

The Digital Media Environment in Indonesia: Online Gender-Based Violence

The experience, impact, and challenges
of online gender-based violence against
women journalists in Indonesia



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*The Digital Media Environment in Indonesia:
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*The experience, impact, and challenges of online gender-based
violence against women journalists in Indonesia*

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Any opinions represented in this report are those of the authors and research participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation or Remotivi.

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Content Warning

This report includes descriptions of gender-based violence experienced by journalists, both in-person and online. Some of these examples include explicit language and detail in reference to these experiences. These details are included to provide context to analysis, so that a greater understanding of online gender-based violence against journalists can be developed and the issue addressed.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AJI	Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Independent Journalists Alliance)
CSO	civil society organisation
GBV	gender-based violence
LGBT	lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OGBV	online gender-based violence
PR2Media	Pemantau Regulasi dan Regulator Media (Media Regulation and Regulators Monitor)
SMS	short message service
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Against the backdrop of the global COVID-19 pandemic, a surge in online gender-based violence (OGBV) against journalists, particularly women, is a growing concern in Indonesia. A study involving 1,256 women in journalism (Rahayu et al., 2021) shed light on the intricate dynamics of OGBV. Field reporters and online media journalists emerged as notably vulnerable groups.

The present study found that the prevalent forms of OGBV include private message harassment, abusive language, surveillance, image-based abuse, and sexually abusive comments. WhatsApp is the primary platform for such incidents, perpetrated by unknown individuals or professional acquaintances. OGBV is often triggered by news subjects like politics, gender, and corporate scandals, and is strategically used to silence critical journalistic work.

Significantly, however, a proportion of survivors experienced OGBV unrelated to journalistic reporting. Further, around a third of survey respondents had experienced offline attacks in conjunction with OGBV, impacting mental health, creating safety concerns, and prompting the need for medical or psychological support. The study underlines the pervasive nature of OGBV and its profound effects on survivors' well-being and professional practice.

Institutional challenges are evident, with journalists, particularly women, lacking awareness of OGBV. Training accessibility issues for women raise concerns about the effectiveness of awareness initiatives. Media institutions display limited understanding of OGBV, often resulting in unsupportive responses from supervisors, exacerbating the problem.

Societal attitudes also play a role. A majority of male respondents expressed disapproval of problematic behaviours and views in regard to OGBV, such as normalising OGBV as part of professionalism, the idea that gender-based violence only consists of physical violence, or sexually suggestive jokes. However, a disconnect exists between perception and the reality faced by women journalists. Gender stereotypes persist both in the newsroom and in fieldwork, with women often pressured to conform to societal expectations, risking exclusion if they resist. Cultural barriers and sexism within the media industry contribute to disbelief, victim-blaming, and the discouragement of women journalists from speaking out.

The study reveals that while a significant percentage of women journalists have reported on OGBV, they also face significant hurdles. Challenges include difficulties in finding and interacting with news sources, biased newsroom responses, assumptions about audience preferences, and a lack of knowledge and training programs on gender-based violence.

The report recommends three strategic interventions: a focus on institutional change to ensure awareness, knowledge, policies, and resources for journalists combatting OGBV; active engagement of men in the conversation through gender-sensitivity training; and the promotion of open and safe discussions among journalists to foster awareness and encourage sharing of experiences.

In summary, combatting OGBV in the realm of journalism in Indonesia requires a multifaceted approach, addressing institutional, societal, and cultural aspects. The study emphasises the urgency of these interventions to create a safer and more inclusive environment for journalists, particularly women, enabling them to fulfil their professional roles without fear of online gender-based violence.





INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, online gender-based violence (OGBV) is on the rise globally. A survey of 901 journalists from 125 countries found that 73% of women journalists have experienced OGBV (Posetti et al., 2021). Similarly, a survey of 1,256 women in journalism in Indonesia found that 78% of respondents have experienced OGBV (Rahayu et al., 2021). Field reporters (48%) and journalists working for online media (79%) are among the most vulnerable.

The UNESCO study also highlights the impact of OGBV on journalists' psychological state. Mental health impacts were the most frequently identified consequence of online attacks among survey respondents (26%), and 12% of respondents said they had sought medical or psychological help due to the effects of online violence.

Online attacks on journalists are often not isolated incidents. According to the UNESCO survey, 20% of respondents had been attacked or abused offline in connection with online violence they had experienced. The UNESCO paper also introduces the "chilling effect" of OGBV, which impedes women's active participation in public debate through journalism, thereby undermining accountability journalism and the public's trust in facts.

The pervasive nature of OGBV is also indicative of deep-seated gender biases and inequalities within Indonesian society. These biases manifest online in the form of misogynistic attacks against women in journalism, reflecting a broader societal issue that must be addressed holistically.

Further, the centralised socio-economic context of Indonesia might influence awareness of and response to OGBV. Jakarta and other cities on Java enjoy significantly more economic and socio-cultural activities and development than other provinces. This inequality has a significant impact on the development of provincial media to properly acknowledge and address the rising OGBV issues.

While prior studies have touched on the general prevalence of OGBV experienced by women journalists in Indonesia (Rahayu et al., 2021; Rahayu et al., 2023), no research so far has delved deeper into understanding the characteristics of attacks; awareness and understanding; and the overall dynamics of OGBV.

This study aims to understand the complexity of OGBV against journalists in Indonesia by exploring the following Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs):

1. How do women in journalism in five areas of Indonesia experience OGBV?
2. What are the considerations and challenges for journalists in reporting on OGBV and acting as advocates to address the issue?
3. To what extent are media organisations aware of, and how do they understand, OGBV?



How did we conduct this study?

This study employs a mixed methods approach by capturing qualitative and quantitative data. It explores how different individuals (research subjects) within media organisations understand and respond to OGBV against women journalists. These research subjects are women journalists who have experienced OGBV, men journalists, and media management representatives.

Data were collected using two methods. The first is a survey of both women in journalism who have experienced OGBV and men in journalism, to understand how each responds to OGBV. The second method consists of in-depth interviews with women journalists to further explore their experiences of OGBV and how it relates to their journalistic work. Media management representatives were also interviewed to understand how media respond to OGBV and their challenges in protecting their journalists from online violence.

Composition of research participants		
Subjects	Survey	In-depth interviews
Women in journalism who have experienced OGBV	132	23
Men in journalism	56	–
Media management representatives	–	10

This study was conducted in five cities across Indonesia: Jakarta, Bandung, Banjarbaru, Kendari, and Pekanbaru. These cities were chosen based on the dynamics of the media landscape in Indonesia, in order to represent the centre of economic and political life in Java (Jakarta and Bandung) and the more marginalised geographical areas (Banjarbaru, Kendari, and Pekanbaru). These provinces were also selected in consultation with Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) and based on the number of cases of public OGBV reported to SAFEnet, an NGO that focuses on digital rights advocacy.

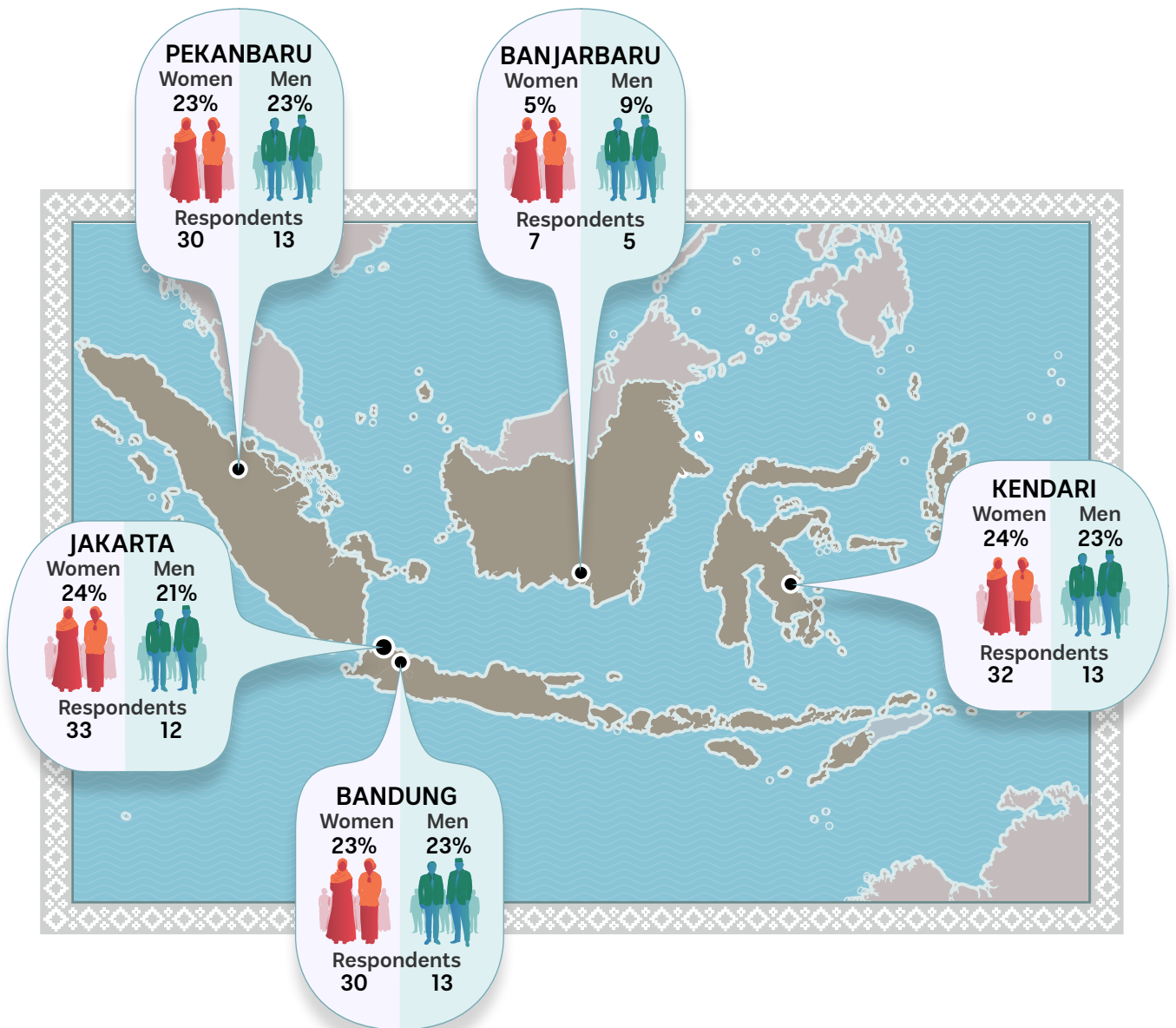
Survey of journalists

Initially, during the development of the survey, the study aimed to implement quota sampling by having 30 OGBV survivors and 10 men respondents from each city. However, due to the reported reluctance of women to discuss OGBV, along with time constraints, the quota in Banjarbaru was not met. Challenges related to participant recruitment in Banjarbaru are further explored in section 3.

Figure 1: Survey participants

132 women, 56 men

Total percentages are less than 100 due to rounding



Among OGBV survivors responding to the survey, lower-level journalists such as field reporters (62%) and freelance reporters (4%) comprise the majority of participants, followed by middle management positions such as editors (20%), managing editors (2%), and field coordinators (2%). Editors in chief make up 8% of the women survey respondents. Men surveyed for the study follow the same distribution in regard to position, with marginal deviation from the women participants.

Figure 2: Media position, women respondents

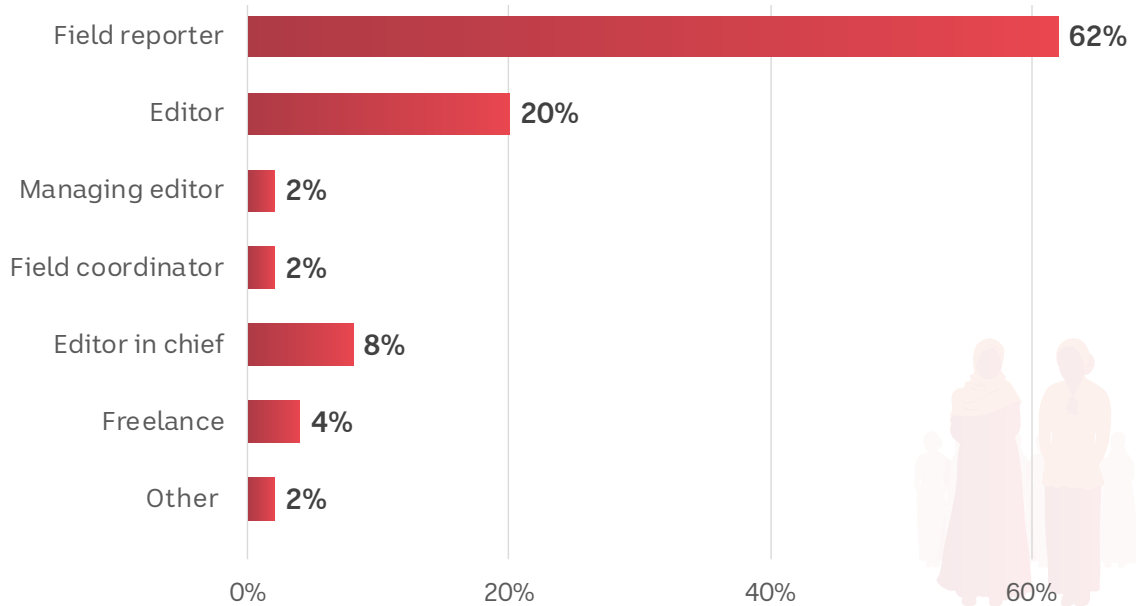
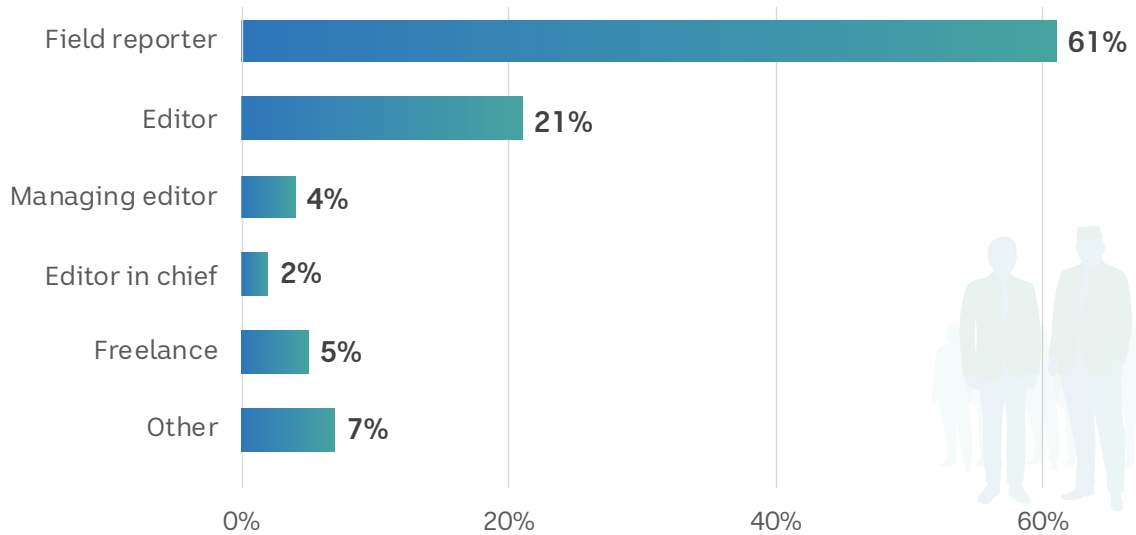


Figure 3: Media position, men respondents
Percentage total less than 100 due to rounding



The majority of the OGBV survivor participants have 5–10 years (59%) or 3–5 years (20%) of journalism experience. The study surveyed more senior men journalists, with 73% having 5–10 years of experience, and fewer junior men journalists, with 7% having 1–2 years of experience.

Figure 4: Work experience, women

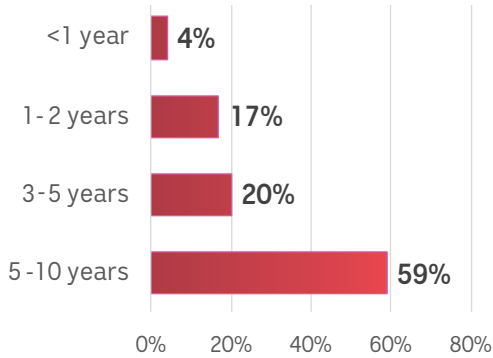
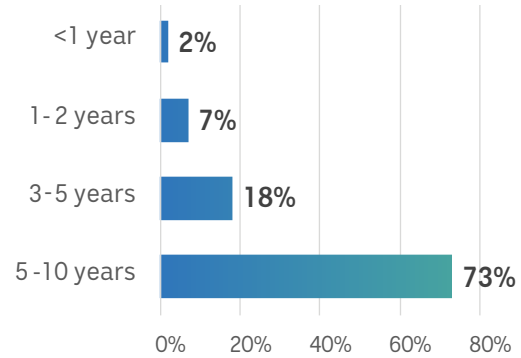
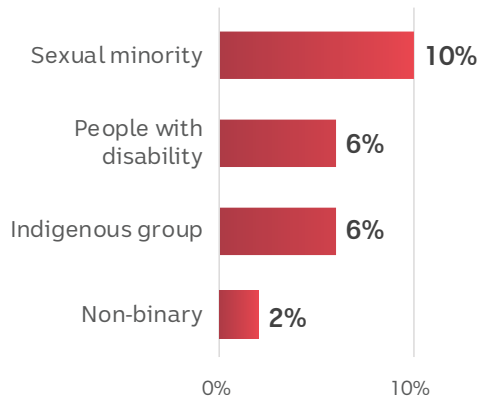


Figure 5: Work experience, men



During data collection, the study engaged with various organisations working with marginalised groups and journalist associations to ensure that the diversity of women’s experience was captured. The study interviewed women who identified as non-binary (2%), belonging to a sexual minority group (10%), people with disability (6%), and members of an Indigenous group (6%).

Figure 6: Women respondents, marginalised identities



It is important to note that the survey we conducted is by no means representative and cannot be generalised as a statistically accurate depiction of journalists’ awareness or the prevalence of OGBV against women in journalism. The survey was conducted to give a general snapshot and context for the qualitative data that we collected and also to help the researchers in selecting in-depth interview participants with diverse backgrounds and OGBV experiences.

In-depth interview participants

The study included two phases of in-depth interviews. The first focused on OGBV survivors who participated in the initial survey. The interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into their experience of OGBV and of advocating against gender-based violence (GBV) through their journalistic work. The study interviewed 23 women journalists who had experienced OGBV, the sample comprising field reporters, freelance reporters, editors, and editors in chief.

The second phase of the interviews engaged with media management representatives, including editors, editors in chief, directors, and corporate executives. The study interviewed 10 individuals to map media institutions' understanding of and practices to mitigate OGBV. To ensure that women's perspectives are well represented, the study interviewed 6 women and 4 men in this phase.

Implementation of the “do no harm” principle

Considering the sensitive and traumatic nature of the research topic, we have worked closely with a specialist on gender, sexuality, and mental health issues who has deep understanding of conducting research on sexual violence, as an independent consultant collaborating in developing the research instrument, providing an ethical field guideline workshop for field researchers, and reviewing field recordings and the final report to ensure the research process minimises harm towards everyone involved in the research, including (especially) participants. We also collaborated with Pulih Foundation, an organisation specialising in trauma and psychosocial recovery, to mitigate harm to our participants and field researchers that might be triggered by the research process.

All research data were collated and managed through the Google Workspace platform. Only the core research team has access to the full range of data, and field researchers do not keep a copy of the raw data. Anonymised raw data were shared with key research partners. After the research report was finalised, all personal data (names, email addresses, and phone numbers) were deleted from the database.

All OGBV survivor interview quotes and stories in this report have been anonymised and reviewed by the research subject to ensure their safety, since specific stories, along with disclosure of location, might be sufficient to deduce their identity.

Organisation of findings

The key findings in this report are divided into three subsections, outlined below:

1. Survivors' experiences

This section focuses on exploring the experience and impact of OGBV, as well as responses to it, from the point of view of OGBV survivors. It also investigates how men journalists and media management representatives responded to OGBV cases experienced by women journalists. In addition, this section covers survivors' experiences in reporting OGBV to their respective media institutions and social media platforms.

2. Media ecosystem context

This section delves deeper into institutional, sociological, and cultural challenges in addressing OGBV against women journalists. “Institutional aspect” explores the knowledge and awareness of journalists (both men and women) and media management representatives in relation to gender-based violence. Under “Sociological aspect”, the findings focus on how OGBV becomes a part of information and social exchange during field reporting, both among journalists and with news sources. Under “Cultural context”, the study explores how journalism, a predominantly male-dominated, has embedded gender biases within its organisational practices.

3. Women in journalism as advocates

This section focuses on the experiences of women journalists – as both OGBV survivors and public information brokers – in writing journalistic pieces on OGBV, as both a way of learning more about the issue and as an advocacy effort.

OGBV EXPERIENCES

1.1. OGBV within the media ecosystem

A statement from an editor in chief of an online media portal in Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, succinctly summarises one of the underlying themes of our key findings:



“ In the location of Kalimantan itself, generally, our community is not aware of online-based violence. So, because it is still often considered as just a normal joking matter, it is perceived as merely a joke. As for people in Kalimantan, sexual harassment means if their body is touched inappropriately, that is considered harassment. However, online harassment also exists, you know.”

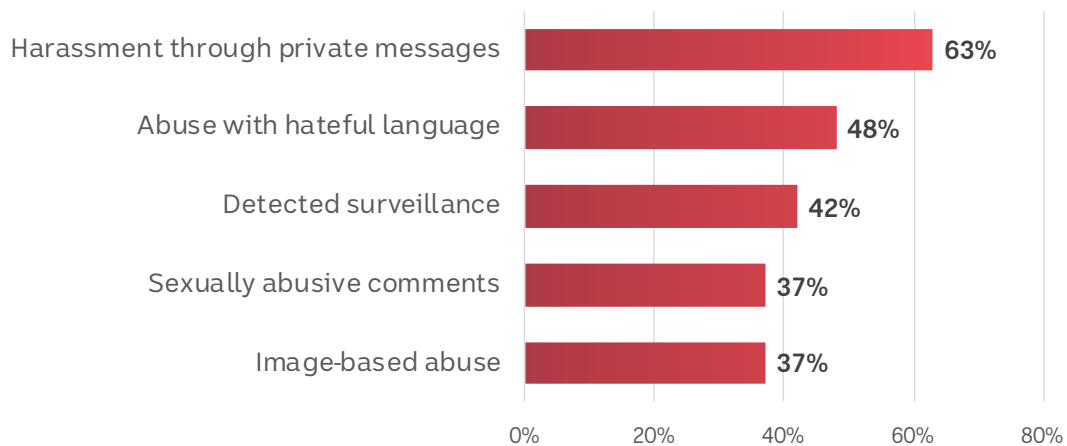
Media management representative, Woman, Banjarbaru

This widely believed misconception that sexual harassment must be physical is one of the major reasons behind the prevalence of OGBV against women in journalism – and Indonesian women in general. Previous studies (Rahayu et al., 2022; Rahayu et al., 2021) have shown that an overwhelming majority of women (between 72% and 82%) have experienced OGBV.

The survey conducted as part of this study found that the most common forms of OGBV experienced by women in journalism are harassment through private messages (63%), abuse with hateful language (48%), detected surveillance (42%), image-based abuse (37%), and sexually abusive comments (37%).

Figure 7: Have you experienced online gender-based violence related to your work as a journalist in the following form?

Respondents could give more than 1 answer



Despite the widespread occurrence of OGBV, journalists and media management representatives often misrepresent the risk and impact of OGBV. A media management representative in Bandung, West Java, stated that, although it is an important issue, it is not a major risk factor for journalists.

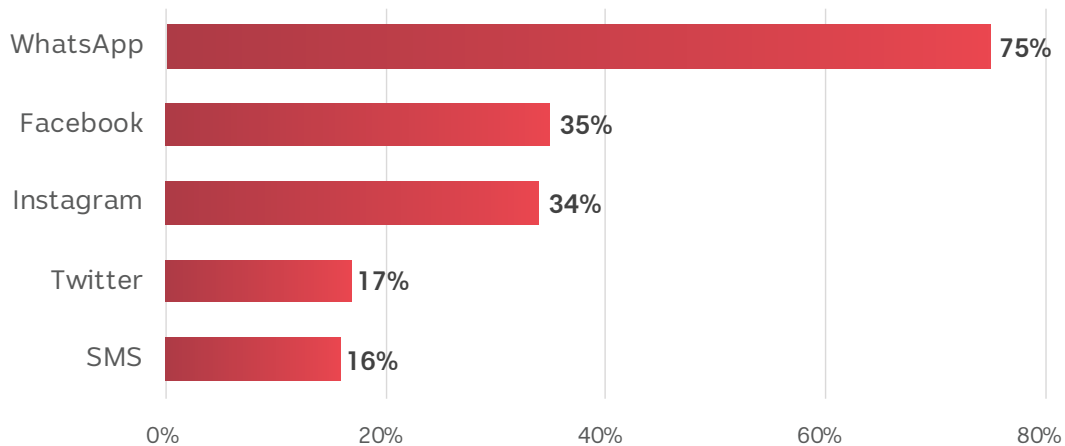
“ So if we’re talking about significant risks, it’s more towards physical risks. It’s not so much about indecent language but rather unethical language. It goes in that direction. I think it’s rare online, but the most common thing is sending photos or flattery on WhatsApp.”

Media management representative, Woman, Bandung

WhatsApp is the platform on which OGBV most frequently occurred (75%), followed by Facebook (35%) and Instagram (34%). The nature of the platform seems to be related to the type of abuse being perpetrated. The high occurrence of OGBV through WhatsApp, a chat platform, reaffirms the finding noted above, that harassment with private messages is becoming the type of OGBV most frequently experienced by women journalists. This may also be one of the reasons why journalists and media management representatives miscalculate the occurrence of OGBV against women journalists, thinking it rarely happens. Since OGBV happens more in private digital space, it tends to be invisible.

Figure 8: Through what online platform are those abuses you experience?

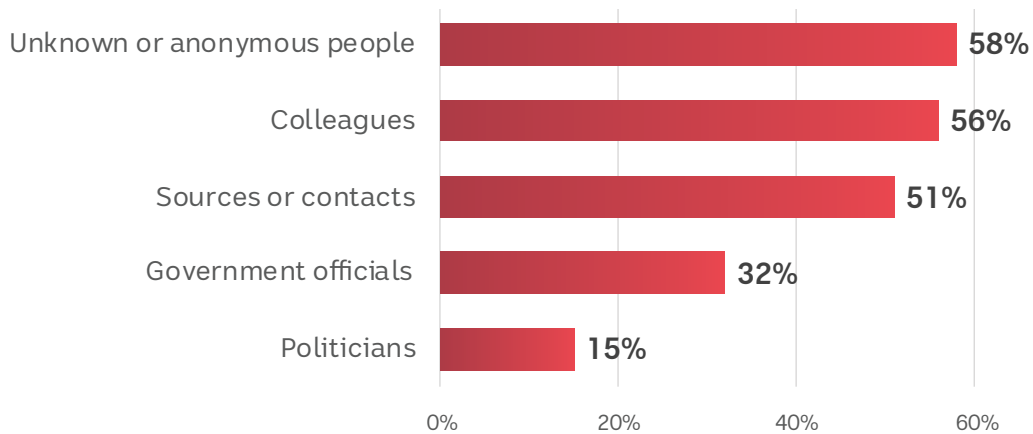
Respondents could give more than 1 answer



Although unknown or anonymous people are the most common perpetrators in OGBV cases (58%), acquaintances such as colleagues (56%) and sources or contacts (51%) closely follow. This indicates that a significant proportion of OGBV cases is linked to the social interaction of journalistic work. The survey also found that 37% of women in journalism have experienced OGBV outside of their journalistic work (see table “What story or conversation subjects appear to trigger online abuse?” in next subsection). Further interviews with journalists revealed that, although some OGBV did not take place while journalists were conducting their work, many of the perpetrators were still people they had met through work, such as colleagues and news sources. Participants reported that these actors harassed them with sexually charged chat messages, phone calls, or video calls after office hours.

Figure 9: Who is the identified source of online violence?

Respondents could give more than one answer



This finding indicates that OGBV is perpetuated through social relations, both among journalists themselves and in their interaction with news sources. A participant from Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, noted that a male-dominated media culture contributes to the stagnation of GBV discussion in the media industry.

“ They still don’t fully grasp the significance of it. On average, the owners of media companies are men. The journalists are also mostly men. ”

Editor, Woman, Banjarbaru, 5–10 years of experience

This domination also delegitimises women’s experiences of OGBV under the pretext of “men’s nature”, which interprets sexual harassment as an expression of attraction and suggests that it is natural for men to act on their more primal instincts. A journalist from Jakarta stated that she told one of her seniors that she and other women journalists were feeling uncomfortable with the harassment they experienced from fellow men journalists. To which the senior replied,

“ Well, just forgive them. They rarely see women. The majority of journalists stationed here are men. It’s like cats that have never seen a fish. ”

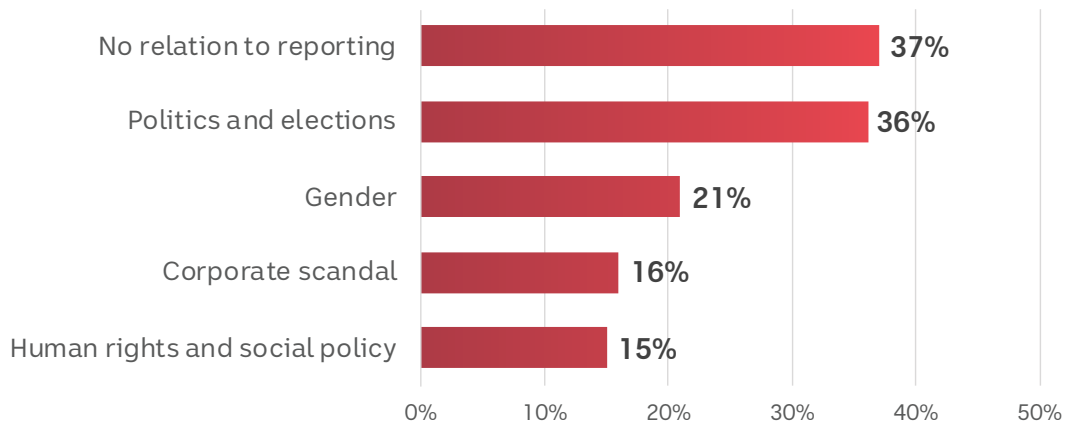
Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

1.2. OGBV as a repression strategy

Politics and elections are the most common news topics to trigger OGBV, as experienced by 36% of our respondents, followed by gender (21%), corporate scandal (16%), and human rights and social policy (15%). These cases are often a response to critical reporting on people or organisations in power. Digital intimidation, hacking, and surveillance are often utilised in attempts to silence women in journalism by specifically exploiting gendered social and personal vulnerability.

Figure 10: What story or conversation subjects appear to trigger online abuse?

Respondents could give more than one answer



A case described by a journalist from Bandung, West Java, who experienced repercussions after writing a story on a public official, illustrates this point clearly. After the report, a group of unknown people came to her office looking for her. She was stalked, detected attempted hacking on her social media, and received threatening calls and chat messages. This intimidation exploited her gendered position as a mother, as she describes clearly:

“ Women are the most vulnerable when it’s related to family. I have received a message stating, ‘I know where your house is.’ I can pay no mind if I get threatened physically through chats. But those words – all I can think about is my children. It said, ‘I know you have two children.’”

(Freelance reporter, Woman, Bandung, 5–10 years of experience)

There is a pattern to attacks in response to journalistic work critical of people or organisations who hold socio-political power. The journalist will first receive an angry call and warning demanding that they take down their article; when they refuse, anonymous digital attacks will follow soon after.

One of the most common attacks is “subtle threat”, in which someone receives floods of direct messages indicating that the sender knows the habits and personal information of the person or their family. Examples of subtle threats are statements that the sender knows where the person lives, which route they take to work, or where their children go to school. These messages do not contain demands or any direct link to the person’s journalistic work, but the timing of the attack suggests that it is linked and that it is aimed at intimidating them and making them feel threatened.

Other than political interests, dominant social values often lead to persecution of media and journalists. Journalists who write critical pieces that shed light on social issues such as the rights of LGBT people, marginalised religious groups, or women often become targets of digital attacks from conservative audiences. These cases are often characterised by moral panic emanating from social media platforms, particularly Twitter, leading to comment-flooding and doxxing. Due to the uncoordinated and viral nature of the attack, the situation becomes unpredictable and escalates quickly.

A journalist from Jakarta who identifies as queer shared her experience during an interview. In 2021, she wrote about a case of child sexual abuse in which a girl was raped and became pregnant. The girl's family applied for an abortion, but the application was rejected because the police refused to issue a required letter of recommendation¹. The story went viral and put the journalist in the public spotlight.

“ Then one of my superiors posted and tagged me. However, my Twitter account is a personal account for day-to-day use. It turns out that Twitter became very lively and started trending. I didn't realise it until my younger sibling called and asked, 'What are you doing on Twitter? My friend said you're trending.' When I checked, my Twitter notifications were flooded, and my sibling mentioned that many people were calling our dad. As they opened my Twitter profile and scrolled down, they discovered that I am queer and have tattoos. Even my aunt said to my dad, 'Hey, is your kid a lesbian? Your kid has tattoos?' My dad is known to be very religious, so I felt bad about it. It's something I have never discussed with my dad. My dad ended up being criticised and lectured because of it.”

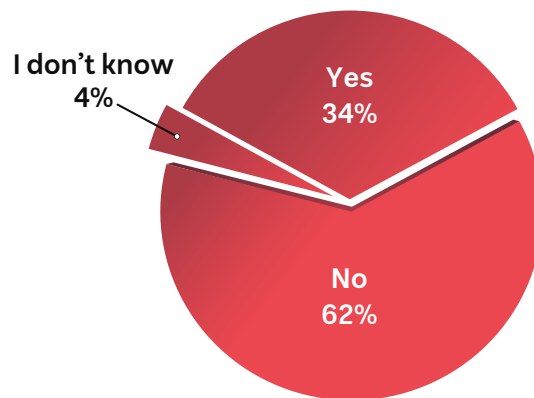
Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

1. In Indonesia, abortion is illegal unless the life of the mother is at risk because of their pregnancy or when pregnancy is the result of rape. In both cases, referrals are needed from local authorities (including police) or health services, but these can be difficult to obtain (Adinda, 2023).

1.3. Impact and response

Online violence cases against journalists are often part of a series of attacks involving both online and offline forms. OGBV against women in journalism can also follow a pattern: 34% of our survey respondents stated that they have experienced offline attacks that they believe are linked with online attacks. During in-depth interviews, OGBV survivor participants disclosed that these offline attacks included rape and attempted rape, intimidation by a group of unknown people, and threats of legal repercussions. The occurrence of these attacks not only demonstrates but also maintains the existing patriarchal gender and power structure in the interaction between perpetrators and victim-survivors. However, some of these attacks have a more specific purpose to protect the socio-political interests of the perpetrator and silence the journalists and their media, as discussed in the previous section.

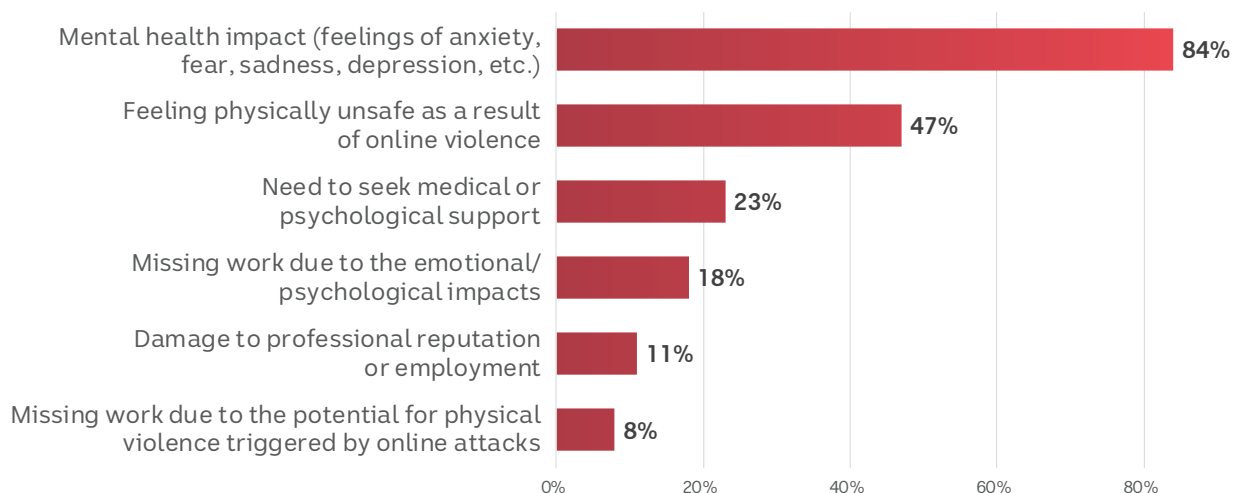
Figure 11: Have you ever experienced offline attacks that you believe to be linked with online attacks?



OGBV has a significant impact on survivors' mental health (84%), concerns about physical safety (47%), and need to seek medical or psychological support (23%). Further interviews with OGBV survivors indicated that experiencing OGBV in addition to physical attacks inflicts heavier impacts on survivors. A participant from Jakarta, who received digital threats after being raped by a fellow journalist, stated that she was unable to function and was off work for 3 months. Another journalist from Bandung, after writing a critical story about a local mass organisation, received digital threats in addition to offline intimidation by a group of unknown people who came to her office. The combination of digital and physical intimidation made her feel unsafe and unable to focus on work for several weeks.

Figure 12: What impact does the online abuse you've experienced have on you?

Respondents could give more than one answer

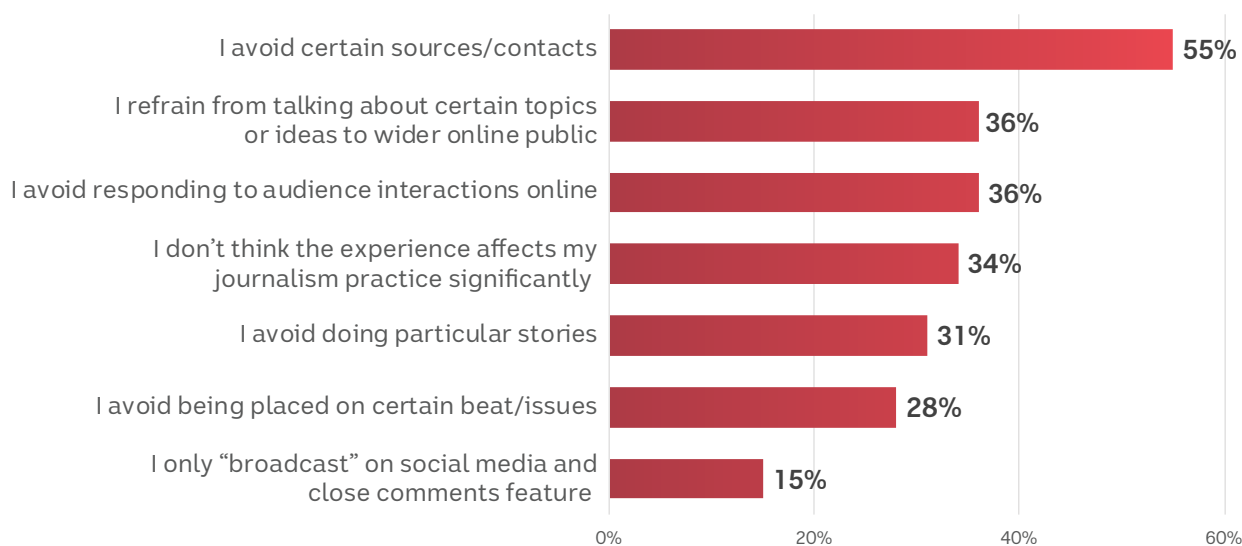


However, correlation with physical attacks is not the only factor that contributes to the severity of OGBV impact. The intensity of digital attacks also plays an important role in inflicting psychological damage on survivors. A participant from Bandung, who specialises in entertainment news reports, experienced doxxing and digital threats from the fanbase of a celebrity that she wrote about. The flood of derogatory comments and threats made her feel anxious about her own and her family's safety. The attacks led her to experience physical health problems, and she was hospitalised for three days.

OGBV also has a significant impact on journalistic practices and online engagement. Since news sources and contacts are among the main perpetrators of OGBV (51% of respondents), survivors are often traumatised and avoid certain news sources (55% of respondents). OGBV also has silencing effects on survivors' social media activities, in which they avoid talking about certain issues or topics (36%) and limit interaction with their followers (34%).

Figure 13: How does the online abuse that you have experienced affect your journalism practice and online engagement?

Respondents could give more than one answer



Due to the high occurrence of sexual comments on social media, most of our participants became self-aware and carefully curated their social media profiles. A journalist in Kendari stated that she ended up not posting photos on social media:

“ Because, like I said before, people’s negative comments, maybe because [I was] not wearing a headscarf or something. So, it affected me, and now I rarely post on social media. Maybe I still do it on WhatsApp, but not in other places. Because I’m afraid, afraid that someone might send something like that again.”

Field reporter, Woman, Kendari, 3–5 years of experience

This self-regulating response also influences women journalists' offline behaviour, given that OGBV is an extension of workplace sexual harassment. Most of our interview respondents limit their interaction and behave very cautiously among men journalists and news sources; most of them choose to wear the hijab and loose clothing, in the hope of avoiding harassment. This response also came from internalised self-blame – the belief that the harassment is mostly due to their inability to dress properly:

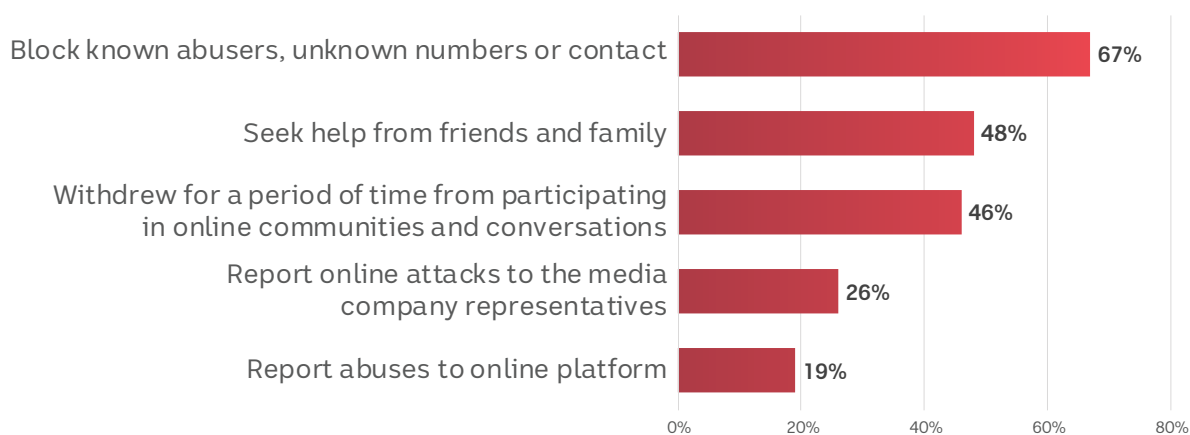
“ I usually go back to myself: I think maybe my clothes aren’t good, I mean they aren’t covering enough even though I’m wearing hijab, or maybe they are too tight, or maybe this or that.”

Field reporter, Woman, Kendari, 3–5 years of experience

Women in journalism often see OGBV as a personal matter, not a professional one, and thus something that should be dealt with via individual measures rather than by seeking organisational or institutional support. The top actions taken by survey respondents after experiencing OGBV were blocking the abuser (67%), seeking help from friends and family (48%), and withdrawing from online communities and conversations (46%). Only a handful of journalists opted to report the attack to their media company (26%) or the online platform (19%) as an immediate response.

Figure 14: What are your immediate responses after experiencing OGBV?

Respondents could give more than one answer



Throughout their journalism career, only 30% of respondents have reported their OGBV experience to their employers. Among those who have not reported to their employers, 35% are reluctant due to lacking confidence that their employers can help, while 26% worry that they would be seen as not “strong enough” to be a journalist.

Figure 15: Have you reported the experience to your employers?

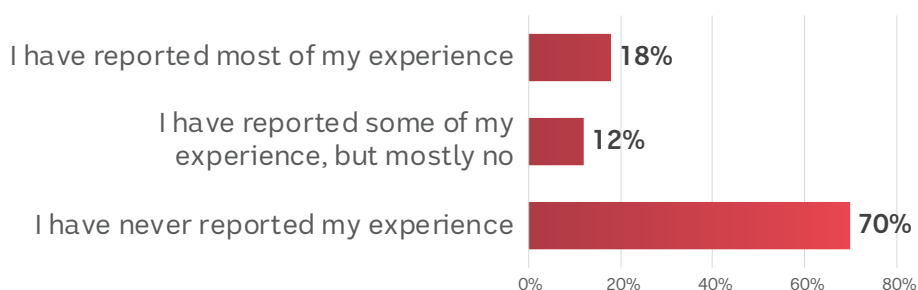
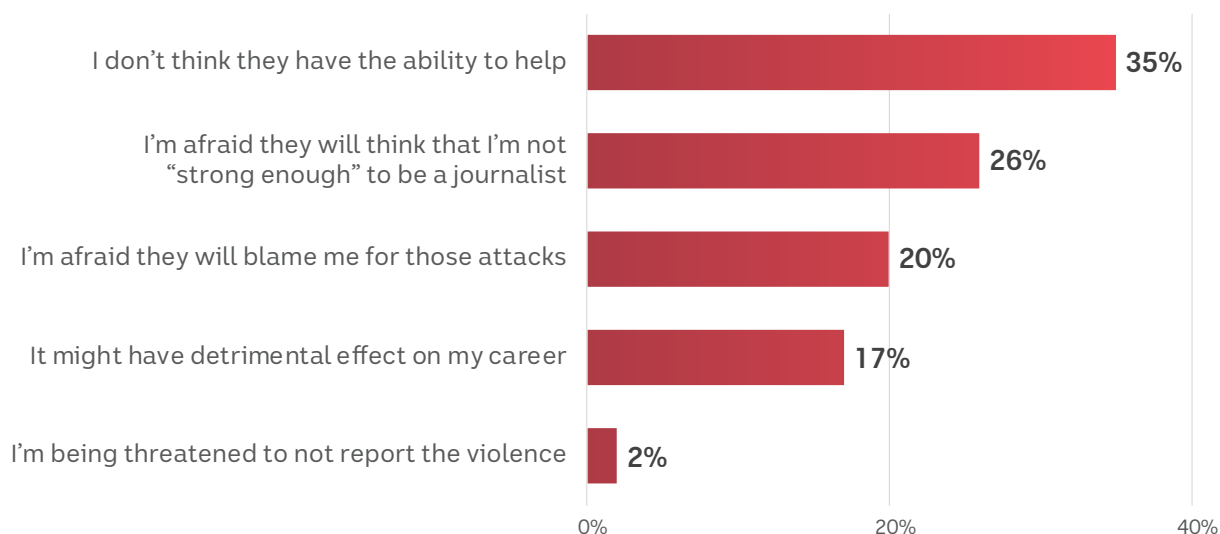


Figure 16: What prevents you from reporting [OGBV experience] to your employers?

Number of respondents who have never reported to their employers: 92.

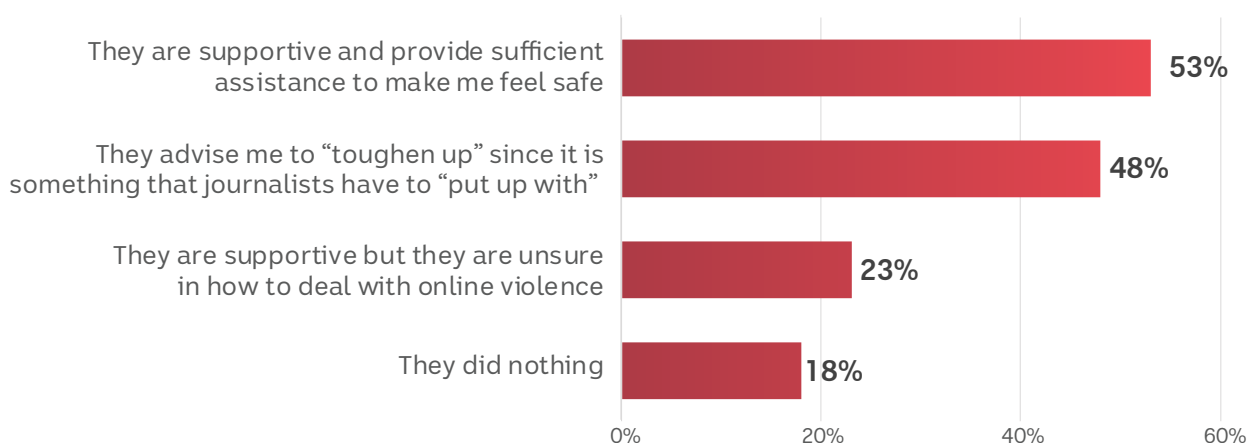


The responses to those who have reported to their employers have been relatively positive: more than half of those who have reported to their employers stated that they received sufficient support and assistance in making them feel safe (53%), while 23% of respondents stated that their employers were willing to help, but unsure how to deal with online violence. Only 18% stated that their employers did nothing about their case.

However, there are two important caveats to note here. The first is that a significant proportion of the respondents were advised to “toughen up” (48%), which signifies the dominant masculine value within journalism in which GBV is an inherent risk that women in journalism have to put up with.

Figure 17: What is their [employers] response[after reporting experience of OGBV]?

Number of respondents who have reported to their employers: 40. Respondents can give more than 1 answer

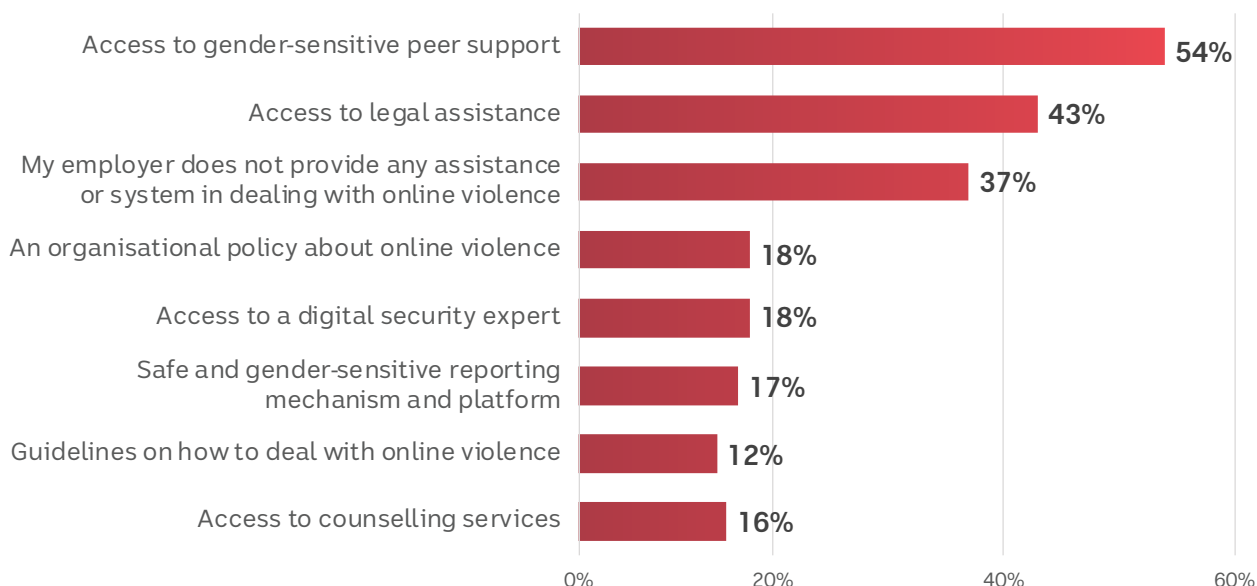


The second caveat is that, where OGBV survivors assessed their employers' response positively, this relates to the presence of an institutional system or culture for handling such cases – which might, conversely, be entirely lacking. A significant minority (34%) of respondents stated that their employers do not provide any assistance or system to assist their journalists in dealing with online violence.

Only a small percentage of respondents stated that their employer has a policy on online violence (18%), a gender-sensitive reporting mechanism (17%), or guidelines on dealing with online violence (12%). The assistance most commonly provided is access to gender-sensitive peer support (54%).

Figure 18: Does your employer have the following items to support you in dealing with online violence?

Respondents can give more than 1 answer



The most significant assistance to OGBV survivors came in the form of individuals who are concerned and well educated on the issue and happen to hold high positions in the media institution. Editors who are well acquainted with women’s rights activists or who are members of progressive journalist associations are often mentioned as the ones who take initiative and are eager to help women in journalism deal with OGBV.

“ But luckily the leader in this office is an AJI member. He understands all kinds of women’s issues. So, regarding this gender-based violence, he really cares [...]. Luckily, in that place, it feels like there’s more attention given. But sometimes, when we talk to men about it, it’s still like, “Don’t be like that.” Maybe I’m the one limiting myself.”

Field reporter, Woman, Pekanbaru, 1–2 years of experience

Similarly, gender-sensitive individuals also play a significant role in field settings. Prominent individuals in governmental institutions or well-respected journalists posted on a beat often act as a deterrent that protects women in journalism from harassment.

“ If the harassment came from fellow journalists or the aide of a local legislative, there is a woman legislative that would intervene. She said, “that’s my sister, don’t fool around with her.” When it comes to friends, [the way] we anticipate so that they don’t become abusive is by steering clear of them. Those who were close before are now kept at a distance.”

Field reporter, Woman, Pekanbaru, 3–5 years of experience

Figure 19: Have you ever reported online gender-based violence to a social media platform?

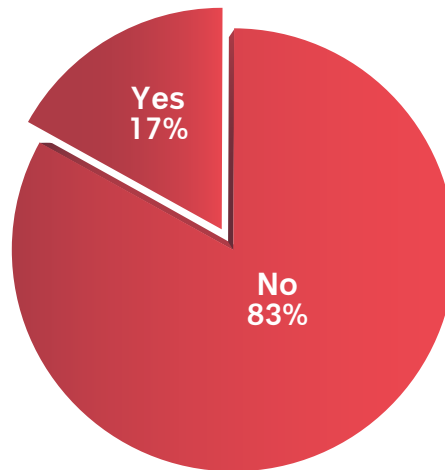
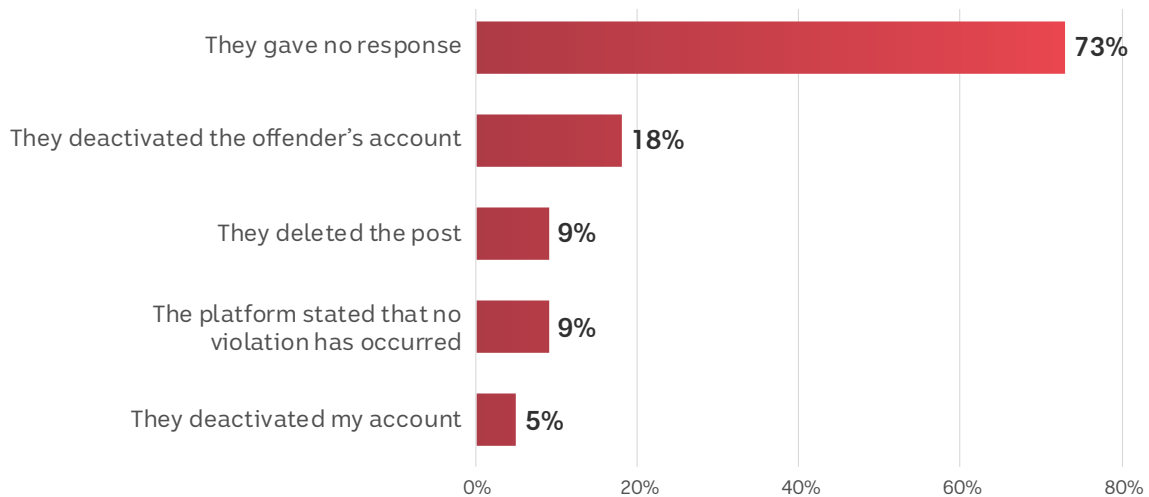
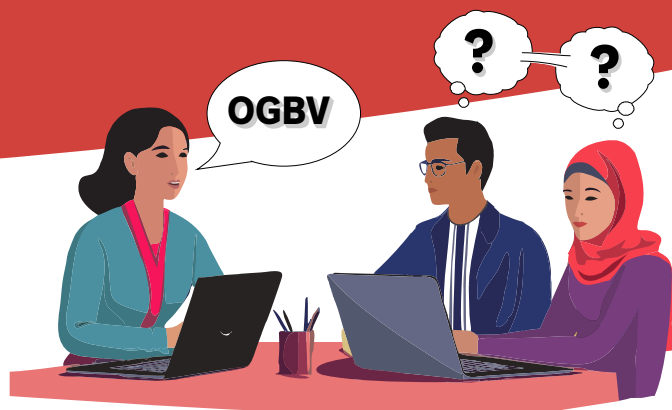


Figure 20: What are the subsequent actions taken by social media platforms?



Digital platforms are also an important stakeholder in creating safe online spaces for women in journalism, yet they have not fulfilled their role to any great extent. The majority of the journalists (83%) have not reported cases of OGBV against them to their digital platform. Those who do report them mostly receive no response from the platform (73%). Only a fraction of respondents stated that the platform deactivated the offender's account (18%) or deleted the offending post (9%).





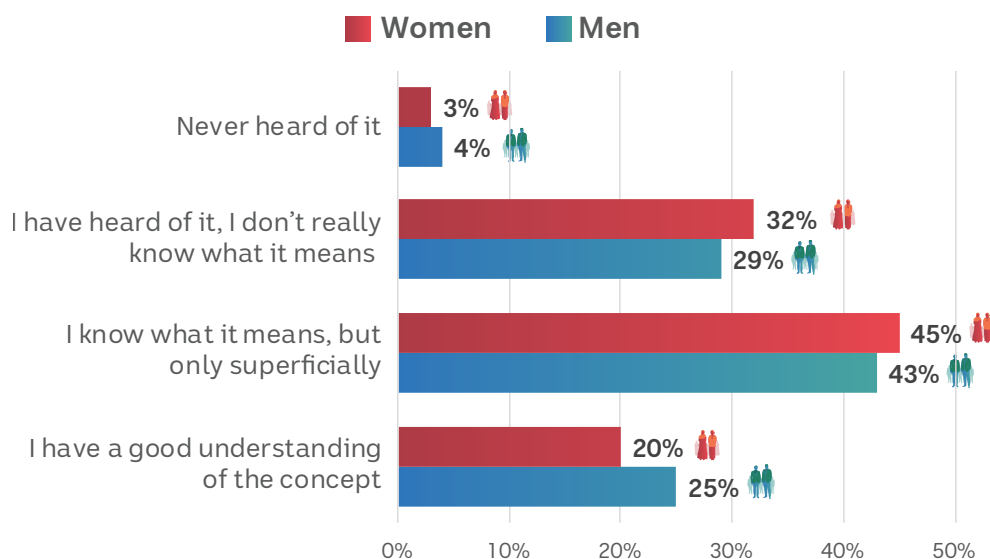
CONTEXT AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

2.1. Institutional aspect

Online gender-based violence is a novel concept both among journalists and in Indonesian society in general. The concept entered public discourse due to the increasing cases of gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, public discussion and awareness in relation to OGBV remains limited.

One of the interesting points to note from our survey findings is that there are minimal differences between men and women in journalism in terms of familiarity with OGBV and their respective information sources on OGBV. Journalists who self-report a good understanding of the concept are the minority, with men (25%) slightly higher than women (20%).

Figure 21: Are you familiar with the term online gender-based violence?



Total respondents: 132 women, 53 men

Online articles and social media posts are the information sources most frequently used by both men and women journalists to understand OGBV. Our findings diverge when we look at the impact of information sources. A high proportion of women journalists stated that online articles (66%) and social media posts (73%) have considerable (or more) influence on their understanding of OGBV, while more men journalists are influenced by training from employers (73%), online articles (68%), and CSO workshops (63%).

The significant influence of training – from both media institutions and CSOs – for men in journalism raises two important points. The first relates to implementation: while the percentages of men and women respondents who have attended employer training and CSO workshops are almost equal, attendees experience different impacts, with women journalists reporting less impact on their understanding of OGBV. This finding might indicate that the strategy or materials used in the training does not effectively engage with the experiences of women journalists. However, it might also be attributed to gendered differences in self-assessment, in which women tend to give lower self-ratings of themselves or their team performance than men (Scherpereel & Bowers, 2008; Beyer, 1990).

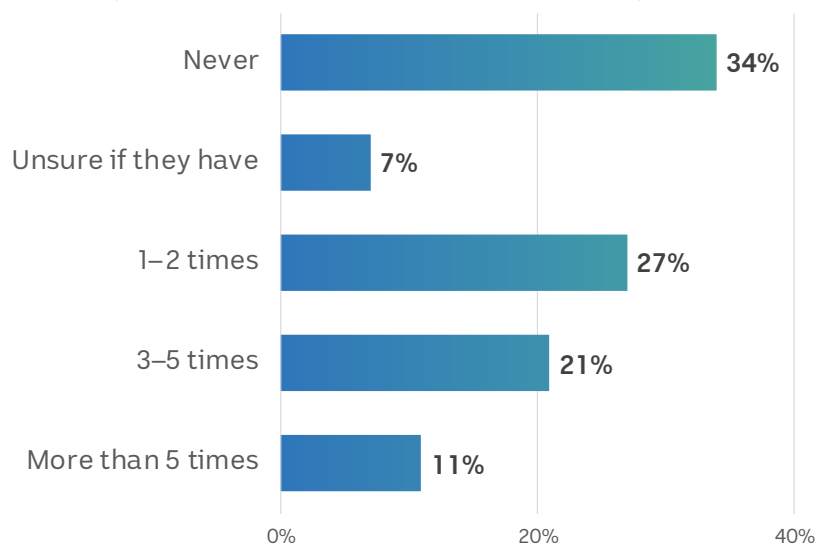
The second important point to discuss is the potential of CSOs and media institutions as strategic communicators in raising awareness of OGBV among men journalists. However, both actors have their own major challenges. CSOs that understand the complexity of OGBV experienced by women journalists are rare, and have limited capacity to reach the ever-growing number of online media. In the case of media institutions, awareness of OGBV among media management representatives themselves is low – some of the individuals we interviewed do not even have basic understanding of the concept. A media management representative from Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, for example, after being told of the concept of OGBV by the interviewer, misinterpreted the term as a program to combat online violence against women in journalism:

“ In my career as a journalist since 2000, frankly speaking, this is the first time I have heard of this. So, as I said earlier, I really appreciate the existence of this OGBV. Hopefully, it can help institutions to protect the dignity of women journalists in the next era.”

Media management representative, Man, Banjarbaru

While some other media management representatives are well acquainted with the concept, they stated that it is far from the institution’s priority, indicating that the media industry in general is slow in addressing gender issues in their practices. A media management representative from Jakarta stated: “We don’t know how massive OGBV is in our media. I think it’s not the priority yet for the company. We are just starting to think about gender equality recently, but we’re getting there.”

Figure 22: Have your women journalist colleagues ever confided in you about OGBV? (men)



Despite these challenges, a significant proportion (58%) of the men in this study stated that women they work with have confided their experience of OGBV to them. Their responses are also overwhelmingly normative, i.e. they acted in a way that would be considered supportive: the majority of the men respondents tried to protect the colleague (61%), and only 30% stated that they wanted to help but did not know what to do. The majority of men in the study also avoided downplaying their colleagues' experiences; they did not state that OGBV is an occupational risk (82%), a harmless joke (88%), or not as severe as physical harassment (85%).

While these findings indicate that the men in journalism we surveyed are generally gender-sensitive, it is also important to reiterate that the survey we conducted is by no means representative. Therefore, it cannot be generalised as a statistically accurate depiction of journalists' awareness. The survey was conducted to provide a snapshot and context for the qualitative data that we collected.

What can be inferred from these findings is the relative success of training and workshops conducted by media institutions and CSOs in helping men in journalism identify appropriate responses towards women in journalism who experience OGBV.

These findings underline the urgency of providing more OGBV training and workshops for journalists by employers and/or CSOs, and ensuring equal opportunity for women to access training and workshops.

2.2. Sociological aspect

There is a common sociological theme indicated by women journalists as a major challenge in addressing OGBV, related to social exchange with both men journalists and news sources. Information, in the male-dominated field of journalism, is currency. This often requires women to adopt the mannerisms, worldview, and behaviours of their male counterparts as part of being "professional journalists". Failure to fit into social expectations – such as an inability to ignore online harassment, so that the woman journalist is seen as "overreacting" – may result in exclusion and inhibition in accessing information.

The drive to gain access to information requires women in journalism to build close relationships both with men they work with and with news sources. Our participants stated that journalists should be open and sociable; they need to be able to be friendly with people from various backgrounds. However, this “obligatory” friendly attitude and closeness are often abused by colleagues and news sources, who then make the woman vulnerable to unwanted sexual advances.

“ When male colleagues want to talk about work, I’m scared. Because in my experience before, we were also both talking about work in the beginning, but they always ended up talking about sexual things.”

Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

There are two things to note here. The first is about how men in journalism perceive what causes OGBV. As part of the survey, we presented 10 statements regarding OGBV. An overwhelming majority of men affirmed the normative opinion. The respondents disagreed with normalising sexually suggestive jokes (95%) or that sexual harassment only involves physical contact (88%). They also felt that men should create a comfortable working environment for women (96%).

However, it is also important to note that, based on field researchers’ observations and conversations with respondents, sexually suggestive jokes are common in the workplace and WhatsApp groups (discussed further in the next subsection, “Cultural context”).

The survey of men in journalism also found that a considerable proportion of respondents believe that women in journalism are also responsible for the OGBV that they have experienced. Respondents believe that women should be aware that there will always be men who want to approach them sexually and need to learn how to handle it (66%); that women provoke sexual harassment through their words, body language, and clothing (48%); and that women should dress and act modestly if they truly don’t want to experience harassment (54%).

This view is also internalised by the women in journalism in this study, showing how women reflect after experiencing OGBV, and think about the clothing they wear (as discussed in section 1). Interestingly, a lot of women in the study wear a hijab. They also pay a lot of attention to the way they dress when out in the field. A journalist from Bandung, West Java, illustrated this practice of taking extra measures to cover up as much of her body as possible:

“ When I am covering crime news, such as prostitution or police raids, I wear a big sweater and a hat. So, wearing a hijab means also wearing inner hijab. I also use chest binder to flatten my breasts.”

Freelance reporter, Woman, Bandung, 5–10 years of experience

The second point that needs to be highlighted is about the repercussions of addressing OGBV. As previously mentioned, information is currency in journalism, and women are the minority in the media industry. This situation requires them often to rely on men to access information. A journalist from Pekanbaru illustrated this experience during our interview:

“ But it [telling off men journalists for harassment] has an impact. News leads usually come from other journalists, most of the time you don’t get it directly from the sources. That’s why it’s really uncomfortable. You have to deal with them every day.”

Field reporter, Woman, Pekanbaru, 1–2 years of experience

Similarly, fear of repercussion also arose in OGBV cases involving news sources. OGBV often occurred in the context of a perceived close connection between the news source and the journalist as they communicated throughout the journalist’s fieldwork. This connection, on the one hand, gives full access to the source when the journalist needs interviews or confirmation on a public issue; but, on the other hand, it makes journalists feel uncomfortable and unable to address OGBV properly.

“ It happens when they [information sources] feel close to us. They have easy access to us, it seems like there’s no boundaries, they can call us at any time. Because we need them. Even though he needs us, journalists, we also need him. He also felt that... he thought it was impossible for us to reject him. Why? Because they have given us a lot. It means the need for a resource person, when we need them, we ask for their help, and they are able to help. That way, they are confident that we won’t refuse them because of the closeness as well.”

Managing editor, Woman, Pekanbaru, 5–10 years of experience

2.3. Cultural context

While the men in this study affirm fewer problematic views in regard to OGBV specifically (approx. 2%–13%), a significant proportion of respondents affirm gender stereotypes and expectations. A relatively high percentage of respondents believe that women are susceptible to bias and find it difficult to remain objective (32%), that women cannot focus on their work after getting married (32%), and that women in journalism easily get offended and exaggerate problems (20%).

Despite efforts to adopt gender-inclusive views in the media industry – which survey respondents affirm to some extent – journalism is still dominated by men, who often espouse patriarchal values. Being a journalist is not always considered an acceptable career choice for women, who are sometimes considered a joke, as experienced by a journalist in Bandung, West Java:

“ I used to work in a media that had few women journalists. They were like, “heureuy mereun” [literally, “what a joke”]. They said, “did your mother want you to be like this?”

Freelance reporter, Woman, Bandung, 5–10 years of experience

During interviews, women participants stated that they felt judged as unfit, due to their gender, to become journalists – a profession that requires objectivity, impartiality, and reason – as women are often perceived to be subjective and biased, driven by emotion. According to participants, this gendered assumption is what makes the media reluctant to put women on a certain desk, such as the crime desk, that they deem more prone to the perceived subjectivity of women. Although women do work on crime desks and they can perform as well as men, they are treated as exceptions and this preconception persists. Another participant from Bandung, West Java, stated this experience:

“ Everything is related back to the fact that we are women. I think we just want to work professionally. But often we are treated like, “oh, don’t place women in crime reporting.” I experienced that. But in fact, I performed well when I was at the crime desk. They gave me more tiring, more difficult, and more challenging tasks, but I did well. But the view persists, women should not be in the [crime] field, because they just want to protect fellow women.”

Freelance reporter, Woman, Bandung, 5–10 years of experience

Inherent sexism rooted within the media newsroom often leads to task assignments that are not based on skills but instead on gender. Women are considered “eye candy”; their very presence is believed to make people feel positive. As a consequence, women are often involved in media events or activity as “social lubricant”. A journalist from Pekanbaru illustrated this experience:

“ I realised that, every time there was any activity, women had to be present. They say that, if there were women, things would go smoothly.”

Field reporter, Woman, Pekanbaru, 1–2 years of experience

This gender-based task distribution is also present in desk assignments, which often puts journalists at risk of gender-based violence. The assignments are often given without informed consent, and media institutions often failed to provide support if journalists experienced harassment – they often forced the journalist to fit into the sexist culture she has to work in. A journalist in Jakarta spoke of her experience in detail:

“ When I contacted news sources from the police force, most of them were flirtatious. It’s like I was enabling them. When I called, I had to like comply to their culture by acting innocent. What annoys me is that those in the police force and in the army tend to be flirtatious, and the media tend to put women in those posts so that the police are willing to talk and be open. I think it’s really shitty and disgusting. But on the other hand, I was also pressured by my editor. I was more afraid of my editor, so I went with the flow. So, it’s like forcing yourself more so that it’s easier to get information. However, we have to adapt to a sexist culture like this”

Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

Cultural barriers are also significant in resolving OGBV cases. Gender stereotypes and related views that women often exaggerate their experience are held by a significant number of men journalists (20%). Disbelief by fellow journalists and superiors, blaming women's behaviour and clothing, followed by advice to be "strong" as a journalist, are all often faced by our women journalist participants. As a result, it is common for survivors to keep quiet and convince themselves that their experience is insignificant. Many women in journalism feel that it is taboo to talk about OGBV – especially what they have experienced themselves – with fellow journalists.

This also became apparent during the fieldwork in Banjarbaru, South Kalimantan, to the point that the field researchers were unable to collect sufficient survey and interview data. During the respondent recruitment phase, the researchers contacted dozens of women in journalism. A significant number of them stated that they have experienced one or more forms of OGBV, but they refused to be interviewed.

The field team for this research found that the journalists had two overarching reasons not to participate in the study. The first is that they feel their experience is insignificant and negligible – that it is a common and normal experience, and should not be blown out of proportion. The second is that these experiences are aib ("dishonour" or "shameful"). In Islamic teaching – a religious faith that is deeply held by the majority of Indonesians – it is frowned upon to talk about the aib of others or oneself. Both these reasons not only indicate how normalised OGBV has become, but also signify the traumatic nature of OGBV that prevents survivors from speaking up.

To conclude this section, it is apparent that there is a paradox within the media industry. On the one hand, the industry does try to be gender-inclusive and to adopt the view that journalism should be a safe space for women; but, on the other hand, gender stereotypes and sexism persist on a deeper sociological and cultural level, putting women at risk of gender-based violence. One journalist from Pekanbaru summed up this phenomenon:

“But at least there are still some who care. Maybe, at the beginning, there would definitely be rejections, [people saying] there's no need for that. For example, they [men in journalism] said something like, “yes, this [ending sexual violence] is good.” But then they don't do it in practice. So, I feel sad and confused too. Do they really support the cause?”

Field reporter, Woman, Pekanbaru, 1–2 years of experience

This paradox might also contribute to the disregard of OGBV among women in journalism themselves. While gender mainstreaming has entered the conscious realm of journalism – in some media and journalist circles, it is a growing discourse – it has yet to change the subconscious realm of journalistic practices and social interaction. A journalist from Kendari stated that, although she has experienced OGBV, she is “not too bothered” and remains ignorant:

“Oh, maybe it's because I'm not too bothered by what they have done to me. I am a bit ignorant about the issue. When I realised it was a form of OGBV, it just passed out of my mind.”

Field reporter, Woman, Kendari, 3–5 years of experience

This ignorance might have two possible interpretations. The first is that it indicates the discourse available has yet to challenge the deeply rooted misogyny that normalises gender-based violence in the journalism field. But it can also be interpreted, secondly, as the defence mechanism of women in journalism to survive in a masculine and misogynistic working environment. This is related to the “nature” of the journalistic environment, that expects women to toughen up to survive. A participant from Jakarta illustrated this point during an interview:

“ There are so many of them [sexual advances through digital platforms], so many that I don’t pay attention to them. Actually, that’s not good. But because I’m tired, I just ignore them.”

Field reporter, Woman, Jakarta, 3–5 years of experience



WOMEN JOURNALISTS' ROLE IN TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The participants in this study seem to have two contrasting responses to their experience of OGBV in relation to their journalistic work. Mentally, some participants become unable to write about gender-based violence and prefer to avoid the topic. A journalist from Jakarta illustrated this response during an interview:

“ In the end, I think that, this sexual violence issue, as long as I can't get myself to write it, it's better not to... I don't want to because it's exhausting. There are many things that can be triggering. ”

Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

There are also those whose experiences are the complete opposite. Some participants feel the calling to cover the issue after experiencing OGBV, such as this participant from Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi.

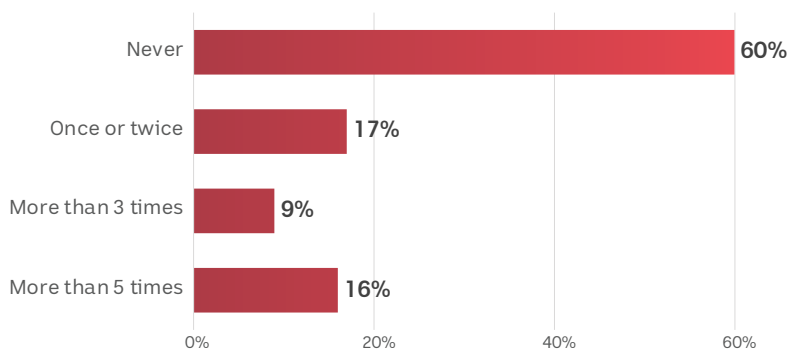
“ I tend to highlight cases of women who frequently experience sexual violence. The [OGBV] articles have many readers. One person that I remember to be very concerned about women's issues is a famous lawyer who is very caring when I write about it. He is very caring and one of those who often protect women. ”

Editor, Woman, Kendari, 5–10 years of experience

The survey for this study found that 40% of women participants have written on OGBV, and 16% have written more than five stories. However, it is difficult for survivors to write on traumatic events similar to those they themselves have experienced. The first and continual challenge for participants is engaging with their trauma throughout the writing process. A participant from Jakarta reflected on her experiences during an interview:

“ We have to control ourselves, because every time we write a sexual violence case, we have to know that this is not our story. Controlling ourselves is very difficult. I can relate with it. I am also a survivor. ”

Field reporter, Woman, Jakarta, 3–5 years of experience

Figure 23: Throughout your career as a journalist, have you ever written a news piece on gender-based violence?

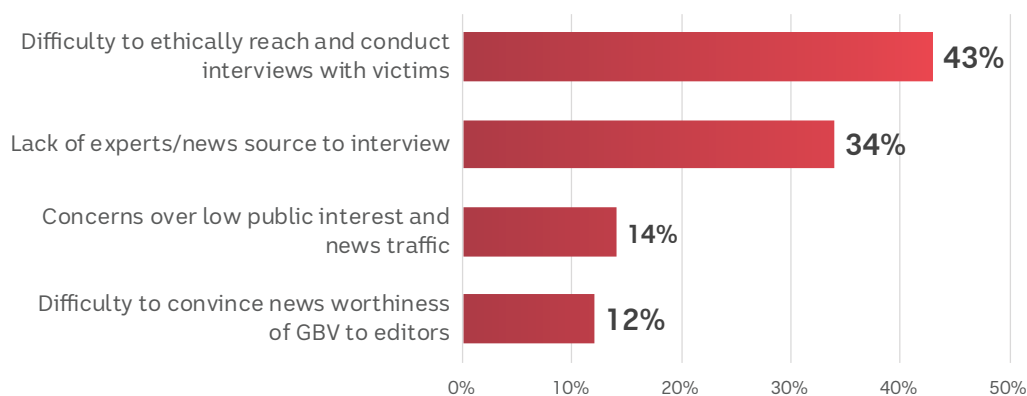
Survey responses from OGBV survivors also found that the most prominent challenges in reporting OGBV relate to finding and interacting with news sources, such as difficulty in ethically reaching and conducting interviews with survivors (43%) and lack of experts or news sources to interview (34%). This made journalists rely more on official statements from the police, as mentioned by a participant from Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi:

“It’s difficult to reach the person [survivor] or perpetrator. So, it’s usually from the police releases.”

Field reporter, Woman, Kendari, 1–3 years of experience

Figure 24: What are the most prominent challenges in writing about gender-based violence?

Number of respondents who have written on GBV: 53



This heavy reliance on police statements is problematic, considering that the Indonesian police has serious issues in its handling of sexual violence cases. Eddy OS Hiarij, Chair of the Task Force Team for drafting the Law on Criminal Sexual Violence in 2022 stated that only 5% of reported sexual violence cases are resolved by the police and judicial system². OGBV cases are often underestimated and not taken seriously. A report by Project Multatuli, an Indonesian alternative media initiative that often provides in-depth reporting on sexual violence³, investigates police officers’ unprofessional behaviour in handling OGBV cases, cornering the person, belittling their experience, and altogether displaying incompetence and lack of knowledge in handling GBV. The police also prioritise cases that have gone viral, the ones that membuat kegaduhan (literally, “create uproar”).

² [CNN Indonesia article, “Police-Prosecutors Only Solve 5% of Thousands of Sexual Violence Cases.”](#)

³ [Project Multatuli report about police officers’ unprofessional behaviour](#)

Police officers are also often reported as abusing their power and becoming or protecting sexual offenders. Another report by Project Multatuli⁴ unearthed local police force misconduct in the investigation of a case of child sexual abuse, perpetrated by the children's father who is also a local government officer. Participants in our study also reported that police officers often harass them when they are reporting from police stations.

With the police force having such a problematic track record in handling sexual abuse cases, journalists need other knowledgeable and independent news sources. Meanwhile, legal aid organisations and advocates against sexual violence have limited resources to provide legal assistance for the significant number of sexual violence cases in Indonesia.

Another prominent challenge discussed by participants relates to newsroom responses and assumed audience preferences. While some respondents are able to write on OGBV or gender-based violence in general, their superiors often criticise them for writing those stories, on the grounds of lack of audience interest. A participant from Jakarta, who used to work in a relatively conservative newsroom, illustrated her experience:

“They [my newsroom] don’t like those kinds of news [gender-based violence]. They are like, “Look at that, how much profit we got? How many page views? This is a serious case. Cases like this are not ‘sexy’.” At that time, I wrote about the case of a woman who was called a prostitute and was stripped naked in Padang. So, she was a karaoke guide and was accused of being pelakor [literally, “thief of other women’s spouses”]. They said, “Look, who will read news like that?” So, the readers [of my] media at that time didn’t like reading news on sexual violence.”

Freelance reporter, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

⁴ [Project Multatuli report about local police misconduct](#)

On the other hand, those who have never written on OGBV – 60% of respondents – gave the most significant reason as not being on the relevant desk (42%). As discussed in previous sections, gender is often a major factor in the desk placement of a journalist. Women in journalism are often not trusted to hold the crime desk, while the vast majority of GBV cases are covered on that desk.

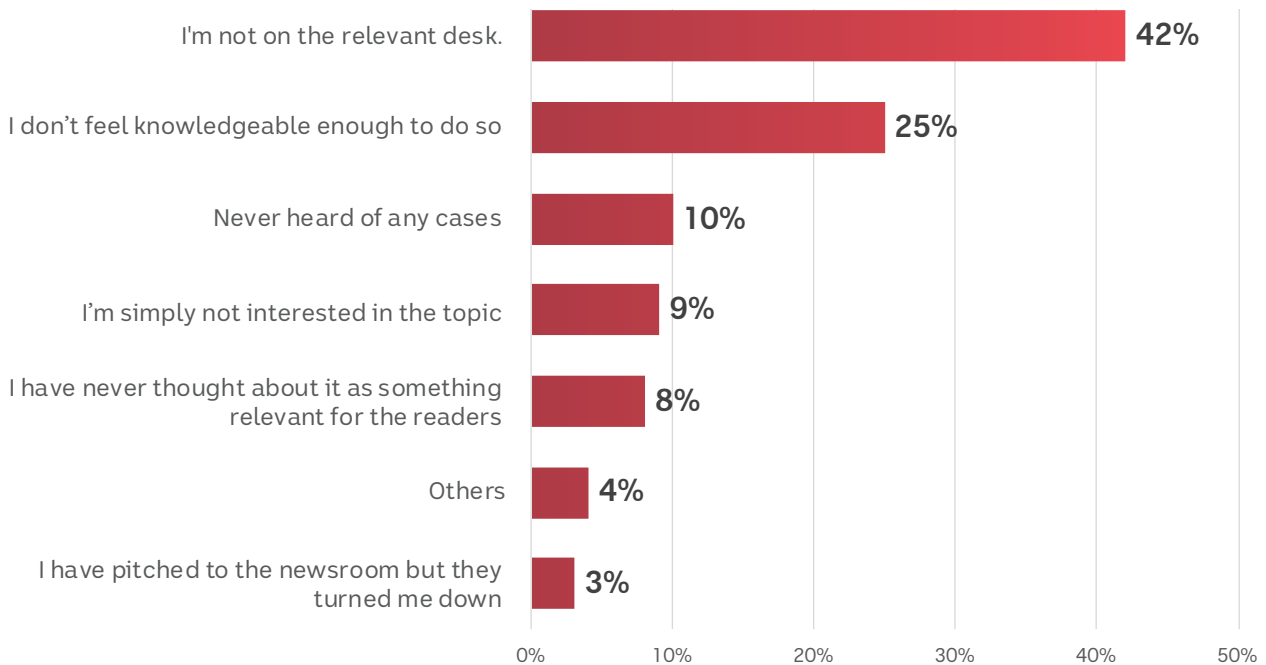
The second most cited reason for not writing on OGBV is lack of knowledge to cover the topic (25%). Media institutions lack the initiative to provide training programs to improve the capacity of journalists on gender-based violence issues. Women in journalism who do write on OGBV stated that they learn about the issue on their own initiative. A participant from Jakarta illustrated her experience in learning about gender-based violence issues:

“ Ideally, companies should provide space and encourage access for their journalists to learn, not seek it out themselves. In a limited time, journalists should be able to prepare, what will they report on tomorrow? In a limited time, do we have to look for workshops? And so on? It is very draining of time and energy. Especially when you already have children and family, it is not very feasible and it does not make sense to be delegated to individuals. Therefore, it is indeed necessary to provide leisure time for journalists to learn, and it should not cut into their off day. Because all the products produced are also for the company’s benefit.”

Editor, Woman, Jakarta, 5–10 years of experience

Figure 25: Among these sentences, which one closely describes your reason for never writing a news piece on online gender-based violence?

Number of respondents who have never written on OGBV: 77



Another journalist from Pekanbaru summed up the relationship between the media and their journalists succinctly:

“It seems like the media just lets us grow on our own, experience our own problems, make our own decisions for our own safety, and all. Neglect. [They expect you to] learn from fieldwork on your own, for your own growth.”

Editor in chief, Woman, Pekanbaru, 5–10 years of experience

With the lack of attention paid by media institutions to educating their journalists, those who earnestly want to learn about the issue turn to various sources. As we have stated, online articles and social media posts are the most common sources of information on OGBV. [Magdalene.co](https://magdalene.co) and [Konde.co](https://konde.co) are two widely cited online media platforms – both of which also have social media accounts – that are trusted sources on gender-based violence for participants. Both were founded by prominent women in journalism, and both state that it is their mission to advocate a feminist, progressive, and inclusive worldview.

Membership of progressive journalism associations is also a contributing factor to the depth of awareness and knowledge on GBV issues. Two organisations are cited as having specific concerns about GBV: Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (Independent Journalists Alliance) and Forum Jurnalis Perempuan Indonesia (Indonesian Women Journalists Forum).

Amidst this significant need for core journalistic training, there is a sharp disconnect between media companies and the education system. A survey in 2005 found that, although 81% of journalists are college graduates, only 17% of them majored in journalism (Hanitzsch, 2005). Our previous study (Heychael, 2021) on journalism programs in five major universities in Indonesia found that the number of women students is twice that of men students. However, 63% of the women students stated that they are not prioritising having a journalism career. Perceived gender discrimination during their media internship programs is one of the most significant barriers to choosing a journalism career.

This creates a vicious cycle: the media industry needs more women working as journalists, but knowledge and experience of sexism within journalistic practices makes women journalism students reluctant to consider journalism as a career choice.



CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



4.1. Conclusion

Online gender-based violence is a growing problem, both within Indonesian society and within the media industry. A significant number of women in journalism have experienced OGBV throughout their career. Our study found that these experiences have considerable mental health impacts, made survivors feel physically unsafe, and prompted respondents to seek medical or psychological support. The attacks also affected respondents' journalism practice: they avoid certain sources, avoid talking about certain topics in public, avoid responding to online audience interaction, and avoid being placed on certain beats or issues.

Politics and elections, gender, and human rights and social policy are the most common topics to trigger online abuse. This indicates that gender-based violence often becomes a tool to repress public interest journalism. OGBV also happens during daily journalistic work, mainly perpetrated by men colleagues and news sources, meaning that the act of coming into work and reporting is itself a risk factor.

Although some major news media institutions have shifted their orientation towards building a gender-sensitive workplace, these efforts are limited and insufficient to address the issue. Only a few respondents have reported their OGBV cases to their employers, and only half of those felt supported and received sufficient assistance. This assistance was mostly in the form of peer support, and a significant number of our respondents stated that their employer provides no assistance or system for dealing with what they experience online. This indicates that gender-based violence is seen as a concern of individual journalists – women who happen to hold positions in the media – and not an institutional concern.

Despite these conditions – and, in some cases, because of these conditions – women in journalism become strong advocates against gender-based violence. A significant number of our respondents have written stories on OGBV, and some of those have written more than five stories. The main challenges for those who have written on OGBV are difficulties in ethically interviewing survivors and a lack of experts. This in turn forces them to rely on police statements, even though the police are known to be unreliable in handling gender-based violence cases.

Those who have not written stories on OGBV stated as their main reasons that these stories are outside of their desk and that they lack knowledge on the issue. Those who have written stories on OGBV also noted that they have to take the initiative both to learn and to write on the issue, with no assistance or training from their media institution.

4.2. Recommendations

1. Focus on institutional change. Efforts to mitigate gender-based violence often focus on raising awareness among journalists. While this is a very important endeavour, our findings indicate that individual awareness is insufficient if it is not complemented by institutional support. Meanwhile, news organisations are severely lacking in awareness, knowledge, policy, and resources to address the issue.
2. Involve men in the conversation. Our study found that, while men in journalism are aware of normative ideas about (i.e., against) OGBV, this awareness has not entered into the cultural and sociological aspects of their practice. Meanwhile, journalists and news sources who are men are often the perpetrators of OGBV. Therefore, it is important to provide gender-sensitivity training that focuses on addressing men's viewpoints and behaviours.
3. Amplify the discourse. The majority of our respondents are aware of the concept of OGBV, but cultural and sociological barriers often force them to downplay its effect and to try to accept it as normal experience. Talking about GBV that they have experienced, whether online or offline, is often considered taboo. It is important to initiate more conversations and sharing among journalists that emphasises the effect of OGBV and encourages them to have open and safe discussion.



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