

Problem Statement

Globally, violence against women and girls remains one of the most persistent, widespread, and under-addressed human rights violations. An estimated **736 million women**—nearly one in three worldwide—have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner at least once in their lifetime (UN women report, 2023). This violence cuts across geographies, classes, and age groups and often remains underreported due to fear, shame, and stigma.

Among the most vulnerable are adolescent girls. Around **15 million girls aged 15–19** have been subjected to forced sex, often by someone they know or trust—a boyfriend, husband, or partner. Shockingly, only 1% of these girls have ever accessed professional help, highlighting the alarming silence that surrounds such experiences (VAW prevalence estimates WHO, 2018).

Most of this violence is perpetrated by men, particularly intimate partners. More than **640 million women globally** have experienced violence from a current or former partner. Non-partner sexual violence is reported by at least 6% of women, though the actual figures are believed to be much higher (SVRI report on VAW, 2024). And these are just the reported figures, the impacts of such violence are far-reaching—resulting in long-term psychological trauma, depression, sexually transmitted infections, unintended pregnancies, and deep social isolation.

These extreme manifestations of violence do not occur in a vacuum. They are part of a broader rape culture, upheld by a social pyramid where everyday normalization of misogyny and gender discrimination—such as sexist jokes, objectification, victim-blaming, and denial of harm—creates the base that allows for escalation into coercion, assault, and even murder. Without disrupting this broader culture, attempts to tackle violence remain surface-level.

The rape culture pyramid illustrates this continuum—from sexist jokes, trivialization of consent, and victim-blaming at the base, to coercion, assault, and murder at the top. Without disrupting the cultural foundation, the symptoms will continue to manifest.

In response, an increasing number of civil society organisations across the Global South are turning their attention toward working with boys and young men—recognizing the critical need for preventive interventions. However, many of these organisations are struggling to sustain engagement due to a lack of innovative methods, contextually relevant content, and scalable platforms that resonate with young male audiences.

This challenge is particularly urgent in today's rapidly digitizing world. Young men are deeply immersed in digital environments—from gaming platforms and social media to mobile apps and chat forums. Yet, most gender programming remains offline, classroom-based, or linear, unable to meet boys where they are or harness the full potential of technology for behavior change.

There is thus a pressing need to develop technology-enabled, culturally grounded, and emotionally engaging tools and platforms that can transform how we engage with boys and

men—by making conversations around gender, power, consent, and empathy accessible, relatable, and sustained.

Theory of Change

Goal

To reduce gender-based violence by transforming harmful gender norms through technology-enabled, participatory engagement with boys and young men.

Assumptions

- Harmful masculinities are socially constructed and can be reshaped through sustained interventions.
- Boys and men are more likely to engage when platforms are interactive, peer-driven, and digitally accessible.
- Technology can expand the reach and depth of gender programming—especially in contexts where traditional formats struggle.
- CSOs, when equipped with digital tools and strategies, can scale their work with boys meaningfully and efficiently.

If

- CSOs are equipped with interactive, culturally relevant, and tech-enabled tools (apps, games, IVRS, chatbots, digital storytelling platforms);
- Boys and young men access safe digital spaces to reflect, share, and learn about gender, power, and relationships;
- Digital content is co-created with youth, embedded in local idioms, and delivered via accessible formats (low-data apps, vernacular podcasts, WhatsApp bots);
- Facilitators and mentors are trained to blend tech tools with community-based dialogue and emotional support;

Then

- Boys and young men will engage more consistently with gender equity content;
- They will critically reflect on masculinities, reject harmful behaviors, and adopt gender-just practices;
- They will influence their peer networks, challenge toxic behaviors, and begin to act as allies against violence;

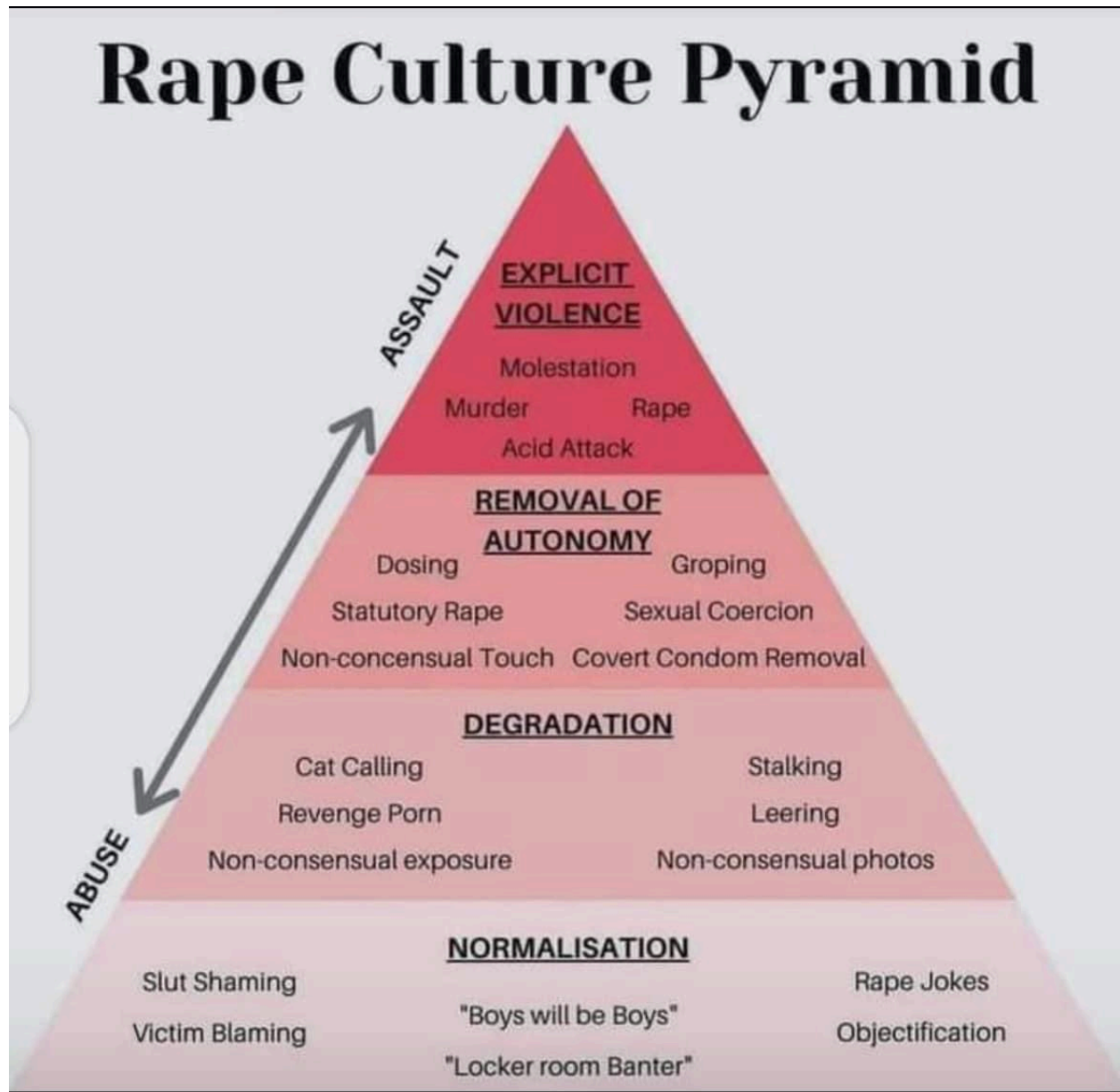
So that

- A new generation of young men are raised in alternative models of masculinity and empathy;
- Civil society has the capacity to scale transformative gender programming;
- Communities experience a measurable reduction in gender-based violence and the normalization of safer, equitable environments.

Outcomes

Short-term (0–1 year)	Medium-term (1–3 years)	Long-term (3–5 years)
Launch of digital tools: apps, games, podcasts, and chat interfaces for engaging boys	Increased digital engagement and attitudinal shifts among boys and men	Community-level shifts in male behavior and reduction in GBV indicators
CSO capacity-building to integrate tech in gender programs	Peer-led digital campaigns and allyship initiatives among youth	Strengthened ecosystems of prevention via scalable digital infrastructure
Co-creation of content in regional languages and formats	Blended learning models that combine online tools with offline facilitation	Technology becomes an integral driver in GBV prevention strategy

Note on rape culture pyramid:



Rape culture pyramid offers a framework for understanding how sexual violence is not an isolated phenomenon, but one that is sustained and enabled by broader cultural norms, attitudes, and practices. This model illustrates how behaviors that may seem socially acceptable or commonplace contribute to an environment in which more serious and violent acts, such as rape and assault, can occur.

At the bottom of the pyramid are behaviors and attitudes that are often normalized in everyday life. These include sexist jokes, objectification of women in media and popular culture, victim blaming, and trivialization of sexual assault. Though often dismissed as harmless or insignificant, such behaviors play a key role in reinforcing gender stereotypes and shaping

public perceptions about power, consent, and responsibility. From a feminist standpoint, this level of the pyramid is particularly concerning because it lays the cultural foundation for more direct forms of harm. It signals what society is willing to tolerate and, in doing so, creates a permissive atmosphere for boundary violations.

The middle tier of the pyramid consists of actions that involve coercion, manipulation, or disregard for consent. This includes unwanted physical contact, pressuring someone into sexual activity, and engaging in sexual behavior with someone who is unable to give informed consent due to intoxication or other factors. While these actions may not always be recognized or prosecuted as criminal offenses, they nonetheless reflect a significant failure to respect personal autonomy. Feminist analyses often highlight the importance of affirmative consent — a model that centers clear, enthusiastic, and ongoing agreement — as a counterpoint to the more ambiguous or dismissive understandings of consent that dominate many cultural contexts.

At the top of the pyramid are acts of overt sexual violence, such as rape, sexual assault, trafficking, and gender-based homicide. These crimes are widely acknowledged as severe violations of human rights, yet they remain disturbingly common in many societies. Importantly, the pyramid framework suggests that these acts are not simply the result of individual pathology or random violence, but are enabled by the broader cultural tolerance of the attitudes and behaviors found in the upper layers. In other words, rape culture does not begin with rape — it begins with everyday sexism that is left unchallenged.

Rape culture pyramid demonstrates the interconnectedness of various forms of harm. It underscores that prevention efforts cannot focus solely on the most extreme cases, but must also address the cultural norms and social practices that allow those cases to occur in the first place. Feminist approaches emphasize the need for structural and cultural change, including education, policy reform, and active resistance to everyday sexism and misogyny. Only by addressing the full spectrum of behaviors within the pyramid can a society begin to dismantle the conditions that sustain sexual violence.

Useful links:

https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/4_Mental-Health-Evidence-Review-2024-update.pdf

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4601628/>

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women#83915>

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10326356/>

Solution Idea Proposals

1. Lifelike chatbot/conversational avatar [proposer: Rahul]

The idea is to develop an app featuring a lifelike character which discusses topics related to rape culture pyramid in a very relatable tone and language. Additionally, we will also use WhatsApp Business account to push informational messages to opted-in users.

Key features:

1. I propose the mascot to look and sound like a mature, easy-going Indian young man. Think of a cool, elder brother who sets the right examples but is empathetic to the problems, doubts and behaviors of the boys/men younger to him.
2. This main character can be accompanied by an equally easy-going and empathetic female mascot who plays the role of the young man's best friend / partner. The idea is to let the users (boys, young men) see the example of a healthy man-woman relationship where both the characters listen to and empathise with the user's queries and behaviors while providing the right guidances in response, sensitising them to rape culture pyramid concepts in an indirect yet effective fashion.
3. The app would be backed by a huge library of precomposed content. This content will have all the information related to violence and prejudices against women and how a lot of normalised behaviors are actually not "cool". They will also challenge the usual prejudices and throw light on new outlooks E.g. challenge "boys will be boys" thinking, expose the biases in victim blaming.
4. The app will also have a conversational feature to let the users talk about their issues, interactions, doubts with this lifelike elder brother, sister characters. A lot of the rape culture pyramid foundational issues stem from loneliness amongst boys and young men and their inability to openly discuss intimate issues or just talk with someone. The conversational feature will help with this. This feature will leverage both the content library as well as a trained LLM to come up with appropriate responses on the fly.
5. Another aspect of this solution will be to send regular tips to users via WhatsApp. This would be sent from a WhatsApp Business account to opted-in users. Our main app will encourage and guide the users to opt-in to this account. Tips would include text, image and audio messages. They would look like an ongoing WhatsApp chat (mostly push based though) with the avatar characters.
6. Quizzes can be incorporated both in the app as well as WhatsApp to gamify the engagement.

7. In future versions, we can add more mascots representing non-binary genders as well as dealing with other social issues and conditionings that young men and boys go through.