Master's Program in Global Journalism

3GJ322: Theoretical MA Thesis

Submission date: 12th Feb 2024

ONLINE HARASSMENT: EXPERIENCE OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS OF NEPAL

Candidate no: 200

NLA University College, Kristiansand

ABSTRACT

This research is about the experience of online harassment of women journalists in Nepal. It aimed to find the forms of online harassment that women journalists have faced, and how it hampered them personally and professionally. Additionally, it also sheds light on the measures used by female journalists and media organizations to address online harassment in Nepal. To accomplish the research, in-depth interviews were taken with 15 people. Of which 10 were female journalists and 5 were owners of the media organization of Nepal. The findings reveal that women journalists witness a significant number of online harassment in various forms like online stalking, sexual and gender-based online violence, intimidation, and manipulation, privacy breaches, account hacking, etc. This harassment has led many victims to change their way of using social media and online platforms. As a result, women journalists have become unwantedly more cautious about writing and speaking about certain topics that trigger the harassers like equality, political issues, etc. Most of the interviewed women journalists replied they didn't speak immediately after the incidents happened due to fear of victim blaming and chances of losing their jobs and reputations. However, two female journalists filed a case against harassers who encouraged everyone to speak out and share about the situation. Both media owners and women journalists say, that if they try to speak out against harassment, many positive helpful hands come to support them. Online harassment poses a significant challenge to women journalists in Nepal, impacting their freedom and safety online, the willingness to confront and discuss these issues openly has the potential to foster a supportive environment. However, there is a critical need for enhanced resources and education on digital safety and privacy to effectively combat online harassment.

Keywords: Online harassment, sexual harassment, journalism, stalking, trolling, female journalists, digital safety, qualitative analysis, freedom of expression, Nepali journalists, social media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABBREVIATIONS

FNJ: Federation of Nepali Journalists

PCN: Press Council Nepal

MAG: Media Advocacy Group

NTA: Nepal Telecommunication Authority

CBS: Central Bureau of Statistics of Government of Nepal

ICTS: Information Communication and Technologies

RSF: Reporters Without Borders

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relevance of the study

Digital journalism has become more engaging for both news consumers and journalists due to social media. The primary information gathering tool is social media for many journalists (Weaver & Willnat, 2016). News and articles are not only published on news portals but also shared on the social media accounts of journalists and media houses. Journalistic norms, practices and newsrooms culture has been impacted from social media (Djerf-Pierre et al., 2020). The daily routine of journalists is quite different these days due to social media engaging with audiences and news sources.

Journalists are used to online comments and interactions with their audience (Chen & Pain, 2017). Digital platforms have become valuable tools for discussing societal issues (Carter Olson, 2016). While there are obvious benefits of the internet for journalism and journalists, it is essential to acknowledge that it has a darker side. Instances of public shaming, cyberstalking, trolling, and intimidation as pointed out by Koirala in 2020 shows the negative sides that co-exist with positive potential of the internet (Koirala, 2020). Journalists are increasingly subject to attacks professionally and personally. Women journalists are particularly at risk, with hate speech, physical threats, and online trolling. These strategies are deployed with the intent of silencing the voice of women journalists as well as to damage their credibility and reputations (Lu & Luqiu, 2023). Journalists report that online harassment has become a part of their profession which causes fatigue, anxiety, and forced them to maintain distance from their work where they have to use social media (Holton et al., 2021).

Ferrier and Patkar (2018) state that online harassment of journalists has been present since the inception of the Internet but has become more prevalent with the rise of social media. Online harassment involves several types of behaviors and attacks by using internet platforms like offensive name calling, stalking, purposeful name calling, threats of violence, privacy invasions, false accession to destroy reputation, sexual harassment, and technological attacks and of mistreating, threatening, or causing harm to an individual or group by using either real or fake identity over the internet (Citron, 2014; Duggan, 2017; Mantilla, 2013). As per Posetti et al.,

gender based online violence involves "Misogynistic harassment, abuse and threats, Digital privacy and security breaches that increase physical risks associated with online violence, coordinated disinformation campaigns leveraging misogyny and other forms of hate speech" (Posetti et al., 2021, p. 10). Regarding the anonymity of the internet, Adams argues, "Cyberspace enables users to behave as though in an imaginary world where people do not really get hurt internet isn't 'real life'" (Adams, 2017, p. 864). Previously, it used to be verbal abuse within the family, friends, and neighbors circle when female journalists talk about equality and inclusion. But digital advancement has made it easier for abusers to operate without being face to face. So, they have become cruel and rude more than before (Subedi, 2021).

The increasing misuse of online platforms is a growing concern for many researchers. "There is nothing virtual about online violence. It has become a new frontline in the journalism safety and women journalists sit at the epicenter of risk" (Posetti et al., 2021, p. 1). Waisbord (2020) says marginalized groups have historically faced repression and censorship when speaking out to demand political recognition and social rights. Online harassments are more commonly experienced by women than men (Duggan, 2017; Lewis et al., 2020).

In Nepal's patriarchal society, patriarchy influences the political beliefs. Its consequences are seen in exclusion of women in decision- and policymaking, which is often a male-dominated space. Feminist movements therefore struggled to achieve expected results or creating sustainable change (Khadgi, 2022). Many female journalists have been targeted of online harassment for reporting on the story's topics like patriarchy, religious doctrines and inequality (Subedi, 2021). In Nepal, journalism is also mostly run by men, with only 19% of journalists are women among 13, 077 journalists in total as per report of Federation of Nepalese Journalists in 2022 (FNJ, 2022).

In a survey report by Media Advocacy Group, gender stereotypes and gender biasness in media has resulted on fewer women journalists report on mainstream beat like foreign affairs and diplomacy (MAG, 2023). Patriarchal society expects women to behave and express themselves in ways that align with patriarchal beliefs. Female journalists face harassment both in their workplace and in public especially, when they express their opinion that goes against the patriarchal beliefs. Moreover, with the rise of the internet and social media, this type of harassment has expanded to include messages, emails, and comments that defame and harass female journalists online. This new form of digital harassment is not only affecting to the life of the women journalists but also to

journalistic content and society (Adams, 2017). Women journalists have formulated numerous strategies to handle abuse from limit the social media use, block the offensive comments, change the content and its focus from the report (Chen et al., 2020).

As a previous journalist of Nepal, this author is being aware on some news articles related to online harassment to female journalists. The news comes from the journalists' sides where news media remain mostly silent in addressing the situation of online harassment. Studies have been conducted in Nepal to assess the impact of online harassment on women journalists and differences between online harassment on male and female journalists. However, there has been little exploration on the strategies used by female journalists and media organizations to face the online harassment. Consequently, to address this gap, this study is particularly motivated to examine the different forms of online harassment experienced by female journalists in Nepal and its personal and professional impact. Additionally, the study will explore the various strategies implemented by female journalists to combat digital harassment and the approaches favored by media organizations to tackle online harassment.

1.2 Statement of the problem

The increasing trend of digital journalism in Nepal has led journalists, including female journalists, to rely heavily on the internet for news collection, presentation, and audience engagement. While utilizing its advantages, it has also exposed them to negative online activities such as public shaming, cyberstalking, trolling, and intimidation (Koirala, 2020). In a research report from Media Advocacy Group (MAG) found that among female journalists surveyed, 88.6 percent have faced some sort of online violence in their life. In which 53 percent reveal this was related to their work in journalism profession. These online threats directly and indirectly aim to suppress the diverse voices necessary for a functioning democracy (2022). Female journalists, who already face challenges due to their gender and underrepresentation in the male-dominated journalism sector, are particularly vulnerable.

The research problem arises from the fact that despite a notable increase in online harassment against female journalists and time and again the news of harassment and complaints come on media. But the action against such incidents remains largely unaddressed and underreported in a society characterized by patriarchal and traditional values (Khadgi, 2022). The research by Koirala (2020) indicates that the number of female journalists facing online harassment is on the rise, and

3

due to societal pressures, many women do not speak out about their experiences. This silence may further encourage the offenders. After the online harassment, the act of women journalists in limiting use of social media and quitting or changing the profession hampers in the overall media industry of Nepal allowing male to be predominant in profession (Manandhar, 2022).

Journalism is considered as the fourth estate in society. But the inability of media house and journalists to openly address online harassment raises concerns about self-censorship, less diversity in media works and many other personal and professional impact on them. To address this gap, this study aims to examine the different forms of online harassment experienced by female journalists in Nepal including the personal and professional impact. Additionally, the study will explore the various strategies implemented by female journalists to combat digital harassment and the approaches favored by media organizations to tackle online harassment.

1.3 Objective of the study

This study aims to examine Nepalese female journalists' experiences of online harassment and how such issues have affected their personal and professional lives. Moreover, the nature of such cases of harassment, and how have female journalists tackled the situations and how the media organizations help regarding online harassment cases that the study is focused on.

This research endeavors to delve into the unique experiences of Nepalese female journalists concerning online harassment, with a particular focus on understanding the profound impact of such adversities on their personal and professional spheres. By exploring the nature and characteristics of these harassment incidents, this study seeks to provide an insightful analysis of how female journalists navigate and respond to the challenging and, at times, hostile online environments they encounter. The objective is to shed light on the resilience and coping strategies employed by women journalists in the face of digital harassment, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the intricacies surrounding their lived experiences in the realm of journalism.

1.4 Research questions

This research aims to answer three important questions regarding female journalists in Nepal and their experience with online harassment. These questions are as follows:

RQ1. What is the nature of online harassment that female journalists have faced in Nepal?

This research question has been chosen to investigate what the nature of online harassment in the context of Nepal are. The previous studies have shown female journalists have faced online harassment, but this research question is to gain insight into the online medium and nature of online harassment targeted to female journalists in Nepal.

RQ2. How has online harassment impacted their personal and professional lives?

This research question has been formulated to see the personal and professional level impact of online harassment on female journalists. The answer to this question shed light on the consequences of online harassment on the personal and professional level.

RQ3. What steps women journalists and media organization have taken to combat these situations?

This question has been formulated to find out the strategies taken by female journalists themselves to respond the online harassment. Further, the answer provides the legal provisions of combating online harassment in Nepal, and the role of media organization in helping to come out form the situation.

1.5 Scope of the study

Studying on online harassment on women journalists in Nepal is broad and significant issue. Every society and profession have already integrated the internet as a necessary platform for the betterment of their performance. The topic sheds light on technology, media, society, gender perspective and exemplary condition of developing country Nepal. The very first study will cover the different forms of online violence prevalence in Nepalese society and the highly used online platforms of online violence. While studying the personal and professional impact of online violence one can understand the mental well-being of the journalists, professional performance, and career orientation. It also shows the necessity of examining laws related to cyber bullying, privacy, and freedom of expression. Moreover, the role of journalists related organization to support the journalists to get rid from the problem and to promote the safe online environment. By addressing these above-mentioned dimensions, the study will contribute on creating safe online environment for female journalists in Nepal.

1.6 Nepal and the status of women in Nepalese society

Nepal is officially known as the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal since 2008. It is a mountainous landlocked country located in South Asia. It is situated in between two bigger nations based on its geography, India, and China. According to the 2021 report from the Central Bureau of

Statistics of Nepal, the current population of Nepal is more than 30 million people, in which females comprise 51.1% and males comprise 48.9%. The literacy rate in Nepal is only 76.2% on average, with males having a higher literacy rate of 83.6% compared to females only at 69.4% (CBS, 2021).

In terms of culture and religion, Nepalese society is heavily influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions, with smaller followings of Muslim, Christian, and other faiths. It is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society that became the Federal Democratic Republic in 2008 after the abolition of the monarchy. Nepalese society has been historically patriarchal, with the country being ruled by kings and male prime ministers. "The women of Nepal are still not freed from the burden of living in a patriarchal society" (Upreti et al., 2020, p. 15). Patriarchal culture has contributed to gender disparity in Nepalese society (Shrestha & Gartaulla, 2015). The lack of educational opportunities for women is the primary reason why they have been lagging in all sectors. Despite women making up more than half of the population, their representation in various aspects of society is very low. Women's participation in politics, education, equal economic opportunities, and other critical aspects of society has been significantly lower than men's in the past. Such gender inequalities are justified with tradition and culture. "Both caste and family-specific privileges have been central for propelling women in leadership positions" (Tamang, 2011, p. 282). The traditional gender roles have historically confined women to the roles of homemakers and caregivers within the family. Women in Nepal are limited within the house with very less opportunities in life and in decision making (Lamichhane et al., 2011).

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 guarantees the right to equality in article no.18. In which clause (2) have mentioned, "No discrimination shall be made in the application of general laws on grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, physical condition, condition of health, marital status, pregnancy, economic condition, language or region, ideology or on similar other grounds" (p.15). Likewise, clause (4) further clarifies, "No discrimination shall be made on the ground of gender with regard to remuneration and social security for the same work" (p.16). Similarly, article no. 38 is about rights of women which ensured no discrimination based on gender. Moreover, clause (3) has detail clarifies, "No woman shall be subjected to physical, mental, sexual, psychological or other form of violence or exploitation on grounds of religion, social, cultural tradition, practice or on any other grounds. Such an act shall be punishable by law, and the victim shall have the right to

obtain compensation in accordance with law" (p. 25). Additionally, the right to education, article no 31 provides access to free basic education up to the secondary level to every citizen. Furthermore, to strengthen the women representation, the constitution has made a significant legal reform by ensuring at least 33% seats to women in parliament for the representation of women in political parties and public institutions (Constitution of Nepal, 2015).

The laws in the country have been strengthened to empower women, which will lead to a stronger position for women in the future. Though the constitution has ensured 33 percent participation of women in politics, there are often doubts upon them ability in fulfilling their roles. Instead of focusing on different way to address women being discriminated against and the lack of opportunities they have for equal participation, people tend to blame on the women of not being ready yet (Upreti et al., 2020). However, it may take some time to change cultural norms and practices to ensure full gender equality.

1.7 Penetration of the internet and online users in Nepal

According to a recent report from the Nepal Telecommunications Authority (NTA) in 2023, internet usage in Nepal has exceeded than the country's total population. The report indicates that 134% of the population has an internet subscription, it might be because of the subscriptions of individuals with multiple connections. The report also highlights that mobile internet plays a significant role in internet penetration, accounting for 94.88%, while fixed broadband contributes only 40% (NTA, 2023).

According to Kemp (2023), over 41% of Nepal's population actively uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Facebook Messenger, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, and LinkedIn etc. A research report of Koirala (2020) suggests that the journalists who work on online media remain more active online fulfilling the requirement necessary to their job. This makes it easier for the audience to identify them in comparison to the journalists who work on print or radio media.

The Nepal Police Cyber Bureau's latest report for 2021/2022 shows that 4,686 cybercrime cases have been registered. In which, over 2,900 of these cases were filed by women and girls. The report highlights that the most commonly misused social media platform for committing crimes is Facebook Messenger, followed by TikTok. Other social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Viber, YouTube, and WhatsApp have also been misused for online harassment and criminal

activities (The Nepal Police Cyber Bureau, 2022). A study on online harassment of women journalists has revealed in a report mentioning Facebook messenger as the main medium of online violence in Nepal (MAG, 2022).

1.8 Current status of Nepali media

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) recently released the World Press Freedom Index 2023, ranking Nepal in 95th place among 180 countries (Reporters Without Borders, 2023). This marks a drop from last year's ranking of 76th place. According to the Press Council Nepal's 2022 annual report, there are a total of 7,911 newspapers registered with the Department of Information and Broadcasting. Out of these, only 4,825 are officially registered with the Press Council Nepal, and many of them are not currently published. The 4,825 registered newspapers consist of 717 dailies, 30 bi-weekly papers, 2,279 weeklies, 400 fortnightly, 595 monthly magazines, and 204 published twice a year or annually. Based on the same report most of the Nepali news outlets are located in the capital city, Kathmandu, while others are situated in major cities such as Pokhara, Butwal, and Biratnagar. As per the Department of Information and Broadcasting's 2022 annual report, 931 FM radios and 186 televisions have been approved to broadcast, with 1,049 online media outlets being registered on their portal. Many of these outlets continue to broadcast regularly. These numbers are official and sourced from the government portal. However, it's difficult to ascertain how many news portals are operating without registration (PCN, 2022, p. 137).

The FNJ (Federation of Nepali Journalists) is an umbrella organization of journalists working in Nepal. From the report of 2022 of FNJ, the number of journalists working across the country in print, digital, and modern online media is more than 13,000 (FNJ, 2022). This professional representative body is associated with many international organizations and works towards ensuring the professional and physical security of journalists. However, membership to journalists' associations in Nepal is voluntary, so the actual number of journalists in Nepal is likely higher than the number reported by the FNJ.

1.9 Organization of the study

The research focuses on three main areas. Firstly, it aims to provide information on the nature of online harassment in Nepal. Secondly, it explores the personal and professional impact of online harassment on women journalists. Lastly, it discusses the measures that female journalists have taken to cope with these problems. The thesis comprises five major chapters. The first chapter provides background information and introduces the study, research problem, objectives, research questions, and significance. The background information includes the status of women in Nepalese society and the status of female journalists. The second chapter discusses relevant theories and literature reviews. The third chapter focuses on the methodologies used in the study, including sample selection and data collection tools and techniques. The fourth chapter presents the findings. Finally, the last chapter includes discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review of this paper will include two separate sections. The first section will try to find out some relevant previous studies on online harassment In Nepal and worldwide, the context of Nepal and the second section will focus on the theoretical framework of the study. A significant number of studies have been conducted on online harassment. Especially focusing on gender-based online harassment in different countries.

2.1 Understanding online harassment

The UN defines online violence in a 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective' by Human Rights Council as:

> "Online violence against women therefore extends to any act of gender-based violence against women that is committed, assisted or aggravated in part or fully by the use of ICT, such as mobile phones and smartphones, the Internet, social media platforms or email, against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately" (Simonovic, 2018, p.7).

Associations for Progressive Communications highlights some of the characteristics of ICT based harassment like anonymity, action at a distance, automation, accessibility and propagation. In which abusive person can remain unknown, harm can be done from anywhere by using technology which is easily accessible and propagates images and information to victimize women (Fascendini & Fialová, 2011, p. 27-28).

Online harassment involves several types of behaviors and attacks by using internet platforms like offensive name calling, stalking, purposeful name calling, threats of violence, privacy invasions, false accession to destroy reputation, sexual harassment, and technological attacks (Citron, 2014; Duggan, 2017).

According to UNESCO's 'The Chilling: Global Trends on Online Violence Against Women Journalists', gender based online violence involves "Misogynistic harassment, abuse and threats, Digital privacy and security breaches that increase physical risks associated with online violence, coordinated disinformation campaigns leveraging misogyny and other forms of hate speech" (Posetti et al., 2021, p. 10).

Online harassment is termed as 'Gender trolling' by Mantilla (2013) where it is defined as the act of mistreating, threatening, or causing harm to an individual or group by using either real or fake identity over the internet. Regarding the anonymity of the internet, Adams argues, "Cyberspace enables users to behave as though in an imaginary world where people do not really get hurt internet isn't 'real life'" (Adams, 2017, p. 864).

2.2 Previous studies on online harassment in Nepal and worldwide

Online harassment is a global problem that has been increasing in recent years. Although research on online harassment of female journalists in Nepal is limited, there are a few studies that provide some insight into the issue.

A survey study titled 'Online Violence against Women Journalists' was conducted in 2022 by Media Advocacy Group (MAG) with the support of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung-Nepal. The study has brought light concerning findings, indicating that the 88.6 percent of women journalists who were part of the survey, has revealed they have encountered online violence at some point in their lives. Out of 88.6 percent 53 percent female journalists reported that the online violence they have experienced was especially linked to their profession of journalism. The survey was conducted between May 1, 2022, to August 31, 2022, and included 500 women journalists. Notably, only 11.4 percent of the women journalists who participated in the survey reported having heard of online violence but not experienced it directly. Additionally, 21.4 percent of the respondents disclosed that the violence they have initially encountered was not limited within online and turned into physical attacks or threats later (MAG, 2022).

Based on the same report, Facebook Messenger is the primary platform where online violence occurs the most. The data clearly indicates that out of the respondents, 62.3 percent said they experience online violence through Facebook Messenger. Twitter (X) followed 15.3 percent, while 12.8 percent said Whatsapp, 11.7 percent indicated Viber, 6 percent pointed to email, and 4.6 percent said Instagram is a social media platform where they faced online harassment. These percentages reveal how online and social media platforms are used to increase violence against women journalists. Moreover, the online harassment they have been getting from the own colleagues inside the office, colleagues of outside the workplace, anonymous sources, political parties affiliated people, news sources, government officials and so on. Social media is not a

choice, but a necessity for journalists in their line of work (MAG, 2022).

In her article 'Female Journalists' Experience of Online Harassment: A Case Study of Nepal' Koirala (2020) revealed the fact about gender based online harassment on female journalists in Nepal which is trying to support patriarchal beliefs and forcing women to be passive and vulnerable:

> "Female journalists face harassment and abuse mainly due to their work and gender. Adding to previous studies which have been based mainly in the First World, most of these incidents were not reported in light of there being a lack of proper policy as well as other cultural factors" (p. 50).

Furthermore, the research indicated that the ratio of online harassment on female journalists working with television and online news portals is more than the female journalists working in newspaper and radio journalism in Nepal. This is because of the nature of online journalists to remain active online. Additionally, based on the age younger female journalists who are in junior positions than their counterparts are more likely to face more online harassment than their senior colleagues. Moreover, most harassment nature is gender based and sexiest in nature. It has been found that online harassers are often anonymous and among them are some of the victims' bosses and senior colleagues. Not all cases of online harassments are reported in Nepal due to patriarchal beliefs of Nepalese society, shaming culture and not having adequate law to address online harassment cases in Nepal. A very few cases reached the police station (Koirala, 2020).

Female journalists around the world, including in Nepal, have been subjected to online violence and harassment. Previous research has highlighted this issue, in a joint global study conducted by the International Center for Journalists (ICFJ) and UNESCO in 2021 revealing that 73% of the 901 journalists surveyed had experienced online violence. Based on which the threat of violence is not limited to the online world, as it can also lead to physical attacks offline. The research indicated women journalists have shared their experiences of physical assaults, defamation, humiliation, as a result of which they have keep themselves less visible in online platforms and self-censorship. The chilling effect of such harassment can affect both the personal and professional lives of female journalists and has serious implications for human rights and freedom of speech (Posetti et al., 2021).

Women journalists are particularly targeted, as they face multiple types of online violence due to their gender and profession. Online violence takes on a variety of forms, including sexual assault and physical violence, abusive language, harassing private messages, threats to damage one's professional or personal reputation, digital security attacks, misrepresentation through manipulated images, and financial threats (Posetti et al., 2021).

 In research by Adams, how online harassments effects on women journalists, the participants reported abuse are directly impacting journalistic content and to the freedom of press. The freedom of expression is compromised when women journalists have started of avoiding reporting in some critical topics like stories on gender and feminism. They have mentioned a kind of situation of self-censorship is done in terms of content selection style, writing without byline or writing with anonymity (Adams, 2017).

According to a survey report on US journalists in 2020, all journalists have experienced some form of online harassment in the course of their work, although the frequency varies. The report highlights that young women journalists are the most affected by online harassment in comparison to their male counterparts. Additionally, journalists who are more personally visible to the public are more prone to online harassment than those who work in larger newsrooms (Lewis et al., 2020).

Harassment cases are frequently reported on social media platforms. Journalists are more intimately engaged with their news audiences through social media. Even though the opinions or news items are expressed on behalf of the organization or media, individuals do not understand that. Instead of directing their disagreement or anger toward the organization's authority, they often target journalists (Holton et al., 2021). Being connected to information sources is an inherent aspect of being a professional. However, in today's world, the challenge lies in being actively engaged with social media. As journalists, it is necessary to be engaged with social media for the benefit of the organization and the news sources.

In a study by Adams (2017) on how online harassment effects on women journalists based on their bylines and reporting beats. The report focuses that the abuses to journalists are mostly from technology used. And, shed lights on how using technology, especially social media it is easy to create the online group but difficult to catch the offenders in comparison to that:

"It indicates that the internet, and especially social media, exacerbates the problem of harassment. This reflects a range of factors, such as the tools available to abusers, the speed and ease of communication, the facility for anonymity, the sheer scale of global correspondence, and the inadequacy of regulation, safeguards and law enforcement" (Adams, 2017, p. 851).

Research conducted by Carlson & Witt in 2020 sheds light on how sexual or misogynistic remarks on female journalists leads them to have doubt and second guessing on themselves prior to publishing their works. Online harassment has prevented women journalists from acting as watchdogs on government and other institutions, impacting press freedom (Carlson & Witt, 2020). "This works to silence women journalists and, in doing so, threatens the freedom of the press in the United States. Moreover, the online abuse women journalists result in greater job dissatisfaction, which may further limit the number of women in the journalism" (Carlson & Witt, 2020, p. 12).

2.3 Responding to online harassment

In a survey report of US adults by Duggan (2017) shows that approximately 60% of individuals experiencing online harassment choose to ignore it. Among those who act against online harassment, about half confront the harasser online, or decide to unfriend or block them. Around 22% reported the perpetrator to a responsible website or online service. A smaller fraction opts for measures like changing a username, deleting a profile or withdrawal from the platform, which is not very common. Lastly, the remaining 5% reach out to law enforcement and discuss the problem in family and friends (Duggan, 2017, p. 26).

"Journalists are forced to mute, delete, block, and report in the cases of online violence. Many journalists have reported to their employers about the abuse, but they are not very helpful in these cases. As a result, journalists have no option left except to follow self-censorship, avoid engagement on social media, and interact with audiences" (Posetti et al., 2020, p. 8).

Regarding responding to online harassment, women try to avoid confrontation. "Some of the women act defensive and self-monitoring responses such as avoiding posting images or comments likely to evoke negative responses. Several women mentioned being "careful" or "more mindful" about not posting "anything that's controversial" or that could provoke "arguments" (Chadha et al., 2020, p. 247).

14

When women journalists report cases of harassment to their media institutions and seek legal action, they are often met with little support. Furthermore, the legal policy regarding online harassment is unclear. Women journalists are forced to handle these situations on their own and are sometimes even advised to develop a thick skin to deal with difficult comments and messages. Even some of the journalists have remained silent and choose to escape certain topics to report about (Koirala, 2020).

In Nepal, there is currently no specific law in terms of dealing with online violence. As a result, authorities often fail to conduct proper investigations, even when complaints are filed with the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police. Additionally, there is no separate authorized office for social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter in the country, making it difficult to conduct proper investigations into cases related to online violence (Basnet, 2022).

2.4 Status of women journalists in Nepal

The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) is the apex organization for Nepali journalists who keeps record of Journalists. Based on its membership report it has a list of 13,077 members, out of which 2,408 are female journalists. However, these numbers do not accurately reflect the actual number of journalists in Nepal as membership in such organizations is voluntary and many journalists choose not to register (FNJ, 2022). There are several other journalist-related organizations in Nepal, such as Press Chautari Nepal, Sancharika Samuha, Media Advocacy Group, Society of Economic Journalists, Working Women Journalists, Press Center Nepal, Center for Media Research Nepal, Federation of Nepalese Indigenous Organizations, and Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists, The Online Journalists Association, The Nepal Sports Journalists Forum etc. (Media Landscape, 2023).

According to a research report published by Sancharika Samuha in 2015, which surveyed 907 media outlets across Nepal, only 21% of women journalists were employed in various media positions in the capital, while the remaining 79% were working outside of the Kathmandu Valley. Similarly, women made up 26.7% of the journalism workforce nationwide, with 47.8% of female journalists and media professionals working in radio, followed by 40.5% in print media (newspapers), 10% in TV, and 1.7% in online media. The research provides valuable insights into the representation of women in journalism and media in Nepal (Sancharika Samuha, 2015).

It is surprising to see that despite a significant number of women working in the journalism sector, very few occupy top positions. Only 2.4% of the 41 editor-in-chief roles are held by women, and similarly, just 4.3% of the 47 executive editors and 11.1% of the 777 editors are female. Even in Kathmandu, where most of the leading media outlets are located, there are no female chief editors or executive editors among the total of 12 and 6 respectively, according to data from 32 media outlets. Moreover, only 1.5% of the 67 editors are female, while an overwhelming 98.5% are men, indicating a significant gender disparity in media houses in Nepal (Sancharika Samuha, 2015). Among those number of women journalists who are serving as editor, many typically represents the media outlets which is either owned by themselves or their family members. "Nepal is yet to see women journalists in the position of an editor-in-chief for any of the mainstream national dailies or television broadcasting stations in the present scenario after 1990s" (Aryal, 2019, p. 2).

The active involvement of women has led to an increase in the number of female journalists which is possible due to the establishment of FM stations across different districts around whole the country. Women aged 20 to 40 constitute the most active demographic in the media industry. The prevalence of FM radio stations across the country has led to a rise in the number of women employed in radio broadcasting (MAG, 2023, p. 4). According to a 2015 report by Sancharika Samuha, 62.1% of women are currently employed in radio. While radio and television have encouraged women's participation in media, however, it is important to note that the number of women journalists covering political issues is significantly lower compared to men. Political beats and current issues beats are considered more significant, but very few women journalists handle these beats, whether in state-owned or private (Sancharika Samuha, 2015).

Aryal (2019) highlights the increasing trend of examining the challenges faced by women journalists, including pay inequality, work-life balance, and breaking through the glass ceiling in news media (p. 22). Although women journalists cover a broad range of subjects in the media, they tend to avoid serious issues such as politics, finance, and current events. Most women journalists work in radio and television as news presenters and reporters, but they struggle with low salaries, irregular payments, and often switch institutions frequently. Moreover, the lack of encouragement and limited promotion opportunities can be discouraging for women who aspire to pursue a long-term career in media. Furthermore, the 2023 report by FNJ reveals that the number of women in media management or directorial roles is significantly low. "Most media outlets were found to have

no clear gender policy. 61.8% of them stated that they do not have a gender policy. Only 14.7% of media houses that participated in the survey said that they have a separate gender policy" (MAG, 2023, p. 3).

2.5 Legal provisions, rules, and regulations in Nepali media sector

The new constitution is enacted in Nepal in 2015, leading to the introduction of many other new acts, rules and regulations. The inclusion of different fundamental rights related to media and freedom of expression has constitutionally guaranteed the freedom of the press. Some of the provisions under the constitution of Nepal 2015 which has safeguarded press freedom are Right to Freedom article no 17 in which clause 2(a) has mentioned right to opinion and expression as fundamental rights of every citizen of Nepal. Likewise, Right to Communicate article no 19, Right to Information article no 27 and Right to Privacy article no 28 are considered as fundamental rights ensuring press freedom. These provisions are like pillars and have always paved the way for healthy journalism since it is mentioned in the constitution (Adhikari & Pant, 2016).

Apart from the provisions in constitution, there are more than half a dozen media friendly or related laws in Nepal like The working Journalist Act, Press and Publication Act, Press Council Act, National Broadcasting Act, Right to Information Act, Electronic Transaction Act, Copyright Act, Secrecy of Document Act, Nation News Agency Act, Gorkhapatra Corporation Act and Communication Corporation Act. These are the major rules in regulating the media in Nepal (Adhikari & Pant, 2016). Also, in 2018 Privacy Act is introduced by government of Nepal. According to which this Act helps to maintain dignified living standards by safeguarding the right to privacy concern of an individuals' body, property, home, documents, relations etc. It is designed to instruct proper handling and protection of personal information and preventing violation of an individual (Privacy Act, 2018).

In Nepal, while there are no dedicated laws specifically addressing cyberbullying or online harassment, but crime activities involving computers or digital platforms that constitute crimes fall under the category of cybercrimes. These are dealt with through some sections and sub sections of the Electronic Transaction Act 2008. The Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police is responsible for managing cybercrimes and they dealt the cases according to section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act 2008. According to section 47, "if any person or organization knowingly and intentionally publish and display the content which violates or breaches the existing laws and

contrary on public morality, increases hatred and terrorize and jeopardize harmonious relation of the society by using computer or electronic technology, they would be punished up to 5 years and fine of 100,000 Nepalese currency" (Electronic Transactions Act, 2008, p. 18). Moreover, section 48 and 49 have provision of punishment regarding privacy breaching and misinformation by using computer and digital media (Electronic Transactions Act, 2008).

Furthermore, the government has recently introduced Directives for Managing the use of social networks in 2023 with the aim of regulating and minimizing cybercrimes. Under this directive, it is compulsion to social networking sites like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, TikTok, LinkedIn, Viber, WhatsApp, Instagram etc. to establish a local contact point in Nepal. This measure is intended to help in investigating cybercrimes cases in a smooth way. The guidelines have banned several activities in social media platforms like creating anonymous or fake IDs in social networking sites, use of offensive words, audio visuals, hateful speech, trolling, bullying, any activities that spread hatred in the society based on gender, caste, religion, race etc., publish or broadcast false and misleading information, disinformation, breaching of personal privacy, hacking others IDs and information, posting or sharing gruesome videos and photographs etc. (Directives for Managing the use of social networks, 2023, p.4-5).

Likewise, Sexual Harassment at (Workplace) Prevention Act is introduced in 2014, to ensure essential measures in preventing sexual, psychological and physical harassment at the workplace. Which will safeguard rights of an individual to work in safe, fair and dignified environment. The section 4(b) mentions "the use of power, authority, position in any employee or customers at workplace to use or display word, picture, newspaper, audio, visual, other information technology, medium, object or material related to obscene and sexual activity is considered as sexual harassment" (Sexual Harassment at (Workplace) Prevention Act, 2014, p.2). Moreover, section 12 has provision of punishment, " If anyone is convicted of committing sexual harassment against an employee or customer one shall be liable to the punishment, considering nature of an offense, with imprisonment not exceeding six months or with fine not exceeding fifty thousand rupees or with both" (Sexual Harassment at (Workplace) Prevention Act, 2014, p.6).

Moreover, Press Council of Nepal holds the responsibility for implementing the journalists code of conduct within the country. Under the press council Act, it promulgates the code of conduct of journalism to ensure accountability, responsibility, and upholds the professional integrity of

journalism (Journalist Code of Conduct, 2016).

Similarly, the Gender Responsive Communication Guideline published by the Press Council and Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) addresses gender issues in media content as well as women working in the media. This policy covers the interests and opportunities of women journalists in the field of journalism in addition to outlining the topics that shouldn't be covered in publications and broadcasts from a gender perspective. In the central, regional, and local chapters of FNJ, women are given particular consideration for membership and leadership positions. In contrast to women journalists, who can only apply for membership after one year of experience, male journalists must have three years of experience to be eligible (Sancharika Samuha, 2023).

The Federation of Nepali Journalists and Press Council Nepal have developed the Safe Workplace Guideline for the Media Sector, 2022, which addresses the physical and professional safety of female journalists at work, including in the media office and field. It emphasizes that the primary duty of media management is to protect people from gender-based violence and discrimination. Additionally, it mandates the establishment of a unique complaint-hearing procedure at each media outlet (PCN, 2022).

2.6 Theoretical framework of the study

This thesis paper explores online harassment from the context of feminist theories, media, and technology focusing on the impact of gender on such cases. Studies conducted by Nadim & Fladmoe (2019), Lewis et al., (2020) and Duggan (2017) indicate that online harassment has a greater effect on women than on men. "Sexual harassment is more common among women than among men and is a particular problem for young women" (Duggan, 2017, p.14). Gender based cyber hate is closely linked to societal issues such as sexual harassment, workplace harassment, and domestic violence, as pointed by second-wave feminists (Jane, 2016). This form of harassment stems from traditional misogynistic discourse that perpetuates gender hierarchy, viewing women as inferior to men (Jane, 2016).

Online sexual violence and harassment happen based on the way society thinks about gender and sexuality. "Online forms of sexual violence and harassment likewise stem from the socially constructed beliefs and attitudes about gender and sexuality (including victim blaming and victim shame and stigma) as well as perpetrator motivations for power and control" (Henry & Powell,

2018, p. 204). Koirala (2020) argues in the context of Nepalese society, gender-based harassment is emphasizing to patriarchal beliefs in the society which considered men in superior role keeping women in obedient and passive roles. "Online harassment can also be considered as a form of violence to suppress female journalists" (p. 49).

In their scholarly work titled "Silencing Women? Gender and Online Harassment" Nadim and Fladmoe (2019) discuss about the silencing effects on women after exploring the impact of online harassment suffered by other women. The revelation of such online harassment instances or cases tends women to hesitate from expressing their opinion in online platforms, regardless of whether they have personally experienced online harassment or not. Women hesitate to express their opinion as often women perceive themselves as a part of vulnerable group in certain contexts like seeing other women witnessing online harassment. Furthermore, the finding of this research shows the messages targeted toward "who they are" has more substantial influence on them in comparison to those focused on "what they think" Nadim and Fladmoe (2019). Psychological effects like low self-esteem, lack of confidence and anxiety are adverse consequences of online harassment (Duggan, 2017).

According to A Literature Review of Empirical Research on Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence shows that young women experience more sexual harassment than adults and it has a bigger impact on them (Henry& Powell, 2018). The research further adds "both women and men may be victims and perpetrators of online sexual violence and harassment; however, women, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex persons are more likely to be targeted for specific forms of digital abuse" (Henry& Powell, 2018, p. 204). "The practice of sexual harassment both reflects and reinforces the devaluation of women's competence and helps erode their commitment to competitive careers" (Benson & Thomson, 1982, p. 248).

With the rise of advanced technologies, women are engaged in the production and distribution of feminist media. They are self-sufficient in terms of doing their work themselves, or they are focused on 'do it by yourself" or following 'third-wave feminism' (Steiner, 2014). Many feminist critics opine about the repeated presentation the women in traditional roles and emphasizing patriarchy (Parry & Karam, 2001). In patriarchal societies, women journalists are often expected to write only about fashion, beauty products, and social/domestic issues. When they venture into

discussing political issues, they are met with a flood of satirical comments suggesting that women are not as intelligent as men. This kind of treatment and judgement often forces women journalists to fit into traditional roles on public platforms (Kamran, 2019).

Women tend to hold back their words in the public setting for example in the workplace or in social media. They censor more than man to avoid negative feedback, being watched in social media, being bullied or risking being harassed (Steen-Johnsen & Enjolras, 2016, p. 359). Women's position in society is subordinated due to harassment which directly impacts different areas like education, employment and social relationships (Benson & Thomson, 1982).

Online harassment, such as trolling, cyberbullying, stalking, sexist comments, and hate speech etc, has a severe impact on women working in the media. Feminist theory provides a critical framework for understanding the underlying gender roles and power imbalances that contribute to such harassment. By employing this theory to study the online harassment experienced by women journalists in Nepal, we aim to better understand the relationship between power and gender-based violence, and misogyny. Additionally, we will explore women's experiences of shaping their identities, as well as the role of media institutions or structures in perpetuating gender-based inequalities where women journalists work.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the first two chapters of this thesis, I introduced the topic, reviewed the literature, and established the theoretical framework for my study. In this chapter, I will delve into the research methodologies used, answering questions about how, where, and when the data was collected and how it will be analyzed. The focus of this study is to explore the experiences of female journalists in Nepal regarding combating online harassment. To gather data, I conducted interviews with the participants, where they shared their views, observations, and descriptions of the situation. The data collected is non-statistical and non-numerical.

3.1 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research is a method that emphasizes the use of words rather than numbers in collecting and analyzing data. This type of research typically involves open-ended questions, and the findings are interpreted by the researcher. The researcher is the primary instrument in collecting data and knows what to observe, focus on, and write about (Bryman, 2012).

Qualitative research strategies aim to interpret concepts and meanings rather than simply generalizing relationships (Toloie-Eshlaghy et al., 2011). This research is focused on the personal experience and impact of online harassment on individuals, the experience of everyone could be different in some way which cannot be easily quantified. Therefore, using a qualitative approach is more suitable for this study. Qualitative research can be done using different methods of data collection, such as in-depth interviews, focused group discussions, participant observation, and field visits. However, for this research, only in-depth interviews were conducted to gather data from each participant regarding their personal experiences, observations, opinions, beliefs, and knowledge. These interviews can be conducted face-to-face or indirectly, such as via email, telephone, or chat (Bryman, 2012).

On the other hand, we cannot ignore the major drawbacks of qualitative research like time consuming, chances of personal influence of researcher which could lead to overlooked or unnoticed of some issue. "All researchers' interpretations are limited. As positioned subjects, personal experience and knowledge influence the observations and conclusions. Also, because the qualitative inquiry is generally open-ended, the participants have more control over the content of the data collected" (Yauch and Steudel, 2003, p. 472-473).

For data collection, I used the technique of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which is conducted via Zoom. It was not as smooth as face-to-face interviews but Zoom interviews became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, many people are now accustomed to virtual meetings and interviews. The advantage of using semi-structured interviews is the flexibility to adjust and edit the questions to clarify any confusion that arose during the interviews.

3.2 Sampling and sample size

For the research, the method of snowball sampling was used in selecting participants. This is a non-probability sampling technique, where researchers begin by contacting within their network who could fit in study requirements. These initial participants, also referred to as 'seed participants', are selected based on specific research criteria. Then, the researcher would ask these seed participants to suggest additional potential participants who could also be suitable within the same research criteria. This process continues, with each new recommended participant to recommend others who meet the same study criteria, it creates a kind of chain of respondents. Once the desired sample size is achieved or a saturation point is reached then this recommending process ends (Parker et al., 2019).

This purposive sampling is relied on choosing the participant who fits in the research criteria. It is useful having little resources, time and work force. The main goal of purposive sampling is to focus on features of a population that are relevant to the study. Also, that will help the researcher to provide answers to his research question (Etikan et al., 2016).

The researcher is a former journalist in Nepal and still have some connections in the journalism field in Nepal which helped to get contact participants. The researcher used social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and WhatsApp to reach out to potential participants who met the research criteria. Among them are some former colleagues and acquaintances. They were given a brief about the research, the length of the interview and were assured anonymity. The participation is voluntary and having a sensitive nature of topic, the researcher gave briefing about the topic to many potential participants. Seed participants were asked to suggest others at the end of their interview. Participants recommended a few other journalists who could provide insights into the topic. The researcher contacted these journalists and other potential interviewees through social media platforms. Participants were not given any incentives for their participation or recommending to other potential participants.

Participants Journalists cover various beats including lifestyle, politics, foreign affairs, crime, environment, economy, education, and social issues etc.

3.3 Data collection technique: Semi-structured in-depth interviews.

An in-depth interview provides flexibility for interviewees to express themselves in a free flow. Which is quite lengthy but very useful to get detailed information (Bryman, 2012). Semi-structured interview allows the researcher to have flexibility to ask follow-up questions for further clarification or inquiries or more to understand interviewees' individual experiences accurately (Adams, 2015, p. 493). However, to carry out semi structured in depth interview effectively, researchers must focus on linkage between the objectives of research and the recent answers given by the interview at the same time (Scanlan, 2020).

I have prepared an interview guide before taking the interview, which is attached in the annex. Following the interview guide the interview with female journalists and media organization owner is taken. A person's body language, voice pitch, and intonation are something we can observe very properly in a face-to-face interview. However, some limitations prevailed over me to present in the real setting. The interview is taken on a virtual platform, Zoom. Zoom video conferencing platforms are getting quite popular after COVID-19 compelled people to distance maintaining. And, after COVID as well, because of its convenience and interactive features people use it for meetings and interviews in an official way.

3.4 Methodological challenges

During the research process, I came across some methodological challenges.

3.4.1 Sample size: According to a research study by MAG, a staggering 88.6% of female journalists have experienced online harassment in various forms. However, very few of them are willing to discuss it publicly. This is likely due to the fact that media houses in Kathmandu are male dominated, with males holding chief editor positions in almost every media house. Despite this, I made persistent efforts to contact them and explained the confidentiality of their information and the purpose of the data use before obtaining their consent. As a result, I was able to have in-depth conversations with only ten female journalists on what they know about online harassment and their experiences. Also, also had interview view five media owner regarding how they take online harassment and helped their staff from online harassment.

24

3.4.2 Interview settings

The interview was conducted virtually via Zoom, which was convenient for both the researcher and the participants. Most of the interviewees seemed busy during the daytime at their office, so the interviews were taken at their homes after work hours, where they felt more comfortable discussing the topic. However, several times the Zoom video calls were interrupted due to poor connection and power outages in Nepal.

3.4.3 Time and response

Approaching the informants posed a significant challenge as there is a time difference of 3 hours and 45 minutes in summer and 4 hours and 45 minutes in winter between Nepal and Norway. Most of the interviews were conducted in winter, which created difficulties in reaching out to them. Some of the informants did not respond to phone calls and messages easily, while others ignored my messages despite being informed about the topic by other journalists who had already conducted pre-interviews. Some of them also postponed the scheduled date and time for the interview, which affected the next scheduled interview with another informant. To work around these issues, I followed the schedule of interviewees based on their convenience and availability.

Response to Interview questions: Since the topic at hand is quite sensitive, some of the interviewees become visibly uncomfortable and emotional during the interview process. I began the interview with warming up questions such as their favorite genre of reporting, most impressive reporting, and awards or facilitation they have achieved. Starting with positive things made the interview easier. However, some of the questions I asked were not easily comprehended by the informants, such as the support they received after incidents of online harassment, the intensity of bitterness of online attackers who were in their close circle, and their digital skills for maintaining privacy settings, etc.

Limitations of the Study: It has been recently discovered that there is a growing interest in researching online harassment in Nepal. Despite the fact that Nepalese society tends to shy away from discussing such incidents, investigative journalism is shedding light on the issue. For this study, I exclusively approached female journalists based in Kathmandu, as it is home to a large number of media houses and media professionals. Although virtual interviews were conducted due to the nature of the study, in-person interviews are considered more effective in observing the facial expressions, tone, pitch, and body language of the interviewees. With a sample size of just 10

out of the estimated 2,500 female journalists working in Nepal and only 5 from the media owner. This study is not intended to quantify the number of harassment cases, but rather to examine how these journalists and media organization combat abusive situations of online harassment and how they have personally and professionally dealt with such situations.

3.5 Data transcribing and analysis

Although all of the journalists understood English, the interviews were conducted in Nepali as it was easier for them to express themselves in their mother tongue. The interviews were recorded using a mobile audio device with the prior consent of the interviewees and were in-depth in nature. However, the translation of the interviews from Nepali to English took a long time due to difficulties in finding the exact words that were used. To protect the interviewees' privacy, their names were changed and no additional details about them were provided. Instead, pseudonyms were created for each participant, and the interview data was manually coded.

The research methodology utilized in this study was an inductive coding approach. This approach involves the researcher reading and interpreting raw data to identify significant emerging topics or themes (Chandra & Shang, 2019). The researcher carefully reviews the data through first-order coding, makes notes, and combines the data into broader themes and theoretical dimensions. "Through first-order coding, a researcher closely reviews the data, makes notes, combines the data into broader themes and theoretical dimensions. Inductive coding requires the marking of passages and sentences of a text with a code" (Chandra & Shang, 2019, p. 91). The findings and discussion section presents and analyzes answers to the research questions based on patterns or themes derived from the data. These themes and sub-themes provide answers to the research questions.

3.6 NSD Notification and approval

On December 21, 2022, I informed the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) that the privacy of my informants or interviewees would be protected. I obtained approval from the NSD before approaching my informants and will not disclose any part of the information that they do not want to be revealed, published, broadcast, or known without their prior consent. The consent form is sent to them as soon as it is assessed by NSD. All participants participated voluntarily, and their identities were given anonymous names to ensure confidentiality. I respected the sensitivity of the topic and never forced them to reveal anything they were not willing to share.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

To address three research questions separately, this chapter is divided into three parts. The first part talks about the nature and types of online harassment (R1). The second part contains the personal and professional impact on journalists from online harassment(R2). The third part relates to how women journalists and media organization involve in coping with the situation or overcoming the problem (R3). Different sub-themes are given in each main theme.

4.1 Demographics of the journalists and media owners

The ten female journalists interviewed for this research were between the ages of twenty-three to forty-five years old. Each of them had between two to ten years of work experience in the Nepali journalism field. All of the journalists have been reporters at some point during their careers. They cover a wide range of topics, including politics, crime, health, policies, social issues, education, lifestyle, and culture. All of them are still working in different media house and hold different positions like some of them are reporters, sub editor, copywriting, news presenter, multimedia production, and social media news updater etc. working in online, television, radio and YouTube channel. I have placed pseudonyms to them as Journalists A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, and J.

Among the five media owners, all of them are male ranging the age of 30 to 60 years. They are the owners of television, radio and online. Many of them do not want to give their official statement therefore I have placed pseudonyms to them like Media Owner, M1, M2, M3, M4 and M5.

4.2 Nature of online harassment (R1)

Social media platforms being the most common medium for online harassment. As per the Cyber Bureau of Nepal Police's report for 2021/2022, Facebook and Facebook Messenger are frequently used for this purpose. The report contains in-depth interviews that were conducted to understand the nature of online harassment and to obtain answers to questions such as the types of comments, messages, or photos the interviewees received, which platform they were reporting on, and if they were affiliated with any political parties or supported any political agenda. The interviews also explored whether anyone made comments on their appearance, dress, or physical features. The interviews revealed that online harassment can take various forms. Based on the interviews, the following nature of online harassment stands out.

4.2.1 Gender-based and sexual harassment

Online harassment of female journalists is a common occurrence due to their gender, as stated by multiple interviewees. These women have faced numerous obstacles in pursuing their education and career in journalism in a patriarchal society. Despite achieving success, they are often judged based on their gender, proving the continued presence of gender bias in society.

Journalist A says women are often portrayed as always seeking benefits from the men around them, whether they are colleagues, superiors, or friends. And also gets unwanted attention either online or offline, which can be extremely distressing to female journalists.

> *"I got a text message at midnight from a source, I am missing you right now. I could not sleep remembering you. I want to meet you tomorrow in …. Café, just you and me."*
> (Journalist A, personal interview, February 18, 2023)

Journalist B expresses her bitter experience with a senior male colleague and also suggests being aware of the intentions of people in your workplace.

> "*I was a new beginner to journalism at that time. I had a colleague who was senior to me, having many years of experience. I wanted to learn, so I used to talk with him being friendly. But slowly, his intentions changed. He started texting me such creepy messages and sexual favors. I was afraid because I was too young at that time to discuss it openly. Still, I feel uncomfortable remembering that incident."* (Journalist B, personal interview, March 8, 2023).

All the interviews say our society is a patriarchal society where gender role expectations limit women's participation in certain areas, even in public comments and posts. Women are often expected to prioritize homemaking instead of pursuing journalism careers. A female journalist shares her experience of reporting on the wrongdoing of a social activist but faced negative gender stereotyping in comments and posts, which was discouraging.

> *"She does not have the capacity to write about such a serious matter. She is influenced by this person, that person. They are enjoying on dollars given of NGOs and INGOs. Women are getting fake wings these days."* (Journalist F, personal interview, March 8, 2023)

She further adds that just because the report was written by a female against a male, I was blamed as a gold digger and blackmailer.

Similarly, another interviewee adds women are subjected to a barrage of derogatory language, pictures, and tags that are meant to intimidate and sexualize them. Double-meaning or slang words and trolling are often used in social media.

> *"Comments follow those words which I cannot pronounce in front of my child. Sexiest language and slurs, even my child knows what that word means. He mentioned that in that way he would tempt me. The word could not be digested in front of family and friends. "*(Journalist C, personal interview, March 3, 2023)

Additionally, constantly monitoring individuals on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter to track their activities, preferences, and habits was mentioned by one of the interviewees in relation to privacy concerns.

> *"What do the rest of others think about me when someone comments in my Facebook photo like Dear madam, you are looking so pretty on this red dress. Have you gone there alone, why don't you inform me, next time take me as well. The commentator is neither my friend nor my family or colleagues."* (Journalist B, personal interview, March 8, 2023).

Stalking should not be a result of being a woman. Personal privacy should be respected for journalists, both in their personal and professional lives. Gender dominating, using negative stereotypes, doubting the capacity, judging from where she goes and what she wears, derogatory comments on personal choices, and use of intimidating and sexist language are all what all the interviewees talk about the online violence they have faced. People range from false allegations to character assassination, thinking women's matters never in a serious way.

4.2.2 Political views

Every individual has different political beliefs, or they like or dislike some parties or politicians. Some questions were asked of interviewees on their political beliefs, discourse, likes or dislikes, etc. In which many share their likes and dislikes about their attitudes to some political parties and people, that is totally personal choices. That has nothing to do with professionalism. But, when they share some posts on the speech or act of politicians, comments are expected there more than

usual.

A political reporter shared her experience of being bullied and trolled due to her political beliefs with a certain party. She further adds that people who were involved in it were from an opponent party or party agents.

> *"I have posted a status mentioning my political interest and belief has shifted from old parties to new free candidates and the potentiality of that mayor candidate. In a counterattack, many comments like promoting him by taking money, and connecting season change to party change belief I have received. Which was difficult to tolerate, my post was not to influence anyone. It was just personal likes or dislikes."* (Journalist C, personal interview, March 3, 2023).

Many journalists seem to agree that if they write about political parties and politicians' wrongdoings, their supporters often flood Twitter and Facebook with comments from anonymous sources. These comments are usually false accusations of bribery, extramarital affairs of journalists, or being influenced by opposing parties or leaders. It looks like they are playing a blaming game on social media. Political issues are elastic, and everyone is ready to stretch it. It's like a duet song presented by political party followers and supporters.

Journalist A says there is a growing hope among people that new candidates, who have not been part of the political establishment for a long time, can bring about positive changes. Unfortunately, political discussions often lack objectivity and are intentionally presented in a negative light, leading to misinformation and confusion among the public. Sometimes, they even attack the writer's intentions for reporting on the issue and often blame journalists for taking bribes. (Journalist A, personal interview, February 18, 2023).

Journalist D has a similar experience regarding hate speech when writing about political wrongdoing.

> *"Many times, I feel like social media is a toxic environment where people through a lot of hate speech and blindly brag about their party and leader. You can't count of somebody's wrongdoings. I have got a message like you have to write in such a way to create a positive image in the society, otherwise, the hate speech starts following you as you are*

blackmailing to leader by counting his wrongdoing." (Journalist D, personal interview, March 18, 2023).

Every interviewee says that they do not want to write about politics and political wrongdoing with their name. They know how important it is political issues are but at the same time a political reporter should be courageous and brave as well at the same time. Although they do not mention the names of any political parties or leaders, they know that if they write anything in favor of or against any political personality, they must prepare themselves for an onslaught of comments and messages.

4.2.3 Personal enmity

As guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal 2015, the right to speech and freedom of expression allows individuals to express their agreement or disagreement with someone's opinion or ideas. However, disagreements in virtual space often lead to personal enmity.

Half of the journalists say online media platforms are frequently filled with insults, accusations, name-calling, distorted facts, and manipulative language. These behaviors can take the form of comments that contain defamation, rumors, bullying, and humiliation.

Here are a few bytes on how personal enmity begins from virtual space.

> *"Someone go and teach this reporter about the status of her online portal. Why she is in media field to insult herself, it's a comment of one of the reputed media person's tweets. The Constitution of Nepal 2015 guarantees the right to free speech and expression, allowing individuals to express their disagreement or agreement with someone's opinions or ideas. However, this freedom also leads to personal enmity in the virtual space. Online media platforms are often plagued by insults, accusations, name-calling, and the distortion or manipulation of facts in figurative language. Defamation, rumors, bullying and humiliating behaviors are frequently posted in the form of comments. mentioning the name and the fame of my news portal."* Journalist J, personal interview, March 10, 2023)

Journalist C mentions how enmity began from online platforms and how it led to harassment.

> *"I have got a threat message from the manpower company owner to remove the news when*

I have written the commission they have accumulated from poor workers. The offensive words are too many in the comments. It is difficult to speak on voiceless people, and the powerful people try to suppress the wrongdoing via threat." (Journalist C, personal interview, March 3, 2023)

Many interviewees have expressed concerns about personal animosity on social media.

4.2.4 Physical appearance and beauty

It's common for people to expect celebrities to look glamorous and beautiful on camera, and they often extend this expectation to their personal lives as well. A television news presenter and reporter (Journalist G) says people talk about their dressing sense, body size, color and how they interact with others. However, comments on outfits, makeup, and fashion choices are personal matters, and others should not become stressed over what someone else wears or how they look in their daily life.

" I look like a model presenting news. I offer you a better chance in modeling and in my film. Your glamour look is not fit for news its for a romantic movie"(Journalist G, personal interview, March 14, 2023).

"Nepalese society is grown up with body shaming. Are you fat or skinny? Are you in a diet? Who asks such types of questions on the public platform? And, such questions are not expected from your audience."(Journalist E, personal interview, March 11, 2023)

Remember again that awkward moment Journalist H shared one of the old incidents.

"*One of my male colleagues has commented in my different time photos where I have worn Sari, it was more than 20 photos in which he wrote. how sexy body you have and how amazing you look in each and every photo with Sari. I was not the only one who read the comments. My family and friend circle how do they take it. I had deleted all the comments one by one. It was so odd and uncomfortable to work with him from the next day after that."* (Journalist H, personal interview, March 11, 2023).

All interviewee journalists have expressed their concern over the issue of body shaming. Nepalese society is always concerned about how thin or fat the female looks. People know that the female

body shape often undergoes changes due to pregnancy and hormonal changes and that this is a completely normal and personal thing. However, trivial matters such as these are often discussed on social media platforms. All the female journalists said they don't like to be trolled, body shamed, and have their photos turned into memes or have comments and posts om how someone looks like on certain body size.

4.2.5 By Fans, followers 'of celebrities or religious groups

Fans, followers' groups, religious groups, or hater groups of film industry celebrities, sports celebrities, or glamour field, be ready to get a counter answer from them. People in Nepal are blindly following some celebrities and religious agendas; they don't want to accept the truth.

A senior radio reporter who covers social issues says

> *"Against my article on rape allegation to one of the film actors of Nepal by a minor singer, their fan followers were flooded with the negative comments of blackmailing and bribing. Even I stopped the comment section of that news."* (Journalist F, personal interview, March 8, 2023).

Journalist J remembered her incident of hate speech when she had covered a story against religious distortion. We have to be very cautious. I was blamed as an agent of a foreign country who wanted to spread another religion and disturb religious harmony.

> *"If you speak about the malpractices of certain religions or religious people, you are one having a vested interest in disturbing religious harmony. The status triggers a virtual war among different religious people It ignites arrows of hate speech"* (Journalist J, personal interview, March 10, 2023).

4.3 Personal and professional impact(R2)

Online harassment can have casual to severe effects on journalists, both personally and professionally. I have asked a question about why the impact of online harassment is bigger, in which every journalist replied. The impact of online is long-term. The reality of posting something on online platforms means it would never be completely deleted. The process of repeated likes, shares, and comments makes the issues a much bigger scene. It's not limited to one boundary; instead, it would travel from person to person via digital platforms. Once we trace when it began

and delete the original source but the reposted, shares with the old stories being dragged into the mix. As a result, many people are affected by it.

The major impact that every interviewee has shared is silencing journalists, limiting their use of social media, and hindering their ability to share their work and personal life with their audience. Its negative consequences affect their mental health and degrade work quality. Unfortunately, in some cases, online harassment is initiated by colleagues, which further exacerbates the negative impact on the mental health and work quality of journalists.

4.3.1 Emotional and psychological distress

Out of ten interviewees, six of them reported they became psychologically distressed and emotional due to online harassment. Two of the interviewees claimed that it was for just a few days; once the issues were not discussed, we became fresh. On the contrary, four of the interviewees mentioned they had not taken it very seriously. They considered themselves thick-skinned people, so didn't take many issues personally.

Journalist A (personal interview, Feb 18), who has five years of working experience, said it makes her understand that often, the working environment is not safe. The learning phase struggle and the behaviors of the senior led her to anxiety until she shifted the job.

> *"It's still shocking to think about those incidents. I found myself crying and doubting my own actions because I had reached out to my senior for help and started a conversation. Maybe my actions unintentionally encouraged them to cross a boundary. I feel like a victim because I was unable to resist at the time. The person who harassed me was my senior."* (Journalist A, personal interview, Feb 18).

Journalist I, who had started her career as an intern in print media, said the situation is more distressing when people judge your relationship with your boss and seniors.

> "*Whenever the news comes of violence or sexual assault, the incidents remain in my mind. I started hating that person and his acts. Not only him, but I also started doubting other colleagues who used to work with me. They didn't trust me in how my boss behaved with me. A kind of helplessness and trauma I have been gone through for a long after that.*"

She further adds that we never know the vested interest or the intention of the people unless we go close to them (Journalists I, personal interview, March 25).

Another Journalist, G, who shared her sexual harassment story online in social media during the MeToo campaign, she started getting nightmares, and the comments haunted her. She knew that she was not the only one who was suffering, but handling both negative and positive comments on social media gave psychological pressure (Journalists G, personal interview, March 14).

> *"My first experience of harassment was very traumatizing for me. I was a beginner at the time. One of my acquaintances had recommended me for reporting at an online media outlet. It occurred just a week after the referral. At this smaller online platform, there were only five staff members, including myself and the owner. He called me into his office and requested that I sit beside him with a laptop. Subsequently, he began touching me inappropriately. I was frozen in shock, pushed him away, and then quickly fled to my home.*
>
> *I couldn't bring myself to share this incident with my parents, as they were in the village. On the same day, he messaged me, asking why I was dramatizing and exaggerating the situation, claiming it was simple. Even though more than ten years have passed, recalling that incident still evokes intense emotions and brings me tears. I often wonder why I couldn't take any action that time".* (Journalists G, personal interview, March 14).

All the interviewees who had gone through sexual online harassment claimed when we reopened the case, and had mixed feelings about whether they should share it or not, and that state my mind caused them mental distress. And, when they read or heard similar stories from other female journalists, the guilt of not taking action troubled as well.

4.3.2 Self-censorship and silencing effects

Nearly all the interviewed journalists mentioned that online harassment had altered their way of using social media than before. They restricted their usage, primarily focusing on sharing their professional work, and exercised caution in their online posts. When expressing controversial views, they carefully considered whether they had the time to respond in case they encountered a flood of negative comments. Moreover, many of them share online posts with no comments facilities so the content will reach the targeted people but without interaction. Two of the

journalists further added that Journalists might share less about their personal lives on social media to keep their private information safe. They tried to keep their personal and professional life separate to some extent so they post fewer personal photos or tell fewer personal stories online.

Five of the female journalists said they had searched about digital privacy and then locked their Facebook profiles to prevent people from sending them friend requests and checking their posts or stalking on that. *"When I started getting unwanted messages and comments from unknown persons, I made my Instagram and Facebook profile private,"* mentioned Journalist A (personal interview, Feb 18).

Three of the other journalists claimed even though journalism is about reaching a wide audience, these journalists agreed that feeling insecure made them limit their online connections and interactions.

Journalist B says many times I am known to exclude myself in controversial issues these days. I used to tweet and update my status at one time. These days I became very selective in terms of sharing.

> *"I have reduced my engagement on online discussions on controversial issues to avoid confrontations and harassment. And, I am aware that its not a permanent solution; rather, I feel alienated and cheated to my journalistic responsibility." (Journalist B, personal interview, March 8, 2023)*

Some other interviewees have similar opinions regarding the engagement on the social media platforms. Similarly, Journalist C shared her bitter experience, "*I had no option than deleting posts and tweets so further not to escalate harassment.*" (Journalist C, personal interview, 3 March 2023)

Two of the journalists said they are now happy in reducing personal information sharing on social media platforms to protect their privacy. Now they have fewer personal photos or details about their personal lives, including family and friends. Sharing each and every activity also makes attackers' tasks easier.

Journalist J had a bitter experience when she publicly confronted some men on social media for their inappropriate actions. She said very few of them had raised concerns about it. Those who had

shown concern on social media also didn't help outside. On the contrary, many have negative criticism of her, labeling her someone as an attention seeker. Even the senior journalists remained quiet on my case. I remained silent for a few months until the investigation ended.

"I was accused of trying to get publicity and further questioned back why I dragged the case in social media instead of solving that in private" (Journalist J, personal interview, 10 March 2023).

Journalist H said for those female journalists who had asked for justice in cases of online harassment, it is not an easy process. They have to go through victim blaming. She added one has to face questioning their character to blame for the publicity stunt was what they heard about. Its not as easy to speak freely about the workplace harassment you faced in front of a male-dominated working environment (Journalist H, personal interview, March 11, 2023).

4.3.3 Damage reputation

All interviewed female journalists are concerned about how talking about sexual online harassment damages reputation. In a patriarchal society in Nepal, honor is taken as a reputation, and in the family, women's honor is always what everyone is concerned about. So, harassers mostly attempt to character assassination of female journalists at first.

Journalist A shared the example of her Facebook account being hacked, and some pornographic pictures and videos were shared from her account. Which was a matter of her reputation damaging and full of embarrassment in front of her family, relatives, and friend circle. She added how it became difficult to face them after the incident of the Facebook account hacked (personal interview, Feb 18, 2023).

Also, journalists agreed that if the harassers are senior journalists and in powerful positions, it is more difficult to talk about the situation. They feared being negatively judged publicly. People in powerful positions defend very strongly, and still, they have many blind supporters.

In addition, Journalist D says the fear of losing her job and damaging her reputation come together if she shares her harassment story in the workplace, which can make it even harder for her to speak out. She gave an example of a young female journalist who fought for almost six months to prove the harasser guilty. The harasser was associated with the Journalist's welfare organization and was in a powerful position.

37

"I lost job; at one time reputation was damaged, which led me to be mentally stressed. I didn't get support from the Federations of Nepalese Journalists, Female Journalists Association in the beginning" (Journalist D, personal interview, 8 March, 2023).

4.3.4 Demotivation on career or job

All the interviewees claimed they don't see job security and personal safety in journalism. According to them journalism itself is challenging to women due to pay gap, professionalism and male dominated field in Nepal, the increasing online harassment to women journalists even adds the feeling of no job security and safety. That is a major reason for demotivation in careers. They further added that the frequency of online harassment demotivates work and job satisfaction time and again.

Journalist H said if someone asked her about a career in journalism, then these days she would stop encouraging junior brothers or sisters to be involved in journalism careers because of safety concerns. She even shared that she is planning to shift her career from journalist to communication officer of any other company. (personal interview, March 8, 2023).

Journalist B, who is working as reporter and news presenter on a television channel, expressed how others see the journalism field from the outside as glamorous and prestigious, but it is actually not the same. "*When you feel your work environment is not safe, and at the same time, you have a tight deadline and you are not getting your payments, the motivation to work degrades automatically* "(personal interview, March 8, 2023).

4.4 Strategies to combat online harassment from journalists(R3)

The primary approach journalists commonly adopt to address online harassment appears to be to delete or ignore it at the first stage if it is not serious in nature, according to all the interviewees. Few of them stated that they become more careful when expressing their personal opinions on social media. In contrast, many of them started to limit their social media activity than before. This may be in response to experiencing online harassment or as a precautionary measure to avoid it.

During interviews, all the women stated that they had used some of the strategies to deal with abusive situations. These strategies included limiting their social media engagement, transforming their public profiles into private ones, ignoring the calls and messages, blocking or unfollowing

specific individuals, deactivating their accounts, sharing fewer personal posts, focus on privacy and digital literacy, filing a case against harassers and changing their profile photos to remain less recognizable etc. Furthermore, two women journalists had completely abstained from social media at some point in their careers due to sexual harassment. They also received advice from others to disregard messages or learn to be thick-skinned as much as possible. Furthermore, many messages are stored in their spam folders just to avoid reading them.

4.4.1 Ignore and be thick-skinned

During the interview, many interviewees stated they had ignored online harassment or even, in some cases, they were not very sure whether that was harassment or not. Those who have faced harassment in a case of blaming and allegations on social media have started to be thick-skinned. And, rather, ignored viewing the messages and comments thoroughly. They even suggested the quality of being thick-skinned is what is necessary to work with social media these days.

Two of the journalists shared that when they had faced repeated online violence initially, they remained away from Facebook login for a few weeks but over time, they got used to such comments and messages of derogatory words and started ignoring it.

Journalist A said she had started ignoring the harsh comments and messages, thinking out her mental health. She added there is no point in replying to harassers who intentionally want to harass someone (personal interview, Feb 18, 2023)

One of the interviewees, Journalist C, shared her experience of how ignoring worked for it. She found that is beneficial for mental health not to stress each and every negative comment and message. She said she learned the idea of ignoring after she took a digital safety and privacy maintenance course (personal interview. March 3, 2023).

One of the younger interviewees (journalist I) revealed she has minimized her activity of posting and commenting on social media these days. It has to some extent, shaved her time and energy from being on social media and responding to comments. Moreover, she got suggestions from her senior as well no need to stress on comments and post as they are just virtual and better not to reply on negative comments. Audience do not understand, its not only us we published it, its on the behalf of our organization so don't answer them to start enmity (personal interview, March 25,

2023).

4.4.2 Delete and block.

Every interviewee agreed the very first step they can do from the individual side is to delete and block toxic people and their comments and posts. But in some cases, deleting and blocking is not the permanent solution. They feel like it's the easiest step to combat at first step but by distancing some of the harassers even take the benefits of doubt. However, two of them expressed that the act of blocking or deleting is quite difficult when the harasser is your boss or senior colleague.

Journalist B revealed that her restricted list and block list are longer than her friend list on social media. She has blocked people who harass her, and she is not in touch with them. She had also created another social media account. She had her close circle to have to freely interact with people whom she felt comfortable with (personal interview, March 8, 2023).

Journalist J revealed her difficulty in blocking her senior, who had sent her flirting and romantic messages. She had neither replied nor deleted it; she just ignored it and maintained a distance from them (personal interview, March 10, 2023).

Blocking the harassers has no exposure to abusive content. That helped her to some extent. She has become very selective these days in accepting friend requests and followers on social media platforms, stated Journalist D (personal interview, 18 March, 2023).

4.4.3. Report to police department and media organization

Journalists we interviewed shared how important to get support from their own organizations and colleagues. When they discussed the harassment issues, everyone had multiple perspectives to think about it and an easy way to solve it or to minimize the harm of it, and they agreed on it. Everyone agrees to keep the voice records or the screenshots of harassment from online platforms to show as proof so everyone will believe.

A young journalist who had won a case against a harasser on sexual harassment give credit to the support she had got from her organization. The very first what we need is the courage to share the situation according to her. If you dare to speak against, there are good people as well, who are willing to help you. Her senior and administrative team suggested her get legal help and guidance for further proceedings. However, the case was handled at a slow pace and took a long time.

During the time, the psychological supports count a lot. Her victory has given hope to many others to speak against the harassment they have been going through (Journalist I, interview, March 25, 2023).

Another senior journalist A has similar opinion as Journalist I, that sharing problems with friends and colleagues leads to finding the solutions and courage to combat it. There are many good people whose contribution and support mean a lot.

"*Regarding my problem when I shared in Facebook platform, it has a mixed opinion. But the problem was discussed in large level. My Facebook post of harassment was shared among many other journalists. And to some extent that encourage them to speak on harassment they have faced*" (Journalist A, personal interview, 18 Feb 2023).

"*Technology has pros and cons both. I have taken screenshots of harassment messages. That worked me as evidence to file a case. Those who didn't believe me first are compelled to believe with that evidence*" (Journalist A, personal interview, 18 Feb 2023).

Journalist J showed her anger seeing the distortions on social media. She feels like social media needs to be regulated properly. She talks about the need of some ethics, regulations, guidelines, and most importantly, clear mentioning of punishment (Personal interview, 10 March 2023).

"*Having a clear and strong punishment on cybercrime will discourage the harasser and encourage the victims to report and combat without delay*" (Personal interview, 10 March 2023).

Nowadays, there are piles of cybercrimes in the cyber bureau of police departments, but their working pace is too slow. I don't mean to criticize the police department, but cyber-crime cases need to be addressed faster than others, according to every participant.

Another journalist, H, shared her experience of how she combated both social media and took help from the Police. At first, she tried to solve the issue herself by talking to the harasser. But, those attempts go in vain with no positive results. She reports to the cyber bureau of Nepal Police. But the culprit defended at first in social media, among others. (Journalist H, personal interview, 11 March. 2023)

Journalist E received initial contact from a women's association when she revealed the case of sexual harassment on social media. When the matter went in progress, they didn't show their concern and stopped answering. So, this so-called helper just wanted a piece of news, but actually, they didn't help. It's a case of ten years back (personal interview, 11 March 2023).

4.4.4 Focus on maintaining privacy and digital security.

All the interviewees agreed on the necessity of knowledge on maintaining privacy and digital security to avoid online harassment. If the media organization or media related institutions offers digital safety training to every journalist, the risk could be decreased. Some of them have taken some training on digital safety which helped them to guide what to do after one faced online violence.

Journalist B, a senior journalist in the online portal, said she has taken a course on digital safety, which helped her to be cautious about clicking the new forwarded link and social media privacy setting policy. And she keeps on updating herself with update the software. (personal interview, March 8)

Many of the young journalists shared their experience of taking screenshots of such harassment and sending them to the concerned body about the harassment. They are becoming more conscious of setting privacy policies to share their personal information from social media and started filtering comment sections as well.

Journalist B expresses the need to teach privacy and digital security to every journalist, whether they work in online media, radio, or television. Journalists-related associations and organizations should not be limited within the Kathmandu Valley; instead, the risk is similar whole the country (personal interview, 8 March, 2023)

Journalist D shares *"I learned after my personal Facebook account was hacked, now I have set two factor authentication password and be very cautious while sharing my personal details in online portals. I feel like need to be more acquainted with ongoing change"* (personal interview, 18 March, 2023).

In some cases, journalists are unaware that they are involved in online harassment or even unintentionally, they themselves are involved in online harassment. So, every journalist agreed to

have training in digital privacy and safety to commit crime and to be safe from it.

4.5 Strategies to combat online harassment from media organization (R3)

In the interview with media owners regarding the situation of online harassment and the strategies needed to mitigate online harassment, everyone showed their concerned on the increasing number of cybercrimes in Nepal. Attacking on women journalists is having direct attack on freedom of expression according to them. Some of them have already gone through the situation of online harassment in their media house in serious case and some of them have said about the cases are not very serious. Everyone agrees on the following points necessary to solve the situation of online harassment in their media organization.

4.5.1 Counseling and emotional support

Media owner revealed the fact the most important help a female journalists need is emotional and psychological counseling to make her strong. In the cases of severe harassment, the psychological and professional state of victims remains distress and traumatic. So, the counseling and support to take further steps or break from the work for certain should be suggested from the media house. "*We offer a comprehensive support system that includes legal assistance, psychological counseling, and technical support to enhance online security for journalists facing harassment*" M2 (personal interview, November 2, 2023).

Moreover, all media owners should ensure a comfortable environment within the organization so the victims do not hesitate to speak out the incident for asking help.

"*One of the main challenges occurs when the predator is anonymous and difficult to immediately track them. And filing a case and going through long process needs patience and strong feeling. But we're committed to finding innovative solutions to protect our journalists and uphold press freedom*" M1(personal interview, November 1, 2023).

4.5.2 Helping in filing case

Being based on interviewees, filing a case against online harassment is easier in Nepal. You just need to show screenshots of violence as a evidence then the cyber bureau register a case. But it has to be done within 30 days of the incidents. The constraints of time and anonymous nature of online harassment takes time make it difficult to understand it sometimes. Everyone says they feel it is

their responsibility to support legally, financially and psychologically to their employee when s/he has faced online harassment.

"When a report of online harassment is made, it triggers a confidential investigation process, with support and protection measures put in place for the journalist involved" M2(personal interview, November 2, 2023)

"We have several success stories past few years since the cases of online harassment has increased. We have also learned to change our swift action and immediate support to help female journalists overcome harassment and continue their important work without fear" M3 (personal interview, November 10, 2023).

"We had filed a case against online harasser in Cyber Bureau department of Nepal police under Electronic Transactions Act 2008, but because of the anonymity of the harasser it took a long time for the case to proceed" M1(personal interview, November 1, 2023).

4.5.3 Aware on digital security and privacy training

All interviewee media owners say digital technologies has made advancement in journalism but its drawbacks like online harassment cannot be ignored. But the timely information on safety maintenance and timely remedies after the incident do not allow the situation to go worst.

Media Owner M2 says, *"Training programs on digital safety and coping strategies for online harassment are available to all journalists, with a focus specially on empowering female journalists. The information on these kinds are things keep changing so must be updated with training "* (personal interview, November 2, 2023).

"We have already organized training on digital security and privacy several times, specially in remote villages and the radio stations connected in our community radio network. When we check their feedback after training that gives us energy to expand the work to reach more people. After the training, the way they use social media is being cautious" M5 (personal interview, November 7, 2023).

4.5.4 Need of policy and legal support

Two of the media owners states they have policy to deal against online harassment and sexual harassment at workplace. According to them, it's a new to them as well so they have studied the Workplace Safety Guidelines prepared by Press Council Nepal and Federations of Nepalese

Journalists and learned about the responsibility of media management. The rest of the others have not their own policy at their media house but serious to begin and act accordingly to ensure safe working environment for the journalists.

"*Our organization has established clear policies that define online harassment and outline the steps for reporting and addressing such incidents. These policies are regularly reviewed and updated. We provide briefing to new employees about this policy to know about their rights and responsibility to maintain safe working environment*" M1(personal interview, November 1, 2023).

The rest of the others say it is their priority and preparing about it to set as soon as possible.

"We plan to introduce more robust training and awareness programs, improve our reporting and support mechanisms, and strengthen our collaboration with tech companies to combat online harassment more effectively" M1(personal interview, November 1, 2023).

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The research aims to find the forms of online harassment female journalists face because of their profession, its impacts on them, as well as the approaches female journalists and media organization use to deal with online harassment. Being based on the findings of previous research in different time, journalists in Nepal have reported the most common forms of harassment as cyberstalking, gender-based harassment, hacking, negative comments to defame and blame and sexual harassment.

 Being based on our participants the common form of harassment they have witnessed online are stalking, sexual assault, political blaming and negative comments, character assassination, hacking of social media etc. Our findings and the previous literature provide the same findings. "Political views, physical appearance, gender and race are among the top reasons people say they are harassed online" (Duggan, 2017, p.17). Two of the senior journalists claimed they were being trolled just because they put their opinion on controversial topics. It was not only them, but male journalists had also given opinion but just being of women, they were trolled. Women hesitate to express their opinion as often women perceive themselves as a part of vulnerable group in certain contexts like seeing other women witnessing online harassment. The finding of this research has similarity with the finding of Nadim and Fladmoe which shows that the messages targeted toward "who they are" has more substantial influence on women in comparison to those focused on "what they think" (2019).

Two of the interviewed female journalists revealed that they had received a threat of publicly defaming her family members and character assassination. Three of them have the same experience of sexual assaults and gender-based harassment. According to Uggen and Blackstone (2004), sexual harassment is a way of exerting power and control over women, with adult women being the most likely targets of unwanted touching and personal space invasion. Feminist theories claims that harassment is a means of social control over women. Women's position in society is subordinated due to harassment which directly impacts different areas like education, employment and social relationships (Benson & Thomson, 1982). As a result, it supports male dominance and female subordination, contributing to the persistence of a patriarchal and sexist society (Fineran, 2002). In this study, female journalists reported experiencing sexual harassment and invasion of privacy and

intentional misbehaved by male colleagues. Those younger journalists who do not have much experience to do their work independently, they are mainly being the target by their colleagues. In the name of helping them to boost their professional skills, they are being misbehaved. The findings of this research aligned with the literature provided in this research.

Moreover, harassers would threaten them with character assassination to intimidate and silence them. This was also observed in research by Koirala (2020), where character assassination was found to be a common tactic used against female journalists. Women were targeted for their identity rather than their opinions. It was noted that in patriarchal societies like Nepal, there is a divide between public and private spaces, and there are still reservations about women occupying public spaces (Koirala, 2020). As a result, female journalists are often targeted online to silence them.

Based on interviews conducted with journalists, it was found that female journalists tend to face online harassment targeted at questioning on them why they are showing much interest in certain topic like politics, religions and equality. The questioning on their writing abilities and credibility comes often from sources and anonymous profile and comments as per interviewed female journalists. In patriarchal societies, women journalists are often expected to write only about fashion, beauty products, and social/domestic issues. When they venture into discussing political issues, they are met with a flood of satirical comments suggesting that women are not as intelligent as men. This kind of treatment and judgement often forces women journalists to fit into traditional roles on public platforms (Kamran, 2019).

Regarding the impact of harassment, our interviews have accepted the feeling of anxiety, low confidence and emotional and psychological distress. That has resulted in degradation of work quality and less motivation to the journalism career. Miller and Lewis (2020) argue that the intention behind online harassment is to inflict emotional damage, which seems similar to what we found in our interviews. Likewise, the silencing and demoralizing to women affects to the practice of participation of women in media and democratic practices. It may also lead to self-censorship among journalists, affecting the range and quality of information that reaches the public (Löfgren et al. 2016). They were more careful of what they posted on social media and limit the usage of social media and online timing, said all interviewed female journalists. Among them, some of them have reported leaving their jobs a few months and starting in a new place, writing in other soft issues, or

even doubting their capacity sometimes as a result of the online harassment they faced.

Online sexual harassment that female journalists face from their colleagues and senior journalists and their audience has hindered their professional progress. This harassment within the same workplace limits women's professional connections and job progression argues Adam (2017). It is challenging for female journalists to have professional growth because of the online sexual harassment they have faced from their colleagues and audiences. They have felt difficulty in sharing the harassment going through them since the workplace is male dominated. That resulted in them feeling isolated and alone. The easy use of social media and the creation of anonymous identity.

Likewise, in comparison to matured and experienced journalists', younger and less experienced journalists shared being psychologically distress due to online harassment they witness. They have to struggle in showing evidence to get support and guidance from their media house. On the other, matured and experienced journalists are easily trusted and prone to get help from media organization. They may also be subjected to more online harassment as their byline appears in the newspaper, whereas an editor's byline may not appear. This finding that junior-level journalists are more likely to face online harassment than their counterparts is similar to the finding in Koirala's (2020) research.

Many of our interviewees have reported limiting their social media usage and in state of mind to leave journalism profession at point of time when they have faced frequent online harassment. Being demotivated in their profession further leads to less interest in profession and it negatively impacts their professional growth. Unfortunately, this not only further increases the gender gap in the Nepali media industry, which is already heavily male-dominated occupying more than 80% of total number of journalists as per FNJ (2022). Female journalists have reported taking some steps forcefully such as discontinuing their use of social media, quitting their jobs, writing for a smaller audience, and not posting anything personal on social media due to incident of online harassment. Previous research done by MAG (2022) and Koirala (2020) shows that online harassment is often viewed yet seriously and legal framework in dealing with online harassment is not clear.

One of the interviewees reported the incident of sexual harassment to the women's welfare organization and journalists' federation, but they claimed instead she had been questioned about

attention seekers and defaming to her senior. The prevalence of victim blaming culture has penalized the victim more. Women hesitate to express their opinion as often women feel themselves as a part of vulnerable group in certain contexts like seeing other women witnessing online harassment. The finding of this research has similarity with the finding of Nadim and Fladmoe (2019) have silencing effects when women feel themselves as part of vulnerable group. The results of a study showed that female journalists who decide to report have to be very much courageous and patience at first level. Likewise, they have to put risk their job, reputation, and physical safety while determined to complain. As a result, female journalists tend to keep their sexual harassment stories to themselves.

Interviewed media owner and female journalists emphasize the need for proper policies regarding complaints of online harassment and maintaining digital privacy. Senior journalists who have more than five years of working experience in journalism revealed that they have already accepted the fact of online harassment while working in the media field; however, they show their insecurity due to less knowledge of digital security and privacy. On the other hand, those journalists who have taken digital security and privacy maintaining training are clear on how online harassment occurs and what to do in case of such incidents. Media owners agree on having more knowledge and resources for online security and privacy can minimize the risk. Media owners agree on prevention is better than cure and they can contribute better to a safe working environment. They take themselves having a huge responsibility to provide safe working environment.

Some of the journalists say they are growing the capacity to be thick skinned and give similar advice to younger journalists too. Instead of reacting on each negative online comments on news, scolding and blaming on online platforms they often ignore it. However, in the incident of severity most of the journalists know about Electronic Transaction Act 2008 under which online harassment cases are handled. Two of the media owners have already introduced policy regarding harassment on women in workplace and online a year before. That policy defines how to support and counsel in such cases. Rest of the owners are also known to Electronic Transaction Act, Privacy Act and Workplace Safety Act to prevent harassment against women in workplace. In short, female journalist follows ignoring, delete, mute, focusing on privacy setting, complain to organization and police. On the another had, media owners provide counseling, psychological and legal guidance to file a case and focus on digital security and privacy maintain training.

In short, during interviews with journalists, it was revealed that all of them had faced online harassment at some point in their careers. All of the female journalists in the sample had experienced different kinds of harassment, only the severity and intensity of the online harassment varied. In some cases, harassers even tried to involve journalists' families as well.

Both journalists and media owners expressed their concerns about their digital security and privacy, emphasizing not just their security but also the security of their family members and sources. The journalists had shared their bitter experience of social media accounts hacked anonymously and unwanted content were sent to being called and sending sexual messages at mid night from their circle people. Media owners and journalists are not very satisfied with the existing law which deal with online violence cases in Nepal. Media owners also appreciate the journalists who show their courage to complain and request women journalists speak up against the wrongdoing. They have provided counseling, legal guidance to digital security maintenance help in some incidents of online harassment.

There are some methodological limitations in this research. As this research used snowball sampling, which relies on a small number of seed participants to further recruit other participants, this research process faces the risk of being distorted or subjective from the beginning. The research does not claim to be representative and generalizable for all Nepali media because the research only had 15 participants. As evident from the interviews of participants, the harassment faced by journalists based out of the capital may be different and even harsher situations or different findings than what we have found here.

The future studies can be done by investigating the effects of various factors like geographical areas, ethnicity, level of experience etc. on the online harassment faced by women journalists. Although this research has interviewed journalists within the Kathmandu valley, how the caste and level of experience within the Kathmandu Valley could be examined. Additionally, comparing the online harassment experiences of women journalists in the Nepal with those working in other countries could provide a deeper understanding of how geography and cultural differences affect journalists' interactions on social media platforms. It's important to acknowledge certain limitations. They should be considered as a means to deepen the understanding of the results and guide the direction of future research.

REFFERENCES

Adams, C. (2017). "They go for gender first." The nature and effect of sexist abuse of female technology journalists. Journalism Practice, 12(7), 850–869. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2017.1350115

Adams, W. C. (2015). Conducting semi-structured interviews. Handbook of practical program evaluation, 492-505. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119171386.ch19

Adhikary, N. M., & Pant, L. D. (2016). Supporting safety of journalists in Nepal. UNESCO Publishing. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245666

Aryal, I. (2019). Women in newsroom in Nepal. Center for Investigative Journalism. Retrieved July 10, 2023, from https://vikes.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Women-in-Newsroom-in-Nepal.pdf

Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods. Oxford University Press.

Bartlett, J., Norrie, R., Patel, S., Rumpel, R., & Wibberley, S. (2014). Misogyny on twitter. https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/files/MISOGYNY_ON_TWITTER.pdf

Benson, D. J. & Thomson, G. E. (1982). Sexual harassment on a university campus: The confluence of authority relations, sexual interest, and gender stratification. Social Problems (Berkeley, Calif.), 29(3), 236-251. **https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1982.29.3.03a00030**

Carlson, C. R., & Witt, H. (2020). Online harassment of US women journalists and its impact on press freedom. First Monday. Retrieved October 10, 2023 from https://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/11071/11317

Carter Olson, C. (2016). #BringBackOurGirls: digital communities supporting real-world change and influencing mainstream media agendas. Feminist Media Studies, 16(5), 772–787. Retrieved 3 Jan, 2023 from https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/14680777.2016.1154887

Chadha, K., Steiner, L., Vitak, J., & Ashktorab, Z. (2020). Women's responses to online harassment. *International journal of communication*, *14*, 19.

https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/11683/2906

Central Bureau of Statistics of Government of Nepal. Retrieved on 22 June 2023 from
https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/household

Chen, G. M., & Pain, P. (2017). Normalizing online comments. Journalism Practice, 11(7), 876–
892. Retrieved on 5 Jan, 2023 from
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17512786.2016.1205954

Chen, G. M., Pain, P., Chen, V. Y., Mekelburg, M., Springer, N., & Troger, F. (2020). 'You really
have to have a thick skin': A cross-cultural perspective on how online harassment influences
female journalists. *Journalism*, *21*(7), 877-895.https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918768500

Chandra, & Shang, L. (2019). Inductive Coding. In Qualitative Research Using R: A Systematic
Approach (pp. 91–106). Springer Singapore. Retrieved 5 Oct, 2023 from
https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-981-13-3170-1_8

Choy, L. T. (2014). The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology: Comparison and
complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches. IOSR journal of
humanities and social science, 19(4), 99-104.

Citron, D. K. (2014). Hate crimes in cyberspace. Harvard University Press.
https://doi.org/10.4159/harvard.9780674735613

Constitution of Nepal. (2015). https://lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-
content/uploads/2021/01/Constitution-of-Nepal.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2013). Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches
(3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Department of Information and Broadcasting. Retrieved on 20 Feb, 2022 from
https://api.giwms.gov.np/storage/23/posts/1670836094_56.pdf

Dhakal, S. (2008). Nepalese women under the shadow of domestic violence. The
Lancet, 371(9612), 547-548.

Dietrich, G. (2004). Waging Peace, Building a World in which Life Matters: Festschrift to Honour
Gabriele Dietrich. Ispck.

Directives for Managing Social Networking Sites. (2023).Ministry of information and
communication of Nepal. 1701329617_14.pdf (giwms.gov.np)

Djerf-Pierre, M., Ghersetti, M., & Hedman, U. (2020). Appropriating social media: The changing
uses of social media among journalists across time. In The Future of Journalism: Risks,

Threats and Opportunities (pp. 46-57). Routledge. Retrieved on 3 Nov, 2023 from

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Monika-Djerf-
Pierre/publication/341129837_Appropriating_Social_Media/links/5f60ad9ba6fdcc1164134
ecc/Appropriating-Social-Media.pdf

Duggan, M. (2017). Online harassment 2017. Pew Research Center. Retrieved on 3 Nov from
http://www.pewinternet.org/2017/07/11/online-harassment-2017/

Electronic Transactions Act. (2008). Bidhutiya (Electronic) Karowar Ain 2063 (giwms.gov.np)

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and
purposive sampling. American journal of theoretical and applied statistics, 5(1), 1-4.

Fascendini, F., & Fialová, K. (2011). Voices from digital spaces: Technology related violence
against women. *Association for Progressive Communications (APC)*. Retrieved on 12 Jan, 2023
from   https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/voices-digital-spaces-technology-related-violence-0

Federation of Nepalese Journalists. (2022). *Members.* Retrieved on 1st feb 2023, from
http://www.fnjnepal.org/np/page/members

Ferrier, M., & Garud-Patkar, N. (2018). TrollBusters: Fighting online harassment of women
journalists. In Mediating misogyny (pp. 311-332). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-72917-6_16

Fineran, S. (2002). Sexual harassment between same-sex peers: Intersection of mental health,
homophobia, and sexual violence in schools. Social Work (New York), 47(1), 65–74.
https://doi.org/10.1093/sw/47.1.65

Gallagher, M. (2003). Feminist media perspectives. A companion to media studies, 19-39.

Holton, A. E., Bélair-Gagnon, V., Bossio, D., & Molyneux, L. (2021). "Not their fault, but their
problem": Organizational responses to the online harassment of journalists. Journalism
Practice, 17(4), 859-874. Retrieved on May 5 2023 from
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/17512786.2021.1946417?needAccess=true

Jane, E. A. (2016). Online misogyny and feminist digilantism. Continuum, 30(3), 284-297.
https://doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2016.1166560

Journalists Code of Conduts. (2016). Journalist Code of Conducts. Press Council Nepal.
https://www.presscouncilnepal.gov.np/np/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Journalist-Code-of-
Conduct-2017-English.pdf

Kamaran, H. (2019). Hostile Bytes: A study of online violence against women journalists. Media
Matters for Democracy. Retrieved on July 2 from

https://www.digitalrightsmonitor.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Hostile-Bytes.pdf

Khadgi, A. (2022, January 21). Women journalists say they face harassment, but actions rarely taken. The Kathmandu Post. Retrieved July 15, 2022, from https://kathmandupost.com/national/2022/01/21/women-journalists-say-they-faceharassment-but-actions-rarely-taken

Koirala, S. (2020). Female journalists' experience of online harassment: A case study of Nepal. Media and Communication, 8(1), 47-56. https://doi.org/10.17645/mac.v8i1.2541

Lamichhane, P., Puri, M., Tamang, J., & Dulal, B. (2011). Women's status and violence against young married women in rural Nepal. BMC women's health, 11, 1-9.

Lewis, S. C., Zamith, R., & Coddington, M. (2020). Online harassment and its implications for the journalist–audience relationship. Digital Journalism, 8(8), 1047-1067. https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2020.1811743

Löfgren Nilsson, M., & Örnebring, H. (2016). Journalism under threat: Intimidation and harassment of Swedish journalists. Journalism Practice, 10(7), 880-890.

Lu, S., & Luqiu, L. R. (2023). When will one help? Understanding audience intervention in online harassment of women journalists. *Journalism Practice*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2023.2201582

MAG (2022). Online Violence and Harassment against Women Journalists. Retrieved 10 Feb, 2023 from https://mag.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Online-Violence-and-Harassment-Against-Women-English.pdf

MAG (2023). A Study on the status of Nepali women journalists covering foreign affairs. Media Advocacy Group. Retrieved on 20 Dec 2023 from https://mag.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/A-Study-on-The-Status-of-Nepali-Women-Journalists-Covering-Foreign-Affairs.pdf

Manandhar, A. (2022). Online harassment among male and female journalists in Nepal and its impact on their work.

Mantilla, K. (2013). Gendertrolling: Misogyny adapts to new media. Feminist Studies, 39(2), 563–570.

Martin, F. (2018). Tackling gendered violence online: Evaluating digital safety strategies for women journalists. Australian Journalism Review, 40(2), 73-89.

Media landscape (2023). *Nepal.* Rretrieved on 12 June 2023 from https://medialandscapes.org/country/nepal/organisations/journalist-associations

Megarry, J. (2014, November). Online incivility or sexual harassment? Conceptualising women's experiences in the digital age. In Women's Studies International Forum (Vol. 47, pp. 46-55). Pergamon. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.07.012

Miller, K. C., & Lewis, S. C. (2022). Journalists, harassment, and emotional labor: The case of women in on-air roles at US local television stations. Journalism, 23(1), 79-97.

Miller, K. C., and S. C. Lewis. 2020. "Journalists, Harassment, and Emotional Labor: The Case of Women in On-Air Roles at US Local Television Stations." Journalism. doi:10.1177/1464884919899016

Nadim, M., & Fladmoe, A. (2019). Silencing women? Gender and online harassment. Social Science Computer Review.
 https://doi.org/10.1177/0894439319865518

Nepal Police Cyber Bureau retrieved on 20 August 2023
 https://www.nepalpolice.gov.np/media/filer_public/6b/3f/6b3f349b-6ec9-47fa-85a3-06531b47e323/fy-2078-79-annual-infographics-ne.pdf

Nepal Telecommunications Authority(2023). Retrieved Feb 20, 2023 from
 https://nta.gov.np/uploads/contents/MIS-2080-Baishakh.pdf

Parker, C., Scott, S., & Geddes, A., (2019). Snowball Sampling, In P. Atkinson, S. Delamont, A. Cernat, J.W. Sakshaug, & R.A. Williams (Eds.), SAGE Research Methods Foundations. https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036831710

Parry, L., & Karam, B. (2001). Feminist media theory. Media Studies: Institutions, theories, and issues, 1, 383.

Posetti, J., Shabbir, N., Maynard, D., Bontcheva, K., & Aboulez, N. (2021). The chilling: Global trends in online violence against women journalists. research discussion paper, UNESCO. Retrieved on 10 May, 2023 from https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000377223

Press council of Nepal(2022).*Yearly report.* Press Council Nepal. Retrieved on May 10 2022 from
 https://www.presscouncilnepal.gov.np/np/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Yearly-Report.pdf

Privacy Act. (2018). https://lawcommission.gov.np/en/?lsvr_document=the-privacy-act-2075-2018

Rabionet, S. E. (2011). How I learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: an ongoing and continuous journey. Qualitative Report, 16(2), 563-566.

Rai, Sarah. (2019, November 22). Plight of female journalists: Still fighting the odds. Retrieved on 14 Jan, 2021 from
 https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/plight-of-female-journalists-still-fighting-the-odds

Reporters without borders.(2023). *Country profile.* Retrieved from
https://rsf.org/en/country/nepal

Scanlan, C. L. (2020). *Preparing for the unanticipated: Challenges in conducting semi-structured, in-depth interviews.* SAGE Publications Limited.

Sancharika Samuha. (2015). Status of women journalists in Nepal. Sancharika Samuha.
https://sancharika.org/portal/?p1=content&p2=165

Schrock, A. R. (2015). Communicative affordances of mobile media: Portability, availability, locatability, and multimediality. International Journal of Communication, 9, 18.

Secretariat, C. A., & Durbar, S. (2015). Constitution of Nepal 2015. Kathmandu: Constituent Assembly Secretariat, 19.

Shrestha, A., & Gartoulla, R. P. (2015). Socio-cultural causes of gender disparity in Nepalese society. Journal of Advanced Academic Research, 2(1), 100-111.

Shrestha, R. (2005). Women Journalists in Nepal. Media Asia, 32(1), 20.

Simon Kemp (2023) Retrieved on 25 th August 2023 from
https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2023-nepal

Šimonović, D. (2018). report of the special rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective (no. A/HRC/38/47). *Human Rights Council. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1641160?ln=en*

Spigel, L. (2004). Theorizing The Bachelorette:"waves" of feminist media studies. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 30(1), 1209-1221.

Steiner, L. (2014). Feminist media theory. The Handbook of media and mass communication theory, 359-379.

Subedi, A. (2021). Social media is 'dangerous' to women journalists in Nepal. MyRepublica. Retireved on 20 Feb from https://ipi.media/social-media-is-dangerous-to-women-journalists-in-nepal/

Steiner, L. (2014). Using New Technologies to Enter the Public Sphere, Second Wave Style. Feminist Media, 182.

Steen-Johnsen, K., & Enjolras, B. (2016). The fear of offending: social norms and freedom of expression. Society, 53(4), 352-362. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-016-0044-2

Tamang, S. (2011). The politics of 'developing Nepali women'. Perspectives on modern South Asia: A Reader in culture, history, and representation, 280-288.

Tandoc, E. C., Sagun, K. K., & Alvarez, K. P. (2021). The Digitization of Harassment: Women Journalists' Experiences with Online Harassment in the Philippines. Journalism Practice, 1-16.

The Sexual Harassment at Workplace prevention Act. (2014). https://lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/The-Sexual-Harassment-at-Workplace-Prevention-Act-2014-2071.pdf

Upreti, B. R., Upreti, D., & Ghale, Y. (2020). Nepali women in politics: success and challenges. Journal of International Women's Studies, 21(2), 76-93.

Waisbord, S. (2020). Mob censorship: Online harassment of US journalists in times of digital hate and populism. Digital Journalism, 8(8), 1030-1046.

Watkins, S. C., & Emerson, R. A. (2000). Feminist media criticism and feminist media practices. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 571(1), 151-166.

Weaver, D. H., & Willnat, L. (2016). Changes in US journalism: How do journalists think about social media?. Journalism Practice, 10(7), 844-855. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/17512786.2016.1171162

Yauch, C. A., & Steudel, H. J. (2003). Complementary use of qualitative and quantitative cultural assessment methods. *Organizational research methods*, *6*(4), 465-481.

ANNEX

Full Interview guide with journalists

1. Please tell us a little bit about your experience as a woman journalist. What kind of topics do you typically cover and what platforms do you use to publish your work?

2. Have you ever experienced any form of online harassment as a result of your work as a journalist? If yes, please describe the type of online harassment you experienced and how it affected you. (threat messages, stalking, comments, and post on social media or on any online platform related to your job)

3. How has the experience of online harassment affected your mental and emotional well-being? Has it impacted your ability to do your job effectively?

4. Do you think online harassment of women journalists is a pervasive problem in the industry? Why or why not?

5. Have you ever reported online harassment to the platform or website where it occurred? If yes, how satisfied were you with the response from the platform or website? If no, why did you choose not to report the online harassment?

6. Have you ever felt that your employer or colleagues did not take your experience of online harassment seriously enough? If yes, can you describe the situation and how it made you feel?

7. Have you ever taken any measures to protect yourself from online harassment, such as changing your privacy settings or blocking a user? If yes, did these measures effectively prevent further online harassment?

8. In your opinion, what can be done to address online harassment of women journalists? Are there any specific policies or initiatives that you would like to see put in place to protect women journalists from online harassment?

9. Have you received any training or support from your employer or professional organizations on how to deal with online harassment? If yes, did you find this training/support helpful? If no, would you like to receive this kind of training/support in the future?

10. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience of online harassment as a woman journalist?

Interview guide with media owner

1. Have you received reports or complaints from women journalists in your organization about online harassment they have experienced? How have you responded to these reports?

2. In your opinion, how prevalent is online harassment towards women journalists in your organization, and in the industry as a whole?

3. What policies and procedures does your organization have in place to prevent and address online harassment towards women journalists? How are these policies communicated to employees?

4. How do you ensure that women journalists in your organization feel safe and supported when reporting online harassment? Are there any specific resources or support mechanisms you provide?

5. What steps do you take to hold individuals or groups accountable for online harassment towards women journalists? Have you ever taken legal action against harassers?

6. Do you collaborate with other media organizations, industry groups, or online platforms to address online harassment towards women journalists? What kind of initiatives or programs have you participated in?

7. In your opinion, what more can media organizations, industry groups, and online platforms do to prevent online harassment towards women journalists?

8. How does online harassment towards women journalists impact the reputation and credibility of your organization, as well as the overall quality of journalism?

9. Have you noticed any differences in the types or intensity of online harassment women journalists in your organization receive compared to their male counterparts? If yes, how do you address these differences?