BIG DATA ANALYSIS ON HATE SPEECH AND MISOGYNY IN FOUR COUNTRIES: BANGLADESH, INDONESIA, THE PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND

UN WOMEN

Introduction

In recent years, the Asia-Pacific region has witnessed rising polarization and strong backlash against gender equality and women's empowerment. This polarization has been particularly evident in online spaces, especially after COVID-19 lockdowns and related movement restrictions drove more people into online spaces.

Widening inequalities and ongoing hardships provide fertile ground for continued polarization and the spread of dis- and misinformation that certain groups capitalize on to foment discontent. Some studies have pointed out troublesome connections between inflammatory speech online and violent acts offline, including attacks on women belonging to marginalized and minority groups.

This brief provides an evidence-based analysis of recent trends in online hate speech. Focused on Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, this brief analyses misogynistic hate speech and cyberbullying against women which has occurred in the context of increasing polarization, shrinking democratic space and the ongoing gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media discourse[1] is analysed over a period of two years (March 2020 to February 2022); search data[2] is analysed over a period of one year (March 2021 to February 2022). The brief is

based on the findings of research conducted by Quilt.AI for the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific as a follow-up of the brief "*Social Media Monitoring on COVID-19 and Misogyny in Asia and the Pacific (2020)*".[3] While these preliminary findings require deeper analysis as development in online spaces may counter efforts to create safer and more inclusive platforms, they are key to understanding better the volume and interest in misogyny, how it is spread and influencing social media discourse on gender equality issues and feminist movements, and how relevant actors can respond and reduce misogynistic traffic on the internet.

Overview of Search Behaviour around Hate Speech and Misogyny

The research team conducted a desk review of local newspaper articles, blogs and forums to identify major misogyny-related keywords and hate speech. The keyword list was enhanced by collating keywords (of English and local languages) that were similar or related to major keywords. These keywords were then categorized into three categories: general search behaviour,[4] help-seeking behaviour[5] and perpetrator behaviour.[6]

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1   For social media discourse analysis, the research team curated keywords and hashtags to identify posts related to online misogyny and hate speech directed towards women across Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. For all platforms, themes were identified through hashtag and keyword combinations (e.g. #feminismiscancer on Twitter or misogynistic groups on Facebook) combined with location-tagging of the four countries. A total of 10,740 social media posts and YouTube videos were analysed.

2   For search data analysis, the research team curated keywords related to misogyny and hate speech directed towards women. These keywords range from derogatory words used for women and the LGBTQIA+ community to gender stereotypes and references to religious or cultural beliefs. In total, 2,075 keywords and 21,355,760 unique searches were analysed for the four countries.

3   This brief was based on the finding of research conducted by Mythos Labs for UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/10/ap-social-media-monitoring-on-covid-19-and-misogyny-in-asia-and-the-pacific

4   This category included words that were related to misogyny and hate speech, portraying either curiosity or information-seeking behaviour (e.g. what are feminist, cultural sexism, cyberbullying real life examples, male chauvinist examples, etc.).

5   This category included words that indicated help-seeking behaviour by users who might be the victims or bystanders of online misogyny and hate speech. (e.g. cyberbullying hotline, bullying counsellor, help with cyberbullying, how to deal with a misogynist, etc.)

6   This category included words that were related to portraying the behaviour of perpetrating or justifying misogyny and hate speech through various tactics or methods. (e.g. feminazi, I hate females, I hate working with women, funny jokes about woman, etc.)

General search behaviour is dominant in all four countries, ranging from 84 per cent in Bangladesh to 95 per cent in Indonesia. The highest percentage of help-seeking behaviour was observed in Bangladesh (12 per cent), while the highest percentage of perpetrator behaviour was observed in Thailand (7 per cent) (see Table).

BOX:

Targets of Misogyny and Hate Speech Seek Support and Advice Online

Online verbal abuse and prejudiced attacks against women are common in the Philippines. However, the analysis observed that people also use social media to find solidarity by sharing personal experiences, finding support and publicly condemning inappropriate behaviours.

When women share personal experiences of misogyny and hate speech, people generally respond to these posts positively, often adding their own similar experiences and offering comfort and encouragement in the process. While not always a safe space for women, social media platforms can, at times, be helpful in creating a sense of community and offering spaces for women to freely articulate their thoughts.
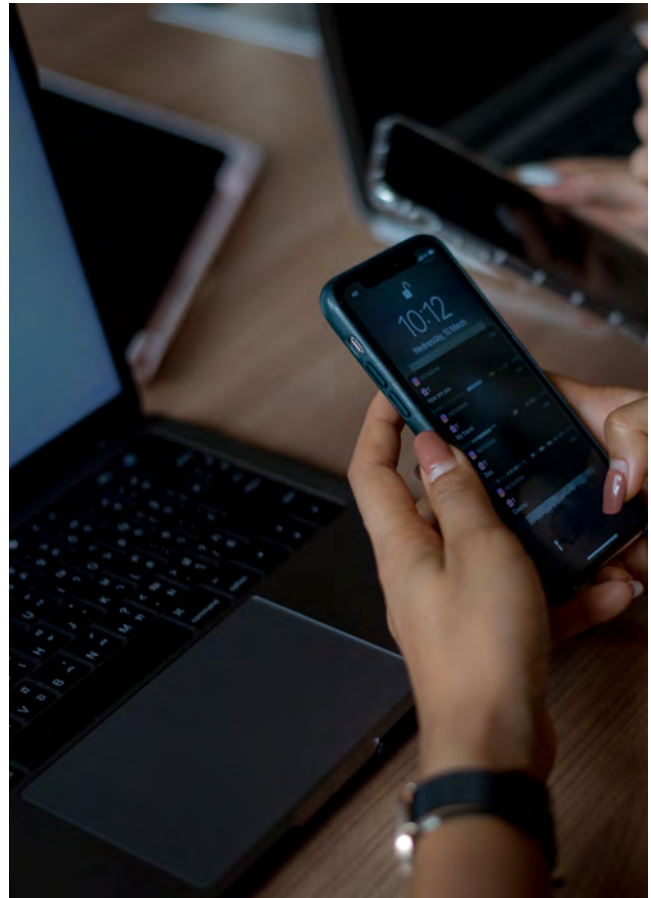

Photo: UN Women/Ploy Phutpheng

Table: Overview of Search Behaviour on Hate Speech and Misogyny

	BANGLADESH	INDONESIA	THE PHILIPPINES	THAILAND
General Search	Gender: Male(72%) Age: 18-24 (48%) Volume: 84%	Gender: Male (59%) Age: 18-24 (40%) Volume: 95%	Gender: Female (62%) Age: 18-24 (57%) Volume: 94%	Gender: Male (65%) Age: 18-24 (32%) Volume: 89%
Help Seeking	Gender: Male (88%) Age: 18-24 (41%) Volume: 12%	Gender: Male (84%) Age: 45-54 (35%) Volume: 2%	Gender: Female (55%) Age: 25-34 (31%) Volume: 5%	Gender: Female (52%) Age: 25-34 (35%) Volume: 4%
Perpetrator	Gender: Male (78%) Age: 18-24 (46%) Volume: 4%	Gender: Male (61%) Age: 18-24 (40%) Volume: 3%	Gender: Female (55%) Age: 18-24 (50%) Volume: 1%	Gender: Male (51%) Age: 25-34 (34%) Volume: 7%

Overview of Misogynistic Narratives and Hate Speech

Qualitative analysis revealed three common narrative types and tactics used by perpetrators, including:

1. Using religion and patriarchal social norms as a pretext to reinforce gender stereotypes

Research showed that in the four countries studied, arguments related to religious beliefs (from all religions) and patriarchal social norms were used to justify misogynistic narratives and to attack women online. The main misogynistic narratives found include:

• Men are superior to women;
• Women's roles in society should be restricted (e.g. "women should not engage in politics and should only be in charge of child-rearing, households chores, etc");
• Women need to be protected; and
• Women need to conform to certain standards of clothing in order to appear modest and should be chastised if they do not dress appropriately.

Richmond

This is how it is taught at school and it is said that women should FOLLOW their husbands

Translate Tweet

Responsibilities of the wife/mother

❖Submit to her husband

2. Engaging in online harassment and victim-blaming

Women often experience victim-blaming on social media, especially when women speak about their experiences with harassment or hate speech. Online attacks against them can be categorized as:

• Commenting on women's attire or substance use and questioning their relationships with sexual violence perpetrators;

• Labelling women as "bitchy" or "loose" and alleging immoral behaviour to justify mistreatment;
• Using sensitive and triggering terms (often related to rape and physical violence) such as gangbang, punching or choking;
• Objectifying women and using derogatory language while referring to them (e.g. "bitch", "pussy" or "whore"); and
• Humiliating survivors by branding them as silly and stupid. Further, purported humour is used to trivialize and downplay women's experiences. For example, using smileys or laughing emojis in their responses/misogynistic posts (see also Communication Cues section).

I_Rizky

Replying to

Later in heaven, you will be gangbanged, sis🤣
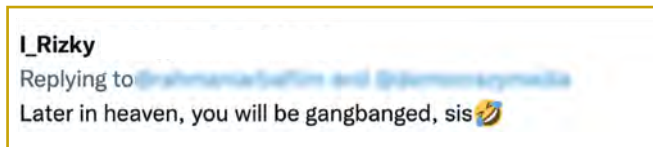
## 3. Incentivizing attacks on women for having opinions

Many attacks are motivated by women expressing political or personal opinions. Women are targeted for having more liberal opinions that support their opportunities or presenting themselves in ways that do not conform to traditional expectations. Online attacks against them can be categorized as:

• Responding with death or rape threats, particularly when women talk about politics;
• Blaming women when they support justice campaigns for other women;
• Calling out or posting hateful or mocking responses to women who speak out about their experiences (particularly those that relate to sexism or misogyny);
• Attacking women for being cowards, stupid or weak for having their own opinions when women refuse to change their views or disengage; and
• Attacking feminism and calls for gender equality by using insults.

only way to get bitches for some guys here is to act as a male feminazi
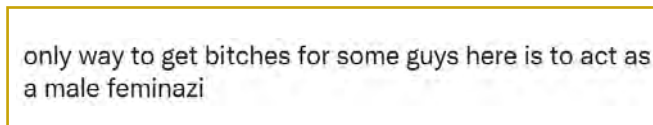
Overview of Communications Cues

Quilt.AI ran word detection on Twitter posts to identify common words, emojis and hashtags that are often used in conversations related to misogyny.
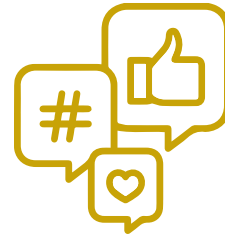
BANGLADESH

Flame emojis were often used in posts that sexually objectify women. Similarly, the 18 and eggplant emojis carry sexual connotations that men often directed at women. Laughing emojis were used to mock and trivialize gender equality and messages related to empowerment. Common words such as rape and other explicit and violent language were commonly used. Religion was often at the centre of these conversations. In contrast, crying emojis were used by those who faced discrimination to express their frustration and despair.

INDONESIA

Laughing emojis were often used to mock women and justify misogynistic comments. Heart emojis were often used when men shared pornographic content. Top keywords showed that the majority of conversations portrayed women's roles in Indonesia society as being good wives and mothers. Any women that strayed from their traditional roles were labelled as evil or naughty.

Top hashtags	Top emoji
#ধর্ষণ (rape)	🔥
#নারী (women)	😋
#desihot	😋
#desiwife	😡
#Rampurhat	🍆

Top hashtags	Top emoji
#perempuan	😋
#lonte	😋
#feminisindonesia	❤️
#mistress	😋
#feminisme	
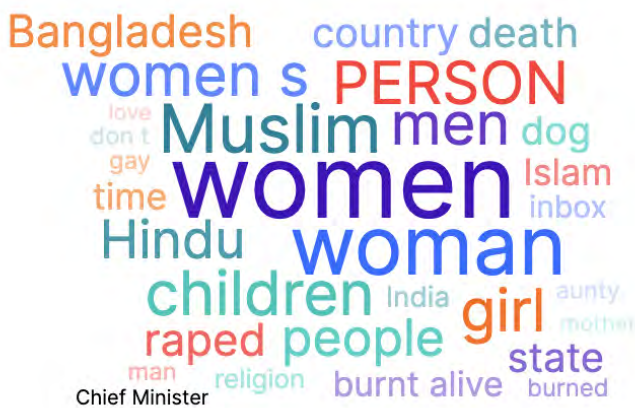
Top words detected in all Twitter posts that contain local keywords
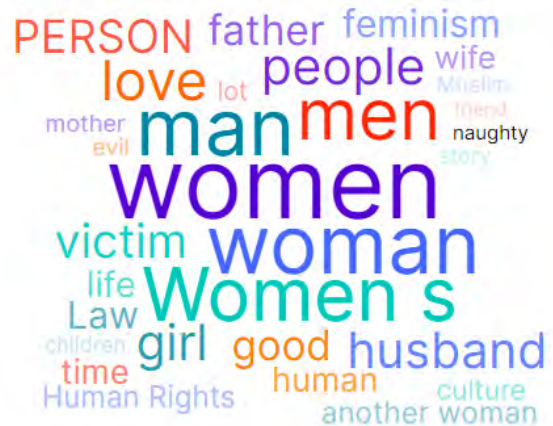
Top words detected in all Twitter posts that contain local keywords

PHILIPPINES

Laughing emojis were indicative of a mocking tone within conversations, with both sides (those who oppose misogyny and those who do not) ridiculing one another. The rampant use of vomit and angry emojis showcased the convoluted nature of the conversations. Top keywords showed that the majority of the conversation derided women: words like "pokpok" and "puta" were among the largest. Keywords like dress, modestly, and decent showed that a large part of discourse related to how women should dress. The word weak stood out as a stereotype falsely associated with women.

THAILAND

Flame emojis were used in posts to describe attractive women and sex workers. These posts were often lewd and carried sexual connotations. Similarly, eye emojis were often used to convey lecherous undertones or to sexualize and objectify women. Laughing emojis were often used to mock and insult women online. Men used diamond and bling emojis to glorify and support sex work and prostitution. The top keywords that stand out were derogatory terms that targeted people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or gender expressions. The term "trans" was often used as an insulting remark to verbally hurt others and promote discrimination and "prostitute" was also a common term used to insult women. Lastly, gaslighting, toxic love, and toxic relationship were used to portray the norm of being in abusive relationships.

Top words detected in all Twitter posts that contain local keywords

Top words detected in all Twitter posts that contain local keywords

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Recommendations

As the region witnesses increased volumes of misogyny and hate speech targeting women online, it is crucial that female social media users are aware of how to protect themselves. In the absence of urgent action, internet-based attacks on women will increase as more people engage in online spaces. The following recommendations are targeted towards governments, development and civil society organizations and private sector actors, particularly technology companies:

- **Review and re-design** digital spaces and invest sufficient resources to monitor the online environments that provide spaces for misogyny to thrive. Technology companies should create safer and more inclusive platforms by identifying the specific typology for hate speech against women, and investing in systems to monitor and remove misogynist content.

- **Promote** women's safe, equal and meaningful participation in public and political life, online and offline, including by addressing persistent obstacles that prevent women from engaging in public debates online.

- **Develop** a proactive gender-specific policy and operational framework to reduce misinformation and hate speech increase the accessibility of safe spaces and extend support to women platform users seeking help.

- **Implement** gender-responsive policies and legislation that criminalizes online harassment, including online hate speech against women. The prevalence of online harassment and impunity for such acts encourages perpetrators and increases women's sense of insecurity in using online platforms.

- **Support** women's access to services to report and block hateful content and develop women's and men's social media literacy and ethical use of social media.

Photo: UN Women/Gagan Thapa Magar

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