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ABSTRACT NO. 11

The Effectiveness of Digital Helplines in Addressing Gender-Based Violence: A Systematic Review of Kenya's Toll-Free Reporting Services

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ABSTRACT

Gender-based violence remains a pervasive issue in Kenya. Notably, online harassment has significantly escalated, demonstrating a 21% increase between 2020 and 2023 (UN Women, 2023). In response, the Kenyan government, in collaboration with United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Safaricom implemented toll-free tech-based GBV reporting hotlines. While employing digital tools is often lauded as innovative ways of enhancing access to justice, their impact remains under-researched. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of toll-free reporting hotlines on gender-based violence, specifically online harassment. A systematic policy review methodology will be employed to evaluate implementation gaps within Kenya's toll-free GBV hotline services. This approach entails a comprehensive analysis of scholarly literature with a focus on data extraction and synthesis to identify prevailing trends and existing shortcomings. Preliminary findings indicate extremely low case resolution rates due to systemic policing and technology alignment dysfunctions, alongside digital exclusion caused by network gaps for rural survivors. These findings are instrumental for policymakers, technology developers, and civil society organizations in fostering more effective and accessible interventions for GBV survivors.

Key Words:

Gender-based violence, Toll-free helplines, digital justice, case resolution, online harassment

