eSafety for Women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds

Summary report

February 2019

Contents

eSafety research

Under Section 15 of the Enhancing Online Safety Act 2015, the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (the Office) has the following research functions. These are to:

- support, encourage, conduct and evaluate research about online safety for Australians

- collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information about online safety

- publish reports and papers relating to online safety for Australians.

The Office's research program is underpinned by four key themes including:
1. tracking trends
2. supporting the development of Office resources and programs
3. inter-agency and international co-operation
4. program and resource evaluation.

This research fits under theme 2.

Data in this report about technology-facilitated abuse experienced by women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is drawn from qualitative research commissioned by the Office in 2018. The research is based on information provided by 29 women who had experienced technology-facilitated abuse and 20 stakeholders (such as domestic violence services) who provide support services to women.

A range of other research reports have also been published by the Office about technology -facilitated abuse which is available online at **esafety.gov.au/about-the-office/research-library**

Related content is also available at:

- **esafety.gov.au/women/take-control**

- **esafety.gov.au/esafety-information/esafety-issues/cyber-abuse**

- **esafety.gov.au/women/about-us**

For any enquiries relating to the Office research program, please contact **research@esafety.gov.au**

Acknowledgement

Key findings

- Women from CALD backgrounds make up a significant proportion of the Australian population—one quarter of the total population were born overseas, and around one fifth speak a language other than English at home.

- Most technology-facilitated abuse experiences relayed in this project did not have a cultural dimension, however there were several cases in which perpetrators used culturally-specific threats: threats of deportation (especially for women on spousal visas), threats of honour killing delivered via a third party, culturally-specific humiliation (such as sending images of a woman without her hijab) and threats of withholding Islamic divorce.

- CALD women face multiple barriers in seeking support for technology-facilitated abuse. Health centres do, however, appear to be one pathway that CALD women are more likely to use for support, as this pathway is less likely to raise the suspicion of abusive partners.

- The key barriers CALD women face in seeking support for technology-facilitated abuse are:

  - a lack of awareness that technology-facilitated abuse may constitute a criminal offence

  - language barriers which may contribute to CALD women not knowing what services are available to them, and create challenges for them explaining their personal experiences with technology-facilitated abuse

- issues with interpreter services, particularly where the interpreter may know the victim/perpetrator

- low digital literacy—which heightens their vulnerability to technology-facilitated abuse, affects their ability to identify that they are victims of technology-facilitated abuse, and also their ability to address the abuse once identified

- cultural biases and misunderstandings from some support services particularly the police

- shaming and traditional gender roles preventing CALD women from seeking support. Many research participants discussed how perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse threaten to shame women publicly as a 'bad wife' if they speak out about the abuse; discrediting her reputation with friends, family and the broader community.

- a lack of financial resources to leave the perpetrator, particularly for recently arrived migrants, women on spousal visas, and women with low levels of English who may struggle to find employment

- a lack of trust in state institutions based on experiences from their home country—this may mean that CALD women resist going to the police or accessing the criminal justice system

- low levels of English and less knowledge about how the justice system works amplify the challenges faced by CALD women in engaging with the justice system.

- The impacts of technology-facilitated abuse on CALD women are not substantially different to the impacts experienced by non-CALD women. However, social isolation may be amplified for CALD women where fear of shaming is particularly strong.

- Research participants made the following suggestions to better support victims of technology-facilitated abuse:

  - better community awareness and education about online safety, the illegality of technology-facilitated abuse, and support options for victims

  - improving support services' capacity to deal with technology-facilitated abuse

  - providing informal avenues for support, such as online support groups and forums for CALD women.

Introduction

The Office undertook research into the experiences of women from CALD backgrounds who are exposed to technology-facilitated abuse, to help better inform victims and to develop appropriate resources.

CALD background refers to people born overseas, in countries other than the main English speaking countries.[1]

> CALD background is a 'broad and inclusive descriptor of communities with diverse language, ethnic background, nationality, dress, traditions, food, societal structures, art and religion characteristics. This term is used broadly and often synonymously with the term 'ethnic communities' (Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria, 2012).

Qualitative methods were used to collect and summarise information provided by 29 CALD women who had experienced technology-facilitated abuse (17 in-depth interviews and 12 online discussion board participants) and 20 stakeholders who provided support services to women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse (such as domestic violence services, legal services, and health services). This qualitative approach was implemented to be sensitive to CALD women's first-hand stories of abuse and to allow for rich data to emerge. All fieldwork was conducted from March to May 2018. Using an analytical framework, anonymised transcripts and the online discussion board data were coded using NVivo, a software program designed to support a thematic analysis of the data. Following is a summary of key research findings.

Technology-facilitated abuse refers to abusive behaviours and activities that occur via internet-enabled devices and online platforms for example, using mobile phones, other devices, social media and online accounts including email or banking. Other terms commonly used for this type of behaviour are: electronic aggression, cyberbullying, and online harassment. Abuse can come from known and unknown perpetrators. There are four main behaviours and activities covered by the term technology-facilitated abuse:

1. **Harassment**—sending threatening images or bombarding with calls, emails or texts.
2. **Monitoring/stalking**—covert GPS tracking or hacking into email or bank accounts.
3. **Impersonation**—creating a false account that results in harassment or abusive messages being sent to the victim.
4. **Threats/punishment**—posting embarrassing comments or intimate images, referred to as image-based abuse.

[1] The main English speaking countries are Australia, England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, United States of American, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Republic of Ireland as classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Australia's multicultural profile

Women from CALD backgrounds make up a significant proportion of the Australian population given that one quarter of the population were born overseas, and around one fifth of the population speak a language other than English at home.[2]

The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics census indicated that there are approximately 2.3 million women born outside Australia or a main English speaking country, and approximately 2.5 million women who speak a language other than English at home.[3] Of recent arrivals, 67% spoke a language other than English at home. The top languages spoken in 2017, apart from English, were Mandarin, Arabic, Cantonese and Vietnamese.[4]

There is limited understanding of interpersonal violence within CALD communities. There is also very little known about the role of technology in the perpetration of abuse and violence within these communities. According to an Australian study on technology in the context of domestic violence, CALD women are one of the groups most at risk:

The group most commonly identified as facing particular challenges in relation to technology-facilitated abuse was women from non-English speaking countries. Participants reported that perpetrators exploited the social isolation and language barriers faced by these women, and deliberately isolated women further by restricting their access to technology, which women often relied on to stay in contact with friends and family.[5]

Despite a growing awareness of technology-facilitated abuse, to date no empirical data exists regarding the nature, prevalence or the impacts of technology-facilitated abuse among CALD communities. To begin to fill this gap, data in this report about technology-facilitated abuse experienced by women from CALD backgrounds is drawn from a qualitative research report commissioned by the Office in 2018.[6]

[2] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017). 2001.0 2016 Census of population and housing general community profile. Retrieved April 24, 2018, from: abs.gov.au/websitedbs/censushome.nsf/home/communityprofiles?opendocument&navpos=230

[3] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017). 2071.0 Cultural Diversity in Australia Reflecting a Nation: Stories from the 2011 Census, 2012-2013. Retrieved April 24, 2018, from: abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2071.0main+features902012-2013

[4] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017). 2016 Census: Multicultural. Retrieved 3 Oct 2018 from http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/lookup/Media%20Release3

[5] Woodlock, D. (2015). Remote Control. DVRCV Advocate (Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria), Autumn/Winter, pp.37-40. Retrieved from: http://www.dvrcv.org.au/sites/default/files/DVRCV_AUTSPR2015_woodlock.pdf

[6] The Office commissioned research from the Social Research Centre.

Specific cultural dimensions to technology-facilitated abuse experiences

Technology-facilitated domestic violence is occurring across many cultures and does not always have a specific cultural dimension even when the victim comes from a CALD background. Nonetheless, stakeholders[7] identified a number of technology-facilitated abuse experiences, where cultural issues played a role.

Spouse visas and threats of deportation

A recurrent theme from interviews with stakeholders was CALD women's fear of losing their immigration status and being deported if they reported the abuse. This was particularly the case for women on spouse visas where the perpetrator used this as a threat (real or perceived) to keep their partners quiet about the domestic abuse. The threat was not necessarily carried out but was nonetheless effective in controlling and manipulating women. More often than not, women were not aware of the laws that could protect them and did not have language skills to read information from relevant government departments to substantiate the perpetrator's claims.

> ### Case study—Amara
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> Amara[1] came to Australia 8 years ago on a spouse visa after marrying her husband. When she joined her husband in Australia, she didn't know anyone except her husband. Her husband organised a mobile phone for her, and she relied on him to both pay for things and to drive her to appointments. Amara's responsibilities caring for her children meant she did not have opportunities to take English classes or meet many people in the community.
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> Her husband did not support her in meeting other people and got angry if she was not at home when he expected her to be. He would send Amara numerous text messages through the day and would call her to monitor her activities. Her husband was physically abusive but she did not tell anyone about the abuse. He told her that she would lose her visa if she spoke out about the violence. She was worried that if she spoke to police, they would report her to the immigration authorities, she would be deported, and lose contact with her children.

7 The term 'stakeholders' refers here, and in the full report of this research, to research participants who provide frontline support services to women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse (such as domestic violence services, legal services, and health services).

If police were called to their home by neighbours, she would not speak to the police and her husband claimed there was no problem, it was a misunderstanding.

The physical abuse escalated such that she required medical attention. Her doctor identified the abuse and encouraged her to seek help from a domestic violence service. It took time for Amara to arrange an appointment because she was scared it would raise her husband's suspicions.It took several meetings with a case manager and interpreter for Amara to feel she could trust the domestic violence service and take their advice. Finally, when the abuse affected her children too, Amara decided she would take her children and leave her husband.

It was at this time that she started receiving threatening messages from him, including death threats. He seemed to always know where she was. Even when she was in the women's refuge, he was outside waiting for her to leave the building. She was very scared for her physical safety and that of her children. With the help of the domestic violence service, she discovered that he had been tracking her movements through her smartphone. Her case manager arranged a new phone, got her to change all her passwords, and checked for tracking devices in her children's toys.

A couple of years later Amara was resettled, had a new phone and had an intervention order against her husband. Her children were in a new school. Things were much better but she still received harassing messages and threats from time to time. She was worried about what would happen if he found her and became anxious easily when she was out in public.

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Third party abuse and threats of honour killing

Stakeholders presented examples of family members or friends of the perpetrator getting involved in technology-facilitated abuse. They described situations where the perpetrator had emailed, text or called the woman's family members in her home country and told them the woman was going to leave, or had left, the family home. The shame this could bring on the family was used as a trigger for the family to get involved and encourage the woman to stay in the relationship. Commonly known as shaming, this type of technology-facilitated abuse was highlighted by stakeholders as being specific to CALD women.

In other severe instances of shaming, the women targeted had received death threats via technology (such as a text message threatening an honour killing) from perpetrators' family and friends. Stakeholders explained that in these cases, there was no legal recourse. The threats were technically considered 'hearsay' and so no legal action could be taken to prevent further threats.

Culturally specific humiliation and threats

Other abuses that could be carried out through technology include culturally-specific humiliation, or threats like hair cutting, which in some cultures indicates adultery, or taking and distributing images of the woman without her hijab. One stakeholder explained how, for the women who experience this kind of abuse, it could be extremely upsetting and humiliating but also that the police rarely took these kinds of threats seriously. This is possibly due to a lack of cultural understanding or not understanding the impact on the woman. It may also be because most current laws relating to image-based and technology-facilitated abuse do not cover these types of cultural abuse.

Threats to withhold divorce

One stakeholder explained that there were instances where women had wanted to leave the perpetrator but the threat of divorce would bring shame on their families and potentially lead to them not seeing their children. Additionally, a woman saying she wanted a divorce might lead to the perpetrator threatening further humiliation such as sending explicit or culturally-inappropriate images to her family, friends or community.

Types of technology-facilitated abuse that have a cultural dimension

The research identified types of technology-facilitated abuse that can have a cultural dimension. These, which sometimes overlap, included:

- using devices or apps to monitor a woman's movements and harass her (including sending messages and threats), with the threat of deportation as a way to keep her quiet about domestic violence, and to stop her from speaking to the police

- image-based abuse where a woman may resist seeking support in fear that her family may find out about the abuse

- using electronic devices, such as GPS tracking functions, to monitor or stalk in general

- destroying devices or restricting access to technology

- discrediting a woman by impersonating her on social media, with the intention of destroying her social networks and socially isolating her (often in the context of domestic violence)

- gaslighting.[8]

Other experiences mentioned, albeit to a lesser extent, involved technology-facilitated abuse perpetrated by people who were not known to the victim.

Harassing messages and threats

The most common form of technology-facilitated abuse reported in the research interviews was abusive partners sending harassing messages and threats. According to stakeholders, the harassing messages that women received often started or escalated when they ended or left the abusive relationship. Themes stemming from harassing messages and threats included:

- the incessant nature of the harassing messages meant that women felt the presence of the perpetrator even when they were physically absent

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[8] Gaslighting is a term used colloquially for the practice of manipulating someone in order to make them doubt their own sanity.

- messages were of a threatening nature

- participants reported that the perpetrator was 'smart' about avoiding anything that could be used as evidence against them (for example, adding random messages to confuse the trail).

This research identified some culturally-specific examples of harassing messages in domestic violence settings. A few stakeholders highlighted how they had encountered instances where threats had been sent by the perpetrator in the woman's first language and it had been necessary to employ a translator to help prosecute the perpetrator. With the assistance of a translator, stakeholders were then able to encourage the woman to report to police.

Image-based abuse

A couple of stakeholders described the cultural context of what is considered intimate. Stakeholders discussed the ways in which men intimidated, shamed and threatened CALD women as a form of control. The threat of sharing images or videos, that may have been taken with prior consent, with their families was mentioned as prevalent among CALD women and used as a way to keep women in relationships with their partners.

Case study—Gabriela

Gabriela[1] was a 22-year-old international student at university. When she first arrived in Australia she did not know anyone and used online dating platforms as a way to meet people. She started a relationship with an older man. After a night out, he took an intimate video of her. Gabriela consented to it at the time as a bit of fun and thought nothing more of it. After a few months of dating, Gabriela felt he was obsessive about her. She felt uncomfortable with his constant phone calls and sexual text messages and decided to end the relationship. He continued to call her and send her messages. She blocked his phone number and blocked him on Facebook.

Gabriela did not think further about the man until she started receiving strange emails from people she did not know. The messages were of a sexual nature and often racist. She learned that her former boyfriend had uploaded the intimate video to an image-based abuse website where he had posted her email details so that other people could send her abusive messages.

Gabriela felt deeply angry, embarrassed and shamed. She didn't want to tell her family. Her family was conservative and would not approve that she had dated someone like him. They would say it was her fault for letting him take the video, and that she had brought shame to the family. She felt alone in Australia and did not know many people who she could turn to for support.

Gabriela considered going to the police but wasn't sure they would be able to do anything. She instead contacted the website to request they remove the content. She received no response and continued to receive abusive messages from strangers.

Gabriela was bombarded by messages and disturbed by the experience. Her university studies were negatively affected. She reported losing confidence in her judgment of other people and felt as though she could not trust anyone anymore. A friend of Gabriela noticed a change in her behaviour. Gabriela confided in her and found out that the perpetrator had dated a few women from the same cultural background to her and he had done the same thing when they had left him.

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Another form of controlling behaviour was explained by a stakeholder who described 'hysteria videos', whereby the perpetrator filmed a woman in a state of 'hysteria' and threatened to, or did, post the video on social media and sent it to her family

Case study—Zahra

Zahra1 moved to Australia with her husband several years ago. They both had good jobs and their children were doing well in school. Zahra kept in regular contact with her family via Facebook. Her husband was emotionally abusive. She did not tell her family overseas about the abuse because she did not want them to worry about her. Zahra's family invested a lot in her education so that she could come to Australia and she did not want to disappoint them.

One day, Zahra was overwhelmed by the stress of the abuse. She broke down and started yelling at her husband. He taunted her further and took a video of her whilst she was 'hysterical'. Later, when he was being violent he threatened her, saying that if she told her family about the violence he would send them the video on Facebook and tell them that she was a bad wife.

Zahra took this threat very seriously. She was angry that he had taken advantage of her in a moment of weakness and scared that he would discredit and shame her in front of her family. Zahra had friends within her community that she was close to but did not want to tell them about the abuse. In her culture, difficulties within the home were not spoken about. Zahra felt alone and withdrew from her community and friends.

When the abuse escalated, Zahra felt desperate and went to the police to see if they could help. Talking to the police about all the abuse was upsetting for Zahra. The police said she did not have sufficient evidence to press charges. Zahra felt that they did not believe that her husband was abusive and they did not seem to understand why she was so upset. Zahra left the police station feeling at a loss and even more

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Surveillance

Women and stakeholders shared their experiences and knowledge about a range of monitoring, tracking and stalking behaviours that formed part of domestic violence. This included:

- monitoring phone usage

- tracking women through smartphone technology

- monitoring and tracking online activity.

One way in which perpetrators were reported to control their partners was through limiting or monitoring their phone usage, and ensuring they knew where the woman was at all times. This kind of control and monitoring was a common form of abuse experienced by those CALD women living with domestic violence. Perpetrators appeared to be checking the women's correspondence, and making sure they were at the location they had claimed to be.

It was also reported that perpetrators would track their partner's movements or activity through their smartphone (such as through Facebook or Instagram apps). In many instances, women explained how their partner had purchased and set up their phone. They had added passwords to apps and enabled tracking software so that they could monitor the woman's location.

In some instances, stakeholders reported that children's devices were also being used as a way to monitor locations and keep track of the women.

Participants reported that in some cases the surveillance and tracking was sufficiently covert so that they were unaware that they were being tracked. Domestic violence support services were also unaware of the monitoring, and specialist IT technicians were often the only people capable of uncovering the tracking devices.

As well as monitoring a woman's movements through her smartphone, perpetrators were also using other devices to monitor locations and stalk. Examples included children's toys, car tracking systems in women's vehicles and hidden listening or recording devices within the woman's home.

Stakeholders from support services explained that they now had more awareness of the variety of ways in which women's privacy was being violated and therefore put measures in place to check toys and devices, including when the child was returned to the mother after a visit with the perpetrator or their family.

Limiting access to technology

Destroying devices or restricting access to technology is one form of technology-facilitated abuse that stakeholders raised. Removing access to technology can be used as a form of punishment or control by the perpetrator as it restricts the woman's access to support from friends and family and contributes to social isolation. This could be particularly isolating for CALD women, living in Australia without their immediate family, as the devices are often their only link with their families in their home country.

Impersonation

Stakeholders reported many instances where perpetrators had impersonated the victim as a way to discredit, control, manipulate and shame them. Impersonation was also highlighted by CALD women as a way for the perpetrator to gain access to other personal details or to discuss private matters with friends and family. Perpetrators were able to impersonate the victim by accessing their social media account (using her passwords or stealing her phone for example).

Perpetrators also impersonated the victim by creating fictitious social media accounts under her name, and then contacting her friends and family and spreading salacious lies about her, or spreading sexual photos of her to them.

In other cases, the perpetrator impersonated other people on Facebook and Messenger as a way to bypass the victim's block on the perpetrator's account. This had enabled them to continue to send harassing and threatening messages.

'He's pretending to be someone else but he's also the one that's writing the messages. Because he keeps calling me wife. For example, 'Where are you?' And I would say, for example, 'I'm at home.' Sorry, I would say, 'I'm out.' And they would write back, 'I know you're at home.' Things like that. [CALD woman 36, Eastern European]

Case study—Leila

Leila[1] is a young woman who is a second-generation migrant. She lives with her parents who are religious and quite conservative. She was recently in a relationship but did not tell her parents about it. The man was not religious and her parents would not have approved of her seeing him. Leila had found him to be manipulative; he frequently criticised her and tried to stop her from seeing her friends.

Leila broke up with this man after several months of dating. He became angry and while he did not hit Leila, she felt scared for her safety. He started calling her and sending her messages on various social media platforms. She blocked him where she could. Leila started receiving friend requests from strangers on Facebook which she thought were him pretending to be someone else as a way to see her Facebook activity and to harass her. She did not accept the requests. She felt worried when she was in places where she thought he might find her.

After a couple of months, a friend told Leila that they had received a strange message from her on Facebook. She was confused because she never sent the messages. She asked her friend to show her and uncovered a false Facebook profile in which someone was pretending to be her and befriending her friends, only to send them messages to discredit her reputation. The messages were rude and sexually explicit. Leila thought it was this man because he used a profile photo of her which was taken by him while they were seeing each other.

Leila reported this to Facebook but they were unable to help because there was no proof that this person was impersonating her and the messages, while unpleasant, were not against Facebook's guidelines. Leila then went to the police but they said they could not do anything to stop the impersonation because they did not have proof, and they did not have power over what occurs on Facebook. Leila was angry and felt disempowered. She did not know how to tell her friends, particularly those who received messages from him through her Facebook page. She felt that this further confirmed that he was a dangerous man but she did not know what to do. Leila was worried for her safety. She did not tell her family. She felt alone and shut herself off from her friends and social media altogether.

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Gaslighting

Finally, there were few examples of 'gaslighting' identified in this research. Gaslighting is a psychological tactic used by perpetrators to plant doubt in the mind of the victim as to her grasp of reality or her sanity.

Where weird things happen, because of the way you can remotely access and control different devices, you can make her really spooked out, you can do something like make her garage door go up and down 50 times a night. [Organisation 5, Legal Service]

These activities can have severe emotional and mental impacts. A few stakeholders described situations where women thought they were 'going crazy' because their partners were monitoring their movements and had adopted gaslighting behaviour, but the women were not aware of it at the time. These situations are difficult to report to police or others as there is no trace of their occurrence. Stakeholders reported that in such circumstances the women experiencing gaslighting, as well as other people, begin to wonder if they are imagining it.

Technology-facilitated abuse from unknown perpetrators

Participants in the research also spoke about instances of technology-facilitated abuse where the perpetrator was unknown. Examples of this included:

- online political debates leading to racist trolling

- uninvited sexual messages (including racist fetishisation)

- asking people for money and racially abusing them in the process.

In almost all of these cases, the technology-facilitated abuse was related to messaging of some description, typically threats, harassment or attempted extortion. Receiving harassing messages was the most commonly reported experience of non-domestic violence related technology-facilitated abuse. The discriminating racial and/or sexual content and frequency with which messages were sent was experienced by victims as harassing and sometimes threatening.

In the case of racist trolling, abusive messages were sent to victims in response to their participation in political discussions on social media (for example Facebook or Twitter debates on same sex marriage, abortion and terrorism). In a few instances, the participant's profile picture on social media accounts showed her wearing a headscarf and this opened her up to anti-Muslim abuse online. A couple of CALD women described receiving uninvited sexual messages with racist overtones. One woman had participated on an online dating platform where they had a profile photo and when they had rejected a man, the man had responded with abusive messaging. In another example, the perpetrator expressed his sexual fantasies, with racially-charged fetishisation.

The final type of technology-facilitated abuse, outside of domestic violence contexts, identified in this research was described by two Jewish women who had been harassed for money online with racist messaging. The perpetrators had targeted them for harassment on Facebook in the hope that they could elicit money.

Case study—Aiya

Aiya[1] was a young international student. Her parents were living overseas, and she had a good relationship with them. She was not involved in any cultural activities of her country of origin. Aiya had an active online life as she participated in multiple political discussion groups on Facebook and Instagram.

Aiya came across a post on Instagram about euthanasia, stating that euthanasia is a crime equal to murder. She decided to share her reaction to the Instagram post, to express her view that euthanasia should be legalised. Immediately after sharing the post, she received personal messages sent to her Instagram account from an unknown account. Messages were addressed to her personally, and contained threatening language stating she had no right to live and she should undergo euthanasia herself.

She decided to block the account of the sender to stop the receiving of more harassing messages. Soon after Aiya received more messages, sent from multiple Instagram accounts containing comparable allegations. The headscarf she wore in her profile picture evoked a sequence of discriminatory messages targeting her religion and race. She tried to block every account that was involved in the harassment, which seemed to be impossible as new accounts seemed to pop up constantly. This pattern continued for a month.

Shocked by the overflow and content of the messages, Aiya considered reporting the abuse to Instagram. Previous disappointing experiences with reporting abuse to website moderators led to her deciding to delete her Instagram account completely. She had no idea where to go with this negative online experience, as she was not aware of any available cyberbullying/trolling reporting schemes.

Aiya was disappointed and frustrated as she felt limited in her ability to express political views in an online platform. The personal and racist allegations impacted her self-esteem, and she decided not to show her profile picture on any social media platforms to avoid further problems.

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Impacts for CALD women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse

The impacts for CALD women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse do not differ substantially from the impacts other women might experience, that is, heightened levels of stress, anxiety and depression; self-doubt; negative impacts on relationships; financial impacts (such as moving home to avoid the perpetrator or the costs of IT analysts). CALD women who had experienced racist trolling, unsolicited sexual messages, and money seeking harassment reported that they had limited avenues to seek help. In most cases, the CALD women did not consider the abuse extreme enough to warrant going to the police or seeking formal support. They did not have sufficient proof of abuse and did not have a good understanding of the laws or systems that could support them. Because of this, the ways in which CALD women responded to the technology-facilitated abuse included:

- blocking the perpetrator or deleting social media accounts

- reporting abuse to platform administrators

- seeking support from friends and family

- hiding their cultural background online

- accepting that technology-facilitated abuse occurs.

Some impacts of technology-facilitated abuse where the perpetrator was known to the woman appeared to be amplified for CALD women in some instances. Social isolation was a common theme in the interviews, where CALD women described how they felt unable to seek support from friends and family for fear of shaming. Cultural biases held by frontline workers (particularly by the police) were also considered to lead to adverse outcomes, with CALD women feeling further isolation and less likely to pursue criminal justice.

Social isolation combined with financial difficulties, the emotional pressure from extended family, challenges of living in refuges and finding other accommodation, was such that some CALD women reported returning to the perpetrator as a result.

In one instance, financial difficulties were illustrated when the stakeholder explained that her client had to pay for an expert in IT forensics to examine her devices to look for tracking devices or monitoring apps in order to provide evidence to the police of the technology-facilitated abuse she had experienced. This particular stakeholder was concerned that IT companies were taking advantage of technology-facilitated abuse victims, promising that they could find evidence where police could not.

Key barriers victims face in seeking support for technology-facilitated abuse

CALD women face multiple barriers in seeking support for technology-facilitated abuse. These can include:

- a lack of awareness that technology-facilitated abuse may constitute a criminal offence

- language barriers may contribute to CALD women not knowing what services are available to them, and create challenges for them in explaining their personal experiences with technology-facilitated abuse

- issues with interpreter services, particularly where the interpreter may know the victim/perpetrator

- low digital literacy may contribute to some women being at heightened risk of technology-facilitated abuse as they may take some time to recognise that technology is being used to abuse them, and be unsure of how to respond once technology-facilitated abuse has been identified

- cultural biases and misunderstandings from some support services (particularly the police)

- perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse threatening to shame women publicly as a 'bad wife' if they speak out about the abuse, discrediting her reputation with friends, family and broader community

- a lack of financial resources to leave the perpetrator, particularly for recently arrived migrants, women on spousal visas, and women with low levels of English who may struggle to find employment

- a lack of trust in state institutions based on experiences from their home country which may mean that CALD women resist going to the police or accessing the criminal justice system

- challenges in engaging with the justice system which can be amplified for CALD women with low levels of English and understanding about how the justice system works.

Suggestions from stakeholders for improving support and preventing technology-facilitated abuse

Stakeholders made the following suggestions for improving support for victims and preventing technology-facilitated abuse:

- Provide access to education on the safe use of technology. This should include education about the legality of technology-facilitated abuse to ensure that CALD women are aware that it is a form of abuse and that there are legal supports available.

- Raise community awareness and education of online safety, the illegality of technology-facilitated abuse, and support options available for victims (both to CALD women and the broader community, including possible perpetrators). Information should be translated and training provided in as many migrant languages as possible. Information should be targeted at places where isolated CALD women frequent, such as schools, supermarkets, health centres and through community radio.

- Improve the capacity of support services to deal with technology-facilitated abuse through, for example:

  - further training for frontline workers such as how to identify technology-facilitated abuse and tracking devices

  - funding to tailor programs to address CALD community needs, including hiring CALD women in frontline support roles

  - greater legal support to understand changes in laws related to technology-facilitated abuse

  - seeing how they can use existing/other laws to support CALD women wishing to prosecute against a technology-facilitated abuse perpetrator.

- Provide informal avenues for support, such as online support groups and forums for CALD women. The benefit of informal networks is that CALD women may feel more willing to seek support where they can share their experiences anonymously. Having someone to talk to who understands their unique cultural background and experiences is important.

- Make channels for building community awareness easily accessible for CALD women who may be quite restricted in their movements and may be confined at home. Examples of appropriate communication channels include supermarkets, medical centres, schools, radio, so that women (particularly those experiencing domestic violence) are able to see and gain access to the material, even in situations where they may normally be controlled by their abuser.

- Educate the perpetrator. In CALD communities, many perpetrators of technology-facilitated abuse are unaware that their actions are illegal and have often had little exposure to technology before coming to Australia. As such, some perpetrators have little understanding as to the consequences of their actions.

Awareness of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner

Few participants knew enough about the Office of the eSafety Commissioner and the available resources to provide insight as to the usefulness of the website and available training materials. Some participants in the online forum looked at the eSafety website (**esafety.gov.au**) and the eSafetyWomen site (**esafety.gov.au/women**) and their feedback was mixed. Some women found the resources and information available helpful and many would like to see more practical support and information targeted at older age groups.

Conclusions

This is the first time in Australia that research focusing specifically on technology facilitated abuse experienced by CALD women (via interviews with service providers and victims) has been conducted. The findings demonstrate the importance of first-hand engagement with minority groups to understand their particular needs, and the potential it provides in identifying effective ways to tailor support programs and services to meet those needs.

A limitation of this research, which links to the key findings, is that CALD women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse related to domestic violence are particularly difficult to identify and engage with. While several CALD women participated in this research with experiences of domestic violence, the insights provided by stakeholders were pivotal in understanding the experiences of CALD women more broadly. The research acknowledges that the findings cannot be generalised or used to demonstrate the prevalence of technology-facilitated abuse experiences among CALD women.

The findings demonstrate that CALD women experience a range of technology-facilitated abuse types, similar to non-CALD women. However, there are particular threats used by perpetrators that reflect women's cultural and migrant backgrounds.

There may be many CALD women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic violence who do not reach out for formal support. CALD women who do come forward to report technology-facilitated abuse in the context of domestic violence tend to do so when the situation is quite desperate. Health centres appear to be one pathway that CALD women are more likely to use as it is less likely to raise the suspicion of abusive partners. This could be harnessed by support services as a way to engage CALD women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse.

A number of barriers to seeking help have also been identified. CALD women are unaware that technology-facilitated abuse can constitute a criminal offence. Indeed, it appears that CALD women may not feel that broader domestic violence warrants going to the police or seeking formal support. Furthermore, CALD women may lack trust in state institutions, based on experiences from their home country such that they resist going to the police or accessing the criminal justice system.

Language barriers are significant. CALD women may also have quite low levels of digital literacy, particularly recently arrived migrants and migrants from backgrounds where they have had little access to technology. This means that they may take some time to recognise that technology is being used to abuse them (such as surveillance), be unsure how to respond and manage their privacy settings, and unsure how to explain these experiences to support services.

Social isolation was a common theme in the interviews, with CALD women describing how they felt unable to seek support from friends and family for fear of being shamed. Cultural biases held by frontline workers, particularly by the police, can lead to adverse outcomes, with CALD women feeling further isolation and less likely to pursue criminal justice responses as a result.

CALD women's responses to technology-facilitated abuse, and the reception they receive from support services, reflect a complex interaction between socioeconomic, education and cultural factors. The findings from this research underscore the importance of a variety of measures across information, support services, legislative reform, and policy responses that may contribute to better justice outcomes for those affected by technology-facilitated abuse, and to raise awareness of this issue more broadly in CALD communities where awareness may otherwise be quite low.