

PEOPLE AGAINST CYBER THREATS/ HARRASSMENT

PeopleACT

Making our cyber space safer, more respectful and empowering for all Malaysians through legislative reform and public awareness

SURVEY ON HOW CYBERHARRASSMENT AFFECTS MALAYSIANS 2016

1. INTRODUCTION

The Malaysian Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights (MCCHR) under its UndiMsia! strategic legislative advocacy campaign against cyberharassment conducted a national survey from 8 June to 31 December 2016.

The purpose of the survey is two-fold:

- 1) to learn about the respondents' online behaviour, how they understand cyberharassment, how cyberharassment affects them; and
- 2) to identify suitable candidates for an extended qualitative study on incidents of cyberharassment in Malaysia.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey consisted of 12 questions. Question 1 to 4 asked for personal information such as nationality, gender, age and area of resident. Question 5 and 6 were related to online habits such as the preferred ICT tools used and the length of time spent online. Question 7 to 11 asked what the respondents would consider as online violence, whether they have experienced cyberharassment, and if yes, would they allow the MCCHR to document their experience. The final question (Question 12) was added to the survey as part of a collaborative initiative with EMPOWER, a woman's non-governmental organisation, working towards developing a people's internet rights charter. Question 12 will not form part of this survey analysis, as the answers are used by EMPOWER for their charter.

The survey was conducted in English and Malay for a period of six months (8 June to 31 December 2016). The survey was uploaded on UndiMsia!'s website (www.undimsia.com) and Facebook page and shared extensively online. It was also distributed to those from public universities such as Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaya (UM), Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), Malaysian NGOs, National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO), Joint Action Group on Violence Against Women (JAG), Ministry of Women, residents' association, law students, etc. Although the survey was initially intended as an online survey, it was the physical

participation of respondents at specific events held mainly in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur that contributed to the bulk of the data collected.

The summary of the key findings is as below:

1. Out of the 522 respondents, 336 (64.4 percent) were women and 183 (35.1 percent) were men. Three respondents did not specify their gender. Majority of them ranged from 17 to 39 years old (52.1 percent from 17 to 24 years old, 30.5 percent from 25 to 39 years old). Although all states were represented by at least one respondent, an overwhelming majority resided in Selangor (52.7 percent) and Kuala Lumpur (23.8 percent).
2. WhatsApp (91.4 percent), Facebook (85.4 percent) and email (68.6 percent) were the top three online platforms used most by the respondents on a daily basis. 78.5 percent of them used these platforms via their smart phones while 61.3 percent with their desk or laptop.
3. Majority of the respondents (66.7 percent) spent about one to five hours online on a daily basis. This excluded the time they spent online for work purpose. The survey also showed that the longer a respondent spent online, the more exposed they were to the risk of online violence, specifically hateful comments, online shaming, revenge porn and death/rape threats.
4. Interestingly enough, the number of respondents who felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments or responses they received online was not higher despite them spending more than 10 hours online per day and experiencing a higher percentage of online violence.
5. Those who said they spent more than 16 hours online a day (2.7 percent) were mostly 17 to 39 years old and composed of seven men, six women and one unspecified gender.
6. Most respondents (above 60 percent) would consider online death/rape threats, revenge porn, online hate speech, online sexual harassment, and online intimidation by the government as online violence, but there were also 20 percent who thought online criticism is a form of online violence.
7. Only one respondent out of 522 added that stalking is a form of online violence.
8. Seventy percent of female respondents considered receiving unwanted online sexually explicit images or links as a form of online violence as opposed to 59 percent of male respondents.
9. Of the 64 women who did not consider online death threats as a form of violence, 23 were 17 to 24 years old. Out of these 23, there were 20 who would however consider online scam and criticism as forms of violence.
10. More than half of the respondents (50.4 percent) have experienced one form of online harassment at least once in their life.
11. Women suffered online sexual harassment (20.9 percent) at least two times more than men (9.8 percent). Women also experienced online death or rape threats (4.8 percent) and stalking (16.4 percent) more than men (3.3 percent and 13.1 percent respectively).
12. Meanwhile, men experienced online hateful comments (34.9 percent), online shaming (17.9 percent) and online spying (20.7 percent) more than women (30.4 percent, 11.4 percent, and 12.2 percent respectively).
13. Men (2.2 percent) and women (2.1 percent) seem to experience revenge porn equally.
14. Forty-one percent of the respondents claimed they have felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments they received online. Of these, 42.3 percent were women compared to 35.5 percent men. Women from all age groups appeared to feel more fearful, threatened or uneasy online compared to their male counterparts.

3. DETAILED MAIN FINDINGS

This section provides the detailed findings of each question asked in the survey, except for Question 12, as the answers are being used for a separate purpose by a partner NGO.

Q1. I am Malaysian

This was a mandatory multiple choice question. Three choices were given: 1) Yes, I am, 2) No, I am not, and 3) Other. This question was asked to determine that the majority of respondents were Malaysians since the survey is targeted at Malaysians and how they experience and understand online violence.

507 (97.1%) respondents said they were Malaysians while 15 (2.9%) said they were not. Out of the latter, only one specified that he/she was Japanese.

Q2. What is your gender?

This was a mandatory multiple choice question. The respondents were given the option of answering female, male or other. "Other" was an option given to recognise the possibility of a third gender identified by the respondents themselves.

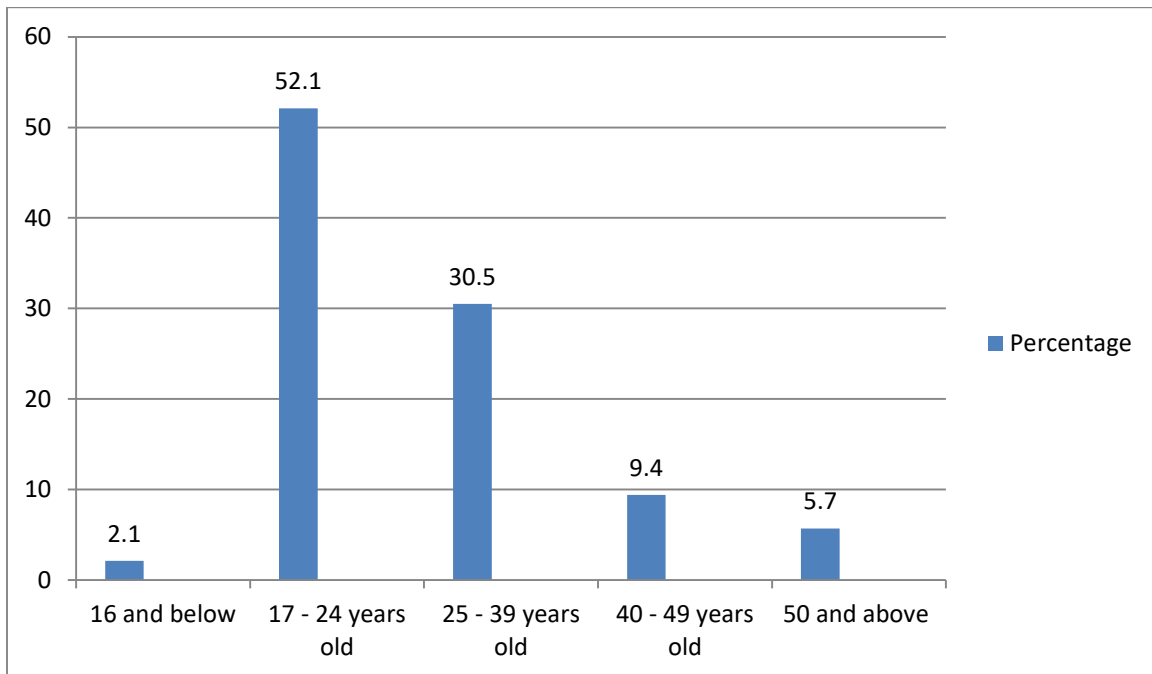
This question was asked since online violence could potentially have a greater impact on women due to existing gender discrimination in a patriarchal society such as Malaysia. Furthermore, according to a 2015 United Nations' report, 73 percent of women and girls have been exposed or have experienced some form of online violence. Any data segregated based on gender is helpful towards understanding whether online violence affects the genders differently, and if yes, how.

336 women (64.4%) and 183 men (35.1%) responded to the survey. Two respondents chose "other" without further specification while one answered "queer". The answer "queer" will not be recognised as a gender in this context, but more of sexual orientation. As such, all three "others" answers will be classified as "unspecified" here.

Q3. I am _____ years old.

The respondents were asked their age group ranging from 16 and below to 50 and above. Majority of the respondents ranged from 17 to 39 years old. 52.1 percent from the age of 17 to 24 years old while 30.5 percent were from 25 to 39 years old.

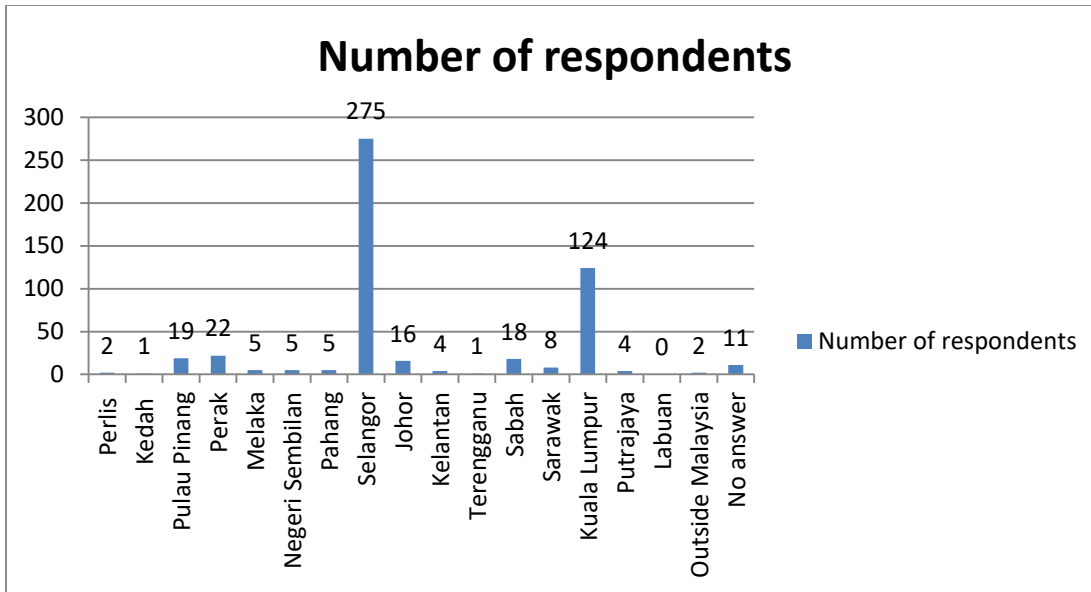
Chart 1: Age range of the respondents



Q4. Where are you staying?

The respondents were only asked to provide the town or city and state only. This question was asked to ascertain the geographical locations of the respondents. Majority of the respondents were from Selangor (52.7%) and Kuala Lumpur (23.8%) while the rest were from all other states in Malaysia.

Chart 2: Where the respondents live



Q5. What online, digital communication platform or device do you use the most on a daily basis?

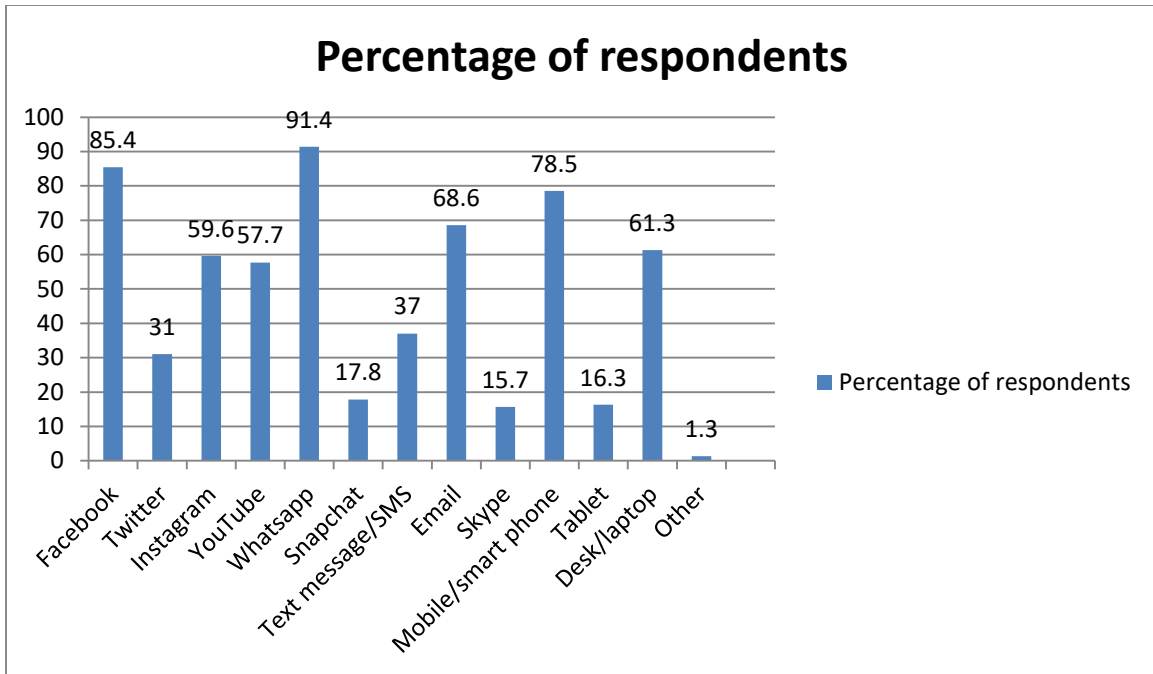
The respondents were asked to choose from a list of online platforms and devices that they used the most on a daily basis; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Whatsapp, Snapchat, short message service (SMS), email, Skype, mobile or smart phone, tablet, desktop/laptop and other. Nearly all respondents used Whatsapp (91.4%) every day, followed by Facebook (85.4%) and email (68.6%). More than 50 percent of respondents also used Instagram (59.6%) and YouTube (57.7%).

It is evident that most respondents had turned to internet-based communications compared to the more conventional form of communications such as text messaging (SMS). This could be due to the accessibility of the internet such as free Wi-Fi at public areas, making Whatsapping more affordable than text messaging (SMS).

Usage of mobile or smart phone to access email and social media was also prevalent among the respondents. As much as 78.5 percent said they used mobile or smart phone while 61.3 percent said they used a desk or laptop on a daily basis. Only 16.3 percent said they used a tablet.

Other online platforms used by the respondents on a daily basis were WeChat, Facetime, Tumblr, Trello and Slack. Interestingly, none of the respondents used Telegram Messenger which hailed itself as a highly secure messaging service with heavily encrypted messages with the ability to self-destruct.

Chart 3: Types of online, digital communication platform and device used most by the respondents on a daily basis



Q6. Roughly how many hours per day do you spend on the Internet? Please DO NOT include time spent on email or performing tasks.

This question was asked to gauge the amount of time spent on the Internet by the respondents on a daily basis. The answers also helped to gauge whether the longer a respondent spent online, the more he or she was exposed to the risk of being harassed online.

Only four respondents claimed they spent zero hour on the Internet while majority (66.7%) spent from one to five hours on a daily basis. As many as 116 respondents (22.2%) claimed they spent from six to 10 hours on the Internet per day. The number of respondents who spent more than 10 hours a day reduced significantly from 40 people (7.7%) who spent from 11 to 15 hours a day to only 14 people (2.7%) for those who spent 16 hours and above.

Those who spent 16 hours or more, were mostly from the age of 17 to 39 years old and composed of nearly equal number of men and women (7 men, 6 women and 1 unspecified gender).

The survey also showed that the longer a respondent spent online, the more exposed they were to the risk of online violence, specifically hateful comment, online shaming, revenge porn and death/rape threat, as shown on Table 1.

Table 1: Experience of online violence measured against the length of time spent online per day

	Percentage (%) of respondents who spent:
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Experienced	No. of hours spent online/day	0 – 5 hours/day	6 – 10 hours/day	More than 10 hours/day
	Hateful comment	28%	40%	57%
	Online shaming	12%	25%	36%
	Revenge porn	1.4%	7.5%	14%
	Death/rape threat	3%	5%	7%

Interestingly enough, the percentage of respondents who claimed they felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments or responses they received online was the lowest for those who spent more than 10 hours on the Internet on a daily basis, despite them facing a higher risk of online violence. For example, 38 percent of those who spent less than five hours a day on the Internet compared to 36 percent who spent more than 10 hours a day said they felt fearful, threatened or uneasy of the comments or responses they received online. As high as 55 percent of those who spent between six to 10 hours claimed they felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments or responses they received online.

One of the reasons that could potentially explain why there were less respondents who felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments and responses they received online despite spending such a significant amount of time on the Internet is desensitisation towards hurtful online behaviour due to prolonged exposure of such behaviour online. There are studies that have shown that repeated exposure to media violence reduces the psychological impact of media violence and hence desensitise viewers to them, particularly those who are constantly engaged in violent video games¹. However, it is not known whether these respondents were spending that much time on the Internet because of video games.

What was also interesting was that despite 55 percent of those who spent six to 10 hours on the Internet every day and claimed they felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of the comments and responses they received online, it did not prevent them from spending at least six hours on the Internet on a daily basis.

Q7. Which of the following would you consider as online violence?

The respondents were given eight options as answers and they were allowed to choose more than one options of what they would consider as online violence. Options 5, 6², 7 and 8 are generally considered as gender-based technology-related incidents as they affect

¹ <https://www2.psy.uq.edu.au/~uqbbast1/Bastian%20et%20al%20JESP%20in%20press.pdf> <accessed 17 March 2016>

² <http://news.asiaone.com/news/malaysia/malaysian-women-gave-away-rm71mil-love-scammers-last-year> <accessed 18 March 2017>

women disproportionately more than men³. The options with a brief explanation of why they were given are as below:

Option 1: When someone criticises your online comments or posts.

This was given to gauge how many respondents would actually consider dissent or disapproval by others as a form of online violence.

Option 2: When the government uses the cyberspace to intimidate citizens.

This was given to gauge whether the respondents would consider online intimidation by the government as a form of online violence as opposed to something that should be sanctioned simply because the government can do whatever they want to its citizens.

Option 3: Online shaming; eg. insults, creation of memes, gifs or hashtags, etc. aimed to insult and humiliate you.

This would commonly be considered as a form of cyber-bullying and it was given to determine whether the respondents would consider it as a form of online violence.

Option 4: When someone demeans you by calling you names or insults targeted at your gender, race, religion, political views; eg. kafir habir, deviant, whore, etc. on the internet.

These were some examples of hateful comments and given to gauge whether the respondents would consider them as forms of online violence.

Option 5: When you receive unwanted multiple links to sexual images on your mobile phone, email or social media account.

This was an example of online sexual harassment and given to gauge how many respondents would consider it as online violence.

Option 6: When you are being scammed by someone you met on the Internet.

With the increasing number of online “love scams” being reported on the news⁴, particularly targeted at financially able and older women, this option was given to determine whether the respondents would consider it as a form of online violence.

Option 7: When you receive death or rape threats through your mobile phone, email or social media account.

This would be considered as one of the most serious forms of online violence, particularly aimed at vulnerable groups such as women.

³ <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-34911605> <accessed 18 March 2017>, http://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/cyber_violence_gender%20report.pdf?vs=4259 <accessed 18 March 2017>

⁴ <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2016/09/14/love-scams-target-women-with-marital-issues-single-mums/> <accessed 29 March 2017>

Option 8: When someone threatens to upload sexually explicit photos of you as revenge.

Revenge porn is also seen as a form of online harassment often targeted at women.

The respondents were also given an opportunity to add any other online behaviour they would consider as online violence. Only nine respondents offered additional comments to this question. Individually, they were:

- Online stalking;
- Cyber-bullying;
- Emotional blackmailing on social media;
- Unsolicited sexual advances followed by threats upon refusal;
- Posting of personal photos without consent;
- Posting of personal photos;
- Plagiarism;
- Repeated pop-ups on gambling or betting websites; and
- Causing physical harm to a person or their belongings; eg. hacking into a computer resulting in financial loss or overclocking a computer resulting in overheating the computer.

A male respondent did not think that any of the options given were online violence because violence only occurs when physical harm to a person and property is established.

The chart below shows the number of respondents by gender who considered each option as online violence.

Chart 4: What the respondents consider as online violence

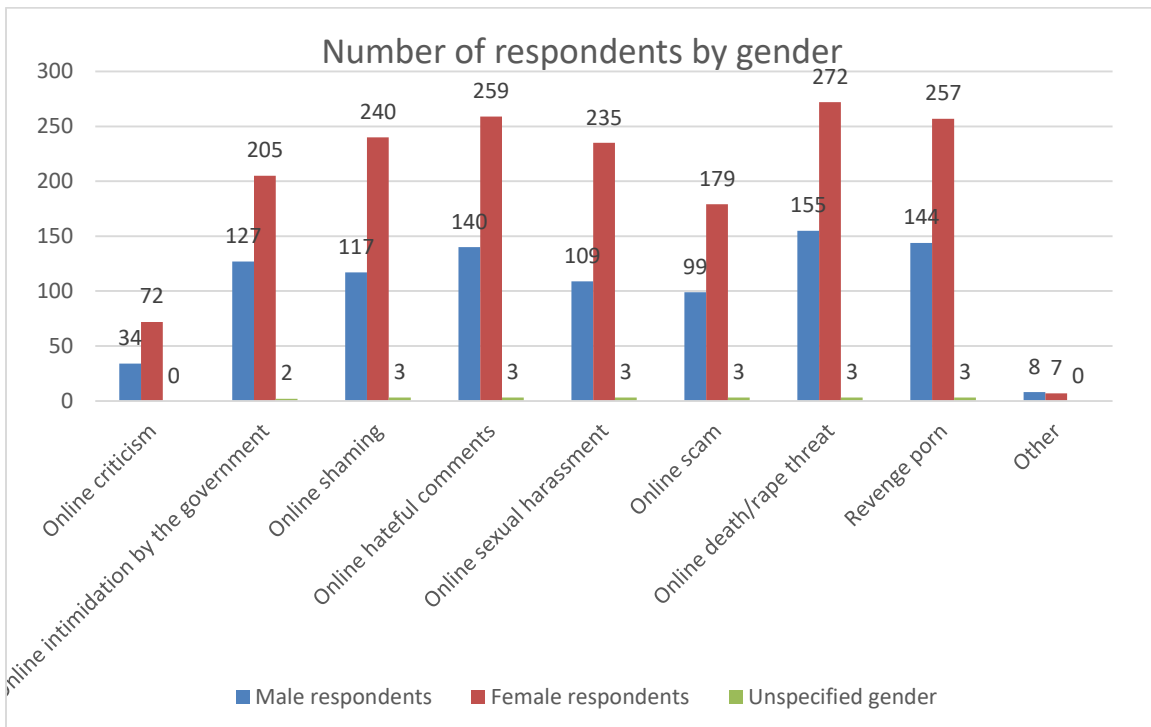


Table 2: What respondents consider as online violence based on the percentage of each gender

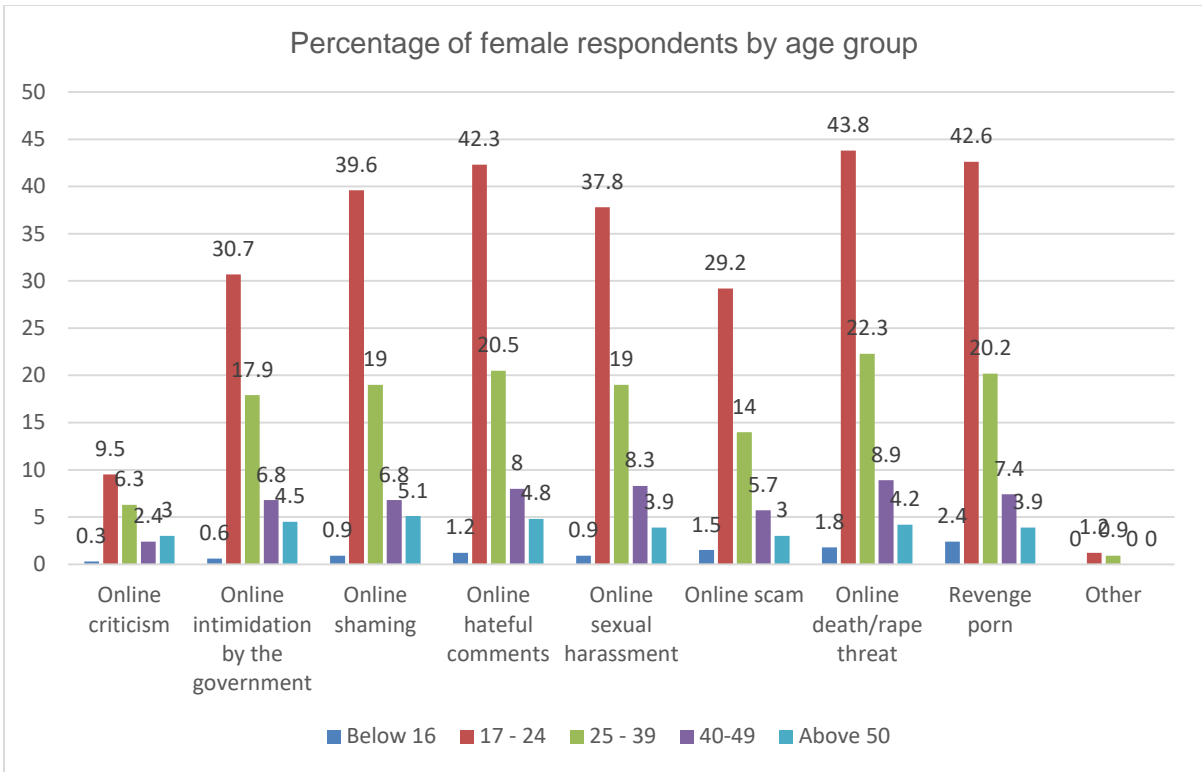
Type of online activity	Male respondents (%)	Female respondents (%)
Online criticism	18.6	21.5
Online government intimidation	68.8	60.5
Online shaming	63.9	71.4
Online hateful comments	76.5	76.8
Online sexual harassment	59.5	69.9
Online scam	54.1	53.4
Online death/rape threat	84.6	81
Revenge porn	78.6	76.5
Other	4.3	2.1

As you can see on the chart and table, the top three options chosen by the total respondents were online death or rape threat (82.4%), revenge porn (77.4%) and online hateful comments (77%). This was followed by online shaming (69%), online sexual harassment (66.5%), and online intimidation by the government (63.6%).

Ranked at the bottom two were online criticism and online scam. As many as 281 (53.8%) and 106 (20.3%) respondents would consider online scam and online criticism as a form of online violence respectively.

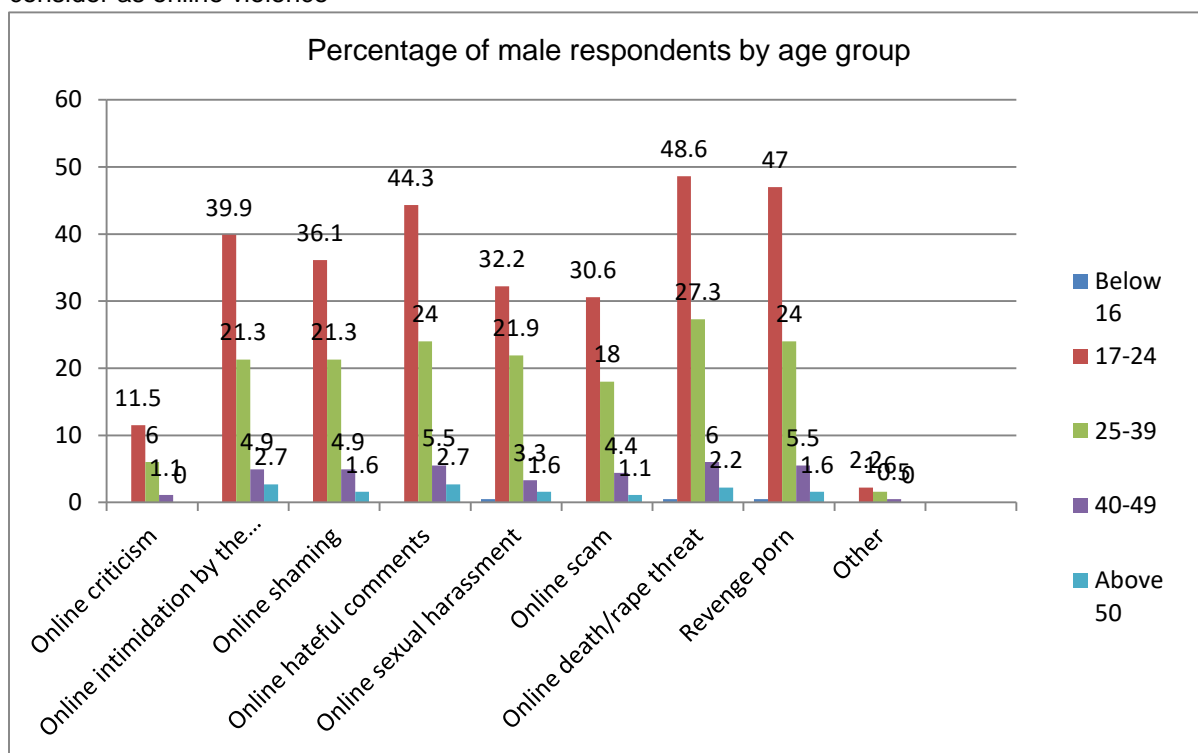
Chart 5 and 6 show the disaggregated data of the percentage of female and male by age group of what they would consider as online violence.

Chart 5: Disaggregated data showing the percentage of female respondents by age group of what they consider as online violence



The disaggregated data in Chart 5 revealed that the top three options most chosen by the women from 17 to 24 years old and those from the 40 to 49 years old are different. For those 17 to 24 years old, most would consider online death threat, revenge porn and online hateful comments as online violence while for those who are 40 to 49 years old, most of them chose online scam, online shaming and online hateful comments. The order of the activities listed is from most chosen to the least chosen.

Chart 6: Disaggregated data showing the percentage of male respondents by age group of what they consider as online violence



The data also shows that majority of the women who did not consider death or rape threat as online violence were from the age group of 17 to 24 years old. Out of these, at least 20 women would however consider online scam and criticism as online violence instead.

More men also felt that online government intimidation is a form of online violence compared to women.

Women seemed to feel more strongly about online criticism, shaming and sexual harassment as forms of online violence compared to men.

Both men and women have the same the opinion about online hateful comments.

Q8. Have you ever experienced the following?

The respondents were given eight options as answers and they were allowed to choose more than one options of what they have experienced. Options 3, 4, 6 and 7 are generally considered as gender-based technology-related incidents as they affect women disproportionately more than men. The options were given as below:

Option 1: Received online hateful/harmful comments due to your gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, political views, etc.

Option 2: Online shaming; eg. your personal details or photos being revealed by someone who disagrees with you.

Option 3: Being victim of online sexual harassment; eg. called obscene name, receiving unwanted pornographic material

Option 4: Revenge porn; eg. sexually explicit photo of you being uploaded on the internet without your consent as revenge

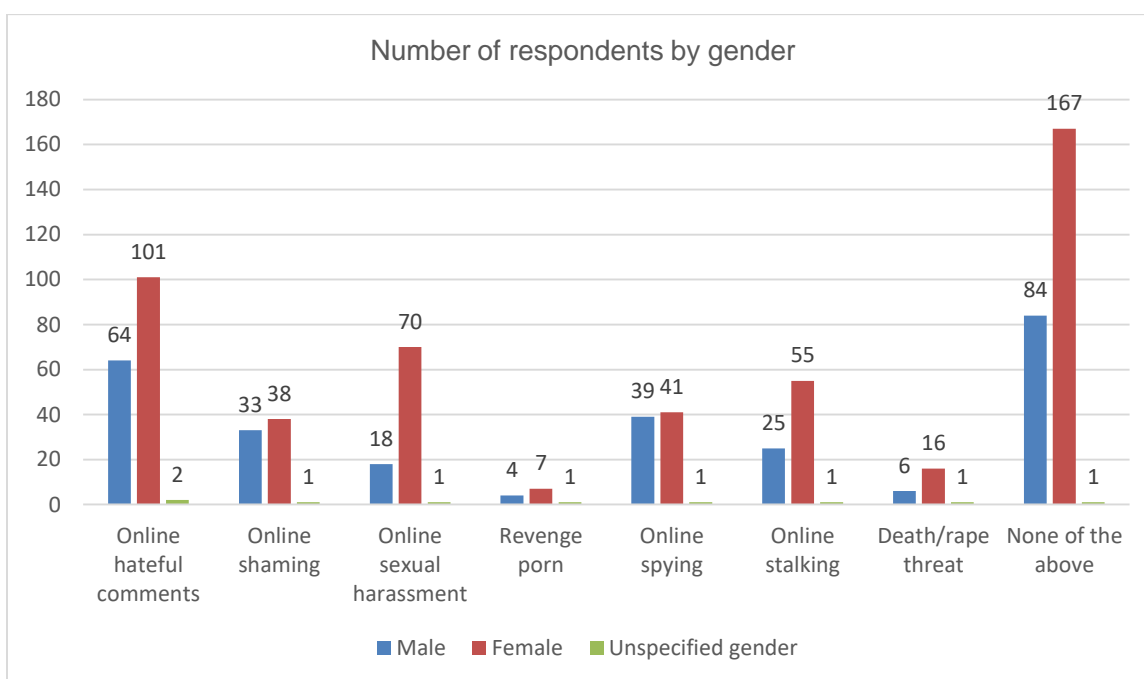
Option 5: Your online activities are being spied by the authorities; eg. university administrator, government, religious department

Option 6: Being persistently stalked on social media

Option 7: Received death or rape threat online

Option 8: None of the above

Chart 7: Number of respondents by gender who have experienced online harassment



The data revealed that more than half (50.4%) of the respondents have experienced some form of online harassment at least once in their life. Among the types of online harassment experienced most was online hateful comments. As many as 31.6 percent of respondents have received online hateful comments before.

The data shows 17 percent of the respondents had experienced online sexual harassment and women seemed to suffer online sexual harassment (20.9%) at least two times more than men (9.8%). Women also experienced online death or rape threat (4.8%) and stalking (16.4%) more than men (3.3% and 13.1% respectively).

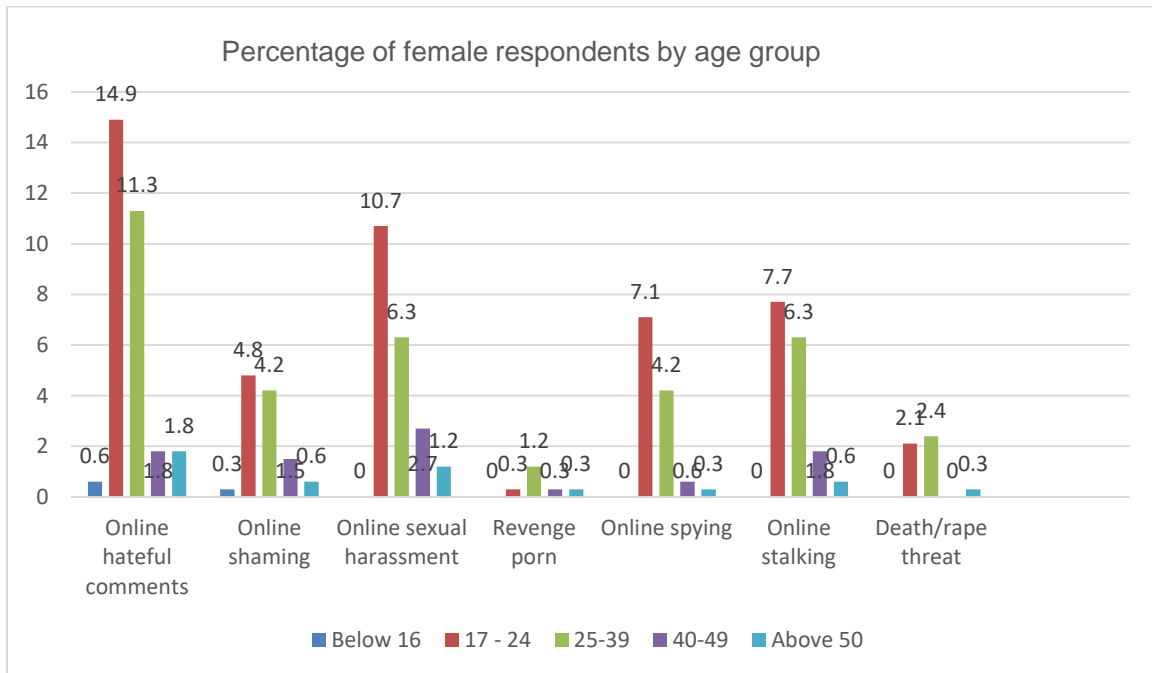
Meanwhile, men experienced online hateful comments (34.9%), online shaming (17.9%) and online spying (20.7%) more than women (30.4%, 11.4% and 12.2% respectively).

Men and women seem to experience revenge porn equally.

259 (49.6%) respondents said they have never experienced any of the options given.

Chart 8 and 9 show the disaggregated data for male and female respondents by age group of the types of online harassment they have experienced.

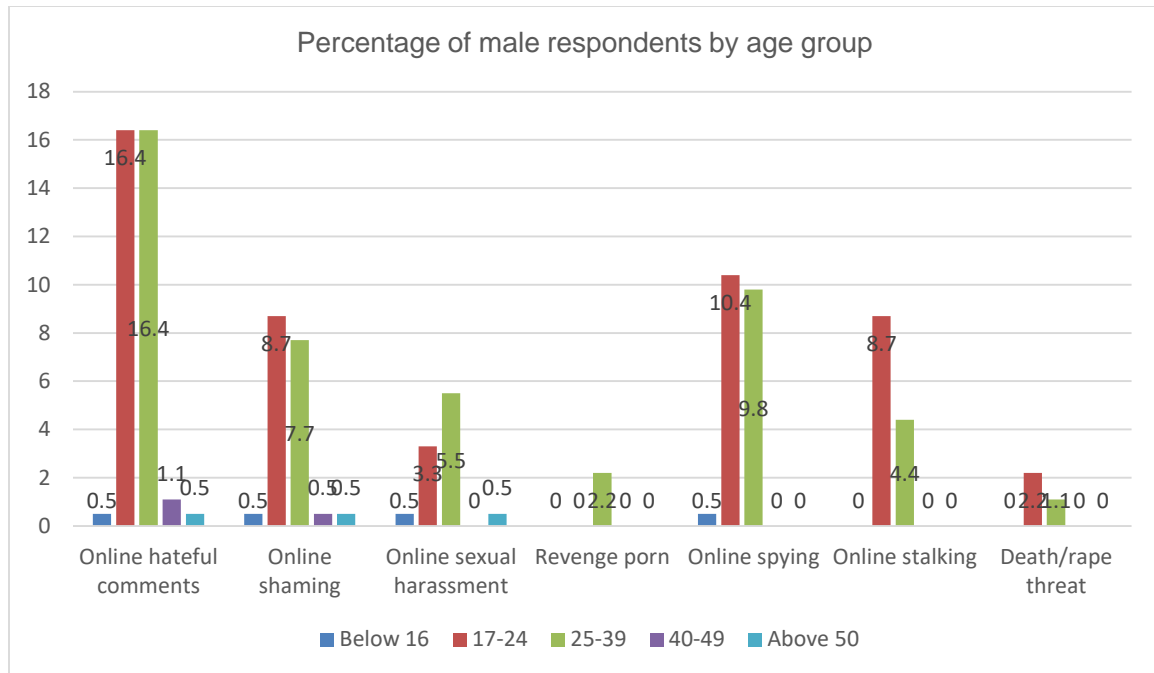
Chart 8: Disaggregated data showing the percentage of female respondents by age group of their experience of online harassment



From Chart 8, it appears that the top three forms of online harassment experienced most by the women, particularly those from the age group 17 to 24 and 40 to 49 years old were online hateful comments, online sexual harassment and online stalking.

Meanwhile, the top three forms of online harassment experienced most by the men, particularly those from the age group 17 to 24 and 25 to 39 years old were online hateful comments, online spying and online shaming.

Chart 9: Disaggregated data showing the percentage of male respondents by age group of their experience of online harassment



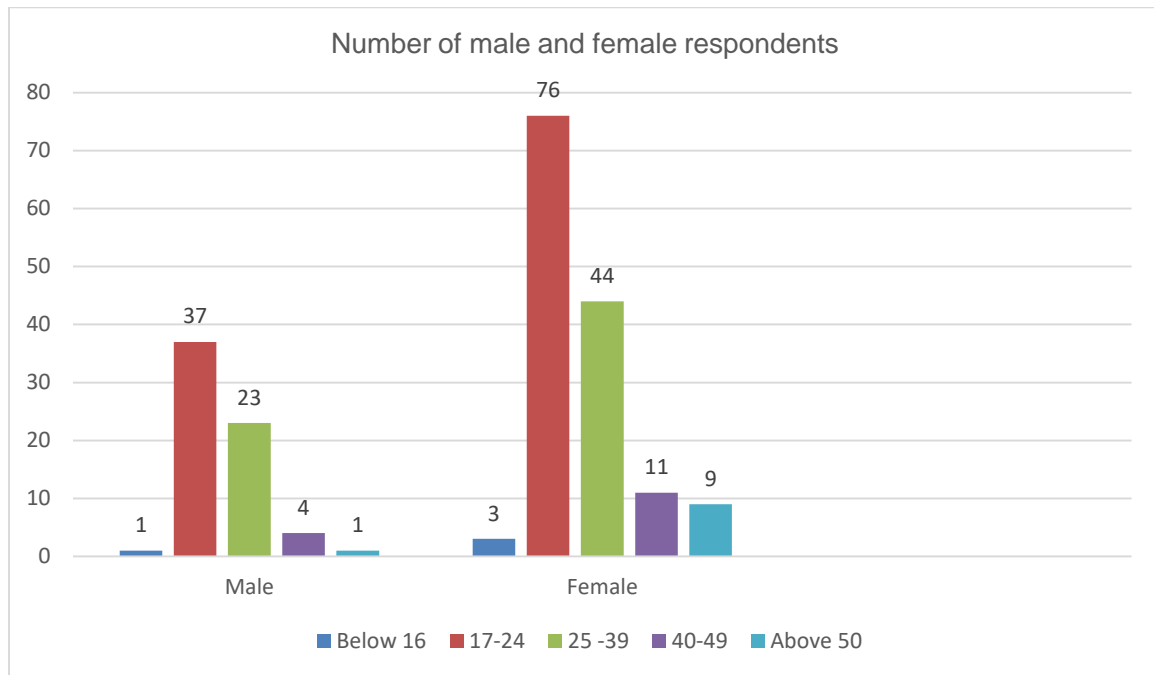
Q9. Have you ever felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of comments or responses you have received on the Internet or digital device?

299 (57.3%) respondents answered “no” to the question while 214 (41%) answered “yes”. Nine respondents gave additional comments to this question. They were summed up as the following:

- Although they felt uncomfortable with some of the comments, they were able to ignore them because they were not affecting their lives;
- Maybe, depending on the extent of the comments;
- They did not feel fearful because they live in a condominium where there are security guards;
- They did not feel fearful because they would fight back in a civilised way; and
- They felt uneasy seeing other people receiving harassing comments.

Chart 10 shows the disaggregated data of male and female respondents who have felt fearful, threatened or uneasy because of comments or responses they received online. The data shows that 42.3 percent of women felt fearful, threatened or uneasy online compared to 35.5 percent of men. The disaggregated data also shows that women in all age group tend to feel more fearful, threatened or uneasy online than men.

Chart 10: Disaggregated data showing the percentage of female and male respondents by age group who have felt fearful, threatened or uneasy online



Q10. Will you allow us to document your experience with online harassment or violence?

This question was asked to identify those who have experienced online harassment or violence and were willing to have their experience documented for the purpose of an extended qualitative study on how online harassment affects Malaysians. Only 96 respondents said they would allow the MCCHR to document their experience while 178 respondents said “no” despite having experienced online harassment. The remaining 248 respondents said they have never experienced online harassment or violence.

Q11. If you answered “yes” to Q10, how can we contact you?

This question was asked to allow the MCCHR to contact the respondents who had expressed their willingness to be documented.

Q12. How would an ideal cyberspace look like to you?

This question was added to the survey as part of a collaborative initiative with EMPOWER, a woman’s non-governmental organisation, working towards developing a people’s internet rights charter. This question will not form part of this survey analysis, as the answers are being used by EMPOWER for their charter.

4. LIMITATIONS

- i. The survey was conducted via three different platforms; 1) Survey Monkey in two languages simultaneously (English and Malay), 2) Google Form in English, and 3) Google Form in Malay. The one using Survey Monkey was launched first for about one month before it was “transferred” to Google Form with minor revisions. The reason for the transfer was mainly due to usability in which the Google Form app is easier to manage and use. Also, the reason why the second survey was carried out in two separate Google Forms (one in English and the other in Malay) was due to the concern that having two languages side by side would make the questions unnecessarily lengthy and thus making it very difficult for the respondents to read.

During the transfer, three questions were added and one was removed from the initial survey conducted using Survey Monkey. The two questions added were: Q1: I am Malaysian, Q3: I am _____ years old and Q12: How would an ideal cyberspace look like to you? The one removed was “I am a university student.” The rest of the questions remained the same.

Fortunately, the survey from Survey Monkey had only three respondents and although they were included in the analysis, it must be noted that there were three respondents whose nationality and age could not be determined. However, for the purpose of this survey, the three respondents were assumed to be Malaysians and were from 17 to 24 years old. These assumptions were made because of where the survey was conducted; i.e. Malaysia and targeted at Malaysians. As to the age, the earliest distribution of the survey was carried out at universities and the respondents claimed they were students. Therefore, they were assumed to be in their early twenties. Nonetheless, it must be noted that there is still a very small margin of error since these are only assumptions.

- ii. The relatively small sample size means any analysis of the figures is unlikely to represent the entire population of Malaysia and should be approached with caution.

5. CONCLUSION

Although majority of respondents did not feel fearful, threatened or uneasy because of comments or responses they received online, there is still a significant number (more than half) of respondents who have experienced online harassment before. It is possible that those who said they were not afraid, threatened or uneasy felt that way because they were tolerant of potentially harmful comments as some had articulated that they could simply ignore the comments or that they are not violent until there is physical harm.

It is also revealing that there is a lack of awareness among the respondents on what entail online violence. For instance, many respondents, especially those below the age of 40, held the perception that online criticism is a form of online violence. There are 41 percent of men who did not think that receiving unwanted sexually explicit images online as online violence. Combined with the fact that only one respondent out of 522 added that online stalking is a

form of violent and that women made up the majority of those who did not consider death or rape threat as online violence, made it even more compelling that public awareness on online harassment is crucial and necessary.

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