

The Pennsylvania State University

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**VICTIM BLAMING AND CYBER SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION: AN EXPLORATORY  
STUDY ON THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY ON  
VICTIM BLAMING ATTITUDES TOWARDS SEXTORTION**

A Thesis in

Criminal Justice

by

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**ABSTRACT**

Studies have been conducted on victim blaming in various crimes, however it has not been studied in regards to sextortion. Currently, there is a lack of research on sextortion as a whole. The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in literature and to see if victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion were influenced by the participant's gender and political ideology. There was a final sample size of  $n = 43$ . It was hypothesized that males would be more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion than females. The second hypothesis was that those who identified as being more conservative would be more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes than those who identified as being more liberal. Using a survey distributed to currently enrolled college students, a preliminary analysis was performed. Results from the study indicate that there are significant differences between males and females, as well as significant differences between those who are very liberal and those who are conservative.

*Keywords:* victim blaming, sextortion, gender, political ideology

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This study is concerned with how participant gender and political ideology influence victim blaming attitudes about sextortion. Victim blaming is formed through the “assumption that the victim was responsible for the crime being acted upon them”, which is based on the theory of victim precipitation (Starr & Lavis, 2018, pg. 428). Victim precipitation is the idea that the victim’s behavior facilitated their own assault (Timmer & Norman, 1984). Individuals who engage in victim blaming believe that the victims are responsible for their own victimization, that victims “asked for it”, and also that victims have agency and could have prevented the crime from happening (Hasinoff, 2017). Victim blaming attitudes have been studied on various sexual crimes, such as rape and revenge pornography. These attitudes only increase feelings of self-blame, reduce reporting and sharing, increase psychological symptoms, and delay recovery time (Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco & Barnes, 2001; Ullman, 1996). Alternatively, belief in the victim and listening to their story has the opposite effect (Campbell, et al., 2001; Ullman, 1996). Thus, the aim of this study is to expand on the literature of victim blaming attitudes, specifically towards cyber sexual victimization.

With the increased use of technology, more people are becoming victims of various cybercrimes, such as revenge pornography and sextortion. Sextortion has been defined as “the threatened dissemination of explicit, intimate, or embarrassing images of a sexual nature without consent, usually for the purpose of procuring additional images,

sexual acts, money, or something else” (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018, pg. 1). Little research has been conducted on sextortion. Prior research has not examined perceptions or attitudes towards sextortion or its victims. The research that is available has focused mainly on the characteristics of the crime and how it relates to children (Açar, 2016; Humelnicu, 2017; Wolak, Finkelhor, Walsh & Treitman, 2018). This current study attempts to examine the victim blaming attitudes towards those victimized by sextortion, expanding on the body of literature regarding cyber sexual victimization.

According to a United States national report (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2016), there has been an increase in sextortion reports over the past few years. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children’s (NCMEC) CyberTipline has been tracking sextortion reports since October of 2013. In the first two years, 2014 and 2015, there was an increase in the number of reports by 90%; in 2016, there was a 150% increase in sextortion reports from the same time period in 2014 (NCMEC, 2016). The Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) has had an increase of over 200% extortion-related complaints since 2017 (Crothers, 2019). Specifically with sextortion, in a seven-month period, from July 2018 to February 2019, a sample of 89,000 email addresses received over 790,000 sextortion threats (Crothers, 2019). There are currently no specific laws against abortion. Currently, the act is covered under extortion laws, as well as child pornography laws, should the victim be a minor.

While some research has been conducted on cyber sexual victimization, there have been no studies looking specifically at victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion. This study seeks to fill the gap. The present study offers information on

victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion. While perceptions and victim blaming have been researched, mainly on similar crimes like revenge pornography, the study at hand aims to expand on those ideas for sextortion. Another goal of this project is to ascertain information about who engages in victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion, specifically looking at the differences between gender and political ideology.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Victim Blaming**

Various factors influence victim blaming, such as the gender of the perpetrator and victim, the race of the victim and perpetrator, rape myth acceptance, relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, and the gender of the study participant (Ayala, Kotary & Hetz, 2018; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; George & Martinez, 2002; Henry, Flynn & Powell, 2019; Starr & Lavis, 2018;). A study with female participants found that victim blaming occurred more often if the participant displayed rape myth acceptance and if the vignette portrayed the victim as a female and the perpetrator as a male (Ayala, et al., 2018). Another study found that the race of the victim and the race of the perpetrator influenced the respondents' engagement in victim blaming attitudes (George & Martinez, 2002). Specifically, it found that the victims of intraracial rape, where both the victim and the perpetrator were of the same race, were deemed more responsible for what happened versus victims of interracial rape, where the victim and the perpetrator were difference races (George & Martinez, 2002). The relationship between the perpetrator and the victim has also been a deciding factor in whether victim blaming will occur, and it places accountability on the victim (Bothamley & Tully, 2018). Another study found that people with high levels of interpersonal trust engaged in less

victim blaming compared to those with a history of betrayal and low trust in others (Starr & Lavis, 2018).

Victim blaming and rape myth acceptance are commonplace on college campuses (Aronowitz, Lambert & Davidoff, 2012; McMahon, 2010; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Research has been conducted on students' perceptions of the campus rape culture (Giraldi & Monk-Turner, 2017; Martin, 2015; Sharp, Weiser, Lavigne & Kelly, 2017), stereotypical rape myths (Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds & Gigycz, 2011; McMahon & Farmer, 2011), and the influence victim blaming has on police and school investigations (Page, 2010; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Wolak & Finkelhor, 2016). The effects of sexual victimization have been thoroughly examined, especially on topics such as self-blame and self-perception (Branch, et al., 2017; Katz, May, Sörenson & DelTosta, 2010; Pittenger, Schreier, Meidlinger, Pogue, Thermer, Flood & Hansen, 2016; Vaillancourt-Morel, Bergeron, Blais & Hébert, 2019). Research has also been conducted on the observer's gender (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Davies, Rogers & Whitelegg, 2009; George & Martinez, 2002; Henry, et al., 2019; Lambert, Smith, Geistman, Cluse-Tolar & Jiang, 2013; McDonald, 2009;) and political ideology (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; McDonald, 2009; Spaccatini, Pacilli, Giovanelli, Roccato & Penone, 2019; Williams, 1984).

Due to the current rhetoric against males and conservatives regarding rape acceptance myths and the adoption of ideas like "Boys will be boys" and "toxic masculinity" (Burns, 2018; Dvorak, 2018; IANS, 2019; Niemi & Young, 2016; Szalavitz, 2018), as well as previous literature on the topic, it is of interest if findings will be similar for cyber sexual crimes. For the present study, the focus is the influence of the

participant's gender and political ideology on victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion.

## **Gender**

There have been studies on the ways that the participant's gender affects victim blaming; specifically, victim blaming varies due to gender of the participant in these studies. It is suggested that men are more likely to victim blame than women (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Davies, et al., 2009; George & Martinez, 2002; Henry, et al., 2019; Lambert, et al., 2013; McDonald, 2009). Yet another study on victim blaming attitudes with rape and race found that males were also more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes than females, especially when they scored higher on racism (George & Martinez, 2002). In a study focused on male-on-male rape, the hypothesis that male respondents would engage in victim blaming behavior more than female respondents was supported (Davies, et al. 2009). This was especially true when the male victims were portrayed as being submissive versus male victims that displayed more masculine characteristics and tried to fight back (Davies, et al., 2009).

Another study found that the participant's gender also affected their acceptance of rape myths (McDonald, 2009); the acceptance of the rape myth also influences the participant's engagement with victim blaming. Men in the study accepted rape myths more than women, and therefore, were more likely to blame the victim than women (McDonald, 2009). Rape myths have been defined as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists...The hypothesized net effect of rape myths

is to deny or reduce perceived injury or to blame the victims for their own victimization”” (Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999, pg. 28). In a study about stalking victims, it was found that men were more likely to blame the victims of stalking than women (Lambert, et al., 2013). Continuously through various studies, it is shown that men are more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes, especially for crimes of a sexual nature, than women.

### **Political Ideology**

There are not many studies conducted on victim blaming and political ideology, however the studies that are available have similar findings (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; McDonald, 2009; Spaccatini, et al., 2019; Williams, 1984). In a study conducted in 1984, it was found that conservatives blamed the victim more often than liberals and were more likely to defame the victim’s character than liberals (Williams, 1984). Yet another study found that the participants who defined themselves as high in conservatism, and low in liberalism, blamed female victims more than they blamed male perpetrators, and this finding was regardless of gender (Lambert & Raichle, 2000). There was also a study that found that those who scored high in right-wing authoritarianism blamed sexualized victims more than non-sexualized victims (Spaccatini, et al., 2019). Finally, in another paper with two studies, researchers found that conservatives were more likely to accept rape myths than liberals (Barnett & Hilz, 2018). As stated previously, other research has found that acceptance of rape myths was associated with victim blaming behavior regardless of gender (McDonald, 2009). If both

males and conservatives are more likely to accept rape myths, then according to previous literature, both groups are also more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; McDonald, 2009).

### **Revenge Pornography and Sextortion**

Sextortion and revenge pornography are similar crimes. While there is limited research on sextortion, there is research on revenge pornography on topics such as the characteristics of the crime and victim blaming attitudes towards victims of the crime. The results from the revenge pornography helped to guide the research questions for the current study.

Revenge pornography has been defined as “the distribution of sexually graphic images of individuals without consent...as well as images originally obtained with consent, usually within the context of a private or confidential relationship (e.g. images consensually given to an intimate partner who later distributes them without consent, popularly referred to as ‘revenge porn’)” (Citron & Franks, 2014, pg. 346). There has been vast research conducted on revenge pornography (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Branch, Hilsinki-Rosick, Johnson & Solana, 2017; Stroud, 2014; Henry, Flynn & Powell, 2019; Henry & Powell, 2015; O’Connor, Drouin, Davis & Thompson, 2017; Starr & Lavis, 2018). The crime has been the topic of many media reports, as cases arise between celebrities and athletes, as well as high profile cases (Hauser, 2018; Nguyen, Bott & Villarreal, 2019; Winton, 2017).

With revenge pornography, the intimate content that is released usually has identifying information about the victim, such as their name, location and links to their social media profiles (Stroud, 2014). Sextortion and revenge pornography are similar in victim characteristics, in that women have been found to be more likely the victims of both cybercrimes (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Branch, et al., 2017). Revenge pornography and sextortion have been closely related (Kopecky, 2017), however, there are some major differences that set these two cybercrimes apart from one another.

One of the main differences between sextortion and revenge pornography is the perpetrator's intent. With sextortion, the perpetrator is using blackmail to gain something from the victim, whether it be more sexual content, money or in-person sexual activities (Wittes, et al., 2016). Sextortion is a private crime, originally occurring only between the victim and the perpetrator, however there can be threats of public exposure, but the threats are mainly not carried through since the victim typically complies with the perpetrator's demands (Patchin & Hinduja, 2018). In contrast, the intent behind revenge pornography is to embarrass and humiliate the victim, whether it be because of separation or infidelity. The perpetrator posts sexual content of the victim on websites or distributes them, and often times, the victim is unaware of any crime occurring until later (O'Connor, et al., 2017).

The victim-offender relationship is also an important distinction between revenge pornography and sextortion. Perpetrators of revenge pornography are typically ex-partners. The sexual content that was shared between the perpetrator and victim was consensual, and often, there was assumed confidentiality (Bothamley & Tully, 2018). This differs from perpetrators of sextortion, who are typically not as close with the

victims. The perpetrator may be someone the victim met briefly in person, someone they met online, or even someone they do not know at all (Wolak, et al., 2018).

There are some studies that highlight the negative impacts that revenge pornography has on the victims. A study found that revenge pornography negatively impacted the victim's reputation (Bothamley & Tully, 2018). Another study found that many victims expressed anger towards themselves for consensually sending sexually explicit pictures (Branch, et al., 2017). These feelings of blame can also make victims less likely to come forward, leading to fewer reports and less public exposure to the crime.

Victims of revenge pornography often engage in self-blame. This makes victims less likely to report the crime or get help (Henry, et al., 2019; Starr & Lavis, 2018). This is further exacerbated when others begin to blame the victim as well. Victim blaming can be detrimental to the victim, emotionally and psychologically (Martin, 2015; Starr & Lewis, 2018).

There are a few studies that focus on the links between victim blaming and revenge pornography. In one study, it was found that victims of revenge pornography were blamed more if they sent the sexually explicit content early in the relationship than if they sent the sexually explicit content later in the relationship (Starr & Lavis, 2018). In a comprehensive review of revenge pornography, it was found that 50% of men and 30% of women engaged in victim blaming attitudes towards victims and also tried to minimize the effects the crime had on the victim (Henry, et al., 2019).

Fortunately for victims, there are laws in 43 states prohibiting revenge pornography (Schulte, 2019). There is, however, still a lack of reporting (Bothamley &

Tully, 2018). While it is agreed upon that a way to reduce risk of becoming a victim of revenge pornography is to not take sexually explicit photos or videos, lawmakers cannot limit a person's right to do this consensually (Henry & Powell, 2015). This makes it more difficult to put an end to revenge pornography, despite there being laws against the crime. As more people engage in sexting, which has been defined as "sending, receiving, and forwarding sexually explicit texts and images via cell phones or the Internet" (Symons, Ponnet, Walrave & Heirman, 2018, pg. 3837), the more they are opening themselves up to victimization (Branch, et al., 2017; Drouin, Hernandez & Wehle, 2018).

Sextortion has been defined as "situations in which perpetrators threaten to expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, engage in sexual activity, or agree to other demands" (Wolak, et al., 2018). In a review of only 78 separate cases that spanned over 52 jurisdictions, 29 states, and 3 foreign countries, researchers found at least 1,397 victims of sextortion (Wittes, Poplin, Jurecic & Spera, 2016). Prosecutors believe that there are more likely to be 3,000 to 6,500 victims in those 78 cases (Wittes, et al., 2016). While globally that number may be small, it is possible that the number of victims is actually higher. Many instances of sextortion victimization are unreported (Wittes, et al., 2016). The crime as a whole receives little media attention and has little to no legislation against it (Wittes, et al., 2016). It is possible that the majority of victims would like to remain anonymous, as they feel embarrassment and shame (FBI, 2015; Wolak, et al., 2018). While there is not research directly on victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion, there is research on other areas of this new form of cyber sexual victimization.

There are various elements to sextortion that make it unique from its counterpart, revenge pornography. Sextortion also occurs online, and once the possession of an inappropriate picture or video is obtained the extortion can occur (Açar, 2016). While it was found in one study that many minors willingly sent sexual pictures to people they did not know at first (Wolak, et al., 2018), there are also victims who had their pictures taken unbeknownst to them by computer hackers, either through hacking into their cameras or onto their devices. Across 78 cases and almost 1,400 victims, researchers discovered five similar elements across the cases of sextortion: computer hacking, catfishing over social media, interstate victimization, international victimization and demands for face-to-face sexual acts (Wittes, et al., 2016).

The majority of the research conducted on sextortion has looked solely at children and their experiences, as well as the general characteristics of the crime (Açar, 2016; Humelnicu, 2017; Wittes, et al., 2016; Wolak, et al., 2018). Most research has focused on children as the popular targets, as they are considered to be the most easily manipulated and vulnerable in the case of sextortion (Humelnicu, 2017; Wittes, et al., 2016). Many times, people, especially children, do not understand that what is happening to them is a crime, which can lead to a lack of reporting (Wittes, et al., 2016). Thus, the lack of reporting perpetuates the lack of awareness.

In a comprehensive review of sextortion characteristics and its prevalence among minors, it was found that 92% of the perpetrators were male and over half of them were minors (Wolak, et al., 2018). It was found that females were more likely to be victims. Most of the respondents knowingly sent the sexual images, and 70% of them said it was because they wanted to start a romantic relationship with the perpetrator (Wolak, et al.,

2018). Respondents also reported that their lives were drastically altered, such as losing relationships with their friends and family, having mental health problems, moving into different communities, and having job-related issues. Only 5% reported that they did not have any offline changes (Wolak, et al., 2018).

In another report, there were similar findings (Wittes, et al., 2016). All the perpetrators that were convicted of some crime related to the incident were male, most of the adult victims were women and there were both male and female child victims (Wittes, et al., 2016). Victims expressed feelings of powerless and vulnerability (FBI, 2015). It has also been noted that victims of sextortion experience mental harm and have had problems in their homes, schools, and jobs (O'Conner, et al., 2017). Similar to other findings, perpetrators demanded more sexual content more than anything else. However, some requested money or expressed wanting the victim to have sexual intercourse with them (Wittes, et al., 2016).

Sextortion is a relatively new problem, so there is a lack of research and awareness of the crime. It is being facilitated over social media, targeting many who willing put their lives online for the world to see. It is the new "playground" for sexual offenders to find victims (Wittes, et al., 2016). The majority of victims want to remain anonymous, which creates a lack of reporting and media attention (Wittes, et al, 2016). Currently, there is no specific legislation criminalizing and prohibiting sextortion. For children, there is some legal aid with laws against child pornography. For adults, there is little available to help with the sexual aspect of the crime; they only receive assistance with just the extortion (Wittes, et al., 2016). The lack of legal aid places many victims at a disadvantage.

### Addressing the Gap

There is limited research that has been conducted on sextortion. While there is research on victim blaming, there are still areas where the knowledge could be expanded. Particularly, there is a gap in the existing literature on what influences a person's attitude toward a victim. The goal of this study is to explore how victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion may be influenced by the participant's gender and political ideology.

Based on prior research on victim blaming (Ayala, et al., 2018; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Hasinoff, 2017; Henry, et al., 2019 Starr & Lavis, 2018), revenge pornography (a similar crime to sextortion) (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Scott & Gavin, 2018; Starr & Lavis, 2018), and the influence of gender and political ideology (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Davies, et al., 2009; George & Martinez, 2002; Henry, et al., 2019; Lambert, et al., 2013; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; McDonald, 2009; Spaccatini, et al., 2019), there are two research hypotheses that this thesis will examine. Based on these previous studies, it is hypothesized that similar findings will be found in victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion.

***Research hypothesis one:*** Men will engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion more than women.

***Research hypothesis two:*** Individuals who identify as being more conservative will engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion more than individuals who identify as being more liberal.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods**

For this thesis research paper, the data is secondary and was obtained through professors at Pennsylvania State University. The survey has been sent to various college campuses in Pennsylvania, Florida and Tennessee. Data collection for the survey is currently occurring.

The two independent variables, gender and political ideology, are examined based on supporting evidence detailed in the literature review (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Davies, et al., 2009; Henry, et al., 2019; George & Martinez, 2002; McDonald, 2009; Lambert, et al., 2013; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; Spaccatini, et al., 2019; Williams, 1984;). The variables are designed to assess if and how they influence the participants' victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion.

Qualtrics Survey Software was the platform used to compose and distribute the questionnaire (See *Appendix*). Participants were presented with a link that took them to the survey. The survey contained a skip logic, which means that the survey varied based on how participants answered each question. If a participant answered that they had been a victim of sextortion, they were not given the questions on victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion. That participant then went to a section on reporting. If the participant answered that they were not victims of sextortion, then they skipped to the questions about victim blaming attitudes.

Data are still being collected from the survey. In total, 82 college students have participated in the survey. The study employed an online questionnaire that was comprised of questions on the participant's experiences with sexual victimization, also including sextortion and revenge pornography, perceptions of cyber sexual victimization, victim blaming attitudes and finally, victimization risk factors. Many questions were derived from the 2018 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Since there is little existing literature on sextortion, the questionnaire adapted questions from another study on victim blaming attitudes towards victims of revenge pornography (Bothamley & Tully, 2018).

There are two independent variables for this study: gender and political ideology. The questions were asked in the demographics section of the questionnaire. Participants were asked, "What is your gender?". The responses were coded as follows: Male = 1, Female = 2, and Other = 3. Participants were also asked, "Which of the following best describes your political ideology?". The responses were coded as follows: Very liberal = 1, Liberal = 2, Slightly liberal = 3, Moderate = 4, Slightly conservative = 5, Conservative = 6, and Very conservative = 7.

For this study, the dependent variable is victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion. The scaled items were used to measure the extent to which the participants engaged in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion. Before these questions were asked, participants were given the following definition of sextortion:

*"Sextortion is defined as 'situations in which perpetrators threaten to expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, engage in sexual activity, or agree to other demands' (Wolak, et al., 2018)."*

Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (Completely = 1, To a great extent = 2, Somewhat = 3, Very little = 4, and Not at all = 5), as detailed below:

1. “To what extent do you think responsibility should be placed on the victim?”
2. “To what extent do you think the victim could have avoided sextortion?”
3. “To what extent do you think the victim had control of the situation?”

They respectively measured attitudes on victim responsibility, victim circumvention, victim control and empathy for the victim. The above victim blaming attitude questions were transformed into a scale variable to measure the total victim blaming attitudes, so that the ordinal scale could be treated as linear. The total scores go from 3.00 (more victim blaming attitudes) to 15.00 (less victim blaming attitudes). For example, if a participant thought the victim was not at all responsible for the crime happening to them, they would score a 15.

The current aim of this study is to only look at the participant’s gender and political ideology as the predictor variables for victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion. As the following variables can influence the chosen independent variables, they will be controlled so that the relationship between each independent variable and the dependent variable can be studied. The variables that are controlled are age, race, socioeconomic class, highest education received and sexual orientation. While more research can be conducted on what influences victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion, the control variables listed are outside the scope of this study.

The question on age was open-ended and asked “What is your age?”. The first question regarding race and ethnicity was “What is your race?”, with the attributes being American Indian or Alaska Native = 1, Asian = 2, Black or African American = 3, Native

Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander = 4, and White = 5. The second question was “Are you Hispanic or Latino?”, and the attributes were Yes = 1 and No = 2. For socioeconomic class, the question asked, “What class do you think your family most identifies with?”, and the attributes were Upper = 1, Upper-middle = 2, Middle = 3, Lower-middle = 4, and Lower = 5. These would be reverse coded. The education question was “What is the highest degree you earned?”, and the attributes were High school diploma or equivalency (GED) = 1, Associate degree (junior college) = 2, Bachelor’s degree = 3, Master’s degree = 4, or Doctorate = 5. Finally, the last control variable is sexual orientation. The question was “What do you consider your sexual orientation to be?” The attributes were Heterosexual = 1, Homosexual = 2, Bisexual = 3, and Other = 4.

The questionnaire received ethical approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB)<sup>1</sup> (See *Appendix*). Participants were asked to take part in a survey about perceptions of cyber sexual victimization. Informed consent was obtained. There were no questions that included identifying information. The results will remain anonymous. There was no compensation, monetary or otherwise, provided to participants for taking the survey. A debrief webpage was presented, and participants were provided links to the VictimConnect Resource Center website and phone number.

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<sup>1</sup> IRB Study Approval # STUDY00012191

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

Statistical analyses were performed using IBM's Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Statistics 26 for the quantitative data. Descriptive statistics were run for gender, political ideology and the victim blaming questions. The data can be found in Table 4-1, Table 4-2 and Table 4-3.

A sample of 43 respondents was used from the survey. While there were 82 respondents, there was missing data from 47.6% of the respondents. Additionally, there was one respondent who answered "Other" for their gender. As this study is only focused on the possible difference between males and females, they were removed from analysis in this study.

The missing data were handled by listwise deletion. Some cases were dropped from this study because they had missing values in at least one of the specified variables (gender, political ideology, or any of the victim blaming questions). The analyses were only performed with cases that had a complete set of data.

Out of 43 respondents, 18.7% of the respondents were male and 38.7% of the respondents were female. The table below (Table 4-1) shows the information about the distribution of genders of the respondents.

Table 4-1

*Descriptive Statistics on Gender*

|              | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
| Male         | 14        | 18.7    |
| Female       | 29        | 38.7    |
| Missing Data | 32        | 42.7    |
| Total        | 75        | 100     |

The following table (Table 4-2) shows the information about the distribution of political ideologies among the respondents. From the table, the majority of respondents labeled themselves as moderates at 18.7%. Another 12.0% labeled themselves as very liberal, 13.3% as liberal, 4.0% as slightly liberal, 5.3% as conservative, and 4.0% as very conservative.

Table 4-2

*Descriptive Statistics on Political Ideology*

|                   | Frequency | Percent |
|-------------------|-----------|---------|
| Very Liberal      | 9         | 12.0    |
| Liberal           | 10        | 13.3    |
| Slightly Liberal  | 3         | 4.0     |
| Moderate          | 14        | 18.7    |
| Conservative      | 4         | 5.3     |
| Very Conservative | 3         | 4.0     |
| Missing Data      | 32        | 42.7    |
| Total             | 75        | 100     |

The following table (Table 4-3) provides information on how respondents answered all of the victim blaming attitudes questions. The first question was “To what extent do you think responsibility should be placed on the victim?”, which measured attitudes towards victim responsibility. Thirty two percent of respondents answered that

the extent of victim responsibility was not at all, while 8.0% responded very little, 8.0% said somewhat, another 5.3% said to a great extent, and finally 4.0% responded completely. This is after missing data has been accounted for.

Victim circumvention was measured using the question “To what extent do you think the victim about have avoided sextortion?” After missing data was accounted for, 5.3% of respondents did not think the victim could have avoided sextortion. The results showed that 17.3% responded very little, 17.3% responded somewhat, 5.3% said to a great extent and 12.0% responded that the victim could have completely avoided sextortion.

Table 4-3

| <i>Descriptive Statistics on Victim Blaming Attitudes</i> |           |         |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
|                                                           | Frequency | Percent |
| Victim Responsibility                                     |           |         |
| <i>Completely</i>                                         | 3         | 4.0     |
| <i>To a great extent</i>                                  | 4         | 5.3     |
| <i>Somewhat</i>                                           | 6         | 8.0     |
| <i>Very little</i>                                        | 6         | 8.0     |
| <i>Not at all</i>                                         | 24        | 32.0    |
| Victim Circumvention                                      |           |         |
| <i>Completely</i>                                         | 9         | 12.0    |
| <i>To a great extent</i>                                  | 4         | 5.3     |
| <i>Somewhat</i>                                           | 13        | 17.3    |
| <i>Very little</i>                                        | 13        | 17.3    |
| <i>Not at all</i>                                         | 4         | 5.3     |
| Victim Control                                            |           |         |
| <i>Completely</i>                                         | 1         | 1.3     |
| <i>To a great extent</i>                                  | 3         | 4.0     |
| <i>Somewhat</i>                                           | 9         | 12.0    |
| <i>Very little</i>                                        | 21        | 28.0    |
| <i>Not at all</i>                                         | 9         | 12.0    |

Finally, victim control was measured using the question “To what extent do you think the victim had control of the situation?” The results showed that respondents

believed the victims had very little control at 28.0%. Another 12.0% responded that victims did not have any control, 12.0% that victims somewhat had control, 4.0% that victims to a great extent had control and 1.3% responded that victims completely had control.

Table 4-4 shows the correlations between the items of the victim blaming subscale. As it is shown, there are statistically significant correlations between most of the questions. The victim blaming subscale was created into a single additive scale and labeled as “Total Victim Blaming”. As mentioned in the Methods section, the lowest score is 5.0 (more victim blaming) and the highest score is 15.0 (less victim blaming). After the additive scale was created, a reliability analysis test was conducted to check for internal validity.

Table 4-4

| Correlations between items of Victim Blaming Subscale |                          |                         |                |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
|                                                       | Victim<br>Responsibility | Victim<br>Circumvention | Victim Control |
| Victim Responsibility                                 | 1                        | .578**                  | .350*          |
| Victim Circumvention                                  | .578 **                  | 1                       | .569**         |
| Victim Control                                        | .350*                    | .569**                  | 1              |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The reliability analysis results of the total victim blaming scale are below in Table 4-5. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.744, which is an acceptable level (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

Table 4-5

*Reliability Statistics of Total Victim Blaming Scale*

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .744             | 3          |

The first research hypothesis of this study is *Men will engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion more than women*. First, a correlation test was run to see if there was a relationship between gender and victim blaming attitudes. The results are shown in Table 4-6. The Pearson correlation was 0.347 and was statistically significant at 0.023. Based on the results of the study, victim blaming attitudes is moderately related to gender at a significant level.

Table 4-6

*Correlation between Gender and Victim Blaming Attitudes*

|                                     | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Gender and Victim Blaming Attitudes | 0.347*              | 0.023           |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Next, a simple linear regression analysis was used to see if gender was a predicting variable in victim blaming attitudes. The results from the analysis are shown in Table 4-7 below.

Table 4-7

*Linear Regression Analysis for Gender Predicting Victim Blaming Attitudes Towards Sextortion*

| Variable   | B     | 95% CI          | $\beta$ | t     | p     |
|------------|-------|-----------------|---------|-------|-------|
| (Constant) | 7.232 | [4.077, 10.386] |         | 4.629 | 0.000 |
| Gender     | 2.126 | [0.311, 3.940]  | 0.347   | 2.366 | 0.023 |

a. Dependent Variable: Total\_Victim\_Blame

As indicated in the above table (Table 4-6), gender is a statistically significant predictor of victim blaming attitudes. A significant regression was found ( $F(1,41) = 5.598, p < 0.05$ ), with an  $R^2 = 0.120$ .

It has been found that there is a relationship between gender and victim blaming attitudes. One of the purposes of the study, however, is to find if there is a difference between the two genders. In order to see if there is a difference, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare victim blaming attitudes between male and female participants. There was a significant difference in the scores for males ( $M = 9.3571, SD = 3.20113$ ) compared to females ( $M = 11.4828, SD = 2.53011$ );  $t(41) = -2.366, p = 0.023$ , which is below the significance level of  $p < 0.05$ . This result shows that male participants within this study displayed slightly more victim blaming attitudes than female participants, as lower scores indicated more victim blaming. The results are shown in Table 4-8.

Table 4-8

| <i>Independent Samples t-test for Victim Blaming Attitudes and Gender</i> |        |         |         |         |        |       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|---------|---------|---------|--------|-------|
|                                                                           | Males  |         | Females |         | t-test | p     |
|                                                                           | M      | SD      | M       | SD      |        |       |
| Victim Blaming Attitudes                                                  | 9.3571 | 3.20113 | 11.4828 | 2.53011 | -2.366 | 0.023 |

The second research hypothesis of this study is *Individuals who identify as being more conservative will engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion more than individuals who identify as being more liberal*. First, a correlation test was run to see if there was a relationship between political ideology and victim blaming attitudes. The results are shown in Table 4-9. The Pearson correlation was -0.414 and was

statistically significant at 0.006. This shows that victim blaming attitudes is moderately related to political ideology.

Table 4-9

| <i>Correlation between Political Ideology and Victim Blaming Attitudes</i> |                     |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
|                                                                            | Pearson Correlation | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| Political Ideology and Victim Blaming Attitudes                            | -0.414*             | 0.006           |

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

A chi square test of independence was calculated comparing the frequency of victim blaming attitudes between various political ideologies. There was not a significant interaction found. The results are  $\chi^2(50) = 59.822$ ,  $p = .161$ .

Next, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of different political ideologies on victim blaming attitudes. The means and standard deviations for the groups are as follows: very liberal (M = 13.3333, SD = 1.0000), liberal (M = 10.3000, SD = 2.75076), slightly liberal (M = 11.6667, SD = 0.57735), moderate (M = 10.3571, SD = 3.41055), conservative (M = 7.7500, SD = 1.25831), and very conservative (M = 10.000, SD = 2.90777). An analysis of variance showed that the effect of political ideology on victim blaming attitudes was significant,  $F(5,37) = 3.081$ ,  $p = 0.020$ , where  $p < 0.05$ .

Table 4-10

| <i>One-Way ANOVA for Victim Blaming Attitudes and Political Ideology</i> |                |         |    |        |       |          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|---------|----|--------|-------|----------|
|                                                                          |                | SS      | df | MS     | F     | <i>p</i> |
| <i>Victim Blaming Attitudes Political Ideology</i>                       | Between Groups | 104.385 | 5  | 20.877 | 3.081 | 0.020    |
|                                                                          | Within Groups  | 250.731 | 37 | 6.777  |       |          |
|                                                                          | Total          | 355.116 | 42 |        |       |          |

As shown in Table 4-10, there is at least one significant difference between two political ideological groups in the sample. However, a one-way ANOVA does not identify which groups have different means, so a post-hoc test, Tukey's HSD, was performed to see which groups differed significantly from one another. It was found that there was a statistical difference between the means of very liberal and conservative (MD = 5.58333, sig. = 0.012).

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

The aim of this study was to provide insight and add to the literature regarding victim blaming and sextortion. Specifically, the focus of the paper was to analyze victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion and see if the participants' gender or political ideology influenced their attitudes. There were two research hypotheses formed. The first hypothesis was *Males are more likely than females to engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion*. The second hypothesis was *Individuals who identify as being more conservative will engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion more than individuals who identify as being more liberal*. Currently, there are no published works of literature that investigate gender and political ideology as predicting variables of victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion victims.

The results from the analysis supported the first hypothesis that males were more likely than females to engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion. This relationship between the participant's gender and their victim blaming attitudes was expected based off of previous studies mentioned in the literature review (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Davies, et al., 2009; George & Martinez, 2002; Henry, et al., 2019; Lambert, et al., 2013; McDonald, 2009). It was found continuously across these studies that men were more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes towards victims of crimes,

especially of crimes that were of a sexual nature, than women. The results from this study support this idea and pattern.

The fact that men are more likely to engage in these victim blaming attitudes poses a few problems. The differences in gender and how the victims of sextortion are perceived is important. As found in previous studies, the majority of victims are female (Wolak, et al., 2018). Additionally, when a victim comes forward to the police, they expect to be believed and expect that law enforcement will help them. Police officers are majority male and also are more likely to accept rape myths (Bothamley & Tully, 2018). If female victims come forward and then feel as if they are being blamed for the crime of sextortion happening to them, they could experience more negative effects (Campbell, et al., 2001; Ullman, 1996). Understanding who engages in victim blaming attitudes can help create more knowledge and education about sextortion, thereby aiding victims. Specifically, there could be additional training for police officers about sextortion and the effects. In general, there could be training and educational opportunities to learn about victim blaming as a whole.

The second hypothesis stated that participants who identified as being more conservative would engage in victim blaming attitudes towards sextortion victims more than participants who identified as being more liberal. Out of the six political ideologies (“Very liberal”, “Liberal”, “Slightly liberal”, “Moderate”, “Conservative”, and “Very conservative”) used in the current study, two had significantly different victim blaming attitude scores. The participants who identified as being “Very liberal” and “Conservative” were statistically different from one another, with the conservative engaging in more victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion.

The results somewhat supported the hypothesis that those who identified as more conservative would be more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes than those who identified as being more liberal. Previous research on political ideology and victim blaming attitudes found that conservatives were more likely to engage in victim blaming attitudes than liberals (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; Lambert & Raichle, 2000; McDonald, 2009; Spaccatini, et al., 2019; Williams, 1984). Thus, the results were expected and fall in line with previous literature.

To say that the hypothesis was somewhat supported means that there was a significant difference found, but only between two groups. There was not a significant difference found between people that were very liberal and very conservative, liberal and conservative, liberal and very conservative and so on. In fact, the mean differences between these groups were much smaller than expected. For example, those who identified as “Liberal” and “Very conservative” scored very similar to one another on the victim blaming scale. As these two groups vary and have polarizing views, it is surprising that their scores were similar. With the previous studies conducted on political ideology and victim blaming attitudes, it was expected that there would be more of a difference between the various groups.

It would be of interest to see with a larger and more diverse sample if there are more differences between the political parties. Due to the large influence politics plays in citizens’ lives, seeing if and how political ideologies plays a role with blaming victims of sextortion is important. If those are elected into office are more politically conservative, that could be detrimental to victims. This is because conservatives are consistently more prone to victim blaming than their liberal counterparts (Barnett & Hilz, 2018; Lambert &

Raichle, 2000; McDonald, 2009; Spaccatini, et al., 2019; Williams, 1984). Furthermore, there are currently no laws making sextortion illegal. If it holds true that conservatives are more likely to blame the victims of sextortion, and they are also elected into office, it could make it more difficult for victims to get the legal help they need. The difference between conservatives and liberals on the topic of victim blaming is important when trying to understand how society will view the victims, as well as how future legislation can aid the victims.

For the current study, there were a few limitations to discuss. A major limitation of the study is that data is still being collected and this was a preliminary analysis. Therefore, the sample size was extremely small,  $n=43$ . The survey has only been out for a couple of months, creating a lack of time for responses for the current study. It might be of interest to replicate the study once there are more respondents and less missing data.

Within the sample, there were more females than males that responded to the survey. There was also a low number of respondents who answered that their political ideology was “Conservative”,  $n = 4$ ; “Very conservative”,  $n = 3$ ; and “Slightly liberal”,  $n = 3$ . The lack of diversity within the sample makes it difficult to generalize the findings. Perhaps making the political ideology question have fewer options (i.e., “Liberal”, “Conservative”, and “Moderate”), or collapsing the categories, could produce results between groups that better highlight the differences between them. Additionally, it could show that the groups are not as different as they might appear.

Another issue is that there was missing data, such as some of the victim blaming attitude questions, gender and political ideology questions being left unanswered. The original sample size was  $n = 82$  and almost 50% of the sample had missing data and were

not able to be used for this current study. Having to account for missing data could have changed the results and made differences between the genders and political ideologies imperceptible or not as strong.

With that being said, there is enough information gleaned from this preliminary analysis that can be beneficial for future research of the topic. While it confirms existing literature, it also shows a pattern that cannot be ignored. As stated before, a replication study with a larger sample size might provide more significant results and larger differences between groups. Running additional analyses from the data from the survey once there are more participants could also provide more information on the topic of sextortion.

To look more at victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion, future research could look at different predicting variables. This could include an adoption of the just world hypothesis, the idea that there are no innocent victims and that victims must have had a part or be responsible for a crime happening to them, which is seen to have an effect on victim blaming attitudes (Hayes, Lorenz & Bell, 2013; Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2012). Additionally, prior research indicates that rape myth acceptance was a predictor of victim blaming attitudes (McDonald, 2009). Another survey, or an addition to the survey used for this study, could be questions measuring a participant's acceptance of various rape myths. Finally, the use of vignettes could be more insightful into victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion. The vignettes could include factors like the victim-offender relationship and how the sexual content was obtained, either consensually or through hacking. It would be of interest to see how victim blaming attitudes change with different situations, rather than attitudes

towards a definition of sextortion. These ideas for future research could all be beneficial in ascertaining more information about victim blaming attitudes towards victims of sextortion.

### **Conclusion**

With regard to the relationship between gender and victim blaming attitudes, it is important to understand the differences between males and females and see how these attitudes can negatively impact victims (Campbell, et al., 2001; Ullman, 1996). This is especially true when it comes to reporting sextortion to law enforcement, which is a male-dominated occupation (Weddell, 2017). If males are being shown to consistently engage in victim blaming behavior, this poses serious issues, emotionally and psychologically, for female victims of sextortion. It could also influence how their claim is processed through the criminal justice system.

Another important factor to consider is how political ideology plays a role in victim blaming attitudes. This study found results consistent with previous studies that indicate that conservatives are more likely than liberals to engage in victim blaming attitudes. With the current political climate in the United States, and a presidential election occurring in 2020, knowing how the legislatures might view crimes like sextortion is of importance. It can affect how laws are made and interpreted with regards to sextortion and its victims.

The gender and political ideology of a person can influence their attitudes towards victims. The aim of this study was to find the differences between genders and between

political ideologies. Victims of sextortion should not feel revictimized through victim blaming. The goal should be to alleviate feelings of self-blame and negative psychological symptoms and, increase reporting. Therefore, challenging victim blaming attitudes becomes essential in aiding victims through encouraging both reporting and recovery.

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**Appendix**  
**Survey Instrument**

**Participant eligibility question**

Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes
- No

Are you currently enrolled as a college student?

- Yes
- No

**(If yes to BOTH – respondent will be given the next question in the survey)**

**(If no to EITHER– respondent will see the concluding message, thanking them for participation. They will not be eligible to continue with the survey response.)**

**Perceptions of Sextortion**

1. Are you familiar with the term “sextortion”?
  - Yes
  - No

**(IF #1 - NO)**

2. What comes to mind when you hear the term “sextortion”?
  - Open-ended

**[Provide definition prior to next questions]**

*Sextortion is defined as “situations in which perpetrators threaten to expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, engage in sexual activity, or agree to other demands” (Wolak, et al., 2018).*

3. Do you think sextortion occurs within the college-aged population?
  - Yes
  - No

**(IF #3 – YES)**

4. How often do you think sextortion occurs within the college-aged population?
  - Very Often
  - Often
  - Somewhat
  - Rarely
  - Never
5. Who do you think are more likely to be the victims of sextortion?
  - Males
  - Females
  - Other
6. Who do you think are more likely to be the perpetrators of sextortion?
  - Males
  - Females
  - Other

7. Through what format do you think sextortion occurs? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Text message
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Dating Apps/Websites
- ☐ Other
  - If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. To what extent do you think responsibility should be placed on the victim?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

9. To what extent do you think that the victim could have avoided sextortion?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

10. To what extent do you think the victim had control of the situation?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

11. To what extent do you empathize with victims of sextortion?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

12. Do you consider sextortion to be an offense/crime?

- ☐ Yes

- No
- Not sure

13. Do you think police intervention is necessary?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

14. Do you think that the perpetrator's behavior will cause mental harm to the victim?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

*Recall, sextortion is defined as “situations in which perpetrators threaten to expose sexual images to coerce victims to provide additional pictures, engage in sexual activity, or agree to other demands” (Wolak, et al., 2018).*

### **Experiences of Sextortion**

1. Have you ever experienced sextortion?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #1 – YES)**

2. Did you tell anyone?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #2 – YES)**

3. Who did you tell? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Friend

- Family member
- Law Enforcement
- Victim Service Provider
- Mental Health Professional
- Clergy/Religious Official
- Other

■ If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**(If #2 - NO)**

4. If sextortion were to happen to you, would you tell anyone?

- Yes
- No

**(If #4 – YES)**

5. Who would you tell? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Friend
- Family member
- Law Enforcement
- Victim Service Provider
- Mental Health Professional
- Clergy/Religious Official
- Other

■ If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### **Perceptions of Revenge Porn**

1. Are you familiar with the term “revenge porn”?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #1 - NO)**

2. What comes to mind when you hear the term “revenge porn”?
- Open-ended

**[Provide definition prior to next questions]**

*Revenge porn is defined as “the posting of revealing or sexually explicit images or videos of a person, without the consent of the subject, in order to cause them distress or embarrassment...Typically, it is a former sexual partner who posts such images” (O’Connor, et al., 2017).*

3. Do you think revenge porn occurs within the college-aged population?
- Yes
  - No

**(IF #3 – YES)**

4. How often do you think revenge porn occurs within the college-aged population?
- Very Often
  - Often
  - Somewhat
  - Rarely
  - Never
5. Who do you think are more likely to be the victims of revenge porn?
- Males
  - Females
  - Other
6. Who do you think are more likely to be the perpetrators of revenge porn?
- Males
  - Females
  - Other

7. Through what format do you think revenge porn occurs? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- ☐ Social Media
- ☐ Text message
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Dating Apps/Websites
- ☐ Other

■ If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

8. To what extent do you think responsibility should be placed on the victim?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

9. To what extent do you think that the victim could have avoided revenge porn?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

10. To what extent do you think the victim had control of the situation?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

11. To what extent do you empathize with victims of revenge porn?

- ☐ Completely
- ☐ To a great extent
- ☐ Somewhat
- ☐ Very little
- ☐ Not at all

12. Do you consider revenge porn to be an offense/crime?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

13. Do you think police intervention is necessary?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

14. Do you think that the perpetrator's behavior will cause mental harm to the victim?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Recall, revenge porn is defined as *“the posting of revealing or sexually explicit images or videos of a person, without the consent of the subject, in order to cause them distress or embarrassment...Typically, it is a former sexual partner who posts such images”* (O'Connor, et al., 2017).

### **Experience of Revenge Porn**

1. Have you ever experienced revenge porn?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #1 – YES)**

2. Did you tell anyone?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #2 – YES)**

3. Who did you tell? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Friend
- Family member
- Law Enforcement
- Victim Service Provider
- Mental Health Professional
- Clergy/Religious Official
- Other
  - If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**(If #2 - NO)**

## 4. If revenge porn were to happen to you, would tell anyone?

- Yes
- No

**(IF #4 – YES)**

5. Who would you tell? **(CHECK ALL THAT APPLY)**

- Friend
- Family member
- Law Enforcement
- Victim Service Provider
- Mental Health Professional
- Clergy/Religious Official
- Other
  - If Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Prior Sexual Victimization**

## 1. Have you ever experienced unwanted sexual intercourse?

- Yes
- No

- Prefer not to answer
- 2. Have you ever been forced to do sexual things that you did not want to do by anyone? (Count such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.)
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

**(IF #2 – YES)**

3. Did this happen more than once?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer
4. Have you ever been forced to do sexual things that you did not want to do by someone you were dating or romantically involved with? (Count such things as kissing, touching, or being physically forced to have sexual intercourse.)
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

**(IF #4 – YES)**

5. Did this happen more than once?
  - Yes
  - No
  - Prefer not to answer

### **Online Dating**

1. Have you ever created an online dating profile (such as Match, eHarmony, Tinder, Bumble, etc.)?
  - Yes

- No

**(IF #1 - YES)**

2. Which platforms have you used to create a dating profile? (Choose all that apply.)
  - Tinder
  - Match
  - eHarmony
  - Bumble
  - Other
    - If other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
3. What was the primary purpose of creating your profile?
  - To begin a casual dating relationship
  - To begin a serious dating relationship
  - To begin a casual sexual relationship
  - To begin a casual sexual relationship with potential to begin a dating relationship
  - To begin a friendship with no initial interest in a sexual/dating relationship
  - Other

**Risky Behavior (Online)**

1. How often do you visit X-rated sites?
  - Very Often
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
2. Have you ever been on a random chat website (Omegle, Chatroulette, Tiny Chat, Chat Random, etc.)?
  - Yes
  - No

**(If #2 - YES)**

3. How did you communicate with the people on the website?
  - ☐ Texting
  - ☐ Online chat
  - ☐ Video chat
  - ☐ All of the above
4. Did you give anyone on the website another way to contact you (such as social media handles, email, number, another app, etc.)?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
5. Have you ever given personal information to a stranger you met on the internet?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
6. Have you ever talked about sex with people you met online?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer

**Risky Behavior (Drugs and Alcohol)**

1. During your life, have you had at least one drink of alcohol?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
2. During the past 30 days, how many times did you have at least one drink of alcohol?
  - ☐ 0 times
  - ☐ 1 or 2 times

- ☐ 3 to 9 times
  - ☐ 10 to 19 times
  - ☐ 20 to 39 times
  - ☐ 40 or more times
- 3. During the past 30 days, how many times did you have 4 or more drinks of alcohol in a row (if you are female) or 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row (if you are male)?
  - ☐ 0 times
  - ☐ 1 or 2 times
  - ☐ 3 to 9 times
  - ☐ 10 to 19 times
  - ☐ 20 to 39 times
  - ☐ 40 or more times
- 4. During your life, have you used marijuana?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 5. During the past 30 days, how many times did you use marijuana?
  - ☐ 0 times
  - ☐ 1 or 2 times
  - ☐ 3 to 9 times
  - ☐ 10 to 19 times
  - ☐ 20 to 39 times
  - ☐ 40 or more times
- 6. During your life, have you used any form of cocaine, including powder, crack, or freebase?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 7. During your life, have you sniffed glue, breathed the contents of aerosol spray cans, or inhaled any paints to get high?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

- ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 8. During your life, have you used heroin?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 9. During your life, have you used methamphetamines?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 10. During your life, have you used ecstasy?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 11. During your life, have you used hallucinogenic drugs, such as LSD, acid, PCP, angel dust, mescaline, or shrooms?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 12. During your life, have you used synthetic marijuana?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 13. During your life, have you taken steroid pills or shots without a doctor's prescription?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
  - ☐ Prefer not to answer
- 14. During your life, have you taken a prescription pain medication without a doctor's prescription or differently from how a doctor told you to use it?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

- Prefer not to answer

**Risky Behavior (Sexual)**

1. Have you ever had sexual intercourse?
  - Yes
  - No

**(if #1 - YES)**

2. During your life, with how many people have you had sexual intercourse?
  - 1 person
  - 2 people
  - 3 people
  - 4 people
  - 5 people
  - 6 or more people
3. During the past 3 months, with how many people did you have sexual intercourse?
  - I have had sexual intercourse, but not during the past 3 months
  - 1 person
  - 2 people
  - 3 people
  - 4 people
  - 5 people
  - 6 or more people
4. Did you drink alcohol or use drugs before you had sexual intercourse last time?
  - Yes
  - No
5. The last time you had sexual intercourse, did you or your partner use a condom?
  - Yes
  - No

**Social Media and Internet Use**

1. How many hours a day do you generally spend on the internet?
  - ☐ 1 hour or less
  - ☐ 2 to 3 hours
  - ☐ 4 to 6 hours
  - ☐ 7 to 10 hours
  - ☐ 11 hours or more
2. Do you use social media?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No

**(if #2 - YES)**
3. What social media platform do you use the most?
  - ☐ Facebook
  - ☐ Snapchat
  - ☐ Twitter
  - ☐ Instagram
  - ☐ Other (fill in)
4. How likely are you to add someone to your social media that you do not know personally?
  - ☐ Not likely
  - ☐ Somewhat likely
  - ☐ Very likely
5. How likely are you to add someone to your social media that you do not know personally, but you have mutual friends with them?
  - ☐ Not likely
  - ☐ Somewhat likely
  - ☐ Very likely

### **Mental Health**

1. Have you been diagnosed with a mental disorder before?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
2. Have you felt particularly low or down for than two weeks in a row?

- ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 3. During the past 12 months, did you ever feel so sad or hopeless almost every day for two weeks or more in a row that you stopped doing some usual activities?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 4. During the past 12 months, did you ever seriously consider attempting suicide?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 5. Because of a mental or emotional problem, do you have serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 6. During the past 12 months, did you make a plan about how you would attempt suicide?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 7. During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?
  - ☐ 0 times
  - ☐ 1 time
  - ☐ 2 or 3 times
  - ☐ 4 or 5 times
  - ☐ 6 or more times

### **Open Ended Before Demographics**

- 1. Is there anything that was not asked in this survey that you feel could be important?
  - ☐ Open ended

### **Demographics**

- 1. What is your age?

- ☐ Open
- 2. What is your gender?
  - ☐ Male
  - ☐ Female
  - ☐ Other
- 3. What is your race? (Select one or more responses.)
  - ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
  - ☐ Asian
  - ☐ Black or African American
  - ☐ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
  - ☐ White
- 4. Are you Hispanic or Latino?
  - ☐ Yes
  - ☐ No
- 5. Which region of the country is your university located in?
  - ☐ North-east
  - ☐ South
  - ☐ Mid-west
  - ☐ West
- 6. What class do you think your family most identifies with?
  - ☐ Upper
  - ☐ Upper-middle
  - ☐ Middle
  - ☐ Lower-middle
  - ☐ Lower
- 7. Which of the following best describes your political ideology?
  - ☐ Very Liberal
  - ☐ Liberal
  - ☐ Slightly Liberal
  - ☐ Moderate
  - ☐ Slightly Conservative
  - ☐ Conservative

- Very Conservative
8. What is the highest degree you earned?
- High school diploma or equivalency (GED)
  - Associate degree (junior college)
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctorate
9. What do you consider your sexual orientation to be?
- Heterosexual
  - Homosexual
  - Bisexual
  - Other

If you or someone you know is a victim of crime, you can contact the VictimConnect Resource Center run by the National Center for Victims of Crime to learn about your rights and options as a crime victim, find information and connect with resources. Please call 1- 855-4-VICTIM (855-484-2846) or visit [www.VictimConnect.org](http://www.VictimConnect.org).