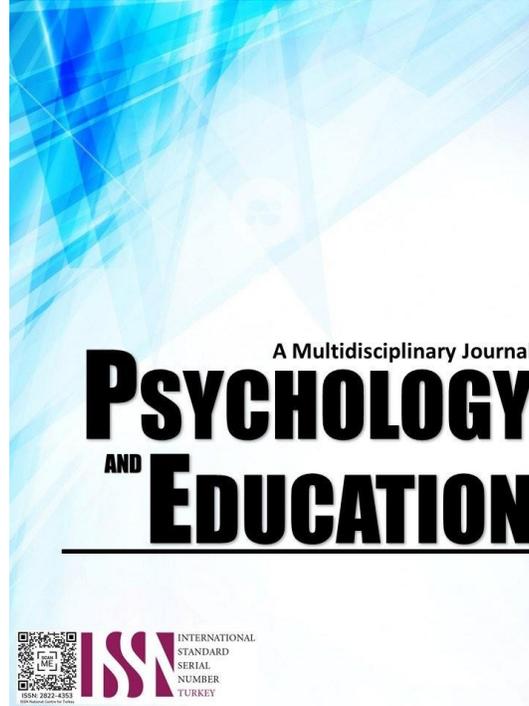


# TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED ABUSE AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY



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## Technology-Facilitated Abuse among College Students in a Private University

Eun Princess C. Balintag,\* Lay Nicolo D. Alvear, Sophia Lourenz Galicia, Jonh Kenneth A. Cadabona, Kenisha Leigh B. Bumanghat, Aprille Joy S. Fernando, Michelle B. Pagaduan, Kristel Joy C. Dapiawen, Lady Valen Charon A. Dela Peña

For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

### Abstract

The advancements in technology have without a doubt helped humanity in so many ways. However, it is sometimes used for the wrong things, such as cyberbullying, cyberstalking, or blackmailing, which are forms of technology-facilitated abuse (TFA). This study aims to minimize the prevalence of technology-facilitated abuse by raising awareness and finding possible ways and policies to effectively prevent it. Through utilizing the Convergent Mixed-methods Approach and surveying 360 Saint Mary's University college students, this study found that, overall, the extent of their experiences of technology-facilitated abuse ranges from not at all to experience at a low extent. Moreover, findings indicate that monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors are the most common types of technology-facilitated abuse they experience. Notably, significant differences can be seen in the extent of the respondents' experiences of technology-facilitated abuse. This suggests the need to be literate and knowledgeable about the pros and cons of technology and the digital world. These findings indicate the need to raise awareness about technology-facilitated abuse. The school could aid in addressing the rising cases of technology-facilitated abuse by educating students regarding the importance of digital safety, and by providing support for those who may be victims of technology-facilitated abuse, it could contribute to making a safer online environment for the students.

**Keywords:** *technology, technology-facilitated abuse, monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors*

### Introduction

With time, the world evolves, and technology goes hand in hand with progress. Anderson (2024) found that through technology, including calls, texting, email, FaceTime, and photo-sharing, many people now have several routes to connect with one another. It has brought drastic changes to our world through accomplishments and the lives of people. Communication has become easier. Education has become more effective. Information is now readily accessible. Technology also offers the entertainment that people desire. However, if it is used for the wrong things, technology has the power to destroy things, even people. Today, people have their gadgets or technological devices, and some use them to harass, threaten, coerce, monitor, breach privacy, and abuse others.

Brookfield et al. (2023) outline that online abuse is an important social problem; therefore, it is necessary to address it. When talking about the ratio of young males to young females who believe that someone can be abused online, it is much higher among women than men. TFA is found to be significant in low and middle-income countries (LMICs), such as the Philippines. The growing access to digital technologies in such countries offers more opportunities to use them as a tool for perpetrating sexual violence, abuse, and harassment (International Telecommunication Union [ITU], 2019)

### *Technology-Facilitated Abuse*

Technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) is the act of abusing someone with the use of technology. It is a form of domestic abuse whereby digital technology and devices are deliberately used to control, coerce, threaten, or harm another person (What Is Technology Facilitated Abuse — Cyber Awareness Ireland, n.d.). Abusers or perpetrators may use technology to manipulate, harass, or intimidate a person. They may carry out physical, sexual, psychological, or economic abuse using technology (Refuge Against Domestic Violence – Help for Women & children, 2023). It includes a range of behaviors. It consists of a variety of digitally based forms of abuse, including but not limited to stalking and omnipresence; tracking; intimidation; impersonation; humiliation; threats; consistent harassment or unwanted contact; sexting; image-based sexual abuse such as non-consensual sexting (i.e., sharing a sexual image without permission); revenge pornography (i.e., sharing a sexual image nonconsensual to hurt, humiliate, or get back at the person); and sextortion (i.e., threatening to share a sexual image to get money, another image, or something else of value from the person) (Turner et al., 2024). Rock (2019) claimed that perpetrators can be anyone. They can be one's husband, wife, boyfriend, girlfriend, ex-lover, family member, friend, or a stranger. They can be someone you least expected.

### *Types of TFA*

#### *Monitoring, Stalking, and Controlling Behaviors*

Stalking and monitoring is repeatedly receiving unwanted harassment and unwanted contact or being monitored for your behaviors and where you are (Stalking and Monitoring, n.d.). This behavior may happen online or in-person and may make one feel that he/she is unable to escape. For in-person stalking, the types of actions can be directed to one person whom they tend to follow and stay around where that individual lives, work, and visit. The stalker might monitor the person, interrupt their property, and do anything that can bring anxiety or worry. As indicated by the latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018), stalking has become prevalent

among men and women. The major difference between victim groups is that from a male offender, the chances for females are higher for them to be stalked by a known male rather than an unknown person.

According to Fraser et al. (2010), perpetrators employ a variety of tools to continue unwanted communication with a victim: besides spreading abusive comments, photos, and private information online, they can assume a victim role in online writing, follow victims in the places and actions they do, or track and observe victims; moreover, they utilize social media to accumulate and/or publish information about their victims. Cyberstalking may become more aggressive to the detail that stalking people physically may end up with abuse or violence (Reyns & Fissel, 2020).

### ***Psychological and Emotional Abuse and Threats***

Blackmail, extortion, and threats have been a part of the world for a long time. Blackmailers would accomplish their goals by making demands and warning that they would disclose embarrassing or destructive facts about their victims if they failed to do what was asked of them. Currently, they apply such devices to conduct these kinds of transactions and extort people using various digital resources (Infosec Train, 2024). Research conducted by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) using a U-Report poll in June 2019 found that 70 percent of youth from 30 countries admitted to being bullied on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter. Also, it is highlighted that 2/3 of Filipino youth experience cyber abuse in the form of insults online, and 1/4 of young people are victims of sexual messages.

Cyber extortion is a type of crime committed online where the perpetrator takes the victim's computer files or data hostage until a ransom is met (What Is Cyber Extortion? | Insureon, n.d.). Attacking someone's social media page and gaining access to personal or private information is a circumstance of cyber extortion. The hacker can now disclose the stolen information if the victim does not comply with the ransom payment. Extortion on the web is popular amongst those in blackmail; this is the method of intimidation and threats. Nonetheless, there are some peculiarities to be noted. Cyber extortion is normally done with the aid of modern technology such as malware or ransomware. Blackmail, the opposite of that, involves conventional ways, such as in-person threats, writing letters, and so forth. As such, cyber extortion is an online form of old-fashioned blackmail (Kukreti, 2023).

### ***Sexual and Image-based Abuse (IBA)***

Wolbers et al. (2022) found that approximately one in five of their respondents (18.8%) had experienced online image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) from someone they met in online dating platforms. Moreover, one in seven respondents stated that someone was threatening to post online or send to others an unsolicited or sexual image (photo or video) of them without their consent (13.5%) and/or taking an unsolicited or sexual image (photo or video) of them without their consent (12.7%). However, one in 10 said an unsolicited or sexual image (photo or video) had actually been shared without their consent (11.7%).

The Women's Services Network (WESNET) found that people from the LGBTQIA+ community, younger people, people with disabilities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are especially vulnerable to this type of abuse. Another type of IBA is cyber flashing, otherwise referred to as "dick pics", which is when a person sends an unbidden image or video of their genitals to another person without their consent (Fido & Harper, 2020). The perpetrators of this type of IBA can be both strangers or known to the victim and it can be any gender also Sexual double standards online mean women and girls often face harsher consequences such as reputational damage if they are victims of sexualized forms of TFA such as IBA (Flynn & Henry, 2019).

### ***Sexual harassment and dating harassment***

Løkkeberg et al. (2023) stated that intimate partner violence (IPV) is viewed as a public health concern. Through the use of technology, perpetrators find new ways of carrying out abuse in intimate relationships. They also found that being controlled by a partner is the most prevalent negative experience among adolescents. Moreover, receiving insulting messages was expected, as well as privacy violations, electronic intrusiveness, and receiving numerous texts from a partner.

Unwelcome advances or comments with sexual overtones, such as jokes that are sexual or offensive, suggestive messages or pictures, emails or SMS with sexual content, and sex-based jokes or insults, also pen down the definition of sexual harassment (Australian Human Rights Commission [AHRC], 2020). Harassment in dating is very different from abuse and is a pattern of controlling behavior used by someone in a romantic relationship to obtain power or control over another (Teresa, 2020). Digital technology that is frequently implemented in intimate partner communication has become a modern tool of manipulation and attack (Briggs, 2018). TFA is an aspect of IPV that occurs in intimate relationship settings.

Quite many people held the view that the usage of technology by people to control their fellow partners or ex-partners was quite similar to the "classic" type of coercive control in physical interaction (Fiolet et al., 2021). Some types of digital abuse are social networking harassment, using GPS to track down and intercept and distributing the tracking or offensive messages, controlling the email account, breaking into the account without authorization, assuming the other identity, disclosing personal and identifying information, and disseminating the sexualized content openly (Dragiewicz et al., 2018). With regard to sexual abuse in the domains of domestic or romantic relationships, technology has created new opportunities such as online sexual harassment, surveillance, and monitoring. For example, emotional abuse, dominating actions, intrusions to their space, and IBA, and using technology which makes life easier for carrying out physical abuse and aggression (Powell et al., 2019). Because of this, the victims might also find themselves in a situation

with hypervigilance on their side as well as suicidality, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### **Preventive Ways**

With society depending more and more on technology for social interaction, work, and communication, TFA prevalence has grown to be a serious problem with wide-ranging effects. These acts of TFA have the potential to seriously disturb victims' psychological well-being in addition to damaging their relationships with friends, family, and partners and affecting their goals for their education and careers (Witwer, 2020). With every generation surpassing the previous one in advancements in technology, the acts of TFA will continue to evolve; therefore, prevention of TFA is a must. In mitigating harm and empowering TFA victims, Witwer (2020) suggests developing tools for detecting TFA, mitigating its effects, supporting victims, promoting coordination among law enforcement, crisis providers, and lawyers, and reassessing remedies and penalties for deterrence and harm mitigation. TFA can be as harmful as offline abuse. A growing social problem, cyberbullying is one of the easiest acts to do, but it is not that easy to mitigate. Some of the ways to mitigate cyberbullying are to use privacy tools and settings, keep personal stuff private, manage location sharing, teach youngsters to think before posting, refuse to respond and report cyberbullies (Gordon, 2022).

Kaur et al. (2021) recognized an increasing incident of cyberstalking due to the frequent use of technology-enabled communication platforms, such as social media. Several ways that can prevent this phenomenon are: avoiding the use of real names, nicknames, or suggestive names in online platforms; practicing caution before information disclosure on online platforms; considering its ramifications in real-life scenarios; considering the potential for perpetual preservation and quick dissemination of information disclosed on online platforms; immediate cessation of communication upon inappropriate contact; record-keeping of all communication with a stalker; and reporting the incidence to the internet service provider, law enforcement agency, school administration, etc. (Paullet et al., 2009).

Furthermore, Winkelman et al. (2015) recommend keeping auto-updates and firewalls on the operating system enabled, installing security programs like anti-virus and anti-spyware software, subscribing to them, and scanning the system every month, avoiding opening any unknown attachments or clicking on links from unknown individuals, being careful of social networking sites, not sharing personal information, and using a stronger password.

TFA's distributive approaches and different types have also been discovered through surveys. In the last case, results reveal the need for student prevention to avoid the whole process of receiving TFA. The study identifies preventive strategies, increasing people's awareness, and the creation of a safer virtual sphere as the main goals. These study findings can be beneficial in preventing technology-facilitated abuse and in fostering mutual respect in the digital world by raising awareness about the potential risks and consequences of online behavior.

Acknowledging technology-facilitated abuse as a critical social issue requiring a coordinated response to navigate the complex online environment is essential. Recent research demonstrates that TFA is dangerous; despite this, the majority do not take laws or legal compliance seriously, making it hard to prevent. The researchers showed interest in this problem and chose college students of SMU as respondents to reveal a variety of TFA an individual may experience in a remote part of the country since few studies have been conducted on this specific demographic. By focusing on college students, the researchers hope to know the extent of experiences of TFA among young adults and the ways to prevent its prevalence effectively. Finally, one of the primary objectives of this study is to provide valuable insights that can better inform policies and interventions to protect individuals from technology-facilitated abuse.

### **Research Questions**

This study aimed to determine the types of TFA experienced by college Marians and find ways to effectively prevent it. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA in terms of:
  - 1.1. monitoring, stalking, or controlling behaviors;
  - 1.2. psychological and emotional abuse and threats;
  - 1.3. sexual or image-based abuse; and
  - 1.4. sexual harassment and dating harassment
2. Is there a significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when they are grouped according to:
  - 2.1. gender;
  - 2.2. school; and
  - 2.3. daily exposure to social media?
3. What are the ways to effectively prevent TFA?
4. What policies should the school implement to prevent TFA?

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study utilized a survey design within the Convergent Mixed-methods Approach. A descriptive-comparative research design was

used in this study. The descriptive method was used to identify the extent and most frequent type of TFA the respondents experience and the ways to effectively prevent TFA. The comparative design was used to determine the significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA when they are grouped according to gender, school, and daily exposure to social media. Apart from that, qualitative responses using open-ended questions were collected to better understand the students' insights and perceptions. The qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis, wherein the researchers gathered the respondents' suggestions on the ways to effectively prevent TFA and the possible policies the school could implement to help prevent TFA incidents in the school.

## Respondents

The participants of this study were the college students of Saint Mary's University (SMU). They were pre-selected for this study since it addresses a sensitive topic that requires mature respondents. The researchers used Raosoft as a tool to determine the required sample size and calculate the total number of participants needed to be surveyed in this study. From the number of college students at SMU, the minimum target number of respondents are 360 students out of the 4,889 students at SMU through stratified random sampling. All 360 students participated in the quantitative survey, while 215 students responded to the qualitative section. Printed and online survey questionnaires were distributed across all course departments, such as the School of Engineering, Architecture, and Information Technology (SEAIT), the School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHANS), the School of Accountancy and Business (SAB), and the School of Teacher Education and Humanities (STEH), to participate in this study. The profile variables of gender, school, and daily exposure to social media were used to categorize the respondents.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Profile	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	112	31.1
Female	214	59.4
LGBTQIA+	34	9.4
School		
School of Teacher Education and Humanities (STEH)	90	25
School of Health and Natural Sciences (SHANS)	90	25
School of Accountancy and Business (SAB)	90	25
School of Engineering Architecture and Information Technology (SEAIT)	90	25
Daily Exposure to Social Media		
Less than an Hour	6	1.67
1-3 Hours	65	18.06
4-6 Hours	164	45.56
7-8 Hours	51	14.16
More than 8 Hours	74	20.55
Total	360	100

Table 1 presents the summary of the frequency and percentage count of the demographic profile of the respondents. A total of 360 respondents participated in the study. From the above table, it can be seen that many of the respondents are female (N = 214, P = 59.4%), while 112 (31.1%) of them are males and 34 (9.4%) identified as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The respondents of the study are mostly females, and therefore the survey reflects a very high percentage of females in participation. Meanwhile, there are 90 respondents each from STEH, SHANS, SAB, and SEAIT. It indicates an equal distribution of respondents among STEH, SHANS, SAB, and SEAIT, with 25% of respondents each. Lastly, the table displays the distribution of respondents based on the time spent on social media daily: 164 (45.56%) for 4-6 hours, 74 (20.55%) for more than 8 hours, 65 (18.06%) for 1-3 hours, 51 (14.16%) for 7-8 hours, and 6 (1.67%) for less than an hour. This suggests that nearly half of the respondents are engaging on social media for about 4-6 hours in a day.

## Instrument

Printed and online survey questionnaires through Google Form were the research instruments used in this study. It was adapted and modified from a research study entitled Technology-facilitated abuse: A survey of support services stakeholders, a study carried out by Asher Flynn, Anastasia Powell, and Sophie Hinds (2021). Their questionnaire has been changed into first person statements, and duplicated ones have been deleted. Along with this, the researchers added statements they believe are necessary for measuring the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA. These statements were carefully crafted to assess the impact of TFA on various aspects of the respondents' lives.

It has three parts. Part one comprises the required data of the respondents' profile, including their gender, school, daily exposure to social media, and lastly, name, which is optional. The second part is a Likert scale with a rate of 1 to 4 (1 is the lowest rate, and 4 is the highest rate). The Likert scale consists of four aspects, which are monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors; psychological and emotional abuse and threats; sexual or image-based abuse; and sexual harassment and dating harassment. The last section includes open-ended questions on the prevention plans and policies to be formed to efficiently prevent TFA.



Table 2. *Result of Reliability Test for the Respondents' Extent of Experience of TFA*

<i>Chronbach's Alpha</i>	<i>N of Items</i>
.945	35

For the reliability test result for the extent of experiences of TFA, Table 2 shows that with 35 items, Chronbach's alpha is equal to .945. Therefore, its internal consistency is equivalent to excellent ( $\alpha \geq 0.9$ ) indicating that the questionnaire is reliable.

**Procedure**

The researchers first adapted the questionnaire from the pivotal study. It was shaped and modified by the researchers, which was reviewed by their research adviser, Mrs. Michelle B. Pagaduan. After which it underwent content validation by Mr. Humprey Ian O. Sagabaen. Then, a permit format was addressed to Dr. Gertrude Danao, University Registrar, for her permission to let the researchers float the survey questionnaires. After the approval of the request, the researchers made the survey by distributing the questionnaires among their target respondents. The collected data were summarized, analyzed, and presented. Ultimately, a careful interpretation was conducted, and the results were reported.

**Data Analysis**

The data gathered were classified, analyzed, and interpreted using the descriptive-comparative method to address the research questions. To analyze the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA, descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were gathered for the data. The mean location of each question was determined by referring to Table 3, which was utilized as a guide for data interpretation. Moreover, to identify whether there are significant differences in the mean of TFA experienced by the respondents when grouped according to gender, school, and daily exposure to social media, one-way ANOVA was used. Furthermore, to determine the ways to effectively prevent TFA, a thematic analysis was used. Finally, to determine the possible policies the school could implement to effectively prevent TFA, a thematic analysis was used.

Table 3. *The extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA*

<i>Weight</i>	<i>Mean Range</i>	<i>Adjectival Rating</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
4	3.50-4.49	Always	Great Extent
3	2.50-3.49	Often	Moderate Extent
2	1.50-2.49	Rarely	Low Extent
1	1.0-1.49	Never	Not at all

**Results and Discussion**

The results and discussion section presents an extensive discussion of the analyzed results from the gathered data. This chapter discusses the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA, the most frequent type of TFA they experience, the differences in the extent of their experiences of TFA, the possible ways people could do to prevent TFA, and the possible policies the school could implement to effectively prevent TFA.

**Section 1. The extent of the respondents' experience of TFA**

Table 4. *The extent of the respondents' experience of TFA*

<i>Type of TFA</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>QD</i>
<b>Monitoring, Stalking, or Controlling Behaviors</b>			
1. I have been followed or watched using electronic tracking or gadgets.	2.05	1.05	Low Extent
2. My banking and finances were tracked, monitored, or restricted through technology.	1.77	0.99	Low Extent
3. I have been monitored or tracked with the use of publicly available online information.	1.91	0.94	Low Extent
4. My email, social media or other online accounts were accessed without consent.	1.54	0.77	Low Extent
5. I have been forced to share passwords or provide access to my devices or online accounts.	1.39	0.72	Not at all
6. My access to my telephone, mobile, or internet was controlled.	1.75	0.95	Low Extent
7. I have experienced being tracked by where and who I am with.	1.50	0.79	Low Extent
8. I maintain unwanted contact with the perpetrator via digital or online communications.	1.74	0.97	Low Extent
Total	1.71	0.56	Low Extent
<b>Psychological and Emotional Abuse and Threats</b>			
1. I have been threatened by disclosing my sexuality and/or gender identity.	1.32	0.71	Not at all
2. I have received threats, offensive, abusive, or harassing messages from anonymous accounts or unknown others.	1.59	0.83	Low Extent
3. I have received threats, offensive, abusive, or harassing messages online from someone I personally know.	1.54	0.83	Low Extent
Type of TFA	Mean	SD	QD
<b>Psychological and Emotional Abuse and Threats</b>			
4. I have been threatened with sexual assault via digital or online means.	1.33	0.66	Not at all
5. Others have posted culturally inappropriate content to humiliate, embarrass, or damage my standing in my family or cultural community.	1.37	0.70	Not at all



6. Others have spread rumors about me online.	1.71	0.91	Low Extent
7. I have been impersonated online to damage my reputation.	1.43	0.77	Not at all
8. Others have posted offensive or unwanted messages, images or personal information on the Internet about me.	1.50	0.82	Low Extent
9. Others have used child contact or communications with children to abuse, threaten, or intimidate me.	1.22	0.6	Not at all
10. I have been threatened with physical assault via digital or online means.	1.27	0.65	Not at all
11. Others have insulted or humiliated me in their posts online, including name-calling and unflattering photos or videos.	1.59	0.90	Low Extent
12. Others have created fake social media profiles in my name and image.	1.50	0.82	Low Extent
13. Others have used my phone or email to send messages to others pretending to be me.	1.41	0.74	Not at all
Total	1.44	0.58	Not at all
Sexual or image-based abuse			
1. I experienced having my photos or videos edited in a nude or sexual way without my consent.	1.16	0.54	Not at all
2. I have been pressured, coerced, tricked, or blackmailed into meeting in person for sexual acts via digital or online communications.	1.19	0.55	Not at all
3. I have been pressured, coerced, or blackmailed into performing or sending an unwanted sexual act on video.	1.22	0.61	Not at all
4. Others post online or send onto others a nude or sexual image of me without my consent.	1.17	0.53	Not at all
5. A nude or sexual image of me was taken without my consent.	1.13	0.46	Not at all
6. I have been threatened to post online a nude or sexual image of me.	1.14	0.51	Not at all
Total	1.17	0.46	Not at all
Sexual Harassment and Dating Harassment			
1. I have been impersonated and represented in a sexual way online.	1.18	0.56	Not at all
<b>Type of TFA</b>			
	Mean	SD	QD
Sexual Harassment and Dating Harassment			
2. Others have posted my personal information online saying that I am available for sex and/or dating.	1.16	0.53	Not at all
3. I have received descriptions of sexual assault via digital or online communications.	1.22	0.62	Not at all
4. I have received abusive comments via a dating application or website.	1.32	0.73	Not at all
5. I have received sexual pictures, videos, or other explicit material, that I do not want to see via digital or online communications.	1.60	0.87	Low extent
6. I have received repeated requests for sex made via digital or online communications.	1.35	0.76	Not at all
7. I have received unwanted texts, emails, online chats, and telephone or mobile phone calls that are improper or offensive due to their sexual nature.	1.51	0.81	Low extent
8. I have received inappropriate comments about my body or sex life made by phone, email, text messages, social media, or dating apps/sites.	1.39	0.79	Not at all
Total	1.34	0.57	Not at all
Overall Total	1.42	0.45	Not at all

Legend: 1.0-1.49 (Not at all), 1.50-2.49 (Low Extent), 2.50-3.49 (Moderate Extent), 3.50-4.49 (Great Extent)

Table 4 shows the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA in terms of monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors, psychological and emotional abuse or threats, sexual or image-based abuse, and sexual harassment and dating harassment. As seen in the table, the mean score of the monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors category ( $m = 1.71$ ) indicates that these behaviors occur to a low extent across all items. However, item number 5, "I have been forced to share passwords or provide access to my devices or online accounts," is not experienced by most respondents. In the psychological and emotional abuse or threats category, on the other hand, most of the respondents' experiences of TFA fall into the "not at all" category. Item number 6, "Others have spread rumors about me online," has the highest mean of 1.71, which can be interpreted as "low extent." This indicates that online rumor-spreading is the most common type of abuse, psychologically and emotionally. In terms of sexual or image-based abuse, all variables' mean is close to each other, having the range of 1.13–1.22, which can be interpreted as "not at all" experienced. For the sexual harassment and dating harassment category, item number 2, "Others have posted my personal information online saying that I am available for sex and/or dating," has the lowest mean value ( $m = 1.16$ ). On the other hand, item number 7, "I have received unwanted texts, emails, online chats, and telephone or mobile phone calls that are improper or offensive due to their sexual nature," has the highest mean ( $M = 1.51$ ). This indicates that the respondents most often experience receiving offensive or sexual messages rather than having their personal information posted online for dating or sexual purposes.

The results imply that the respondents rarely experience TFA in terms of monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors, psychological and emotional abuse or threats, sexual or image-based abuse, and sexual harassment and dating harassment. This may signify that college students generally feel safe. While some may have encountered TFA, it appears that these experiences have not been severe enough to bring disruption in their lives. Todd et al. (2020) found evidence of surveillance, sending threats, and intimidating victims through sending text messages in approximately 36.6% of cases and use of social media in 17.1% of cases of TFA.

Anander (2024) stated that rumors are not always bad; some are positive. However, when untrue, rumors are passed along to others and may become "fake news," which can negatively impact a person's psychological and emotional well-being. Pröllochs et al. (2021) also found that rumors often contain unpleasant feelings. The number of participants, the duration of activity, and, to a lesser extent, the structural virality of rumor cascades are all significantly influenced by emotions. This may result in why the respondents mostly

experience online rumor spreading in terms of psychological and emotional abuse or threats.

In terms of sexual harassment and dating harassment, it appears that the respondents might not have gone through a serious type of these incidents. It may be because they only do sexual activities with their trusted partner, or they may have given them consent, allowing them to do sexual activities. People who are not in a relationship may have exercised caution, thereby avoiding serious forms of sexual harassment. Participants in the research of Beres (2020) think that consent education lacks the aspect of preventing sexual violence, but it was found that consent education could effectively lower sexual violence rates. She also found that it is possible that disregarding another's boundaries could feel beneficial for others, making them do such acts.

The school's policy about social media use and personal responsibility from the Student Handbook given by the university may also be one of the reasons for attaining this positive result from the respondents. "The Importance of Policies in Schools" by Save You a Spot in 2021 stated that policies are important because they help a school establish operating procedures and create standards of quality for learning and teaching. These low results in these categories may also be because of Article II under Republic Act No. 11313 (Safe Spaces Act) of 2019, which states that "Penalties for Gender-Based Online Sexual Harassment: The penalty of prison correccional in its medium period or a fine of not less than one hundred thousand pesos (₱100,000.00) but not more than five hundred thousand pesos (₱500,000.00), or both, at the discretion of the court, shall be imposed upon any person found guilty of any gender-based online sexual harassment."

Overall, the monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors have the highest mean ( $m = 1.71$ ) and is experienced at a greater extent among all the categories. This highlights the prevalence of monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors and suggests a potential issue with privacy invasion and personal boundaries. Although the overall mean indicates that TFA is not at all experienced by the respondents, even low-level exposure to such incidents can negatively impact the psychological and emotional well-being, social reputation, and interpersonal relationships of the respondents.

The findings of this study are in contrast with the study of Mumford et al. (2023), wherein they found that 70% of young adults have experienced some form of TFA. Majority of their respondents have reported moderate to high risk for exposure to TFA. They also found that TFA is a significant concern in this generation among young adults. However, in the Philippine context, there are little to no studies about TFA, resulting in a lack of awareness about it. According to Douglas et al. (2018), monitoring is done covertly; because of this, the respondents of their study stated that their lack of understanding of technology contributed to their vulnerability to abuse. This lack of awareness may make people more prone to being victims of TFA as they may not recognize the signs or know how to protect themselves from such actions. This may be why the gathered data only ranged from not experienced at all to experienced but only at a low extent. The respondents may not be aware that what they are experiencing are forms of TFA.

### One-way ANOVA for Independent Samples

Table 5. Comparison in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to gender

		<i>f</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Gender	Male	112	1.46ab	0.55	5.09	0.007
	Female	214	1.36a	0.39		
	LGBTQIA+	34	1.61b	0.47		

\*Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) Means with different letters are significantly different

Table 5 shows the significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to gender. As can be seen in the table, there is a significant difference ( $P = 0.007$ ) in the extent of experience of TFA between the females and those part of the LGBTQIA+ community. This may signify that gender may affect the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to gender. LGBTQIA+ with the highest mean (1.61) experience TFA more than the other gender groups, which could mean that certain factors target this gender group as being at risk of experiencing TFA that need to be further researched. Some factors may include their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression as well as societal biases against them. The results of this study were consistent with the study of Hinduja and Patchin (2020). According to them, twice as many students, part of the LGBTQIA+ community, reported that they had been cyberbullied compared to heterosexual students. Additionally, males (1.46) show a higher mean than females (1.36) in their experience of TFA, which contradicts the study of Powell et al, (2021). However, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2019) supports the notion that males have a higher prevalence of cyberviolence at 44 percent, while females at 43 percent. This indicates that males experience cyberviolence more frequently than females.

Table 6. Comparison in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to school

		<i>f</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>
School	STEH	90	1.55a	0.61	3.99	0.008
	SHANS	90	1.36b	0.32		
	SAB	90	1.41ab	0.45		
	SEAIT	90	1.34b	0.37		

\*Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) Means with different letters are significantly different



Table 6 shows the significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to school. As can be seen in the table, there is a significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to school. Specifically, there is a significant difference between STEH and SHANS, and STEH and SEAIT. The data reveals that STEH has the highest mean ( $M = 1.55$ ) and SEAIT has the lowest mean ( $M = 1.34$ ). SHANS ( $M = 1.36$ ) and SAB ( $M = 1.41$ ) are in the middle. This signifies that schools may affect the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA. SEAIT having the lowest mean can be interpreted as the school department that experiences less TFA than other schools. This may be because of having subjects related to technology that they are more aware of TFA compared to the other schools. STEH having the highest mean may signify that they experience TFA more than the other schools. This may be because those in the field of education and humanities are interacting with more people with different perspectives and backgrounds since they are in a field where social interaction is a requirement. Technology-facilitated sexual violence is experienced by a large majority of Canadian undergraduates in the research of Snaychuk and O'Neill (2019). This may imply that TFA is a common issue among undergraduates who use technology in their everyday lives that exposes them to certain electronic risks such as stalking and controlling behaviors, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and harassment. However, there is a lack of research that examines how different schools can influence the extent of the respondents' experience with TFA. Further research is needed to understand the significant difference between these variables.

Table 7. Comparison in the extent of the respondents' experience of TFA when grouped according to daily exposure to social media

		<i>F</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F-value</i>	<i>P-value</i>
Daily Exposure to Social Media	Less than an Hour	6	1.67ab	1.01	3.81	0.005
	1-3 Hours	65	1.32a	.36		
	4-6 Hours	164	1.37a	.36		
	7-8 Hours	51	1.43ab	.48		
	More than 8 Hours	74	1.57b	.59		

\*Significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) Means with different letters are significantly different

Table 7 indicates the significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA when grouped according to daily exposure to social media. As can be seen in the table, there is a significant difference in the extent of the respondents' experiences of TFA between those who spend more than 8 hours and 1-3 hours on social media ( $SD = .36$ ) and those who spend more than 8 hours and 4-6 hours on social media ( $SD = .36$ ). Having a high and low standard deviation ( $SD$ ) has their different meanings. High  $SD$  indicates that the respondents' responses are not close to each other. On the other hand, having a low  $SD$  indicates that respondents' responses are close to each other. This suggests that it is possible to be a victim of TFA regardless of the amount of time spent on social media; however, the extent of one's experiences of TFA varies depending on the time they spend on social media. Those who spend more than 8 hours online may be more prone to experiencing TFA than those who spend 1-3 and 4-6 hours. It may be because those who stay for more than 8 hours online are more concentrated on social media platforms. Moreover, according to Ngo (2020), social media has a connection with cybercrimes, as seen in the increasing instances of online harassment. In addition to that, Chin (2024) said that exposure to a user's social media relationships also increases cyber risk by allowing cybercriminals to make inferences about the user. Even if they have hidden their interests, location, and other information, analysis of a user's profile can lead to potential identity fraud or theft.

## Section 2. Thematic Analysis on the Respondents' Suggestions

Table 8. Ways to effectively prevent TFA

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Sample Statement</i>
Strengthening Data Privacy Act	"The school should implement a strong privacy, especially when it comes to students' information."
	"Strengthen security online and maintain confidentiality and privacy of the students' data and information."
	"Protect the data of every student."
	"School should implement the data privacy act to help students who are victims of TFA so that all their information is confidential."
Impose sanctions or punishments for offenders	"Policies about severe punishments or consequences to prevent TFA"
	"Tougher consequences for those who commit TFA to scare users from committing them."
	"Implement punishments for those who abuse other social media users (like expelling, detention, and giving tasks)."
Monitoring students' well-being	"Monthly monitoring of students and their well-being."
	"By regularly ask (asking) each student on a set number of days to ask if they were being sexually abused in social media especially if the perpetrators are fellow students."
	"Monitor TFA among students."
Anti-TFA Program	"It would be beneficial if schools should have anti-TFA campaigns and programs"
	"They need to implement an Anti-cyberbullying law and stop using technology in a bad way."
	"Anti-cybercrime policy"
Recommendation	Sample Statement
Anonymous reporting system	"I think policies are already in place. Perhaps a way to safely report the activities would be a _____"



great help.”  
 “A friendly application implemented by the school in order for the students to reach out regarding this issue. This is to maintain privacy for students to vent out their concerns.”

Table 8 shows the ways to prevent TFA. As can be seen in the table, more than 50% of the respondents suggest that people should be careful with their behavior, languages, and post on social media. The sample statement says, "Beware of suspicious looking information, link, site or apps. Note that social media will require personal information. Do not overshare those private information." This implies that people should be mindful of their actions and words, especially in public spaces like social media. This is because what netizens say or do has consequences. It is important to be respectful, responsible, and considerate of others. Also, limiting the usage of social media and focusing on other activities may help in reducing the possibility of experiencing TFA. Moreover, educating others and raising awareness about such issues may help others to become more cautious about what they do and who they trust in the digital world. As Badshah (2022) has said, as citizens, netizens should behave responsibly when using social media. People should also be aware of what we post on social media. Lastly, do not ever share personal information with others, and do not disclose it to the social media platform.

Table 9. Possible policies the school could implement to effectively prevent TFA

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Sample Statement</i>
Yes Cellphone, No Entry	“Implement a Yes CP, No Entry” “Minimization or restriction of phone use” “Yes CP, No Entry” “Do not allow students to bring their phones to school.”
Recommendation Educate students	Sample Statement “Instead of focusing on “No Cellphone Policy,” they should just educate people about such matters.” “Implementation of awareness about an individual (individual’s) do (dos) and should not do (don’ts) in technology.” “The school should engage students in attending seminars and workshops with regards to TFA to spread awareness and make students knowledgeable in the proper use of technology.” “Implementing an awareness campaign or distributing informational infographics preventing TFA on school.”
Social Media Policy None, the school is not responsible for students’ personal lives	“Social Media Policy, banning or removing harmful posts.” “None, schools should not implement regulations regards personal soc meds of people but rather educate them on media safety” “Schools does (do) not prevent with whatever you do online because that is a student’s personal life.” “I don’t think the school can actually help because the school can’t control what students do or post. Probably with awareness, yes, they can do something but I think they can’t really help on this situation because it will leave digital footprint no matter what.” “Relating the school policies to students’ social media life is subjective. Some could potentially view them as “controlling” even though the school’s intention is not anyhow related to control the students. So, I think the school could still hold a survey, not policies, about this or their online/virtual health and at the same time, it’s the student’s choice to approach if he/she needs help.”
Recommendation Strengthening Data Privacy Act	Sample Statement “The school should implement a strong privacy, especially when it comes to students’ information.” “Strengthen security online and maintain confidentiality and privacy of the students’ data and information.” “Protect the data of every student.” “School should implement the data privacy act to help students who are victims of TFA so that all their information is confidential.”
Impose sanctions or punishments for offenders	“Policies about severe punishments or consequences to prevent TFA” “Tougher consequences for those who commit TFA to scare users from committing them.” “Implement punishments for those who abuse other social media users (like expelling, detention, and giving tasks).”
Monitoring students’ well-being	“Monthly monitoring of students and their well-being.” “By regularly ask (asking) each student on a set number of days to ask if they were being sexually abused in social media especially if the perpetrators are fellow students.” “Monitor TFA among students.”
Anti-TFA Program	“It would be beneficial if schools should have anti-TFA campaigns and programs” “They need to implement an Anti-cyberbullying law and stop using technology in a bad way.” “Anti-cybercrime policy”
Recommendation Anonymous reporting system	Sample Statement “I think policies are already in place. Perhaps a way to safely report the activities would be a

great help.”

“A friendly application implemented by the school in order for the students to reach out regarding this issue. This is to maintain privacy for students to vent out their concerns.”

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Total

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Table 9 shows the possible policies the school could implement to prevent TFA. As can be seen, 20 respondents believe that the school is not responsible for students' personal lives and should not implement any policies. This implies that the students may not want the school to enforce policies regarding their personal lives because they may feel that the school is trying to control them or interfere with their privacy. Although this is the case, 39.07 % (84) of the respondents believe that educating the students may be a better option as it could help raise awareness and provide support without directly imposing policies on this issue. This may be the best approach to addressing this sensitive issue. 31 students mentioned the need for no cybercrime policies, but the school already has an Anti-Bullying Act of 2013. Maybe the school just needs to reinforce and educate the students about it, maybe then they could lessen the incidents of bullying both in the physical and the digital world. One also suggested implementing a social media policy, which the school already has. It encourages students to use social media in a way that is healthy, safe, and friendly. According to Pietsch (2023), educating the public about technology-facilitated abuse faced by youth can enable adults to provide more effective support. Also, learning about young people's rights can help address tech-related abuse.

### Integrated Findings of the Quantitative and Qualitative Phase

Survey reveals that most of the students rarely experience TFA in terms of monitoring, stalking, and controlling behaviors, psychological and emotional abuse or threats, sexual or image-based abuse, and sexual harassment and dating harassment. Significant differences were also found when they grouped according to gender, school, and daily exposure to social media. Interview responses supports these findings since they have different understanding and views on TFA and the ways it could be prevented, including policies the school could implement to lessen its prevalence inside the school.

### Conclusions

Technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) is the use of digital technology and devices to control, coerce, threaten, or harm another person (Law, 2024). This study focuses on four forms of TFA; Monitoring, Stalking and Controlling Behaviors, Psychological and Emotional abuse or threat, Sexual or image-based abuse, Sexual Harassment and dating harassment According to Thompson et al.(2018) digital abuse is a social issue that needs to be addressed. This study found that most students do not experience TFA, a portion of the population still faces its adverse effects, emphasizing the need to address this issue. TFA can manifest in various forms, including monitoring, stalking, or controlling behaviors; psychological and emotional abuse and threats; sexual or image-based abuse; and sexual harassment and dating harassment. Many students are likely to encounter these harmful behaviors, particularly through electronic tracking, surveillance devices, and online platforms. The study also revealed significant variations in TFA experiences based on gender, school, and social media exposure.

Despite these findings, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size may not fully represent the broader student population, limiting the extent to which the findings can be applied to a wider population. However, the methodology effectively identified meaningful trends in TFA experiences, providing valuable insights into its prevalence and impact on students. To mitigate and prevent TFA, students should practice proper online behavior and limit screen time, allowing for engagement in other activities such as hobbies. Schools play a crucial role in addressing this issue by organizing seminars and symposiums to educate students on the risks of technology and the importance of online safety. Future research should explore more diverse student populations and examine the long-term effects of TFA to develop more comprehensive preventive measures. Additionally, fostering a supportive environment where students feel comfortable reporting instances of TFA can help create a safer digital space for all.

With the significant findings of the study, the researchers recommend the following:

The school may implement seminars and symposiums to teach students about technology-facilitated abuse, raising their awareness of TFA and hopefully lessening the chances of student victimization.

For internet users, it is essential to protect yourself from technology-facilitated abuse by:

Regularly updating your privacy settings;

Using strong, unique passwords for each account;

Avoiding falling for phishing scams;

Being careful about sharing too much personal information online;

Update your software frequently, connect securely, and install trustworthy anti-malware software; and

Being aware of online risks and report any abuse or suspicious behavior right away

Social media creators, it is recommended to increase the security applications or online platforms to prevent the abuse before it happens.

For instance, they may use AI technology to detect messages that are not appropriate and alert the users. They may also consider looking for the pattern in spam messages or calls and posting to see if there is anything unwanted.

For future researchers, we recommend the following:

Focus on one type of technology-facilitated abuse (TFA) to measure the extent of their experiences accurately;

The questionnaires should be equally distributed for a more valid and equal distribution of the profiles of the respondents for more accurate and reliable results;

For the accuracy of their answers, future researchers are recommended to monitor their respondents while answering the given questionnaires and also check their answers before leaving to avoid answers that are not related to the questions;

It is also recommended to use interviews as your tool instead of providing a questionnaire. The respondents' answers in the interview are more accurate and direct, as it helps clarify their answers and follow up some questions regarding their experiences of TFA; and

Future researchers may also change the respondents from college students to senior high school students

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## Affiliations and Corresponding Information

**Eun Princess C. Balintag**

Saint Mary's University – Philippines

**Lay Nicolo D. Alvear**

Saint Mary's University – Philippines

**Sophia Lourenz Galicia**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines

**Jonh Kenneth A. Cadabona**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines

**Kenisha Leigh B. Bumanghat**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines

**Aprille Joy S. Fernando**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines

**Michelle B. Pagaduan**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines

**Kristel Joy C. Dapiawen**

Saint Mary's University - Philippines



**Lady Valen Charon A. Dela Peña**  
Saint Mary's University - Philippines