to be changed to avoid any contact with 'the person'. So, this mostly affected their personal and professional life. One of the interviewees is still suffering from severe depression and taking medical support and medicines as those incidents impacted her physically, emotionally and mentally. What kind of support you seek (medical, counseling, legal) to resolve the effects of online sexual harassment? What was the outcome of it. One of the respondents didn't seek any support. Considering the duration and nature of the harassment, she thought she got over it once the incidents stopped. While 3 of them shared with family and ignored the issues. Meanwhile, they still feel uncomfortable at the thought of it and would avoid meeting 'the person'

(including coincidental meeting) as much as possible. One of them, seek for medical and legal support to resolve the effects of online sexual harassment and had strained relationships with family and friends. She is still taking medicines and trying to get over the incident and waiting for the justice as she had reported. How was the response of family, friends, medical or legal authority when you shared or reported the issue? Did they put the effort to address the issues and get justice for you. Parents, friends were helpful and supportive during the issues. But still the victim blaming was there during addressing the issues by friends and families. One of them didn't share with anyone about the incident. In your opinion, what are some of the reasons why people engage in online sexual harassment of women and teenage girls (social, cultural, economic, technical). They think that its largely due to the patriarchal society that we live in. The thought among many male members with reach and influence that they can get anything and anyone (or 'man ego' to term it better) might be one of the many reasons. In some case, this was the sole reason and his threats weighted them down since they felt that he meant what he said. Similarly, male dominant society, victim blaming, hegemonic masculinity prevalent in society are some major reasons on people engaging in online sexual harassment of young girls. In your opinion, why men feel confident on committing online sexual harassment. Is there role of family and society to make him confident to commit that crime. Patriarchal society, masculine thought that they are lead and can do anything made men feel confident on committing online sexual harassment. They also agreed that there is role of family and society to make them confident to commit that crime. Are you aware about the legal policies and acts against cyber-crime? What is your opinion on how they function and are they accessible. Some of the respondents weren't aware about the legal policies and acts against cyber-crime while some of them were aware and also acted on them. In their thought, even though policies/ strategies are in place, proper communication and information dissemination is still lacking in case of Nepal. Similarly, implementation of the legal policies and acts were difficult and not strict as well. While deeply rooted patriarchy is still persisting, it is challenging for females as a whole to address these kinds of situations since this topic is usually highly stigmatized, enabling environment to voice these issues are not in place and victim-blaming/ shaming is often the first bite of justice that the 'victim' might get. In your opinion, what can be done to better support women and teenage girls who have experienced online sexual harassment in terms of addressing the physical, mental, and emotional impacts (family, society, nation and government). The first and foremost thing would be to provide enabling environment where women can voice out their situations to friends, family and relevant authorities. In addition to this, the country's policy to mitigate online harassment should be implemented at all levels. While lack of sufficient information dissemination on the topic is one of the challenges, authorities, community and relevant stakeholders must ratify awareness generation among different age group population, based on evidence-based findings. These aspects of harassment should also be encompassed under the Gender, Inclusion and Protection policies/ strategies. They also advised that Cyber Bureau need to be active and timely checking the report given by survivor [25]. In your opinion, what are the responsibility of Nepalese government and online platforms to prevent and address online sexual harassment. Nepal government need to focus more on implementation of the cyber law and make the system robust and ensure punishment to the perpetrator. Continue enhanced information dissemination and awareness among citizens through different media platforms. Involve different people (Ex: School Health Nurses at schools for education to adolescents in schools, Influential persons at different events) for this. Additionally, Nepal government should strictly abide by the set policies, strengthen their punishment mechanisms and penalize involved perpetrators likewise while providing necessary psychological and social support/ safety to the victim and their family.

4. CONCLUSION

Most of the respondents were using social media for 1 to 5 hours where young girls students of 18-24 years of age group were heavily involved in social media and also accepted the unknown friend

requests. Young girls have received the guidelines and guidance from their parents although more of them didn't get any guidance. More than half of the respondents (56%) had experienced online sexual harassment as a woman or girl at least once. Nonconsensual sharing of images, unwanted sexual messages, online stalking and purposefully embarrassment are major forms of online sexual harassment. Majority of the young girls have experience OSH for more than once while 29% of them have experienced it for more than 3 times. Only 7% of victims report incidences to police or cyber bureaus, despite the high prevalence. This indicates a noticeable lack of reporting cases in the authorities. Furthermore, only 36% of victims ask for family support, which shows the lack of family support systems in these kinds of cases. Blocking or unfollowing the perpetrator or ignoring them were major response of the young girls while very less of them shared with friends and family and there was huge gap on reporting the cases to the legal authority. Similarly, behavioral changes and avoidance strategies were used by the girls to cope with online sexual harassment, such as avoiding certain online activities or platforms and altering their behavior or appearance both online and in society. The study highlights how young girls' mental and physical health are negatively impacted by online sexual harassment. There were major symptoms of mental disturbance in young girls' anxiety, feeling sad or down, excessive fear or worries along with severe depression. Similarly, they also have physical pain and to address these effects, several people sought medical or professional assistance. OSH also resulted in the family relationships, social gatherings, online and physical behavior or appearance on them due to fear of sexual harassment and to avoid the further incidents. Online sexual harassment has shown to have long-term impacts on victims' life. They also had impacted the online and physical appearance in the platforms and impacted on their personal, educational and professional career. Survivors had difficulties trusting people online and offline leaving the long-term impact on their life. They think that sociological aspects such as gender roles and expectations, societal attitudes, culture of tolerance and cultural or social factors contribute to the prevalence of online sexual harassment in Nepal. The results highlight the critical need for initiatives that address online sexual harassment and offer victims' support. To further challenge cultural tolerance and promote a safer online environment, it is important that young girls and society at large be made aware of this issue. In conclusion, the study emphasizes the concerning prevalence and significant effects of online sexual harassment through social media on young girls in Nepal, emphasizing the importance of addressing the problem with both specialized support and more comprehensive social interventions.

5. RECOMMENDATION

Online sexual harassment is a serious issue that can have a significant impact on young girls. It's important for parents to support and guide their daughters in dealing with such situations. Here are some recommendations for parents:

- **Open communication:** Encourage her to talk about her online experiences and any incidents of sexual harassment she may have encountered. Be a patient listener and avoid blaming or shaming her.
- **Educate about risks:** Teach them about the potential risks of online interactions, including sexual harassment. Explain the importance of protecting personal information and using privacy settings on social media platforms.
- **Promote critical thinking:** Encourage them to think critically about online content and messages they receive.

- Strengthen privacy settings: Guide them in setting up strong privacy settings on social media platforms and other online accounts. Regularly review and update these settings as new features are introduced.
- Report and block: Teach them how to report and block individuals who engage in sexual harassment. Show them the steps to take and encourage her to document evidence of harassment, such as screenshots or messages.
- Encourage support networks: Help them build a support network of friends, family, or mentors who can provide emotional support and guidance.
- Promote self-care: Encourage activities that promote mental and emotional health, such as engaging in hobbies, exercise, and spending time with loved ones offline. Teach them to recognize signs of stress or anxiety and seek professional help if needed.
- Stay informed: Stay up to date with the latest trends and platforms in the online world.
- Advocate for change: Encourage them to use their voice to advocate against online sexual harassment. Support her in raising awareness, sharing experiences, and participating in campaigns or organizations working to combat such harassment.

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