

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Survivors' experiences and
police responses in Greece

Kalliopi Ioannou

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Department of Social Sciences

University of Essex

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Dedication

In Loving Memory of Garifallia

In profound sorrow and with a heavy heart, I dedicate this Ph.D. thesis to the cherished memory of Garyfallia, a dear friend whose life was tragically cut short by the devastating scourge of gendered violence on the fateful day of July 16, 2021. As I pursued this research journey, I was confronted with the harsh reality of the violence that continues to afflict our society, and I am acutely aware that it stole from us a remarkable soul.

Garifallia was not just a friend; she was a beacon of kindness, strength, and resilience. Her radiant spirit was a source of inspiration for me throughout this academic endeavor. Her untimely passing serves as a stark reminder of the urgency and importance of the research undertaken in this thesis, which seeks to shed light on the multifaceted issues surrounding gendered violence and strives for a world where such tragedies no longer occur.

May this work be a tribute to her memory, a testament to her enduring legacy, and a clarion call for change.

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Abstract

This qualitative study adopts a critical realist paradigm informed by feminist epistemology to explore the experiences of survivors of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) in Greece. It employs open-ended questionnaires administered to a group of police officers (N=15) and conducts interviews with survivors (N=28) and professionals (N=10), including psychologists (N=2), cyber law experts (N=2), and cyber security experts (N=6).

The study investigates two primary research questions. Firstly, it delves into the experiences of TFSV survivors, with a particular emphasis on elucidating the compounding effects of TFSV on their lives. Secondly, it scrutinizes the perceptions of TFSV held by Greek police officers and professionals engaged in counselling and support. This inquiry also takes into account their perspectives on the multifaceted challenges involved.

In essence, this research contributes vital empirical evidence to an area of study that has remained largely underexplored, unveiling the detrimental impacts of TFSV on survivors and shedding light on the obstacles that hinder its effective mitigation by law enforcement. Furthermore, it underscores the urgency of implementing comprehensive responses to address TFSV, especially in the context of Greece, and highlights the significance of bridging the gaps between law enforcement and support services to empower survivors and combat this burgeoning societal concern.

Introduction to the Thesis

This study explores the experience of survivors of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV) in Greece. Focusing on the non-consensual posting of images, the study seeks to explore the experiences of survivors in order to better understand how the experience of TFSV has had an impact on their lives. Additionally, it seeks also to explore how professionals from across various institutions such as police officers, mental health workers, and lawyers respond to TFSV as a phenomenon through their practice. Through administering open-ended questionnaires to 53 survivors and professionals, the research is intended to generate findings on the experiences of these individuals and groups that may contribute to exposing the impact of TFSV on survivors and shed light on the obstacles to appropriate institutional responses to the phenomenon and its mitigation.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV)

Technology has deeply altered the way individuals interact with each other. This change is particularly noticeable in romantic relationships. The advent of social media has increasingly made private interactions between couples digitized and thus more amenable to recording, reproduction and transmission in the public realm through social media (Lenhart, et al., 2015). Technological developments, including social networking sites, have undoubtedly contributed to this phenomenon,

offering new ways of communication which have both positive and negative effects on interpersonal relationships (Utz and Buekeboom, 2011). A typical example of a technology-led change in romantic relationships is related to the way in which intimate partners express their sexual desires. For instance, although sharing intimate material was something almost unheard of in the past, in the digital age it is a commonplace practice. In his research, for example, McAfee (2013) found that fifty percent of American smartphone owners included in their study shared “intimate photos” with their partners, one in ten of whom was threatened to have these images made public by their partners. It is in the context of the widespread use of the Internet and the social media that what has popularly been called as “revenge pornography” (for more on this terminology, see below) came into the spotlight.

Also known as “revenge porn” or “cyber rape” (Franklin, 2014), “revenge pornography” has been defined by the public as non-consensual pornography as it involves the distribution of sexually explicit material without the subject’s consent (Castro and McQuinn, 2015). In essence, “revenge pornography” is a media-generated term typically referring to the situation in which a “scorned ex-lover” distributes their former partner’s sexual images online without their consent. This term has, however, been the subject of much criticism by a number of critical criminologists (see, for example, Frank, 2016; Powell and Henry, 2016; Citron and Franks, 2014).

First of all, the word is itself a misleading term, as not all offenders are driven by revenge when they post naked or pornographic photographs of other people without permission (Frank, 2016). A person can engage in distributing non-consensual images not only to publicly humiliate the victim, but also, *inter alia*, to impress their peers or gain sexual satisfaction as a result of acquiring power and control over the victim (Frank, 2016). Secondly, the emphasis is often narrowly placed on the dissemination or posting of photographs by jilted ex-lovers seeking revenge against a former partner and, as such, does not sufficiently capture different types of image-based violations, such as the non-consensual taking of nude or pornographic photos (e.g., hacking and illegal recording in private places) or the threats of sharing nude or sexual images-also known as sextortion (Maddocks, 2018).

Thirdly, the terminology links non-consensual images to commercial pornography production; yet, most images shared without consent have very little in common with conventional porn (Franks 2016).

Conventional pornography aims at purely commercial consumption, and those participating in its production do so consensually, while, in the context of TFSV, images may or may not be produced consensually.

The latter can be used either to cause distress to a specific person (Bloom, 2014) or for commercial consumption depending on the situation in question. This is what really differentiates “revenge pornography” from conventional pornography. Fourthly, the term adopts victim-blaming assumptions by implying that the survivor has

done something to arouse the perpetrator's hatred (Franks 2016). Such an idea originates from the term “revenge” in the English language which implies that the victim of that revenge had previously committed a transgression against the perpetrator, one that instigated such vengeance. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, the term puts emphasis not on the perpetrators' violent acts but on the content of the pictures by failing to recognize that non-consensual images, or the threat of their dissemination, have quite significant impacts on those who experience such a threat (Powell and Henry, 2016). As a response to the aforementioned problems associated with the term “revenge porn,” this thesis uses the term “technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV)” because it captures a much wider range of behaviours and their impacts.

The decision to use the term ‘TRSV’ over revenge pornography and the need for a broader, more inclusive term relates also to the status of such offenses according to Greek law. In the legal system of Greece, unlike several other European countries, “revenge pornography” is not criminalized as a standalone offense. Instead, it is addressed through a combination of specific civil and criminal provisions, as well as recourse to the Data Protection Authority. Depending on the specific case and current legal provisions, the perpetrator can face imprisonment ranging from 10 days to 5 years or a fine. However, if the perpetrator's intention was to gain illegal financial benefit for themselves or cause financial harm, and the total benefit or damage exceeds the amount of one hundred and twenty thousand (120,000)

euros, then the law prescribes a minimum prison sentence of 1 year or imprisonment of up to 6 years. Therefore, the punishable act of “revenge pornography” may also incorporate other offenses such as defamation, insult, threats, illegal access to information systems or data, and more.

According to the above, the punishable act of “revenge pornography,” except in its distinguished form where there is illegal financial benefit or damage exceeding 120,000 €, is treated as a misdemeanour under the law. The fact that it is addressed by a special criminal provision that adds a fine to the imprisonment sentence makes the punishment relatively lenient for the perpetrator, potentially diminishing its deterrent character.

It is also notable that its leniency makes the insufficiency of current legislation more likely to impact women as the primary victims of TFSV. As Citron notices (2004), the survivors of TFSV are predominately female. As for the perpetrators, they are usually familiar people, such as a husband or an intimate partner, who under certain circumstances (e.g. divorce/ breakup) wish to retaliate by distributing nude images or videos of their ex-girlfriends without their consent (Citron and Franks, 2014). The treatment of TRSV and survivors within Greek institutions and under current law therefore constitutes a feminist issue.

After the disclosure of such sexually explicit material, survivors usually suffer various negative effects. Specifically, Bloom (2014)

suggests three main types of effects on victims. Firstly, career-related problems and problems pertaining to the victims' interpersonal relationships can arise when private photographs are posted online. Secondly, such disclosure can lead to suicidal tendencies, especially concerning women who are more vulnerable. Lastly, threats by third parties or ex-partners might accompany the disclosure, and as a consequence, the survivors live in constant fear. In addition, research has also identified similarities between sexual assault survivors and 'revenge porn' survivors. In particular, earlier as well as recent studies have detected common mental health issues among victims of sexual assault and revenge pornography such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, self-blame, substance abuse and denial/ avoidance (Eaton et al., 2017; Cecil, 2014; Campbell, 2008; Kilpatrick and Acierno, 2003; Cohen and Roth, 1987).

Apart from the devastating effects on survivors, there are also some other reasons that could make the phenomenon of TFSV so dangerous nowadays. First of all, technology-facilitated sexual violence can constantly take different forms due to technological advancements. In particular, TFSV could not only be limited to intimate partners given that now there are numerous websites (such as shesahomewrecker.com, cheaterland.com, gossipblaze.com, internetcheaters.com, myex.com etc.) where sexual material is posted without the consent of the person displayed (Gold, 2011). This practice occurs often as a result of the use of high computer hacking techniques which help strangers to obtain the nude photos from the victims' electronic devices without their

consent and knowledge (Laird, 2013). Afterwards, these photos are published on revenge porn websites, often accompanied by the full details of the victims' identities, where each user can access, comment on or even share such photographs. For example, 'isanyopeup.com' was the first and most popular revenge porn website created in 2010 (Woolf, 2015). Gradually, the website drew the attention of Internet users, having a significant number of nude photo submissions. The operator of the website, Hunter Moore, benefitted from the popularity of the site by making a lot of profit from advertising in a short period of time. After some victims' interventions, the website was shut down and sold to an anti-bullying group in 2012; Moore was sentenced to two and a half years in prison (Brait, 2015).

Although 'isanyopeup.com' (now taken down) put a spotlight on the disturbing phenomenon of TFSV, there are still some other websites which do exactly the same (see, for example, shesahomewrecker.com, cheaterland.com, gossipblaze.com, internetcheaters.com).

Technological tools such as these can be used to humiliate people by circulating sensitive personal data online or easily spreading unsubstantiated rumours through the use of technology. For example, software like Photoshop can be used to harm people who have nothing to do with the sexual material or the rumours. In particular, videos known as "deepfakes" use a person's body with another person's face mapped over the top (Morris, 2018). Moreover, relatively recent findings by researchers from the University of Newcastle warn against the upcoming dangers of new technological advances in artificial

intelligence (Griffin, 2020). Specifically, they suggest that VR technologies in the pornography industry could achieve such a realistic result that they would offer individuals an almost real sexual experience. These technologies could raise new consent-related and ethical issues since VR pornography could legitimize abusive behaviours (Wood, 2017). For instance, such technology might instigate individuals to observe such consumption as cheating on their significant others. It might also enable individuals to act out fantasies that are considered violent or extreme (Griffin, 2020).

Moreover, the decision to employ the term "survivor" (*επιζών*) in lieu of "victim" (*θύμα*) for the research participants who have encountered TFSV aligns with the aim of the study to emphasize the resilience, strength, and agency of these individuals. This terminology shift acknowledges their capacity to overcome adversity and reclaim their lives following traumatic experiences, in line with the perspectives presented in relevant literature (Williams, 1999). It underscores that those affected by TFSV are not defined solely by their victimization but are dynamic and enduring individuals navigating the intricate aftermath of trauma (Walkate, 2006). By using the term "survivor," the research aims to empower these individuals and honor their fortitude and courage, highlighting their active and enduring journey beyond victimization, in line with the discourse on the limitations of the "victim" label and the potential advantages of adopting a more empowering term (Van Dijk, 2009; Fohring, 2018). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that terms such as 'victim' may be present in

the speech of the participants in the study, and it is important to represent accurately the English equivalents to the Greek terms used when quoting from the primary data. The cultural embeddedness of concepts of victimization when it comes to sexual abuse and assault may differ according to cultural context and this is something that also warrants discussion when carrying out the analysis below (Kalra & Bhugra, 2013).

Responses to TFSV

Despite the evidence of the serious effects and the multiple factors that can lead to the phenomenon of TFSV, unfortunately there has been no global standard for dealing with it so far. However, a global standard for addressing TFSV is essential because our world is interconnected, and global challenges require coordinated responses. Even if some countries do not currently recognize TFSV as a problem, the potential consequences and interdependence of nations make it crucial to establish standards and protocols for addressing such issues on a global scale. While non-consensual pornography has been expanding substantially in the past few years and many countries such as some states in the USA, the UK, Germany and France have enacted national laws against it, there are still no international legal guidelines and enforcement standards that provide uniform protection to victims (Medium, 2017). As Citron and Franks (2014) suggest, there are three main reasons behind the lack of international legislation regarding the

ban of image-based sexual violence. Firstly, inconsistent conceptions of contextual privacy render law-making an extremely complex task. These conceptions are based on theories supporting that the victim has the right to act legally only if he or she is the one who created the content. In other words, if the photo was a “selfie,” then the victim has the copyright and, hence, can be legally protected if someone threatens his or her privacy (Levendowski, 2014). However, the issue seems much more complicated legally if someone claims that the victim had consented to a nude photo only for private use in the context of a romantic relationship and later his or her partner posted this photo online (Jacobs, 2017).

Apart from the technical difficulties, there are also some socio-political and cultural reasons that could possibly explain why there are still few and inadequate laws to protect survivors against TFSV. These reasons are mainly related to the historical indifference and hostility to women’s autonomy (Citron and Franks, 2014). According to feminist criminologists, sexual assault and rape are seen as practices of male domination over women and not as acts of sexual gratification (Chapleau and Oswald, 2010; Day, 1995; Ellis, 1989). Technology – facilitated sexual violence could also be thought within this framework. As Bates (2017) highlighted, men feel more at liberty to sexually harass or humiliate women online due to the fact that the tech world is mainly dominated by males and the latter benefit further from the anonymous nature of the internet itself.

Lastly, the current lack of adequate laws banning non-consensual images might be associated with a lack of understanding of the gravity of the problem (Citron and Franks, 2014). Despite media attention to “non-consensual images,” especially in the cases of celebrities like Jennifer Lawrence and Rihanna who have fallen victims to cyber-attacks (see Hotchin, 2014 for further details), relatively few academic studies have focused on the issue, partially emphasising only its legal response. Thus, so far there has been only a scarce body of research related to TFSV – and, in particular to survivors’ experiences and the national (social, cultural, legal, enforcement) responses to it (see, for some exceptions, Bloom, 2014; Henry and Powell, 2014, 2015a, 2015b).

Aims of this Study

For the purposes of this study, the terms “technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV)” and “non-consensual posting of images” will be used. The current study focuses on the experiences of the survivors of TFSV, in particular the ones whose images have been posted on social media without their consent, in Greece. The study delves into the experiences of survivors (N=28) of TFSV, with an emphasis on understanding how TFSV has had cumulative impacts on their lives. Subsequently, it investigates the perceptions of Greek police officers (N=15) and professionals (N=10) regarding TFSV. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following two research questions and three sub-questions:

- 1) What are the survivors' experiences of TFSV?
 - 1A) How do survivors interpret their experience of TFSV as impacting their subsequent life trajectories and outcomes?
- 2) What are the institutional responses – both governmental and non-governmental – to TFSV-related victimisation?
 - 2A) What are Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV and of the ways they respond to it?
 - 2B) How do professionals working in counselling and support (e.g., mental health professionals, lawyers, etc.) respond to incidents of TFSV?

In the following chapter (Chapter 2), the current literature related to the phenomenon of TFSV and “non-consensual images” will be critically discussed. Chapter 3 will delineate the methodology which has been selected for this study. In this chapter, the methods of data collection and analysis will be illustrated along with some ethical considerations and limitations of this project. Chapter 4 will analyse the research findings. Chapter 5 includes a brief summary of findings and an in-depth discussion within the context of the previous theory—thus, suggesting new pathways for future research.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

This chapter seeks to offer a thorough analysis of the evolving landscape of cybercriminology, focusing on various aspects of the field.

It commences by discussing the concept of digital criminology and its significance in comprehending crime and justice within our contemporary digital society. This discussion draws upon key criminological theoretical frameworks (see, for example, Burruss et al., 2012; Hinduja and Kooi, 2013), including social learning theory, low self-control theory, general strain theory (Burruss et al., 2012; Hinduja and Kooi, 2013), and routine activity theory (Bolt and Bossler, 2008), to establish a foundational understanding of cybercriminology. This lays the groundwork for a more in-depth analysis of specific phenomena within cybercriminology, specifically, sexting and cyberbullying. The importance of these subjects to the research project lies in their capacity to illuminate the intersection of technology and social harms, particularly those concerning sexual violence.

Subsequently, an examination of the sexting phenomenon is undertaken, considering its multifaceted implications within the digital criminology framework. This analysis encompasses the motivations behind sexting, its prevalence among adolescents and young adults, as well as the potential consequences and societal attitudes surrounding this behaviour.

Moving forward, the chapter explores the subjects of cyberbullying and cyberstalking, two forms of online harassment and victimization.

Although these topics are not directly aligned with our research project on TFSV, they provide valuable insights into broader issues of victimization and the socio-dynamic factors influencing online abuse.

The various forms of cyberbullying and cyberstalking are investigated, along with their impact on survivors and societal attitudes toward these forms of violence.

Finally, a discussion of feminist criminology and victimology is included, emphasizing their relevance to the discourse on cybercriminology. An investigation is carried out on how societal attitudes and victim-blaming contribute to the perpetuation of TFSV, as well as the impact of rape culture on victim experiences.

To summarize, this chapter conducts a comprehensive exploration into cybercriminology by analysing diverse facets of the field. Grounding the analysis in key criminological theoretical frameworks aims to illuminate the complex dynamics of cybercrimes and their consequences for individuals and society.

Exploring the Evolving Landscape of Cybercriminology: From Traditional Typologies to Digital Criminology and Survivors' Experiences

The nature of the study of cybercrime in the digital web age is well represented by the early and widely influential typology of David Wall (2001), which outlines four types of cybercrime: 1) cybertrespass, which includes unauthorized access to a computer system, network or data source, such as on-site hacking of a system, online attacks, and/or malware; (2) cyberdeception and cyber-theft, including electronic piracy, theft of financial data and theft of intellectual property—offences which occur in the form of email scams, identity theft, and malware; (3) cyberporn and cyberobscenity, relating to the internet trade of sexually explicit content, such as human trafficking and child online grooming; and (4) cyberviolence, which refers to the different ways in which individuals can cause emotional distress and damage to others, such as cyber-stalking, cyber-bullying, and cyber-harassment etc. (Wall, 2001).

Despite this broad field for research, in practice most cybercriminology experts has focused on financial crimes and particularly on identity fraud and security threats (Stratton, Powell and Cameron, 2018). In contrast, technology-facilitated interpersonal violence has received much less attention (Stratton, Powell and Cameron, 2018). However, beyond the issue of lopsided attention in regard to certain cybercrimes, a combination of interrelated theoretical approaches has become

prevalent within cybercriminology. Particularly, it has become evident that the majority of all cybercriminology theories developed to this day have focused primarily on online/offline distinctions (Stratton et. al, 2018).

Criminologists have developed different theories to understand why certain people engage in deviant online behaviour, while others do not. There are various examples of such theories, including social learning theory, low self-control theory, general strain theory, and routine activity theory (see, for example, Burruss et. al 2012; Hinduja, and Kooi, 2013). Routine activity theory, for instance, which Holt and Bossler (2008) consider as one of the most prevalent approaches in cybercrime research, ascertains that crime can be explained by three factors: motivation, opportunity, and the absence of a capable guardian. According to routine activity theory, cybercrime may also be explained by cyber-attack motives, target hardening and dangerous online habits of survivors (Holt and Bossler, 2008). While these theoretical frameworks were initially meant to describe crimes perpetrated in the real world, they can also be applied to cybercrime. However, theories like those mentioned above have been challenged by other criminologists applying a sociological criminology perspective (see, for example, Stratton et al., 2018) because they fail to incorporate the conceptual aspects of cyberspace pertaining to the creation of perceptions that promote online abuse. According to Stratton et al. (2018), previous cybercriminologists did not appear to fully comprehend that cybercriminality is not an isolated and separate

category of crime but rather an extension of the problems that already exist in offline society. In simpler terms, earlier studies in cybercrime, as exemplified by Brewer (2017), Chawki (2015), Britz (2013), and Brantingham (2011), tended to view technology either as a target of crime or as a tool used in crime, without recognizing its role as a fundamental component of the victimization process that can intensify offline violence (as explained by Stratton et al., 2018).

A significant exception becomes evident in the evolving research of cultural criminologists who have tried to investigate how the internet might alter the historically conceived meaning and socially engaged patterns of crime and deviance (Stratton, Powell and Cameron, 2017). For example, traditional notions of theft might involve physically stealing an item from a store. However, cultural criminologists may be interested in how activities like online identity theft or hacking represent new forms of crime and deviance in the digital age. Critical criminologists, as exemplified by Salter (2013), shift their focus away from specific crimes and crime prevention to emphasize social harms. However, earlier works by Powell & Henry (2017) and Stratton et al. (2017) assert the need for cybercriminology to transcend traditional dichotomies such as “online/offline,” “cyber/real,” or “virtual/terrestrial.” Instead, critical criminologists argue for a broader examination of crime experiences, issues of justice and injustice that emerge from the integration of digital technology into our daily lives. This perspective gave rise to the concept of “digital criminology,” a term coined by Statton et al. (2018), which represents a critical and

cultural approach to understanding crime and justice in our digital society.

Digital criminology goes beyond the confines of conventional cybercrime. It places a strong emphasis on the convergence between technology and social harms and extends its focus to encompass broader concerns of injustice and inequality in the digital era, as noted by Salter (2013).

To clarify the connection between Powell et al.'s argument and the study of Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV), it is essential to delve deeper into their ideas. Powell et al. argue that the field of criminology should move beyond these dichotomies and consider the broader implications of technology integration into our daily lives. In the context of TFSV, this means exploring how technology interacts with and exacerbates issues related to sexual violence, consent, privacy, and accountability in our increasingly digital world. By adopting a “digital criminology” perspective, researchers can better understand and address the complexities of TFSV, going beyond traditional frameworks to uncover new insights and solutions.

So far, few crime scholars have focused on ongoing social inequalities that have arisen in the digital era in relation to crime (see Halford and Savage, 2010) and few studies have addressed the impacts on and social responses to survivors of cybercrimes and other harmful digital activities, like cyberbullying, cyberstalking and online harassment, in relation to gender, race and/or sexual orientation (exceptions include

Halder and Jaishankar, 2012; Powell and Henry, 2016; Mann et al., 2003; Sutton, 2002). Further research is, however, required to enhance our understanding of the experiences of TFSV survivors, in particular the ones whose images have been posted on social media without their consent. The following subchapters include research on online activities and personal experiences, like sexting, cyberbullying and cyberstalking, which can provide insight into the idiosyncrasies of this new frontier in digital criminology.

Sexting

This section delves into the phenomenon of sexting and its complex implications within the framework of digital criminology. It begins by highlighting that sexting, a relatively modern phenomenon, intersects significantly with the principles of digital criminology. Digital criminology, which emphasizes the convergence of technology and social harms, places emphasis on understanding sexting on the basis of its potential impact on consent, privacy, coercion, and harm in the digital realm. The section acknowledges the intricacies of studying sexting, underscoring the necessity for a critical examination of its effects on individuals and society, in accordance with the central concerns of the digital criminology framework. The exploration navigates through the growing prevalence of sexting, gender dynamics, motivations, consequences, and societal attitudes, all while considering the limitations and biases inherent in researching this sensitive topic. Ultimately, this section aims to shed light on the multifaceted nature of

sexting and its broader implications within the context of digital criminology.

The rise of contemporary behaviours and trends, like sexting, has gained increased attention in scholarly works, as exemplified by Chalfen (2009) and the research conducted by Walker, Sanci, and Temple-Smith (2011). The notion of “sexting” became particularly popular in the 21st century, emanating from the words “sex” and “texting”—that is, sending a text message to someone (Lenhart, 2009; Phippen, 2010). Nowadays, the term is used to describe a broad range of activities in which sexually explicit materials—such as nude or semi-nude pictures—are first individually produced and then further distributed via mobile phones or social media platforms (Hasinoff 2013; Wolak, Finkelhor and Mitchell, 2011).

As a phenomenon, sexting has been getting increasingly popular in the modern world. There are several sexting scandals in which celebrities, such as Miley Cyrus and Rihanna (Weintrub, 2011), or politicians, such as Anthony Weiner, have been involved (Brunker, 2009). Research also indicates that nowadays sexting is a relatively common practice, especially among children and young adults (Mitchell et al., 2014). In particular, early surveys have found that 20% to 33% of adolescents adopt sexting behaviours (Eurispes and Telefono Azzurro, 2012; National Campaign, 2008). However, the prevalence of sexting seems to have increased rapidly lately. According to a more recent study, 78% of adolescents receive sexts, while 73% of them send sexually explicit material and 9% publicly post sexts (Morelli et al., 2016).

Although the escalating popularity of sexting as a new form of sexual behaviour has been determined according to prior research (Stasko & Geller, 2015), academics are still attempting to clarify the characteristics of the individuals who “sext.” Specifically, the gender of the sender still remains a subject of debate among researchers. Hence, some studies indicate that males engage in sexting more often than females (see, for example, Dir et al., 2013; Gordon-Messer et al., 2012), while other studies (see Englander, 2012; Wysocki and Childers, 2011) suggest that women send sexually explicit material more often than men. However, there are also several studies that do not detect any imbalance concerning the role of gender in sexting (see Benotsch et al., 2013; Dir, Cyders and Coskunpinar, 2013; Drouin & Landgraff, 2012; Weisskirch, Drouin, & Delevi, 2016).

Apart from the gender differences identified regarding the frequency of sexting, variations are also observed in the reasons why individuals sext. In general, the need for expression of sexual desires is considered as the basic motivation for sexting (Barrense-Dias, et al., 2017).

Moreover, research on adolescence links sexting with developmental tasks concerning the redefinition of identity and the achievement of social aims such as drawing attention, achieving popularity, imitating friends (Festinger, 1954; Lenhart, 2009; Sul, Martin and Wheeler, 2002), as well as with other forms of self-expression, like body-image redefinition (Bianchi et al., 2017; Chalfen, 2009; Henderson and Morgan, 2011; Siibak, 2009). However, research has indicated some differences on how gender affects the way that people view and

experience sexting. For instance, some studies (e.g., Drouin, Coupe and Temple, 2017; Harris, A., et al., 2013) highlight the differences on the identified motivations for sexting between the two genders. According to these studies, girls are more likely to engage in sexting in the context of a romantic relationship, while boys get involved with sexting mainly for reasons of social status and competitiveness and they report sexting more frequently with a casual partner rather than a committed partner.

Another controversial aspect of sexting concerns its effects on individuals and their interpersonal relationships. To put it in other words, it remains unclear whether sexting could be considered a risky practice for those who engage in it. On the one hand, there are several studies (e.g., Houck et al., 2014; Livingstone and Görzig, 2014) which suggest that sexting could be associated with psychological and emotional difficulties. Depression is the most oft-cited negative psychological state which is found to be related to sexting behaviour in these studies. Moreover, there are studies which have found a strong association between sexting and other risky behaviours, such as substance abuse, unsafe sexual behaviour, or even low psychological well-being which could be even linked with suicide attempts (e.g., Benotsch et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2016; Crimmins and Siegfried-Spellar, 2014; Frankel et al., 2018). In addition, certain researchers have also found links between sexting and signs of poor relationships between the partners who engage in this practice (see, for example, McDaniel and Drouin, 2015).

Yet, there are again mixed results regarding the outcomes and/or the predictors of sexting. In particular, a large-scale study among young adults conducted by Gordon-Messer and her colleagues (2012) found no relations between sexting and risky sexual behaviours or negative psychological states. On the other hand, some surveys suggest that there is indeed a relation between depressive symptoms and sexting, but only among young girls (Ybarra and Mitchell, 2014). Furthermore, some studies suggest that sexting should not be considered as a deviant behaviour anymore, given that it may have positive relationship consequences (Drouin, Coupe and Temple, 2017; Parker et al., 2013; Wiederhold, 2015).

However, all the above studies have similar limitations since sexting is a sensitive topic and some answers might be biased. Studies on sexting can produce biased answers due to various factors, including sampling bias, where non-representative samples are employed (Klettke et al., 2014); social desirability bias, as individuals may underreport sexting behaviours due to stigma (Drouin et al., 2013); selection bias, when research recruits participants from environments where sexting is more accepted (Van Ouytsel et al., 2017); cultural bias, reflecting differences in sexting norms across societies (Dully et al., 2023); researcher bias potentially influencing study design and interpretation (Albury et al., 2019); and response bias from participants providing socially desirable answers (Madigan et al., 2018). Researchers should address these biases through careful methodology and transparent

reporting to provide a more accurate understanding of sexting behaviours.

Moreover, the attitudes and public discourses on sexting constitute another parameter which researchers, educators, parents and mental health specialists should not overlook when they try to examine this new type of sexual behaviour. It has been observed that many sext education campaigns tend to focus exclusively on girls' protection from the damaging consequences of sexting, such as sexual harassment or cyberbullying (Angelides, 2013; Dobson, 2015; Ringrose et al., 2013; Salter, Crofts and Lee, 2013). In this context, the media also highlight the supposed vulnerability of females through several methods, like films which over-represent the femininity deficits (Dobson and Ringrose, 2016). The aforementioned practices could be said to victimize girls and promote victim-blaming by arguing that females are the weak gender who should think better before taking a nude image and proceeding to a sexual communication (Hasinoff, 2015). As a result, the attention is focused mainly on online strangers who are considered to be the possible perpetrators. However, there is evidence that sexting, or the further distribution of sexually explicit material may not always be a consensual practice in the context of a romantic relationship and, thus, may also function as another form of sexual coercion (see Choi, Van Ouytsel and Temple, 2016).

Cyberbullying and Cyberstalking

Current concerns related to the use of communication technology have to do with the safety of personal information which is often collected and distributed without the person's consent (Eterovic-Soric et al., 2017). Sheller and Urry (2003, p.116) have described the latter problematic aspect of communication technologies, mentioning that, in the internet era, "individuals increasingly exist beyond their private bodies." Taking into consideration the aforementioned problematic areas of communication technology, it is easily understood why deviant and criminal behaviours could also readily emerge in cyberspace.

Such risky online behaviours have been described as "cyberbullying" and "cyberstalking." These online activities, while not directly related to the phenomenon of TFSV, introduce an area of study that can provide more insight into this relatively less researched field. This is primarily due to the possibly similar motives of perpetrators and the common effects on survivors. These new aspects of crime in the 21st century have both overlapping motives and a similar time frame in which they have emerged. Thus, one can conclude that all of these phenomena are invariably intertwined. Moreover, cyberbullying and cyberstalking can take the form of TFSV. One example of this could be a cyberbully or cyberstalker utilizing non-consensual photographs to blackmail or otherwise intimidate his or her victim (Dodge, 2016; Korkodeliou, 2016).

As for cyberbullying, research indicates that it could be linked to social rejection and negative effects on well-being (O’Keeffe, Clarke-Pearson and Council on Communications and Media, 2011). According to Childline (2014), 69% of young people in the UK have experienced cyberbullying and are more likely to be bullied on Facebook than on other social networking sites. Despite the fact that there is no universal definition of cyberbullying, most definitions describe the phenomenon by referring to similar characteristics such as repetition, torment, disregard, anonymity, publicity and the survivor’s vulnerability (Kokkinos et al., 2016). For instance, Hinduja and Patchin (2009) described cyberbullying as an individual or group action intended to harm a defenceless survivor through the constant use of digital media. Bowker (2012) links cyberharassment to cyberbullying. According to him, cyberharassment involves a general disturbing behaviour against an Internet user, while cyberbullying involves specific threats addressed to the victim. However, cyberbullying constitutes cyberharassment when both the victim and the perpetrator are young people (Bowker, 2012). Turbet (2009) has also described cyberbullying as an alarming trend which teenagers have adopted to harass each other.

Cyberbullying can also take different forms, just like traditional bullying. The most common types include:

- harassment, which involves repeated communication offenses against a target (Willard, 2007),

- cyberstalking, which involves the repeated use of digital communication technologies to disturb or threaten a target (D’Ovidio and Doyle, 2003, p.10),
- denigration, which involves the use of insulting words or images against a target (Langos, 2013; Willard, 2007),
- happy slapping, which is the recording or the filming of a physical assault against a victim (Chan et al., 2012; Yar, 2012),
- exclusion, which basically does not allow the victim to have access to online “areas” (Willard, 2017),
- outing and trickery, which involve the manipulation of the victim and the publication of his/her personal information (Willard, 2017),
- impersonation when the perpetrator pretends to be someone else to manipulate the survivor (Willard, 2017),
- indirect threat, which is related to cyberstalking, but also involves a threat of physical harm (Langos, 2013).

Research on cyberbullying is relatively limited. So far, a few studies have focussed on the cyberbullies’ characteristics. In particular, Karl, Peluchette and Schlaegel (2010) identified Facebook bullies as individuals characterized by low levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, as well as high levels of narcissism. Kokkinos and his colleagues (2016) have also carried out a study trying to understand how cyberbullying is carried out

through Facebook. They examined the behaviours and attitudes of young adults on Facebook and concluded that males are more likely to have bullied through Facebook compared to females. Moreover, with reference to cyberbullies' characteristics, a study among fifth-grade students found that well-qualified students are less likely to bully or be bullied compared to students with learning disabilities and general education (Siegle, 2010). In reference to young people, research also indicates that students engaged into TFSV by circulating images without the consent of their peers (see, for example, Ringrose et al. 2012b)

Research has also shed light on cyberstalking, which is also considered as one of the most common types of cyberbullying. Indeed, findings indicate that four million people are stalked every year in the United States and one in four victims have been cyberstalked as well (Baum, et al., 2009). Researchers have also attempted to gather data related to the characteristics of cyberstalkers. McFarlane and Bocij (2003) conducted interviews with victims around the world—including countries such as Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States—and they identified four types of cyberstalkers: a) vindictive cyberstalkers, who threaten their targets both online and offline and usually have previous criminal records, b) composed cyberstalkers, who repeatedly annoy the victim aiming to cause him/her distress, c) intimate cyberstalkers, who are basically either ex-partners or obsessive lovers trying to gain attention and obtain a relationship with the victim via threats, and d) collective cyberstalkers, who are a

group of stalkers considering themselves as the victims and looking for revenge (McFarlane and Bocij, 2003).

Overall, despite the previous lack of research concerning cyberbullying and cyberstalking, the majority of studies and literature agree on two key points. Firstly, they concur that cyberbullying can be an extremely traumatising experience and should be dealt with as a mental health problem (Sourander et al., 2010). This means that cyberbullying can cause serious negative effects on individuals' wellbeing (Smith et al., 2008) and health (Dehue, Bolman and Vollink, 2008). In addition, reports indicate that cyberbullying could be considered more dangerous than traditional bullying, given that it takes place mainly on social networking websites where the survivor is more easily accessible, and everything can become public (Williams, 2012). Secondly, it seems that young women are described as the easy target of cyberbullies and cyberstalkers, while simultaneously being considered responsible for the actions that led to their own victimisation (Lumsden and Morgan, 2012). Citron (2014) thoroughly examined the online victimisation of women and concluded that women are more likely to be survivors of criminal activities in cyberspace. This happens mainly because of the general attitude concerning gender inequality which presupposes that a woman is vulnerable and, hence, can be manipulated more easily.

Victimology, Victim-Blaming and Rape Culture

Labels play a significant role in shaping how society perceives of and how individuals understand their identities (Goffman, 1990). The impact of labels on an individual's life can be both positive and negative. Positive psychologists argue that labels can highlight positive personality traits, providing individuals with a sense of purpose (Peterson, 2009). Conversely, negative labels, often associated with stereotypes, can lead to self-rejection, particularly evident in research on mental health patients (Wright et al., 2000). This complexity in labelling becomes particularly apparent when intertwined with multifaceted processes like victimization.

Criminal victimization is a label that can garner extensive attention and sympathy when it aligns with the image of an “ideal victim” (Christie, 1986). However, society may neglect the needs of those not perceived as “deserving victims” (Miers, 1991 cited in Hall, 2010). Victim labelling can have both advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, certain victims can access support from organizations during their time of need (Van Dijk and Groenhuijsen, 2007). On the other hand, the “victim” label can also lead to perceptions of passivity and helplessness, further stigmatizing those labelled as such (Romkens and Diekstra, 1998 cited in Van Dijk, 2009).

Given the pivotal role played by the circumstances surrounding the acquisition of the “victim” label in shaping societal responses, this essay critically examines the effects of this label. First, it explores why using the term “victim” contributes to acknowledging victimization as a process. Subsequently, it delves into the potential implications of victim labelling regarding contemporary social responses to victimization.

Historically, the discipline of criminology predominantly focused on crimes and criminals, with victims receiving attention primarily within the context of trials (Walkate, 2007). Early definitions of “victim” were often tied to legal criteria (Pemberton, 2016). The 2001 EU Framework Decision defines a victim as someone who has suffered harm directly caused by violations of criminal law (cited in Hall, 2010), thus highlighting the legal perspective. The use of the term “victim” by criminologists and victimologists sheds light on victimization through research.

The “victim” label bestows a specific social identity upon individuals, enabling them to expect necessary support for rebuilding their lives (Hoyle et al., 2011). However, the recognition of victim status precedes the application of the label, and self-recognition is vital, especially in cases like domestic violence (Kelly and Radford, 1990). Some individuals may even strive to obtain a “victim” label, believing it ensures financial or psychological support, as observed in cases involving abused women who killed their intimate partners (Spalek, 2006). This recognition of the victim status also aids in quantifying

victimization and identifying criminal acts when individuals report harm to the police (Goodey, 2005).

However, the term “victim” is often associated with weakness and passivity (Fohring, 2018). In contradistinction, the term “survivor” has emerged as an alternative, aiming to emphasize strength and resilience. Nevertheless, the “victim as survivor” label has faced criticism, as it can pressure individuals to appear strong, potentially negating their true feelings of helplessness (Williams, 1999). Some argue that both “survivor” and “victim” labels are inadequate in capturing the dynamic processes of victimization, where individuals can be active or passive victims or survivors (Walkate, 2006).

The limitations of the “victim” label extend beyond its inability to fully describe the complexities of victimization processes. The term's etymology, rooted in Latin “victima” meaning a sacrificial animal, carries religious connotations, particularly in Christianity (Karmen, 1990; Van Dijk, 2009). Moreover, publicized cases often reveal victims rejecting the label, such as Natasha Kampusch's case in Austria (de Quetteville, 2007; Cole, 2006).

Religious influences also manifest at a socio-political level, where victims can be viewed as both pariahs and saints, blamed for their misfortunes, and sacrificed for society's greater good (Lerner, 1980; Eisenberger, 2003; Underwood, 2004). Practitioners may assume passivity or idealize victims, potentially sidelining their actual needs and leading to secondary victimization (Orth, 2002).

This notion, intertwined with victim labelling, has implications for restorative justice processes, influencing how criminal proceedings and support agencies treat victims (Van Dijk, 2009). As compared with retributive justice, which prescribes punishment as just dessert for wrongdoing, restorative justice aims at reconciliation between the offending and offended parties (Johnstone & van Ness, 2007, p. 511). The ultimate aim of this is to render offenders aware of the harm caused by their actions and to discourage them from reoffending, whilst encouraging forgiveness on the part of the survivors of their crime (Zehr, 2005, p. 22). Greek legislation has introduced some restorative justice measures as an alternative approach to traditionally retributive criminal justice (Stamatakis, 2021), with processes such as Penal Mediation being applied to cases of domestic violence indicating its applicability as a means for providing and evaluating justice in cases of sexual violence (Wasileski, 2015).

The process of victim labelling is closely tied to the concept of the “ideal victim” (Christie, 1986). The “ideal victim” concept influences how the criminal justice system responds to crime and victims.

Vulnerability is often confused with victimization, resulting in prioritization of certain victim types, such as women and children, while overlooking others, like prostitutes or individuals with criminal records (Walkate, 2007; Cain, 1989; Smart and Smart 1978; O’Donell and Edgar, 1996; Sim, 1994). This selective attention is evident in police and criminal agencies' responses to victims at risk (Goodey, 2003 cited in Goodey, 2005).

Furthermore, the emphasis on specific victim categories poses methodological challenges, potentially biasing research on victimization. Researchers may inadvertently focus on “ideal victims,” neglecting those who do not fit this image (Walkate, 2007).

In conclusion, while the term “victim” has some benefits, such as drawing attention to neglected actors and providing a sense of identity and support, it is not without limitations. These limitations include associations with passivity and weakness, as well as the influence of the “ideal victim” concept on societal perceptions and the criminal justice system. To improve responses to victimization, victimology must confront these challenges and strive for a broader, more nuanced understanding of victims and victimization processes.

As mentioned earlier, to address these limitations and provide a more empowering and nuanced perspective, this thesis adopted the term “survivor” over “victim” to describe the experiences of individuals who have endured TFSV. The term “survivor” emphasizes resilience, strength, and agency, which aligns with the aim of highlighting the fortitude and courage of those who have faced traumatic experiences. By employing the term “survivor,” we intend to shed light on the active and enduring aspects of individuals' journeys beyond victimization, acknowledging their capacity to overcome adversity and reclaim their lives. This terminology shift recognizes that individuals impacted by TFSV are not defined solely by their victimization but are dynamic and resilient individuals navigating the complex aftermath of trauma.

As highlighted in the introduction, in recent times, the unauthorized dissemination of nude images online has become a relatively new phenomenon, occasionally characterized as an innovative manifestation of sexual predation and consequently recognized as a fresh variant of sexual violence (Franklin, 2014). Indeed, it can be argued that TFSV has a lot in common with sexual crimes such as sexual assault and sexual harassment. The common patterns might be particularly noticeable in attitudes and beliefs related to sexual violence (Sills et al., 2016). Specifically, literature has linked two phenomena with sexual violence: a) victim-blaming, and b) rape culture (Gavey, 2005; Gavey and Senn, 2004).

First, it has been argued that victim-blaming justifies rape and underestimates its severity (Sills et al., 2016). Victim-blaming is deeply rooted in societal beliefs and occurs when victims are considered responsible for the harm that befell them (Eisenberger, 2003). It has been mainly related to sexual crimes against women in which the latter are usually being considered responsible for their victimisation because of their risky behaviour (Ringrose and Renold, 2012). Several academics have highlighted that, in the cultural domain, the female body is considered a “risky place” which can trigger the sexual aggression of men (e.g., Duits and van Zoonen, 2006; McClintock, 1995). Jessica Valenti (cited in Filipovic, 2008) agrees with the invention of the female body as a risky terrain and also stresses the existence of a purity myth, according to which female sexuality is usually considered something pure by society. Hence,

based on the purity myth, women should not behave out of this norm, by wearing sexy clothes, for example, because through this way they generate the sexual violence against them. In this context, even “non-consensual images” can be excused. This means that when a woman takes nude images and then decides to share them with her intimate partner, she increases the possibilities of becoming a victim and, hence, she is considered responsible for her victimisation. In other words, the public sexually explicit material of a nonconsenting woman can become a tool for victim-blaming and slut-shaming rather than evidence of violation and sexual coercion. In contrast to common societal beliefs, a recent thematic analysis of 462 narratives suggests that young women send nude photographs as a result of coercion by their male partners and that the refusal to do so was often accompanied by threats (Thomas, 2018).

Victim-blaming and slut-shaming practices flourish in a culture which has been described as “rape culture” (Nicoletti, Spencer-Thomas and Bollinger, 2009). Rape culture, as defined by Herman (1984), is the cultural phenomenon which normalizes aggressive sexual behaviour by males and promotes the idea of female sexual passivity. White and Smith (2004, p. 174) point out that rape culture “refers to multiple pervasive issues that allow rape and sexual assault to be excused, legitimized, and viewed as inevitable.” In patriarchal societies, imbued by rape culture beliefs, women and men consider sexual aggression as a fact of life, given that men constitute the powerful gender that subordinates females (Brigham, 2016). Under these gender stereotypes,

malevolent behaviours of boys are legitimized, while the hypersexualization of girls is criticized as immoral, and at the same time, the need for a return to the ideal of the innocent and virgin girl is more and more emphasized (Giraldi and Monk-Turner, 2017; Renold and Ringrose, 2011).

It has been argued that phenomena like rape culture and victim-blaming are reinforced in the contemporary society which is characterized by the “digitalization of everyday life” (Horeck, 2018; Lovheim et al., 2013). Faulkner (2001) suggested that inequalities between the two genders are also detected in digital life because of “gendered” technology. According to this argument, technology creates fewer opportunities for women because men prevail in technology and technical skills. In accordance with this argument, Lumsden and Morgan (2017) mention that “trolling” is a form of gendered violence as it takes place on social media—mainly against women and other minority groups. Trolls basically adopt “silence strategies” which involve several threats, such as rape and death threats, and through which they aim to remove the victim from his or her daily digital activities (Lumsden and Morgan, 2017). Ultimately, the media reproduce these “silence strategies” by advising social media users and especially female victims not to “feed the troll” (Lumsden and Morgan, 2017). As a result, the attention shifts once again to the victims’ responsibility instead of the motivations and the causes of online abuse.

Moreover, although there is little evidence so far, research on the way social media is used in cases of rape and sexual assault also indicates that the media creates new opportunities for victim-blaming attitudes and propagates the ideas which reinforce the rape culture (Boux and Daum, 2015). Similarly, the results of a study conducted at the University of Auckland explain how social media are transformed into tools for rape-supportive statements (Sills et al., 2016). Taking into consideration that “non-consensual images” constitute a phenomenon that takes place mainly via social media and social networking websites (Franklin, 2014), it is important for the academia to examine whether mediated spaces reinforce victim-blaming attitudes related to “technology-facilitated sexual violence” as well. This is important because the rape myth and victim-blaming practices have been found to affect social support agencies as well—that is, the police and mental health professionals who play a significant role in justice and the remediation of victims, respectively (see, for example, Bollingmo et al., 2008; Brown, Hamilton, and O’Neill, 2007; Sleath and Bull, 2015; Starzynski et al., 2017; Venema, 2016).

To put it in other words, TFSV could create new avenues for discrimination between ideal and deserving victims—a fact previously observed in sexual harassment and sexual assault cases. For instance, Du Mont, Miller, and Myhr (2003) suggested that women report a sexual assault against them more easily when the latter is in accordance with standard beliefs about what rape and a rape survivor are supposed to be. Hence, women who suffered severe injuries or had

evidence (e.g., torn clothes) to prove their physical coercion were more willing to speak about their assault to the police. Since in TFSV cases the victims do not suffer any physical trauma and cannot provide the authorities with any relevant evidence, women might be deterred from seeking justice.

The Impact of Sexual Harassment/Assault and Similarities with TFSV

Forms of sexual harassment vary from physical interaction and touching to psychological, environmental, or online harassment (Eom et al., 2015). Even though there are several types of sexual harassment, all of them seem to share a common belief which originates from the very first definition of sexual harassment (MacKinnon, 1979).

According to the latter, sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination used by men to subordinate women (MacKinnon, 1979).

Indeed, several studies have shown that women are more likely to become victims of sexual harassment compared to men (Finkelhor et al., 2013). There are also studies, however, which indicate that the possibilities for someone to become a victim of sexual harassment are equal for both males and females (AAUW, 2001).

Regardless of whom it affects mostly, sexual harassment can have serious consequences including the loss of job, decreased productivity and income (Avina, and O' Donohue, 2002) and negative effects on their mental health (Ho et al., 2012). Victims of sexual harassment

usually suffer from a post-trauma syndrome, meeting symptoms such as sleep disturbances and emotional numbing (Hamilton et al., 1987). Research has found that approximately a third of sexual harassment victims suffers from PTSD symptoms (Danksy and Kilpatric, 1997; Ftizgerald et al., 1997; Glomb et al., 1999; Wolfe et al., 1998). In addition, studies on students who have been victims of sexual harassment have showed that they usually suffered from depression, loss of appetite, disturbed sleep, as well as low self-esteem, and that they were more likely to feel sad, afraid, scared, or embarrassed (Hand and Sanchez, 2000; Lee et al., 1996).

What is still open to discussion is whether sexual harassment affects women more than men or vice versa and whether the impact on the psychological well-being of the sufferers is the same. Research results here are diverse. In particular, some studies on young adults show that women suffer more severe negative consequences than men, such as suicidal behaviour (Chiodo et al., 2009; Duffy, Walsh and Wareham, 2004; Mitchell, Ybarra and Korchmaros, 2014), while others indicate that men could be harmed more than women (Kaltiala-Heino, Fröjd and Marttunen, 2016; Romito et al., 2016). The latter findings have been explained by authors through the argument that women are more used to sexual harassment and, hence, they do not find this experience as stressful as men (de Hans et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2010).

There is also a research gap concerning the relatively new form of harassment which takes place online. A few studies so far have showed that cyberharassment is turning into a serious issue as it affects 20% to

40% of adolescents (Aboujaoude et al., 2015). Moreover, a survey of 17,366 middle and high school students (Sinclair et al., 2012) examined the effects of harassment via the Internet or text messaging in comparison to other forms of harassment among students. The results showed that students who were experiencing both cyberharassment and traditional harassment were more likely to manifest suicidal behaviour and, hence, they were at greater risk of committing suicide. The same findings also indicate that non-white males and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals are more likely to experience bias-based harassment, while white women are more likely to experience cyberharassment (Sinclair et al., 2012).

Similarly to sexual harassment victimisation, research has shown that sexual assault victimisation also has a great impact on individuals' lives. Survivors of sexual assault suffer from severe mental health issues, such as PTSD, depression, anxiety, self-blame, and substance abuse (Campbell, 2008; Cohen and Roth, 1987; Kilpatrick and Acierno, 2003). Perhaps the most significant finding concerning sexual assault victims is that they use coping mechanisms like denial or avoidance in order to repress their memories and deal with their traumatic experience (Ward, 1998). Studies have also suggested that sexual assault victims who adopt coping mechanisms like denial or avoidance are more likely to blame themselves for their victimisation (Boesch et al., 2001).

So far, there is only a small body of research related to the experiences of the victims of "non-consensual images." However, from a

criminological perspective, a significant claim is that TFSV does not differ from other sexual offenses (Bloom, 2014) in terms of effects on survivors. Bloom (2014) outlines three primary categories of consequences experienced by survivors. Firstly, the posting of private photographs online can result in career-related challenges and interpersonal relationship issues. Secondly, TFSV is associated with an increased risk of suicidal tendencies, particularly among vulnerable women. Lastly, survivors of TFSV may also face threats from third parties or ex-partners, marking another dimension of the impact on survivors' lives. Moreover, a qualitative study on 18 survivors' experiences (Bates, 2016) indicated that there are similarities between the effects of having nude or sexually explicit images posted online without permission and sexual assault/sexual harassment. Especially, researchers found several common experiences and mental health issues like loss of trust, self-blame, PTSD, anxiety, depression, suicidality, low self-confidence, and self-esteem (Bates, 2016). In addition, a recent study conducted by the Cyber Civil Rights (Eaton et al., 2017) suggested that the victims of "non-consensual images" suffered from severe mental health problems.

The above discussion proves not only that there are a lot of similarities on the ways sexual harassment, sexual assault and possibly TFSV affect individuals' lives, but also that sexual victimisation is a very complex issue. Additional negative impacts on the mental health of the survivors of sexual violence might also spring from the way society reacts to their victimisation. There is accumulating evidence, stemming

mainly from studies on sexual assault, which indicates that sexual victimisation is a complex issue when it comes to both legal and therapeutic intervention. Specifically, as Paine and Hanse (2002) mentioned, sexual victimisation is often accompanied by self-disclosure. A relatively recent study of forty-two children and adolescents aged 6 to 17 years old (Münzer et al. 2016) found that the participants did not report their victimisation for 17 months. When researchers asked them why they did not disclose their victimisation, the most frequent response was that they did so because of shame and fear of social stigmatisation (Münzer et al., 2016).

The above results can better be understood if we take into consideration the impact of the rape myth and slut-shaming which have been discussed in the previous section on victim-blaming. As previously discussed, the belief that the female body is a risky space leads to risk management strategies which aim to deal with sexual assault cases. A risk management tactic assumes that women are responsible for their victimisation and, hence, they should avoid certain behaviours, such as walking alone at night, to minimize the risk of being sexually assaulted (Carmody & Carrington, 2000).

It could be argued that survivors of “non-consensual images” might also be blamed for their victimisation. In particular, campaigns and several advisory articles attempt to prevent young women from sending nude pictures which reveal their identity to strangers (Brown-Warsham, 2012). There are also some online news websites which advise women to completely avoid filming sexually explicit material if they want to

avoid being victims of revenge pornography (Gray, 2014).

Consequently, attitudes like these absolve perpetrators from their responsibility by making the victim feel responsible for the harm that befell them.

This indicates that, just like other types of sexual violence phenomena, such as sexual harassment, sexual assault or TFSV could continue to occur as the rate of prosecution of the perpetrators remains low. As a result, the victims will possibly suffer from further harm due to the manner in which institutions and other individuals deal with them. This phenomenon has been described as secondary victimisation in criminology (see, for example, Orth, 2002).

“Non-Consensual Posting of Images” Legislation

The following literature review’s section is highly relevant as it offers a comprehensive understanding of the challenges surrounding the criminalization and response to TFSV. It sheds light on various legal and societal aspects associated with TFSV and highlights the limitations of existing legislation and policies. This information is crucial in framing the context in which TFSV occurs and underscores the need for further research and improved awareness.

It remains difficult to ascertain whether any advantages arose from the various approaches to criminalisation and/or response to TFSV in legislation and policies. According to Citron and Franks (2014), the current lack of adequate laws banning “non-consensual images” might

be correlated with a lack of awareness on the gravity of the problem and on the poor response to episodes of TFSV. Moreover, the current lack of relevant policies gives limited insight to social responses and ramifications of the phenomenon.

Laws have the uncanny ability to reinforce existing standards of morality and to establish new standards of morality in society. Laws play a decisive role in contributing to our desire to be perceived as a productive and upright member of society (Citron, 2009). In a practical sense, the intended objective of a law is to shape people's behaviour, providing a deterrent against committing such acts that are banned through legislation. The established law will ideally result in an overall greater societal disdain for the offenders and will also legitimize the public perception that the victims are indeed in need of support and affirmation (Citron, 2009). However, in the context of TFSV, current legislation has certain limitations, failing to articulate the nuances of this emerging complex societal problem and the subsequent impact on victims' lives. Overall, by taking into consideration the limits of current law, criminologists can identify where further legislation must be implemented. It is precisely this adapted and evolved legislation that can bring about awareness and cultural changes to the way that people deal with the phenomenon of image-based abuse.

There are various difficulties related to "non-consensual images" legislation and criminalisation. First of all, it could be argued that, both in certain states of the US and under English and Welsh law, there

is yet no clear understanding of what this phenomenon of TFSV involves (Mcglynn and Rackley, 2017). The latter may have to do with the problematic use of the mainstream label “revenge porn” (Mcglynn and Rackley, 2017). Particularly, the term “revenge” focuses on the perpetrator’s motives and fails to describe the harm done to the survivors as well (for more on this, see above at pages 8-9). Moreover, the term “porn” usually entails a sense of consent and legitimacy (Mcglynn and Rackley, 2017).

Another difficulty concerning the insufficient “non-consensual images” legislation is related to the vague definition of consent in the context of a sexual interaction. According to British law, consent is the “freedom and capacity” to make a choice (Mcglynn and Rackley, 2017, p. 543). In cases of “non-consensual images,” however, it is more difficult to define whether or not consent was given since the images are usually taken with the individual’s consent, but it is the subsequent distribution of those images that is non-consensual (Mcglynn and Rackley, 2017).

Further intricacies arise because of the inconsistent conceptions of free speech. For example, in the United States, the First Amendment allows citizens to share their ideas, even if the latter are against governmental beliefs. Hence, although obscene speech is unprotected by the American law, pornography is protected by the First Amendment (Genn, 2014). Therefore, the state’s difficulty to prohibit “non-consensual images” stems from the fact that the individual has previously accepted to display his or her naked body and, hence, the

latter can be the subject of public discussions in which anyone can participate (Koppelman, 2016). Consequently, the principle of free speech could be criticized as contradictory because, on the one hand, it allows all citizens to propagate their ideas, and, on the other hand, it excludes those with spoiled identity, such as victims of sexual violence facilitated via technology, from the public discourse. That possibly means that stigmatized individuals are discouraged from speaking about their experience of TFSV, especially when they know that the law shows tolerance towards their victimisation (Lai, 2016).

Along with the above-mentioned definitional issues and the inconsistent conceptions associated with free speech and consent, there are also some limitations in a legal sense. In particular, in a “revenge porn” trial, it should be proved that: a) the defendant threatened the accuser with sharing nude images without his or her consent, b) in case the sexually explicit material was posted on a specific website, the defendant was indeed the person who uploaded the aforementioned material on that website, and c) the aim of the defendant was to harm the accuser (Lonardo, Martland and White, 2016). It is easily understood then that the trial of revenge porn cases is not an easy task.

Despite limitations, some steps have been taken early to deal with “non-consensual images.” Without specific statutes against the distribution of “non-consensual images,” in the United States the attention was primarily focused on copyright and tort laws as alternatives for the punishment of those who posted non-consensual sexually explicit material (Koppelman, 2016; Pen, 2015). Specifically,

proponents of copyright law argued that through this approach the victims could protect themselves, as the only authors of the images (Goldnick, 2015). However, copyright law has been highly criticized as inadequate since it does not take into consideration that, even if the victims took some photographs, they are not responsible for any posted details related to them (Bartow, 2008). On the other hand, tort law was initially considered as another window for TFSV survivor protection. According to proponents of the tort law approach, survivors of “non-consensual images” could be protected if they could prove that the perpetrator aimed to cause them intentional emotional harm or violated their privacy by disclosing their personal information (Pen, 2015). In essence, the tort law approach is more focused on the survivors’ harm instead of looking for the copyrights of the published photographs. However, the tort law approach has also some limitations. Its opponents mainly highlight the fact that the survivor should be in a position to provide the court with details about the identity of the defendant—a task extremely difficult to be achieved in some occasions because of the anonymity afforded by the Internet (Citron and Franks, 2014; Levendowski, 2014).

The criminal statutes comprise a third tool in the fight against “non-consensual images.” Although there is currently no federal statute for the criminalisation of “non-consensual images”, thirty-seven states and Washington, D.C. have criminal statutes against the non-consensual distribution of sexual material (Donick, 2017). For the proponents of using criminal statutes to combat revenge pornography, this approach

is the most suitable because it can deter the perpetrator by recognising non-consensual pornography as a new form of sexual abuse (Citron and Franks, 2014). Some scholars, however, are against the criminal statutes approach, mentioning that it could lead to over-criminalisation and that it could prove problematic in relation to the consent doctrine and the identification of the perpetrator (Patton, 2015).

Even though the legislation related to TFSV is still at a nascent stage of development, there are some countries -including the UK- that have already banned revenge pornography. Specifically, in the UK in February 2015, a legislation was introduced according to which the non-consensual distribution of sexual material is considered an offense which carries a maximum penalty of two years in jail (Bond and Tyrell, 2018). Although the law came into force on 13 April 2015, early research on its application indicates that there are still some limitations in the fight against TFSV. Particularly, Bond and Tyrell (2018) conducted an online survey concerning the police forces' understanding of revenge pornography in March 2017. They found that there is a misunderstanding of the term "non-consensual images" by the authorities and that there is a need for a better training of the police forces in order for them to respond better in revenge porn cases and protect victims (Bond and Tyrell, 2018). Consequently, it is necessary for the academia to shed more light on the "non-consensual images" phenomenon in order for it to be better understood, not only by those who are responsible for law enforcement, but also by society in general.

In summary, the provided literature review is relevant as it offers valuable insights into the global context of TFSV. To enhance its relevance, it is important to consider it within the Greek context and examine how TFSV is perceived and addressed in Greece, taking into account any unique legal, cultural, or societal factors that may be at play. This localized perspective can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of TFSV and inform effective strategies for prevention and response in Greece.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter serves as a roadmap for the current research study. It starts by justifying the choice of a qualitative approach taken for this research project. The section on reasons for employing qualitative research methodology elaborates on the alignment with research questions and outlines the advantages within the study's context.

The chapter also delves into the researcher's epistemological stance and how it influences the chosen research design. It discusses methods for data collection, emphasizing the choice of specific methods (interviews and survey) to address the study's research questions and detailing the adopted procedures and tools. The data analysis methods section introduces the chosen analysis approach (thematic analysis) and provides an overview of the process. The researcher's positionality is considered, acknowledging potential biases and strategies in order to minimize them. Ethical considerations and strategies for minimizing retraumatization are discussed, ensuring participant well-being. Lastly, any limitations of the study are acknowledged, together with plans to address them, offering a comprehensive overview of the research methodology.

Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches

In the ongoing scholarly discourse, researchers have frequently positioned qualitative and quantitative research methodologies in opposition. However, it's essential to recognize that this debate primarily hinges on the divergent philosophical foundations of these approaches. Positivist or quantitative philosophy places a paramount emphasis on objectivity, involving the pursuit of consistent relationships between variables through experimental methods, measurement, and causal inference (Robson, 2002). Quantitative research primarily addresses questions pertaining to “what,” “where,” and “when” and has historically been the favoured approach within the social sciences (Jones, 2002).

In contrast, qualitative research offers a distinct framework for comprehending subjective and in-depth experiences. It rejects the notion of a fully knowable objective reality and underscores the importance of examining phenomena within their specific contextual settings (Robson, 2002). This approach provides more room for interpretative creativity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

The present study aligns itself with the qualitative paradigm, allowing participants the freedom to express their thoughts and experiences authentically (Barker et al., 2002). Qualitative research excels in capturing the unique perspectives of specific groups and unearths diverse responses stemming from individual experiences (Carroll &

Rothe, 2010; Alderfer & Sood, 2016). It centres on how individuals make sense of their world and interpret events (Willig, 2006), where subjectivity holds a central place (British Psychological Society, 2006).

Reasons for Employing Qualitative Research Methodology

This qualitative study aims to explore TFSV focusing on the potential traumatic effects of the non-consensual dissemination of sexually explicit material on survivors as well as on the ways in which police and experts respond to their victimization. Given that TFSV is a relatively new phenomenon and that so far there has been little literature on the topic, this project did not attempt to test a particular hypothesis. Instead, this research seeks to add weight to previous theories and examine whether previous theoretical perspectives and research findings on sexual violence also apply in cases of image-based abuse or they have partial explanatory value.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of survivors in the context of TFSV, this study employs in-depth interviews as a qualitative research method. In doing so, I place survivors' voices at the forefront of the analysis, allowing them to share their perspectives and narratives in their own words. In-depth interviews provide a valuable opportunity to collect rich, detailed data (Kvale, 2007) that captures the nuances and complexities of survivors' experiences, shedding light on the emotional, psychological, and social

impacts of TFSV on their lives. This methodological approach is essential for gaining insights into the lived experiences of survivors and contributes to the depth and richness of our findings.

Epistemology

In the realm of qualitative research, my research approach is firmly grounded in two key philosophical paradigms: critical realism and feminist epistemology. Critical realism, as proposed by Bhaskar in 1975, forms the foundational framework which acknowledges the complexity of reality and the coexistence of stable aspects of reality with the socially embedded and imperfect nature of scientific inquiry (Bhaskar, 1975). This approach allows me to explore the multifaceted nature of reality, considering the roles of individual agency and structural factors, encompassing social, economic, and political contexts. It conceptualizes three interconnected domains of reality: the real, the empirical, and the actual (Bhaskar, 1975).

In tandem with critical realism, and in line with ideas articulated by scholars such as Longino in 1994 and Renzetti in 2013, feminist epistemology plays an equally pivotal role, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the intersectionality of identity and its impact on the research process (Longino, 1994; Renzetti, 2013). Notably, this concept and its use here is distinct from the theory of intersectionality. As a female researcher, my personal viewpoint, shaped by my

experiences and understanding of gender dynamics, serves as a crucial lens through which I approach the study of TFSV.

Critical realism allows me to delve into the complexities of reality, acknowledging the coexistence of stable elements and the socially embedded nature of human understanding. This approach helps me to navigate the multifaceted landscape of TFSV and to explore the roles of individual agency and structural factors. In this framework, stable aspects of reality exist independently of human perception, while acknowledging the socially embedded and imperfect nature of scientific inquiry. Critical realism enables me to bridge the gap between objective reality and individual perceptions, as argued by Bhaskar (1975).

Complementing critical realism, feminist epistemology emphasizes the recognition of the social dimension of reality and the diversity of individual perspectives within it. It underscores the importance of considering the intersectionality of identity, which aligns with my role as a female researcher who is attuned to the nuances of gender dynamics. In this research, I aim to amplify the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups, including survivors of TFSV, women grappling with TFSV, and professionals in associations and the legal field dedicated to addressing this issue.

For the purposes of this research, I have chosen Thematic Analysis as a qualitative method for analysing data, enabling me to capture the rich, context-specific narratives of the participants and the unique

challenges they face within the broader social context. This combined approach, informed by critical realism and feminist epistemology, is designed to provide a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the complex issues surrounding TFSV, particularly in relation to gender dynamics. It facilitates an exploration of the multifaceted realities of TFSV, while taking into account the diversity of individual experiences and the influence of the broader social context.

In summary, my research distinctly embraces both critical realism and feminist epistemology as foundational frameworks. Critical realism grants me the tools to navigate the complexities of reality and the coexistence of stable and socially constructed aspects of knowledge, while feminist epistemology underscores the significance of recognizing the social dimensions of reality and the intersectionality of identity. This combined approach allows for a more comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted issues related to TFSV and gender dynamics, ensuring that the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups are heard and understood within the broader context.

Research Design

Research questions

Two research questions and three sub-questions guided the strategy and methodology used in this study:

- 1) What are the survivors' experiences of TFSV?

- 1A) How do survivors interpret their experience of TFSV as impacting their subsequent life trajectories and outcomes?
- 2) What are the institutional responses – both governmental and non-governmental – to TFSV-related victimisation?
- 2A) What are Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV and of the ways they respond to it?
- 2B) How do professionals working in counselling and support (e.g., mental health professionals, lawyers, etc.) respond to incidents of TFSV?

Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative research recognizes and investigates the existence and interactions of many perspectives and opinions. However, this information cannot be comprehended without acknowledging the meaning that individuals attribute to that information, their thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and behaviours (Illingworth, 2006).

For this study, a qualitative research strategy was used because qualitative approaches are particularly beneficial in determining the meaning that people assign to situations that they encounter (Merriam, 1998). Phenomenology will be utilized precisely to explore how individuals construct understanding of the topic being examined, i.e., the effects of non-consensual distribution of sexual material on survivors' lives, the way in which the authorities see their victimisation etc. According to Creswell (2003), qualitative research is extremely useful when the research sample is small– in this case,

twenty-eight survivors have been interviewed and ten professionals (among the 10 professionals, there are: two mental health counsellors, six cybersecurity experts, and two lawyers). In addition, I managed to collect data by ten police officers through an online questionnaire (see the sections below for further detail). In research methodology, phenomenology is also selected to generate themes and establish significant links that contribute to the formation of new knowledge (Moustakes, 1994).

The qualitative research methodologies utilized in this study are discussed in further detail in the sections below which include information on methods for data collection and analysis. The main purpose of this study is to understand survivors' experiences and how police and professionals perceive and deal with TFSV cases. This means that this project is exploratory because not so many studies have been conducted so far focusing on this topic (for exceptions, see above at page 10. Exploratory research is defined as research conducted to investigate a relatively understudied problem. It is carried out to gain a better understanding of the current problem (Elman, 2020).

The study's aims and methods were reviewed and approved by an ethics review board at the University of Essex (see Appendix A).

Methods for Data Collection

Research Participants

Research participants in this project were separated in three different groups. The main participants in this research project were Greek survivors of TFSV as this study seeks to explore the impact of TFSV onto their lives (total number of participants: 28). The second group of research participants were Greek police officers as this study also seeks to examine their perceptions of TFSV and the ways they respond to it (total number of participants: 15). The third research group of research participants are professionals working in counselling and supporting agencies who have worked very closely with victims of TFSV since this research project seeks to examine the way in which such professionals respond to their victimisation (total number of participants: 10).

Generally speaking (for more detail, see sub-sections below), participants were notified of the goal of the current study, research protocols, potential advantages of the current research project, their right to withdraw from the study at any time, and confidentiality of sensitive data as a first step in the interview procedure [for further details, see Appendices B; B(a); E and F]. Simultaneously, I presented myself both as a PhD researcher at the University of Essex and as Managing Director of CSI Institute to establish a positive relationship with responders and exhibit knowledge of TFSV (Creswell, 1994). The Cyber Security International Institute (CSI Institute) is a Greek non-governmental group aiming to raise cyber awareness and support people

who have been victimized online. In the three sections below, I illustrate in detail the practices I used to approach and recruit participants in each of the three groups; I also illustrate how the data was collected, namely through interviews (in the case of survivors and practitioners) and a questionnaire (only for police officers).

A) Survivors

- **Recruitment of Survivors**

The sample for this qualitative study currently consists of twenty-eight participants (n=28) who have self-identified as survivors of “revenge pornography.” To be selected for this study, participants had to be at least 18 years old and self-identify as “revenge porn” survivors; in my recruiting material (for further details, see Appendices C; D; and G), I used the much criticized (see above at pages 8-9) term “revenge porn” as this is how the phenomenon is known as and called in Greece. This allowed the research to include a variety of incidents, ranging from a massive online disclosure of survivors’ nude images/videos, to sexual material being exchanged on a smaller scale (such as among their group of acquaintances), to the creation of fake profiles with their data on porn and dating sites or even to the victims being threatened with the disclosure of such material (Powell and Henry, 2016; Citron and Franks, 2014).

Using purposive sampling (Orcher, 2016), the recruitment of the participants took place via social media and specifically via the CSI

Institute's Facebook page. For the last three years, I have held the position of Managing Director at the CSI Institute. My role has been to manage the overall operations of the institution, and coordinate public awareness projects and activities, as well as groups of volunteers, while ensuring successful execution of networking, promotions, and seminars. Among my other responsibilities, I frequently have to appear on Greek television and digital media as the key speaker discussing about cyber-bullying and how to handle cases of online-victimisation, cyber-addiction, as well as safe internet surfing to protect children and to promote the institute's activities.

Access to potential participants was gained initially in October 2020 through my position as the Managing Director of the CSI Institute and as the co-administrator of the CSI Institute Facebook group. Initially, I talked in person to Manolis Sfakianakis, the co-administrator of the Facebook group CSI Institute and the Founder of CSI Institute. My intention was to post a recruitment message on this FB group; therefore, I explained to him the objectives of my research and its possible benefits to participants. Such benefits included the shaping of more effective and survivor-centred policies and practices on TFSV. Specifically, I asked him to give me permission to share and reshare on the CSI Institute Facebook page the posts in which I was calling for victims to volunteer as participants in my research project from my personal "Kelly Ioannou" Facebook account. Once I received his permission and the ethics approval from the University of Essex (see Appendix A), I shared a post explaining who I am, who my supervisors

are, and what my research project is, and asking for participants to volunteer in the research [see Appendix B and, for the English version, see Appendix B(a)].

Since the goal of the study was to uncover what is happening with the non-consensual distribution of sexual material in Greece, therefore my post was written solely in the Greek language so as to approach Greek participants.

I chose this recruitment method because survivors of TFSV are an extremely hard-to-reach group, and social media offered a space where I could potentially reach out to some of them. Moreover, by using my personal Facebook account to share the post, survivors also had the opportunity to check my profile. This could be considered extremely significant given that victims of TFSV might not feel secure to disclose their experiences mainly because they feel that they will be deceived online again. Existing research (see, for example, Carter et al., 2021) indicates that transitioning to online environments for data collection can help achieve recruitment targets but may have some drawbacks, such as diminishing data richness, participant enjoyment, and group consensus. However, the growing importance of online spaces in daily life is driving the migration of traditional qualitative research methods to the virtual realm and giving rise to new methods tailored to virtual settings. Other academics, such as Morison et al. (2015), have also been acknowledged for their discussion of power dynamics in online spaces and their dedication to self-reflection in data collection and generation. Revealing my identity both as a researcher and as the

Managing Director of the CSI Institute may have helped survivors to see me as a trustworthy person.

Besides the original post calling for victims to volunteer as participants in my research project (see Appendix B), I continued by uploading two more posts within November 2020. Specifically, I created and posted two flyers to raise awareness about the phenomenon of non-consensual distribution of sexual material (see Appendix C and Appendix D) and also to give my personal contact details -my personal email account- in case any person who had suffered from TFSV was willing to participate in my research project. I posted these flyers originally on my personal Facebook account and then I reshared them on the CSI Institute Facebook page.

From November 2020 to the end of December 2020, ten people contacted me on Facebook Messenger asking to participate in my research project voluntarily. All of them had sexually explicit material posted online without their consent.

Once survivors volunteered to participate by contacting me on Messenger, I asked them to give me an email address to forward them the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix E), the Survivors' Interview Guide (see Appendix M) and the Consent Form (see Appendix F), which included a summary of the research project, its phases, risks, advantages of participating in the study, participant rights, and statement on confidentiality.

In December 2020, the Greek media reported a scandal regarding a website called “chatpic.org” (Keep Talking Greece, 2020). Such a platform allowed users to circulate sexual material without the knowledge of those depicted and without requiring the registration of users. Social media users asked for the immediate intervention of the Cyber-Crime Department of the Greek Police. The topic became viral and created a trending hashtag #cancelchatpicorg on Twitter. This allowed me to use my Twitter account to reach out to more victims of TFSV. To this end, I started “tweeting” regarding the specific event and informing people on who I am. Specifically, I briefly described my research project asking people that had been victimized by non-consensual distribution of their sexual material to contact me if they wanted to participate in my research study – which I described to them through my tweets in up to 280 characters (see Appendix G). In my “tweets,” I explained that their experiences with these incidents will not only help academics better understand the phenomenon, but also help shape more effective and survivor-centred policies and practices. Two Twitter users decided to contribute to this research project. They contacted me through my email (which I had included in my posts) saying that their naked photos were published without their consent in chatpic.org and that they wanted to participate. Following that, the victims received details about the interview process and procedures (see Appendix E, Appendix F and Appendix M) and had to sign the consent form to become participants in the study.

In April 2021, since I did not have any calls for participation for a long time, I decided to create a new Instagram account following my supervisors' advice to increase the sample size. I named this account "Stop image abuse- End Revenge Porn Greece" and I started posting informative posts regarding the phenomenon of TFSV. I also uploaded a video on IGTV introducing myself as a researcher and talking about the goals of both my Instagram account and my research project. Users started following the account very quickly, reaching 174 followers to date, and other accounts relevant to women's rights (such as "Girl Power Greece," "Everyday girls blogging," "Magicme.gr," "Wonder Woman," "Voice of Greek Women/Girls") supported my goal by sharing my account on their Instagram stories and asking their followers to follow "Stop Image Abuse- End Revenge Porn Greece" and to participate in my study. Since then, sixteen more persons have approached me via instant messaging on Instagram and offered to be interviewed on their experiences with TFSV. In these cases, I followed the same strategy I had adopted for the Facebook recruitment. When victims agreed to participate by contacting me via Instagram inbox, I asked them for an email address. Participants first had to read an information sheet (see Appendix E) and the Victims' Interview Guide (Appendix M) which were attached to their email and informed them of the study and then to consent to take part in this study (see Appendix F). After giving their consent, they could proceed with anonymously sharing their experiences on a mutually agreed date and time.

Among the cohort of twenty-eight survivors who experienced TFSV and were sampled for this study, it is noteworthy that twenty-seven of them were of the female gender, while a sole male survivor was identified. A comprehensive demographics table, encompassing data regarding gender and age, is provided below (see Table 1).

Table 1
Survivors of TFSV Characteristics

Pseudonym	Gender	Age
Anastasia	Female	39
Christina	Female	29
Christiana	Female	34
Efi	Female	19
Eleni	Female	23
Emma	Female	25
Eva	Female	28
Evangelia	Female	19
Fani	Female	27
Glykeria	Female	21
Ifigenia	Female	24
Ioanna	Female	29
Ismini	Female	27
Kathy	Female	30
Katerina	Female	26
Kornilia	Female	22
Kostas	Male	33
Maria	Female	35
Melina	Female	19
Niki	Female	32
Olympia	Female	30

Ria	Female	22
Sandra	Female	23
Savina	Female	22
Sonia	Female	33
Spiridoula	Female	30
Stella	Female	45
Zoi	Female	20

- **Interviews with Survivors**

The interviews with the survivors (n=28), conducted via Skype, took place from November 2020 to June 2021. The interview guide was provided to participants a minimum of two weeks prior to their scheduled interview to help alleviate any anxiety they might have had about the process. The interview guide relied on 20 open-ended questions, and it was specially designed for the victims (see Appendix M).

The survivors' interviews began with my invitation to shortly describe themselves, explain what "revenge pornography" is for them and elaborate on their experience with it. The last question was phrased in this manner to provide participants with the flexibility and freedom to investigate their feelings, experiences and perceptions related to their victimisation in depth (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Apart from their experiences with TFSV and its effect on their lives, survivors were also asked about how family/friends/colleagues/intimate

partners reacted to their victimisation and how society views people whose naked photos are posted online, regardless of their gender.

Along with the open-ended questions included in the interview guides, participants were commonly asked “why?” so that they could reflect and expand on their encounters. For instance, when describing how they think society views women whose naked pictures have been distributed online, they were asked at the same time to justify their answer. Participants' perspectives were explored in depth during 40 to 50-minute interviews.

The interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants to provide an accurate transcript (Merriam, 1998; Rubin and Rubin, 1995). In the context of the current research project, all interview transcripts have been anonymized and securely stored in password-protected files, accessible solely by the researcher and her supervisors on the BOX platform, a free service provided by the University of Essex. This is in-keeping with the demands for data-handling and storage according to GDPR (UKRI, 2020). Additionally, the informed consent forms signed by participants are also stored alongside the transcripts.

B) Police officers

- **Recruitment of Police Officers**

To address the second research question (i.e. *What are Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV and of the ways they respond to it?*), I

decided to approach the Greek police and professionals (for the latter category, see section C below). Indeed, given that police responses to events of non-consensual distribution of sexual material could possibly capture how law enforcement authorities respond to this phenomenon, the recruitment of police officers was considered extremely significant. To this end, I took advantage of the contact list I had access to as the Managing Director of the CSI Institute, after obtaining the necessary permission from the Institute's board of directors.

Greek police officers are very difficult to approach when it comes to interviews, and I knew this since the beginning. Therefore, in November 2020, I contacted on her professional telephone number the spokesperson for Hellenic Police whom I happened to know personally. I explained my study to her, and I asked her to give me her advice on what I should do to have police officers participate in my research project. The spokesperson instructed me to send an email to the Communications Director of the Department of Hellenic Police using the publicly available email address “communication.dir@astynomia.gr.” In this email, I was to introduce myself, outline the details of my research project, and clarify my objectives. Following the instructions of the spokesperson, on the 18th of November 2020, I emailed the police presenting myself as a University of Essex researcher and mentioning my position at CSI Institute, in an attempt to receive feedback faster (see Appendix H).

By the end of November 2020, they had answered my email. Although I had already highlighted in my message that I was a PhD researcher

from the University of Essex exploring the impact of non-consensual distribution of sexual material on Greek survivors' lives in the context of my thesis, they responded to my email by asking me to provide them with full details of my identity. They also required me to let them know if I belong in a specific research programme and provide them with a certificate for my studies. Following that, I forward to the same email address a statement of responsibility, where I clarified that the research is carried out in the context of my doctoral dissertation. I also sent them the approval decision for the research by the board of University of Essex (see Appendix A).

Unfortunately, this was not enough for them to give me access to the officers. After a whole month, by the end of December 2020, the Communications Director of the Hellenic Police answered that they would like me to send them:

- A statement of responsibility stating that their personal data will be secured (see Appendix K).
- An official document stating that I am a PhD candidate and its official Greek translation (see Appendix J).
- A certificate or document from my supervisor and its official Greek translation (see Appendix I).
- The interview guide for the police officers (see Appendix L(c)).
- The purpose and objective of the research (see Appendix E).

In addition, they asked me to let them know if I would like to interview police officers of a particular department, such as Cybercrime Division, and to clarify the number of the participants that I would like to interview. It took me two months to collect all the aforementioned documents and, most importantly, to acquire their official Greek translation. There are specific and very limited public agencies in Greece that provide official translation services. The fact that all these incidents occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic and especially during a long period of lockdown in Greece slowed down my progress even more. Finally, in March 2021, I managed to get all the required documents officially translated and send them to the Communications Director of the Hellenic Police. Furthermore, I clarified that, ideally, I would like 20-30 police officers from the Cybercrime Division to participate in my research project, but that I would be happy even with a smaller sample size. Consequently, on the 29th of April 2021, the Hellenic Police approved my request to interview police officers from the Cybercrime Division regarding the phenomenon of non-consensual distribution of sexual violence. They announced their decision by contacting me at kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com, my personal email address (see Appendix N). They also said that in the next few weeks they were going to give me more details on the practicalities of the recruitment of police officers. Specifically, they said that I should wait until any police officer from the Cybercrime Division contacts me through my email address (either my academic one or my personal one) asking to participate voluntarily in my research project.

I was expecting to have finished with the interviews of the Greek police officers by the end of summer 2021. However, in spite of the official “green light,” the police proved very slow in giving me feedback regarding the interviewing process. Since too much time had elapsed (almost 10 months from November 2020 to September 2021), I decided to directly contact the Chief Cybercrime Officer of the Hellenic Police whom I know personally due to my job. I texted him via LinkedIn and explained the process I had to go through in order to obtain the official police authorisation to interview his unit. He asked me to arrange a personal meeting with him in September 2021. During our meeting, he told me that he was aware of my research project, and he already knew that I had been approved to interview police officers from the Cybercrime Division. However, he explained to me that he found my suggested interview guide extremely time-consuming and demanding and he suggested that I should design a short online questionnaire instead. I explained to him that this was something that I had to discuss with my supervisors. Then, in October 2021, and after discussing this with my supervisors, I designed a brief online questionnaire (see Appendix L for more details) and I emailed the link at communication.dir@astynomia.gr asking them to forward it to their police officers so they would volunteer to participate. Finally, after repeatedly contacting the Communications Office to remind them of my online questionnaire, fifteen police officers (thirteen male and two female) had volunteered to participate in the research by the end of August 2022 by completing the brief online questionnaire. Below, you

can find Table 2, which presents demographic data on the gender and age of police officers.

Table 2
Police Officers' Characteristics

Gender	Age
Male (N=2)	41
Male	35
Male	42
Male (N=2)	50
Male	35
Female	39
Male	37
Male (N=2)	45
Female	37
Male (N=2)	38

- **Police Officers' Online Questionnaire**

Police officers who decided to contribute to this research project followed a link which was forwarded to them via email by the Greek Police's Department of Communication. This link transferred them to the brief online questionnaire (see Appendix L). Participants first had to read an information sheet which was attached to the questionnaire

and informed them of the study [see Appendix L(a)] and then to consent to take part in this study [see Appendix L(b)]. After clicking on “yes,” they could proceed with filling out the brief questionnaire and anonymously sharing their perceptions related to TFSV.

The online questionnaire was designed for the police officers and relied on 5 open-ended questions (see appendix L). The open-ended questions were utilized to encourage participants to talk freely and react honestly to inquiries (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Kvale, 1996).

The online questionnaire starts by asking police officers to shortly describe their role in the force (age, gender, education, length of time in service, etc.) as well as to define the training they received on “revenge pornography.” The police officers’ online questionnaire is focused on how the Greek authorities respond to incidents of non-consensual distribution of sexual material and whether police officers have received adequate training to deal with relevant cases.

C) Experts/Professionals

- **Recruitment of Professionals Working with Survivors of TFSV**

As mentioned above, this research project also seeks to shed light on how professionals dealing with incidents of TFSV respond to TFSV cases. Specifically, for the purposes of this research project, mental health counsellors and legal counsellors have been recruited to share their experiences on working very close to survivors of TFSV.

In order to recruit professionals to voluntarily participate in my research project, I started making a list of agencies dealing with phenomena relevant to TFSV. I have to mention here that so far in Greece there is not a single agency dealing with incidents of TFSV alone. Therefore, I focused on agencies dealing with sexual abuse or gender violence issues (like, for example, the “General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality”). In total, I contacted via email ten agencies (like W.I.N. Hellas, Womensos.gr, Diotima.org.gr, mkoapostoli.com). In my emails, I informed them about my research project and requested access to mental health counsellors who work with survivors of TFSV. I also asked them to forward my email in order to share my contact details in case any of them wished to voluntarily participate in my research project.

By the end of August 2022, I had received a response to my request from the “General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality”; a government agency responsible for formulating, implementing, and supervising policies related to gender equality across various sectors. Subsequently, I conducted interviews with two mental health counsellors from this organization who have experience working with survivors of TFSV. In September 2022 (and in order to increase my sample related to professionals who have worked closely with victims of TFSV) I also contacted two large Greek private companies specialized in dealing with cases of cybercrime. One is named Greek Information Security Systems, and the other one is named Cyberx. The first company granted me access to two of their lawyers who specialize

in legal defence for survivors of TFSV. The second company provided me with access to six cybersecurity experts who have worked on cases of TFSV. The final overall sample of professionals working with survivors of TFSV collected for the current research consisted of ten individuals. In the following Table 3, you will find the names of the professionals, their respective roles, and the names of the organizations/companies they work for.

Table 3
Professionals' Characteristics

Pseudonyms of Cybersecurity Experts Working on Cyberx	Pseudonyms of Lawyers working on Greek Information Security Systems	Pseudonyms of Mental Health Counsellors working on General Secretariat for Family Policy & Gender Equality
Pantelis	Kostas	Lina (General Secretariat for Family Policy)
Manos	Dimitris	Marikelly (Gender Equality)
Panos		
Michalis		
Alexandros		
Fotini		

- Interviews with Professionals

In order to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and practices of professionals involved in providing assistance to survivors of TFSV, I conducted a series of online

interviews via Skype between August 2022 and December 2022. To accomplish this, a carefully crafted interview guide (please, refer to Appendix L(c) for additional details) was shared with participants at least two weeks prior to their scheduled interview sessions, with their consent for audio recording, following the guidelines outlined by Merriam (1998) and Rubin and Rubin (1995).

The interview guide [see Appendix L (c)] comprised 19 open-ended questions aimed at encouraging participants to provide detailed insights into their experiences, viewpoints, and practices. The initial question requested participants to offer brief self-introductions, including essential background information such as age and educational qualifications. This introductory step was intended to establish a contextual framework for their subsequent responses.

Professionals were also prompted to clarify the terminology they use when discussing the non-consensual distribution of sexual material. This foundational question served as a basis for exploring the various language nuances prevalent in the field.

Furthermore, participants were asked to outline their standard procedures when responding to TFSV cases, elucidating the steps taken upon initial contact with survivors. They were encouraged to share details about memorable cases, reporting trends, and the typical profiles of survivors. Additionally, participants were prompted to engage with topics such as the potentially gendered nature of TFSV, the intersections between TFSV survivorship and other victimization

experiences, the dynamics of trust-building with survivors, and any emotional challenges they encountered.

The interview guide also inquired about the professionals' professional training and their evaluation of legal responses in Greece regarding non-consensual sharing of sexual material. Lastly, participants were invited to offer personal insights into and reflections on TFSV as a societal phenomenon, which allowed them to contribute concluding remarks or additional observations as they deemed appropriate.

In summary, this interview guide, featuring open-ended questions, was designed to facilitate in-depth discussions with professionals dedicated to working with survivors of TFSV. Its purpose was to contribute to a deeper understanding of this critical issue. Providing the interview guide well in advance of the interviews ensured participants' readiness and fostered constructive and informative exchanges throughout the interview process.

Methods for Data Analysis

In this research, a qualitative approach was chosen to explore the experiences of individuals who have experienced TFSV, as well as police officers and professionals who have worked with TFSV survivors. This choice was made due to the underrepresentation of TFSV in existing literature, and the goal was to gain insights into human experiences (Silverman, 2000).

For data analysis, the method selected was thematic analysis (TA). TA is a widely used method for analysing qualitative data and is adaptable to various theoretical approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It involves detecting, evaluating, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Selecting an approach to thematic analysis grounded in phenomenology contributed to my decision to use a thematic approach inspired by Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA constitutes a thematic approach to analysis that focuses on how individuals experience events through the inductive generation of themes across responses to interview or survey questions (Smith & Osborn, 2003). It was deemed useful towards the aims and objectives of this research based on their focus on the experiences and attitudes of participants, which is the focus of an IPA approach (Bell, 2014).

The goal of thematic analysis was to uncover meaning in texts and analyse repeating themes or patterns of meaning in order to better comprehend survivors', police officers', and professionals' experiences of TFSV. This approach aligned with the research questions (see above in the methodology chapter, under “research design”), which referred to specific groups of participants, leading to distinct themes emerging from each group's dataset.

The data for thematic analysis came from interviews with survivors of TFSV, Greek police officers, and professionals working in counselling and support regarding TFSV. Three basic categories were created: i)

Survivors' experiences of TFSV, ii) Police officers' perceptions of TFSV cases, and iii) Professionals' attitudes regarding TFSV cases. These distinctions guided the analysis presented in the following chapters.

The processes of undertaking this analysis were arrived on the basis of IPA methods (Smith, et al. 1999). Themes were not pre-determined but generated using an inductive approach to coding so as not to prejudge the data by first determining the themes the researcher anticipated *might* arise in the data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Raw data was read and re-read for relevant themes, using a method where themes generated across one text could be compared with themes across other texts so as to refine them (Thomas, 2013). Texts were annotated using the left-hand column of the page to record initial thoughts and responses to the text relevant to the study's research questions, and then themes were generated from these notes in the right-hand column of the text. Themes were arrived at on the basis not simply in terms of frequency of response, but how emphatic responses were (Gibson & Brown, 2009), bearing in mind also the phenomenological rationale behind IPA to emphasize unspoken or implicit attitudes, feelings and experiences alongside overt opinions or statements of belief (Smith, 1996). Using comparison across texts, these themes were refined into common themes across the data for a given set of participants (e.g., survivors, police officers, professionals) and refined into the themes that structure the data analysis chapters below. These themes are presented across Tables 4 to 6 below.

Table 4

Insights from Survivors: Key Themes from TFSV Interview Analysis

Survivors' experiences of TFSV

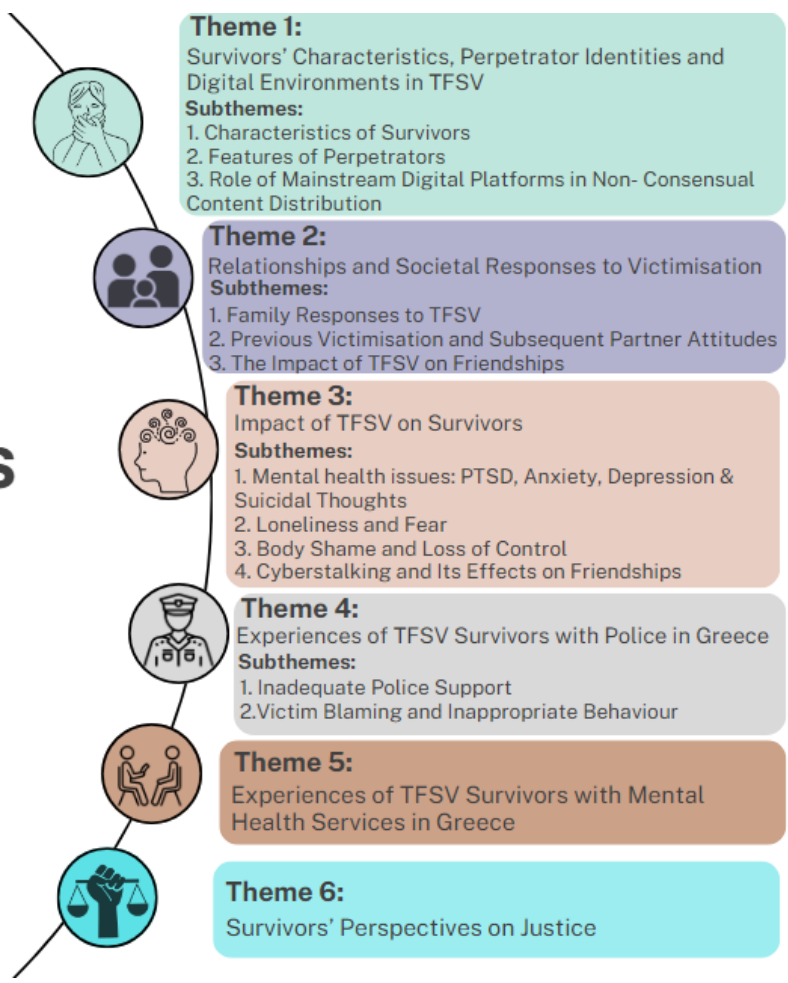
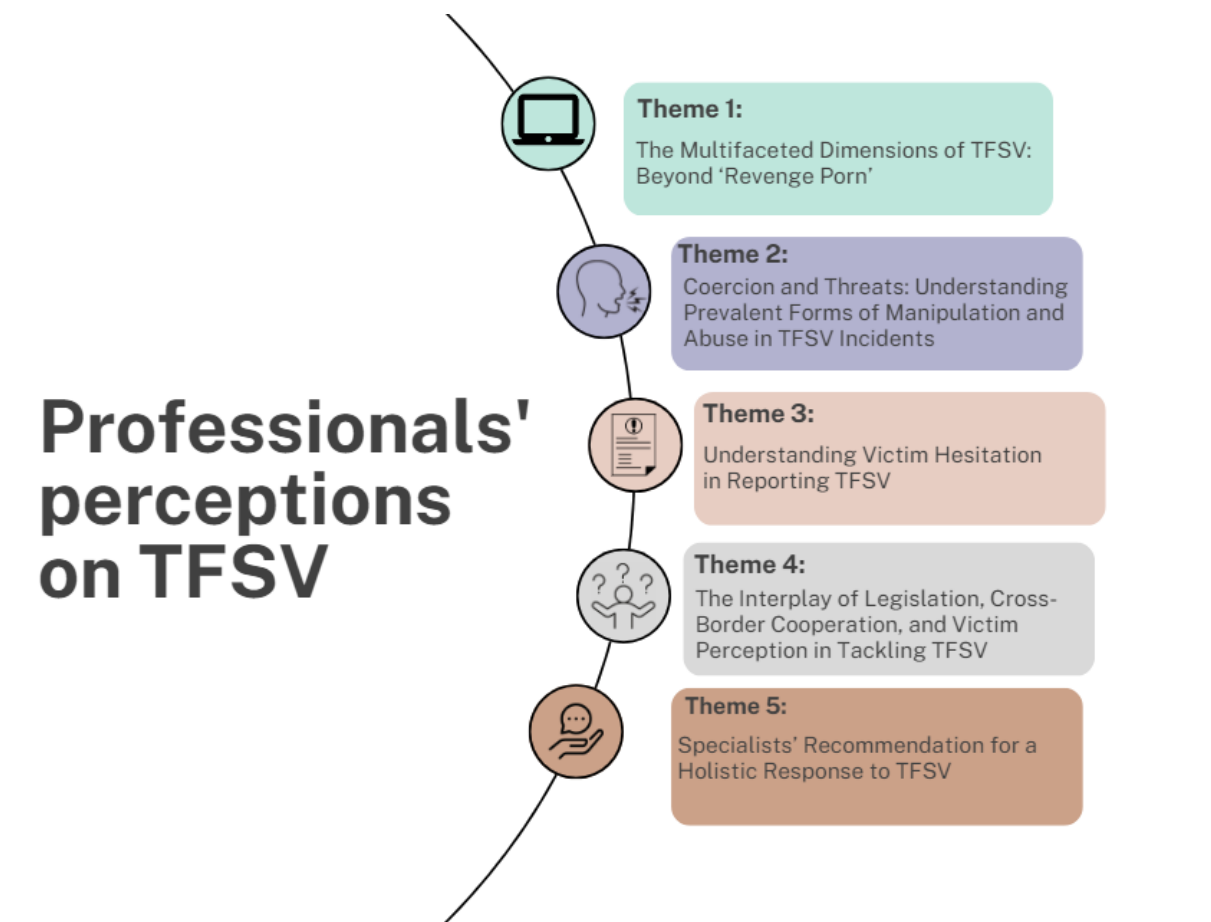


Table 5
Thematic Analysis of Police Responses to TFSV

Police perceptions on TFSV



Table 6
Professionals' Perceptions on TFSV



The Positionality of the Researcher

Reflexivity, as defined by Burawoy (2003), entails a comprehensive examination of the entire research process, which includes scrutinizing the practices, identities, and roles of all involved parties. Qualitative researchers often encounter practical challenges when conducting studies among participants who may seem familiar, as was the case in

my study involving survivors of TFSV, police officers, and professionals working with survivors, all of whom are from Greece.

The shared nationality and language among the study participants and myself raise pertinent questions about the extent of our familiarity and the potential boundaries that need navigation. Wiederhold (2015) categorizes researchers in such familiar environments as “insiders” or “researchers at home.” In my case, the fact that I was Greek with a background as the Managing Director of the Cyber Security International Institute and the fact that I had a similar socialization background to the participants granted me unique access to knowledge and information not readily available to others. Hence, I can be considered an insider-researcher based on these attributes.

The effect of my status as an insider- or activist-researcher requires some reflection with regards to positionality. Researchers’ identities can shape their work (Haynes, 2012) and the relative positions of researcher and participant can impact how participants respond to prompts and how researchers analyse that data (May & Perry, 2010). For example, the status of the researcher as an NGO activity involved with women’s rights might induce social desirability bias, by which respondents attempt to provide more socially acceptable, desirable or ‘correct’ responses (Burgess, 1982).

Awareness of one’s own positionality in this regard can assist in overcoming such biases (Qin, 2016). Maintaining a reflexive awareness of one’s position and values and the assumptions that they might bring

to bear on research and analysis is essential in order to avoid biasing data collection and analysis (Bourke, 2014). Nevertheless, my status as an insider does also provide me with a unique insight into the issues raised in the course of this research. Terry and Hayfield (2020; 2021) argue that thematic analysis is bolstered by insider insight and that the researcher's subjectivity – one subject to sufficient reflection with regards to positionality – can become a resource and tool of analysis as opposed to an obstacle to objectivity. Despite not having a personal history of TFSV, my previous contact with male and female survivors during my employment at the Cyber Security International Institute and my 2017 study on the mental health impact of TFSV provided me with insights and preconceptions that could influence my doctoral research.

The relative identities of participants and researchers can also influence data collection and analysis (Macbeth, 2001). Culture, as defined by Kendall (2011), is inseparable from ethnicity and is a fundamental marker of identity, encompassing shared tangible and intangible aspects within a group. In my study, all participants identified as Greek speakers, a shared characteristic that I also possess, in addition to my fluency in English and German. This shared language made me a cultural insider among the participants, facilitating smoother interactions. An illustrative incident involves a participant who used the phrase “and the month is nine” (a colloquial Greek expression meaning “one couldn't care less”) to describe how police officers responded when she reported her case of TFSV, which means that police officers did not pay attention to her case. The use of

this unexplained phrase can be perceived as an expression whose meaning the participant expected me (the researcher) to know since I could speak the language.

Gender, as extensively debated in feminist scholarship (Manohar et al., 2019), plays a significant role in social research. Researchers of the same gender as participants may elicit more open sharing, as observed in my study primarily involving female survivors. My gender as a female researcher made some participants more comfortable sharing their experiences, believing that I would better understand and be less judgmental.

Furthermore, the age of the researcher in relation to that of the participants can profoundly impact social research, influencing trust and the depth of information shared (Manohar et al., 2019). In my case, my age positively impacted interactions, particularly with younger participants, who felt at ease expressing their views.

In addition to these considerations, it's essential to acknowledge the toll that conducting this research took on my own mental health. Data collection during the COVID-19 pandemic introduced additional challenges, including strained interviews due to safety protocols and difficulties in engaging participants who had pandemic-related concerns. These challenges, combined with the emotional weight of interviewing TFSV victims, took a toll on my well-being. Reliving their traumatic stories during the analysis phase was emotionally

exhausting, requiring a delicate balance between presenting findings and respecting the participants' narratives.

However, despite these challenges, this research project significantly developed my role as a researcher. It required me to take responsibility for my actions, make decisions, and conduct interviews, ultimately enhancing my confidence and competence as a researcher. I am now more eager to embrace future research projects independently.

Additionally, my professional history as a Managing Director at an NGO providing counselling and support to survivors influenced my interpretation of the findings, emphasizing the positive impact of empowerment and support for trauma survivors.

Ethical Challenges and Strategies for Minimizing Retraumatization

This research study, approved by the University of Essex (see Appendix A), addresses several ethical considerations in line with the guidance of Plummer (2001). These ethical considerations encompass the participants, the researcher, and the overall nature of the research project, including intellectual property, informed consent, the right to withdraw, confidentiality, and the sources of research funding. In this study, which focuses on the experiences of victims of distressing events such as privacy violations, betrayal by acquaintances, and threats from internet trolls and cyberstalkers, specific ethical challenges arise.

Primarily, this study delves into victimization experiences, potentially exposing participants to retraumatization during the research process (Seedat, 2004). To address this concern, rigorous strategies were implemented to minimize the risk to participants. The utmost emphasis was placed on ensuring participant confidentiality, given the sensitive nature of the data collected. Anonymity and pseudonyms were offered as protective measures to safeguard participants' identities.

Furthermore, considering the ethical implications of storing data related to this research within an online context (Buchanan & Zimmer, cited, 2012 in Iakono et al., 2016), participants were informed that their data would be securely stored on a protected computer.

Secondly, this study employed online-based research methods, utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram as recruitment tools. While online research offers advantages such as ease of participant recruitment, it also presents unique challenges, particularly related to trust and privacy (Gelinas et al., 2017). To address these concerns, transparency was a key principle. The researcher openly shared her real identity from the outset, refraining from deceptive practices or the creation of false online personas [for further details see Appendix B(a)]. This approach aimed to build trust with potential participants and mitigate any potential embarrassment or mistrust arising from the physical distance between the researcher and the targeted social media users.

In summary, this research study, ethically approved by the University of Essex, navigated the specific ethical complexities associated with

victimization research and online-based data collection by prioritizing participant confidentiality, informed consent, and transparency. These strategies were implemented to ensure the well-being of participants and maintain the integrity of the research process.

Limitations of the Study

In any research study, it is essential to acknowledge and address its limitations to ensure transparency within the context of the project (Elman, 2020). Limitations can vary in nature and impact, and it is crucial to discuss them candidly.

As a sole researcher, I faced a significant obstacle in this study, primarily due to the formidable difficulty of reaching participants. The extensive time and effort required for collecting interview data and questionnaire responses resulted in a relatively small pool of participants. It is crucial to emphasize that this limitation does not diminish the value of my study; instead, it underscores a distinct strength of my project. I intentionally chose to work with a smaller sample size because of the scarcity of prior research in this particular area, making it quite an under-researched territory. My project does not aim for universal generalizability; instead, it offers valuable insights in a field with limited prior exploration. This makes my research unique and impactful in its own right. In summary, my limited sample size does not signify a shortcoming but rather highlights the formidable challenge of accessing participants in a domain where data collection is

notoriously challenging. It also underscores the remarkable contribution of my research, addressing a crucial gap in the literature by delving into an under-researched and sensitive topic.

Moreover, qualitative data collection introduces a set of limitations (Braun and Clarke, 2006). One significant concern relates to the sensitivity of the study when recounting the experiences of trauma survivors and understanding the impact on individuals working with survivors. To ensure a robust analysis, a thematic analysis approach was employed to present the most representative responses to questions. Additionally, all research instruments underwent rigorous scrutiny before distribution to the main participant group to ensure fairness and alignment with the research questions. These measures were taken to enhance the study's methodological rigor and data quality without implying any research bias.

Another notable limitation involves the use of online interviews for survivors of TFSV and professionals working with them as the data collection method. This approach introduced unique challenges, particularly in establishing rapport and connection with participants. Unlike in-person interviews, where body language cues play a significant role in communication and rapport-building, online interviews often lack the opportunity to observe these non-verbal signals. This lack made it more challenging to gauge the emotional state of participants and adapt the interview accordingly. Additionally, some of the survivors participating in this research (N= 4 out of 28) did not have their cameras turned on during the interviews, further

limiting the ability to read visual cues. These challenges are important to consider when evaluating the study's methodology and its potential impact on the quality of the data collected.

Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight that approaching survivors as research participants presented an additional layer of complexity and difficulty. Survivor research inherently involves individuals who have experienced trauma, and gaining their trust and cooperation is a delicate process. The trauma-informed approach used in this study aimed to ensure the well-being and comfort of survivors, but it inevitably added an extra layer of challenge to the research process. The ethical considerations and emotional toll associated with this aspect of the study cannot be understated.

In summary, despite the notable challenges associated with a limited sample size, the unique hurdles of online interviewing, and the sensitivity of approaching survivors as research participants, this study was undertaken with a keen awareness of its defined scope and overarching goals. Rather than detracting from the study's value, these challenges served to underscore its distinct strengths. The deliberate choice of a smaller sample size, necessitated by the scarcity of prior research in this area, highlights the study's uniqueness and its profound impact on a largely unexplored domain. Furthermore, while online interviews introduced their own set of difficulties, they were navigated with a commitment to methodological rigor and fairness in data collection, minimizing any potential research bias. Thus, it is crucial to consider these challenges in the broader context, recognizing that

they add depth and character to the research, rather than diminishing its significance. As such, when interpreting the findings, these strengths and limitations should be held in tandem, resulting in a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the study's contributions.

Chapter 3: TFSV and its Aftermath: The Survivors' Voices

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the thematic analysis of the 28 interviews I conducted with survivors of technology-facilitated sexual violence (TFSV). The study involved interviews with twenty-eight survivors, and its primary objective was to explore the multifaceted dimensions of TFSV, shedding light on the various aspects of victimization, survivor characteristics, societal responses, mental health repercussions, interactions with law enforcement, engagement with mental health services, and survivors' perspectives on justice. The analysis of the interview was done thematically, which involved listening to the interviews, writing their transcripts and (re)reading them, and then paying attention to patterns and recurring ideas or concepts in the data related to the research questions and/or objectives. Below I present a quick summary of the six main themes which emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts (see also Table 4 below); they will be further presented and analysed in depth in the following sections of this chapter.

The chapter takes a discursive approach to explore survivor characteristics and the dynamics surrounding Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV). It begins by providing an overview of the demographic profiles of survivors, highlighting the prevalence of

female survivors, the age range affected, and the troubling frequency of incidents occurring during their formative years. Moreover, it sheds light on the educational backgrounds of survivors, revealing that the majority have achieved a high level of education. This section also emphasizes the diversity of perpetrators involved and the various platforms through which non-consensual sexual content is distributed, underscoring the pervasive nature of TFSV in both personal and digital spaces.

Subsequently, the chapter delves into the profound impact of TFSV on survivors' mental health. It emphasizes the prevalence of mental health repercussions, which encompass a range of issues such as anxiety, phobias, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, and even suicidal thoughts. Additionally, it explores the emotional toll on survivors, including feelings of body shame, loss of control, humiliation, and hypervigilance. In doing so, this chapter highlights instances of resilience among survivors and the enduring trust issues that many grapple with after experiencing victimization.

Moving forward, the chapter delves into the phenomenon of cyberstalking, a significant consequence of TFSV. It elucidates the psychosomatic and mental health issues resulting from cyberstalking, including sleep disturbances and a pervasive lack of trust. Moreover, this section explores the escalation of harassment, as it often progresses from a single perpetrator to multiple perpetrators, both in online and offline spaces. This discussion underscores the extent of distress endured by victims in the aftermath of TFSV incidents.

A critical section of the chapter details the experiences of survivors when reporting incidents of TFSV to law enforcement agencies. Two prominent themes emerge from this examination: survivors' hesitation or reluctance to report and the substantial difficulties encountered by those who did engage with law enforcement. The chapter sheds light on the factors influencing the decision not to report, including mistrust in law enforcement and the emotional challenges associated with legal proceedings. Additionally, it underscores the negative interactions survivors often have with the police, characterized by inadequate support, victim-blaming, and unprofessional conduct, all of which exacerbate the trauma experienced by survivors.

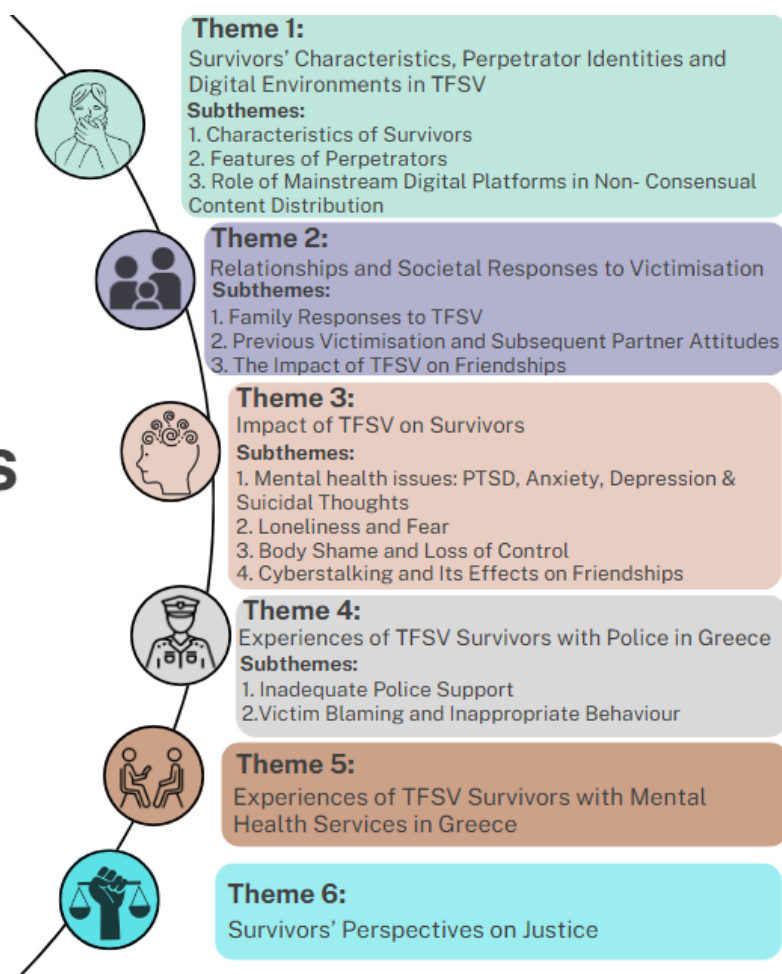
Another significant aspect discussed in this chapter is survivors' reluctance to seek mental health services despite enduring profound psychological trauma. It elucidates the complex attitudes and experiences of survivors regarding mental health support, including past negative experiences, mistrust in providers, and the belief that they can manage their trauma with the support of friends and family. Moreover, it acknowledges the positive impact of private mental health providers on a minority of participants.

Finally, the chapter concludes by emphasizing the restorative perspectives of survivors, highlighting their focus on societal recognition and condemnation of the crime rather than seeking revenge. It underscores the survivors' desire for community reintegration and the importance of addressing their own shame in the broader context of achieving justice and healing.

Table 7

Insights from Survivors: Key Themes from TFSV Interview Analysis

Survivors' experiences of TFSV



Survivor Characteristics, Perpetrator Identities, and Digital Environments in TFSV

- **Characteristics of survivors**

The following discussion analyzes the basic characteristics such as the age, gender, educational level of the victims and the perpetrators as well as the relationship between them as emerged from the analysis of the interviews with the survivors. Overall, among the participants of this research, the majority were women (n=26, 93%) and only two males (7%). The participants in this research talked about their relationships with the opposite sex without revealing more information about their sexual preferences. Their ages ranged from 19 to 45. Most of the survivors (n=24 out of 28, 86%) were still minors when their sexual material was published non-consensually on the internet. It is important to note that the specific findings are important to shed light on the phenomenon of technology-facilitated sexual violence and to better understand who may be survivors and perpetrators; however, due to a limitation in the number of the sample, we cannot draw general conclusions.

Corresponding results of related research also demonstrate that survivors of non-consensual distribution of sexual material are mainly young women and non-heterosexual people. For instance, Gámez-Guadix et al. (2015) reported that women and young individuals (e.g., 25-35 years), as well as non-heterosexuals, were more likely to be the victims of the perpetrator's distribution or dissemination of sexual

photos or material of the victim without his or her will. However, it should be noted that although someone reviewing the current research's findings could presume that the majority of those who experience TFSV are women, this would be an arbitrary conclusion. This mainly occurs because it is exceedingly challenging to determine the extent of sexual violence against males with any degree of accuracy. There isn't much data on sexual assault since many men and boys are very reluctant to disclose such information (Russell, 2007; Touquet & Gorris, 2016). According to Hlavka (2016), this underreporting is frequently brought on by the shame and stigma associated with sexual victimization, and the scant statistical data on this subject most likely underestimates the true number of male survivors.

Furthermore, most of this study's participants, whose ages ranged from 19 to 45, were in their 20s when they experienced TFSV. The vast majority of the survivors in this research (n=25, 89%) are people with a high level of education, specifically university education. Moreover, most of the survivors (n=26, 93%) were single at the time of the interview without children, while only two people (7%) participating in the research reported that they were divorced and had one child each. However, most of the research on TFSV that has been carried out so far focuses on the adult population (see, for example, Thompson & Morrison, 2013; and Drouin et al., 2015). In contrast to other research findings on the victimization during adulthood (see also, for example, Powell and Henry, 2019), the current research findings suggest that the non-consensual leakage of the sexual material happened when the

majority (93%) of the participants in this research were still minors and specifically during the period of their pre-adolescence and adolescence, that is, between the ages of 13 and 15. For example, consider the following quotes from two of the participants:

I had sent [pictures] while I was in another relationship many years ago, when I was 15 years old, I wonder why his request didn't bother me so I wouldn't send anything. In any case, it's done, it doesn't change. There were 2 photos that changed my life radically. **(Ifigenia, 24 years old)**

It was my first serious relationship. I was 15 at the time and he was 19. When we broke up, he sent [the pictures] to others. I stopped going to school when this all started. **(Katerina, 26 years old).**

Only two of the participants (7%) in this research reported being victimized during their adulthood and, more specifically, when they were married. In particular, one woman participating in this research reported that during a period when she was not getting along very well with her husband, she began chatting on social media with a much younger man who then shared nude photos without her consent.

He knew what he was talking about, he knew who I was, he knew I was married, I had raised a child, and yet he posted my photos. Of course, he didn't admit that he did it. He said someone had hacked my cell phone. **(Stella, 45 years old)**

A man participating in this research stated he was 31 years old when he started chatting with an unknown woman on Instagram. He said he fell in love with her from the first moment without having seen her in person. After a month, she asked him to send her a video of himself masturbating. Within hours, this video had been sent via chat to his friends and relatives without any warning. As he said:

I don't know how I hit it off with this woman given that I had previous love experiences and I never believe that at 31 years old a woman would deceive me like this by exposing my sex life, even to the eyes of my younger sister. (**Kostas, 33 years old**).

The findings of the current research may also highlight something new for further investigation regarding the profile of the survivors of TFSV. To date, little study has been done on adult sexual victimization online, including digital sexual harassment (see, for example, Thompson & Morrison, 2013; Drouin et al., 2015; Powell and Henry, 2019). These studies focus mainly on the nature and the different forms of TFSV, such as digital harassment or image-based abuse, and on the gender of individuals who have been affected by these phenomena. However, these studies have not focused on other factors linked to the identity of survivors of TFSV, such as their mental health history or whether they had been survivors of some other form of violence in the past.

Although the data of the current research are not sufficient to draw general conclusions due to the limitation of the sample number, they may nevertheless demonstrate a new aspect of the survivor profile that deserves further investigation for a better understanding of the phenomenon of TFSV. In particular, three of the women (11%) participating in this research mentioned that prior to their victimization due to TFSV, they had a history of mental trauma or abuse.

One participant reported that a video of her making love to her boyfriend was filmed and distributed without her consent, at a time when she was simultaneously struggling with anorexia nervosa:

When the recording was over, I was exhausted, ready to pass out, crap, I didn't enjoy anything, I clearly did it for him. I was 37-40 kilos, it was not a woman's body, it was a child's body. (**Melina, 19 years old**).

Another participant also noted that even before her victimisation she had been suffering from depression:

Even before the photos were leaked, I was depressed. In general, I have experienced a lot of traumas in my life. And I have also experienced physical violence and abuse. There was one time when we were playing a game with my friends. I was 13 years old then. And, anyway, they said with such a card you will enter the room and you will do whatever we say. And I say no, I'm not undressing, but one of them did it by force, and they also hit me. (**Glykeria, 21 years old**).

There was also a female survivor of TFSV who reported that she had also been a rape survivor in the past.

At the age of 15, in my teenage years, I was raped by a friend and got pregnant. I didn't tell my mom. I only told her that I got pregnant. I didn't explain to her how. Mom took me and I had an abortion. (**Emma, 25 years old**)

- **Features of perpetrators**

Little is known about how adults respond to technology-facilitated sexual violence victimization and about the survivor's relationship with the offender when it comes to the gendered character of TFSV (Huiskes et al., 2022). Powell and Henry (2016) reported that participants in their study were more likely to say that the TFSV

offender was a stranger to the victims (28.2%), a friend they knew face-to-face (21.8%), or that they did not know the perpetrator's identity (16.6%). However, the findings of this research suggest that perpetrators of TFSV are predominantly ex-partners of survivors. Specifically, the majority of the current study's participants reported that the person who had committed TFSV against them was either their former romantic partner (n=15, 54%) or their romantic partner at the time (n=3, 11%), while others have also mentioned their close friends and classmates (n=7, 25%), hackers (n=2, 7%) and themselves posting on anonymous websites (n=1, 3%).

In particular, the 54% of the participants (n= fifteen out of the twenty-eight participants) of the current research reported that their sexual material was published by their former romantic partner without their consent when their relationship had come to an end. The same number of people (fifteen out of twenty-eight) reported that the partner was at least three to five years older than them and that the relationship they maintained with the perpetrator was long-term with a duration of one to three years. Consider, for example, a fragment taken from the interview with Evangelia:

I had dated a guy and, anyway, we were together for three years. I trusted him very much and I don't know why, but I was very attached to him. One day we just decided to move on. He told me I was his first. And, anyway, I was at home, and we did what we had to do anyway, and he tells me to make a sex tape just to see what it's like and then he will delete it. But not only did he not delete it, but he also sent it to his friends. **(Evangelia, 19 years old)**

Of those 15 participants who stated that the material was posted by their ex-partner, only one participant reported that there were signs of abuse during their relationship that preceded the posting of the material.

He was studying in Bulgaria throughout the relationship. We weren't fighting from the beginning, but from the middle onwards, after we had more intimacy. I had seen some abusive signs. That is, he grabbed me by the throat once, I couldn't breathe. But it wasn't so serious. That is, he didn't hit me. Plus, he was cheating on me. **(Ria, 22 years old)**

Another woman out of the 15 participants reported that she found out afterwards that her ex-partner who posted her nude photos without her consent when they broke up used to do this to every girl he broke up with. Specifically, he had a collection of nude photos of his former romantic partners which were posted anonymously on pornographic sites.

He had material, photos, and videos, from many of his exes. I didn't expect it. I was shocked. He was taking naked pictures of his girlfriends from the waist up and when he broke up, he decided to publish them on the internet. He just didn't publish them under his name. **(Eleni, 23 years old)**

In addition to former romantic partners, the findings of this research suggest that perpetrators of non-consensual distribution of sexual material were also current romantic partners of the survivors when the incident of TFSV occurred. In this study, three participants in particular described how the perpetrators were insistent on taking pictures or recording videos with sexual content during their relationships with them.

He was insisting on my sending him nude pictures of myself. I didn't feel comfortable, I didn't want to. Anyway, when he went to the army, I sent him some pictures in underwear. I was 15 years old then. Then, he asked for more and more. He kept telling me to take off the bra too. When I turned 17 years old, he took a video of us making love. I had my back turned. I hadn't understood anything. In the following days, his behaviour was strange. He was constantly texting on his cell phone and when I approached him to see what he was doing, he moved away. On some occasion when he went to the kiosk to buy cigarettes, he left his cell phone at home. I had memorized his password and unlocked it. He was sending that video to his friends, both male and female, and he was saying 'look what a p****y I'm f****ng with.' **(Melina, 19 years old)**

I had made it clear to him and I had told him 'Look, Aris, I have a grown child and I don't want to get into such stuff and send you naked photos of myself.'" He insisted. The truth is that he convinced me because I was in love with him, and I was afraid to lose him. We had gone for a ride in the car, we took some photos, I deleted the photos after sending them, just after two to three seconds. He apparently took a screenshot and some of these photos have been published. **(Stella, 45 years old)**

Yet, in addition to their former and current romantic partners, there are seven participants (25%) of the current research who claimed that other persons in their immediate circle, such as friends and classmates, published their sexually explicit material without their consent. One participant shared that she met a boy her age on Instagram when she was 15 years old, and they had a long flirtation. After a few months, the boy began to request that she email him pictures of herself in her underwear. Despite her initial reluctance, she eventually decided to send him images since, as she had previously indicated, despite the fact that they hadn't yet met in person, she was in love with him. When the photos were finally posted online without her consent and even reached her classmates and teachers, she found out that this boy's profile was

fake and belonged to her best friend and some other kids from her village who had set her up through this fraud.

She didn't own this profile. Additionally, other kids from my town ran the profile, which led to a lot of people making fun of me because of it. I believed I was simply chatting with one guy, but I was actually conversing with several men. As a result, not only the kids in my village but also the kids in nearby villages had seen my images. I'm not sure what they were hoping to achieve from what they did to me. I just know that my pictures spread like wildfire. **(Zoi, 20 years old)**.

Another participant said that the person who shared her naked pictures without her permission was neither her romantic partner nor a close friend; rather, he was only a classmate, and she is still unsure of how he obtained her naked pictures.

He wasn't my boyfriend. He wasn't a high schooler with whom I was close. He was one of my school classmates. He maintained a record of nude photographs and released them since he was aware of which girls were in relationships. He looked through their profiles, read chats, and other things. **(Ifigenia, 24 years old)**

Something similar happened to another female participant in this research who reported that while she was still a student, at some point she went to the school toilet and a classmate of hers started taking pictures of her without her knowledge and then published these pictures on the internet without her consent.

I was in the 3rd year of high school at the time and a classmate of mine took pictures of me when I went to the bathroom. He took pictures of my butt. He sent these pictures to a lot of men, adults, while he himself was an adult. I was 17 at the time and he was 19, I think. **(Savina, 22 years old)**

In addition, one participant in this study reported how she was victimized by her friends and classmates when during a school party

she and her romantic partner had a special romantic moment in one of the rooms of the house where the party was taking place. During this party, some of their friends had placed hidden cameras, videotaped them, and then leaked the video without their consent.

The party was at my best friend's house, and I later found out that he was the one who proposed to videotape us during while my boyfriend and I were making love without our knowledge. **(Kornilia, 22 years old)**

Similar to the current research findings, Huiskes et. al. (2022) found that almost one in four of all self-identified TFSV survivors reported that their perpetrator was an intimate partner/date (23.9%) or a friend they knew face to face (23.9%). One in five reported that they did not know the identity of the person (20.4%). Likewise, two research participants stated that an unidentified offender engaged in some hacking activities and exposed their private sexually explicit material.

"I have learned from the police officers of the Cybercrime Department that this video was uploaded by someone with a Spanish IP and was downloaded elsewhere." **(Emma, 25 years old)**

I was informed by the police that the specific message was phishing and, when I clicked on the link it contained, a hacker gained access to my computer and from there found my nude photo and then published it online. **(Christina, 29 years old).**

In this particular research, there was also the case of a girl who on her own published, as she herself reported, her nude photos on an anonymous platform when she was only 12 years old, something she later regretted but it was already too late because the photos had gone

viral and, to this day, they continue to get republished on pornographic sites.

I was 12 years old. I really don't know what was going through my mind. Then, I didn't even realize that when [the photo] gets uploaded and downloaded, it stays forever. (**Sandra, 23 years old**).

It is noteworthy that previous research (see, for example, Bryce & Fraser, 2014; Jonsson et al., 2015; Beldad and Hegner, 2017) on the behaviour of young people sharing intimate photos online has also identified several factors that contribute to their actions and subsequent regret such as:

1. *Peer Pressure and Social Norms*: Young people might feel pressured to conform to their peers' behaviours, especially in the context of social media platforms where sharing personal information and images is common (see, for example, Sherman et al., 2016; Abeelee et al. 2014; Walrave et al.2014).
2. *Privacy Concerns*: Many young individuals might not fully grasp the long-term implications of sharing explicit images online. They may not realize that these images can be easily shared beyond their intended audience and can remain accessible even after they delete them (see, for example, Shin & Kang, 2016; Baek et al., 2014).
3. *Seeking Validation*: Some young people seek validation, attention, or approval through the sharing of explicit images.

They might believe that doing so will enhance their social status or popularity (Ali et al., 2015).

4. *Online Anonymity*: The perceived anonymity of online platforms can lead young people to feel more comfortable sharing intimate content, thinking they won't be recognized or linked back to these actions in the future (Andalibi et al., 2018).

- **The Role of Mainstream Digital Platforms in Non-Consensual Content Distribution**

The findings of this research showed that the distribution of non-consensual sexual content was made in three main ways. Such material was mainly posted on pornographic websites, on dating websites or shared via social media applications. For instance, four individuals (14%) revealed that their images were being shared anonymously for years on sites like “Volafile.org,” “Chatpic.org,” “xhamster.com.” In fact, they said that despite their repeated attempts and conversations with the owners of the digital platforms, new uploaders were submitting the same material repeatedly.

Since no one else was interested, my boyfriend and I were forced to work as investigators. We discovered my photos on a variety of websites, including xhamster, tubex, and pornhub. Unfortunately, my material has been published elsewhere several times, and we are constantly filling reports. I'm not sure what else to do, really. This is now my worst nightmare. My partner and I are always doing research; we check these websites five to six times every day to see if any of my images have been posted again. **(Glykeria, 21 years old)**

The fact that I was still a kid when these images were shot is the most insane thing. So, Volatile and Chatpic are websites that host child pornography as well as sexual content without the consent of individuals who are depicted in it. **(Evangelia, 19 years old)**

But, in addition to anonymous platforms, two out of twenty-eight participants (7%) in this research reported that their photos were published along with their full details such as name and place of residence on dating websites. According to the participants, the captions on their images originally said that they were professional prostitutes asking for clients to have sex with them for a charge.

He went through the process of creating a regular profile on the dating site with my details. I realized this when I started getting emails from men asking to pay me to make love to them. **(Emma, 25 years old)**

My personal phone number has received calls from strangers asking me how much I charge for a blowjob after he posted my photo on sex advertisements. **(Olympia, 30 years old).**

However, the vast majority of survivors (78%) in this study indicated that their sexual content started to circulate non-consensually through various forms of social networking sites. In particular, twenty-two out of the twenty-eight participants in this study claimed that they often received notifications by their friends or just followers that their sexual content had been shared on social media. In other cases, the images were not shared via chat, but rather uploaded on private channels with particular hashtags.

‘Are you out of your mind?’ a friend of mine texted me. And I asked him ‘What do you mean?’ He told me that there are some videos of myself engaging in sexual activities with a guy. I was screaming at him, telling him to delete it immediately. But he had

already forwarded it to other groups on Discord and shared it with other guys. **(Evangelia, 19 years old)**

My boyfriend went out with his friends on New Year's Eve after discovering that one of them had photos of me. When my boyfriend questioned him about how he obtained these photographs of myself in my underwear, he said that someone else had sent them to him over Instagram. **(Fani, 27 years old).**

Overall, the research findings reveal that the majority of participants were women (93%) with ages ranging from 19 to 45, and a significant proportion (86%) experienced non-consensual publication of their sexual material while they were still minors, primarily during their pre-adolescence and adolescence. A noteworthy finding is that 89% of survivors had a high level of education, often at the university level. Additionally, 11% of participating women reported a history of mental trauma or abuse prior to experiencing TFSV. Perpetrators of such violence were typically former romantic partners (54%) or current romantic partners (11%), with other instances involving close friends, classmates, hackers, or self-posting on anonymous websites. The distribution of non-consensual sexual content occurred mainly on pornographic websites, dating websites, or social media applications, with a substantial majority (78%) indicating that their sexual content started circulating on social networking sites, often resulting in notifications from friends or followers. While these findings shed light on the survivor profile, the limitations of the sample size underscore the need for further research to better understand the phenomenon of TFSV.

Relationships and Societal Responses to Victimization

The findings of this study also highlight intriguing connections related to the relationships of survivors following their TFSV victimization. Specifically, the following data are analysed in three main sub-categories of themes: i) family responses to TFSV, ii) previous victimisation and subsequent partner attitudes, and iii) the impact of TFSV on friendships. From the results that emerged from the experiences of the 28 survivors who participated in this research, it appears that 22 out of 28 survivors (79%) were blamed by their family for their own victimization. On contrary, the 75% of the survivors described their subsequent partners' behaviour as very supportive. Regarding friendships, the findings of this research show that the impact of TFSV was not as severe, as 22 out of 28 victims (78%) stated that their friendships were not affected at all after the non-consensual publication of their sexual material. The following sections proceed with the analysis of the data regarding the social response, as the latter emerged in relation to survivors' experiences.

- **Family Responses to TFSV**

According to the interviewed survivors, TFSV had an impact on numerous aspects of their lives, such as their family life, subsequent dates/romantic relationships, friendships, and so on.

Using family life as a starting point, the majority of the participants in this research (n=22 out of 28, 79%) claimed that their connection with their family changed after they were victimized. The majority of the

participants stated that both of their parents blamed them for their own mistreatment.

They described being criticized by their parents as “ignorant” for giving their intimate images to someone else:

My parents told me that I had made a mistake. They said to me ‘Did you have to send your face too? Did you send him your naked photographs? Did you have to send your face too? What foolish thing did you do?’ (**Ifigenia, 24 years old**)

They expressed their embarrassment at my behaviour. They began ranting at me, claiming that it was my responsibility and that I should not have given my naked photos to my ex. They described my actions as childish and unsuitable for my age. (**Maria, 35 years old**)

Furthermore, according to the participants in this study, there was a distinct divide between mother and father, with numerous survivors opting to talk solely to their mother and conceal the incidence of their victimization from their father. Twenty-two survivors (79%) said that it was easier for them to talk about what happened to them in their mother's presence, and that they purposefully kept it from their father. The survivors' fathers, according to their descriptions, have more impulsive personalities and would either condemn the survivors for their victimization or respond aggressively against the perpetrator. For example, as Eva said:

If my father knew anything, he could kill my ex or he could have a heart attack. My father's mentality is from another age, and he would blame me... (**Eva, 28 years old**)

Even when fathers were informed that their child's sensitive personal information had been published online, their reactions were not what

the survivors had hoped for: on the one hand, they blamed the survivors for their victimization, while on the other hand, they underlined how society would now see their family as a result of this tragedy. Specifically, the 79% of the survivors have indicated that fathers are more concerned with what society believes about their children rather than how their own child feels. This has been mentioned several times in situations when the survivor was from a rural area.

Consider, for instance, this snippet from Melina's interview:

My father is a man who does not believe he can be degraded in the community. 'What will the village say?' I want to stop hearing this thing in my brain at last. In other words, he is more concerned with what the village would say about me than with what has occurred to me. And this annoys me so much that it nearly destroys me. (**Melina, 19 years old**).

It is unsurprising that some parents reject their children's sexual behaviour since they regard it as something that has to be pure (Valenti, 2010). Several extremely conservative family expectations of their children's sexuality have frequently been exposed in the media in Greece. For example, three years ago, the story of a 27-year-old woman who was forced to undergo a range of medical and polygraph tests to prove to her family that she was still a virgin went viral (Strange, 2015). In the same vein, sexting is an activity that is frowned upon by parents (Gong and Hoffman, 2012).

Furthermore, studies have shed light on family support, particularly as regards women who have been victims of intimate partner abuse (Frias and Agoff, 2015). The findings of a research on Mexican female victims of partner abuse were disheartening, implying that families do

not always help their victimized children (Frias and Agoff, 2015).

Forty-one percent of female participants, in particular, reported turning to public authorities without first disclosing what had happened to them to their families. Furthermore, 11% of participants stated that they did not seek assistance because they were afraid their family would find out about their abuse (Frias and Agoff, 2015).

Although the family can be quite judgemental at times, the findings of the present study reveal that there were other cases (n=2, 7%) when the parents were very supportive, which was essential for the survivor's mental health. Consider, for example, the following quotes:

They were supportive because they raised me to be the person I am now, teaching me that no matter what you wear, no one has the right to mistreat you in order to snap a picture of you. However, other families have a different perspective; they believe that the way you dress and say something might convey a more sexual message than it should, and who can evaluate that? It is totally subjective... **(Savina, 23 years old)**

I wish I had mentioned what happened to me sooner; they were really helpful. **(Kornilia, 22 years old)**

There were, however, some parents who were neither critical nor supportive. In two situations, the participants (n=2, 7%) said that when they discussed their victimization with their parents, the latter did not take the matter seriously or even feigned not to know afterwards. For example:

My parents instructed me not to deal with him because it's a waste of time. **(Olympia, 30 years old)**

They acted as if I hadn't told them. I believe it was too much for them to handle. **(Sonia, 33 years old)**

However, two participants (7%) in this research decided not to tell either of their parents about their abuse. They were either humiliated or scared that if their parents discovered that their child's sensitive sexual content had been released online, it would harm their family bonds.

They'd start whining. My mother's brother works at the police station and if he found out, he'd start judging me as well, so that's why I didn't file a report. **(Kathy, 30 years old)**

I was ashamed of what I did to them, of what I did to me. **(Emma, 25 years old)**

Research on intimate relationship abuse has also shed light on female victims' self-blaming. According to research, women who hold particular gender role views are less likely to reveal their victimization (Miller and Porter, 1983). This is possible because female survivors are often blamed for inciting the aggressive behaviour that leads to their victimization (Miller and Porter, 1983).

However, literature on intimate partner violence has emphasized the need for a supportive family context for survivor rehabilitation.

According to Weiss (2013), family members should constantly stand next to the survivor, listening to his or her experiences while being ready to encourage him or her. Citron and Franks (2014) also state that family support is important for the psychological well-being of the survivors of TFSV.

- **Previous Victimization and Subsequent Partners Attitudes**

The majority (75%) of the survivors rated their subsequent partners' behaviour as highly supportive. Within the context of the aftermath of non-consensual distribution of intimate material, the following quotes exemplify the significant role that a supportive romantic partner plays in aiding the survivor's recovery and resilience:

I never thought I'd find someone who would stand by me through the darkest chapter of my life. When my intimate moments were cruelly exploited without my consent, it shattered my trust and self-esteem. But in the arms of my loving partner, I found not just solace, but strength. He helped me rebuild my confidence. **(Olympia, 30 years old)**

In the aftermath of my intimate images being shared without my consent, I felt exposed and violated, like I had lost control over my own body and story. But my partner showed me what true love means. They stood beside me, reminding me that I was more than a victim, and worthy of love. **(Kornilia, 22 years old)**

However, seven participants (25%) mentioned that after their victimization, they did not want to become involved in any serious romantic relationships again.

Consider, for example, the following quotes:

I will never go into a relationship after that. This is clear. I do not want to ever have a relationship again. I do not want to get married. I do not want to have children. I do not want anything. I hate everything after what happened to me. **(Melina, 19 years old).**

I have not had a relationship since. I do not have the same confidence. I'm definitely afraid that if someone approaches me, they can approach me because they may have seen my photos and know. **(Eva, 28 years old)**

Although research on the influence of sexual coercion on later dating and romantic relationship experiences is lacking, several studies show that previous unpleasant experiences may have an impact on the quality of subsequent intimate relationships (Collibee and Wyndol, 2014). A study conducted on a sample of twenty-four young adults who had experienced sexual coercion by their ex-partners found that, regardless of whether the individuals received support from their subsequent partners, sexual coercion in the context of their former relationships had a negative impact on romantic experiences (Collibee and Wyndol, 2014). In contrast, another study which focused on female survivors of sexual assault found that women tend to disclose their unpleasant experiences to their subsequent partners in order to assess the strength of their present relationship and to discuss how they feel about their victimization (Lozano, 2015). The same data, however, show that, following the aforementioned revelation, the connection between the two partners changed, although participants were unable to explain how (Lozano, 2015). Franklin (2014) contends that individuals impacted by TFSV are less likely to have a future romantic encounter for fear of sexual coercion. Bloom (2014), commenting on the experiences of ‘revenge porn’ victims, says that the breach of trust that victims suffer might harm their future relationships.

- **The Impact of TFSV on Friendships**

In terms of how TFSV influenced the survivors’ friendships, participants in the current research reported no change. That is, their

friendships did not improve or deteriorate as a result of their victimization. Some of them (n=3, 11%), however, noted how they came closer to their friends since they were quite supportive:

Everyone among my friends was on my side, of course. I did not do anything bad. No one told me ‘You did it on purpose, or why did you do it?’ (**Kornilia, 22 years old**)

My close friends who found out were all by my side. I had tremendous support. In fact, I had to talk to some of them for 4-5 months, but all this brought us closer and strengthened our friendship. (**Melina, 19 years old**).

In general, research on survivors’ perceptions of social support has emphasized the significance of friendship in the healing process (Dakof and Taylor, 1990). Interestingly, research on fifty-five cancer patients found that connections with friends were more significant for the participants’ psychological well-being than relationships with close family members (Dakof and Taylor, 1990). Similarly, in the current study, survivors of TFSV considered their friends’ intervention as more helpful than their family’s intervention.

However, there were two survivors (7%) who reported major trust difficulties in their friendships after being victimized.

That is the major reason I am trusting a lot harder. And I have a lot of insecurities in general, as well as in my friendships, because I feel like I can no longer allow myself to be so close to someone because, first and foremost, I’m terrified of being abandoned, and secondly, I’m worried of doing something horrible to myself. (**Evangelia, 19 years old**).

For years after my victimisation, my personality has turned suspicious and sceptical. I do not trust other people easily although I am sociable and extroverted. (**Anastasia, 39 years old**).

However, there was a victim who said that she did not have the support she expected from her friendship environment as they did not know what to say to make her feel better.

They told me not to think about it. This was not so supportive, because telling me not to think about it or not to care does not help me at all. It is like being stressed and being told not to stress. **(Ioanna, 29 years old).**

Of all the victims, only one reported that when her friends learned that sexual material had been released on the internet, they stopped hanging out with her and cut off all contact.

I was told that I was not what I looked like, they started cursing at me, and I generally cut myself off from friends. **(Katerina, 26 years old).**

Overall, the findings of this research, based on the experiences of 28 survivors, reveal several key points related to relationships and social responses to victimisation. Evidently, a substantial majority of the survivors, comprising 78% of the sample, encountered familial blame in the aftermath of their victimization. Curiously, the impact of such violations on interpersonal relationships, particularly friendships, appears comparatively attenuated, with 78% of respondents asserting that their friendships remained unaffected following the non-consensual dissemination of their intimate material. Additionally, a noteworthy majority of survivors, constituting 79%, disclosed that they found it more comfortable to engage in discussions concerning their experiences within the maternal familial sphere, while consciously withholding this information from paternal figures. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that there were instances, albeit limited

(7%), where parents exhibited a commendable degree of support. Furthermore, a substantial 75% of survivors reported experiencing highly supportive behaviour from subsequent romantic partners, underscoring the pivotal role played by such partners in facilitating the process of recovery and resilience-building. Conversely, a non-negligible minority, comprising 25% of the participants, articulated their disinclination to engage in substantial romantic relationships subsequent to their victimization.

Impact of TFSV on Survivors

- **Impact of the Violation on Mental Health**

The vast majority of survivors who took part in this research, specifically 27 out of 28 (96%), stated that since their sexual material was published without their consent, their mental health was significantly affected, manifesting symptoms of anxiety, phobias, sleep problems, eating disorders, and even suicidal tendencies. The majority of participants reported having trust issues after surviving TFSV, in addition to the previously documented negative effects of TFSV on mental health. Fourteen out of twenty-eight (50%) of the participants in this research also experienced substantial levels of body shame and loss of control after their victimization, in addition to humiliation, anxiety, fury, worry for their personal/physical safety, and the need for hypervigilance.

- **Mental health issues: PTSD, anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts**

The majority of participants (n=27, 96%) in this research said that the release of their sexually explicit content had a negative impact on their mental health. Following their victimization, almost all respondents, regardless of their age, stated that they were formally diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression.

Furthermore, all research participants (n=28, 100%) reported feeling significant degrees of shame, anxiety, wrath, concern for their personal/physical safety, and the need for hypervigilance following the incident of TFSV. Many respondents cited some common words such as “humiliation,” “pain,” “trauma,” “hurtful,” and “suicide” when they were asked to identify words that sprang to mind when they attempted to describe their experience with TFSV.

A female participant characterized the non-consensual distribution of her nude photographs as “mental prison.” She mentioned that she did not know what TFSV was until her ex-intimate partner shared her nude photographs and this activity affected her psychological well-being in several ways:

I have not stopped thinking about suicide. I cannot do this thing; I would just prefer it if the girl in the photo were dead now. I can no longer bear to live what I live at all. I'm in a mental prison.
(Glykeria, 21 years old).

Another participant described that she had experienced suicidal thoughts and had even attempted to take her own life after her nude

photographs were distributed online without her consent. As she poignantly noted:

I wanted to hurt myself. I once tried to jump off the balcony, but there were people over there and they were looking for me and they stopped me. Another time, I tried to cut my veins.

(Evangelia, 19 years old)

Both previous and current research on sexual assault/abuse has indicated that survivors feel humiliated and suffer from severe mental health effects like PTSD and that they have higher anxiety and depression scores (Dario and O'neal, 2018; Mullen, et al., 1989). Moreover, research focused mainly on female sexual abuse suggests that women who have been abused in the past are more likely to suffer from psychopathological disorders for many years and usually blame themselves for the assault (Miller et al., 2010; Pico-Alfonso, 2002; Woody and Beldin, 2012). The medical term that is used to describe the mental health effects on rape survivors is called rape trauma syndrome. Rape trauma, in essence, is the way that a survivor responds when he or she has experienced a non-consensual and life-threatening situation (Burgess, 1983).

Given that TFSV can also be characterized as a non-consenting situation which involves several threats against an individual, it is easily understood why survivors of non-consensual distribution of material may suffer the same severe mental health effects as do sexual assault survivors. Evidently, TFSV does not involve a physical attack against a survivor's body, but, as Bloom (2014) explains, TFSV

survivors—especially teenage and young ones—could even demonstrate suicidal behaviour.

Apart from cases of rape and sexual assault, research has also shed light on the effects of the violence instigated by an intimate partner on a survivor's mental health. In particular, it has been suggested that women who have been exposed to physical or psychological intimate partner violence are more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety symptoms, PTSD, and suicidal thoughts than the women who have not experienced intimate partner violence. Citron and Franks (2014) assert that non-consensual pornography could be considered a form of intimate partner violence.

Another common point in the answers of most of the participants in this research was the withdrawal of the survivors from their social circle immediately after the publication of the material, despite the fact that the majority of them had very supportive friends (see the section above for further details related to the impact of TFSV on friendships). According to the participants in this study, they were withdrawn immediately after their victimization and, for a period of at least one to two years, their social life changed dramatically.

I was constantly locked in the house with music, constantly listening to music. I did not go out, I did not go anywhere, I did not go for walks or anything. I did not get up, I remember I was taking my food and eating in bed; that is, I did nothing. I do not remember how long, a year for sure, maybe more. (**Kornilia, 22 years old**)

Indeed, research on survivors of traumatic experiences (see, for example, Gagnier & Collin-Vézina, 2016; Peter, 2008; Banyard &

Williams, 2007) suggest that survivors may withdraw or isolate themselves even when they have supportive friends for several reasons, as coping with trauma can be a complex and individualized process.

Some common explanations for this behaviour are:

1. *Shame and Guilt*: Survivors often grapple with feelings of shame and guilt, even when they were not at fault for the traumatic event. They may believe that they have somehow brought the trauma upon themselves or that they should have been able to prevent it. These feelings can be overwhelming and make them hesitant to share their experiences, leading to withdrawal (see, for example, Plante et al., 2022; Maercker & Horn, 2012).

2. *Emotional Overload*: Trauma can result in intense emotions, such as fear, anger, sadness, and confusion. These emotions can be difficult to process and share with others. Survivors might worry that their friends won't be able to handle their emotional intensity or that discussing the trauma will only exacerbate their distress.

3. *Avoidance Coping*: Some survivors use avoidance as a coping mechanism. They may try to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event as a way to protect themselves from the painful memories and emotions associated with it. While this may provide temporary relief, it can also lead to isolation (see, for example, Elzy et al., 2013; Littleton et al., 2007; Bal et al., 2003).

Two survivors also reported eating disorders that occurred during the first two weeks after their sexually explicit material was found online without their consent.

From the moment I saw my nude pictures online, for a week I did not eat anything, not even a fruit. I was constantly having panic attacks. The next week after that, I kept vomiting five times a day. I have not felt more mentally ill than during these first two weeks. **(Efi, 19 years old)**

On the other hand, there were two cases of survivors who, despite being quite psychologically affected at first, then reported that they came out stronger than before with the help of friends, relatives, or specialists.

At the beginning, it was a strong shock because I am also a human being. Then, I changed my mind. I did not want to let him hurt me anymore. Sometimes after the bad, the good comes out; there is no such thing as bad publicity. **(Anastasia, 39 years old)**

Psychologically it had affected me, but now I try to think differently and to tell myself that it was just a mistake. I try to think positively. **(Katerina, 26 years old)**

There was also the case of a survivor who stated that she was not affected at all when the sexual material in which she was depicted leaked without her consent. In fact, this particular survivor justifies the fact that her mental health was not affected by placing emphasis on her personality and the way in which she had learned from an early age to love herself and to set boundaries to others and their actions.

It did not affect me much because as a person I am very dynamic, I have grown up in such a way that I know who I am and I do not wait for someone's actions to determine that for me. **(Savina, 22 years old)**

- **Loneliness and fear**

In addition to the aforementioned negative impacts of TFSV on mental health, the majority of the participants (n=26 out of 28, 93%) said they experienced trust difficulties after being victimized. When asked how they felt after their naked photographs or videos were posted online without their knowledge, the majority of the respondents used the words “*betrayed*,” “*helpless*,” “*isolated*,” and “*fear*.”

I have zero faith in humans. And I used to be quite outgoing, but now I keep my distance, I don't want to interact, and I am quieter. (**Katerina, 26 years old**).

Nobody is who he claims to be any more for me. I feel insecurity, fear. I feel that no matter what happens, I will be judged for it. So, when someone texts me, I feel like he will tell me something related to it. And it's ugly. (**Spiridoula, 30 years old**).

According to Joskowicz-Jablonek and Leiser (2013), once a person feels deceived by someone with whom they had a personal relationship, the harm is so severe that it can impair every part of that person's life. Literature reveals that individuals, particularly in the Internet era, have a predisposition to quickly trust others, but that this trust may be easily destroyed under specific conditions, leading to poor experiences in future interactions (Covey, 2008; Hans-Werner and Bernd, 2004). Children of divorced parents, for example, are more likely to have trust issues with their spouses in the future, according to a study (Lewis, 2013; Schaick and Stolberg, 2001). Traumatic events in adulthood, on the other hand, might lead to trust difficulties which can damage a person's interaction with future partners (Rodriguez et al., 2015).

Intimate betrayal is perhaps the most prevalent form of adult deception. When a person feels vulnerable in a romantic relationship, he or she may want to reclaim control by manipulating or punishing his or her partner (Rodriguez et al., 2015).

The nonconsensual sharing of nude photographs by a person seeking vengeance against an ex-intimate partner may also be viewed as a sort of intimate betrayal with grave ramifications for the survivor's life. Given the preceding explanation of betrayal and trust, it's easy to see why the majority of the study's participants felt deceived and had trust issues after being victimized.

It's also clear why so many of the survivors chose the word "fear" to characterize their revenge pornography experience. This dread primarily emerges from either a fear of stigmatization or a fear of re-victimization. According to Bloom (2014), TFSV survivors are afraid of being identified and publicly criticized once their naked photographs are posted online. In addition, according to Cecil (2014), most TFSV survivors strive to hide themselves by changing their true names and addresses, deleting their social media accounts, and quitting employment in order to reduce the chances of being re-victimized.

There were participants in this research who claimed that they had significant trust issues with later love relationships for fear that what happened to them in the past might happen to them again.

For instance, there was a participant who said that when she met with a new intimate partner during a nice and romantic moment, there was a

slight conflict between them because she was afraid that he might record their moment together without her consent:

When I met with a new boy for the first time, we met at his house. He put on some music on his computer and I told him ‘It’s okay if you want to put on music. I just want you to turn the screen the other way.’ He looked at me and laughed. And I told him I was serious; ‘do you see me laughing?’ And he told me ‘okay, relax.’ **(Melina, 19 years old)**

Another participant stated that she was even forced to emigrate because she thought that in any part of this country everyone would know how she looks naked.

I even moved to another country when this happened to me. That is, I had panic attacks to the point that I did not want to leave my house at all. I thought that anyone who knew me would do the same to me. I had reached a point where I even stopped sending my CV for job applications because I thought that each of the recruiters knew what had happened to me. **(Ioanna, 29 years old)**

However, on the other hand, there were two participants in this research who stated that the non-consensual distribution of their sexual material did not affect them in terms of confidence, since they still considered themselves very cautious and suspicious, as they pointed out:

I have always been suspicious, sceptical. I do not trust other people easily, although I am social and extroverted. **(Anastasia, 39 years old)**

I do not trust others easily anyway. **(Kostas, 31 years old)**

On the other hand, some stated that TFSV as a phenomenon affected the trust they showed in other people, but the impact on trust was short-

term when they received the appropriate support and guidance from a mental health professional.

Fortunately, I have a good psychologist, and he has told me that what I am going through now is existential, that I am starting to see that this is how the world is. **(Eva, 28 years old)**

It's important to highlight that the duration and intricacy of trust issues in individuals who have experienced trauma are influenced by a range of elements. Research conducted within the field of trauma psychology indicates that factors such as the nature and severity of the traumatic event, variations in individual coping mechanisms, the presence of concurrent mental health conditions, and the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions can collectively impact the speed of recovery (Foa et al., 2008; Cloitre et al., 2011). Furthermore, the level of social support available and the quality of therapeutic techniques, including evidence-based modalities, like cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) or eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), have been identified as significant factors (Hofmann et al., 2012; Bisson et al., 2013). It's imperative to acknowledge that the process of rebuilding trust is intricate and personalized, with some survivors experiencing rapid progress and others requiring more time and ongoing assistance (Herman, 1992).

- Body shame and loss of control

Apart from embarrassment, fear, rage, worry for personal/physical safety, and the need for hypervigilance, ten participants (36%) also

reported significant degrees of body shame and loss of control following their victimization.

For all these ten participants, the words “shame,” “powerless,” “isolated,” and “helpless” are strongly connected with the incident of TFSV. Two of them characteristically described how finding out that their nude photos/videos had been released online made them feel ashamed of their bodies and powerless to protect themselves from harm:

Since he shared my phone number, ten different persons have begun texting me on my phone. I despised the fact that everyone could see how I looked naked, but, still now, after three years, I cannot do anything to stop it. (**Glykeria, 21 years old**)

A stranger found me on Facebook and expressed his admiration for my nude figure. My full name was also shared by my ex, so he knew who I was. It was humiliating to realise that someone else had complete power over my life. (**Sonia, 33 years old**)

Individuals who are forced to act unwillingly frequently suffer a loss of control over their lives (Smith et al., 2002). Frazier (2003) proposed three categories of loss of control based on sexual assault victims: a) past loss of control, which occurs during the sexual assault, b) current loss of control, which refers to unsatisfactory interventions by the police and mental health professionals, and c) future loss of control, which refers to the inability to have control over re-victimization. All of the aforementioned categories of losing control are linked to significant degrees of suffering and trauma experienced after being a survivor of sexual assault (Walsh and Bruce, 2011).

Another thing that is interesting based on the reports of the participants in the context of the findings of the current research is that four survivors (14%) reported how after the non-consensual distribution of their sexual material they began to develop a poor self-image and, in particular, how such distribution negatively affected how they view their body.

As one of them explained characteristically:

I do not know, some of my relatives look at me with disgust and I often look at myself with disgust in the mirror when I am naked because I remember what happened. (**Emma, 25 years old**)

Moreover, along with the findings which suggest loss of control among the sexual assault survivors, research on abused women also indicates that abuse can be considered a traumatic experience which can shape victims' degree of control over their own lives (Coker et al., 2000).

- **Cyberstalking and its effects on survivors**

The results of the current study point to a close relationship between TFSV and cyberstalking. The term “cyber-stalking” is used to describe stalking that takes place in an online setting and is equivalent to traditional types of stalking in that it combines persistent behaviours that instil dread and terror (Spitzberg and Hoobler, 2002). When a woman leaves or makes an effort to leave a violent boyfriend, stalking alone has indeed been established as a risk factor for physical violence, including physical abuse and murder (Russell et. al., 1999). Participants in this study who were survivors of TFSV claimed that

they experienced cyberstalking by unidentified Internet users concurrent with the nonconsensual sharing of their personal information.

Particularly, the 64% of the participants (n=18 out of 28) described how cyberstalking altered their daily lives after the offender exposed sexually explicit content online without their consent. Survivors of TFSV mentioned a great variety of psychosomatic and mental health issues they experienced as a result of cyberstalking. The 36% of participants (n=10 out of 28) experienced sleep problems and a lack of trust in other people, after they had been cyberstalked. As some of them explained:

Receiving offensive messages from strangers has become a nightmare for me. Someone posted images and my personal data, including my name and age, on a website. I immediately erased all of my Facebook and other internet accounts with my last name after learning of this. And out of dread, I erased all of my social media accounts. Some strangers are so obsessed with me. They repeatedly upload my images while requesting further information about me, such as my home address. I'm terrified every time this occurs because I worry that they will discover where I live.
(Glykeria, 21 years old)

It's not only that he published my content without my permission. The problem is that, following that, thousands of strangers began stalking all of my online activity. In other words, I didn't think it was pornography; instead, I thought I was being harassed at the time, humiliated, and that everyone was looking at my naked body without my permission. All of this had a terrible impact on my mental health. I even recall some individuals leaving mocking comments about me in Instagram stories that they had uploaded. All of this impaired my ability to function; I was unable to read, work, or go for a walk. My thoughts were continuously focused on what they would upload next about me. They would publicly humiliate me in yet another way. **(Niki, 32 years old)**

One participant said that she and her brother both got inappropriate messages from strangers as a result of the non-consensual posting of the sexual content.

They would anonymously send my brother my pictures and tell him ‘Look at what your whore sister is doing.’ They started calling me on my phone in private and calling me a bitch and saying things like ‘I want to fuck you.’ ‘You have a gorgeous ass,’ a girl once wrote in a message to me on Instagram.
(Spiridoula, 25 years old)

The most intriguing aspect of the survivors’ accounts in this research is how, in situations where there was initially only one perpetrator—the person who shared the material—the number of perpetrators increased, as some repeatedly shared the material online, sent the victims threatening messages, and in some cases even began to harass them in person. Three victims described how the perpetrators switched from online to offline stalking. As one of them characteristically described:

I initially believed that what I was going through was psychological abuse before realizing it was stalking. Strangers would still pass by me on the street when I went to the beach in the summer and they would tell me that my ex wanted to kill me or burn me on fire, but it was okay because I was a whore.
(Sonia, 32 years old)

To summarize, the research findings underscore the substantial negative impact of non-consensual distribution of sexual material online on survivors' mental well-being. Nearly all survivors (96%, 27 out of 28) reported significant mental health repercussions, including anxiety, phobias, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, and even suicidal thoughts. Additionally, 50% of participants experienced body shame, loss of control, humiliation, anxiety, and a need for

hypervigilance, with two individuals developing eating disorders shortly after the incident.

Notably, there were instances of resilience, where survivors received support from friends, family, or professionals, or possessed strong self-love and boundary-setting skills. Nevertheless, the majority of participants (93%) reported enduring trust issues post-victimization, characterized by feelings of betrayal, helplessness, isolation, and fear. Furthermore, 36% of survivors grappled with body shame and loss of control, in addition to the emotions mentioned earlier. Significantly, 14% of participants reported a negative impact on their self-image, particularly concerning their bodies.

Cyberstalking emerged as a significant consequence, disrupting the lives of 64% of participants (18 out of 28). Survivors experienced various psychosomatic and mental health issues due to cyberstalking, including sleep disturbances and a pervasive lack of trust in others. Importantly, the research revealed situations where a single perpetrator turned into multiple perpetrators who engaged in both online and offline harassment, intensifying the survivor's distress.

Experiences of TFSV Survivors with Police in Greece

The discussion that follows focuses on significant segments of survivors' reports of incidents of TFSV submitted to the police. Two major subthemes emerged from the data of the current study. The first concerns survivors who either were hesitant to call the police after

experiencing TFSV or did not report their case to the police at all (25%). The second subtheme refers to the many difficulties the survivors face as regards the police's involvement when they reported their case (75%).

It is crucial to note at this point that out of the twenty-eight participants in this study, twenty-one (75%) chose to call the police in order to receive official assistance for their victimization, while seven (25%) decided not to do so at all. What is equally important based on the results of this research is that out of the twenty-one participants who reported their incident to the police, none stated that they had positive experiences from their interaction with the law and the authorities and from the treatment they received from the police.

In order to provide some context for the seven participants' decision not to contact and/or report their case to the police, it is helpful to first investigate the survivors' expectations when it comes to assistance seeking and to what the police could achieve.

According to the seven participants in this study, the reasons they decided against going to the police were that they either believed there would be no outcome, lacked trust, or did not want to relate their experiences to anybody else again. The main reasons why survivors who took part in this research chose not to file a report were mainly related to a lack of confidence in the authorities' ability as well as to the fear of being further stigmatized.

The following are a few examples of what some of them explained:

I never had any intention of reporting this to the police since, considering that I live in a village, not only would I not receive any assistance from the local police stations, but it would also make the matter worse. No confidentiality exists. The entire community would be informed once I complained to the local police station. **(Stella, 45 years old)**

I did not contact the police. I believe that I would continue to keep thinking of a situation that I was attempting to escape. These things are not solved overnight with a complaint. Additionally, the photo's dissemination was under control. It wasn't that widespread. Perhaps if I had complained, it would have grown in magnitude. **(Christiana, 34 years old)**

Relevant findings from research on sexual assault survivors show that many of them experience shame and choose not to report the incident to the police. For example, survivors of rape frequently characterize their experiences as demeaning and humiliating (Anderson and Doherty, 2008; Ullman, 1996), and these feelings can significantly discourage them from reporting the crimes committed against them to the police (Greenberg and Ruback, 1992).

According to the findings of the current research, another reason that seems to have prevented a survivor (out of seven who did not file a report) from contacting the authorities was the survivor's relationship with the abuser. In particular, one of the participants mentioned that she did not want to file a complaint with the authorities because the people who released her photos without her consent were her friends.

As she explained:

I believe the reason I didn't want to call the police was because the people who harmed me were my friends. I've known them since they were young kids, so I couldn't have imagined that one day I'd find myself accusing them in a courtroom. I didn't want to face everyone and go through the process of addressing this. I

believe it wouldn't be simple. It would be catastrophic. It would just make me feel worse about myself. For sure. I might have sobbed and generally been unable to talk, and I would not have liked any of this; the process would have affected me psychologically. **(Kornilia, 22 years old)**

The results of this study also indicate that the survivors' age (at the time of the incident) may have been a significant factor in their decision not to contact the authorities. After all, as mentioned in the chapter above, the vast majority of the participants in this research were still minors when their sexual material was released non-consensually.

Twenty-one participants (75%) in this research who reported going to the police for help indicated that they decided to speak to the authorities when they felt that the situation had escalated and there was no other solution. Survivors generally contacted the police when the situation had spiralled out of control, and the sexual material had also been sent to family members of the survivor. For more than two years, two-thirds of participants reported seeing their sexual content online on various websites and social media.

This indicates that many survivors were in a desperate situation when they requested for support:

Well, as long as it's me, it's alright. I'll simply accept it. When they started harassing my child, sending him my nude pictures, I said: 'This has got to end.' **(Maria, 35 years old).**

This suggests that many survivors had reached a point of despair by the time they asked for help.

However, even when survivors of TFSV approached the authorities, it is notable that all 21 participants in this study (75%) reported that their experiences with the police were only negative. Most survivors described a variety of disappointing follow-up experiences, with two main common subthemes arising: inadequate police support, as well as victim-blaming and inappropriate behaviour.

- **Inadequate Police Support**

The fact that ten participants out of twenty-one (who filed a police report) in this study stated that they had hoped to seek assistance and justice from the police but were unsuccessful in accomplishing this led to the first subtheme regarding the interaction of the police with survivors of TFSV. As these participants explained:

[...] the people in the department I visited gave me hope that a solution would be found. That it takes some time—perhaps even many months—for the content to be removed entirely from the internet. Finally, they informed me that there was nothing further they could do. I mean, I feel like I've been left helpless. They failed to assist me. The police officers were essentially useless or uninterested, so we basically did nothing. I strongly believe that. **(Anastasia, 28 years old).**

The police did not help me in any way. I said to the cybercrime prosecution, 'please do something, remove the video' and they refused, they said 'no.' I was asking them 'Why? Isn't this material mine?' **(Ismeni, 27 years old)**

I didn't get any aid, and I still don't, and I never will. And you know what? I realize that, generally speaking, any pervert may have freedom and that the notion that we were taught to live by—don't act badly because you'll end up in jail—is untrue. Everyone is free to do whatever they like, and justice is useless. Even my attorney has informed me that the prosecution will not take up my case since they have far more severe issues to deal with. In other

words, my problem isn't serious even though this person has been torturing me for the past three years because every time the content is published, I die, and he won't let me forget it. (**Eva, 28 years old**)

Another aspect of the police's passivity relates to collecting evidence.

Two participants commented on the difficulty in gathering proof to support their claims.

I received no substantial help from the police. They said that in order to help me they need tangible evidence and the like. What evidence do I have? I'm asking for help, what should I do? (**Ifigenia, 24 years old**)

When the images went viral, I went to the police. I was told by the police to gather any evidence I have. Thus I acted. I placed them on a single USB drive, including his threats and our discussions, but the police informed me that they would not be used as evidence. They said I may still submit a complaint against his person even if he denies responsibility. However, they said that, if he claims that he didn't do it, they will be unable to hold him accountable. (**Ioanna, 29 years old**)

Two participants recalled being told that their experiences weren't significant enough to constitute a criminal offence.

The first participant says that the local police officer discouraged her from making a complaint because he warned her that she would face consequences and more difficulties if she did. He only informed her that he would contact the offender to warn him not to repeat the offence. As the participant specifically explains:

The policeman told me that I would be held accountable because I didn't have enough evidence in my hands. And then he called my ex and told him 'not to curse at the girl in public on Facebook or upload pictures of her.' He told the police officer 'okay, sir,' then he deleted my photos for half an hour, and then uploaded them again. (**Olympia, 30 years old**)

Similarly, the second participant described that she reported to the police that her ex-partner had posted pornographic images of her on Facebook. She claimed the police told her that the images were not “improper enough,” and that this activity did not constitute a crime.

- **Victim Blaming and Inappropriate Behaviour**

Ten participants out of the twenty-one who filed a police report spoke negatively about the police because of their inactivity (see above), while eleven of them (out of 21) complained about the police because they believed their behaviour or actions were undignified.

The victim-blaming reaction, in which victims were made to feel guilty and told they should modify their attitude, is the second subtheme in this context. Several survivors received advice to quit using social media in order to stay away from the offender, while others claimed they had been criticized by police officers for sending nude photographs or making wrong decisions.

The way the cops treated me was terrible. I believed that I was the one who committed the crime and not the man who took something from me without my permission. I thought that I was to blame for filing a complaint. **(Eleni, 23 years old)**

In general, the policeman did not treat me well at all and almost attempted to throw me out because it was my fault. He told me that I should not have sent such revealing photos and that this is unethical and dangerous. He was also racist because he told me ‘you got involved with an Albanian, what did you expect? We can't do anything about you.’ **(Anastasia, 29 years old).**

Similarly, research on sexual violence survivors shows that police commonly react to adult rape survivors by blaming them for the crime

and refusing to believe their narratives (see, for example, Campbell, 2008). Additionally, according to a study by Greeson et al. (2016), although negative comments had an adverse effect on the emotions of sexual violence survivors and made them feel hopeless about their cases, positive responses encouraged disclosure to the police and had a beneficial impact on survivors' emotions.

However, the findings of the current research, apart from victim-blaming behaviours, also point to the reluctance of police officers to provide assistance. Specifically, one participant said that after having filed a police complaint, her footage was still being shared on pornographic websites along with her personal details, causing her to get obscene messages from dozens of random people on a daily basis. When she called the police, the officer told her that he had more important things to handle and that all she needed to do in order to stop being disturbed by strangers was to stop responding to such nasty comments and delete her social media accounts.

It didn't make any sense to me. Since everyone knew where I lived, I called the police to ask for assistance because I was starting to worry even about my physical integrity. The police officer only gave me the advice to simply delete my social media accounts and said that it was my responsibility to ensure that I do not read such messages. (**Olympa, 30 years old**).

The most stunning description, however, came from a woman who said that she felt sexually harassed by the police officer after he saw nude images of her that were shared online, in addition to being blamed for her victimisation by the same officer.

When I went to the department, the officer had a strange smirk on his face and said to me ‘when I saw the photos, I said, Niki, what kind of woman are you?’ As if he started flirting with me after that. **(Niki, 32 years old)**

Overall, this section delves into survivors’ experiences when reporting incidents of TFSV to the police, revealing two prominent themes within the data. First, a portion of survivors, roughly 25%, expressed hesitation or chose not to report their cases to the police. Second, the majority of survivors, constituting 75%, encountered significant difficulties in their interactions with the police when they did report these incidents.

Among the survivors in the study, 75% decided to contact the police for official assistance, while the remaining 25% refrained from doing so. Strikingly, none of the survivors who reported their cases to the police reported having positive experiences with law enforcement or authorities, nor did they feel they received adequate support.

The decision not to involve the police often stemmed from various factors, including a lack of confidence in law enforcement, mistrust in the system, and a reluctance to revisit their traumatic experiences or risk further stigmatization. For instance, some participants feared that reporting in small communities would lead to a lack of confidentiality and widespread gossip.

Another significant factor influencing the decision not to report was the survivor’s relationship with the abuser. In cases where the perpetrators were friends or acquaintances, survivors found it emotionally challenging to initiate legal proceedings.

Furthermore, the age of the victims at the time of the incident played a role, with many being minors when their non-consensual sexual material was shared. This likely affected their decision-making processes.

Survivors typically resorted to involving the police when their situations escalated, especially when the material was sent to family members, reflecting a sense of desperation and hopelessness.

However, even when survivors approached the authorities, their experiences were overwhelmingly negative. All 21 participants who reported their cases to the police (75%) reported unsatisfactory interactions. Key issues included inadequate police support, victim-blaming attitudes, and inappropriate behaviour from law enforcement officers.

Inadequate police support was a recurring problem, with survivors often feeling that their complaints went unanswered or that the authorities were uninterested in their cases. Gathering evidence also proved difficult for some, as they were told that tangible proof was needed to support their claims.

Victim-blaming was another distressing theme, with survivors made to feel responsible for their victimization. Some were advised to quit using social media, criticized for sending explicit images, or faced racism and derogatory comments from police officers.

In addition to victim-blaming, survivors reported that some police officers exhibited reluctance to assist, providing unhelpful advice such

as deleting social media accounts rather than addressing the core issue. In extreme cases, unprofessional conduct, including inappropriate comments about the survivors' images, compounded their distress.

In summary, this chapter underscores the significant challenges faced by survivors of TFSV when interacting with law enforcement. Many grapple with negative experiences, ranging from reluctance to report and inadequate police responses to victim-blaming and unprofessional behaviour, which can exacerbate the trauma of their initial victimization.

Experiences of TFSV Survivors with Mental Health Services in Greece

As mentioned above, even though the 96% of the survivors participating in the current study argue that they have been experiencing psychological aftereffects that persist for months or even years after the incident (see, for example, the above chapter related to mental health issues), they do not demonstrate a shift in the usage of mental health services over time. According to the participants in the current research, they might not often seek mental health assistance in response to the technology-facilitated sexual abuse, but they might do so later in life.

More specifically, the majority of the participants of this research (n=16 out of 28, 57%) in this study stated that they preferred not to seek help from a mental health professional despite the fact that the nonconsensual distribution of their sexual material and their online exposure caused them to experience multiple psychological traumas. In particular, these

participants claimed that they had not even considered contacting mental health organizations for help because they believed they could handle what had occurred to them on their own or with the support of their own people. In other words, these participants reported that they were strong enough to handle it on their own, with the help of their parents and close friends, despite their very young age.

I didn't go to a mental health expert. Whom should I speak with? My parents are here. I feel that the support from my own people is much more valuable than advice from an expert. **(Olympia, 30 years old)**

As one participant explained, she did not want to visit a mental health specialist because she did not have a good experience in the past:

My parents advised me to consult a mental health professional. However, I had previously been the victim of sexual assault. I stated that I didn't want to consult a specialist for this reason. I promised myself and my friends that I would get over it just like I did the first time. And yes, it did seem like a second rape to me. My sister urged me to visit a mental health centre, but since I've done this before, no one else needs to know how it feels. **(Emma, 25 years old)**

On the other hand, there were also two participants who mentioned that the fact that they took responsibility for their victimization on their own made them decide that they did not need specialized support from a mental health specialist. As they commented:

For me, this specific incident wasn't all that serious. I don't dispute the seriousness of the non-consensual sharing nude images or the significant psychological harm it does to other women. It's a serious event, but not for me. I wouldn't let other people's immaturity lead me to lose my mental stability. Visiting a psychologist is not a negative thing for me and I would do so, if I thought I couldn't handle it on my own, just like I have done with other professionals. **(Savina, 22 years old)**

I didn't feel it had a big impact on me. I mean, I didn't let it really impact me because I also received emotional support from my mom, and I also found support from my boyfriend. **(Ifigenia, 24 year old)**

On the other hand, one participant claimed that no amount of assistance would be sufficient to make her feel better. She also mentioned how extremely fatigued she felt after years of therapy and trips to psychiatrists' and psychotherapists' offices, and how no amount of counselling or medication was able to make her feel better in the end.

I take Lamictal, Seroquel, Zoloft, Zyprexa, Azapin, and Tavor. And on Monday I'll be in the hospital once more. I still occasionally consider suicide. I can't do it; I mean I'd rather the girl in the photo had been dead now. I really cannot bear living the way I am now living. **(Glykeria, 21 years old)**

Although they would have liked to, two participants said they delayed seeing a mental health professional because they found it exceedingly difficult to discuss their feelings with others. They were worried that by doing this, their victimization would be reborn.

I wanted to talk to someone, but every time I considered doing so, a weight in my chest, shortness of breath, and trembling in my legs took over me. The incident had a significant psychological impact on me, and I was unable to adequately explain it. I wish I had the confidence to share how I was feeling with a psychologist, but I have never done so. **(Christina, 29 years old)**

I thought about it countless times. I only believed that I couldn't manage it. I was unable to speak to anyone about it. I wanted to express my feelings to someone, but I was at a loss for words. **(Zoi, 20 years old)**

Five participants, however, stated that they trusted neither a formal government mental health system nor a private mental health

practitioner, which is why they never sought treatment from any of them. As they argued:

Psychologists haven't generally been helpful to me. Even though I had been there previously, nothing seemed to have changed. **(Evangelia, 19 years old)**

The reality is that I don't have a lot of trust, therefore I didn't want to visit a psychologist. I suppose my parents ought to be aware of what happened to me. But I didn't want them to know, and I was even concerned that my family might find out if I saw a psychologist. **(Efi, 24 years old)**

Even when research participants sought treatment for symptoms, the service provider did not raise the subject of victimization. As two participants mentioned:

I think there is a lack of information on online victimization. Numerous psychologists and psychiatrists have seen me. Everyone is not treated the same way. And I've been victimized by a psychotherapist who, in addition to not treating me like an abuse victim, blamed me for failing to create boundaries in my relationship. **(Ria, 22 years, old)**

I spent eight months seeing a psychologist. I had already seen a number of different mental health professionals. But I still don't believe that the individuals I talked to about these issues could do more to support me. I'm switching psychologists right now because I think my therapist doesn't understand how I became a victim. For instance, since he had earned my trust, I informed him of what had happened to me and then he said, 'Okay, when someone has such an issue, they toss it away as if it has never happened, and that's the end of the problem.' I felt horrible when he said this to me. I mean, come on, the apparent first-choice remedy is that it should never have happened in the first place, but what can a person do after being victimised? **(Sonia, 32 years old)**

However, three individuals in this study also claimed that going to a mental health professional considerably benefited them by improving their quality of life. Notably, none of the three individuals sought

treatment from a public mental health facility, but rather from a private mental health provider that they located via independent investigation.

I owe a lot to my psychotherapist. My sense of security was restored, and the bad thoughts left. She showed me how to manage this, but I pursued this on my own without receiving official instruction from a government institution. **(Ifigenia, 24 years old)**

In summary, this section discusses the reluctance among survivors of technology-facilitated sexual abuse to seek support from mental health services despite experiencing persistent psychological trauma. The study reveals that 96% of survivors acknowledge enduring psychological aftereffects for months or even years but do not show an inclination to use mental health services over time. Many participants, particularly 57% of them, expressed a preference for not seeking professional help, believing they could manage the aftermath with the support of family and friends. Some cited negative past experiences with mental health professionals, while others considered their victimization less severe and thus did not seek specialized assistance. A few participants felt that no amount of counselling or medication could alleviate their suffering. Some participants struggled to articulate their feelings, while others mistrusted both public and private mental health systems. However, a small number found substantial benefit from private mental health providers, which improved their quality of life. Overall, the study highlights the complex attitudes and experiences of survivors regarding mental health support in the context of TFSV.

Survivors' Perspectives on Justice

Survivors participating (n= 28) in this study were questioned about the appropriate type of punishment for the offenders of TFSV. In particular, participants were asked to elaborate on what they believed needed to be done to hold their offenders accountable as well as to imagine what a proper punishment might look like in an ideal world. Despite popular belief, most informants were less interested in seeing their perpetrators suffering than they were in seeing justice being served by having this offence treated seriously, as explained below.

Half of the participants (fourteen out of twenty-eight) rejected punishment or rehabilitation standards. These people didn't regard punishment as a social obligation or as a form of revenge. Instead, they stressed the harm inflicted on them as a result of the abuse and demanded that this victimization be treated equally with other forms of sexual assault. In fact, at least five of them claimed that what happened to them was similar to being raped.

The state must first take such crimes more seriously. Because injuries inflicted on a person's soul may be more severe than physical ones. When someone hurts your body, that will be a moment and then it will be over, but when they hurt your soul, it will take years to heal. It is precisely the same as rape; it is not inferior. **(Eva, 28 years old)**

I'm not sure what the best penalty would be. Because it is a form of psychological rape, I only know that there should be a punishment comparable to that imposed on rapists. **(Efi, 24 years old)**

Furthermore, the goal of twelve out of twenty-eight participants of the current research was safety—both for themselves and for other future survivors. In other words, rather than punishing offenders for past offences, they wanted to stop offenders from committing new ones. In the majority of occasions, they thought that maintaining some level of control or surveillance over the offender would be vital to guarantee future safety.

I would like there to be controlled access to the internet for these perpetrators. I don't know if this is possible. But there should be some record of their history and their activity on the internet. I believe this would be better than sending them to jail because then there wouldn't be any more victims. **(Ioanna, 29 years old)**

I wouldn't want to force him to go to jail, therefore I would never do it. I simply want him to be stigmatized and for people to be aware of what he did. I don't want the women who date him to be unaware of what he's done and experience what I have experienced. I want people to know in the back of their minds that he is not a reliable guy. **(Fani, 27 years old)**

Only one interviewee supported the idea that serving a term of imprisonment is a sort of usual punishment for a crime. As the interviewee explained:

Okay, obviously, there will be a punishment. I'm not sure what could be done to punish them, but I think they should spend some time in jail or maybe all of eternity because what they are doing is terrible, isn't it? And particularly when victims are younger, such as little children. Normally, the offenders should be punished and kept in prison forever. **(Ifigenia, 24 years old)**

Also, another participant believes that financial restitution is the best type of punishment because it requires the offenders to compensate for the harm they caused the victim.

I want his punishment to be something truly commendable. However, I wouldn't mind receiving financial recompense for the harm he did me. If it weren't for him, I wouldn't have spent so much money on attorneys and psychiatrists. (**Olympia, 30 years old**)

Overall, the majority of the survivors of the current research (n=26), who desired to make things as right as possible in the future rather than to seek revenge for the past, highlighted the restorative aspect of their perspectives. They focused on the harm caused by the crime rather than the legal infringement of their rights in general. Their focus on the significance of societal recognition and condemnation of the crime was another aspect of their restorative vision. However, they were more concerned with their own desire for community re-integration than with the needs of the offenders. They understood how crucial it was to publicly humiliate the perpetrator, but they first wanted to be released of their own shame.

Chapter 3 Findings Overview

In conclusion, this chapter has unveiled a complex and distressing landscape surrounding TFSV and its profound, negative impact on survivors. The prevalence of the problem of TFSV was noted as were the characteristics of survivors. Women were predominantly aged 19 to 45, university educated, and some 86 per cent had experienced non-consensual distribution of sexual material during their formative years. Furthermore, perpetrators of TFSC were typically former or current romantic partners, friends, colleagues, hackers, or anonymous

individuals on the internet. The places in which this material was disseminated were diverse, including pornographic websites, dating apps, and social media.

Furthermore, survivors struggled with mental health problems, with some 96 per cent reporting anxiety, phobias, sleep disorders, eating disorders, and suicidal ideation. A reluctance among many of those studied to seek professional help was noted and linked to past negative experiences of mental health services. In particular, barriers to accessing mental health services meant that survivors had to endure psychological trauma. Some had pursued private providers, though past negative experiences discouraged many from seeking help at all.

Additionally, engagement with law enforcement was also challenging. None of the survivors participating in the study reported positive experiences of interacting with the police. They reported inadequate levels of support, an attitude of blaming victims, and inappropriate behaviour from police officers. Such obstacles were viewed as impeding justice. In terms of justice, the survivors tended towards favouring a restorative paradigm for justice, seeking recognition of the harm caused by TFSV and emphasizing the importance of addressing their personal shame through community acceptance and reintegration.

The findings derived from the above analysis demonstrate the scale and impact of TFSV on women in Greece. A number of trends may be discerned from the data, such as the disproportionately high number of women affected, something noted by past research into the phenomenon

(SWGfI, 2019). The prevalence of survivors from among women with a higher education background notes also the concentration of the problem among more educated groups, reflecting past research that has indicated revenge porn is a problem on campus (Branch & Hilinski-Rosick, 2017). Another finding that reflects past research is the onset of abuse within the survivor's formative years, which may prove more damaging in the long-term due to the observed effects of suffering trauma during one's adolescent development (Trickett, 2013).

The range of perpetrations from former romantic partners through acquaintances to anonymous actors highlights the diverse avenues through which TFSV may occur, indicating the need for the development of comprehensive prevention strategies that can target not only intimate relationship dynamics and their intersection with technological communications but also governing broader digital safety. A further concern for relevant institutions and professionals is the pervasive impact on mental well-being noted by the study, reflected in the myriad of symptoms of psychological distress. The reluctance of survivors to seek out mental health services suggests also the importance of targeting mental health interventions at vulnerable groups and making trauma-informed support services more accessible and approachable. Furthermore, addressing alarming trends within law enforcement such as victim-blaming attitudes and inadequate support for survivors is essential for avoiding the deterrence of survivors from coming forward and seeking support. This indicates also that a joined-up approach to destigmatization across relevant institutions and

services is a necessary step in improving experiences and outcomes for survivors.

In summary, the chapter's findings collectively underscore the urgency of addressing TFSV comprehensively. The study highlights the pervasive nature of TFSV, its devastating impact on survivors' mental well-being, and the significant challenges survivors face when interacting with law enforcement and mental health services. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing survivors' perspectives on justice, emphasizing restoration over retaliation.

Moving forward, this research calls for a multi-faceted approach, involving educational initiatives to prevent TFSV, improved support systems for survivors, and enhanced training for law enforcement and mental health professionals to provide sensitive and effective assistance. Ultimately, these efforts are essential to mitigate the profound and enduring harm caused by TFSV and to promote healing, resilience, and justice for survivors.

Chapter 4: Police Officers' Perceptions on TFSV

Introduction

This and the next chapter address the second research question of this study, namely: *What are the social responses to TFSV victimisation?*

While this chapter analyzes the responses to an online questionnaire by 15 police officers of Cybercrime Department, the next chapter (No 5) focuses on professionals' perspectives. Respectively, these two chapters address research questions 2A and 2B (see above in the methodology chapter, under 'research design').

The method used to analyse the data from the questionnaires was thematic analysis (see the Methodology chapter for further details). By using thematic analysis, this study aimed to attribute meaning to participants' descriptions and analyse repeating themes or patterns of meaning in order to better comprehend police officers' views on TFSV.

So far there has been little research (see e.g., Powell and Henry, 2018) on how the criminal justice system responds to incidents of TFSV.

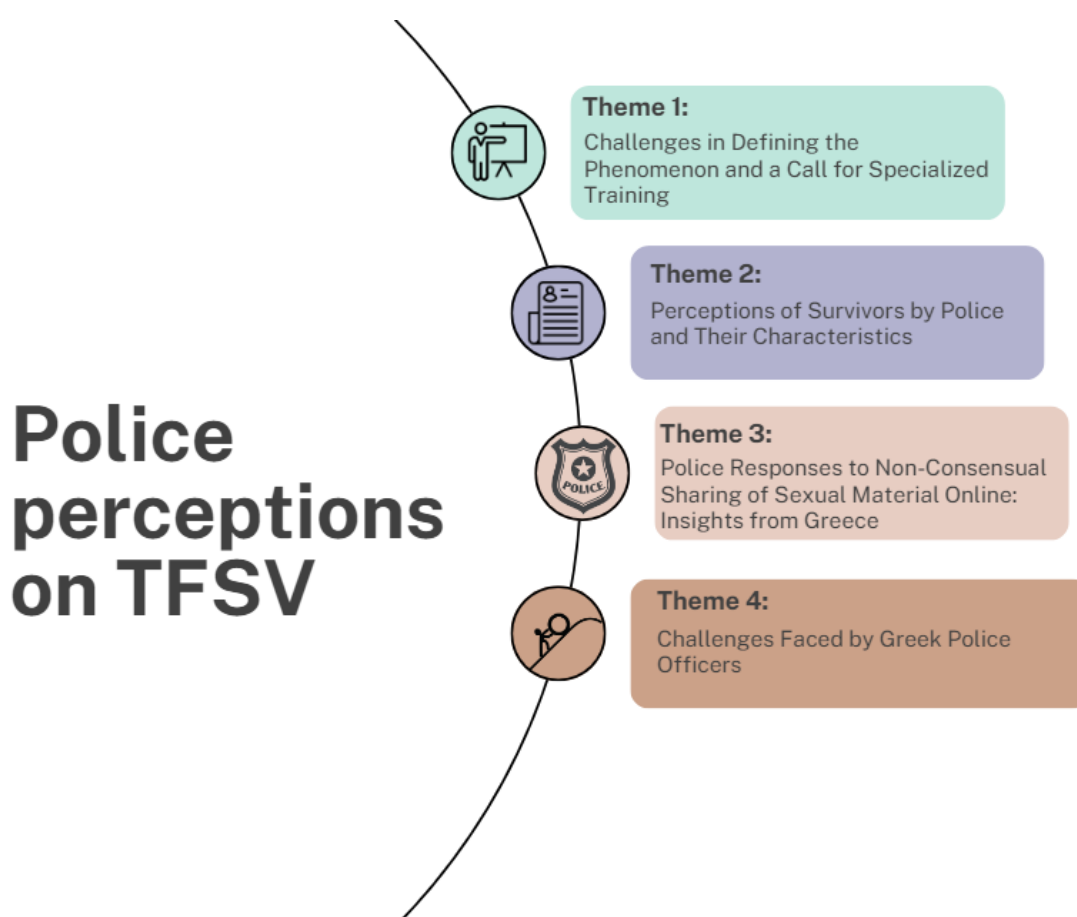
Little research has also been done on the attitudes of police officers dealing with situations of alleged technology-facilitated sexual abuse (see again Powell and Henry, 2018). The purpose of this chapter is to address this research gap.

To this aim, fifteen actively serving cybercrime police officers in Greece were given a brief questionnaire with open-ended questions, which was distributed online via email (see Appendix L for further details regarding the online questionnaire). The goal of this questionnaire was to find out how the police react to the reports by survivors of TFSV. Although the sample of police officers was very small, it was adequate to achieve the research objectives, given that police officers from the Cybercrime Department are the only ones dealing with TFSV cases in Greece. One of the key research questions for this research is how the police respond to cases of TFSV. To explore how the law enforcement authorities react to such situations in Greece and what measures they take to combat these phenomena, it was crucial to incorporate the police's viewpoints in this research. All the police officers who were approached gave their consent to take part in the research and responded to open-ended questions on an online survey (for further details related to police officers' recruitment, see the methodology chapter above).

The first part of the questionnaire (see Appendix L for further details regarding the online questionnaire) focused on the police officers' general training in situations of TFSV. In the second part of the questionnaire, the focus was on common reports of TFSV submitted to the police. Finally, following descriptions of incidents of TFSV that had been reported, the questionnaire also investigated the steps police officers take to deal with these situations as well as the challenges they encounter. From the thematic analysis of the data obtained from

the responses of the police officers to the open-ended questions of the questionnaire, the following four themes emerged: a) Challenges in Defining the Phenomenon and Call for Specialized Training, b) Perceptions of Survivors by Police and Their Characteristics, c) Police Responses to Non-Consensual Sharing of Sexual Material Online: Insights from Greece, and d) Challenges Faced by Police Officers. (See also Table 8 below)

Table 8
Thematic Analysis of Police Responses to TFSV



Challenges in Defining the Phenomenon and a Call for Specialized Training

Data extracted from the brief online survey administered to the police reveals the problematic ways in which TFSV incidents are being referred to by the Greek police officers and their lack of specialized training.

At first, it should be noted that when the police officers were asked to describe overall the phenomenon of TFSV, they used the term “revenge pornography” to describe situations in which sexual content was distributed without consent. In particular, this specific definition was used by the vast majority of the police officers (80% or N=12 out of 15) who participated in this study. Only the 20% (or N=3 out of 15) referred to the phenomenon of TFSV without using the term “revenge pornography.” In fact, instead of the term “revenge pornography,” they used the term “breach of personal data.”

As discussed earlier in this thesis (for further details, see the literature review chapter), the relevant literature points out that the term “revenge pornography” is restrictive in describing the phenomenon of TFSV, and should be avoided (see, for example, Citron and Franks, 2014; Bates, 2017). According to Maddocks (2018), for example, “revenge pornography” is a victim-blaming term that puts the public and government policies at risk of being misinformed. For instance, framing the issue primarily as a form of revenge may lead to a narrow focus on the motive behind sharing explicit content, potentially

overlooking other aspects of the crime, such as non-consensual distribution, harassment, and the violation of privacy (for further details, see the literature review chapter above).

The use of this problematic term by the Greek police is concerning, but at the same time it is unsurprising; after all, the term “revenge pornography” is widely used to describe incidents of non-consensual distribution of sexual material by the media both in Greece and in other countries (see, for example, Voukelatou, 2021; Kazis, 2022; Rackham, 2022).

The phenomenon of TFSV is not the only one the police have a hard time defining. Another example is the term “cybercrime.” For example, Hadlington et al.’s (2021) study on 16 police officers in the UK indicated that although participants attempted to give concrete explanations of what cybercrime is and what it entails, it was clear that there is still a significant degree of misunderstanding on what is intended by or included in the word. Cybercrime had been described by them as being “vast,” “ambiguous,” and “vague” (Hadlington et al., 2021). Given that incidents of TFSV fall within the context of cybercrime, the authorities seem to face a general difficulty when it comes to grasping the various ways in which technology can be used to facilitate sexual violence. This lack of awareness can hinder their efforts to recognize and combat these forms of cybercrime effectively. Police officers’ ability to address and prevent TFSV may be hindered when they lack comprehensive training to recognize various forms of

TFSV beyond narrow definitions, such as the non-consensual distribution of sexual material by former romantic partners. This limitation in their training can have significant implications for the prosecution rates in TFSV cases. For instance, Henry and Powell (2017) noted that the term “revenge pornography” has played a crucial role in shaping both global legislation and police responses to survivors of TFSV. To illustrate this point, consider the data from the United Kingdom: Between April and December 2015, there were 1,160 cases of TFSV reported to UK police departments. However, only 11% of these cases resulted in prosecutions, indicating consistently low conviction rates in TFSV cases. These findings are consistent with research by other academics, as highlighted by Cook (2015). These low conviction rates may be attributed to two main factors: first, to the law enforcement’s limited awareness of the relevant legislation related to TFSV, and second, to their lack of expertise in effectively handling such cases. In essence, the failure to adequately train and equip law enforcement agents to deal with the broader spectrum of TFSV cases can contribute to the persistent challenge of securing convictions in cases involving “revenge pornography” and similar offences.

The current research highlights the significance of specific terminology in police officers’ recognition and response to various forms of TFSV based on their training. Only 6.6% of surveyed officers reported receiving training for investigating incidents of “revenge pornography” both domestically and internationally. However, this specialized training addressed cases involving exclusively non-consensual

distribution of intimate material by former adult romantic partners, overlooking other TFSV scenarios like account hacking and the sharing of sensitive content among underage students.

These findings are consistent with previous research. For example, a study among 490 law enforcement offices in the State of Michigan (Hinduja, 2004) also highlighted a perceived lack of specialized training opportunities in dealing with cybercrime. Similarly, a recent national online survey in England and Wales conducted by Bond and Tyrrell (2021) suggested that 94.7% of police officers and staff argued they had not received any official training on how to handle investigations into “revenge pornography.” Furthermore, Wilson, Cross, and Powell’s research in 2022 found that only 50% of police officers (N = 422) in Australia reported receiving any training on cybercrime, and even less said they had obtained instruction on how to handle digital crime scenes and receive and address incident reports. Similarly, the 73.3% of the participants in the current study (N =11 out of 15) also mentioned that even though they have dealt with numerous cases of “revenge pornography,” they never received specialized training in handling and dealing with them. As some of them explained:

I have spent the last 12 years working for the Cybercrime Prosecution Division as a Police Officer II [Special Duties]. I have dealt with dozens of cases involving revenge porn. But I never received any relevant training on the subject. **(Male police officer, 41 years old)**

I work in the Cybercrime Prosecution Division, but I haven’t gotten any specialized training. We occasionally encounter revenge porn incidents. **(Male police officer, 35 years old)**

When questioned if they had any specialized training to deal with cases of TFSV, three police officers out of fifteen (N=15) responded affirmatively. However, they clarified in their response that the training they received covered a wider range of topics, including personal data protection in general and, in particular, the legal protections for situations when there has been a breach of personal data. However, it was not stated whether they had had any particular training on how to deal with survivors of TFSV.

As one of them noted characteristically:

I work in the Cyber Crime Prosecution Division for the Greek Police and have worked there for the last five years. Along with the General Regulation of Personal Data and its protection on the internet, I have received training in dealing with cybercrime.
(Male police officer, 42 years old)

As a conclusion, we would argue that the majority of Greek cybercrime police officers in this study (93.4%) had never been given specific instructions regarding what the phenomenon of TFSV is and how to handle relevant cases. Moreover, by using the term “revenge pornography,” which may potentially reduce the seriousness of these crimes to a simplified “scorned ex-boyfriend” narrative, the majority of the police officers (N= 12 out of 15, or 80%) in the current research tend to fail to consider the various dimensions of the TFSV phenomenon, suggesting that perpetrators might primarily be motivated by personal vengeance and that survivors could be seen as playing a role in inciting perpetrators to seek revenge. Given the findings of a research on the crime of rape (see, for example, Sleath and Bull, 2012;

Darwinkel et al. 2013), which suggest that specialized training programs for law enforcement officers can lead to more positive attitudes towards rape survivors, decreased acceptance of rape myths, and improved responses to incidents of sexual violence, it is critical to emphasize the significance of police training for TFSV as well. In a study by McKee, Mueller-Johnson, and Strang (2020), police officers who participated in a training program in the UK exhibited more positive attitudes toward both male and female rape survivors compared to those who didn't receive relevant training. This program not only influenced how officers evaluated the credibility of survivors, but also their acceptance of rape myths. A similar study conducted in the United States (Page, 2007) involved 891 police officers and found that challenging rape myths could be achieved through better education and experience in rape investigations among officers. These findings suggest the need for further research to assess the impact of specialized training programs on law enforcement's attitudes and responses to TFSV incidents.

Perceptions of Survivors by Police and their Characteristics

Based on the cases of TFSV that they have been called upon to handle thus far in their careers, the police officers participating in this research were asked if there are any similar traits among the survivors. All fifteen police (100%) officers who participated in this research, when asked to describe the profile of the survivors, referred only to the

gender of the survivor saying that most of them were women. Only 26.6% of them (N= 4 out of 15) gave more descriptions in relation to the survivor's profile by either commenting on the survivor's social profile or describing the survivor's behaviour as naive or risky.

As they noted related to the survivor's gender:

Most of the victims are women, often young ladies, who have plainly fallen prey to emotional blackmail and have been lured. **(Male police officer, 35 years old)**

They are mainly young women. **(Female police officer, 39 years old)**

Apart from the gender and age of the survivors, the police respondents did not provide any further information to describe the profile of the survivors of TFSV. Only one police officer reported that women whose sexual material is published online without their consent are usually married and/or women who are widely recognized, influential, and prominent in their respective fields or in public life. These women often have a significant presence in the media and are well-known to the general public. They may have achieved success and visibility in areas such as politics, entertainment, business, sports, academia, activism, or other fields.

Usually, the perpetrators choose married women of high social or economic standing to humiliate them by posting their sexual material. **(Female police officer, 39 years old)**

Two police officers who took part in the study also mentioned the survivors' typical personality traits. By characterising survivors as

“foolish, vulnerable prey,” they reinforce victim blaming myths. The described survivors in the following way:

These are often foolish individuals who are easily lured and trust the wrong people with their sensitive data. **(Male police officer, 41 years old)**

They are people who show excessive trust in their partner and sometimes insecurity. **(Male police officer, 37 years old)**

A police officer even characterized the behaviour of TFSV victims as risky. As he mentioned:

These individuals are participating in dangerous sexual conduct by letting their partners take these kinds of pictures or films. **(Male police officer, 45 years old)**

While the majority of participants in the current research (53.4%) did not provide specific details about the survivors' profiles, the findings can still contribute to the limited existing knowledge regarding victim-blaming within law enforcement. Additionally, the findings of the current research align with and support previous reports of victim-blaming in cases of TFSV, such as studies by Bothamley and Tully (2018) and Scott and Gavin (2018). These reports suggest that while TFSV is increasingly recognized as a serious offence among the general public, individuals who have not engaged in sexting may be more likely to blame the victim.

This phenomenon mirrors what feminist criminology, as exemplified by Gelsthorpe and Morris (1990), and prior research on rape cases, like Ferro and Gonçalves (2015), have emphasized: the persistence of myths and stereotypes about what constitutes a “true rape” and who qualifies

as a “real” or “genuine” victim significantly influences how society perceives victims (Randall, 2010). The narratives surrounding conventional femininity, which are used to assess rape victims, may also be applied when judging TFSV victims. Specifically, it can be argued that sharing or consenting to the creation of intimate photos challenges socially imposed restrictions on female integrity.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the creation of these private photographs or the survivors’ perceived role in their creation, women whose intimate images are circulated may find themselves stigmatized and no longer considered pure or respectable.

This perspective is in line with Ringrose et al.’s (2013) research on “Teen girls, sexual double standards, and sexting,” which delves into the gendered dynamics of digital image exchange among adolescent girls. According to Ringrose et al., societal norms often subject young women to sexual double standards, where their actions and choices are subjected to more stringent scrutiny and judgment than those of their male counterparts. In this context, regardless of how their private photographs were obtained or their involvement in their creation, women whose intimate images are circulated may face harsh judgments. These societal attitudes could also help explain why the majority of TFSV survivors in our study are hesitant to disclose such cases (for further insights into the barriers faced by survivors in reporting TFSV, please refer to the section titled “Understanding Survivors’ Hesitation in Reporting TFSV” below)

Police Responses to Non-Consensual Sharing of Sexual Material Online

The police officers involved in the current research were asked what procedures they follow once a survivor reports to them that their sexual material has been published online without their consent. First of all, they made it clear that “revenge pornography” is regarded as a publicly prosecuted offence in Greece (see the Literature Review chapter for further details related to the legal and cultural background of Greece), meaning that it is punished regardless of whether the survivor lodges a complaint, or whether a third party brings a case against an unidentified individual.

In this context, the 80% (N= 12 out of 15) of the police officers participating in this study responded by highlighting the way in which survivors committed their complaint forms to the authorities. Specifically, they emphasized what the appropriate steps that the survivor must follow are in order for his/her complaint to be considered valid. According to the police officers involved in this investigation, a complaint can only be taken seriously if the survivor is able to provide the authorities with necessary evidence, such as screenshots of the non-consensually published sexual material and the precise email addresses and/or URL addresses where the sexual material was posted. As they noted specifically:

The victim needs to submit a police complaint together with the presentation of the disputed content and the specific websites where it has been uploaded (specific URL) in order to initiate a

criminal investigation of such incidents against an unidentified offender. Only in such cases is the complaint considered valid. **(Male police officer, 37 years old)**

The complainant-victim serves us with a request and provides us with all of the evidence regarding the alleged violation (prints of the snapshots, uploaded web pages, etc.) The complaint is only sent to the prosecutor once we have carefully analysed the available evidence and determined that it is valid. **(Male police officer, 41 years old)**

Powell and Henrys' findings (2018) demonstrated a similar practice which the Australian authorities follow for collecting evidence for TFSV incidents. In particular, police interviewees in Powell and Henrys' study (2018) mentioned that, given that it is costly and time consuming for them to get information out of some of those internet service providers, they usually ask the victim to provide them with evidence and not to delete any of them.

Only the 13.3% (N=2 out of 15) of the police officers spoke about taking down content that was published online without the victim's consent. They made the point that the survivor should get in touch with the owners of any websites that are hosting their sexual content without their consent in order to get it removed from the internet.

As the two officers reflected:

If the alleged content has been published online, we encourage the victim to get in touch with the publishing websites to get it 'removed immediately.' **(Male police officer, 45 years old)**

We advise the victim to get in touch with the websites to get the content taken down. The material is often removed right away. **(Female police officer, 39 years old)**

The need for greater information provided by the survivors and for their assistance in the process of gathering evidence was also demonstrated by another study (Huber, 2023), which took place in the UK among women victims (n=17) of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA), stakeholders (who have professional experience working with victims of IBSA, that is, organisation staff and lawyers; n=6), and criminal justice staff (n=5; four police officers and one crown prosecutor).

On the other hand, when evidence is provided to the police by the victim, 20% of the participants (N= 3 out of 15) focused on the investigation of the crime and the measures taken to identify the offender in an attempt to explain the methods they use to cope with the phenomena of TFSV. In particular, they described that they investigate the perpetrator's digital media in order to identify other possible present actions that the latter has committed against other survivors. Two of the police officers participating in this research also emphasized the role of psychological support as an important step in the response of the Greek police to cases of TFSV.

As the one of them stated:

In serious cases, the victim's psychological support is essential.
(Female police officer, 37 years old).

The police officer, however, did not specify what they consider a serious case to be, what constitutes a less serious case, or what criteria lead to making these decisions.

Challenges Faced by Greek Police Officers

The investigation of and response to TFSV incidents, involving both underage and adult victims, present a number of difficulties, according to police officers participating in the current study. The main difficulties in dealing with cases of TFSV have to do mainly with a) the lack of specialized psychologists in the Greek police to support the survivor throughout the investigative process, b) the gender of the police officer who interrogates the survivors in such cases, c) the place and facilities in which the investigative process takes place, and d) difficulties in restricting the circulation of non-consensually published material.

The majority of police officers who responded to the questionnaire of this research identified the absence of trained mental health specialists in the Greek police as the biggest obstacle to dealing with incidents of TFSV. Two thirds (N=10 out of 15) of police officers referred to the unique characteristics of TFSV victimization and noted that, in such circumstances, more attention should be focused on psychological assistance for the survivor. For instance, some of them noted that:

The majority of victims are in a poor mental condition, frequently cry, believe they are to blame for their misfortune, are embarrassed to disclose what actually happened to them, and worry that the video will continue to be circulated online. (**Male police officer, 45 years old**)

Victims arrive at our service in a distressed psychological condition, filled with remorse and rage. For these reasons listed above, the Service needs a specialized psychologist to handle and assist victims with events of this nature. (**Female police officer, 37 years old**)

One third of them (N=5 out of 15) suggested that even the gender of the police officer questioning the survivor plays a role in cases of TFSV. In order to make the survivors feel more at ease, one police officer suggested that only female officers should examine the victims and their sexually explicit material. As two officers explained:

The victims typically experience uncertainty, embarrassment, and terror. Due to this, a female police officer should conduct the examination; however, a psychologist can also do so. (**Male police officer, 38 years old**)

Indeed, previous research has indicated that female police officers may provide more effective handling of cases compared to their male counterparts. As Van Wormer (1981) noted, incidents involving sexual violence often led to citizen complaints when handled by male officers. The literature has shed light on various factors contributing to this phenomenon, as exemplified by the work of Silvestri (2018). Billing (2011) further posits that enduring gender stereotypes and societal norms may influence perceptions, leading to the assumption that female officers are better suited to handle such sensitive incidents.

In contrast, Van Wormer's (1981) research suggests that female officers tend to avoid conflict, projecting a non-threatening and less aggressive image to the general population. Moreover, they appear to have a comforting influence in such situations. Additionally, Carrington et al. (2020) conducted a study that underscores the significance of specialized police stations staffed exclusively with female officers, particularly in postcolonial nations in the global south. These stations have been found to enhance access to justice, empower women to break

free from the cycle of domestic abuse, and counter gender violence by challenging the patriarchal norms that perpetuate it.

However, it is important to note that the influence of the police officers' gender on handling rape cases remains a topic of debate. Several research studies, including those by Davies et al. (2009), Goodman-Delahunty and Graham (2011), and Wentz and Archbold (2012), have not identified any significant effects of gender on how such cases are managed.

According to two police officers participating in the study, beyond the mediation of a mental health specialist, the location in which the interrogation takes place also plays an important role in making the survivor feel comfortable during the investigative process. As they explained, this aspect aligns with the broader discussion on the effectiveness of female police officers and specialized police stations in handling sensitive cases, as highlighted in previous research (Van Wormer, 1981; Carrington et al., 2020). The choice of an interrogation location may be an additional factor to consider in creating a supportive environment for survivors, especially in cases of sexual violence, where the gender and training of officers, as well as the physical setting, can collectively contribute to a survivor's sense of comfort and security.

In a characteristic manner, one of these officers argued:

The victim's examination should be conducted in a place that is inaccessible to others, without interruption for pointless reasons, and primarily by a female police officer in the presence of a psychologist. {This is} a must for the victim to feel comfortable

with the setting and the personnel. (**Male police officer, 42 years old**)

Another police officer went so far as to say that the survivor's solid psychological state and their sense of security outside of the realm of taking care of their mental health are crucial to the case's investigation. As he characteristically mentioned:

There are challenges in attempting to learn as much information as possible from the victim by questioning them; these inquiries may humiliate the victim, who might not answer honestly out of shame, fear, etc. (**Male police officer, 45 years old**)

The problems with eliminating the circulation of the sexual content from the Internet and limiting its spread emerged as a prevalent issue from the police officers' responses to the questionnaire of the current study. Police officials claim that this is because Internet and telecommunications service providers have not immediately cooperated with them. As they claimed:

Removing content from the internet is now impossible once the material is shared, because it is difficult to work with foreign online platforms. (**Male officer, 41 years old**)

There should be better communication/cooperation with foreign companies on whose platforms the illegal sharing of sexual material takes place. (**Male officer, 42 years old**)

Powell and Henry's (2018) findings also highlighted that suppliers of Internet and telecommunications services are not cooperating.

Participants noticed, in particular, the rising need to have more specialized digital forensic tools for the investigation of hardware and electronic evidence (Powell and Henry, 2018). In addition to the need for supplementary resources for forensic analysis, several police

interviewees in Powell and Henry's study (2018) mentioned that their own computer and Internet access presented a barrier to documenting evidence (such as difficulty accessing Facebook to screenshot abuse directed at a victim due to internal access restrictions or slow Internet connections).

Chapter 4 Findings Overview

In chapter 4, the study addresses the second research question: What are the social responses to TFSV-related victimisation? This chapter focuses on the analysis of responses from 15 police officers of the Cybercrime Department in Greece, while the next chapter (Chapter 5) will delve into professionals' perspectives. These two chapters aim to answer research questions 2A and 2B, as outlined in the methodology chapter.

The primary method used for data analysis is thematic analysis, which seeks to attribute meaning to participants' descriptions and identify recurring themes or patterns of meaning. The study aims to gain insight into police officers' views and responses regarding TFSV. Findings from this chapter reveal several significant aspects related to the research area, filling critical gaps in the existing body of literature through examining the response of the criminal justice system to TFSV. Four main themes were identified. The first of these themes – Challenges in Defining the Phenomenon and a Call for Specialized Training – emphasized the need for police to be assisted in identifying

TFSV through training. It was noted that 80 per cent of officers commonly used the term ‘revenge pornography’, whereas only around a fifth recognized that the term might be inaccurate or contribute to victim blaming. These officers did not use the term ‘TFSV’ but instead referred to the leaks as breaches of personal data.

The second theme identified by the thematic analysis – Perceptions of Survivors by Police and their Characteristics – noted that police officers tended to assume that survivors were women and did not tend to describe them beyond this. For instance, they did not make significant remark as to their profiles or behaviours. This indicates potentially that police officers know little about the profile of TFSV survivors and the potential experiences and struggles they might be going through.

A third theme identified through analysis - Police Responses to Non-Consensual Sharing of Sexual Material Online – noted that 80 per cent of police officers emphasized the importance of survivors submitting comprehensive evidence to support their claims. Specifically, they believed that screenshots of the images and URLs linking to the content uploaded online was necessary in order to instigate a criminal investigation. This highlights that police may place investigations into the hands of survivors, potentially retraumatizing them through forcing them to relive their abuse. Officers recognized also the need for more psychological support for survivors in especially serious cases, signalling that they have some understanding of the need for a holistic approach to addressing TFSV.

The fourth theme derived from this chapter – Challenges Faced by Greek Police Officers – indicates several challenges experienced by police officers working on TFSV cases. For instance, two-thirds of officers identified the lack of trained mental health specialists among the police as a significant obstacle to meeting the psychological and emotional needs of survivors. A lack of sufficient female police officers able to speak to survivors was also noted in some cases, as well as the insufficiency of facilities for interrogation in order to ensure survivor comfort. The officers recognized also that there were difficulties in restricting the online circulation of non-consensual material due to a lack of cooperation from internet and telecom providers. These findings indicate not only a lack of sufficient funding – or a need to reprioritize spending – as well as the lack of an adequate legislative framework according to which internet and telecom providers could be made to cooperate with the law.

These findings underscore the challenges that Greek police officers encounter in responding to TFSV cases, including issues related to terminology, training, victim perceptions, and the practical aspects of investigations and support. The themes generated from the analysis contribute to the closing of notable gaps regarding the justice system's handling of TFSV cases and its relationship to the attitudes and responses of law enforcement.

The findings note that police officers tended to generalize with respect to survivors, referring to them broadly as 'women' as opposed to taking into consideration their specific profiles, such as social characteristics

or behaviour. It is possible this indicates a limited understanding of the demographics impacted by TFSV and likewise how experiences may be diverse across these groups. Similarly, the use of the term ‘revenge pornography’ to describe the phenomenon of TFSV indicates perhaps an oversimplified conceptualisation of the practices and experiences associated with TFSV, as well as inadvertently contributing towards victim-blaming (Henry, 2019).

The responses of police officers to cases of TFSV tended towards placing the onus upon survivors to gather evidence and contact websites and internet hosts to take down images posted online. This again suggests perhaps an attitude of victim-blaming at work in their responses to the non-consensual sharing of sexual material online. It is notable also that whilst policy offers advocated for psychological support for advisors, few responses noted proactivity in terms of contacting support services themselves. This may be attributable to the lack of mental health specialists noted by the police officers. Such oversights indicate also the potential for multiagency cooperation to better facilitate the support of survivors and the need for interprofessional cooperation in supporting survivors and addressing trauma at the point of contact with police.

The chapter thus underscores the complex challenges in the response of law enforcement to TFSV in Greece, demonstrating the need for enhanced training, provision of support to survivors, and collaboration with other professionals in order to encourage survivor engagement with police and support services.

Chapter 5: Professionals' Perceptions of TFSV

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the perceptions of TFSV held by 10 experts/professionals, whom I interviewed during my study. It answers research question 2B, which is: *How do professionals working in counselling and support (e.g., mental health professionals, lawyers, etc.) respond to incidents of TFSV?*

Together with the previous chapter (No 4), it contributes to answering the second research question of this study: *What are the social responses to TFSV?*

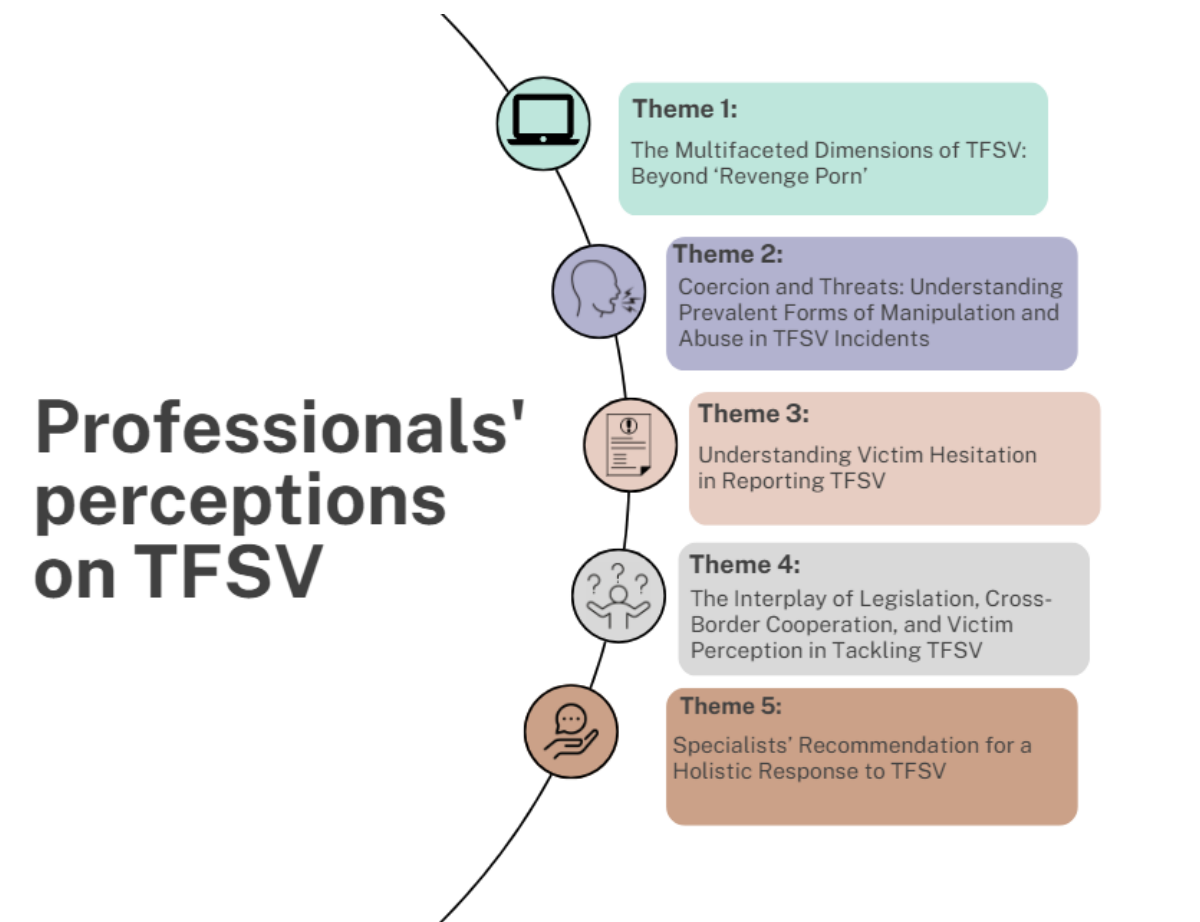
So far, there have been only a few studies examining how experts deal with incidents of TFSV (see, for example, Bond and Tyrell, 2018; Powell and Henry, 2016). This chapter contributes to this scant literature through a thematic analysis of ten interviews with Greek professionals who are experts of TFSV or working to support victims of TFSV (for their recruiting and the method of data analysis, see the methodology chapter). The goal of the specialists' interviews was to gather information about professionals' experiences with and viewpoints on cases of TFSV covering different aspects of this phenomenon (terminology, instances, prevalence, and impacts),

including their views on how law enforcers and mental health services address TFSV.

Since obtaining their consent between December 2021 and May 2022, I conducted ten stakeholder interviews (see Appendix M for further details regarding the interview guide) in Greece (n=10), including with: six (6) cyber security experts; two (2) lawyers; and two (2) mental health counsellors. All the recruited professionals run their own private profit-driven agencies and two of them work for the state. Specifically, of these experts, only the two psychologists work in two national organizations, *General Secretariat for Family Policy*, and *Gender Equality*, that deal with the abuse of women, but they are not specialized in cases of cybercrime and TFSV.

Interviews were held online on Skype and recorded, and then transcribed with the written consent of the interviewees. Participants were given a pseudonym. The coding of qualitative data was done manually and the interview transcripts were categorized in the following five themes: a) The Multifaceted Dimensions of TFSV: Beyond “Revenge Porn”; b) Coercion and Threats: Understanding Prevalent Forms of Manipulation and Abuse in TFSV Incidents; c) Understanding Victim Hesitation in Reporting TFSV; d) The Interplay of Legislation, Cross-Border Cooperation, and Victim Perception in Tackling TFSV; and e) Specialists’ Recommendations for a Holistic Response to TFSV (See Table 9 below). I address the main themes from these topics in the following sections.

Table 9
Professionals' perceptions on TFSV



The Multifaceted Dimensions of TFSV: Beyond “Revenge Porn”

According to the interviewed professionals, while the term “revenge porn” is commonly used, it is worth noting that they argued that most of the cases of TFSV they deal with involve the non-consensual sharing of intimate or sexual images by ex-partners. In fact, 60% of the participants (N=6 out of 10) reported instances where ex-partners disseminated such images on social media and via email without permission. A romantic partner who released the content without their former partner’s consent after they broke up engaged in TFSV, according to 60% of the professionals participating in this study.

However, the remaining 40% (N=4 out of 10) of the experts were critical about using the term “revenge porn” by identifying different motivations and drivers that were related to instances of TFSV other than revenge. One expert gave the example of taking up the legal defence of a woman whose former boyfriend had taken nude pictures of, while the survivor was still in a relationship with him, on the condition that they would continue to be together and that no one else would see them. But after that, he posted them on a private channel on Discord where other male users would also upload naked pictures of their current girlfriends and chat and boast about having sex with these women.

As one lawyer explained:

I have dealt with some really difficult cases in my time as a lawyer. This is the one that disturbed me the most because it

made other girls' experiences as well as that of my client's known. In essence, these girls' images were being shared online against their will, and the offenders were advertising them as if they were products for sale. **(Kostas, lawyer)**

Two cyber specialists also pointed out that the situation is far more widespread than what the media are presenting and that offenders are not always motivated by vengeance. One of them mentioned that TFSV frequently occurs between underage survivors and underage cybercriminals who are now technologically savvy enough to be able to hack underage classmates' devices and steal nude photos of them before uploading those photos to sites on the dark web, getting paid for each post.

The fact that many survivors are unaware that their photographs are being shared without their consent is another problem related to this form of TFSV. As John, one of the cybercrime experts-analysts, noted: "The fact that the victims cannot report the abuse if they are not aware that photographs of them are being disseminated poses a significant challenge for law enforcement.

Overall, data analysis of the responses from professionals involved in this research (60% or N=6 out of 10) suggests that the most frequent cases of TFSV they deal with involve the non-consensual posting of material by the survivors' ex-partners, while the remaining 40% (or n=4 out of 10) said that their cases mainly involve hacking activities where the perpetrator is unknown to the survivor. Similarly, in a recent survey conducted by Flynn et al. (2021), 92.3% of professionals reported that the survivor was a former intimate partner, a de facto partner or a spouse (N=204). On contrary, the results of other studies suggest that this type of TFSV is occurring less frequently. For

instance, in a national survey of Australians aged between 16 and 49 years (n=4, 274), only 11% of the participants mentioned nude or sexual images posted by ex-partners on social media and via email without consent (Henry et al., 2017; see also Branch et al., 2017). However, 40% of the respondents in this study (N= 4 out of 10) appear to concur with the findings of earlier research (see, for example, Henry et al., 2017) that there are many different types of TFSV, and that revenge is not always the motivation. Participants in the current study have also reported that the non-consensual publication of sexual material takes place by current romantic partners for reasons of sexual pride or for financial benefits, reasons which have been highlighted in previous research findings (Henry et al., 2017) as motivators in relation to TFSV. Additionally, professionals who participated in Flynn et al.'s (2021) study argued that perpetrators have extra motivations as they seek to intimidate the survivor (92.8%), to control the survivor (92.3%), to cause distress (86.9%), to cause fear for safety (85.5%), and to isolate the survivor or restrict their activities (81.9%).

Coercion and Threats: Understanding Prevalent Forms of Manipulation and Abuse in TFSV Incidents

Two key kinds of threats were also mentioned by 80% (N= 8 out of 10) of the professionals included in this study prior to the non-consensual dissemination of sexually explicit content. These were: a) the threats against the survivor in order for the latter to take the pictures, and/or b) the threats of the distribution of the material. As the experts said,

these threats mostly applied to incidents where the perpetrator and the survivor were acquainted and had a close relationship. In these cases, before the material was published without their consent, the survivors were either coerced into taking pictures of themselves or threatened with the publication of these pictures each time the survivor told the abuser that they desired to break up.

A typical example of manipulation is the case described to us by an expert in which a young couple who had been together for two years had frequent fights as the young man kept asking his girlfriend to send him nude photos. His girlfriend explained that she didn't want to take the nude photos because that was something that made her feel uncomfortable. He, however, persisted, telling her that she was too conservative, that she didn't behave like a girl of her age, that she didn't trust him enough, which meant that the foundations of their relationship were not strong, and that if she continued to refuse to do so, he would have to find another girl who would trust him and satisfy him sexually more.

As a mental health specialist described, "My client took the photos that her then romantic partner requested of her after psychological violence she suffered. She was in love with him and, while she didn't want to send the nude photos, she did so because she didn't want to break up with him." (**Lina, mental health specialist**).

Furthermore, the 80% (N=8 out of 10) of the professionals who participated in this research reported that there were signs of an abusive relationship prior to the non-consensual publication of the material. As the experts underlined, their clients confessed to them that

every time they made the decision to leave their abusive partner, the latter used their sexual material as a trophy, threatening to publish the material on the Internet if they broke up.

As a lawyer highlighted: “I can state with confidence that, based on my experience in similar situations, there were obvious indicators of an abusive relationship the majority of times. Victims were controlled by abusers who used threats of distribution of the images or videos to persuade them not to end the relationship.” (*Dimitris, lawyer*).

Despite this, 20% of the participants (N= 2 out of 10) clarified TFSV is a complex phenomenon due to the dimensions and different forms it can take. Specifically, as they commented, in cases where the non-consensual distribution of sexual material occurred after hacking activities, there had been no warning signs of threats and the survivor was not even able to realize who the perpetrator was or know that their photos are on the Internet.

The current research findings regarding the threats associated with TFSV incidents are consistent with the observations made by Henry et al. (2018). In particular, Henry et al. (2018) reported that in their study involving 52 stakeholders, two primary schemes employed by offenders were identified. These schemes involved a) coercing survivors into taking explicit pictures of themselves or having pictures taken of them, and b) threatening survivors with the distribution of such pictures unless they complied with unwanted demands, such as

paying money (blackmail), engaging in sexual activities, or refraining from ending a relationship.

Understanding Survivors' Hesitation in Reporting TFSV

Another interesting theme that emerged from the data analysis of the interviews with professionals dealing with cases of TFSV is why survivors often refuse or hesitate to report their victimization to the authorities. The 80% (N= 8 out of 10) of the professionals who took part in this research reported that the survivors they contacted had not previously reported the non-consensual sharing of their personal material to the police. Most of the aforementioned experts, in their attempt to document the reasons that prevent survivors from contacting the authorities, referred to the challenges faced by survivors of TFSV. They discussed that the way in which TFSV was policed was affected by conventional gender norms and victim-blaming attitudes (see also Huber, 2023).

According to John, one of the cybercrime experts-analysts who participated in this research, almost all of the cases of survivors' first contact with the police were characterized by victim-blaming behaviours, with the officers questioning the survivors asking them "why they had initially agreed to take such revealing photographs," "why they had voluntarily agreed to send the material," and "whether the material was shared by them with third parties other than the alleged perpetrator." This could quite possibly have been the reason behind the survivors' unwillingness to file a report to the police.

Previous studies show that police and other personnel who deal with sexual assault tend to blame the survivor (Campbell & Johnson, 1997; Lafree, 1989; Spohn et al., 2001). For instance, police officers take into account the level of “victim malpractice” before arresting offenders, prosecutors persistently question victims’ justifications for reporting sex crimes, and jurors base their decisions on the characteristics of the survivor rather than the actions of the perpetrator (Lafree, 1989; Spohn et al, 2001). According to one research, 51% of police officers misapplied the law by blaming the survivors of the assault (Campbell and Johnson, 1997).

Participants also connected victim-blaming with poor reporting rates, especially by the police. As one of the lawyers who participated in this investigation mentioned, the first thing a lawyer has to deal with in these types of cases is the reluctance of the survivor to file a complaint with the authorities. This is because, as he comments, his clients are almost always afraid that the police will tell them that “*whatever gets uploaded on the internet is never deleted and that you shouldn’t have taken those photos in the first place.*”

The 20% (N= 2 out of 10) of the professionals also mentioned that survivors usually tell them that they do not want the police involved in their case because they do not trust the authorities.

As lawyer Dimitris notes:

Victims either do not believe that the police will do anything to help them, or they believe that things will get worse. They often tell me that they have been in contact with other victims who

filed a complaint with the authorities and have seen no results whatsoever.

Something similar was also commented by another cyber security expert who said that his clients who have been survivors of sexual violence often refuse to contact the authorities because they fear that such a move will further enrage the perpetrator who, in order to take revenge, will begin sending the material to the survivor's coworkers, family, and close friends.

In cases where the material has been published non-consensually on websites on the internet but has not yet reached the hands of the victim's family or colleagues from the victim's workplace, the victim categorically denies police involvement for fear of the material being leaked again and someone close to them seeing it.

Marikelly, one of the mental health professionals who participated in this research, referred to the process of secondary victimization that survivors experience when they are called by the police and have to hand over their nude photo material to the officers. As the therapist pointed out:

This is an extremely painful process that re-traumatizes the victims as it forces them to confront their traumatic trigger again and again. I've had other patients who don't want to call the police because they don't want to have to show the police those photographs.

An equally important position was made by Pantelis, a specialist - analyst of cyber-crimes who, based on his experience in cases of TFSV, clarified that the treatment of the authorities is different depending on the survivor.

For example, as he mentioned:

In cases where the victim is a minor, the mobilization by the authorities is immediate and the treatment of the police towards the victim is different. In cases where the victim is an adult, there are again differences. For example, in the case of foreign women who were victims of non-consensual distribution of sexual material, the police did not treat the incident with due importance but focused on whether there were threats of physical harm against the victim.

The issue of distinguishing between respectable and non-respectable victims has also emerged in research results on sexual abuse. For instance, Campbell and Johnson (1997) reported that 40% of police officers believe that rape must include force and that occasionally a male can't stop himself (p. 260).

The Interplay of Legislation, Cross-Border Cooperation, and Victim Perception in Tackling TFSV

The detection and identification of offenders is one of the most difficult tasks in all types of cybercrime, which is made more difficult by the sometimes vague and conflicting, or non-complementary, legislative borders (see e.g., Broadhurst, 2006; Brown, 2015).

According to the majority of the professionals (60% or N= 6 out of 10), the particularities in the fight against TFSV have to do mainly with the fact that, in addition to individual perpetrators, administrators of websites and social media platforms located in foreign countries with different legal codes are also being involved (see also the previous section above entitled "Challenges Faced by Police Officers" on what

police officers commented in relation to the non- direct communication of the authorities with the operators of websites). Working in a cross-jurisdictional setting with outside law enforcement authorities is thus a significant problem for policing TFSV. The two lawyers who participated in this investigation stated that the Greek police cooperate with the authorities of foreign countries only in the case where minor survivors are involved.

As one of the lawyers explained:

Of the ten technological sexual violence cases I have handled to date in my career as a lawyer, two have involved minor victims. In such cases where the risk concerns children and there is now talk of child pornography, the mobilization of the authorities and cooperation outside borders is a given. (**Dimitris, lawyer**)

The cross-border cooperation of the authorities should also concern cases of adult victimization in order to save valuable time and prevent further reproduction of non-consensual material on the internet. Technology now provides the appropriate means to detect this type of material immediately. The difficulties have to do purely with the difference in legislation from one country to another, another lawyer (**Kostas**) added.

It is notable that 40% of the participants (N= 4 out of 10) highlighted the fact that violence and harm to the victim are subjective concepts but the police treat them as objective based on what is defined in the criminal code.

In order to intervene in time, a police officer must consider additional elements such as whether the victim is being followed by the perpetrator, whether the victim is receiving threatening messages, whether the victim believes that their life is in danger or that their physical integrity is threatened. (Manos, cybersecurity expert)

Similarly, Marikelly, a mental health professional, states that the mobilization of the police is more immediate if the issue has been in

the news in the media and especially in cases where the perpetrator is famous. “If the victim and the perpetrator are anonymous, the arrest warrant itself may never come,” she comments.

Recent research has also supported the above arguments by highlighting that while physical and sexual assault have been criminalized in many countries, the same countries seldom include criminal penalties for emotional abuse and controlling behaviour (Flynn et al., 2021).

Specialists’ Recommendations for a Holistic Response to TFSV

The participants in this research also made some suggestions through which the phenomenon of TFSV can be better dealt with. Based on their proposals, two main themes emerged. The first concerns the training of all involved bodies in dealing with gender-based violence and, in particular, with the phenomenon of TFSV. The second concerns the better cooperation of the authorities both at an international, national and local level and their connection with mental health professionals.

In addition to promoting victim awareness, training provides workers with the basic tools for engaging with institutions. It is crucial that training be constant and efficient in order to address the lack of empathy and comprehension that these workers experience while interacting with TFSV victims.

You cannot effectively deal with a phenomenon when you know nothing about the roots of the problem. Most of the police and judges are not aware of the consequences of the non-consensual distribution of sexual material on the lives of the victims. They believe that as long as there is no physical violence, everything else is manageable. But it's not like that. The experiences of victims of technologically facilitated sexual violence show that the soul hurts much more than the body. (**Lina, Mental Health Specialist**)

Likewise, a frequent concern was the general lack of knowledge regarding sexual violence-related topics. In related studies, sexual assault professionals have reported a lack of understanding by all levels of the criminal justice system (Campbell & Johnson, 1997; Finch & Munro, 2005; Spohn et al., 2001). The main obstacles cited by the participants were “denial of the problem,” “lack of belief that sexual assault occurs,” and “ignorance about sexual violence.” This ignorance causes a disrespect to the survivors. Some people might not report the incident because they do not trust the criminal justice system (Campbell & Johnson, 1997; Finch & Munro, 2005; Spohn et al., 2001).

Another important recommendation that was made by the participants in this study was for mental health practitioners to be more willing to collaborate with police officers and other professionals. It is not unexpected that police differ from other human care providers in what they prioritize in the debate over “punishment versus treatment.”

It is well acknowledged that social workers and police have distinct perspectives when it comes to social issues. This distinction has been previously noted by Hechler (1988), who argues that whereas the police attempt to uphold the law against disobedient individuals through

confrontation, social workers try to effect change through cooperation. When coordinating services, Saunders (1988) emphasized the need to take these discrepancies in the “belief systems” of the police and other human care providers into consideration.

As Pantelis, a cyber security expert, concluded:

While one professional group may advocate for the overall well-being of the victim, another group may advocate for evidence and a legislative intervention to stop technology-facilitated sexual violence. The goal is to establish an interdisciplinary environment where these conceptual disagreements can be settled and where each networking body can carry out its duty while determining an intervention strategy that works better for the victim.

Chapter 5 Findings Overview

This chapter delved into the multifaceted dimensions of TFSV and moves beyond the commonly used term “revenge porn.” It explores the motivations, threats, and challenges surrounding TFSV incidents as revealed through interviews with professionals.

The first theme raised by the analysis - The Multifaceted Dimensions of TFSV – notes the diverse manifestations of TFSV in practice. Some 60 per cent of professionals had encountered cases involving the non-consensual sharing of intimate pictures on behalf of former partners specifically. 40 per cent of those interviewed, however, believed that ‘revenge’ was an inaccurate motivation in many cases, arguing that TFSV is often motivated by financial gain or sexual conquest. The professionals also reported disturbing cases where underage boys

would hack their classmates in order to share intimate photos of them, with the victim often unaware that the images were being shared among their peer group. Identifying perpetrators in such scenarios was often difficult due to the clandestine nature of hacking attempts.

The second theme identified in this chapter – Coercion and Threats – highlights the use of coercion and threat in cases of TFSV. Some four-fifths of professionals cited coercion as a means for taking explicit photos of women, whereafter the threat of distribution was used to manipulate survivors. This was often part of a pattern of abusive behaviours within a relationship, characterised by a need to dominate and control the partner, where such relationships could exacerbate the survivor's vulnerability. Again, in cases of hacking, an absence of a behavioural pattern could prevent law enforcement from identifying who was behind blackmail attempts.

A third theme raised by the analysis - Understanding Victim Hesitation in Reporting TFSV – highlighted the difficulties in ascertaining why survivors do not always come forward. The professionals recognised that survivors are often reluctant to involve authorities, a reluctance sometimes fed by perceptions of victim-blaming attitudes and gender norms perpetuated by law enforcement. Likewise, a fear of former partners, retaliation, or the distribution of further intimate images also deterred survivors from coming forward.

The fourth theme generated through thematic analysis – The Interplay of Legislation and Cross-Border Cooperation – highlights the

international nature of cybercrime and the difficulties this presents for identifying and prosecuting perpetrators. Hosting images on foreign websites or hackers being located outside the jurisdiction of officers could render it difficult to have images removed or launch proceedings against cybercriminals. Some cross-jurisdictional cooperation was noted, particularly in cases involving underage survivors, as well as being motivated by the perception of further threat to the survivor. This indicates that TFSV itself is often not considered a priority unless other threats or crimes accompany it, suggesting its deprioritization among the police force.

Finally, the fifth theme - Specialists' Recommendations for a Holistic Response to TFSV – underscores the recommendations put forward by specialists in order to take a holistic response to TFSV. Foremost, the need to improve training for all parties involved in the process of dealing with survivors – from law enforcement to mental health professionals – was advocated. Interdisciplinary cooperation was also deemed to be important in order to make survivors feel comfortable coming forward and to ensure they received the help they need with regards to mental health and trauma. The importance of a coordinated effort to take a nuanced approach to understanding the complex and diverse dimensions of TFSV and to effectively support survivors and pursue justice on their behalf was at the heart of the recommendations put forward by the professionals.

These findings underscore the intricate and diverse nature of TFSV, highlighting various motivations, challenges in reporting, and the need for improved training and cooperation among professionals to provide holistic support to survivors. The themes derived from the analysis of responses on behalf of various professionals focused on the multifaceted nature of TFSV, something which conflicts with the somewhat one-dimensional description of 'revenge porn' given by the police officers in the preceding chapter. The professionals reported an array of cases involving the non-consensual sharing of sexual images, including underage cybercriminals and individuals motivated by factors other than revenge. Motivations such as financial gain and sexual pride indicate the myriad factors that motivate perpetrators of TFSV to share private images online. The distinction between police officers and professionals in this regard perhaps highlights the distinction between the focus on the act as a crime within law enforcement and the context and motives behind crimes in clinical perspectives.

In a similar vein, professionals noted the pervasiveness of coercion and threats in cases of TFSV as well as patterns of manipulation used by abusers to convince survivors to take explicit photographs as well as the practice of control facilitated by the threat of their publication. This may contribute to a reluctance to go to authorities among survivors, who fear the police cannot protect them from such repercussions or will blame them for taking intimate photographs. This appears to corroborate the observation made above that police focus disproportionately on the responsibility of the victim in such cases

rather than focusing on the culpability of those who share images illicitly.

Professionals on cybercrime highlight the insufficiency of current legislation as well as efforts in cross-border cooperation. There is an apparent need for further training and guidance for professionals required to navigate the jurisdictional complexities of cases of TFSV that often serve as obstacles to achieving justice for survivors.

Likewise, the participants put forward recommendations for interdisciplinary collaboration between mental health professionals and law enforcement that echoes the discussion of surveys of police officers carried out above.

The chapter therefore presents findings that highlight the diverse nature of offending motives and the diverse functions that TFSV can play in intimate relationships. Furthermore, it emphasizes the need for improved training and cooperation among professionals to provide holistic support to survivors and combat effectively sexual abuse online.

Chapter 6: Concluding Discussion

Overview

This project embarked on a comprehensive exploration of Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV) within the Greek context. It aimed to illuminate the perspectives and experiences of survivors (N=28) and key stakeholders, including cybercrime police officers (N=15), cyber security experts (N=6), lawyers (N=2), and mental health counselors (N=2). Adhering to a critical realism paradigm (Bhaskar, 1978), this qualitative research utilized online interviews via Skype and open-ended questionnaires. While I interviewed survivors and professionals (the latter group including psychologists, cyber law experts, and special investigators), I sent online questionnaires with open-ended questions to police officers (for further details see Chapter 2 Methodology). The research employed a thematic coding structure to systematically organize the data and identify commonalities and disparities in responses pertaining to the research questions. The study provides a comprehensive view of the TFSV landscape in Greece, reinforced by specific percentages, painting a detailed portrait of this complex issue.

Summary of the Main Research Findings

The research questions guiding this investigation were as follows:

1) What are the survivors' experiences of TFSV?

1A) How do survivors interpret their experience of TFSV as impacting their subsequent life trajectories and outcomes?

2) What are the institutional responses – both governmental and non-governmental – to TFSV-related victimisation?

2A) What are Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV and of the ways they respond to it?

2B) How do professionals working in counselling and support (e.g., mental health professionals, lawyers, etc.) respond to incidents of TFSV?

This chapter concludes an in-depth examination of the intricate and disheartening landscape of TFSV within the context of Greece. This research has revealed a tapestry of insights into the multifaceted nature of TFSV, touching upon its impact on survivors, the responses of law enforcement officers, and the perspectives of various professionals. The following comprehensive findings encapsulate the significant aspects of this study:

Impact on Survivors:

In response to Research Question 1, “What are the survivors' experiences of TFSV?”, this study found that a substantial majority (93%) of survivors are women, predominantly aged between 19 and 45. Perhaps the most alarming revelation is that 86% of survivors endured

non-consensual distribution of sexual material while they were still minors, often during their pre-adolescent and adolescent years. This signifies a deeply troubling pattern of victimization that necessitates attention.

Furthermore, a noteworthy 89% of survivors possessed a high level of education, frequently at the university level. This detail challenges preconceived notions about the demographic profile of TFSV survivors, highlighting that education and social standing do not shield individuals from this form of victimization. Research Question 1A sought to achieve a nuanced understanding of how victimization influences various aspects of individuals' well-being and opportunities; this study found that the impact on survivors' mental well-being is profoundly disturbing, with an overwhelming 96% reporting significant mental health repercussions. These repercussions span a wide spectrum of psychological distress, including anxiety, phobias, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, and, tragically, suicidal thoughts. Additionally, 50% of participants experienced body shame, loss of control, humiliation, anxiety, and a need for hypervigilance. The prevalence of these mental health consequences underlines the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support for TFSV survivors.

Despite the severity of these psychological traumas, it is concerning that 96% of survivors hesitated to seek professional mental health services. The reasons behind this reluctance are diverse, including negative past experiences, mistrust in the system, and a belief that they could manage with the support of friends and family. While some

participants found solace in private mental health providers, there is an evident gap in accessing appropriate mental health services for TFSV survivors. Addressing these barriers to accessing mental health care is paramount.

Moreover, survivors' perspectives on justice reveal an overarching preference for a restorative approach, focusing on the harm caused by the crime rather than seeking revenge. They emphasize the significance of societal recognition and condemnation of the crime, as well as concerns about community reintegration and addressing their own shame. This highlights the need for a holistic approach to justice and support that respects survivors' preferences.

Police Officers' Responses:

In response to Research Question 2A, "What are Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV and of the ways they respond to it?", this study uncovered significant challenges in how TFSV cases are addressed and understood by law enforcement officers. Notably, only 6.6% of police officers had received specialized training for TFSV investigations. This lack of training results in a limited understanding of the complexities of TFSV, with the predominant association of TFSV with "revenge porn" underscoring the necessity for broadening their comprehension beyond this narrow terminology.

The perpetuation of victim-blaming attitudes within law enforcement is another concerning finding, with 26.6% of officers labeling survivors

with terms like “risky” or “naïve.” This underlines the urgency of transforming attitudes within the police force to create a more supportive environment for survivors.

Additionally, challenges faced by police officers include the absence of specialized personnel, particularly psychologists, and the lack of dedicated facilities at police stations. This highlights the need for structural improvements in police departments to enhance their capacity to address TFSV cases effectively. The recommendation for the presence of female counterparts during victim depositions is also a practical step towards creating a more conducive environment for survivors.

Insights from Professionals:

Research Question 2B sought to understand how professionals working in counseling and support, such as mental health professionals and lawyers, respond to incidents of TFSV. This study found that in the examination of TFSV, experts, including cybersecurity professionals, mental health counselors, and lawyers, provide a more comprehensive perspective compared to that of police officers. They underscore the multifaceted nature of TFSV, moving beyond the common term “revenge porn.” Notably, 60% of these experts reported cases involving the non-consensual sharing of intimate images by ex-partners, while 40% criticized the use of the term “revenge porn,” recognizing diverse motivations, such as financial gain and sexual pride. Furthermore,

some cases involved underage cybercriminals hacking and stealing nude photos, which posed a significant challenge for law enforcement, often exacerbated by victims' lack of awareness of their images having been shared without consent.

Coercion and threats were recurring elements in TFSV cases, with 80% of the professionals highlighting two central threats: coercing survivors to take explicit photos and threatening to distribute them. These abusive dynamics were often characterized by manipulative tactics within relationships, indicating signs of control and a distinct absence of warning signs, particularly in hacking cases. Survivors frequently hesitated to report TFSV incidents, largely due to the pervasive victim-blaming attitudes of police officers and fears that involving law enforcement might exacerbate their situations. The complex landscape of cross-border cooperation was noted by 60% of professionals, particularly when foreign websites and administrators were involved. These findings underscore the pressing need for a holistic response, involving interdisciplinary collaboration and heightened awareness and training for all parties involved in addressing TFSV, in contrast to the traditional stance held by police officers.

Similarities and Differences Among Groups of Research Participants

There are notable similarities and differences among the research groups involved in this study. A common consensus exists among both law enforcement officers and professionals regarding the challenges in

defining TFSV. Further, both groups associate TFSV with “revenge porn” pointing to the imperative of enhanced training programs to expand the understanding of TFSV beyond the confines of a narrow terminology. The agreement on the need to define TFSV more comprehensively is a significant step toward a unified approach to addressing the issue.

In addition, both survivors and professionals acknowledge the persistence of victim-blaming attitudes among law enforcement officers. Survivors reported labels such as “risky” or “naïve” being attributed to them, while professionals recognized this as a problematic attitude within the police force. Identifying this issue as a shared concern is an essential first step in fostering a more supportive environment for survivors and aligning the perceptions of all stakeholders.

Alongside similarities, notable differences emerged among the research groups in terms of the depth of understanding of TFSV and expertise in addressing the issue. Survivors share their personal experiences and insights, emphasizing the psychological impact and need for restorative justice. Survivors in this study reported adverse impacts on their mental health linked with their experiences of TFSV, which caused them to experience humiliation, hypervigilance, anxiety, and a withdrawal from their social lives. Survivors also reported a hesitancy to contact law enforcement after experiencing TFSV, partly because of their lack of confidence in police capabilities to address the crime and also due to lack of confidence and fear of stigmatization.

Consequently, survivors conceptualized restorative justice as a crucial tool for improving communication between survivors and law enforcement and ensuring that the needs of survivors are addressed in the aftermath of TFSV.

In contrast, professionals, including cyber security experts and lawyers, offer a more comprehensive and nuanced perspective of TFSV. For example, they recognized TFSV as a multifaceted issue, extending beyond “revenge porn” and emphasizing its legal, technical, and societal dimensions. In contrast, law enforcement officers primarily use the term “revenge porn” and, as a group, may not have the same level of expertise as the professionals. These differences underscore the need for continuous education and training to enhance law enforcement’s comprehension and expertise in addressing the complexities of TFSV cases.

Another notable difference lies in the understanding of legislative change. Professionals advocate for legislative amendments to mandate explicit takedown procedures for telecommunications providers and website operators, holding them accountable for the prompt removal of explicit content. This perspective is grounded in legal expertise and underscores the importance of a legal framework in combating TFSV. In contrast, law enforcement officers, as demonstrated in the research, did not understand the legal implications of TFSV or demonstrate general legal expertise regarding the crime. The disparities in legal expertise between professionals and law enforcement officers suggest the need for legal training for law enforcement officers to ensure that they are

up to date with the legal statutes that should guide their responses to TFSV cases.

These similarities and differences among the research groups emphasize the need for collaboration and knowledge-sharing among survivors, law enforcement officers, and professionals. While survivors provide invaluable personal insights into the emotional and psychological aspects of TFSV, professionals bring legal, technical, and societal expertise to the table. Bridging these gaps in understanding and perspectives is crucial to develop a more holistic and effective response to TFSV. An integrated approach that leverages the strengths of each group can result in a more comprehensive strategy to combat TFSV and provide support and justice to survivors.

In conclusion, this research underscores the urgency of addressing TFSV comprehensively and recognizing the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon, taking into account different perspectives. The findings emphasize the importance of a holistic approach to justice, support, and healing for survivors.

Moving forward, this research calls for a multifaceted approach to combating TFSV. This approach should involve educational initiatives to prevent TFSV, improved support systems for survivors, and enhanced training for law enforcement and mental health professionals to provide sensitive and effective assistance. These efforts are essential to mitigate the profound and enduring harm caused by TFSV and to promote healing, resilience, and justice for survivors. Furthermore, it

is critical to address the barriers that deter survivors from seeking professional mental health services and to broaden the understanding of TFSV among law enforcement officers. This will help ensure a more supportive and empathetic response to TFSV cases, ultimately contributing to a safer and more just society.

Discussion of the Findings

In considering where this project fits within the wider context of the literature, it is important to evaluate the findings in relation to what is already known. Largely, the findings from this qualitative study align with what has been documented in past literature, but it is important to consider the context and how this research advances the discussion on TFSV.

From the current research findings, it is evident that victimization has wide-ranging effects on the lives of those who have experienced TFSV. These effects encompass various aspects, including family life, friendships, and intimate relationships, all of which are adversely affected by incidents of TFSV. These consequences, such as issues with trust in subsequent intimate relationships, continue to trouble survivors. This aligns with the existing body of literature on sexual violence, where scholars like Gavey and Senn (2004) have consistently found that victim shame is a prominent outcome. Additionally, Ho et al. (2012) have observed detrimental effects on the mental health of sexual violence survivors, which subsequently impact their relationships in

diverse ways. Chodo et al. (2009) even suggest that the failure to form connections in future relationships can lead to extreme outcomes like suicide, although this was not a finding in the current study.

Nevertheless, mental health concerns remain a significant problem for TFSV victims.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Sinclair et al. (2012) investigated the impact of online and text message harassment on middle and high school students, revealing a higher risk of suicidal tendencies when students experienced both cyberharassment and traditional harassment.

While there is limited research on the experiences of “non-consensual images” survivors, from a criminological perspective, it is argued that TFSV shares similarities with other sexual offenses, as suggested by Bloom (2014). These similarities include career-related challenges and issues in interpersonal relationships when private images have been shared online. Technology-facilitated sexual violence is also linked to a greater risk of suicidal tendencies, especially among vulnerable individuals. Threats from third parties or ex-partners may further compound these challenges.

Moreover, a qualitative study by Bates (2016) on the experiences of 18 survivors indicated that the effects of unauthorized online sharing of explicit images resemble those of sexual assault and harassment. These experiences include common themes such as loss of trust, self-blame, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression, thoughts of suicide, low self-confidence, and reduced self-esteem. Additionally, research by

the Cyber Civil Rights group (Eaton et al., 2017) underscores the severe mental health problems experienced by victims of “non-consensual images.”

Collectively, these studies underscore the significant and diverse negative repercussions of TFSV on its victims, including its connection to mental health issues, trust-related problems, and a higher risk of suicidal tendencies, especially among vulnerable individuals.

The negative effects of TFSV on mental health outlined in this study were also consistent with the existing literature on TFSV. For example, this study found that survivors of TFSV were going through extremely painful processes and that the reliving of the trauma through the completion of police reports and working through criminal proceedings significantly increased stress levels. These issues were exacerbated when the police officers did not take the threats seriously because there was no physical harm inflicted on survivors. In previous research on sexual violence, Campbell and Johnson (1997) proposed that as many as 40% of law enforcement officers believed sexual violence and physical violence were interchangeable. The current research project also found that police officers were not appropriately trained to deal with TFSV survivors, and that this led to increased mental health stress. This was a relatively new finding in relation to what had previously been published. Mental health does seem to be a topic that is emerging more commonly in the broader discussions by survivors, and this new contribution could be due to the fact that people find

increased comfort (in current times) in talking about mental health issues, whereas previously, this topic was often seen as taboo.

In the context of social responses to TFSV-related victimization, this research stands out due to its focus on the distinctive cultural elements within Greek society, setting it apart from the broader field of TFSV research. In the case of Greek police officers' perceptions of TFSV, there was a lack of awareness around TFSV and no standard procedure that they could follow. The police officers did not always feel confident in undertaking these procedures due to a lack of professional development training, but they acknowledged the ideas. This is contrastive to literature conducted by Bond and Tyrell (2018) who suggested that police forces did not have a good grasp of what constituted non-consensual images and, consequently, there was no valid response. Bond and Tyrell (2018) suggested that more professional development training was necessary, which aligns with the findings from this research project.

Finally, in relation to the section on how professionals working in counselling and support responded to TFSV, this study found that there were significant obstacles for mental health and cybersecurity experts to overcome when dealing with survivors of TFSV. Specifically, it was found that the legal requirements were quite confusing in the Greek context and that there was a lack of resources along with victim-blaming attitudes that hindered prosecution and victim support. Griffin (2020) noted that pornography had adapted over the years, which made prosecution difficult. It has thus been a challenge for the legal system

to keep up with technology, which does seem to explain to some extent the situation in Greece. Walker et al. (2011) indicate that it is also different based on different generations, which does not justify TSFV, but rather that the training required when dealing with young people may be different from that required when addressing TSFV with older adults. There is a paucity of research on the Greek situation, which does suggest this is a new contribution to research beyond what currently exists in the literature.

Contribution to Knowledge

This research study represents a substantial and nuanced contribution to the realms of sociology, criminology, cybercriminology, digital criminology, and the understanding of the impact of cybercrimes on victims. Its significance lies in the richness of the empirical data collected and analyzed around a highly intricate and sensitive subject: Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV). In delving into this intricate field, this research uncovers unique challenges in the research phase—challenges that, until now, have remained relatively uncharted. An analysis of contemporary and seminal works in the field of digital criminology reveals recurring topics such as cyberbullying, online sex work, cyberstalking, child pornography, hacking, online fraud, challenges experienced by law enforcement, and the implications for law enforcement. Comparatively, a limited amount of research in the field has been directed towards TFSV. Thus, this research provides a

vital outlet for survivors of TFSV, allowing them to share their stories and experiences. This not only adds an important aspect to the body of research, but also supplements existing literature on the subject, as exemplified by Powell and Henry's work in 2018. Prior to this research, a glaring gap existed in the study of TFSV, particularly in the context of Greece. This research, therefore, brings to the forefront a previously overlooked aspect of TFSV, enriching the knowledge base and subsequently paving the way for enhanced support structures for trauma survivors. The originality of this study is rooted in its enmeshing of various theories to adopt a digital criminology perspective that achieves a better understanding of the complexities of TFSV than traditional frameworks. Specifically, this research has illustrated the impacts that harms facilitated by technology have on people in a real-life context, clearly illustrating the embedded nature of online/offline experiences in crime and justice. This is an important contribution to the literature since very few studies have addressed the impacts on and social responses to survivors of cybercrimes and other harmful digital activities, like cyberbullying, cyberstalking and online harassment, in relation to gender, race and/or sexual orientation (exceptions include Halder and Jaishankar, 2012; Powell and Henry, 2016; Mann et al., 2003; Sutton, 2002). Against this backdrop, this research thus enriches current academic understanding of the experiences of survivors of TFSV, particularly those whose images have been posted on social media without their consent. Furthermore, it bridges the chasm between digital criminology theory and its real-

world application in the Greek context, infusing the theoretical with the invaluable insights gleaned from reality.

Looking at the broader context of digital criminology, it is imperative to recognize that this field transcends traditional cybercrime literature, focusing instead on the intricate interplay between technology and society. Additionally, digital focuses on the effects that harm produced through or on online platforms has on the lived experiences of people, such as the TFSV survivors as in this study. Unfortunately, there has been a noticeable lack of studies pertaining to the online victimization of marginalized communities, such as based on gender, and general, systemic issues such as prevailing digital and social inequalities as they relate to crime and justice. There is an evident lack of studies exploring the unequal nature of TFSV, its impacts and responses by law enforcement officers concerning gender in particular. This lacuna reflects a general dearth of cybercrime research that has addressed different forms of violence against minority and/or marginalized communities. This research has addressed this gap in the literature by documenting the experiences of female survivors of TFSV and their unequal access to justice. By focusing on this under-researched community, this research also unpacks new notions of justice as revealed by survivors of TFSV themselves. Importantly, notions of justice conceptualized by the survivors in this research challenge prevailing ideas about cybervictimology in the literature that proposes how digital participation can foment self-help and activism (see, for example, Prins, 2011). It also challenges ideas about informal justice

processes via the use of technologies or digital vigilantism (Thompson et al., 2016), which are discussed in the literature as part of citizen-led justice practices supported by digital participation. This research offers a novel perspective informed by empirical data revealing survivors' advocacy of restorative justice. As proposed by offender-victim interaction theory, restorative justice has strong foundations in the field of victimology.

This research offers a fresh perspective by incorporating elements of both critical realism and feminist epistemology as its research paradigms. Critical realism acknowledges the importance of understanding the underlying structures and mechanisms that influence crime and social control, while feminist epistemology asserts the significance of gender in shaping and defining these aspects. Within the context of feminist criminology, it is essential to recognize the inherent power dynamics between the researchers and the researched. In this study, these power dynamics are leveraged as a means to amplify the voices that may otherwise remain unheard. Feminist criminology has made substantial contributions to comprehending and addressing issues such as "revenge porn," as highlighted by Bates (2017), and examining the intersection of gender and technology (e.g., Faulkner, 2001; Filipovic, 2008). Consequently, this research consistently integrates critical realism and feminist epistemology into its framework, enriching the broader theoretical landscape with unique insights from the Greek perspective.

In an era marked by the ever-evolving landscape of technology, this study's fresh empirical evidence, rooted in established theories, serves to reinforce or reshape ongoing discussions as technology continues to progress. In summary, this research represents a significant and multifaceted contribution to the domains of sociology, criminology, and cybercriminology. Its analytical depth, exploration of gender dynamics, and bridging of theory and practice not only reaffirm existing findings but also push the boundaries of our understanding of TFSV and its implications for both survivors and society.

Suggestions for Future Research

While this was a relatively small qualitative study, it lays the foundation for future researchers to build upon the valuable insights presented here. Unfortunately, TFSV is a persistent issue, and there are compelling reasons to believe it may even escalate in the future. This projection implies that there will be an increasing number of TFSV survivors and a growing community of individuals committed to supporting those who have endured such trauma. This underscores the necessity for continued research and a broader scope of inquiry in this field.

Expanding our research beyond the boundaries of this study presents an exciting opportunity. Additional participants could be interviewed, both within and beyond the confines of Greece. Similarly,

disseminating questionnaires in different countries can contribute significantly to the enhancement of the study's overall scope.

Investigating TFSV across various countries and regions can provide valuable insights into the diverse manifestations of this phenomenon, taking into account cultural, social, and legal factors that influence the experiences of survivors.

Furthermore, it is imperative to recognize that the impact of TFSV may vary significantly from one region to another. Different countries enforce varying degrees of TFSV laws, which raises intriguing questions about the effects of prosecuting TFSV perpetrators on survivors. These variations in legal approaches should be explored by future researchers to assess the implications and efficacy of these legal measures in aiding survivors and deterring TFSV.

Beyond legal considerations, some countries may possess substantial resources dedicated to aiding survivors. This raises an interesting question: are these resources optimally utilized, and do survivors seek support from alternative sources? Understanding how various countries allocate and use resources to support TFSV survivors is vital for optimizing the response to this issue.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence can also be explored further through multidisciplinary teams to reflect the various intersectionalities that inform this crime, risks, and access to justice. Multidisciplinary teams can offer a cross-national perspective that is currently missing from the literature and can improve the current

knowledge base pertaining to survivors' experiences of TFSV and law enforcement approaches to addressing this form of crime. Longitudinal studies can also shed more light on the long-term impact of TFSV on survivors, which will be crucial to generating effective responses that address their needs.

Most of all, cyber criminology theories, such as the prevailing Routine Activity Theory, have focused primarily on online/offline distinctions (Stratton et al., 2018) and are skewed towards understanding the motivations of cyber offenders. A theoretical gap in the literature requires future studies to develop new theoretical insight about the factors that affect responses to TFSV, for example, and how these are determined by variables such as gender.

In conclusion, the voices and experiences of TFSV survivors stand at the heart of this thesis and should remain central in all future research and advocacy efforts. Their narratives are not only integral to understanding the depth of the problem but also critical for developing effective support systems. As we move forward, it is imperative that we keep listening to the voices of survivors and taking their experiences seriously. Their needs, perspectives, and resilience should continue to guide our actions in our collective pursuit of justice and healing.

Technology-facilitated sexual violence is a global concern and understanding it comprehensively and providing the necessary support will require a sustained commitment to continued research and active engagement with those who have experienced such trauma.

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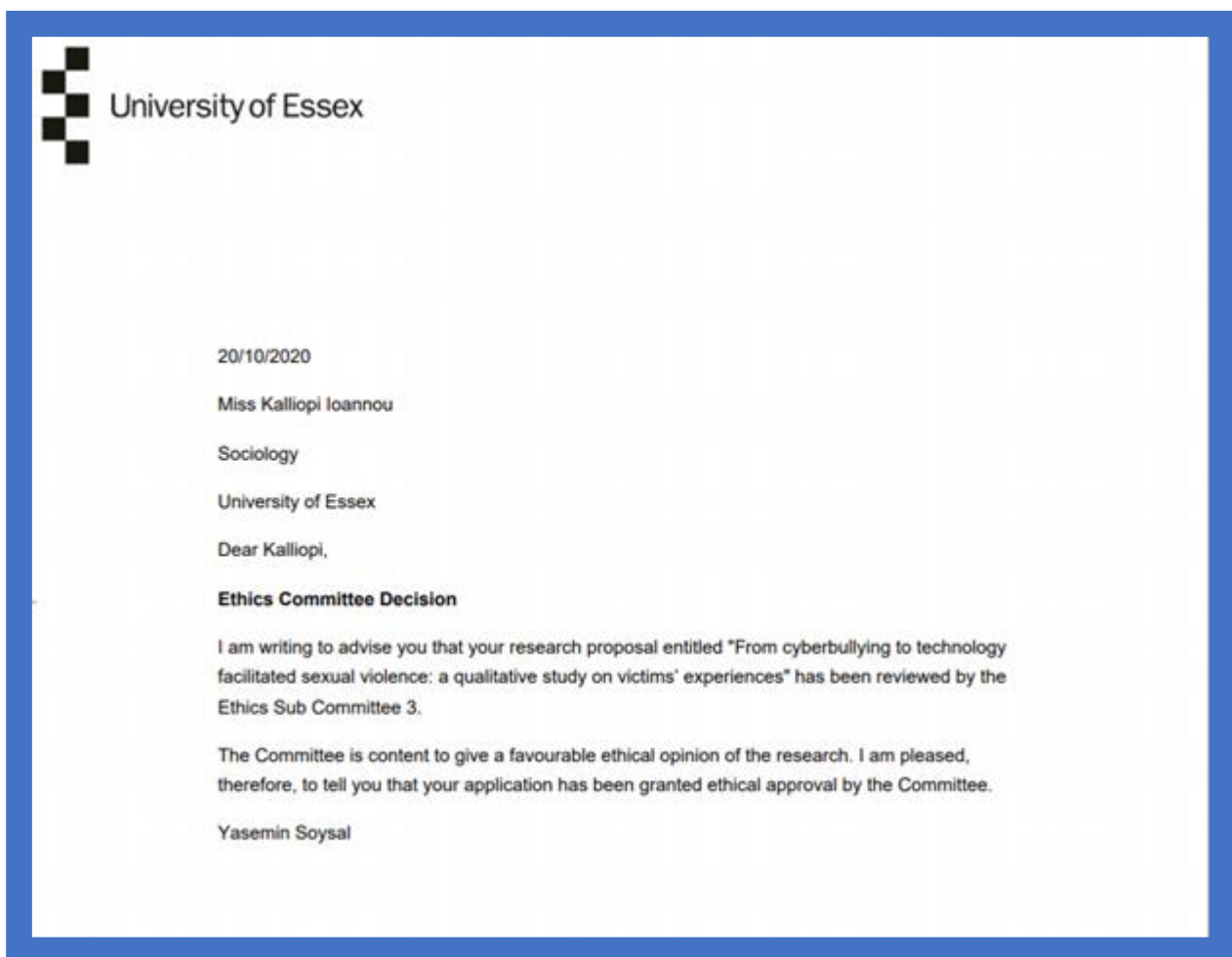
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Appendices

Appendix A- Authorization of Study Objectives and Techniques by University of Essex Review Board



Appendix B- Research Project Introduction and Call for Participants



Kelly Ioannou

October 27, 2020 · 🌐

Γειά σας,

Οι περισσότεροι από εσάς με γνωρίζετε ως Δ/ντρια του [CSI Institute](#). Ως υποψήφια διδάκτωρ Ψηφιακής Εγκληματολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Essex συμμετέχω στο ερευνητικό έργο με τίτλο: "Από cyberbullying, στην τεχνολογική σεξουαλική βία: Μία ποιοτική έρευνα για τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων».

Γράφω για να ζητήσω ευγενικά τη συμμετοχή σας σε αυτήν την έρευνα.

Διενεργώ συνεντεύξεις για να ενισχύσω την κατανόησή μας σχετικά με το πώς η σεξουαλική βία που διευκολύνεται μέσω της τεχνολογίας και συγκεκριμένα η μη συναινετική δημοσίευση φωτογραφιών ή βίντεο σεξουαλικού περιεχομένου επηρεάζει διάφορες πτυχές της ζωής των θυμάτων (π.χ. διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις, ψυχική υγεία, ευκαιρίες εργασίας / καριέρα κ.λπ.).

Αν έχετε πληγεί από το φαινόμενο, θα μπορούσατε να μοιραστείτε την εμπειρία σας μαζί μου. Η συμβολή σας θα βοηθήσει ριζω φως σε έναν τομέα που δεν έχει μελετηθεί έως τώρα στην κοινωνιολογία και την εγκληματολογία. Οι εμπειρίες σας όχι μόνο θα βοηθήσουν τους ακαδημαϊκούς να κατανοήσουν καλύτερα το φαινόμενο, αλλά και να βοηθήσουν στη διαμόρφωση πιο αποτελεσματικών πολιτικών και πρακτικών από την Πολιτεία με επίκεντρο την προστασία των θυμάτων.

Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί μέσω κλήσης Skype και θα διαρκέσει περίπου 1 ώρα.

Οι απαντήσεις σας στις ερωτήσεις θα παραμείνουν εμπιστευτικές. Η ανωνυμία και τα ψευδώνυμα θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για την προστασία της ταυτότητάς σας.

Εάν κάποιος από εσάς είναι πρόθυμος να συμμετέχει, στείλτε μου ένα ιδιωτικό μήνυμα στο email μου (ki19417@essex.ac.uk).

Ιδανικά, ψάχνω για 20-30 συμμετέχοντες.

Θα μπορούσατε να προτείνετε μια ημέρα και ώρα που σας ταιριάζει.

Εάν έχετε απορίες, μη διστάσετε να επικοινωνήσετε μαζί μου (ki19417@essex.ac.uk) ή με τους επόπτες μου Dr. Anna Di Ronco (a.dironco@essex.ac.uk) και Dr. Róisín Ryan-Flood (rflood@essex.ac.uk).

Appendix B(a)- Research Project Introduction and Call for Participants (English Version)

"Hi everyone,

My name is Kelly Ioannou, and I am a PhD Candidate at the Department of Criminology at University of Essex. I participate in the research project titled: "Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Survivors' experiences and police responses in Greece" I am being supervised by Dr. Anna Di Ronco and Dr. Róisín Ryan-Flood at University of Essex.

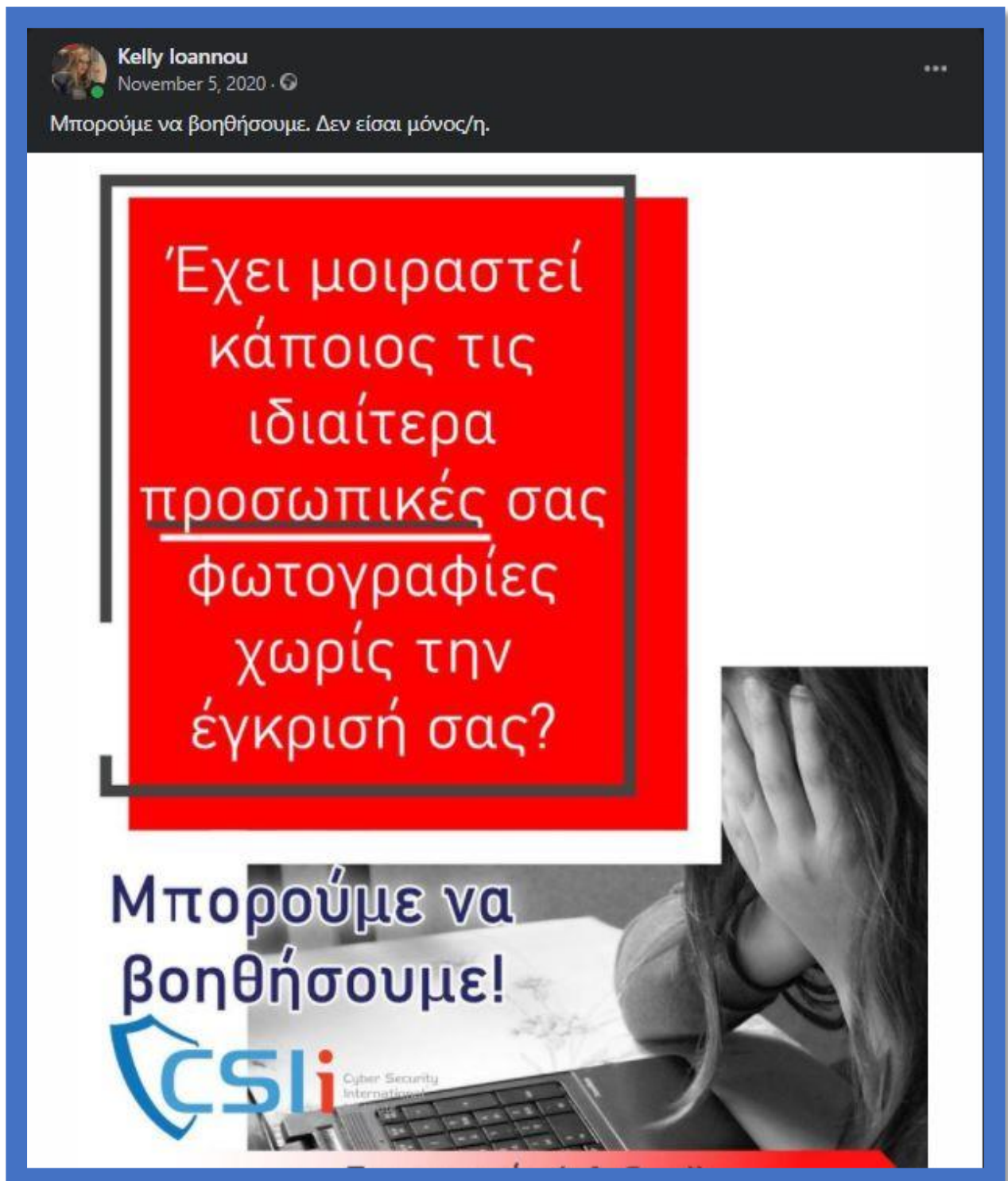
I am writing to kindly request your participation in this qualitative study. I am conducting interviews as part of this research study to increase our understanding of how technology-facilitated sexual violence and specifically the non-consensual posting of images affect several aspects of victims' lives (e.g., interpersonal relationships, mental health, job opportunities/career, etc.). As a survivor, you could share your experience from your own perspective. Your contribution will help illuminate a phenomenon – the one of TFSV –which has been understudied so far in sociology and criminology. Your experiences with these crimes will not only help academics better understand the phenomenon, but also help shape more effective and victim-centred policies and practices.

The interview will be conducted via Skype call and will take around 1 hour. I am simply trying to capture how non-consensual posting of sexual material affected your life. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Anonymity and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity.

If anyone of you is willing to participate, please contact me at my email(ki19417@essex.ac.uk) or at my supervisors' emails: Dr. Anna Di Ronco (a.dironco@essex.ac.uk) and Dr. Róisín Ryan-Flood (rflood@essex.ac.uk). Ideally, I am looking for 20-30 participants. You could suggest a day and time that suits you.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask me."

Appendix C -Recruitment Poster 1



The poster is framed in blue. At the top, it features a social media-style header with a profile picture of Kelly Ioannou, her name, and the date 'November 5, 2020'. Below this is the text 'Μπορούμε να βοηθήσουμε. Δεν είσαι μόνος/η.' (We can help. You are not alone/alone).

The main content is a red rectangular box with white text that reads: 'Έχει μοιραστεί κάποιος τις ιδιαίτερα προσωπικές σας φωτογραφίες χωρίς την έγκρισή σας?' (Has someone shared your especially personal photos without your consent?).

Below the red box, the text 'Μπορούμε να βοηθήσουμε!' (We can help!) is written in a dark blue, bold font. At the bottom left is the CSi International logo, which consists of a blue shield icon and the text 'CSi International' in blue and red. The background of the lower part of the poster shows a person with long hair covering their face with their hand, sitting at a desk with a laptop.

Appendix D - Recruitment Poster 2

Kelly Ioannou
November 25, 2020 · 🌐

Όταν μιλάμε για βία το μυαλό μας πάει σε συγκεκριμένες συμπεριφορές.
Το αποτέλεσμα:
Περιθωριοποιούνται συγκεκριμένες ομάδες θυμάτων. Με αφορμή την Παγκόσμια Ημέρα για την Εξάλειψη της Βίας κατά των Γυναικών ΘΑ ΠΡΕΠΕΙ ΕΠΙΤΕΛΟΥΣ να γίνει κατανοητό ότι η βία αλλάζει μορφές. Η μη συναινετική διανομή ευαίσθητου προσωπικού υλικού είναι πλέον μία νέα μορφή "έμφυλης βίας" που πλήττει γυναίκες ανεξαρτήτως ηλικίας. Στην Ελλάδα τα περιστατικά ολοένα και πληθαίνουν.
Εσυ θα μείνεις αμέτοχος;
Όταν γνωρίζεις ότι μία γυναίκα διαπομπεύεται διαδικτυακά ΜΙΛΑ!
Μη συναινείς και μη σωπαίνεις μπροστά σε κάτι που δεν θα ήθελες να σου συμβεί.
Αν εσύ ή κάποιο δικό σου άτομο αντιμετωπίζει κάτι παρόμοιο inbox με ή στείλε μου ένα email στο kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com
Θα είναι χαρά μου να βοηθήσω!
[#myactionmatter](#) [#kellyioannou](#) [#digitalcriminology](#) [#cyberviolence](#) [#intimateimageabuse](#)

“
Δεν είναι ένα απλό **share**
είναι ψηφιακή βία

Appendix E – Participant Information Sheet



Project Title: “Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Survivors’ experiences and police responses in Greece ”

About this research

This project is being conducted by a PhD student from the Department of Criminology, University of Essex. This study will contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning the experiences of technology-facilitated sexual violence survivors. Specifically, the purpose of this research project is to examine if and how the non-consensual sharing of sexual material affected several aspects of the survivors’ life (e.g., interpersonal relationships, mental health, job opportunities/career etc.) and what the social responses were to their victimisation. This study will use a qualitative research approach, which attempts to offer an in-depth understanding of survivors’ experiences. The specific qualitative research method which will be used for this study is qualitative semi structured interviews. Particularly, in-depth semi-structured interviews will be conducted with participants, who have to be older than 18 years old and to self-identify as victims of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Criteria for being selected

You have been invited to participate voluntarily in these interviews because you are a technology-facilitated sexual violence survivor.

What your participation will involve

You will be invited to participate in semi-structured interviews, which will be conducted via Skype calls. These interviews will be digitally audio-recorded, with your consent, and will take place at a date and time that is convenient to you. The interviews will cover a wide range of topics such as experiences of non-consensual sharing of sexual material and reflections on your personal life/work/friendships etc. You will not be asked, however, to disclose your personal details, and anonymity and pseudonyms will be used to protect your identity. The interviews will last approximately one hour, depending on the length of your responses.

Benefits of taking part

Although there are no direct personal benefits to participants, it is hoped that you may enjoy the opportunity to share your experience, while contributing to bridging the research gap regarding the technology-facilitated sexual violence phenomenon. The research findings will be evaluated by the academic staff of the University of Essex, who will then make recommendations for social responses related to technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Anything that you say in the interviews will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed to others. Your words may be directly quoted for the need of this research; however, your name will never be used. The confidentiality of data, including the identity of perpetrators, will be ensured by anonymization, and by making sure that all information is stored securely. Anonymization, involving the removal of identifiers, will be employed to prevent the likely identification of individuals to whom the data originally pertained using reasonable means. The data which you provide will be stored on a protected computer. The audio recording will be destroyed once an accurate anonymous transcript has been produced.

After the interview

The findings of all the different phases of the research will be presented in a PhD thesis in early autumn 2022. If, after the interviews have ended, you decide that you no longer wish for your contribution to be included, you may request for it to be withdrawn. Participants in this study are able to withdraw at any moment, either temporarily or indefinitely, without having to provide any justification. They are also free to withdraw retrospectively any permission they may have previously granted and to demand the destruction of their own records, including any recordings.

If you have any queries or comments about the research, please contact PhD student, Kalliopi Ioannou (ki19417@essex.ac.uk), her supervisors Dr. Anna Di Ronco (a.dironco@essex.ac.uk) and Dr. Roisin Ryan-Flood (rflood@essex.ac.uk) or Essex REO Secretary, Roberts Jacqui Taylor (jtaylorr@essex.ac.uk).



University of Essex Appendix F- Consent Form

Project Title: “Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence: Survivors’ experiences and police responses in Greece ”

Consent Form

Please complete this consent form to confirm that you have received adequate information about this research project, that you are aware of your rights as a participant in this project, and that you are willing to take part in the interview.

Please tick as appropriate

	YES	NO
1. I have read the information sheet and understand what the research is about.		
2. I have had an opportunity to ask any questions I might have about the project before I give my consent to take part.		
3. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer particular questions, and that I can end the interview at any time.		
4. It has been explained to me that if any of my quoted words are used in this research project, any identifying details about me (including my name and that of anybody I refer to) will be changed in an effort to protect my anonymity.		

5. I understand that if I disclose any information that raises concerns about child protection or criminal activity in the interview, these issues will need to be reported to the appropriate authorities.		
6. I agree to take part in this research project.		
7. I agree to the recording of the interview.		
8. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time without having to give any reasons.		

Participant Signature:

Date:

Participant Name:

Researcher Signature:

Date:

Thank you for agreeing to contribute to this important project.

Appendix G- Recruitment Poster 3



The image shows a screenshot of three tweets from Kelly Ioannou (@KellyIoannou) posted on December 4, 2020. Each tweet includes a profile picture of Kelly Ioannou, her name, handle, and date. The tweets are in English and Greek, both mentioning the hashtag #cancelchatpicorg. The first tweet is in English, the second in Greek, and the third in Greek. Each tweet has engagement icons for replies, retweets, and likes, along with a share icon and a menu icon.


kelly ioannou @KellyIoannou · 4 Δεκ 2020
I conduct anonymoys interviews with survivors of nonconsensual distribution of sexually explicit material. I am PhD researcher @essexuniversity If anyone of you are willing to participate please send me a private message on my email ki19417@essex.ac.uk. #cancelchatpicorg

kelly ioannou @KellyIoannou · 4 Δεκ 2020
ΔΕΝ ΕΙΝΑΙ εκδικητική πορνογραφία.... ΕΙΝΑΙ ΕΜΦΥΛΗ ΒΙΑ #cancelchatpicorg

kelly ioannou @KellyIoannou · 4 Δεκ 2020
Αν εσείς ή κάποιος που γνωρίζετε έχει υπάρξει θύμα μη συναινετικής δημοσίευσης προσωπικού του περιεχομένου (π.χ γυμνές φωτογραφίες/ βίντεο κ.ο.κ) μπορώ να φανώ χρήσιμη. Επικοινωνήστε μαζί μου #cancelchatpicorg

Appendix H- Request for Expedited Feedback from Police as University of Essex Researcher and CSI Institute Member

ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΕΚΦΟΒΙΣΜΟ ΣΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΟΛΟΓΙΚΗ ΒΙΑ 📄

 **Κέλλυ Ιωάννου** <kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com>
 προς communication.dir 📧

Τετ, 18 Νοε 2020, 7:05 μ.μ. ★ 🔍 ⋮

Αξιότιμοι κύριοι,

Το όνομά μου είναι Κέλλυ Ιωάννου. Είμαι η Διευθύντρια του Διεθνούς Ινστιτούτου για την Κυβερνοασφάλεια (CSI Institute) που εδρεύει στην Αθήνα. Είμαι επίσης υποψήφια διδάκτορας στο Τμήμα Εγκληματολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Essex.

Ως διδακτορική ερευνήτρια συμμετέχω στο ερευνητικό έργο με τίτλο: «Από τον εκφοβισμό στον κυβερνοχώρο έως τη σεξουαλική βία που διευκολύνεται από την τεχνολογία: μια ποιοτική έρευνα για τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων», υπό την επίβλεψη της Dr. Anna Di Ronco (a.dironco@essex.ac.uk) και της Dr. Ryan-Flood (rflood@essex.ac.uk) στο Πανεπιστήμιο του Essex.

Επικοινωνώ σήμερα μαζί σας για να ρωτήσω σχετικά με τη δυνατότητα διεξαγωγής συνέντευξης με αξιωματικούς σας ώστε να καταγράψω τις προσωπικές τους εμπειρίες με θύματα μη συναινετικής διανομής σεξουαλικού υλικού. Η συνέντευξη θα πραγματοποιηθεί μέσω κλήσης Skype και θα διαρκέσει περίπου 30 λεπτά. Η ανωνυμία και τα ψευδώνυμα θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για την προστασία των ταυτοτήτων των συμμετεχόντων. Θα εκτιμούσα ειλικρινά οποιαδήποτε βοήθεια θα μπορούσατε να δώσετε σε αυτήν την προσπάθεια.

Εάν κάποιος από εσάς είναι πρόθυμος να συμμετάσχει, στείλτε μου ένα προσωπικό μήνυμα στο email μου (kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com / ki19417@essex.ac.uk).

Αν έχετε απορίες, μην διστάσετε να ρωτήσετε.

Σας ευχαριστώ εκ των προτέρων για το χρόνο και το ενδιαφέρον σας.

Με εκτίμηση,

KALLIOPH IOANNOU

*Διευθύντρια Διεθνούς Ινστιτούτου Κυβερνοασφάλειας (CSI)-
 Κλινική Εγκληματολόγος - Σύμβουλος Οικαγένειας
 Υποψήφια Διδάκτωρ Εγκληματολογίας στο πανεπιστήμιο του Essex*

*Managing Director at Cyber Security International Institute
 Clinical Criminologist - Family and Crime Victim Advocate, MSc
 PhD (cand) in Criminology at University of Essex*

office: (+30) 2111 82 18 18
 email: info@csii.org / kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com

Appendix I - Confirmation Letter from My Supervisor



University of Essex

Colchester, 26 November 2020.

Δ. ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΑΜ. 33233 ΔΣΑ
ΙΘΗΝΑ Τ.Κ. 11141
Γ.Δ.Υ. ΓΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ
ΤΑΧ. 0114

To Whom It May Concern:

Reference for Kalliopi Ioannou

I am writing to confirm that Kalliopi Ioannou is my PhD student, and that I supervise her doctoral study at the Sociology Department of the University of Essex. Kelly's PhD research addresses technology-facilitated sexual violence, and examines the experiences of survivors as well as the views of victim support associations and the police. Kelly's research has obtained ethical approval by the University on 20 October 2020, and since then Kelly is allowed to recruit participants and carry out interviews with them.

We are very grateful to the Greek police for their interest in participating in Kelly's research and are very much looking forward to hearing their views on the very compelling topic of technology-facilitated sexual violence.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Anna Di Ronco
Senior Lecturer in Criminology
Deputy Director of the Centre for Criminology @UoECrim
Department of Sociology
University of Essex

Ακριβές φωτοτυπικό αντίγραφο
εκ του επιδειχθέντος σε εμένα πρωτο-
τύπου το οποίο επικυρώνω νόμιμα.
Αθήνα, 16.1.2021
Ο Επικυρών Δικηγόρος

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ Α. ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΔΙΚΗΓΟΡΟΣ ΕΠΙΧΕΙΡΗΣΙΑΚΩΣ ΔΣΑ
ΜΗΤΣΑΝΩΝ 6 - ΑΘΗΝΑ Τ.Κ. 11141
ΑΦΜ. 113094482 ΔΟΥ. ΓΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ
ΤΗΛ. 697220114

Δ. ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΑΜ. 33233 ΔΣΑ
ΙΘΗΝΑ Τ.Κ. 11141
Γ.Δ.Υ. ΓΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ
ΤΑΧ. 0114

Κόλτσεστερ, 26 Νοεμβρίου 2020.

Προς κάθε ενδιαφερόμενο:

Σχετικά με την Καλλιόπη Ιωάννου

Συντάσσω την παρούσα επιστολή για να επιβεβαιώσω ότι η κα Ιωάννου Καλλιόπη είναι διδακτορική φοιτήριά μου και ότι επιβλέπω τη διδακτορική της εργασία στο Τμήμα Κοινωνιολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου του Έσσεξ. Η διδακτορική έρευνα της Καλλιόπης εξετάζει τη σεξουαλική βία που διευκολύνεται μέσω της τεχνολογίας, τις εμπειρίες ατόμων που αντιμετώπισαν αυτού του είδους τη βία, καθώς και τις απόψεις ενώσεων υποστήριξης θυμάτων και της αστυνομίας. Η έρευνα της Καλλιόπης έλαβε τη δεοντολογική έγκριση από το Πανεπιστήμιο στις 20 Οκτωβρίου 2020 και από τότε έχει την άδεια να επιλέγει συμμετέχοντες και να πραγματοποιεί συνεντεύξεις μαζί τους.

Είμαστε πολύ ευγνώμονες προς την Ελληνική Αστυνομία για το ενδιαφέρον τους να συμμετέχουν στην έρευνα της Καλλιόπης και ανυπομονούμε να ακούσουμε τις απόψεις τους επάνω στο πολύ ενδιαφέρον θέμα της σεξουαλικής βίας που διευκολύνεται μέσω της τεχνολογίας.

Με εκτίμηση,
[υπογραφή]

Δρ. Anna Di Ronco
Ανώτερη Λέκτορας Εγκληματολογίας
Υποδιευθύντρια του Κέντρου για την Εγκληματολογία @UoECrim
Τμήμα Κοινωνιολογίας
Πανεπιστήμιο του Έσσεξ (University of Essex)

Καθώς μετάφραση στην ελληνική από την... γλώσσα του εγγράφου, του οποίου επικυρωμένο αντίγραφο επισυνάπτεται στην παρούσα, εκδίδω δε τη μετάφραση αυτή σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 38 παρ. 2 γ' του Κώδικα Δικηγόρων (ν. 4194/2013), βεβαιώνοντας χρέωνως ότι έχω επαρκή γνώση της γλώσσας από και προς την οποία μεταφράζω. Η άνω μετάφραση έχει πλήρη ισχύ έναντι οποιασδήποτε δικαστικής ή άλλης Αρχής σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 38 παρ. 2 γ' του άνω Κώδικα.

Αθήνα, 16.03.2021
Ο Υπογράφων Δικηγόρος

Πανεπιστημιούπολη του Έσσεξ T 01206 873333 www.essex.ac.uk
Wivenhoe Park
Κόλτσεστερ C04 3SQ
Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ Δ. ΔΑΚΙΔΗΣ
ΔΙΚΗΓΟΡΟΣ ΑΜ 83233 ΔΣΑ
ΜΗΤΣΑΚΗ 8 - ΠΛΑΤΑΝΙΑ Τ.Κ. 11141
ΑΘΗΝΑ 115284037 ΔΟΥ ΠΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ
ΤΗΛ: 210 2674114

Appendix J- Confirmation Letter of Registration at University of Essex



University of Essex

WINNER
UNIVERSITY
OF THE YEAR
THE AWARDS
2018


17 February 2021

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Miss Ioannou Kallipoli, Registration No: 1900809

This is to confirm that Ioannou Kallipoli is currently registered as a Criminology PhD student in the Department of Sociology at the University of Essex. Her PhD research is entitled: 'revenge pornography': A qualitative study on victims' experiences and she is supervised by Dr Anna Di Ronco and Dr Roisin Ryan Flood.

ΟΣ Δ ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΙΟΣ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ
8
14/2/21



Sue Aylott
Research Grant Administrator and Research

Email: socpgadm@essex.ac.uk

Ακριβές φωτοτυπητό αντίγραφο
εκ του επιδειχθέντος σε εμένα πρωτο-
τύπου το οποίο επικυρώνω νόμιμα.
Αθήνα, 16.03.2021
Ο Επικυρών Δικηγόρος

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ Δ. ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΔΙΚΗΓΟΡΟΣ 11333 ΔΣΑ
ΜΗΤΣΑΚΗ 5 Τ.Κ. 11141
ΑΡΜ: 113034/201 ΔΝΥ ΠΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ



Δ. ΔΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
113333 ΔΣΑ
ΜΗΤΣΑΚΗ 5 Τ.Κ. 11141
ΑΡΜ: 113034/201 ΔΝΥ ΠΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ

Πανεπιστήμιο του Έσσεξ (University of Essex)

ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ
ΝΙΚΗΤΗΣ ΤΟΥ ΕΤΟΥΣ
ΒΡΑΒΕΙΑ THE 2018

17 Φεβρουαρίου 2021

Προς κάθε ενδιαφερόμενο

Θέμα: κα Ιωάννου Καλλιόπη, Αριθ. εγγραφής: 1900809

Με το παρόν βεβαιώνεται ότι η κα Ιωάννου Καλλιόπη είναι επί του παρόντος εγγεγραμμένη ως διδακτορική φοιτήτρια στην Εγκληματολογία στο Τμήμα Κοινωνιολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου του Έσσεξ. Η διδακτορική της έρευνα έχει ως τίτλο: «Από τον κυβερνοεκφοβισμό στην εκδικητική πορνογραφία: Μια ποιοτική μελέτη για τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων» και επιβλέπεται από την κα Anna Di Ronco και τον κ. Roisin Ryan Flood.

[υπογραφή]

Sue Aylott
Ερευνητική Διαχειρίστρια

Email: socpgadm@essex.ac.uk

Ακριβής μετάφραση στην ελληνική από την...
το επικυρωμένο αντίγραφο επισυνάπτεται στην παρούσα, εκδίδω δε τη μετάφραση αι...
σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 36 παρ. 2 γ' του Κώδικα Δικηγόρων (ν. 4194/2013), βεβαιώνον...
συγχρόνως ότι έχω επαρκή γνώση της γλώσσας από και προς την οποία μεταφράζω...
ως άνω μετάφραση έχει πλήρη ισχύ έναντι οποιασδήποτε δικαστικής ή άλλης Αρχ...
σύμφωνα με το άρθρο 36 παρ. 2 γ' του άνω Κώδικα.

Αθήνα, 16.02.2021
Ο Υποναρκύριος Δικηγόρος

ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ Δ. ΚΑΛΚΙΔΗΣ
ΔΙΚΗΓΟΡΟΣ ΑΜ. 3233 ΔΣΑ
ΜΗΤΣΑΚΗ 8 ΑΘΗΝΑ Τ.Κ. 11541
ΑΦΜ: 1139840000 ΤΑΛΑΤΣΙΟΥ
ΤΗΛ: 697490314

Πανεπιστημιούπολη του Έσσεξ T 01206 873333 www.essex.ac.uk
Wivenhoe Park
Κόλτσεστερ CO4 3SQ
Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο

Appendix K - Responsible Statement for Participants' Data Protection

Κωδικός: FT_lciB32QGBE06gQzYzAg

Επιβεβαιώνεται το γνήσιο Υπουργείο
Ψηφιακής Διακυβέρνησης / Verified by the Ministry
of Digital Governance, Hellenic Republic
20210316145837402007



Υπεύθυνη Δήλωση (άρθρο 8 Ν.1599/1986)

Η ακρίβεια των στοιχείων που υποβάλλονται με αυτή τη δήλωση μπορεί να ελεγχθεί με βάση το αρχείο άλλων υπηρεσιών (άρθρο 8 παρ. 4 Ν. 1599/1986).

Προς ⁽¹⁾ :	Α.Ε.Α./ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ						
Όνομα:	ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗ	Επώνυμο:	ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ				
Όνομα και Επώνυμο Πατέρα:	ΗΡΑΚΛΗΣ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ						
Όνομα και Επώνυμο Μητέρας:	ΙΩΑΝΝΑ ΡΟΜΠΟΡΑ						
Ημερομηνία γέννησης:	11/12/1992						
Τόπος Γέννησης:	ΑΜΑΡΟΥΣΙΟΝ ΑΤΤΙΚΗΣ						
Αριθμός Δελτίου Ταυτότητας:	AN972478	Τηλ:	+306957126892				
Τόπος Κατοικίας:	ΝΙΚΑΙΑ ΑΤΤΙΚΗΣ	Οδός:	Ηλιουπόλεως	Αριθ:	53	ΤΚ:	18450
ΑΦΜ:	124222454	Δ/ση Ηλεκτρ. Ταχυδρομείου (E-mail):	kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com				

Με ατομική μου ευθύνη και γνωρίζοντας τις κυρώσεις⁽²⁾, που προβλέπονται από τις διατάξεις της παρ. 6 του άρθρου 22 του Ν. 1599/1986, δηλώνω ότι:

Επιθυμώ να διεξαγάγω συνεντεύξεις σε τουλάχιστον 30 Αξιωματικούς ή και από κατώτερο προσωπικό της Ελληνικής Αστυνομίας.

Οι συνεντεύξεις θα ήθελα να διεξαχθούν σε αστυνομικούς συγκεκριμένης Υπηρεσίας όπως παραδείγματος χάρη της

Διεύθυνσης Ηλεκτρονικού Εγκλήματος.

Οι συνεντεύξεις θα διεξαχθούν στο πλαίσιο της διδακτορικής μου διατριβής ως υποψήφια διδάκτωρ Εγκληματολογίας στο Πανεπιστήμιο Essex του Ηνωμένου Βασιλείου.

Η συνέντευξη θα αφορά το φαινόμενο της μη συναινετικής διανομής σεξουαλικού υλικού.

Τα προσωπικά δεδομένα των συνεντευξιζόμενων θα ανωνυμοποιηθούν και τα αποτελέσματα θα χρησιμοποιηθούν

αποκλειστικά και μόνο για τους σκοπούς της επιστημονικής έρευνας ενώ δεσμεύομαι ότι δεν θα χρησιμοποιήσω τα προσωπικά δεδομένα των συμμετεχόντων για κανέναν άλλον σκοπό.

16/03/2021

Ο - Η Δηλ.

ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ

Appendix L - Police Officers' Online Questionnaire

1. Tell me a few words about your role in the force and the training you received on non-consensual online distribution of sexual material and/or "revenge pornography."
2. What procedures/practices do the police follow when reports of non-consensual online distribution of sexual material are filed?
3. What are the common characteristics of survivors of non-consensual distribution of sexual material?
4. What are the challenges in addressing survivors' needs?
5. What police tools, training, practices could contribute to better dealing with such incidents but also to understanding the survivors?

Appendix L(a)- Questionnaire Participant Information Sheet

Σχετικά με την έρευνα

Αυτή η έρευνα διεξάγεται από τη διδακτορική φοιτήτρια, Καλλιόπη Ιωάννου στο Τμήμα Εγκληματολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου του Essex. Αυτή η μελέτη θα συμβάλει στις επιστημονικές γνώσεις σχετικά με τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων της τεχνολογικής σεξουαλικής βίας. Συγκεκριμένα, ο σκοπός αυτού του ερευνητικού πρότζεκτ είναι να εξετάσει εάν και πώς η μη συναινετική ανταλλαγή σεξουαλικού υλικού επηρέασε διάφορες πτυχές της ζωής των θυμάτων (π.χ. διαπροσωπικές σχέσεις, ψυχική υγεία, ευκαιρίες εργασίας / καριέρα κ.λπ.) και ποιες ήταν οι κοινωνικές απαντήσεις στην θυματοποίησή τους.

Για τη συγκεκριμένη μελέτη θα χρησιμοποιηθεί μια ποιοτική ερευνητική προσέγγιση, μέσω της οποίας επιχειρείται να αποκτηθεί μια εις βάθος κατανόηση των εμπειριών των θυμάτων αλλά και των αρχών. Η συγκεκριμένη μέθοδος ποιοτικής έρευνας που θα χρησιμοποιηθεί για αυτήν τη μελέτη είναι ποιοτικές ημιδομημένες συνεντεύξεις. Συγκεκριμένα, θα οι συμμετέχοντες, οι οποίοι πρέπει είναι ανήκουν στο προσωπικό της Ελληνικής Αστυνομίας και συγκεκριμένα στο τμήμα Δίωξης του Ηλεκτρονικού Εγκλήματος θα κληθούν να απαντήσουν ένα σύντομο διαδικτυακό ερωτηματολόγιο.

Τι θα περιλαμβάνει η συμμετοχή σας:

Θα κληθείτε να απαντήσετε σε ένα σύντομο διαδικτυακό ερωτηματολόγιο ανώνυμα.

Οφέλη από τη συμμετοχή:

Αν και δεν υπάρχουν άμεσα προσωπικά οφέλη για τους συμμετέχοντες, ελπίζουμε ότι μπορείτε να απολαύσετε την ευκαιρία να μοιραστείτε την εμπειρία σας, συμβάλλοντας στην κάλυψη των κενών στον τομέα της έρευνας σχετικά με το φαινόμενο τεχνολογικής σεξουαλικής βίας.

Τα ευρήματα της έρευνας θα αξιολογηθούν από το ακαδημαϊκό προσωπικό του Πανεπιστημίου του Essex και θα διατυπωθούν προτάσεις για τις κοινωνικές απαντήσεις που σχετίζονται με τη τεχνολογική σεξουαλική βία.

Εμπιστευτικότητα και ανωνυμία

Οτιδήποτε πείτε στο ερωτηματολόγιο θα παραμείνει εμπιστευτικό και δεν θα αποκαλυφθεί σε άλλους. Μπορεί να υπάρξει άμεση αναφορά στα λεγόμενά σας για τις ανάγκες αυτής της έρευνας, ωστόσο, το όνομά σας δεν θα χρησιμοποιηθεί ποτέ. Η εμπιστευτικότητα των δεδομένων θα διασφαλιστεί με την ανωνυμοποίηση. Ψευδώνυμα θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για την αποτροπή της πιθανής των ατόμων με τα οποία αρχικά σχετίζονται τα δεδομένα. Τα δεδομένα που παρέχετε θα αποθηκεύονται σε προστατευμένο υπολογιστή.

Μετά το ερωτηματολόγιο

Τα ευρήματα όλων των διαφορετικών φάσεων της έρευνας θα παρουσιαστούν σε μια διδακτορική διατριβή στις αρχές του φθινοπώρου 2022. Εάν μετά τη λήξη των συνεντεύξεων αποφασίσετε ότι δεν επιθυμείτε πλέον να συμπεριληφθεί η συνεισφορά σας, μπορείτε να ζητήσετε την απόσυρσή της. Οι συμμετέχοντες σε αυτήν τη μελέτη μπορούν να αποσυρθούν ανά πάσα στιγμή, είτε προσωρινά είτε επ' αόριστον, χωρίς να χρειάζεται να αιτιολογήσουν. Είναι επίσης ελεύθεροι να αποσύρουν οποιαδήποτε άδεια που είχαν προηγουμένως χορηγήσει και να απαιτήσουν την καταστροφή των δικών τους απαντήσεων.

Αν έχετε οποιαδήποτε απορία σχετικά με την έρευνα μπορείτε να επικοινωνήσετε με την διδακτορική φοιτήτρια Καλλιόπη Ιωάννου (ki19417@essex.ac.uk), και τις επιβλέπουσες καθηγήτριες της Dr. Anna Di Ronco (a.dironco@essex.ac.uk) και Dr. Roisin Ryan-Flood (rflood@essex.ac.uk) ή τη γραμματεία του Essex, Roberts Jacqui Taylor (jtaylor@essex.ac.uk).

Appendix L(b) – Questionnaire Consent Form

ΔΗΛΩΣΗ ΣΥΓΚΑΤΑΘΕΣΗΣ

Είναι σημαντικό να διαβάσετε, να κατανοήσετε και να επιβεβαιώσετε τη συγκατάθεσή σας στο διαδικτυακό ερωτηματολόγιο και να είστε ικανοποιημένοι με τις ακόλουθες δηλώσεις.

Εχω ενημερωθεί πλήρως για τη φύση και τους στόχους αυτής της έρευνας, όπως περιγράφεται στην έκδοση του φύλλου πληροφοριών. Συναινώ να λάβω μέρος σε αυτήν.

Είχα την ευκαιρία να κάνω οποιεσδήποτε ερωτήσεις μπορεί να έχω σχετικά με το έργο προτού δώσω τη συγκατάθεσή μου να λάβω μέρος.

Κατανοώ ότι έχω το δικαίωμα να αποσυρθώ από την έρευνα ανά πάσα στιγμή χωρίς να αναφέρω κανέναν λόγο.

Κατανοώ ότι οι πληροφορίες που συλλέγονται θα χρησιμοποιηθούν για ερευνητικούς σκοπούς.

Κατανοώ ότι κανένα άτομο εκτός από τον ερευνητή και το ακαδημαϊκό προσωπικό του Πανεπιστημίου του Essex δεν θα έχει πρόσβαση στις παρεχόμενες πληροφορίες.

Εάν έχετε διαβάσει και κατανοήσει τη σελίδα πληροφοριών:

1. Συμφωνώ να λάβω μέρος σε αυτή τη μελέτη (Μόνο οι απαντήσεις «ναι» θα ληφθούν υπόψη για αυτήν τη μελέτη).

Ναι

Όχι

Appendix L (c)- Experts/Professionals' Interview Guide

1. Tell me a bit about yourself (age, education, etc.)
2. Based on your work as an expert working with survivors of TFSV, how do you call the non-consensual distribution of sexual material?
3. What term do you use to refer to this phenomenon?
4. When did you first come across this phenomenon?
5. Could you walk me through your professional practices when it comes to these cases? (In other words, what happens after a survivor contacts you?)
6. Could you talk to me about your experience with “revenge porn” cases as an expert working with survivors of TFSV?
7. When did you first come across this phenomenon and has it – or your views about it – changed over time?
8. Are there any particularly memorable cases that you would like to mention?
9. Are cases of “revenge pornography” being reported? What are the most common cases?
10. Who are the typical survivors of “revenge pornography”?
11. Do you think this is a gendered crime?
12. Are these survivors also often found to be survivors of other crimes?
13. Do you find it easy to make survivors of non-consensual distribution of sexual material open up to you?
14. Do you find it difficult to listen to what survivors tell you?
15. Have you received any training to be able to deal with “revenge porn” cases?
16. What happens to survivors once their cases are processed by the police?
17. Do you think the Greek legal responses to non-consensual sharing of sexual material are adequate to protect survivors?
18. What are your thoughts on the non-consensual distribution of sexual material as a phenomenon?
19. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix M- Survivors' Interview Guide

1. Tell me a bit about yourself.
2. What is technology-facilitated sexual violence for you?
3. Tell me about your experience with technology-facilitated sexual violence.
4. How has this affected you personally?
5. How has this affected you on the job market?
6. How has this affected you while at work?
7. How has this affected you regarding your family life?
8. How has this affected your friendships?
9. How has this affected you in terms of dating or romantic relationships?
10. How has this affected your ability to trust people?
11. Tell me about any experiences you've had with law enforcement as a survivor of technology-facilitated sexual violence.
12. Can you tell me about the laws on non-consensual sharing of sexual material where you live?
13. If you dealt with law enforcement, how did you feel about how the police handled your case?
14. What would you like to see happen with laws on technology-facilitated sexual violence?
15. Tell me about any experiences you've had with victim advocacy groups.
16. Have you experienced any judgment when your photos are being uploaded online?
17. How do you feel women are viewed when their nude photos end up online?
18. How do you feel men are viewed when their nude photos end up online?
19. What would your advice be to other people who've been victimized by technology facilitated sexual violence?
20. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Appendix N - Hellenic Police Approval

Police On Line

https://tws.ydt/arxeion-xml/pages/police/prot_beta/file-get?arx-files-di..



ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΑ
ΥΠΟΥΡΓΕΙΟ ΠΡΟΣΤΑΣΙΑΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΛΙΤΗ
ΑΡΧΗΓΕΙΟ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗΣ ΑΣΤΥΝΟΜΙΑΣ
ΚΛΑΔΟΣ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΤΙΚΗΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ ΚΑΙ
ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΟΥ ΔΥΝΑΜΙΚΟΥ
ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ
ΤΜΗΜΑ ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ
Δ/ση: Π.ΚΑΝΕΛΛΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ 4 10177 ΑΘΗΝΑ
Αρμόδιος: ΠΕ-Α' ΚΩΣΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΗΣ ΣΤΥΛΙΑΝΟΣ
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ
Τηλέφωνο: 210 6922055, POL:1035100
e-mail: communication.dir@astynomia.gr
ΑΡΙΘ. ΠΡΩΤ.: 1821/ 21/874914

ΑΘΗΝΑ , 29/04/2021

Ηλεκτρονική διακίνηση για τους αποδέκτες που
είναι συνδεδεμένοι στο δίκτυο POL.

ΠΡΟΣ: 'ΒΛΕΠΕ ΠΙΝΑΚΑ ΑΠΟΔΕΚΤΩΝ'

Γ.Φ./Ε.Φ. Θεματολογίου: (9009/12)

ΘΕΜΑ: Αίτημα της Διδακτορικής Ερευνήτριας στο Τμήμα Εγκληματολογίας του Πανεπιστημίου του Essex κας ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Καλλιόπης για πραγματοποίηση συνεντεύξεων με Αξιωματικούς της Ελληνικής Αστυνομίας, στο πλαίσιο διδακτορικής έρευνας με τίτλο «Από τον κυβερνοεγκοβισμό στην εκδικητική πορνογραφία: Μια ποιοτική μελέτη για τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων»

ΣΧΕΤ:

- α) Υπ' αριθμό 1821/21/606603 από 24/03/2021 έγγραφο (ΑΕΑ/ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΕΠΙΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑΣ/ΤΜΗΜΑ ΣΥΝΤΟΝΙΣΜΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ)
- β) Υπ' αριθμό 1449/21/733133 από 09/04/2021 έγγραφο (ΔΝΣΗ ΔΙΩΣ. ΗΛΕΚΤΡΟΝ. ΕΓΚΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ/ΤΜΗΜΑ ΚΑΙΝΟΤΟΜΩΝ ΔΡΑΣΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΗΣ)
- γ) Το υπ' αριθμ. 1821/21/865659 από 28/04/2021 Εισηγητικό Σημείωμα - Απόφαση κ.Αρχηγού.

Γνωρίζεται ότι με το ανωτέρω (γ) σχετικό, **αποφασίστηκε η ικανοποίηση του αιτήματος της διδακτορικής ερευνήτριας, κας ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Καλλιόπης, για πραγματοποίηση συνεντεύξεων με εθελοντές Αστυνομικούς της Διεύθυνσης Δίωξης Ηλεκτρονικού Εγκλήματος**, στο πλαίσιο διδακτορικής έρευνας με τίτλο «Από τον κυβερνοεγκοβισμό στην εκδικητική πορνογραφία: Μια ποιοτική μελέτη για τις εμπειρίες των θυμάτων».

Η Διεύθυνση Δίωξης Ηλεκτρονικού Εγκλήματος παρακαλείται όπως ενημερώσει το σύνολο του προσωπικού της για την **εθελοντική συμμετοχή** του.

Βασικές προϋποθέσεις:

1) Η διενέργεια των συνεντεύξεων να πραγματοποιηθεί **μέσω χρήσης σύγχρονων Τεχνολογιών Πληροφορικής και Επικοινωνίας (ΤΠΕ)**, σε απευθείας συνεννόηση των **εθελοντών συμμετεχόντων** με την αιτούσα (τηλ. 2111821818 email: kelly.ioannou92@gmail.com, ki19417@essex.ac.uk), **σε χρόνο εκτός υπηρεσίας**.

2) Οι εν λόγω συνεντεύξεις, θα βασιστούν αποκλειστικά στον συνημμένο οδηγό συνέντευξης που κατέθηκε στην Υπηρεσία μας.

3) Η διασφάλιση από την ερευνήτρια ότι τα αποτελέσματα που θα εξαχθούν από την έρευνα θα χρησιμοποιηθούν αποκλειστικά για την πραγματοποίηση των σκοπών της συλλογής και επεξεργασίας τους και θα τηρηθούν οι κανόνες **προστασίας των προσωπικών δεδομένων**

και η ανωνυμία των συμμετεχόντων.

4) Η αποστολή των αποτελεσμάτων της έρευνας προς αξιολόγηση και έγκριση πριν από ενδεχόμενη δημοσίευση σε επιστημονικά συνέδρια και περιοδικά.

**Ο ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΤΗΣ
ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΓΕΡΟΧΡΗΣΤΟΣ
ΠΕ-Α'**

ΠΡΟΣ

- 1) ΔΙΕΥΘΥΝΣΗ ΔΙΩΣΗΣ ΗΛΕΚΤΡΟΝΙΚΟΥ ΕΓΚΛΗΜΑΤΟΣ
- 2) ΚΑ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΚΑΛΛΙΟΠΗ

ΚΟΙΝΟΠΟΙΗΣΗ

- 1) ΕΠΙΤΕΛΙΚΟ ΓΡΑΦΕΙΟ ΑΡΧΗΓΟΥ
- 2) ΔΕΑ/ΥΠΑΡΧΗΓΟΣ ΕΛ.ΑΣ.
- 3) ΔΕΑ/ΕΠΙΤΕΛΕΙΟ
- 4) ΔΕΑ/ΚΛΑΔΟΣ ΑΣΦΑΛΕΙΑΣ
- 5) ΔΕΑ/ΚΛΑΔΟΣ ΔΙΟΙΚΗΤΙΚΗΣ ΥΠΟΣΤΗΡΙΞΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΘΡΩΠΙΝΟΥ ΔΥΝΑΜΙΚΟΥ