TECHNOLOGY RELATED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Investigating Tech Related Violence Against Women in Peri-Urban Areas of Uganda

LIST OF ACRONYMS

WOUGNET	:	Women of Uganda Network
TECH	:	Technology
VAW	:	Violence Against Women
ICT	:	Information Communication Technology
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
LGBTQI	:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex.

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1   INTRODUCTION

This is a report derived from a Study: Investigating Tech related Violence Against Women in Peri-Urban Areas of Uganda. The three months' study, June 2018 – August 2018, was conducted by Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) with support from Association for Progressive Communications (APC).

In this report we highlight the different aspects of Tech-related VAW, their implications and solutions proposed. This is aimed at addressing this growing concern in our societies.

1.1   DEFINING "TECHNOLOGY RELATED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Technology, in this report sometimes abbreviated to "tech", can be very helpful to persons, governments and institutions as an effective alternative information sharing and communication option. It takes various forms, some to mention being: telephones, computers, television, radio, and their relations.

Using these devices, one can easily take advantage of accompanying packages: email, social media platforms, instant and online messaging. They reach more and further.

Technology is part of lives – from the moment we wake up to when we fall asleep. Everyone should have the right to use technology without harm or harassment.[i]

Mobile devices and the internet can be powerful tools, but they can also be weapons. – the UN has issued a "wake-up call" about cyber violence against women. It says it can be just as damaging as physical abuse, especially as technology can now reach remote corners of the world.

https://www.bbc.com/news/world-34911605

Nonetheless, some use it to abuse, harass, threaten, coerce, monitor, exploit, and violate their victims. This then connotes "Tech related Violence".

The UN estimates that 95% of aggressive behavior, harassment, abusive language and denigrating images in online spaces are aimed at women and come from current or former male partners.[ii] For such cases, it is then referred to as: Technology-related Violence Against Women, (Tech-related VAW).

Tech-related VAW encompasses acts of gender-based violence that are committed, abetted or aggravated, in part or fully, by the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as phones, the internet, social media platforms, and email.[iii]

1.2   FORMS OF TECH RELATED VAW

Tech related VAW can be categorized in three main classes: -

- Pornography
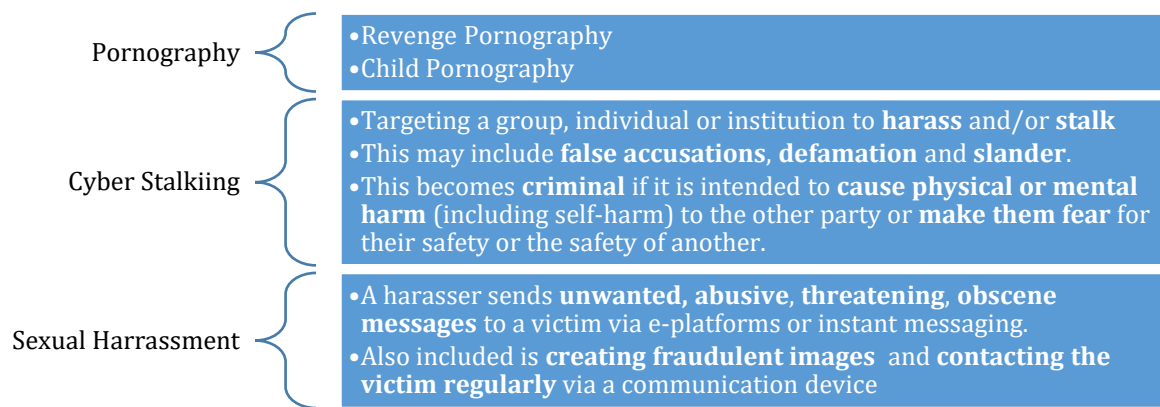- Cyber Stalking and
- Sexual harassment.

See summary in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Forms of Tech Related VAW - Summary

Pornography
- Revenge Pornography
- Child Pornography

Cyber Stalkiing
- Targeting a group, individual or institution to **harass** and/or **stalk**
- This may include **false accusations**, **defamation** and **slander**.
- This becomes **criminal** if it is intended to **cause physical or mental harm** (including self-harm) to the other party or **make them fear** for their safety or the safety of another.

Sexual Harrassment
- A harasser sends **unwanted, abusive**, **threatening**, **obscene messages** to a victim via e-platforms or instant messaging.
- Also included is **creating fraudulent images** and **contacting the victim regularly** via a communication device

Pornography can be in form of **Revenge Pornography** which involves revealing or sexually explicit images or videos of a person posted on the Internet. This is common by a former sexual partner, without the consent of the subject and in order to cause them distress or embarrassment. It can also be what is commonly termed, **Child Pornography** which involves distributing degrading images or child sexual abuse material. In this category also falls people that take others children photos without permission and use them in sexually indecent manners, sometimes altering them to provide a different intention.

Cyberstalking, a yet another form of tech-related VAW involves use of the Internet or other electronic means to stalk or harass an individual, group, or organization. It may include false accusations, defamation and slander. This becomes criminal if it is intended to cause physical or mental harm (including self-harm) to another person or make them fear for their safety or the safety of another.

One can be accused of cyber stalking if, with ill intentions, they publish something about a person on the internet or via email or contacting a person by telephone, text, e-mail, social media or other electronic means. Pretending to be another person when publishing something on the internet or using email, tampering with a person's computer to upload key loggers or any other track device without their consent, making threats or using abusive or offensive words at or in the presence of a person and even directing abusive or offensive acts towards a person, all fall in this category. More in the category is tracing a person's emails, internet use or other electronic communications or otherwise keeping them under surveillance without their consent, including, giving offensive material to a person or leaving it where it will be found by a person intentionally or recklessly doing something that would physically or mentally harm a person or make them fear for their safety or the safety of another

To find a person guilty of stalking, the court must find they have engaged in a 'course of conduct' that amounts to stalking.

Sexual Harassment happens when a harasser sends unwanted, abusive, threatening, or obscene messages to a victim via e-mail or instant messaging. This stretched to not only creating fraudulent images but also contacting the victim regularly via a communication device.

Victims are said to respond in various ways: shying away from the public, hit back with abusive words, reported to authorities, lawsuits, and in some cases physical violence, the list is endless. Bottom line, this is wrong against humanity and must be stopped immediately.

1.3   PEEK INTO THE UGANDA LAW: TECH RELATED VIOLENCE

The Uganda does have various Acts[1] that indeed attempt to address issues related to violence on the internet and its accompanying repercussions. Some to mention are: -

- **The Computer Misuse Act, 2011:** An Act to make provision for the safety and security of electronic transactions and information systems; to prevent unlawful access, abuse or misuse of information systems including computers and to make provision for securing the conduct of electronic transactions in a trustworthy electronic environment and to provide for other related matters.

- **The Data Protection And Misuse Act, 2015:** An Act to protect the privacy of the individual and of personal data by regulating the collection and processing of personal information; to provide for the rights of the persons whose data is collected and the obligations of data collectors, data processors and data controllers; to regulate the use or disclosure of personal information; and for related matters.

- **Anti-Pornography Act:** An Act to define and create the offence of pornography; to provide for the prohibition of pornography; to establish the Pornography Control Committee and prescribe its functions; and for other related matters.

- **Penal Code Act:** An Act to establish a code of criminal law.

The fact that this topic is being given attention already is recommendable. However, there are challenges to the approach: -

- There is none that specifically talks about such offenses to the female gender. The Acts are generalized. Such a scenario often does not strongly bring out the issue and repercussion, especially when the more vulnerable gender is in the spot light like it is with Tech-related VAW.
- The information is scattered in different Acts. Not everyone has a good reading culture, and even for those that do have, one needs to search for a specific one among so many. This is tedious and often results in one giving up.

Challenges

1. There is none that specifically talks about such offenses to the female gender. The Acts are generalized. Such a scenario often does not strongly bring out the issue and repercussion, especially when the more vulnerable gender is in the spot light like it is with Tech-related VAW.
2. The information is scattered in different Acts. Not everyone has a good reading culture, and even for those that do have, one needs to search for a specific one among so many. This is tedious and often results in one giving up.

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[1] An Act is a bill which has passed through the various legislative steps required for it and which has become law.
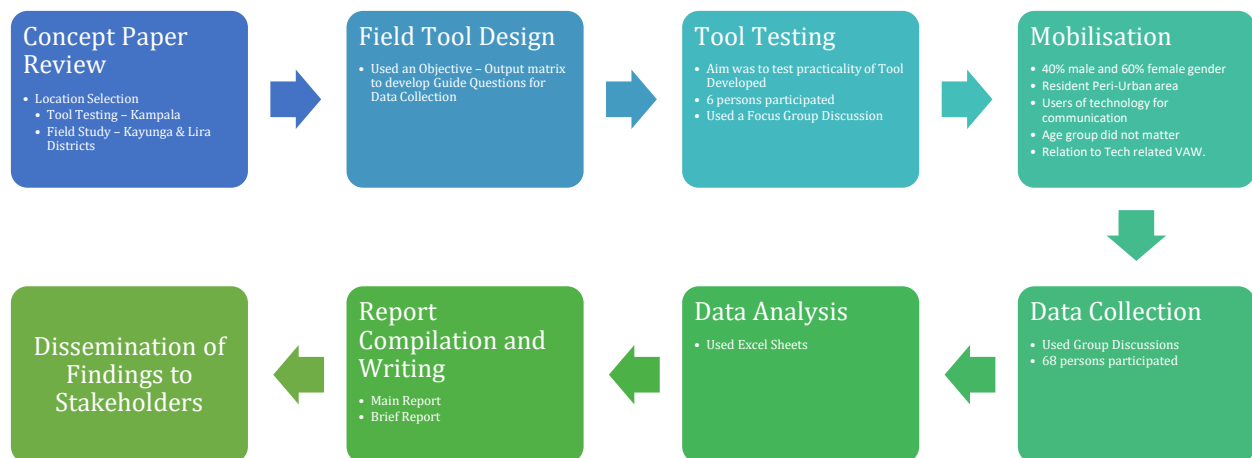
2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 THE PROCESS

The methodology involved obtaining vital information like the target group, goals, expected outcomes and more from the Concept Paper. These were necessary to guide tool development as well as a suitable location from where the majority of the respondents would be obtained.

The tool developed was then used for data collection, analysis and a report written thereafter. See table below for process.

Figure 2: The Process to Report Writing

2.1.1 Preparation for the Study

Concept Paper Review: The Concept paper was reviewed by the commissioning and study team. The aim was clearance that both parties understood the aim and nature of the study. It is in this meeting that the locations for study (Tool Testing and Main Study) were chosen.

Designing of the Field Tool: The Field Tool was derived from the Concept Paper. Using a, Objective-Output Matrix, the Project Team was able to determine and map out questions that would be necessary to determine the results. This was done using a Brain Storming Method and later Card Sorting for mapping and proximity. See final matrix in Annex 5.1

Testing of the designed Tool: This was done to ascertain the practicality and functionality of the designed tool in obtaining relevant information from the respondents in accordance to the Concept Objectives. The tool was tested on a group of selected persons. Minute alterations were made.

Mobilization

The process involved identifying the preferred characteristics: -

- Users of technology for communication. All respondents were also supposed to have been exposed to at least one form of technology
- Resident Peri-Urban area. This is because many of the researches done have targeted persons living in the cities. The Project team felt need to obtain the Peri-Urban voice as well.

- 60% should be of the female gender. 40% from the male gender. Option to have more females was because they are the more affected gender. It was though felt necessary to get the views of the males as well on this topic.

  The male gender responses, even if of a smaller preferred number, were to be crucial in not only understanding this topic from the male perspective but also engaging them in solution finding; a course that was thought practical.
- Been a victim of Tech-related VAW or know someone who was/is a victim or closely followed such a story in the media.

Age group did not matter. As long as the above were fulfilled.

To maintain this criteria, emphasis was done during mobilization and a census taken before each of the sessions.

2.1.2   Collection of Data

Qualitative and Quantitative methods were used to collect data. Option to combine them was based on the knowledge that each has specific limitations as well as particular strengths; by using them together, would enable one method compensate for their others' mutual and overlapping weaknesses.

Basically only four (4) methods were used to obtain information that led to the writing of this report: -

Documents and Records

This involved examining existing data in form of articles, conference reports and newsletters online. These were obtained using the search engine, Google. Key words used to obtain such information were: "technology related violence against women", "forms of technology related violence against women", "victims of technology related violence against women" and "solutions to tech related online violence against women".

The advantage with this methodology is that the internet provided a wide array of information. A challenge was the information was overwhelming. Skill was used to obtain only the relevant information.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD**)**

Target groups were identified and gathered to discuss the topic of interest. Caution was made not to sit different age groups together.

To prevent respondents from shying away in their responses, the cards method was involved. This involved respondents writing their responses out on cards. These were collected for both on spot and later analysis.

Interview

These enabled face to face discussion with the respondents. Questions, both closed and open ended were set prior to the interview and notes taken during the interview.

Closed ended questions were asking for and receiving answers about fixed facts. These managed the data and quantify the responses more easily. Open ended questions tickled verbose responses and were used where explanations were required.

Video

This was used to capture words by respondents. They were given an option to participate in the video exercise. Critical statements were captured and highlighted in the report.

2.1.3 Analyzing the collected Data
Frequency Tables

The information was basic and was easily analyzed using Frequency Tables. This was done with the help of Ms Excel; using the Smart Charts for expression and visibility of the results from the responses.

Transcribing

From the videos captured, critical statements were obtained and used as quotations in the report.

2.1.4 Report Compilation and Writing
The methods above all enable the preparation of the report.

The Report is divided into six (6) main sections:

Section: 1. The Introduction – demystifies "Tech related VAW" and introduces related laws in the Republic of Uganda that include and govern it

Section: 2. Methodology – explains the Preparation, Data Collection, Analysis and Report Writing procedures taken in concerns with this subject

Section: 3. Sharing responses from the community – this section shares compiled responses from varying respondents

Section: 4. Recommendations and conclusions

Section: 5. Annex – extensions from the report are placed here for exclusive reading

Section: 6. References – added reading both on and off line with accompanying links

2.1.5 Dissemination of Study Findings
WOUGNET will mobilize her stakeholders for a one-day workshop. The aim will be to present the Study Findings.

In this meeting, approval for the recommendation will also be sought.

2.2 CHALLENGES MET WHILE CONDUCTING THE STUDY
Below are the challenges met while conducting the Study

1. As one heads further away from the urban areas, the number of older citizens using technology reduces; and usage is more biased to the male gender
2. The study was conducted during the school time, compelling the team to seek permission to relate with the respondents during class hours.

Despite the challenges mentioned, amicable solutions were found, at the end of the day, none hindering the quality and quantity of data collected.
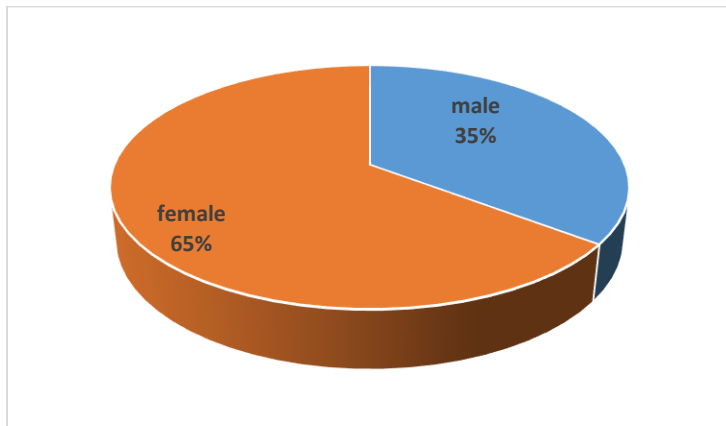
3 SHARING RESPONSES FROM THE COMMUNITY

3.1 RESPONDENTS COMPOSITION

In total, 88 people participated in the Study. Of these, a bigger percentage of the respondents were of the female gender. This was in accordance with the set plan. See Figure 3.

Figure 3: Gender distribution of the Respondents

All respondents were either victims of Tech related VAW or knew someone, whose case they were familiar with that was a victim of Tech related VAW. The respondents were from the towns of Kayunga, Kampala and Lira.

3.2 RESPONDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF "TECH RELATED VAW"

It was important that the respondents understood the key term "Tech related VAW".

Below are key words the respondents used to describe "Tech related VAW"

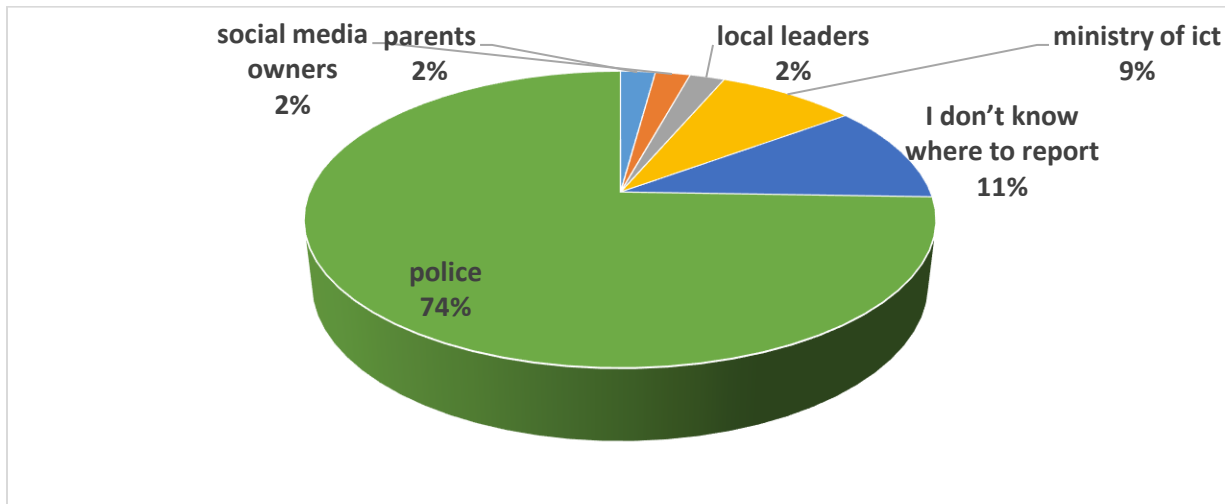*Figure 4: Collage of Words from the Respondents defining "Tech related VAW"*

3.3 REPORTING VIOLENCE

The majority of the respondents said that they would report a Technology related VAW to the "police". See Figure 5. This is because they said that it is their duty to **maintain law and order**. Others said that it is because the police today have means of tracing sources of cyber related crimes.

It is important to mention at this point that some did express doubt about this ability saying that it was only the police in more developed countries capable of doing this. When asked to explain the doubt, they said they had watched them on the television; and that in Uganda it was still a "dream". Police have the powers to apprehend they said.

Figure 5: Pie Chart illustrating Preference areas of reporting Tech related VAW

More than half of the remaining respondents (22%) claim they are not adequately informed over where to report such a crime, 11% saying they don't know even where to report such a crime. This is unfortunate because the crime manner is reported to be growing surely and steadily.

The respondents are very reluctant to report to their parents. Reasons given were that because chances are high that the parents would blame them for the crime irrespective of whether they were the victims. The low percentage accorded to the Local Leaders too was because the respondents said, reporting to the local leaders is similar to a parent. The Local leaders would tell their parents and the blame game would start.

3.4 PROPOSED AMENDMENT OF THE LAW

The respondents were informed of the laws that cater for "Tech related VAW". These were: -

- Computer Misuse Act 2011: Misuse Offenses
- The Data Protection and Misuse Act 2015
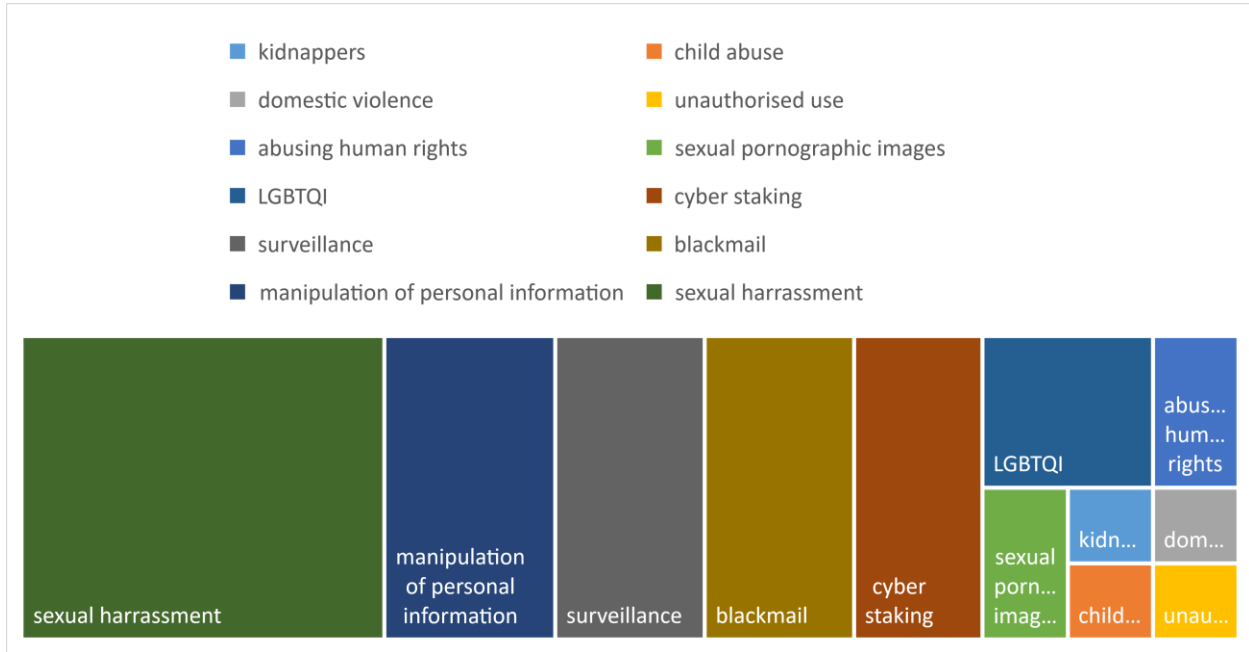- Anti-Pornography Act
- Penal Code Act

Thereafter, they were asked to mention key elements they felt needed to be given priority and emphasis in these laws. The list given was long. Nevertheless, the majority mentioned: -

- Sexual harassment
- Manipulation of personal information

- Surveillance
- Blackmail
- Cyber stalking

See figure below for degree of emphasis.

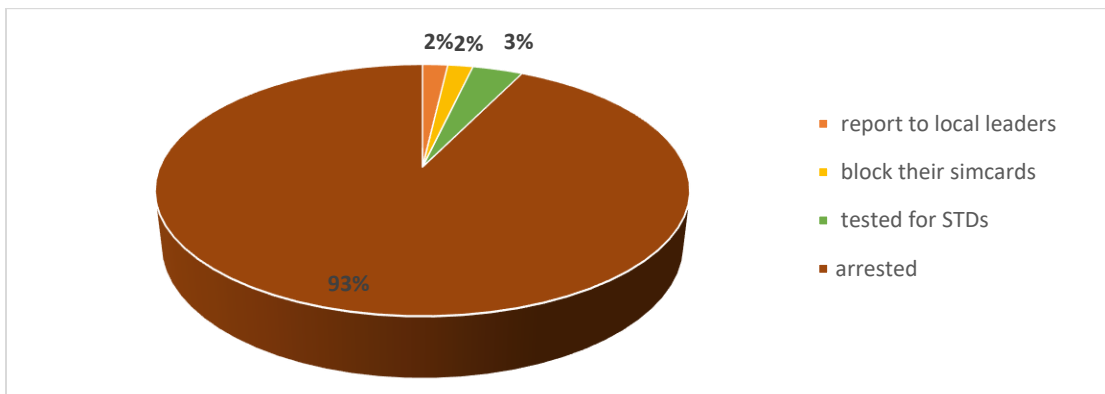*Figure 6: Tree Diagram illustrating Priority Areas for Inclusion in the Laws that address Tech related VAW*

During the discussions, opinions were strong that there was need to have a full act on "Tech related VAW". They said that breaking it up in pieces in different laws was confusing, easy to omit certain sections that may be vital and not being direct on this cause.
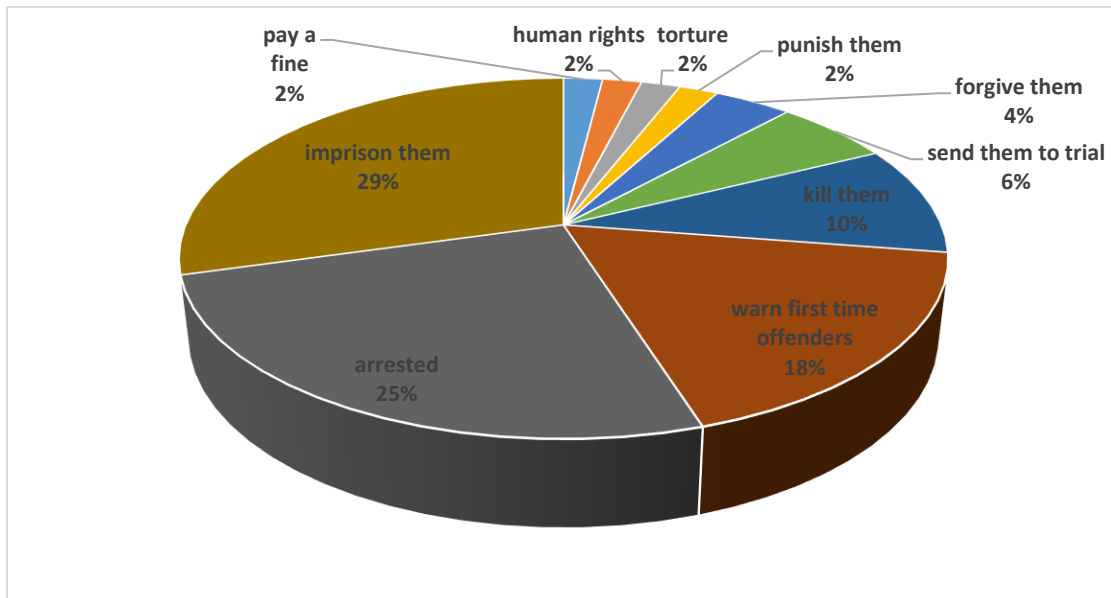
3.5   THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW IN TECH RELATED VAW

The respondents were asked how they felt those guilty of Tech related VAW should be handled. The bigger majority were quick to say that they need to "get arrested". See figure below for more details.

Figure 7: Respondents judgement of persons found guilty of Tech related VAW

However, after arresting the said criminals, a number of repercussions were suggested thereafter. The figure below attempts to present this.

Figure 8: Proposed Repercussions after arrest of persons guilty of "tech related VAW" crimes
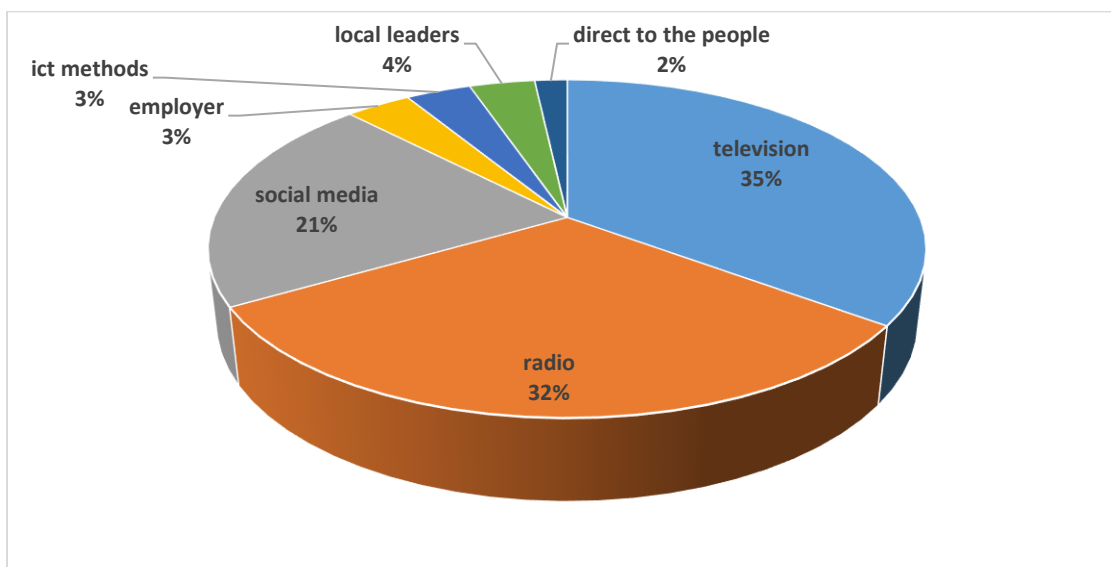

Key responses on what to do to the persons caught in the act of this crime(s) Tech related VAW said (1) they should go to prison (2) be arrested with no defined way forward (3) warn the first time offenders (4) kill them.

3.6 RAISING AWARENESS

To raise awareness on Tech related VAW and its repercussions if found guilty, the respondents suggested use of Television, Radio and Social Media, with Television and Radio being the most preferred method.

Figure 9: Raising Awareness on the Cause

Further investigations revealed that radio would be used to reach out to the people in the more Peri-Urban settings. More, social media applications suggested were WhatsApp. They said the government, through Ministry of ICT and police could design messages and send them through WhatsApp. Then it was suggested that Instagram and WhatsApp be used to display the culprits; again with messages attached. That, Social media reaches very far today and is loved by the youth who are the main victims.

Other methods suggested though were through employers informing their employees, local leaders and use of ICT methods.

4 RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSION

Issues related to women are very sensitive in Ugandan societies and probably the same in all Africa. Those that have broken barriers and penetrated the known male dominated spaces have faced varying responses. Among those spaces is "technology". Like mentioned afore, Government of Uganda has done a recommendable job in establishing and updating laws that protect its peoples, but it can do more, especially in respect to Tech-related VAW.
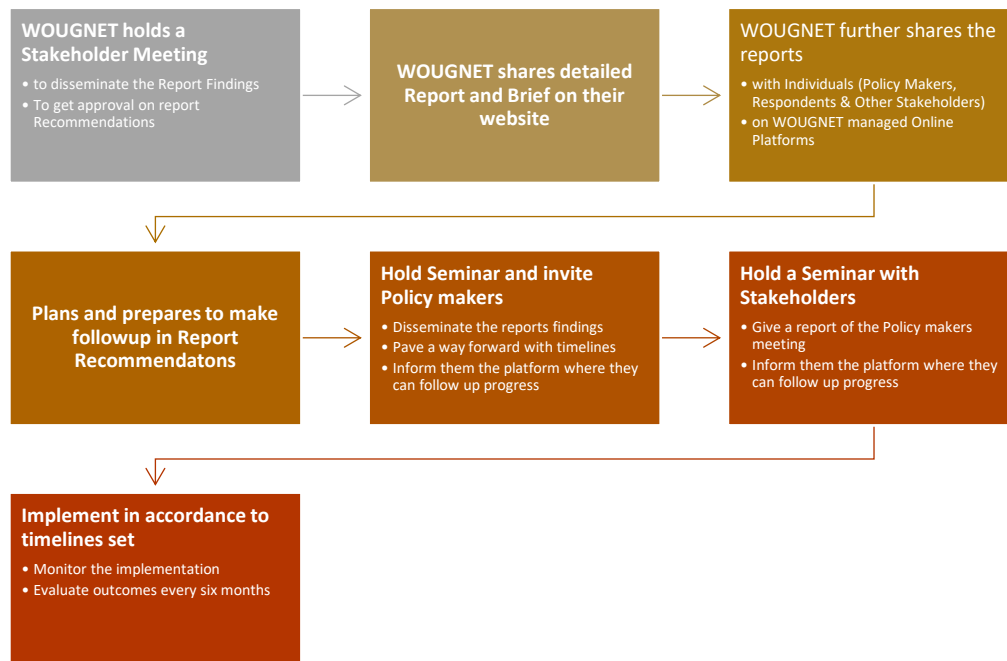
For starters, there is need for a specific law on "Tech related VAW". Currently, what we have is scattered in various Acts and not specific to the more vulnerable gender. This makes referral more tedious and especially to a lay man and other gender positive institutions.

By making it a law, it will be exhaustive and referral easier to all persons.

This public needs to be informed about law. The study informs on preferred methods to use. These and more can be explored so as to greatly reduce this act, if not, stop the act.

Below in Figure 10 is a proposal, derived mainly from the respondent's views as well as literature that can enable address these recommendations successfully.

Figure 10: Proposed Way Forward

WOUGNET should upload the Full Report and other related material(s) on their website. This will act as a referral for persons that prefer to read the whole report. Meanwhile, Report Briefs be derived from the main report. This is because it is easier to read and conceptualize a Brief that a Full report. A Brief is a short, summarized version of the report that only highlights vital key areas in the Full Report. Distribute the Briefs to the Policy makers and other stakeholders. Also provide a download link for the Brief. This saves the printing costs and yet reaches out to many.

WOUGNET should then hold a Seminar with **<u>only</u>** Policy Makers. Mobilization should be made to not have attendees as Policy Makers' Secretaries and other staff, rather the Policy makers themselves. During this

Seminar, (1) Disseminate the reports' findings. A lot of interesting issues have cropped out of the field discussions. They need to know these. (2) Pave a way forward with timelines. This should include the period of implementation, vital persons to involve and activity. (3) Inform them the platform where they can follow up on the progress. It is important to note that for better results, do not mix other stakeholders in this Seminar. Document the discussions.

Thereafter, WOUGNET should hold another Seminar but this time with the other Stakeholders. Policy makers can attend if they prefer. During this gathering, (1) Disseminate the report's findings and Policy Makers propositions (2) Inform them about the platform where they can follow up progress. Document the discussions. The is to inform and for them to advise more.

Thereafter, implement. While doing so, do not forget to (1) Monitor the implementation process (2) Evaluate outcomes every six months.

The government has laws. The respondents have identified and given their opinions. There is need therefore to open the communication lines with law and policy makers on the tabled topic: Tech-related VAW.

It is evident from the responses that this practice is wrong and inhuman.

It is the duty of a government to protect its peoples. The government therefore should work alongside tech companies and other related institutions to respond to its peoples' voices and evidence of existing and growing Tech-related VAW.

5 ANNEXES

5.1 FIELD TOOL

Table 1: Field Tool used as a guideline to Data collection

PROBING FOR:	MAIN QUESTION	EXPECTED RESPONSE
Profile	Gender	Male or female
Victims of tech related violence	Have you been a victims of tech related violence?	Yes or no
	If the answer is no, can you speak authoritatively for a victim of related violence?	Yes or no.
	Was this reported?	Yes or no
	If yes, to who was this reported?	Development of list
	If no, why was it not reported?[iv]	Development of a list
Nature of violence	Would you describe the extent in detail? (investigate for the "nature") respondent and friend	• Fill in of the matrix[v] • Question for the documentary
Reporting violence	Where can victims report safely?	• Each respondent writes two areas they are aware of to where the victims can report • Tally and develop a list from responses on the cards
	Where would you report safely, given similar situation	Each respondent mentions two areas that they are confident with; they use numbers for order of priority
Proposed amendment of the law	Assuming you were asked to be part of the team that creates a law on "*tech violence against women*", mention three things you would like included in that law	• Each respondent writes responses on cards • Probe for order of priority using numbers
The Law	How can tech related violence perpetuators be brought to book?	• Each respondent writes responses on cards • Probe for order of priority by developing a list and ask them to prioritize
Raising awareness	How can we raise awareness? Solutions?	Open discussion

6 REFERENCES

6.1 ONLINE REFERENCES

1. Video: Tech-Related VAW by WOUGNET

2. Understanding Technology-Related Violence Against Women: Types of Violence and Women's Experiences by Dr. Linda Baker is the Learning Director for The Learning Network at the Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children

3. Recommendations on technology-related Violence Against Women (VAW) for the UN by por Paz Peña O. e Joana Varon

4. Technology-Based Violence Against Women: The Next Frontier? by Grace Githaiga

5. Technology-Related Violence Against Women by Violence against women learning network in Canada

6. Technology-Related Violence Against Women by Jan Moolman and Katerina Fialova from apcwomen.org

7. Technology facilitated violence against women for Women Survivors by Center Against Sexual Assault & Family Violence (CASA) – Australia secasa@monashhealth.org

6.2 END NOTES

[i] Technology Safety Australia: Safer technology for women
https://techsafety.org

[ii] The Association for Progressive Communications, p. 1
http://www.apc.org/en/node/11452

[iii] Technology-Related Violence Against Women – A Briefing Paper
https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/HRC%2029%20VAW%20a%20briefing%20paper_FINAL_June%202015.pdf

[iv] Those who said yes above can also share to whom reports are made

[v] Nature of Violence

CYBER STALKING	SEXUAL HARASSMENT	SURVEILLANCE	UNAUTHORISED USE	BLACKMAIL	MANIPULATION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION