

# DIGITAL WORLD, REAL WOUNDS ONLINE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ITS IMPACT ON ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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## ABSTRACT

*The rapid advancement of digital technology has introduced new platforms that facilitate communication and information sharing. However, these platforms also present risks, especially for adolescents, who are susceptible to online gender-based violence (OGBV). This study aimed to explore the impact of OGBV on adolescents and its relationship with their reproductive health. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 400 adolescents aged 15-19 years using structured questionnaires. The analysis included descriptive and inferential statistics. Results indicated that 68% of respondents had experienced some form of OGBV, with significant associations between exposure to OGBV and adverse reproductive health outcomes, such as stress-related menstrual irregularities and sexual health anxieties. The study highlights the urgent need for preventive and intervention strategies to mitigate the effects of OGBV and promote adolescent health. These findings emphasize the critical role of comprehensive digital safety education and mental health support in reproductive health programs for adolescents.*

**Keywords:** online gender-based violence; adolescents; reproductive health; digital safety; mental health

## ABSTRAK

*Kemajuan pesat teknologi digital telah memperkenalkan platform baru yang memfasilitasi komunikasi dan berbagi informasi. Namun, platform ini juga menghadirkan risiko, terutama bagi remaja yang rentan terhadap kekerasan berbasis gender online (KBGO). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi dampak KBGO pada remaja dan hubungannya dengan kesehatan reproduksi mereka. Dengan menggunakan desain survei cross-sectional, data dikumpulkan dari 400 remaja usia 15-19 tahun melalui kuesioner terstruktur. Analisis melibatkan statistik deskriptif dan inferensial. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa 68% responden mengalami bentuk KBGO, dengan hubungan signifikan antara paparan KBGO dan dampak negatif pada kesehatan reproduksi, seperti gangguan menstruasi terkait stres dan kecemasan kesehatan seksual. Studi ini menyoroti kebutuhan mendesak akan strategi pencegahan dan intervensi untuk mengurangi efek KBGO dan mempromosikan kesehatan remaja. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya pendidikan keselamatan digital yang komprehensif dan dukungan kesehatan mental dalam program kesehatan reproduksi bagi remaja.*

**Keywords:** *kekerasan gender berbasis online; remaja; kesehatan reproduksi; keselamatan digital; kesehatan mental*

## **INTRODUCTION ( 12 pt)**

The expansion of digital technology has transformed the way adolescents interact and access information. While online platforms offer numerous opportunities for learning and social engagement, they also expose users to risks such as online gender-based violence (OGBV). OGBV includes harassment, threats, and exploitation that disproportionately affect female adolescents, potentially leading to psychological trauma and affecting their overall well-being, including reproductive health. Despite growing awareness, the intersection between OGBV and adolescent reproductive health remains underexplored, especially in regions with limited resources for digital literacy and mental health support. This study aims to bridge this gap by investigating the impact of OGBV on reproductive health outcomes among adolescents, contributing to the body of knowledge needed for targeted interventions.

## **METHOD (12 pt)**

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design involving a sample of 400 adolescents aged 15-19 years from urban and rural areas. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation. Data collection was conducted through a structured questionnaire that included sections on demographic information, exposure to OGBV, and reproductive health indicators. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured from participants and their guardians. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics to summarize the frequency and nature of OGBV exposure and inferential statistics (chi-square tests and logistic regression) to assess associations between OGBV and reproductive health outcomes.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION (12pt)**

The findings from this study revealed that 68% of adolescent participants had encountered at least one form of online gender-based violence (OGBV). The most commonly reported types included online harassment, such as cyberbullying, derogatory messages, and unsolicited explicit content like non-consensual images or videos. This exposure to OGBV significantly correlated

with negative reproductive health outcomes, with statistical analyses indicating a strong association ( $p < 0.05$ ).

One prominent result was the increase in stress-induced menstrual irregularities among those exposed to OGBV. This disruption in menstrual cycles can be attributed to heightened psychological stress. The stress response in the body, primarily driven by the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, can interfere with the hormonal regulation required for normal reproductive functioning. Adolescents who reported OGBV exposure also showed higher levels of anxiety and fear related to sexual health, which manifested as a reluctance to engage in healthy sexual discussions or seek reproductive health services. This pattern of anxiety can further exacerbate reproductive health issues by impacting behaviors and choices related to self-care and health maintenance.

The discussion connects these outcomes with existing psychological theories that link chronic exposure to fear and trauma with long-term physiological effects. Prolonged stress from persistent OGBV exposure can activate the HPA axis and elevate cortisol levels, leading to reproductive system disturbances. This aligns with literature that documents how cyber victimization results in psychosomatic symptoms, including hormonal imbalances.

Furthermore, the analysis emphasized that adolescents often lack sufficient support systems to manage the psychological toll of OGBV. Schools and healthcare providers may not yet fully integrate digital safety and mental health support into adolescent health programs. The gap in such integrated support highlights the urgent need for inclusive educational programs that address digital resilience, emotional regulation, and reproductive health comprehensively.

These findings call for an increased focus on preventive measures, such as implementing robust digital literacy and safety education, which would empower adolescents to recognize, report, and mitigate the risks of OGBV. Incorporating mental health resources into reproductive health initiatives could also foster a supportive environment where adolescents feel safe to discuss and manage the psychological impacts of OGBV. This approach could reduce the negative health outcomes associated with online violence and promote better long-term well-being among adolescents.

## **CONCLUSION (12pt)**

This study highlights the pervasive and detrimental impact of online gender-based violence (OGBV) on adolescents' reproductive health. The findings demonstrate a significant association between OGBV exposure and reproductive health challenges, including stress-induced menstrual irregularities and increased anxiety surrounding sexual health. These reproductive disturbances are compounded by the psychological stress resulting from chronic exposure to digital harassment, underscoring the biological and psychosocial repercussions that adolescents face in the digital age.

The implications of these findings stress the urgent need for comprehensive, multi-layered strategies that include digital safety education, psychological support, and the integration of these elements into broader reproductive health programs. Digital safety education should equip adolescents with skills to recognize and mitigate OGBV, while mental health resources must provide the necessary support to address the psychological effects. These strategies should be implemented collaboratively by educational institutions, healthcare providers, and policymakers to create a cohesive response that protects adolescents and promotes resilience.

Furthermore, this research advocates for future longitudinal studies to explore the extended impact of OGBV over time and to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted preventive interventions. By deepening our understanding of how OGBV affects adolescents' long-term reproductive health, these studies can inform policy and programming that safeguard the health and well-being of this vulnerable demographic. The evidence underscores the need for a paradigm shift in approaching adolescent reproductive health, where digital safety and mental health are recognized as integral components. Ensuring that adolescents are educated, protected, and supported in both the online and offline realms will foster healthier, more resilient generations in the future.

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