

# ONLINE INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST TEENS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN NEPAL



## CONTEXT

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a growing concern, with digital technologies increasing the risk of online IPV, particularly among teens and young people. In Nepal, internet use is rising, but awareness of online safety remains low. There have been reports of online IPV targeting teens and young people, yet there is little information on its patterns, magnitude, trends, vulnerabilities, and response mechanisms.

While previous studies in Nepal have focused mainly on offline IPV among married couples, this research explored

the prevalence, attitudes, and perceptions of online IPV among 16–24-year-olds.

The study also developed a knowledge base on risk factors, coping strategies, barriers to reporting, and response mechanisms, as well as the continuum of violence both online and offline. It aimed to fill existing evidence gaps and provide insights to guide effective interventions and policy actions addressing online IPV among teens and young people in Nepal.

## OBJECTIVES

- 1 To understand the prevalence, patterns, emerging trends, vulnerabilities and attitudes towards online IPV.
- 2 To identify the various risk factors of online IPV, the help-seeking behaviours and coping mechanisms.
- 3 To develop a strategic set of policy recommendations addressing online IPV in Nepal.

## METHODS

The study employed a cross-sectional descriptive design, utilising a mixed-methods approach that combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods.

It was conducted nationwide across Nepal's seven provinces, covering ten districts selected based on factors such as internet accessibility, geography, demographics, and youth population.

A total of 4,352 participants from schools and colleges took part in the survey, divided into two age groups: 16–17 years (teens) and 18–24 years (young people). Data were collected using Kobo Toolbox, an online data collection tool.

The qualitative component included 17 focus group discussions with teens and young people, 10 key informant interviews with service providers, and 11 in-depth interviews with survivors of online IPV.

Ethical standards were rigorously maintained throughout the research, including obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant authorities, securing informed consent, and strictly enforcing confidentiality measures.

## RESULTS

- **Relationship Status:** 40.5% study participants (1,762 out of 4,352) reported being in current or past relationships.
- **Prevalence of Online IPV:** One in four participants in intimate relationships experienced online IPV.
- **General Perception:** In general, online IPV is not considered as serious as offline IPV.
- **Age and Vulnerability:** While both 16–17 and 18–24 age groups were equally at risk, older participants demonstrated greater ability to recognise and avoid abusive behaviours.
- **Gender and Vulnerability:** 27% male and 21% female participants experience online IPV.
- **Ex-Partners as the Perpetrators:** Most of the online IPV perpetrators were ex-partners.
- **Prevalent Type of Violence:** Non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery, forcing to perform online sexual activities, sexual extortion, force to have sexual relations (mostly without consent), stalking, controlling online activities, spreading false information or rumour.
- **Adult-Minor Relationships:** 11% of participants in relationships reported adult-minor relationships, raising concerns around consent and vulnerabilities.
- **Geographic Trends:** Sunsari district reported the highest prevalence of online IPV at 38%, driven by rigid gender norms.
- **Duration of Relationships:** Shorter relationships (less than six months) showed a higher prevalence of IPV.
- **Continuum of Violence:** 46% of those experiencing IPV faced both online and offline abuse, highlighting the interconnected nature of these forms of violence.
- **LGBTQIA+ Community:** The LGBTQIA+ community was particularly vulnerable due to reliance on online dating apps to affirm their identities.

## NOTABLE IMPACT OF RESEARCH

### IMPACT AT POLICY LEVEL

- This was the first study of its kind in Nepal and possibly in the Asia-Pacific region. It exposed critical systemic gaps, including the absence of legal recognition for unmarried intimate partners, widespread victim-blaming, weak response mechanisms, and inadequate legal and policy frameworks.
- The study provided evidence-based, sector-specific recommendations to policymakers, service providers, educators, and parents, urging them to fulfil their responsibilities in protecting teens and young people from online IPV. It called for a holistic response—combining education, awareness campaigns, policy reforms, stronger legal measures, and greater parental and school involvement in online safety.
- Its findings served as powerful advocacy tools for influencing policymakers and government agencies. Notably, the study helped raise awareness that Nepal's current laws do not recognise unmarried intimate partners or the violence they experience, and it advocated for their inclusion in national protection frameworks.

### IMPACT ON PROGRAMS

- This study laid a critical foundation for future research on technology-facilitated intimate partner violence (IPV) in Nepal and beyond. By identifying key risk factors and proposing targeted interventions, it charted a path toward creating a safer digital environment for teens and young people.
- Its impact extended beyond academia. The National Child Rights Council - the government's lead agency on child protection - along with UN agencies such as UNICEF, UN Women, and UNFPA, and international NGOs including Plan International and World Vision, recognised the study's significance. They found its insights and tailored recommendations instrumental in shaping their programmes and interventions to address online IPV in Nepal.
- This research not only filled a critical evidence gap but also catalysed national and international collaboration to safeguard young people from technology-facilitated abuse.

### IMPACT WITHIN ORGANIZATION

- This research created a lasting institutional impact within ChildSafeNet. It strengthened the organisation's research capacity by developing robust tools, ethical protocols, and a skilled pool of field researchers. Building on the knowledge and expertise gained, ChildSafeNet successfully secured funding for three new research projects on child online protection. The researchers trained through this study were actively engaged in these subsequent projects, applying the skills and experience they had developed to conduct high-quality research.
- The study also enabled ChildSafeNet to build strategic networks, including collaboration with ChildLight, and one of its researchers was recognised internationally as an early-career researcher. Moreover, it deepened organisational understanding of critical issues such as victim-blaming, online IPV among boys and unmarried couples, gaps in support services, and weaknesses in the legal framework.
- Overall, this research strengthened ChildSafeNet's credibility as a national leader in technology-facilitated abuse research, attracting new partnerships and funding opportunities, and setting a strong foundation for evidence-based advocacy and policy influence.



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