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MEDIATING SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUALITY IN THE GEN Z ERA

Edited by
Rachel R. Reynolds, Dacia Pajé,
Sienna Medina and John Gigante

ROUTLEDGE


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An Assessment of Victim Blaming against Women and Girls in Northern, Sri Lanka

Anutharsi Gabilan

Background

The large amount of victim blaming on digital platforms in Northern Sri Lanka severely affects women victims of image-based violence, especially women actors, models, rights activists, and political leaders, where young adults primarily use digital platforms due to their high reliance on smartphones, social media, and online communication. This chapter focuses on the non-consensual cyber-distribution of sexual images that has been referred to as “technology-facilitated abuse,” “image-based violence,” or “revenge porn.” Women need a safe and inclusive digital space to live without societal discrimination, but Sri Lanka’s existing legal framework doesn’t have adequate provisions to regulate and address such harmful content. At the same time, social media platforms’ community policies do not efficiently provide solutions for handling misogynistic expressions and victim blaming.

Patriarchal and religious ideology mainly influence the thoughts and ideas of Sri Lankans. Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, and Muslims are the major religions in Sri Lanka, and religious leaders in them oppose equality for women. The northern part of Sri Lanka has a distinct culture from the rest of the country, where most of the Tamil-speaking community resides. Tamils, who mostly follow Hinduism, are the majority community in Sri Lanka’s Northern Province. In Northern Sri Lanka, many people’s cultural perspectives are primarily influenced by patriarchal ideology, and women face multiple forms of gender-based violence, such as hate speech and misogyny, from the community.

Furthermore, when the Jaffna peninsula of northern Sri Lanka was under Dutch colonial rule, to facilitate the administration of their colonial territories in Ceylon, the Dutch established an elaborate system of justice based on Roman/Dutch law and the customary law of the land. This customary law, the Thesavalamai, codified by the Dutch in 1805, discriminates against women socially and economically (Tamilmaran, 2013). Today, this combined legal system is one of the reasons why the province has a strong patriarchal nature.

The status of internet freedom in Sri Lanka is still a significant concern. While people know the importance of digital safety, there is a recognition that more needs to be done. However, there needs to be more capacity and practice at the individual

and organizational levels (Hashtag Generation, 2022). This is also a reason for the different forms of online violence. Moreover, in the digital era, adoption of online media use by GenZ has significantly impacted women. Women are affected by online sexual violence, such as image-based violence, victim blaming, and more. At the same time, women are also the perpetrators of image-based violence and victim blaming.

Backgrounds

Image-Based Violence

Image-based violence, referred to as “revenge porn” or “non-consensual pornography,” occurs when intimate images and videos that were previously sent with permission are leaked to a broader audience without consent. The two notions mean to harm, degrade, or embarrass the victim, often resulting in significant emotional, social, and psychological distress. For example, a former Sri Lankan cricket captain was at the centre of a “non-consensual video” that was leaked and circulated in 2017, going viral on all social media and picked up by the mainstream. It showed him with an ex-partner, a woman who after their break-up was to become the wife of an established businessman and media tycoon (Colombo Telegraph, 2017). The woman seen in the footage stated that the cricketer had recorded the video when they became engaged in a special ceremony at a temple since he was already married. Although there was no proof of who released this video, the woman partner publicly said that the cricketer released the video stating, “This was revenge. He recorded it. We were lovers at the time this was filmed. We became engaged in a temple because he had not yet divorced his legally wedded wife” (Bose, 2017). The media had done unfortunate reporting and violated the privacy of the two people. Images of the victims were shown to groups of friends or colleagues via mobile phones or mobile apps or posted on pornographic websites and social media sites.

Hate Speech and Misogyny

Another example of how dangerous online misogyny can be involves the fallout from protests by a group of women outside a former President’s private residence demanding solutions to the issues caused by an economic crisis. This particular protest was met with significant police resistance, as officers used barricades and shields to obstruct protesters. The former parliamentarian mentioned above attempted to pass the barricades, triggering a stampede. The incident was widely circulated on YouTube, TikTok, and social media, along with misogynistic expressions and endorsements of violence against the former parliamentarian. Screenshots of her cleavage, exposing her breasts and body, were used as YouTube thumbnails (Hashtag Generation, 2022). It is to be noted that the physical exposure happened as a coincidence and media highlighted and exaggerated it. Although viral posts and videos from this protest should have helped effect some positive change, a very high level of responses contained misogynistic speech

against women. Hashtag Generation observed gendered hate speech, slurs, and derogatory terms comparing the parliamentarian to animals and sex workers, in a study that identified misogynistic attacks on social media done mainly by male users (2022).

Digital misogyny is the targeted abuse and harassment of women through the means of the internet. It includes various forms of gendered hatred, harassment, and abusive behaviour targeted at women. The two stories above illustrate how misogyny can be expressed on an individual level or be systemic, existing within societies, institutions, and cultures. It can be used as a political tool to support patriarchy and to refuse recognition of the rights of the disenfranchised.

Cyber Violence and Victimization

Women as well as queer individuals who participate in political activities in Sri Lanka face an excessive burden. The act of expressing their political views in public, for instance, through protest marches, is often met with suspicion or lack of interest or is completely ignored. This reflects the gender inequality that exists in the political system of Sri Lanka, where women have never been represented in parliament by more than 15%. From January to August 2022, 60.25% of the recorded online gender-based violence were instances of harassment against women, with a particular focus on activists and female politicians (Hashtag Generation, 2022).

CERT (Sri Lanka Computer Emergency Readiness Team) reported 16,975 social media incidents (Cyber violence) in Sri Lanka in 2021, with Facebook incidents being the most frequent. There were 182 incidents reported relating to abuse, hate, and privacy violations on online platforms. Social media usage has increased in Sri Lanka, and at the same time, cyber violence against women has also risen. People in Sri Lanka simply shift violence against women from context to context, face to face, to cyberspace. A do-not-care mentality is typical in most situations where calls for action fall flat. Sadly, even the victims of misogynistic cyber violence were afraid to address these issues and necessary measures, and most of them did not know the mechanism of legal action (Linganathan, 2022).

Cyber Violence, Laws, and Regulations

Sri Lanka, like many post-colonial states, has no laws or regulations regulating online content such as text, images, animations, music, and videos and although the existing laws are sometimes interpreted to extend to cyberspace as well, individual governments cannot control the Internet using national laws and regulations. However, authoritarian states have devised ways to filter, monitor, and otherwise block content. Even some democratic states have considered or already implemented various restrictions as a response to legal, economic, and security challenges posed by new media (Gunawardene, 2017).

The Sri Lankan Penal Code was created more than a century ago and still serves as a tool to prosecute crimes such as theft, cheating, and misrepresentation, even

in the modern digital age. However, it is worth noting that the definitions of these offences outlined in the Penal Code are pretty limited regarding digital technology. In many instances related to new media, resorting to old laws is difficult. Thus, in Sri Lanka, a place without proper laws and regulations, action to create adequate laws is needed for a safer online environment.

Research Concern and Methodology

As this volume attests, when most GenZ people have a high level of engagement on digital platforms it is worth examining how such activities can be misused for revenge by anonymous users, with or without the user's consent, including how this misuse can be further facilitated by artificial intelligence. People in Sri Lanka mainly use digital platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Viber, Imo, Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok.

Women victims of image-based violence, especially women actors, models, rights activists, and political leaders, have faced notable challenges on digital platforms, and those living in Sri Lanka face multiple forms of oppression. Victim-blaming attitudes especially contribute to victimized women's discouragement to reach out for help. Image-based violence is a growing contemporary problem in which GenZ, at the forefront of social media use, also engage in the perpetration of image-based violence and victim blaming.

The researcher conducted this study in Northern Province, Sri Lanka, to examine the impacts of image-based violence and victim blaming using case studies. Additionally, the study conducted an audience analysis to identify youth behaviours that engage in victim blaming when it comes to image-based violence and the underlying attitudes and biases that contribute to victim blaming.

The study used a qualitative analysis for the descriptive method analysis and applied the observation method and in-depth interviews to the primary data throughout the study. The researcher interviewed four GenZ women victims for this study. The interview recordings ranged from 60 to 120 minutes. The researcher interviewed 50 youths to collect additional data and validate the study. The researcher used purposive sampling techniques for this study and conducted all the interviews in Tamil, which most people in the Northern Province speak.

The researcher investigated image-based violence and victim blaming in this study. The study aims to gain more understanding from a victimization perspective as a first step towards improving victim outcomes. The study investigates:

R Q 1 In what way are female users affected by using social media platforms?

R Q 2 What are the impacts of image-based violence on victims?

R Q 3 To what extent do youth engage in victim-blaming behaviours when it comes to image-based violence?

R Q 4 What are the underlying attitudes and biases that contribute to victim blaming?

R Q 5 How does victim blaming impact the victims?

Case Studies: Results and Discussion

Based on the study, victims of image-based violence faced victim blaming by both men and women in Northern Province, Sri Lanka, via digital platforms. Many women (GenZ) who make sexually explicit photos and videos believe that their information will not be shared with others, only to find out later that the impact of someone else posting these images can have devastating personal and social consequences. This is because, in Sri Lanka, an online identity is most important to get a job and meet other needs in a contemporary world. Moreover, image-based violence and victim blaming threaten the identity of many young women and deny their self-respect.

The analysis below presents four case studies. Case one was an actress whose intimate videos were shared on social media and pornography sites. She was a 26-year-old woman in 2021 when the incident began. Her ex-boyfriend shared the video with his friends, who in turn shared it on social media and pornography sites. Case two was a university student whose intimate photographs were shared on social media by her ex-boyfriend in 2022 when she was 23 years old. Case three involved a manipulated photo of a 26-year-old woman activist shared on social media by unknown people to damage her reputation in 2021. Finally, case four involves explicit intimate images of a woman, aged 27, exposed on social media by her former partner in 2020.

Impacts of Image-Based Violence

Psychological Distress. Based on the study, victims of image-based violence often experience significant psychological distress. They may feel violated, humiliated, and ashamed as a result of the non-consensual sharing of their private images. The emotional toll leads to anxiety, depression, and even thoughts of self-harm or suicide in some cases. Victims blame themselves for taking or sharing the images initially, which exacerbates their emotional distress. There is also a societal stigma surrounding image-based violence that makes it difficult for victims to seek help and support.

A youth interviewed to collect additional data for the study mentioned that suicides and self-harm are the tragic outcomes of image-based violence and victim blaming. He also said that many incidents have been recorded in Sri Lanka, and one happened in his circle last year: a girl committed suicide due to image-based violence. However, her family hides that in the name of family reputation. Meanwhile, some victims strongly stand against the violence that happened to them firmly and seek justice.

Loss of Privacy. According to the participants, one of the most immediate consequences of image-based violence is the loss of privacy. Intimate images that were meant to be private become public, making it difficult for victims to regain a sense of control over their personal lives and information.

As a victim of image-based violence, I was victimized many times. My videos have been shared many times on various digital platforms, including

porn sites. Social media users in my contacts and anonymous people questioned me regarding this on digital platforms. Their questions and blame on me have ruined my days.

(Case One).

Damage to Reputation. The sharing of explicit images can severely damage a person's reputation, both personally and professionally. Victims face social isolation, discrimination, and judgement from friends, family, colleagues, and the wider community. Society tends to blame victims of harassment, questioning their behaviour, choices, or motives. This blame can contribute to a damaged reputation as others may unfairly judge the victim, assuming they played a role in the harassment.

"I feel guilty and struggle to face my lectures and others in the university. My colleagues avoid me, and I sit in the lectures and canteen alone" (Case Two). The victim falsely believes she is responsible for the harassment experienced. Societal attitudes that sometimes unfairly scrutinize and question the actions of victims reinforce this self-blame. Additionally, victims fear that disclosing harassment will strain relationships with friends, family, or colleagues.

Cyberbullying and Harassment. Perpetrators of image-based violence often engage in further harassment and cyberbullying. They may send threatening messages, create fake social media accounts to impersonate the victim, or incite others to join in the harassment. Two victims said they never succeeded at removing their images from social media platforms. That image would be taken down off of one online platform, only to have it reappear on another one. "Some of my colleagues and university boys approach me and treat me like a prostitute" (Case Two). Cyberbullying and cyber harassment do not only impact the digital world, but they also have real-life implications for women. The impact of online violence on women extends beyond the digital space and can have tangible consequences in their lives. Online harassment can escalate to physical threats or actions. Women may fear for their physical safety and well-being.

Legal Consequences. As mentioned above, Sri Lanka has no laws or regulations regulating online content although existing laws are sometimes interpreted to extend to cyberspace. The Computer Crime Investigation Division (CCID), under the Sri Lanka Police, focuses on investigating and prosecuting cybercrimes. It collaborates closely with law enforcement agencies to combat various cyber offences, including financial fraud, hacking, online harassment, and social media-related crimes (Sampath, 2023).

However, evidence in this study demonstrates that the legal system for cybercrime in Sri Lanka needs to be fixed. The following examples illustrate why. One victim explains that she never believed the law protected her or punished the perpetrators. Her distrust of Sri Lanka's legal system, especially in tackling violence against women and girls, is evident. Despite the presence of laws, they are often ineffective, and societal stigma frequently silences victims. Furthermore, another one shares that when she filed a complaint at the police station, the officials never treated her appropriately. In Sri Lanka, reporting violence or harassment is often intimidating. Victims face insensitive questioning, victim blaming, and a

lack of gender-sensitive police officers, leading many to fear further humiliation or inaction. Another victim said that the perpetrators of image-based violence in Sri Lanka openly and fearlessly defend their actions on social media. They are never the subject of legal action.

The justice system, with its focus on the needs and concerns of the victim, can unfortunately worsen their trauma, causing them to suffer multiple times. This is because of problems such as lengthy delays at trial, lack of privacy for victims, insufficient psychological support, and shortcomings in the victim and witness protection mechanism in the country. All these factors can lead to prolonged trauma for the victim. The lack of sensitivity and the patriarchal mindset of criminal justice system officials contribute to the problem of negative gender stereotyping. This issue is compounded by the shortage of gender sensitivity among police officers, healthcare professionals, prosecutors, and judges throughout the region.

Impact on Relationships. Based on the study, victims may face strain in their relationships, including with their partners, family, and friends. The betrayal of trust from sharing intimate images can be challenging to overcome. According to the four case studies, they all lost their friends and colleagues, and their family members mistreated them.

My former partner shared a private video of us on Facebook and sent the video to my family members via WhatsApp. After the incident, Facebook users and my family members humiliated me. My father has beaten me. I am ashamed of my earlier relationship and depressed. I lost contact with many friends because I isolated myself and did not want to face anyone. Their behavior increased my stress, and they said I am responsible for the image-based violence I faced.

(Case Four)

It is, however, social shunning that most deeply impacts relationships because it results in victims isolating themselves and avoiding social situations in order to avoid being reminded of their traumatic experiences. They limit their social interactions to minimize stress and adverse reactions from friends and family, as well as when they feel unsupported.

Moreover, some victims may become hesitant to enter into new relationships or engage in intimate activities due to fear of future harm or exploitation. A victim mentioned that images and videos posted on porn sites damaged her entire life. She is bothered that her future partner may mistreat her, and the image may spread again after her marriage, affecting her life. "This incident spoiled my future. My ex-boyfriend has done this. Due to this incident, I could not accept a new relationship" (Case Four).

Online and Offline Safety Concerns. The study indicates that victims face safety concerns, both online and offline, where victims claim that they are afraid that violence committed online can happen again and that violence committed online also leads to violence offline. They encounter several forms of online violence, including victim blaming, trolling, cyber mobbing, and cyberstalking. They

may also be subjected to doxxing (publicly revealing their personal information), where address and mobile number can be exposed online, leading to offline threats and potential harm. "I received constant unwanted messages on social media from an individual that caused emotional distress and fear for my safety. The stranger used derogatory terms and abusive language" (Case Four). Additionally, one of these cases also included non-nude images of the girl, which were photoshopped to appear sexual and uploaded on Facebook. "I feel depressed about this incident. I could not tolerate this. All the images shared were photoshopped. However, no one was ready to believe me" (Case Three).

Interviews: Results and Discussion

The researcher interviewed 50 youths (30 women and 20 men) aged 20–30 in 2021 to collect additional data and validate the study. The researcher used purposive sampling techniques for this study and conducted all the interviews to determine the attitudes and behaviours that motivate perpetrators for victim blaming. The discussion below summarizes the overall results of the analysis of those interviews.

Attitudes and Biases that Contribute to Victim Blaming. Victim blaming against the victims of image-based violence not only weakens law enforcement in cases of image-based sexual violence but also increases the suffering of victims. Many studies have discussed that victim blaming creates trauma and is significantly associated with a variety of psychopathological domains that lead to post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide, depression, anxiety, and eating disorders.

Based on the study, victim-blaming attitudes and biases are rooted in societal misconceptions and stereotypes that unfairly place responsibility on victims rather than holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. The study found that these attitudes and biases manifest in various forms and contexts, such as stereotyping and prejudice, rape myth acceptance, blaming the victim's choices, minimizing the harm, attribution of motive, lack of empathy, normalization of harmful behaviour, institutional biases, cultural and religious beliefs, and fear and denial.

Stereotyping and Prejudice. Pre-existing stereotypes and prejudices about gender, race, class, or other factors can lead to victim blaming. For example, stereotypes about women being more responsible for their safety or about certain groups being more prone to criminal behaviour can influence how victims are perceived.

In addition to being a patriarchal nation, Sri Lanka has a strong degree of prejudice and stereotyping against women in its Northern regions. In particular, women are blamed by society even though they become victims. The majority of young people were interviewed for the study to collect the data to determine the attitudes and behaviours that motivate the perpetrators to place the blame on the victims; those youths were asked why the victims were sent private photographs of them to someone's boyfriend or partner. Youths painted the victims as unworthy women.

Rape Myth Acceptance. Acceptance of rape myths, such as the belief that rape only happens between strangers, that victims "ask for it" by their clothing or behaviour, or that false reports of sexual assault are standard, can contribute to victim blaming in cases of sexual violence. Several youths have high degrees of rape

myth acceptance in this study, a phenomenon that can lead to the violence against women (O'Connor, 2021).

Some people may blame victims for the choices they made leading up to an incident, such as drinking alcohol, going to a specific location, or trusting someone they should not have. This shifts the blame away from the perpetrator's actions. Blaming the victim's choices is another finding of the study. Youths interviewed also blamed and criticized the victim's dress, habits, talking style, job, appearance, and other activities.

Downplaying the seriousness of the harm or the impact on the victim can be a form of victim blaming. For example, suggesting that a physical assault was not that severe or that emotional abuse is not as harmful as physical abuse can diminish the victim's experience. Minimizing the true impact of harm is also another impact faced by image-based violence victims by victim blaming. However, according to the study, few youths only consider minimizing harm's true impact. When society engages in victim blaming, it tends to shift responsibility onto the person who experienced the harm rather than holding the perpetrator accountable.

Lack of Empathy and Normalization of Harmful Behaviour. A lack of empathy for victims can contribute to victim blaming. Failure to understand or connect with the emotional trauma and suffering that victims endure can make it easier for individuals to blame them. Many young people, both men and women, lacked empathy for victims. They judge people without making any observations or understanding them. Some people may have grown up in environments where certain harmful behaviours were normalized or trivialized. This normalization leads to a tendency to minimize the wrongdoing of others. Furthermore, many young people believe they have the right to invade the privacy of others and disparage their hobbies, appearance, passions, actions, and so on. These kinds of behaviours are normalized by the society in Northern Sri Lanka, too.

Institutional Biases. Institutional biases within the legal, law enforcement, and social systems can also contribute to victim blaming. For example, police or court officials who are not trained to handle cases of sexual assault sensitively may inadvertently contribute to victim blaming. Likewise, Sri Lankan law and social policies are not neutral for all. Even police officials did not correctly handle these types of issues sensitively. In most situations, cultural norms and religion influence the behaviours of officials. Even a victim is affected while she goes for a counselling session by the counsellor's disrespectful treatment.

Cultural and Religious Beliefs. Socio-cultural norms and dominant ideological beliefs and values lead to the construction and usage of harmful content and hate speech against Sri Lankan women on online platforms. Facebook depicts the sexualization and abuse to which women are subjected and how the body and sexuality of women are disciplined and controlled. Society connects every independent activity of women with their dignity. Furthermore, when a man or boy makes mistakes, society blames the mother instead of blaming them (Linganathan, 2022).

Other findings of the study are that patriarchal norms, religion, culture, stereotypes, and other social policies encourage perpetrators to do victim blaming. Socially and culturally prescribed gender roles afford more power to men, and

women most often become victims. Cultural or religious beliefs that emphasize modesty, obedience, or submission can lead to victim blaming when individuals within these communities are subjected to harm. Victims may be blamed for not adhering to these beliefs. A victim said, "Women are taught to be 'good wives' or 'good persons'." The term "good" incorporated many hidden cultural meanings and pressure to uphold the standards of family values. In Sri Lanka, especially in the Northern Province, "good wife" means a woman living with her husband's family, doing all household work calmly, obeying the orders of her husband and his family members, and dressing culturally appropriately, while sacrificing her ambitions, likes, interests, etc. It means women are losing their individuality after marriage. The cultural norms are pervasive, and even girls want to be "good girls" in the community. However, societal expectations dictate that individuals conform to cultural norms despite their interests and desires.

As previously mentioned, many youths on social media make victim-blaming posts without any concern at all. Such posts amount to the practice of misogyny, patriarchal ideology, and other unfavourable traits, created by deeply ingrained patriarchal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and contribute to victim blaming. Some individuals lack awareness of gender equality, consent, and respectful behaviour, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and biases that lead to victim blaming. Additionally, the anonymity provided by social media platforms allows individuals to use situations and leads to online violence and victim blaming without concern for law and ethics and without the potential consequences of seeing their victim or her defenders face to face.

Fear and Denial. Fear of crime or a desire to distance oneself from victims can lead to denial or avoidance of the reality of victimization. People who censure or blame victims are paradoxically doing so to reassure themselves that since they are "good" and the victims of online sexual violence are "bad," their goodness will protect them from ever being the target of digital misogyny. Likewise, because of this, a kind of social contagion logic comes into play, where youths pretend to follow all social norms without concern for victims.

Impacts of Victim Blaming. Based on the case studies, victim blaming had a significant impact on the victims of image-based violence. Rather than holding the perpetrator accountable in Northern Sri Lanka, there is a harmful societal phenomenon where individuals or groups place blame or responsibility squarely on the victim. The impacts on the victims perpetuate cycles of injustice and harm, such as psychological distress, hesitancy to report and barrier to justice, secondary victimization, loss of trust, social isolation, impact on recovery, suicidal behaviour and self-harm, and normalization of harmful behaviours.

Another significant impact of victim blaming was the impact on those already struggling to recover from image-based violence. "Image-based violence has abused me, and when I try to overcome it. Unfortunately, others hurt me and blame me" (Case Three). The loss of trust means the victims lose their faith in the institutions, legal system, and individuals in society. The researcher saw this victim's loss of trust and confidence in all four case studies. As mentioned in the previous sections, victims experienced social isolation when friends, family members, or

peers may distance themselves from victims or question their credibility, leading to further emotional distress and a lack of support. Other women also treated women victims in a wrong manner. A female university student stated in the study that "women should not share their private videos or photographs and should not be allowed to take private images or videos if the person is her boyfriend or partner. It affects the dignity of all women." Most people in the region and country hold these ideologies and thoughts. A small minority understands victims and supports them.

According to the study, victim blaming impedes the healing and recovery process for individuals who have experienced image-based violence. This is because victims feel unsupported, which can make it harder for them to seek out vital forms of support such as therapy or counselling. Ultimately, this leads to unnecessary suffering and prolonged recovery times.

Finally, when society blames victims, it can inadvertently normalize harmful behaviours and attitudes. This sends a message that abusive or criminal behaviour is acceptable as long as the blame can be shifted onto the victim. Youths normalize and the toxic and offensive behaviour, and they fail to overlook the reality that perpetrators are to blame for acts of crime and violence, not victims. This not only hurts the victims but also restricts their freedom of movement.

Conclusion

Victims experience a diverse range of experiences, from image-based violence to victim blaming. Victims reflecting on image-based sexual violence mentioned that it impacts their mental and physical health and causes a range of stress-related conditions. Unfortunately, many men and boys who share private videos do not know that they are engaging in crime while doing it. Those who post such videos with a request to "Link please" (which invites others to share the link) should be ashamed of themselves, especially because online violence leads to offline violence. The perpetrators identified in all four case studies were men, as is most common around the world.

The study draws on the experiences of victims and how they are affected in their workplace, university, and other public places. Victim-blaming psychologically impacts a person who is already struggling to recover from abuse. As a result of patriarchal norms, religion, culture, stereotypes, and various social policies, they also encourage perpetrators to do victim blaming.

According to these case studies, image-based violence can have profound and lasting impacts on the victims, both psychologically and socially. The impacts of image-based violence mainly include psychological distress, loss of privacy, damage to reputation, cyberbullying and harassment, legal consequences, impact on relationships, online and offline safety concerns, long-term trauma, self-blame, and stigmatization, and preventing future relationships.

Furthermore, these are the significant findings of attitudes and biases that contribute to victim blaming noted stereotyping and prejudice, rape myth acceptance, attribution of motive, blaming the victim's choices, minimizing the true impact of harm, lack of empathy, normalization of harmful behaviour, institutional biases,

cultural and religious beliefs, and fear and denial. As per the study, the impacts of victim blaming are emotional distress, hesitancy to report injustice, secondary victimization, loss of trust, social isolation, impact on recovery, normalization of harmful behaviours, and barriers to justice.

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