

Developing Mobile Application for Public Awareness on Violence Against Women

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Abstract: The study analyzed existing literatures to understand the needs in developing mobile application to provide women with tools to protect themselves from gender-based violence. Literatures give different perspectives on how to protect women but comprehensive and complete information on Violence Against Women (VAWs) is in need to assess existing studies and application. The proponents proposed a mobile application that can give the user the capability to send incident report to the related response agency, different laws regarding VAWs to educate the users, send notification to the families and response team if emergency occurs with corresponding location through GPS, list of different government agency help lines. The application can be used through mobile application by individual users and web portal wherein administrators will be the one to receive reports and incidents. Furthermore with the proposed application, it can provide free, simple reporting procedures, ensure specific accessible response mechanism in place to react to cases and establish systematic reporting and monitoring of ICT related forms of VAW that are instituted at all level, so that, trends can be monitored and addressed by the related response government offices.

Key words: Android mobile application, violence against women, PNP women's desk, street harassment, sexual violence, comprehensive

INTRODUCTION

Philippines is not stranger to the violence against women. It is real, it is happening and it claims lives and it is very noticeable by the VAW cases reported to the Philippine National Police (PNP) which increased by over 500% in the past 16 years. This appears as one of the country's pervasive social problems and happens both in the private and public range of women's lives, it is recognized to be a crime against humanity and not merely a crime against a person (Cruz, 2013).

VAW is related to how women and men feel, experience and think about the world around them, perceptions that are influenced by the system of power and how organization, policies, norms and behaviors support those systems in different contexts. According to the 2008 National Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office, one of five Filipino women age 15-49 has experienced physical violence, since, age 15 (Ellsberg and Heise, 2005). Only 30% of women sought assistance after being physically or sexually abused. It is indeed alarming that despite efforts to address the concern, VAW persists. Many women were violated in different forms in response to these cases, the Philippine government is making initiatives to eliminate violence against women. Additionally, based on the records of the Philippine

National Police in 2013 the number of VAW cases increased by 49.4% from 2012. The increase caused the trend to go upward again after it decreased in 2011. The 2013 report is so far the highest number of reported VAW cases, since, 1997 (PCW., 2014). Due to the increase of violence in women it is in need to protect women and be aware of their rights.

Most of the societies, woman cannot afford to report violence and pursue legal action due to different reasons such as fear for her own safety and safety of her children, fear to be apprehended or taken away by the husband, influence of her extended family, emotional attachment and loyalty to the abuser, low self-esteem and self-blame, religious values or pressure from cultural community, economic dependency on the abuser and lack of legal information about their rights and laws (Legaspi, 2015). On the other hand, authorities are one of the factors why abused woman does not report the crime.

The Women's Desks of the Philippine National Police was established by virtue of Republic Act No. 8551, otherwise known as the Philippine National Police Reform and Reorganization Act of 1998, its role is to administer and attend to cases involving crimes against chastity, sexual harassment, abuses committed against women and children and other similar offenses. Some people think that police's action is always characterized by distrust and tension. Police officers always demand the battered

women to give factual information through a thorough investigation to pursue the case. This is because once the case is filed in the court dropping off the case would no longer be possible. This put the abused women in significant dilemmas as they weigh the consequences of their actions. Furthermore, according to Annan as cited by Sadusky, abused women only think that police protection and presence may only give negative impact on their communities, since, violence against women is the most shameful human rights violation. With these problems, the number of violence increasing but not reported due to stated reasons above. In contrast with this issue, it is hard for the police officers for them to take all actions to have positive outcome and giving the victim justice from such abuse (Espineli, 2015).

A massive and significant progress has been made in addressing and eliminating violence against women by both government and non-government organizations. But, it is uncertain when this trend will totally diminish in the Philippine setting but as long as current efforts to fight VAW are sustained, hope could be set high.

With the development of technology in the Philippines and the growth of "information society, ICT tools and the internet play a big role in the battle against sexual abuse and violence against women both as tools to curb such violence. While ICTs and internet can also offer new, innovative ways to battle violence against women and to provide women and girls with more protection, more security and more independence (Saloranta, 2013). Meanwhile, mobile phones become an extension of someone's personal lives, providing speeding communication and convenient storage of personal and important messages or information. It provides the space for self-expression, education, communication and networking.

The proposed mobile application can be an innovative technology to provide women with tools to protect themselves from "gender-based violence". The mobile application can give the user the capability to send incident report which gives the user to identify location where possible harassment hotspots and hazardous areas are located. It also provides the women to avoid places where harassment seems to be public but it can also provide related response team important information on areas where women's violence is concentrated and security and protection measures need to be increased. It is also used to educate user regarding laws and rights on women, furthermore with the aid of GPS, it will track the current location of the user. If the user feels unsafe it will send notification regarding the user's location to the primary contact and the user may view the different government agency help lines.

Literature review: The literatures stated that gender violence, remain largely concealed by prevailing social attitude that condone it and by the victim's reluctance to report cases (Silva, 2009). Moreover, WHO (2013), it is common social problem worldwide and one that is distinctly gendered. Additionally, Ellsberg *et al.* (2008) stated that research consistently shows that abused women are at increased risk of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicide as well as physical problems (Feder *et al.*, 2006). Despite these negative outcomes, there is limited evidence of effectiveness for interventions in health care settings with inconclusive results in terms of the effects on women's physical and psychosocial well-being (Feder *et al.*, 2009; Ramsay *et al.*, 2006, 2009; Webb *et al.*, 2010).

There are many mobile applications used in different countries about violence against women like in India, Canada, America and others where women and victims access the application to seek help and educate about their right. Such interventions that provided an enriched information environment and offered automated tailored feedback were found to have significant effect on behavior change (Webb *et al.*, 2010). As part of literature survey, it is investigated some application of women violence that already existing. The aim is to observe how these applications work and to see how they can be improved and how they are different.

Junt@s mobile application that can notify emergency center or a person of trust and great advantage is that the App. is pre-installed on all mobile phones supplied under a CNT contract, so no one has to explain why they have it on their phone. While Medicapt is an innovative mobile App. that equips health and justice sector officials to collect, document, transmit and preserve forensic evidence of sexual violence. Moreover, Oxfam Novib and partners Soul City Institute (South Africa), Breakthrough (India) and Puntos de Encuentro (Nicaragua) are using video-blogs to raise awareness on dating without violence and on the many ways gendered violence is expressed and reproduced and training civil society organizations to mobilize edutainment (education through entertainment) in their advocacy work in eleven countries in Asia and Africa (UNiTE, 2015). Additionally, under the USAID-supported Mobilise! project, victim's access to counseling and other support services through a network of trusted organizations that could provide services.

Another innovation www.IAmNot4Sale.ca and App. provides immediate access to 24 h resources with confidential, appropriate supports that offer safe and positive solutions and when necessary, access to an immediate community agency response. The latest mobile application Nidarr is gender-based violence App. which

easy access to justice, enabling them to lodge complaints by using the application. Victims of domestic violence can make phone calls, send texts and even send video recordings of scenes of violence, provide them information about the nearest place they can reach out for help (Kathmandu, 2015). Lastly, in the Philippines mobile application called AksyonVAW, aims to educate its users on the dangers of VAWS in the Philippines. It features three stories in which users can explore options on how to deal with each scenario. The stories include cyberbullying, identity theft and online harassment and also proving Philippine laws regarding violence.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The proponents conducted several ways to gather data like internet research in different journals from Science Direct, Scopus, IEEE and others to represent and analyze more detailed information for planning and analysis of the existing studies related to women abuses. Data collected and benchmarking to different mobile application stores like Google App. Store and IoS Store was investigated deeply to think of the essential prerequisites in building up the framework and its modules.

For the development of the application the proponents will be using Scrum methodology. Scrum methodology is commonly used for software projects, for it lets the team adapt to changes and problems that the team could encounter during the development (McGuire, 2006). Development happens during a sprint that commonly lasts for a week. There are also sprint meetings every day, a short meeting, commonly 5-10 min where the team could talk about the project. This software cycle will repeat until the development comes to a conclusion. The team will also be using Black Box as a method for testing the software. It is the most used method for testing software where the functionality is the priority in testing rather than the inside workings of the software (STF., 2010).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

System architecture: The system will be built through mobile application and web based application. The system also requires to have a stable connection and an enable GPS for accurate reading of user’s location. Figure 1 represents the system architecture of mobile application of public awareness for VAW which shows the mobile application features for the users and web based application for the related government response team. The features and functionalities of the system will be discussing on the project design section.

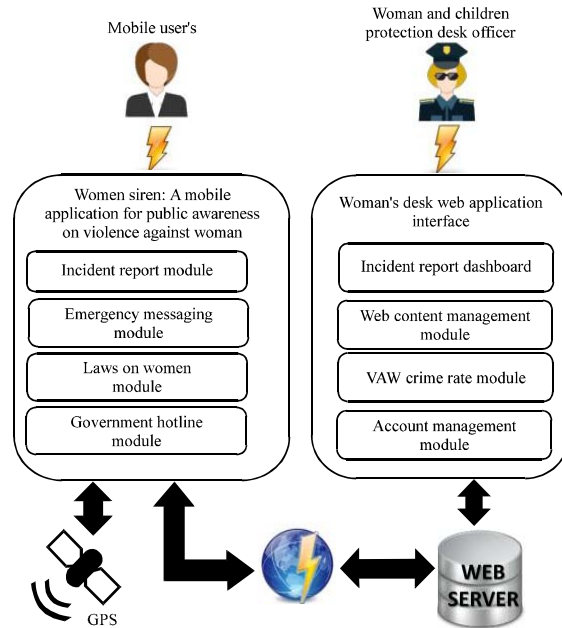


Fig. 1: Public awareness mobile application system architecture

Project design: Mobile application for public awareness on violence against women will consist of the following main modules: incident report module, emergency messaging module, laws on women module and government hotline module.

The incident report module is the main feature of the system that will allow the user to report any types of violence against women and children. To add security to the feature, the user must register first with valid information and the system will automatically verify the user. The report will be sent to women and children protection desk web application and check the validity of the report. The police officer will give feedback, recommendation and suggestion to the complainant to proceed with the case.

The emergency messaging module, the application will execute pre-defined text message that will automatically send to user’s primary contact including his/her location. With the aid of GPS, it will track the current location of the user.

The laws on women module is for the users to be in the know of the different laws regarding specific violence based on Republic Act 9262. It includes but is not limited to, the following acts: physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence and economic abuse.

And lastly the government hotline module shows the different contact details and information regarding government offices where the user can seek counseling and referral services. And the Women and Children Protection Desk web (WCPD) application will be using for

receiving reports and complaints from the user. The response team officers will also verify the complaints and send feedback to the user to help them with the case. With the number of the reports it will be tabulated to evaluate the trend and identify the crime rate. And also, upon the receipt of complaint, the WCPD officer shall conduct appropriate investigation which includes but is not limited to taking the formal statement of the victim-survivor and collecting other evidence necessary for the filing of the case.

CONCLUSION

This study describes the need to have violence against women application in Philippines due to the increasing number of VAW cases reported by Women's Desks of the Philippine National Police and other related agencies. The battle against VAW should be fought not just by women but by everyone. As a community, the people need to have social responsibility to answer the need for better prevention aside from laws, programs and penalties.

The rapid changing of technologies is continually producing new ways to link, share and experiences and build communities through collaboration. Building mobile application is a way of helping the victims by alerting the authority more easily and raise awareness on different forms of violence happening in the society. It also helps women and girls to be more educated on their right through immersion to Philippine laws which can give answers to queries of women to certain situation, so that, it can prevent and answer to VAWs and girls, support victims and advise the authorities that work to help them. The study is also a response to the recommendation of Association of Progressive Communication for Women's Right Programme such as providing free, simple reporting procedures, ensure specific accessible response mechanism in place to react to cases and establish systematic reporting and monitoring of ICT related forms of VAW which must be instituted at all levels, so that, trends can be monitored and addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For future research, strict implementation of maximizing mobile application and other program related to violence against women must start from local municipality to strengthen the commitment in responding to services in domestic violence and public abuses. Raising awareness is the major challenge of public officials about the mobile software from rural and remote part of the country through the help of Gender and Development (GAD) units and Philippine Commission on

Women (PCW)s. Accountability mechanism must be established and strengthened to ensure compliance of public officials with laws and regulation that respond to violations.

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