

# *Gender Inequality in the Digital Field and Potential Remedial Measures*

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the phenomenon of gender inequality in digital spaces and explores potential remedial measures. Through an analysis of historical cases of online discrimination, gendered experiences on the internet, and current landscape of discriminatory behavior, it is clear that women are frequently exposed to cyber bullying and other forms of abuse. Strategies for promoting gender equity in digital spaces include self-regulation, education and awareness, state legislation, and industry practices. Surveillance capitalism's impact on gender equity is also discussed, as data collected through this practice can be used to profile individuals based on their gender identity or sexuality. The paper concludes by stating that research into the efficacy of self-regulation, education and awareness approaches as well as state legislation in shielding women from online discrimination is necessary. Additionally, industry practices targeting those who battle discrimination should be further investigated. By utilizing such methods, one can move towards an equitable digital space where all individuals are respected regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

**Keywords:** gender inequality, digital spaces, self-regulation, education and awareness

## 1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, digital domains have become a prime medium for socialization and professional endeavors. Unsurprisingly, these virtual spaces have the capacity to generate various forms of gender disparity due to their widespread nature. Gender equity can be considered to define various approaches taken by societies or establishments in order to ensure equal access, resources, and opportunities for both genders within them. It encompasses not only eliminating sexual discrimination but also actively striving to create an atmosphere where women can be viewed as equivalent to men [1]. Social media platforms, websites, and electronic neighborhoods are ubiquitous in this time period and have gained considerable clout in terms of shaping public opinion. Nonetheless, certain digital platforms have been utilized in a way that is detrimental to gender equality, often leading to the mistreatment of particular individuals [2]. This can be observed in online chatrooms, gaming lobbies, and discussion forums where people may be subjected to discrimination or marginalization on the basis of their gender identity. Henceforth, this paper will analyze how such digital spaces contribute to gender inequality and evaluate potential solutions for tackling this problem.

## **2. Historical Context of Discrimination in Digital Spaces**

According to Dlamini, nearly a quarter of women had reported experiencing abuse and harassment on the internet. This is indicative of a long-standing pattern of gendered experiences on the internet, where various forms of discrimination have been perpetrated against women and other minority groups [3]. There have been numerous cases in which online harassment has targeted female victims for their gender identity or sexual orientation [4]. This has included cyberbullying, threats of violence, non-consensual images being shared without permission, and even doxxing (the public release of someone's private information) [5]. Aside from this, some digital spaces are also known to be filled with explicit misogyny and sexism, which often goes unchecked. Furthermore, there have been several cases wherein people in positions of power within these digital spaces have adopted a discriminatory attitude towards minorities, women, and members of the LGBTQ+ community [6].

### **2.1. Gendered Experiences on the Internet**

It is essential to comprehend the historical circumstances of bias in digital spaces. Since its emergence, a huge number of women have had negative experiences on the web. In its early days, women were frequently addressed with offensive language and exposed to sexual mistreatment. This type of gender-influenced experience was extended to other minority groups as well; this led to their seclusion from these digital realms [6]. To protect themselves from potential assailants who would use their identity details for negative reasons, many women resorted to using pseudonyms or screen names when engaging online. Even though this precautionary measure worked efficiently, it also presented difficulties for those trying to connect with others via the internet. For instance, verifying their real identity became impossible [6]. Investigations have revealed that even with such safety measures in place, women are still more exposed to gender-based discrimination than men in the digital world. For instance, scientific studies have revealed that women are more liable to become targets of cyberbullying than their male counterparts [7]. Moreover, research has proven that female players were put through considerably more sexual mistreatment and gender-related discrimination compared to male gamers. This is a demonstration of the larger trend where digital spheres tend to enhance existing prejudices against certain genders or minority groups [7].

### **2.2. Early Cases of Online Harassment and Targeting of Women and Minorities**

In the early 2000s, there were innumerable situations in which women endured online abuse predicated on their gender identity. Lori Drew became infamous after being blamed for the cyberbullying of the late teenager Megan Meier; the occurrence highlighted the risks posed by digital environments to those at risk and raised discourse about how to make these digital spaces safer for everyone [8]. This instance of dehumanization brought to light the ease with which predators can exploit an individual's gender identity and put them in a vulnerable position. Moreover, since then, other examples of minority exploitation due to sexual orientation have come to the surface, for example, the episode concerning a transgender woman from the United Kingdom who was targeted by a band of malicious users on an online website [9]. These occurrences show how discrimination and intimidation against women and people of color are still common practices even when utilizing digital platforms.

As Salminen postulate in their research paper, tackling these issues necessitates a multifaceted approach involving both technological and social interventions [10]. Technological solutions such as improved moderation utilities, automated speech recognition programs, and machine learning algorithms can help identify hate discourse and cyberbullying more quickly. Moreover, it is important to recognize the importance of educational initiatives related to online security and safety,

policy revisions designed to promote gender parity, as well as creating digital forums where individuals can comfortably share their thoughts without worrying about being targeted due to their identity [8].

Comprehending the dynamics of discrimination directed towards women in digital platforms is essential for establishing a fairer and safer online experience. Even if technology helps alleviate certain situations, it is also significant to have social strategies in place that tackle any latent attitudes or preconceptions based on gender. This will ensure that all people can navigate digital spaces without suffering from discriminatory treatment.

### **3. Current Landscape of Discriminatory Behavior in Digital Spaces**

The current landscape of digital spaces is a highly contested one, with numerous examples of discriminatory practices persisting. Sexism, racism, homophobia, and transphobia are widely proliferating on social websites such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. These popular platforms have unfortunately become havens for discrimination against women and minorities who often fall victim to hateful discourse, in addition to malevolent cyber bullying tactics like doxxing (the deliberate public disclosure of confidential data) [11]. Furthermore, due to the rise of surveillance capitalism, gender equity has been severely impacted in terms of data collection - individuals can now be profiled based on their gender identity or sexuality, which can lead to further discrimination.

#### **3.1. Cyber Bullying as a Form of Discrimination Against Women**

Cyberbullying has been observed as a prevalent issue, particularly targeted at women, due to gender bias. In 2015, renowned American actress Leslie Jones faced extreme sexist and racist abuse on the Twitter platform by various users who threatened her with violence using derogatory words. This episode showed how easily females can be oppressed online, having drastic repercussions for their mental health [12]. The risks associated with cyberbullying comprise fear-induced anxiety, depression, and even contemplating suicide. Additionally, physical safety is also compromised if perpetrators make violent threats against victims. Consequently, it becomes crucial for online service providers to take measures to prevent such discrimination and provide necessary resources to those suffering its effects [12]. Alerting people to the potential harms of cyberbullying and taking measures to raise awareness should be deemed necessary in order to promote a secure environment on the internet, no matter an individual's gender or sexuality [12]. With this thought in mind, Twitter has recently implemented a policy that allows users to report any form of ill behavior and has it examined by its team as well as creating a Safety Centre for those who are struggling with being cyberbullied [13]. It is crucial that it is understood that cyberbullying is actually a serious issue, and steps are taken to battle this tendency of discrimination within the digital sphere. Initiatives such as these should be a model for other online platforms in order to build an equitable internet atmosphere for all participants.

#### **3.2. Surveillance Capitalism's Impact on Gender Equity**

The rise of surveillance capitalism has had a negative effect on gender equity as data collected through this practice is often used to profile individuals based on their gender identity or sexuality. This provides power to those with an agenda of discrimination, allowing them to target vulnerable people who may be already facing marginalization in certain digital spaces [14]. Surveillance capitalism has made more people to become increasingly vulnerable to monitoring and tracking online which exposes them to the risk of harassment and worse, cyber bullying. For instance, the utilization of facial recognition technology has been used in the targeting of minority groups such as the LGBTQ+ spectrum community and African Americans. Such targeting is higher among these

minority groups compared to the general populace which indicates how inherent this practice is in nature and how it is deeply rooted in discrimination and gender biasness. Therefore, it is essential that steps be taken in order to ensure that surveillance capitalism doesn't result in heightened levels of bias against women. This can include pushing for increased clarity when it comes to collecting data, introducing laws to protect people's privacy as well as regulating organizations that use personal information. Additionally, websites should work towards making their products safer, so people don't have to worry about facing cyber bullying or any other forms of discrimination. Utilizing such methods will guarantee that women can still access the resources they need without feeling scared or threatened in virtual spaces [14].

Ultimately, it is important to comprehend gender equity's role in creating a more equitable internet with everyone having equal chances for learning, growth, and taking part. It is also necessary to tackle discriminatory conduct like cyber bullying, which has become increasingly prevalent online. This can be done by implementing steps for preventing cyber bullying along with providing support for those who have been affected by it [15]. By taking certain steps, one can move towards a digital space where all individuals are esteemed regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

In order to combat discrimination against women in the virtual realm, it is essential to promote equitable gender rights in these settings. Self-policing, education, and consciousness are vital elements of this procedure. This might involve instructing users on suitable online conduct as well as offering assistance to those who have been victimized by cyber bullying or other types of prejudice. Furthermore, government regulations could lend assistance in shielding women from discrimination through the imposition of penalties or fines on those who partake in such behavior. Lastly, organizations should implement practices that counteract discriminatory activity and foster an environment that is more open for everyone [16]. By taking certain steps, one can move towards a digital space where all individuals are esteemed regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

#### **4. Strategies to Promote Gender Equity in Digital Spaces**

There are various methods that can be used in order to promote gender equity in the digital world. This includes making sure that diversity is promoted within online platforms and implementing policies that protect people's privacy from being exploited or abused [13]. Additionally, websites should also work towards making their products safer, so people don't have to worry about facing cyberbullying or any other forms of discrimination. These strategies include Self-regulation, education, and awareness; State-level Legislation; and organizational practices.

##### **4.1. Self-regulation, Education, and Awareness**

Self-regulation is critical in the mission to promote gender equity in digital environments. It involves delivering users with materials and guidance on suitable online practices like averting cyberbullying, abstaining from transmitting offensive messages or making sexual suggestions, and refraining from exposing other users publicly [17]. Additionally, educating people on the consequences of engaging in discriminatory conduct can aid in discouraging it. This can include furnishing information on how victims of cyberbullying or other types of discrimination can access help and resources. Finally, heightening consciousness around the dilemma of discrimination in virtual spaces through campaigns and news reports can assist in establishing an atmosphere where such behavior is more socially unacceptable. For instance, initiatives that use chronicles from real-life persons affected by online inequity are a compelling way to demonstrate the effects of this kind of conduct [17].

## 4.2. State-level Legislations to Protect Women in the Digital Space

To further safeguard women from being exposed to discrimination on the internet, governments at all levels must introduce laws that would impose sanctions or punitive measures upon those who indulge in such oppressive behavior. This can be achieved by enforcing existing anti-discrimination regulations or by incorporating new protocols tailored toward curbing cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment [18]. Such steps will help to cultivate a more secure habitat for females in digital domains. As an example, the European Union has recently been appraised for a novel directive that requires social media enterprises to eliminate damaging content, including hate speech and instigation of violence, within 24 hours after they have been posted. These sorts of legalities could potentially foster an environment where users are respected and feel safe regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation [19].

## 4.3. Industry Practices to Promote Gender Inclusion

Finally, the industry needs to put in measures that discourage gender bias and promote gender representation within digital spaces. This could be achieved by imposing bans on offensive language, creating code-of-conducts that prohibit hurtful behavior such as trolling, cyber bullying, and doxxing, and providing resources for victims of online aggression. Moreover, enhancing clarity regarding data collection can help protect women from surveillance capitalism's biased influence [15]. This approach would mean that user privacy is respected, and all individuals are granted a secure network experience regardless of their sex or sexual orientation. Ultimately, it is essential to create an environment where all participants feel welcome and equal in order to maximize the use of technology for everyone's benefit. To achieve this goal, one should implement tactics like self-regulation, state laws, and industry guidelines.

Conclusively, it is essential to advance gender parity in digital domains because women are regularly exposed to cyberbullying and other forms of discrimination. This can be enacted through tactics such as self-governance, education and awareness, state legislation, and corporate guidelines like supporting diversity and furnishing assistance for victims. In addition, further investigation is necessary on the repercussions of surveillance capitalism on gender equality. Ultimately, these measures have the capacity to form an equal platform for all participants in digital spheres. Bearing this discussion in mind, there are many subjects that necessitate further research in order to gain an improved understanding of the impression of surveillance capitalism on online gender equality. To further safeguard women from being exposed to discrimination on the internet, governments at all levels must introduce laws that would impose sanctions or punitive measures upon those who indulge in such oppressive behavior. This can be achieved by enforcing existing anti-discrimination regulations or by incorporating new protocols tailored toward curbing cyberbullying and other forms of online harassment. Specifically, extra research should be done into the efficacy of self-regulation, education, and awareness approaches as well as state legislation in shielding women from online discrimination. Additionally, industrial procedures targeting people who battle discrimination ought to be delved into further. It should comprise the implementation of regulations that ban such behavior and provide adequate resources for victims. Initiatives such as these should be utilized in order to have platforms that can be able to build and maintain an equitable internet atmosphere for all participants. Ultimately, more analysis is needed to understand how surveillance capitalism adds to online gender disparity online across various communities. With a better understanding of these dilemmas, strategies can be crafted that have the potential to create a more equitable atmosphere for all users of digital platforms.

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