From Myths to Misdeeds: Understanding the Cycle of Myth Acceptance, Proclivity and Perpetration in Image-Based Sexual Abuse.

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Abstract

Image-Based Sexual Abuse (IBSA) is a growing form of technology-facilitated sexual violence involving the non-consensual creation, distribution, or threat of distribution of intimate images. Despite increasing legal and social attention, limited psychological research has investigated the attitudinal and behavioural predictors of IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance. This thesis aims to fill that gap by exploring the prevalence, predictors, and interrelations of IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA) and proclivity or engagement in IBSA perpetration. Across five studies, a combination of systematic review, scale development, and four empirical analyses is employed to understand IBSA as a behaviour on the continuum of sexual abuse. An initial systematic literature review identifies the prevalence and predictors of IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration. The first empirical study demonstrates that attitudes underpinning IBSAMA align with traditional rape myth acceptance, indicating a shared cognitive framework. Study 2 confirms that IBSAMA significantly predicts proclivity to perpetrate "revenge pornography" behaviours. Study 3 introduces and validates the Image-Based Sexual Abuse Proclivity Scale (IBSAPS), offering a robust psychometric tool to assess proclivity across various IBSA behaviours. It explores predictors of IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity, identifying dark personality traits, sexual attitudes, and victimisation history as significant factors. It also examines gender differences and the potential mediating role of IBSAMA in IBSA proclivity. Finally, Study 4 investigates predictors of actual IBSA perpetration, revealing unique psychological profiles based on perpetration method and gender. The findings contribute to theoretical understandings of IBSA as a form of sexual violence and inform the development of targeted interventions and legal reform efforts. By identifying psychological predictors of IBSA-related beliefs and behaviours, this thesis provides actionable insights for prevention, policy, and support services.

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Publications

Research from this thesis is under review in the following journal:

Harewell, J. L., Pina, A. & Gonidis, L. (2025). Investigating Predictors of Proclivity to Perpetrate Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Developing and Validating an Image-Based Sexual Abuse Proclivity Scale. [Under Review]

Research from this thesis is in preparation for the following article:

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Research from this thesis has been presented at the following conferences:

Harewell, J. L., & Pina, A. (2022). Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Predictors of Proclivity and Perpetration. Poster presented at the 2022 Psychology Research Symposium, University of Kent.

Harewell, J. L., & Pina, A. (2023). The Role of Myth Acceptance in the Proclivity to Perpetrate Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Presentation at the 18th European Congress of Psychology, Brighton. Cited in *European Journal of Psychology Open* (2023), *82* (Suppl. 1), Paper number 1188. https://doi.org/10.1024/2673-8627/a000043

Harewell, J. L., & Pina, A. (2023). From Myths to Misdeeds: Understanding the Cycle of Myth Acceptance, Proclivity and Perpetration in Image-Based Sexual Abuse: Presentation at the 2023 Psychology Research Symposium, University of Kent.

The following has been published in the technology-facilitated gendered violence field during this period of study:

Harewell, J. L., Pina, A., Storey, J. E. (2021). Cyberstalking: Prevalence, Characteristics, and Impact. In: Powell, A., Flynn, A., Sugiura, L. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Gendered Violence and Technology.* Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. 203-227. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-83734-1_11

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Conventions Used in this Thesis

Presentation of Studies

All the studies presented in this thesis are numbered independently of the chapter in which they appear.

Tables and Figures

Tables and figures are presented within text at first mention. The numbering of tables (and figures) is sequential throughout the thesis.

Appendices

Appendices are included at the end of the thesis and contain useful additional detail. Full comprehension of the programme of research presented in this thesis does not rely on the supplementary materials provided.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronyms and abbreviations are outlined within the text. However, the most prominent are also described below for convenience.

ASI	Ambivalent Sexism Inventory
BJW	Belief in a Just World
BRPQ	Beliefs about Revenge Pornography Questionnaire
IBSA	Image-Based Sexual Abuse
IBSAMA	Image-Based Sexual Abuse Myth Acceptance
RMA	Rape Myth Acceptance
RPPS	Revenge Porn Proclivity Scale
RWA	Right Wing Authoritarianism
SDO	Social Dominance Orientation
SDSS	Sexual Double-Standards Scale
SIAMA	Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance

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Background, Aims and Overview of Thesis

Background

Defining Image-Based Sexual Abuse

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a term developed by McGlynn and Rackley (2017) to define the non-consensual creation, distribution or threat of distribution of private sexual images – the lack of consent referring to the person depicted in the image. This behaviour has been labelled many misnomers in the past, including non-consensual pornography and the media favourite 'revenge pornography' (Maddocks, 2018). IBSA belongs on the continuum of sexual abuse, and this instantly expresses the distress that the behaviour can cause (McGlynn et al., 2017). Instead, the use of the term 'pornography' in revenge pornography or non-consensual pornography focuses on the product as opposed to the behaviour, which devalues the gravity of the behaviour and has led to the misunderstanding of IBSA (Maddocks, 2018). Furthermore, it implies consent and an entertainment value that is not synonymous with the nature of the behaviour.

IBSA includes a vast range of behaviours that are not captured by 'revenge pornography', further highlighting the term's ineffectiveness. Whilst relationship vengeance and non-consensual distribution of private sexual images represent a significant proportion of IBSA, it is not the only behaviour it delineates (Powell et al., 2019; Powell & Henry, 2017a). The additional behaviours it encompasses include, but are not limited to, voyeurism, upskirting, sexualised photoshopping, sextortion, images of sexual assault, and sexploitation (McGlynn et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2018). Powell et al. (2018) delineate that technology advancements, particularly the use of smartphones, has accelerated the ease in which IBSA can be perpetrated.

Some researchers have adopted a wider definition of IBSA that includes 'cyberflashing' (e.g. Harper et al., 2021; Henry & Beard, 2024). Cyber-flashing is the sending

of an unsolicited sexual image (i.e. where the recipient has not consented to receive the intimate image). Whilst cyber-flashing is evidently a form of cyber sexual harassment that involves images, IBSA conceptualises that the lack of consent refers to the individual depicted rather than the recipient. Therefore, this does not constitute IBSA as defined in this thesis.

Law and Policy Surrounding IBSA

There has been a continued rise in the prevalence of IBSA in the UK; the Revenge Porn Helpline (a helpline founded in 2015) has reported an exponential growth of cases year on year, from 1300 in 2018 to an estimated 19,000 in 2023 (Papachristou, 2023; Ward, 2021). However, there has historically been low levels of reporting the crime to the police, and even where the IBSA is reported, negative experiences have been experienced by 70% of victims (Papachristou, 2023).

The legislation in the United Kingdom governing IBSA, when beginning this programme of research in 2020, demonstrated progression but was not sufficient. Prior to 2024 it was an offence, contrary to s33 Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, to disclose private and sexual photographs and films without consent with intent to cause distress. This law was problematic due to its heavy focus on 'intent to cause distress', which failed to encapsulate the many other motivations behind IBSA (Henry et al., 2019b; Powell & Henry, 2017c). Furthermore, it only protected disclosure (threats to disclose were added much later in June of 2021) and not the non-consensual creation of private sexual images (Powell & Henry, 2016). Many researchers believed that these failures were due to the previous expression 'revenge pornography' indirectly causing misinterpretation of the issues surrounding the behaviour (Maddocks, 2018; McGlynn & Rackley, 2017; Powell & Henry, 2017c). Conviction rates and crime reporting data further suggested issues with the original law. The BBC collected data from 34 out of the 43 police forces in England and Wales and

found that the number of cases reported to the police had almost doubled (from 1,861 to 3,307) between the 2015-16 and 2017-18 periods, yet the percentage of cases resulting in charges had halved from 14% to just 7% (BBC, 2018). Furthermore, the conviction rate between 2019 and 2022 continued to decline to just 4% (Bottomley & Bruckmayer, 2023).

At the time of legislating the original 2015 law there was a lack of research, however, the field of psychology has made every effort to close this gap, providing a wealth of research since (McGlynn et al., 2021; Rackley et al., 2021). The Ministry of Justice announced plans in 2019 to review the law with particular focus on providing anonymity for victims (Ministry of Justice, 2019). Legal experts including McGlynn and Rackley expressed this need for justice immediately and additionally suggested that IBSA is reclassified under sexual offences (Dearden, 2019).

Legal changes were enacted in January 2024 (the empirical work outlined in this thesis was conducted prior to these changes). IBSA is now criminalised as a sexual offence; the Online Safety Act 2023 outlined that sharing or threatening to share intimate imagery (photo or film) is a criminal offence contrary to the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Additionally, sharing (or threatening to share) ‘deepfake’ imagery is now explicitly included within these legal protections. The most important element of the new law is the abolishment of a requirement for there to be intent to cause distress or harm. This is now included as an additional more serious offence, whilst the intentional sharing is the base offence regardless of motive. Threats to share intimate imagery are also included as a more serious offence, regardless of whether such an image is proven to exist. This law still does not include creation of images, but the Ministry of Justice has pledged that this will be addressed in the Crime and Policing Bill which is due to be introduced late 2025 (Ministry of Justice, 2025). This will replace current voyeurism laws and is designed to mirror and compliment the

offences of sharing and threatening to share intimate images. It will also explicitly criminalise creation of deepfakes which is not currently legislated against.

Impact of IBSA Victimisation

The impact on individuals who experience IBSA is similar to individuals who are victims of other forms of sexual abuse (Bates, 2017; McGlynn et al., 2019). It has been described as social rupture: a complete all-encompassing devastation of every aspect of life (McGlynn et al., 2019). Moreover, the abuse is pervasive, as the immortalisation of online images renders the harm both inescapable and often unresolvable (McGlynn et al., 2019; Powell & Henry, 2018).

Despite vast differences in the forms of victimisation of IBSA, three themes of mental health issues have arisen: trust issues after IBSA; self-esteem, confidence and loss of control; and PTSD, anxiety and depression (Bates, 2017). A prior relationship with the perpetrator may account for the trust issues that ascend from IBSA in intimate relationship contexts. Lack of trust and loss of control are understandable emotions that would immediately result from the 'non-consensual' and 'private' elements of IBSA. Powell and Henry (2018) further emphasised that victims suffer feelings of loss of control due to the escalation of image dissemination that can be unrelenting. The prominent mental health conditions experienced by victims are comparable to those following sexual assault (Bates, 2017). Many victims are diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety or depression and almost half report moderate-to-severe suicidal ideation levels (Bates, 2017; Champion et al., 2022; Henry et al., 2019b). Additionally, research has demonstrated that as many as 59% of victims engage in some form of physical self-harm (Short et al., 2017). Ruvalcaba and Eaton (2020) identified that victims of non-consensual sharing of sexually explicit images had significantly higher levels of somatic symptoms and significantly lower levels of psychological wellbeing. However, when analysed by gender, only female victims were significantly different in psychological

wellbeing and somatic symptoms than non-victims, there were no differences in male victims and non-victims. This suggests a gendered impact of IBSA.

Victims of IBSA frequently report feeling fearful for their safety (Short et al., 2017; Henry et al., 2019b). Henry et al. (2019b) found that a fear of safety was greater for individuals who were victims of threats that their images would be circulated. However, fear is felt across IBSA victim experiences; McGlynn et al. (2019) identified that some victims were living in constant fear that a threat of exposure had been acted upon, whilst other victims were terrified of harassment by viewers of their sexual images that had been shared. It is also interesting to note that fear resulting from IBSA is different between genders, with women more likely to report being afraid than their male counterparts (Henry et al., 2019b).

IBSA has been shown to impact almost every aspect of a victim's life, including employment (Bates, 2017; Champion et al., 2022; McGlynn et al., 2019; Short et al., 2017). It was revealed by Short et al. (2017) that the work performance of one in five (22%) victims of IBSA is negatively affected with a further 5% being dismissed from their jobs. With such a large proportion of victims experiencing such a negative impact to their psychological wellbeing, it is no surprise that this would have a rolling impact on other aspects of their life, such as employment. Furthermore, loss of employment is a prevalent result in professions such as teaching and can not only ruin current employment but also chances of future employment (Bates, 2017; Stal, 2022).

Relationships are also impacted, with two in five (40%) victims feeling extremely isolated and one in five (22%) giving up on social activities (Short et al., 2017). Victims report withdrawing from society completely and in particular retracting from social networks through fear of being contacted by individuals who have seen dispersed images (McGlynn et al., 2019, 2021). A lack of social support and isolation from friends and family can be further exacerbated in cultures and religions that strongly stigmatise sexual behaviour (Aborisade,

2022; Henry et al., 2022). Contrastingly, the largest positive influence on victim coping was feeling as if they were not alone; being surrounded by strong support networks and relating to other survivors helped victims feel safer and move on (Bates, 2017). However, whilst social support groups can be helpful, they can also be a risk of reliving the trauma (DiTullio & Sullivan, 2019).

Bates (2017) outlined that victims often partake in negative coping mechanisms in the immediate aftermath of IBSA before finding positive ways to cope, including avoidance, excessive alcohol consumption and obsessive thoughts. Avoiding talking about the IBSA and generally seeking to escape interaction were very common among victims (Bates, 2017). In juxtaposition, participants mostly reported obsessively focusing on why the IBSA took place, struggling to understand the reasons behind such dreadful behaviour by the perpetrator. Furthermore, in parallel to victims of sexual abuse, many turn to alcohol to cope with the stress of victimisation (Bates, 2017; Champion et al., 2022).

Help-seeking amongst victims of IBSA is largely understudied, however, research has revealed that as many as 73% of victims do not seek help at all when they discover that they have been victimised (Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020). The largest reason for not seeking help for women was that they were too embarrassed (39.1%). Interestingly, on the other hand, 59.1% of men reported doing nothing as the images did not bother them. Short et al. (2017) found that only 10% of respondents reported their case to the police and only 4% contacted a helpline; again, these low reporting rates were accompanied with feelings of embarrassment.

Secondary Victimisation and Image-Based Sexual Abuse Myth Acceptance

Secondary victimisation, which is a subsequent consequence of IBSA, is the result of victim blaming attitudes and failures of the justice system (Bond & Tyrrell, 2021). There is consensus that IBSA is a crime that requires police intervention, but this is held in conjunction with victim blaming attitudes (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Henry et al., 2019b).

Henry et al. (2019b) found that 50% of men and 30% of women held victim blaming attitudes and minimised the harm caused by IBSA. More alarmingly in Pina et al. (2017), 99% of participants demonstrated some degree of revenge pornography approval. Uhl (2017) concluded that participants did not generally endorse high levels of victim blaming. However, the specification of high-levels, implies at least some endorsement of victim blaming. These victim blaming views prevent victims from seeking help and often lead to negative experiences for those who do seek help (Aborisade, 2022; Henry et al., 2022; Karasavva et al., 2023; Papachristou, 2023).

The attitudes held by the police can have a significant impact on both the victims and the perpetrators as they are responsible for achieving justice. Harmful beliefs held by law enforcers have a detrimental effect on reporting IBSA (Henry et al., 2019b). Bond and Tyrrell (2021) revealed that 94.7% of police officers have not received training on IBSA investigations. With the law not appropriately governing all the motives of IBSA until 2024, and many law enforcers receiving no training on how to investigate such issues, it is hardly surprising that attitudes towards IBSA are adverse (Bond & Tyrrell, 2021; Henry et al., 2019b).

Endorsement of societal attitudes surrounding IBSA that blame victims, minimise the harm and seriousness of the behaviour, and excuse perpetrators is referred to as IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA; Henry et al., 2019b). Results from Henry et al. (2019b) revealed that women trended towards disagreement and men trended towards agreement with IBSAMA. It is interesting to note that both men and women trended towards agreement on victim blaming myths, whilst both trended towards disagreement with myths that minimise and excuse IBSA behaviour. Nevertheless, none of the average scores presented as close to absolute disagreement, suggesting some endorsement of IBSA myths in the general population.

The gender of the victim can play a large role in attitudes towards the victim and perpetrator (Scott & Gavin, 2018). Individuals are more lenient towards perpetrators of IBSA when the victim is female in comparison to when the victim is male (Fido et al., 2021). There is also more blame attribution to women whose ex-boyfriend took the image than to men whose ex-girlfriend took the image (Uhl, 2017). However, Uhl (2017) did not find that the victims' gender alone had any main effect influences on perceived seriousness of the offence or on the responsibility of the victim. When the victim took the photo themselves, the sharing of the image was perceived more serious for female victims than male victims (Uhl, 2017).

Additionally, the sexting behaviour of the victim plays a substantial role in victim blaming attitudes (Gavin & Scott, 2019). Nearly one in five (18.2%) individuals believe that victims who send sexual images deserve to have these images disseminated without consent (Branch et al., 2017). Individuals believe image distribution to be more unpleasant when the image was originally non-consensually shared in comparison to when an image was originally consensually shared (Dekker et al., 2019).

Furthermore, if the victim takes the image themselves, they are attributed far more blame, given less sympathy and more negative affect is felt towards them than if the perpetrator took the photo (Hasinoff, 2017; Uhl, 2017). The appearance of an IBSA victim can also have an impact on the extent of victim blaming that occurs. Uhl (2017) found that men, compared to women, attribute more blame to 'thin' and 'obese' victims. Furthermore, there was a high level of negative affect attributed towards thin female victims whereas thin male victims received the lowest negative effect (Uhl, 2017).

On the other hand, there is more limited research focusing on observer characteristics that influence IBSAMA. It is consistently found that there are gender differences in blame attribution towards victims of IBSA (Henry et al., 2019a). As well as attributing more blame towards the victim, men sexually objectify victims of IBSA (Dekker et al., 2019). Scott and

Gavin (2018) found that women perceived IBSA as more serious than men, suggesting that men are more likely to minimise the seriousness of IBSA. In addition, it is established that men report more lenient judgments towards perpetrators of IBSA (Fido et al., 2021). Uhl (2017) found that women viewed IBSA as more severe, felt more negative affect towards the perpetrator and attributed more blame to the perpetrator than men. Men attributed significantly more blame to the victim and were more sympathetic towards the perpetrator. Furthermore, there are 2.29 times greater odds of women recommending criminal sanctions than men (Uhl, 2017). Contrastingly, Bothamley and Tully (2018) did not find any gender differences in the rating of seriousness of harm suffered by the victim, despite finding that men blamed IBSA victims significantly more than women did.

At the start of this programme of research, the literature focus of IBSAMA was heavily placed on victim characteristics. As IBSAMA has a direct impact on secondary victimisation and victim help-seeking, identifying ways to combat these attitudes is necessary. Therefore, there was a pressing need to identify observer characteristics that predict IBSAMA endorsement to determine how the issue can be tackled.

Understanding Perpetrators of IBSA

Perpetrators of IBSA include family members, friends, intimate partners and even strangers; the category is not confined to the spurned ex-partner that the colloquial term revenge pornography suggests (Henry et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2018). Nonetheless, ex-partners are a large proportion of perpetrators with up to 40% of perpetrators targeting ex-partners (Henry et al., 2019a; Pacheco et al., 2019). These figures do not show a majority, and thus the behaviour is more commonly committed by another known person to the victim (Henry et al., 2019a). Although perpetrators are not confined to one group of individuals, the behaviour is generally more common in men and individuals from the homosexual and bisexual community (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019).

The motivations behind IBSA are plentiful and go beyond the presumed 'revenge'; they include amusement, sexual gratification, coercive control, social notoriety, monetary gain, gossiping, entertainment and voyeurism (Bindesbøl Holm Johansen et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2018). Hall and Hearn (2019) identified that power, control and revenge were the most prominent underlying motivations for posts to a 'revenge pornography' website. All the male posters in this study blamed the victim for their actions and claimed that the IBSA perpetrated was for the purpose of regaining control, protecting their manhood, and hurting the women involved. In Uhl et al.'s (2018) investigation of IBSA websites, they found that 35.8% of posters stated a reason or excuse for the perpetration. It is interesting to note that the number of perpetrators that were motivated by revenging an ex versus simply because the woman depicted was 'hot' or 'sexy' were identical (21.6%) (Uhl et al., 2018). The non-consensual dissemination of sexts is largely thought of as a joke (30.8%) and not a big deal (47.8%) by perpetrators (Clancy et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is proposed that younger assailants (aged 15-27) are motivated by improving social status through making fun of victims and engaging in visual gossip (Bindesbøl Holm Johansen et al., 2019; Clancy et al., 2019; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021). This further emphasises the complexities of the intent behind IBSA and highlights the inappropriateness of the 'intent to cause distress' clause that was required under original legislation.

Research exploring characteristics of IBSA perpetrators was largely under researched when beginning this programme of study, with much of the research focusing on victimology, prevalence, or demographics. The literature identifying predictors of IBSA perpetration was particularly nascent. A small body of research had emerged focusing on dark personality traits, aversive beliefs and sexting behaviour (Morelli et al., 2016; Pina et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2019). This was also mainly focused on proclivity to perpetrate revenge pornography

behaviours (Pina et al., 2017). Proclivity refers to an individual's perceived likelihood of perpetrating a behaviour regardless of whether they have or have not in the past.

Aim of Thesis

The overall focus of this thesis was to shed more light on IBSA perpetration and endorsement of IBSAMA. It is well established that IBSA has a substantial impact on victims, and that victims feel a barrier to help-seeking due to fear of embarrassment and judgment. The Law Commission was working to update the laws as an initial step to improving justice for victims. However, there was limited work completed to identify the underlying characteristics, beliefs and behaviours that drive IBSA perpetration. Further, there was a dearth of research on IBSAMA. With victim blaming and myth acceptance rife and exacerbating negative experiences for victims, it is important to identify what drives these beliefs to work towards combating them. Finally, whilst theorists and policy makers identified IBSA as another form of sexual abuse, the similarities between IBSA and offline sexual abuse had not been empirically studied (to our knowledge). The body of studies included in this thesis aimed to explore IBSA as a technology-based abusive behaviour on the continuum of sexual abuse. The following research questions were established:

1. Does IBSA perpetration, proclivity to perpetrate IBSA, and IBSAMA mirror sexual abuse offline?
2. What is the prevalence of IBSA proclivity, IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA in the UK?
3. What are the predictors of IBSAMA?
4. What are the predictors of IBSA perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate IBSA?
5. What is the relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate IBSA?
6. Are there gender differences in IBSA perpetration, proclivity to perpetrate IBSA and IBSAMA?

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 1 provides a systematic review of the existing literature on IBSA and IBSAMA. It aimed to comprehensively synthesise prior research to determine prevalence and predictors of IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA in adult populations. The review identified key predictors of IBSA, as well as highlighting gaps in the literature. It focused on demographic, attitudinal, behavioural and other psychological predictors of IBSAMA and IBSA, demonstrating that the literature thus far is heavily focused on demographic predictors. The review identified several limitations impacting this field of research, including inconsistencies in IBSA definitions, and a predominant focus on university-based samples, restricting generalisability. The chapter concludes the need for further empirical research, particularly in distinguishing different forms of IBSA and their psychological predictors.

Chapter 2 presents the first empirical study, which examines the relationship between rape myth acceptance (RMA) and IBSAMA. The study aimed to explore how traditional rape-supportive beliefs extend to IBSA-related attitudes, contributing to the normalisation of IBSA behaviours. The findings indicated a strong relationship between RMA and IBSAMA and demonstrated that these beliefs are predicted by the same variables, suggesting a shared cognitive framework between offline sexual violence attitudes and IBSA-related justifications. These results underscore the importance of addressing IBSA myths in education and prevention efforts and emphasise that IBSA is on the continuum of sexual violence.

Chapter 3 investigates the association between IBSAMA and proclivity to engage in revenge pornography. This second empirical study explored whether individuals who endorse IBSA-supportive myths were more likely to exhibit a willingness to engage in non-consensual image distribution. Furthermore, this was the first study to explore a wider range of predictors of IBSA including sexism, sexual double standards, sexual consent, sexting

behaviours and victim-experiences. The results demonstrated that IBSAMA significantly predicts revenge pornography proclivity, consistent with the hypothesis that cognitive distortions facilitate IBSA perpetration. The chapter considered the shortcomings of existing proclivity scales focusing on 'revenge pornography' scenarios and highlighted the need for the development of a proclivity scale that measured a wider breadth of IBSA behaviours.

Chapter 4 details the creation and validation of a novel psychometric scale designed to measure IBSA proclivity. The aim was to establish a reliable and valid instrument that captures different dimensions of IBSA-related behaviours, including taking, sharing, and threatening to share intimate images. The scale development process is outlined including item generation, factor analysis, and reliability testing. The final version of the scale included 10 vignettes detailing various IBSA behaviours each followed by a question to capture likelihood to perpetrate that behaviour (along with additional exploratory questions capturing blame and enjoyment). This demonstrated strong psychometric properties, providing a valuable tool for future research in IBSA perpetration.

Chapter 5 presents the third empirical study that explored key predictors of IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity using the new IBSA proclivity scale. Building on Study 2 (Chapter 3), this study examined hostile and benevolent sexism, the dark tetrad, sexual consent beliefs, sexting experiences and IBSA victimisation experiences, to determine predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA. Furthermore, this study assessed gender differences in both proclivity and myth acceptance to explore inconsistencies in predictor variables across genders. These results further highlighted the significant role of myth acceptance in predicting IBSA proclivity. Psychopathy and sexism were also identified as significant predictors of both IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA. IBSAMA remained a significant independent predictor of IBSA proclivity across both men and women after controlling for other variables. However, there was some variation in the other significant independent

predictors: psychopathy for men and benevolent sexism, sadism and consent adherence for women.

Chapter 6 presents the final empirical study which investigated predictors of existing IBSA perpetration. This was explored across gender and across the different methods of IBSA perpetration: creation, distribution and threat of distribution. The study aimed to determine whether distinct psychological profiles exist among perpetrators of each type. IBSA perpetration was predicted by male gender, IBSAMA, IBSA victimisation, lack of consent seeking in sexual encounters and cyberflashing perpetration. When analysing by separate IBSA behaviours, only victimisation of that same specific behaviour predicted perpetration. Furthermore, IBSAMA and male gender were significant independent predictors of IBSA via sharing but did not significantly predict the other two methods: via creating or via threatening to share. Differences between genders were also highlighted with only consent seeking behaviours predicting IBSA perpetration in women, whilst the same independent predictors were found for men as the full model. The novelty of these findings is discussed.

Finally, Chapter 7 presents a general discussion addressing the overall aims of this programme of research. The findings of each study are summarised and discussed in the context of the thesis aims and the broader literature. A broad theoretical model of IBSA, amalgamating the findings of the thesis and existing sexual aggression theory, is presented. Limitations, implications and future directions are also considered.

Chapter 1

Capturing Image-Based Sexual Abuse: A Systematic Literature Review of Perpetration and Myth Acceptance

Introduction

Rationale

IBSA, a term coined by McGlynn and Rackley (2017), refers to the non-consensual creation, distribution, or threat of distribution of private sexual images. This behaviour has also been incorrectly labelled in the past as non-consensual pornography and 'revenge pornography' (Maddocks, 2018). These misnomers shifted focus from the abusive content to the image content, downplaying the seriousness and contributing to widespread misconceptions about image-based sexual abuse (IBSA; Maddocks, 2018). IBSA encompasses a broader spectrum of behaviours, including voyeurism, upskirting, sexualised photoshopping, sextortion, images of sexual assault and sexploitation (McGlynn et al., 2017; Powell et al., 2018).

Research has shown that one in five individuals (23%) are victimised by IBSA during their lifetime, highlighting the prevalence and importance of understanding the behaviour (Henry et al., 2019b). Despite such high prevalence rates, research has highlighted that as little as 10% of cases get reported, with the most significant reason for not doing so being embarrassment (Short et al., 2017). The societal attitudes towards victims are instrumental in minimising the harm caused and constructively dealing with the aftermath of IBSA. Endorsement of attitudes that blame the victim, minimise the harm suffered and excuse the perpetrator is known as IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA). IBSAMA increases shame, isolation and reduces help-seeking for victims (Henry et al., 2019a; McGlynn et al., 2019).

With the terminology and research developing substantially in the last five years it is important to review the current literature on IBSA. Most prominently, to develop interventions

to prevent perpetration, it is important to understand the predictors of the behaviour. This chapter will explore the contemporary research surrounding the prevalence of IBSA and the profile of perpetrators. Finally, research regarding IBSAMA is collated to provide an understanding of what may influence the attitudes that encourage secondary victimisation.

Objectives

The aim of this systematic review was to evaluate the current literature on IBSA perpetration, identifying prevalence as well as predictors of perpetration. Additionally, expanding on existing reviews, the present review assesses the literature surrounding IBSAMA, considering it a key component in the equation of IBSA perpetration. The systematic review will answer the following questions:

1. What is the prevalence of IBSA perpetration?
2. What is predictive of IBSA perpetration (or the proclivity to perpetrate IBSA)?
3. What is the prevalence of IBSAMA?
4. What are the predictors of IBSAMA?

Method

Eligibility Criteria

Content and definition

Research that addresses IBSA behaviour was included. This was defined as the non-consensual creation, distribution, or threat of distribution of private intimate images. Studies that used a different name, such as non-consensual pornography or address specific behaviours, such as upskirting or deepfakes, were included if the behaviour addressed fitted the above definition. Studies that assessed IBSA behaviours collectively within a wider range of behaviour such as technology facilitated sexual violence or domestic abuse were not

included unless IBSA behaviour was distinctly measured and analysed separately from the wider topic.

Type of Publication

The systematic review included original empirical research papers published in the English language. Articles that synthesise existing research, such as literature reviews and meta-analyses were not included. Additionally, commentary and legal articles were excluded.

Whilst IBSA was termed in 2017, the behaviours described pre-date this. Therefore, the review searched papers from 2010 onwards. This year was the beginning of an exponential rise in social media and smartphone usage which incited the ease of access to perpetrate sexual abuse online (Statista, 2023a, 2023b). By selecting 2010 as the starting point, the review aligns with the onset of these enabling conditions, ensuring relevance to the digital contexts in which IBSA typically occurs. Including literature published prior to 2010 would likely provide a historical perspective that does not reflect the current digital landscape or the nature of IBSA as it is now understood. Therefore, the 2010 cut-off ensures the review remains focused on contemporary manifestations of the issue.

Participants

This review focused on research pertaining to adult populations. Papers that focused exclusively on participants under the age of 18 were excluded from the review. A decision was made during screening that studies that focused on adult populations, but included participants aged 16+, would still be included. This was a factor in many studies so excluding these would have removed key studies from the review and limited the findings. As age 16 is deemed 'age of consent' in the UK it was determined that this remained in the scope of 'adult-populations'.

Inclusion Criteria

- Published in the English language.

- Empirical Research.
- Published 2010 onwards.
- Research addresses IBSA – the nonconsensual creation, distribution or threat of distribution of private sexual images.
- Research addresses perpetration, proclivity to perpetrate or myth acceptance.
- Research sample includes adults aged 16 or over.

Exclusion Criteria

- Not published in the English language.
- Articles that were not original empirical work such as literature reviews, meta-analyses or commentaries.
- Published before 2010.
- Research that does not inherently address IBSA.
- Research that does not distinguish IBSA behaviour in isolation from a larger topic (for example intimate partner violence or cyberstalking).
- Research that only focuses on victimology.
- Research sample that is under the age of 16 or exclusively under the age of 18.

Information Sources

Literature search strategies were developed using search terms that address IBSA. As a relatively new area of research that has multiple labels, search terms were broad to capture all relevant papers. The following databases were searched: Academic Search Complete (EBSCO host interface), PsycInfo (EBSCO host interface), PsycArticles (EBSCO host interface), Scopus (Elsevier interface) and Web of Science (Clarivate interface). To ensure literature saturation, the reference lists of included studies were also hand-searched to identify any relevant material not captured by the database search.

Search Strategy

Database resources were searched in the 'title, abstract and keywords' using the following Boolean search terms:

("Revenge Porn*" OR "Non-consensual porn*" OR Upskirting OR Downblousing OR Deepfakes OR Sextortion OR "Digital Rape")

(OR)

((Cyber OR Internet OR Technology OR Technology-Facilitated OR digital OR Online OR Image-Based) AND ("Sexual Abuse" OR "Sexual Violence"))

(OR)

((Sext* OR "Sexual Image*" OR "Private Image*" OR "Private Sexual Image*" OR "Intimate Image*") AND (Abuse OR Non-consensual* OR "Without Consent" OR Disseminat* OR Sharing OR Distribut* OR Forward*))

Study Screening, Selection and Data Extraction Process

Database search results were exported to Mendeley citation manager and uploaded to Rayyan, an internet-based software program that facilitates systematic literature reviews. The software detected duplicates and allowed for blind reviewing.

The titles and abstract of the articles were screened against the eligibility criteria and it was determined whether they be excluded. Any articles highlighted as a maybe at this stage were included in the second stage of screening. A second reviewer screened 20% of the abstracts for calibration. Full reports were obtained for the second stage of screening, and these were screened against the eligibility criteria. This was completed by two independent reviewers with reasons for exclusion at this stage being recorded. Any disagreement was resolved through discussion at the end of each of the stages of screening.

The final stage of the selection process assessed papers for trustworthiness using the weight of evidence (WoE) approach (EFSA, 2017). Any papers that were not graded medium

or high using the WoE criteria were excluded. An exception was made to include studies that were graded ‘low/medium’ because of limited scope (only assessing one of the research questions). It was not deemed appropriate to exclude what could be valuable insights to individual research questions on this basis.

Data items for extraction were discussed between the reviewers, and calibration exercises were conducted to insight consistency. Extracted entities included general study information, perpetration information and myth acceptance information. General study information included study details (authors, year, country); type of publication; study population; sample size; participant demographics; and study methodology. Due to variation in defining IBSA, the definition or outline of IBSA behaviour used in the research was also extracted. Data extraction then included identification of whether perpetration or proclivity was measured; type(s) of IBSA behaviour measured; the prevalence of perpetration/ proclivity; demographic predictors; attitudinal and belief predictors; behavioural predictors, and ‘other’ psychological predictors (e.g. cognitive or personality predictors). Myth acceptance data extraction also included prevalence, and the same predictor categories. The tools used to measure IBSA, IBSAMA as well as any predictors were also extracted. See Appendix A for supporting documents including a searchable database of extracted data and a detailed table of key research findings.

Data was synthesised as a systematic narrative review addressing the research questions. This was structured into tables and text sub-sections addressing the prevalence and predictors of IBSA perpetration and the prevalence and predictors of IBSAMA.

Results

Study Selection

Initial database searches conducted on 26th September 2023 yielded a search result of 13,125 publications. When exported to Mendeley 5,225 duplicates were detected, leaving a

total of 7,900 publications for screening. These were exported into Rayyan which detected an additional 544 duplicates. A final total of 7,356 abstracts were screened. At the abstract screening stage, 7,041 records were excluded due to misalignment with the inclusion criteria. This left 315 articles to be retrieved for the full screening stage. Of these, 303 reports were accessible and obtained for full assessment.

Assessing against the full inclusion and exclusion criteria identified 84 reports eligible for this review. Whilst 84 articles were obtained, there were 2 dissertations that duplicated findings of journal articles that were also included. Data was extracted from these in tandem, meaning 82 unique papers were retained. Four papers also included multiple studies; therefore 88 unique studies were reviewed. See Figure 1 for the full Prisma breakdown.

Weight of Evidence (WoE)

The trustworthiness and applicability of studies was critically appraised using WoE. Overall, the quality was assessed as Medium in most studies (see Table 1). In 12 studies, the overall ranking was 'Low', therefore these studies were excluded from the data synthesis, (study details can still be found in a separate tab in the extraction database, see Appendix A). Twelve studies were identified as 'Low/Medium' and retained, as although contribution to the questions of this systematic review were small, they still provide additional context to single areas of interest. Following weight of evidence assessment, 76 studies are included in the synthesis of findings.

Table 1

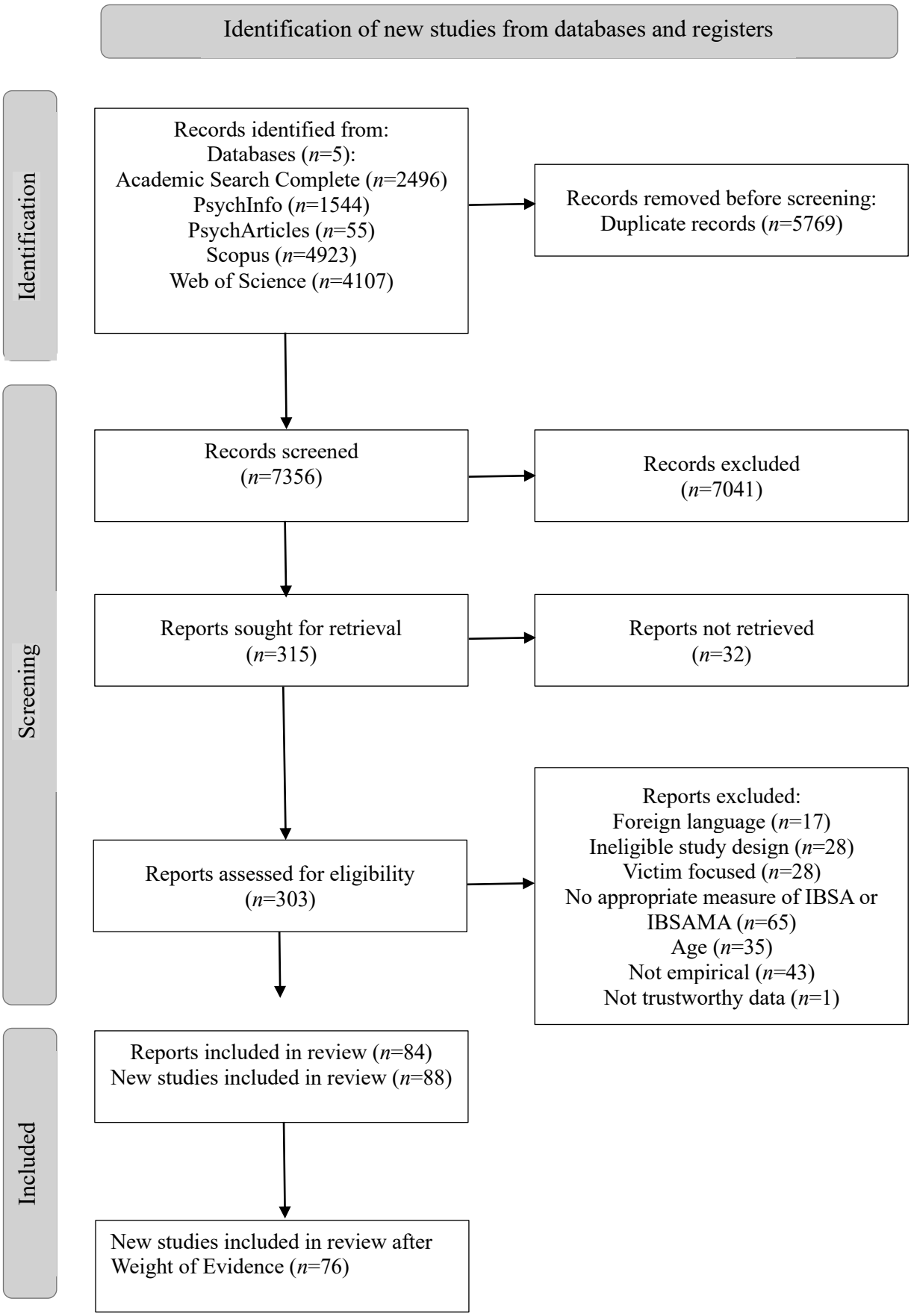
Number of Studies Ranked in Each Category in Weight of Evidence Assessment

	Low	Low/Medium	Medium	High
N	12	11	55	10

Note. Total *N*=88

Figure 1

Prisma Flow Diagram



Overview of Study Characteristics

The key characteristics of studies included in the synthesis are outlined in the supplementary materials linked in Appendix A (available in Table A of the supporting tables or in the searchable database). There were 65 quantitative studies, four qualitative and seven mixed method studies included. The majority of studies (*n*=69) were survey-based (16 of which were mixed quantitative methods involving an experimental manipulation). Most studies were mixed gender, with the exception of two studies that involved only male participants (Boer et al., 2021; Brem et al., 2019).

There were 14 studies that addressed all four of the research questions (indicated in Table A of the supporting tables in Appendix A). Five studies only addressed IBSA perpetration prevalence, whilst 3 studies only addressed IBSAMA prevalence. Twenty-four studies addressed only the two IBSAMA questions, whilst 15 studies addressed only the two IBSA perpetration questions. Each individual research question was addressed by between 36 to 49 individual studies. See Table 2 for the number of studies addressing each research question.

Table 2

Number of Studies Addressing Each Research Question

	Prevalence of IBSA Perpetration	Predictors of Perpetration	Prevalence of IBSAMA	Predictors of IBSAMA
N	43	36	49	45

Note. Total *N*=76

IBSA Perpetration Findings

Prevalence of IBSA Perpetration or Proclivity to Perpetrate

Forty-three studies addressed prevalence of IBSA perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate IBSA (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Barroso et al., 2021; Boer et al., 2021; Brem et

al., 2019; Califano et al., 2022; Call, 2021; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Clancy, Howard et al., 2021; Clancy, Klettke et al., 2021; Dodaj et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2022, 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Graham Holmes et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2019a; Hu et al., 2023; Hudson, 2012; Hudson et al., 2014; Jonsson et al., 2014; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Karasavva et al., 2023; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Kričkić et al., 2017; Maas et al., 2021; Maes et al., 2023; Morelli et al., 2020, 2023; Perkins et al., 2014; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Scholz et al., 2023; Sesar et al., 2021; Sparks et al., 2023; Van Oosten & Vandenbosch, 2020; Walker et al., 2021; Zhong et al., 2020). Thirty-six studies reported actual perpetration of IBSA whilst 8 studies reported IBSA Proclivity (one study reported both; Maes et al., 2023). One study reported a combined IBSA perpetration prevalence (Flynn et al., 2023), whilst three further studies provided a combined IBSA as well as separate creation, distribution and threat of distribution prevalence rates (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Thirty-seven studies reported IBSA perpetration (or proclivity) via sharing, one of which also reported IBSA perpetration via threatening to share (Brem et al., 2019). Finally, two studies reported IBSA perpetration in relation to deepfake imagery (Fido et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2022). Measures used to record IBSA perpetration (or proclivity to perpetrate) and the key findings from each of the studies are reported in Table B of the supporting tables (linked in Appendix A).

Perpetration rates of IBSA via sharing ranged from as low as 1.5% and as high as 35.2% (Hudson et al., 2014; Kričkić et al., 2017; see searchable database or Table B for all 34 studies reporting rates of IBSA via sharing). Perpetration of IBSA via creation was recorded between 8.7% and 15.8% in the three studies that reported on this (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019; 2022). Finally, IBSA perpetration via threatening to share was reported between a rate of 4.9% and 14.1% (Brem et al., 2019; Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al.,

2019; 2022). Overall perpetration is cited between 10.1% and 17.5% (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al.,2019; 2022).

Reporting methods for proclivity to perpetrate IBSA included mean scores on Likert scales or percentage scores of participants indicating any inclination other than '*absolutely would not'*. In the three studies that reported a percentage score, between 17.5% and 48.2% of participants presented a response beyond absolute disagreement. Mean scores demonstrate that proclivity trends towards the bottom end of scales (see Table B of the supporting tables in Appendix A), highlighting that very few respondents report a proclivity to perpetrate IBSA behaviour. For example, using the revenge porn proclivity scale, average scores are reported of around 1.1 on a 1-5 scale (Pina et al., 2021; Scholz et al., 2023).

Demographic Predictors of IBSA Perpetration or Proclivity to Perpetrate

Gender. The most prominent demographic explored in relation to IBSA perpetration (or proclivity to perpetrate) was gender, with 29 studies investigating the relationship between gender and IBSA behaviour (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Dodaj & Sesar, 2023; Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Flynn et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2016; Graham Holmes et al., 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Henry et al., 2019a; Hu et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maas et al., 2021; Maes et al., 2023; Morelli et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Sesar et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2021). Due to sample limitations, comparisons were only made between male and female participants or male and non-male participants in all studies included in synthesis.

None of the studies presented findings to support women as more likely to perpetrate IBSA, whilst 15 studies presented support for proclivity or perpetration of IBSA being more likely or prevalent in male participants (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy, Klettke, et al.,

2021; Dodaj & Sesar, 2023; Flynn et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2016; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva et al., 2023; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maas et al., 2021; Morelli et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020; Sesar et al., 2021). However, one of the studies was only a marginally significant finding (Pina et al., 2021) and two of the studies presented regression models in which gender was significant in earlier iterations but was no longer significant when additional variables were included (Karasavva et al., 2023; Klein & Cooper, 2019).

Twelve studies found no significant differences or relationships with gender (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Graham Holmes et al., 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Hu et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Maes et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2021). One study did not find a significant difference between gender but did find a significant interaction between gender and country, with Australian women being more likely than Australian men to disseminate, whilst U.S. men were more likely than U.S. women (Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021). Further, one study found significant differences between gender for the creation of deepfake images but not for the distribution of deepfake images, with men expressing a significantly higher proclivity for creation of deepfake images than women (Fido et al., 2022, Study 1).

Whilst findings are mixed, more than half of studies identified that men were significantly more likely to report perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate. Three studies demonstrated that this difference was present for each type of individual mode of IBSA behaviour as well as having perpetrated any form of IBSA (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). For example, Powell et al. (2019) identified that male participants were 78% more likely than female participants to self-report IBSA, and significantly more likely to report ever taking (12.0% vs. 6.2%), distributing (9.1% vs. 4.4%), and/or threatening to distribute private sexual images (7.0% vs. 3.3%).

Age. Twenty studies explored the relationship between age and IBSA perpetration (or proclivity). Eight of these studies presented significant findings. Two studies reported that perpetration was more prevalent in older populations (Clancy et al., 2020; Maas et al., 2021). Contrastingly, four reported that it was more prevalent in younger populations (Flynn et al., 2022; Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020); one qualitative study also reported that participants believed perpetration was associated with younger individuals (Dodaj et al., 2022). Finally, one study reported mixed findings regarding age-related patterns in IBSA behaviours: while age was positively correlated with actual perpetration, it was negatively correlated with proclivity to perpetrate (Maes et al., 2023).

The 12 remaining studies reported non-significant findings (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Hu et al., 2023; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Morelli et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2022; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023). Synthesising the findings, it can be inferred that perpetration of IBSA behaviour is more prevalent in the younger population. Although, three studies did outline a positive correlation between age and perpetration behaviour, indicating older individuals to be more likely to perpetrate, all of these were limited to participants younger than 35 (Clancy et al., 2020; Maas et al., 2021; Maes et al., 2023). Henry et al. (2019a) identified that the 40–49-year-old age category reported significantly lower rates compared to all other younger categories. It must therefore be considered that, when looking at all age groups rather than just younger adults, IBSA perpetration is less common in older adults and more common in younger adults.

Sexual Orientation. Fourteen studies explored sexual orientation as a demographic predictor of IBSA behaviour (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Flynn et al., 2022; Garcia et al., 2016; Graham Holmes et al., 2021;

Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maes et al., 2023; Morelli et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020). One of the studies compared androphilic to gynophilic participants (Fido et al., 2022, Study 2), whilst the remaining thirteen studies compared heterosexuality to either LGB(+) or non-heterosexuality.

The single study comparing androphilic and gynophilic participants did not find this to be a significant independent predictor of proclivity to perpetrate IBSA via deepfake production (Fido et al., 2022, Study 2). However, it did interact with intended use of the deepfake (creation for sexual-gratification or to subsequently share). Gynophilic participants reported being likely to produce deepfakes to subsequently share it rather than for personal use whilst this did not differ in androphilic participants.

Five studies reported that IBSA perpetration was more prevalent in LGB participants (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Flynn et al., 2022; Morelli et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Morelli et al. (2023) identified that the LGB participants were more than twice as likely to have perpetrated IBSA compared to heterosexual participants. Interestingly, Barrense-Dias et al. (2020) found that non-heterosexual orientation predicted having perpetrated IBSA in binary analyses, but also identified in multivariate analyses (comparing non-perpetrators, one-time perpetrators and multiple-time perpetrators) that it predicted having perpetrated IBSA several times but did not remain significant comparing non-perpetrators to one-time perpetrators. None of the studies identified that IBSA perpetration was significantly more prevalent in heterosexual respondents compared to non-heterosexual respondents.

Six studies did not find any significant differences in IBSA perpetration between categories of sexual orientation (Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Graham Holmes et al., 2021; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maes et al., 2023).

The two remaining studies reported mixed findings in relation to sexual orientation and IBSA perpetration (Garcia et al., 2016; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020). In each of these studies sexual orientation did not predict IBSA perpetration alone, but both did find significant interactions with gender. In Ruvalcaba and Eaton (2020) there was no difference in perpetration between heterosexual women and lesbian women, but gay men reported significantly more IBSA perpetration than heterosexual men. Similarly, Garcia et al. (2016) identified that gay men were more than twice as likely to share sexts compared to lesbian women whilst no other effects were found.

Education. The findings are limited thus far on the relationship between education and IBSA, with inconsistent and largely non-significant results. Education was explored as a predictor in six of the studies in this review (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maes et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019; Said & McNealey, 2023), however only two of the studies reported significant findings (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Maes et al., 2023). Barense-Dias et al. (2020) identified that IBSA was predicted by a lower education level, which held across both genders. On the other hand, Maes et al. (2023) found the opposite, reporting that perpetration was positively correlated with education level. Yet, they found that education was negatively related with proclivity to perpetrate IBSA (Maes et al., 2023).

Ethnicity. Five studies explored race or ethnicity as a predictor of IBSA perpetration (Flynn et al., 2022; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023). Four studies identified significant differences in perpetration between White or Non-Indigenous participants and BAME or Indigenous participants respectively (Flynn et al., 2022; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). More specifically, Aboriginal or BAME participants reported significantly more IBSA perpetration than Non-Aboriginal or White participants. Both Flynn et al. (2022) and Klein and Cooper (2019) found ethnicity to

be a significant independent predictor in regression models, with BAME or indigenous participants being 25% and 100%, respectively, more likely to report IBSA perpetration than White participants. Whilst significant differences were found in Powell et al. (2019, 2022), ethnicity did not present as a significant predictor in regression models in these studies. The remaining study did not find any significant differences between ethnicities (White, Asian, Black, Hispanic or other; Said & McNealey, 2023).

Culture/Country. There were five studies that explored IBSA perpetration between different cultures or countries, all of which identified significant differences (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019; Flynn et al., 2022; Morelli et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2022). All studies presented comparisons between different countries. Barrense-Dias et al. (2020) identified that those who perpetrated IBSA several times had higher odds of being foreign-born compared to Swiss. Clancy, Klettke, et al. (2021) found perpetration to be significantly more reported in US participants compared to Australian participants. Powell et al. (2022) identified no significant differences in perpetration between Australia and the United Kingdom, but respondents from New Zealand, however, were 33% more likely to self-report engaging in a form of IBSA compared to participants from Australia and the United Kingdom. On the other hand, whilst Flynn et al. (2022) identified that respondents from New Zealand reported significantly more deepfake perpetration, this was not a significant predictor in the regression model. Similarly, Morelli et al. (2023) found that Colombians reported being significantly more engaged in non-consensual sexting than Italians, but this did not remain a significant predictor in the regression model. It is clear from the findings that IBSA perpetration varies between different cultures or countries, but with each study exploring different comparisons the extent of this remains unclear.

Disability. The small body of research exploring disability within IBSA perpetration has identified significant relationships (Flynn et al., 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). In both

of their studies Powell et al. (2019, 2022) found that participants that self-reported requiring assistance for disability were twice as likely to self-report having engaged in IBSA perpetration. Similarly, Flynn et al. (2022) found that participants with a self-reported disability (26.6%, *n* = 362) were more likely than respondents without a self-reported disability (2.2%, *n* = 104) to have perpetrated deepfake imagery behaviour. These three studies were conducted by the same research group and are the only ones to explore the relationship between disability and IBSA behaviour.

Religion. Klein and Cooper (2019) was the only study to explore religion as a predictor of IBSA perpetration and only compared Christianity to non-Christianity. In their full model, religion significantly predicted IBSA perpetration. More specifically, Christian participants had a 105% increased likelihood of sending a suggestive or nude photograph of someone else compared to non-Christian participants.

Additional Non-Significant Demographic Predictors: Socio-economic Status, Urban Residency and Age of Puberty Onset. Barrense-Dias et al. (2020) additionally explored socio-economic status, age of puberty onset and urban residency (compared to rural) as predictors of IBSA perpetration. However, none of the findings presented any significant relationships.

Attitudinal and Belief Predictors of IBSA Perpetration or Proclivity to Perpetrate

IBSA Myth Acceptance. Sixteen studies explored IBSAMA as a predictor of IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Dodaj et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2022, Study 1; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Karasavva et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2021). This included subjective norms around IBSA behaviour, victim blaming, minimisation of the harm caused, excusal of perpetrator behaviour and attitudes that IBSA is ‘not a real crime’. Fifteen studies reported

positive relationships between the endorsement of myth accepting attitudes and IBSA perpetration (and/or proclivity; Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Dodaj et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2022, Study 1; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Karasavva et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Sparks et al., 2023). As there are multiple facets to IBSAMA, there are mixed findings of significance. For example, in Powell et al. (2019), victim blame was identified as a significant predictor of IBSA, whilst minimisation of harm and excusal of perpetration behaviour was non-significant. Conversely, in a later study Powell et al. (2022) found the opposite, minimisation and excusal was identified as a significant predictor, whilst victim blaming was non-significant. Only one study did not find a significant relationship between non-consensual sharing of intimate images and IBSAMA, but their measure of IBSAMA was limited to subjective norms and attitudes (Walker et al., 2021). For more detail on the findings of these studies see Table C in the supplementary tables (linked in Appendix A).

Perceived IBSA Myth Acceptance. One study investigated IBSAMA further by exploring the impact of perceived myth acceptance of others on perpetration of IBSA (Maes et al., 2023). The findings, however, were mixed. Maes et al. (2023) found that perpetration correlated with *perceived responsibility-based victim blaming* (e.g. victims could avoid it) by peers. But only '*perceived responsibility-based victim blaming* by parents towards a *female* victim' correlated with perpetration and not '*perceived responsibility-based victim blaming* by parents towards a *male* victim'. There was no significant relationship between perpetration and *perceived characteristic-based victim blaming* (e.g. victims have a bad reputation) by both peers and parents.

Rape Myth Acceptance. Furthermore, one study explored the relationship between RMA and IBSA perpetration (Harper et al., 2023, Study 3). Corresponding with findings on

IBSAMA, it was found that RMA correlated with IBSA perpetration to a moderate degree. However, when entered into regression analysis (controlling for the dark tetrad, IBSAMA, political orientation, age, sex, education, and IBSAMA), RMA did not remain an independent significant predictor of perpetration.

Sexism. Two studies explored the relationship between sexism and IBSA perpetration (Pina et al., 2017, 2021). In earlier research, Pina et al. (2017) measured the relationship between revenge pornography proclivity and ambivalent sexism identifying a positive correlation between them. However, when entered into regression analyses, controlling for the dark tetrad, ambivalent sexism was not a significant independent predictor. Interestingly, in later research Pina et al. (2021) explored hostile and benevolent sexism separately using the subscales of the same scale but did not find any significant relationships between them and IBSA proclivity.

Just World Beliefs. Three studies included belief in a just world (BJW) as a potential predictor of IBSA behaviour (Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3). In their initial study, Fido et al. (2022; Study 1), BJW correlated with proclivity to share deepfakes, but not deepfake creation proclivity. However, in their subsequent study, BJW was not a significant predictor of deepfake IBSA perpetration (Fido et al., 2022, Study 2). The remaining study found a positive correlation between BJW and IBSA perpetration proclivity (via revenge pornography), but it was not an independent significant predictor when entered into regression analyses (Harper et al., 2023, Study 3).

Political Beliefs. Only one study explored the relationship between IBSA perpetration proclivity and political beliefs, with interesting mixed findings (Harper et al., 2023, Study 3). It was found that having a more liberal (or left-wing) political orientation predicted non-consensual sharing proclivity. However, the correlation between proclivity and political beliefs was non-significant.

Perceptions of Police. Said and McNealey (2023) measured the relationship between non-consensual sharing of intimate images and perceived police ability generally as well as perceived police ability to deal with IBSA. Neither of which were significant independent predictors of perpetration in logistic regression analyses.

Entitlement. One study explored the relationship sexual entitlement and aggrieved entitlement had with non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery (Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Aggrieved entitlement refers to the tendency for individuals to feel humiliated or angry when they are denied what they perceive they deserve as their 'birth right'. On the other hand, sexual entitlement can lead individuals to believe they are deserving of sexual favours regardless of the needs of their partner. Both sexual entitlement and aggrieved entitlement yielded positive correlations with perpetration, but neither were a significant independent predictor in the regression model.

Unconditional Respect for Persons. The concept of unconditional respect for persons identifies that all individuals deserve respect, and that it can neither be earned nor rebuked (Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021). This was explored in one study which found that it negatively correlated with IBSA perpetration (via non-consensual sharing) but only in the US sample and not the Australian sample (Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021). It was also non-significant in the regression model.

Behavioural Predictors of IBSA Perpetration or Proclivity to Perpetrate

Sexting Behaviour. Fourteen studies explored sexting behaviour in relation to IBSA perpetration or proclivity (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Califano et al., 2022; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Dodaj et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2023; Jonsson et al., 2014; Maes et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023). Sending sexts was the most commonly measured behaviour and was frequently found to significantly predict IBSA perpetration (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020;

Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Hu et al., 2023; Jonsson et al., 2014; Maes et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022), particularly among male participants (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Jonsson et al., 2014). Several studies also identified that receiving or requesting sexts were positively associated with perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Clancy, Howard et al., 2021), although these variables did not always remain significant in multivariate models. Using a composite measure of sexual self-image behaviours, Powell et al. (2019, 2022) identified that those that had engaged in sexual self-image behaviours had between 118% and 210% greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA. Some studies also explored more nuanced behaviours, such as posting one's own sexts online (Califano et al., 2022), which was positively correlated with IBSA perpetration even when sending sexts privately was not. While the overall trend supports sexting behaviour as a predictor of IBSA, a few studies noted that these behaviours did not always emerge as independent predictors when controlling for other psychological or attitudinal variables (Clancy et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023). This could suggest that sexting may be part of a broader constellation of risk behaviours rather than a standalone causal factor. For more detail on the key findings from each of the studies see Table D in the supplementary tables linked in Appendix A.

IBSA Victimisation. Eleven studies explored the victim-perpetrator dyad in IBSA (Branch et al., 2017; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2021, 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2021). Ten of the studies identified a significant positive relationship between victimisation and perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2021). For example, Powell et al. (2019, 2022) found that victimisation in each specific form of IBSA predicted perpetration of IBSA, with victims being between 63% and 367%

more likely to engage in IBSA perpetration. Similarly, Karasavva & Forth (2022) reported that individuals with no history of victimisation were 65% less likely to perpetrate IBSA via sharing. Clancy et al. (2020, 2023) also demonstrated that victimisation significantly predicted perpetration, particularly in the context of sext dissemination. On the other hand, one study presented a negative relationship between victimisation and perpetration (Branch et al., 2017). Nonetheless, the overall pattern across the literature supports the existence of a victim–perpetrator overlap with victims being between 58% and 532% more likely to have also perpetrated IBSA. Prior victimisation may contribute to normalisation or desensitisation of such behaviours, or reflect complex dynamics of retaliation, peer influence, or internalised cognitive distortions (Henry & Beard., 2024; Powell et al., 2022; Sparks et al., 2023).

Vicarious IBSA Experiences. Seven studies explored how vicarious IBSA experiences related to IBSA perpetration (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Maas et al., 2021; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). Vicarious IBSA experiences are experiences of a third party receiving or viewing private images of others without their consent. In all the studies that measured vicarious IBSA experience, it was significantly positively related to IBSA perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate. In six of these studies, receipt of disseminated sexual images was a significant independent predictor of IBSA perpetration or proclivity (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Maas et al., 2021; Schokkenbroek et al., 2023; Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). For example, Clancy et al. (2019) found that individuals who have received sexts that were not originally intended for them to see were twice as likely to also disseminate sexts. Furthermore, Schokkenbroek et al. (2023) found that receiving disseminated images explained an additional 23.6% of variance in their model, substantially predicting IBSA perpetration. The final study explored ‘slutpage visitation’, which is the active viewing of non-consensually shared intimate images online

and identified that this positively correlated with IBSA perpetration in both men and women (Maas et al., 2021).

Sexual Behaviour. Four studies explored the relationship between sexual activity and IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Klein & Cooper, 2019). Being sexually active or frequency of having sex were significantly and positively related to IBSA in all four studies. In one of the studies, being sexually active increased the likelihood of IBSA perpetration via sext dissemination by almost three times (Clancy et al., 2019). Two of the studies also identified age of becoming sexually active as predictive of IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020). More specifically they identified that perpetration was significantly associated with becoming sexually active at a younger age. For example, in Clancy et al. (2019) the mean age of becoming sexually active for perpetrators was 15.9 years old, whilst it was 16.7 years old for non-perpetrators.

Clancy, Howard, et al. (2021) additionally explored the relationship IBSA perpetration had with risky sexual behaviours, for example having had unprotected sex, having had sex whilst intoxicated and having ever had a sexually transmitted infection. Whilst they did not find risky sexual behaviours to significantly correlate with IBSA perpetration, it was a unique significant positive predictor of perpetration in the model. Similarly, Klein and Cooper (2019) explored number of sex partners as a predictor of perpetration but did not find it to be a significant independent predictor.

Masturbation. Only one study explored masturbation as a predictor of IBSA perpetration, but they did not find it to be a significant predictor (Klein & Cooper, 2019).

Pornography Use. Four studies explored pornography use as a potential predictor of IBSA perpetration (Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maas et al., 2021; Maes et al., 2023). Three studies found that frequency of pornography use was significantly related to non-consensual sharing of intimate images (Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Maas et

al., 2021; Maes et al., 2023). Interestingly, two studies found perpetration to positively correlate with frequency of pornography use (Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Maas et al., 2021) whilst the other found it to negatively correlate (Maes et al., 2023). More unusually, although perpetration negatively related to pornography use in Maes et al. (2023), willingness to perpetrate was positively related to pornography use. Of additional note, the significant relationship between pornography use and perpetration was identified in both genders (Maas et al., 2021). The remaining study did not find pornography use to significantly predict IBSA (Klein & Cooper, 2019).

Sexual Aggression. A single study explored the relationship IBSA proclivity has with other technology facilitated sexual violence behaviours, namely sexual aggression, cyberstalking and sexual assault (Zhong et al., 2020). IBSA proclivity significantly positively correlated with the likelihood to perpetrate all three to a moderate degree.

Engagement with Police. One study measured whether having ever been stopped (but not arrested) by police was related to IBSA perpetration (Said & McNealey, 2023). They found that having been stopped by the police before significantly predicted perpetration with those individuals being 71% more likely to have perpetrated IBSA.

Intoxication: Drinking Behaviour and Drug Use. Intoxication behaviour was measured in three studies (Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maas et al., 2021; Sparks et al., 2023). All three studies explored alcohol use as a predictor of IBSA perpetration whilst Sparks et al. (2023) additionally explored drug use. One of the studies did not find frequency of drinking alcohol to relate to IBSA perpetration (Klein & Cooper, 2019). The remaining two studies did find that alcohol use was significantly greater in perpetrators (Maas et al., 2021; Sparks et al., 2023). This relationship was represented in both genders and significantly predicted the frequency of non-consensual sharing of intimate images (Maas et al., 2021). Sparks et al. (2023), as the only study to explore drug use, identified that drug use was significantly

greater in victim-perpetrators compared to the non-perpetrator-non-victim and victims-only groups.

College Society Participation: Sports and Greek Life. One study captured aspects unique to college life (Maas et al., 2021). Greek life, referring to membership in college sororities and fraternities, predicted frequency of IBSA perpetration for both men and women. In their overall model Greek life independently predicted perpetration. However, this was moderated by gender. Men in a fraternity non-consensually posted nude images/videos without consent significantly more frequently (M = 1.93, SD = 0.31) than their non-fraternity counterparts (M = 0.88, SD = 0.06) and more frequently than women in a sorority (M = 0.76, SD = 0.08) or not in a sorority (M = 0.58, SD = 0.07).

Participation in a college sports team only correlated with perpetration in men and was not significant in the overall model. However, there was an interaction with gender; men who played a team sport non-consensually posted nude images online significantly more frequently (M = 1.75, SD = 0.29) than men who did not play a team sport (M = 1.34, SD = 0.23), women who played a team sport (M = 0.14, SD = 0.05), and women who did not play a team sport (M = 1.12, SD = 0.09). The findings of this study highlight the impact of toxic masculinity that is commonplace in male college societies.

Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimisation. A single study explored both cyberbullying perpetration and victimisation in relation to IBSA perpetration (Hu et al., 2023). Cyberbullying perpetration correlated positively with sext dissemination, which is perhaps to be expected as they are both forms of technology-facilitated violence. On the other hand, there was no significant relationship between cyberbullying victimisation and IBSA perpetration.

Internet/Technology Use. Engaging in technology was explored in four studies but all investigating a different aspect (Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maes et al., 2023; Sirianni &

Vishwanath, 2016; Zhong et al., 2020). Firstly, perhaps surprisingly, duration of time spent online has been shown to significantly decrease likelihood of having perpetrated IBSA (Klein & Cooper, 2019). This remained significant when sexual activity and relationship measures were added to the model but not when social learning theory measures were added. Social media use has also been demonstrated as a correlate of IBSA perpetration (Maas et al., 2021). Frequency of non-consensually sharing private sexual images was positively related to weekly social media use in both men and women. It was not a significant predictor in the regression model though. Toxic disinhibition, the tendency to behave more negatively online than in real life, was explored in one study (Zhong et al., 2020). They reported a significant positive correlation between toxic disinhibition and IBSA proclivity of a moderate size. Finally, technology self-efficacy, believing oneself to be technologically capable was explored as an indirect predictor in one study (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). However, none of the hypothesised relationships were significant in this study.

Online Dating Behaviour. Engaging in online dating behaviour was identified as a predictor of IBSA perpetration in two studies (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Powell et al. (2019) identified that individuals that have partaken in online dating behaviour were significantly more likely to perpetrate IBSA than those that have not engaged in online dating behaviour, with 13.1% of 'online daters' perpetrating IBSA compared to only 2% of non-daters. Powell et al. (2022) reported that respondents who had engaged in online dating behaviours were 97% more likely to report IBSA perpetration.

Romantic Relationships. Four studies explored how currently being in a relationship impacted perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate (Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Klein & Cooper, 2019; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sesar et al., 2021). However, all reported non-significant findings.

Other Psychological Predictors of IBSA Perpetration or Proclivity to Perpetrate

Dark Personality. Thirteen studies explored dark personality traits in relation to IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Dodaj et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2022; Harper et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Scholz et al., 2023; Sparks et al., 2023). Most of which explored either the dark triad (psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism) or the Dark Tetrad (which additionally includes sadism). All studies found some degree of relationship between dark personality and IBSA perpetration (or proclivity) but there was variation between specific traits.

For example, Clancy et al. (2019, 2020) found that individuals who had disseminated sexts scored significantly higher on all three Dark Triad traits, with narcissism emerging as a particularly strong predictor. Pina et al. (2017) identified psychopathy as the only significant independent predictor of revenge pornography proclivity, while later research by Pina et al. (2021) found sadism to be the strongest predictor. Fido et al. (2022) further supported the role of psychopathy, showing that interpersonal and antisocial components predicted proclivity to create and share deepfake pornography. However, other studies presented more mixed findings in predictive models (Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Clancy et al., 2020; Scholz et al., 2023). These findings collectively indicate that dark personality traits contribute meaningfully to IBSA proclivity and perpetration, though their predictive power may be moderated by other dispositional and attitudinal factors.

An interesting finding highlighted that any combination of at least two dark personality variables was predictive of the same amount of variance in proclivity to perpetrate IBSA (Scholz et al., 2023). They inferred that what is shared between dark personality traits, such as callousness or manipulativeness, is predictive of IBSA perpetration rather than any particular set of dark traits. This may explain the mixed findings of predictive value of individual traits across studies whilst all dark personality traits are consistently

correlated with IBSA perpetration. See Table E in the supplementary tables (Appendix A) for a summary of the findings related to dark personality in each of the studies.

Impulsivity. One study explored impulsivity as a predictor of IBSA behaviour (Sparks et al., 2023). They compared groups of victim-perpetrators, victim-only, perpetrator-only, and 'neither', but the analysis of variance was non-significant. However, post-hoc analyses presented a significant difference identifying that victim-perpetrators have higher impulsivity scores than non-victim/non-perpetrators (but do not differ to victim only or perpetrator only). This study was focused on highlighting perpetration-victim overlap hence why the comparisons are not simply perpetrators and non-perpetrators.

Psychosexual Variables. Three studies explored different psychosexual variables including sexual esteem, sexual satisfaction, sexual preoccupation, sexual compulsivity and paraphilia (Califano et al., 2022; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021; Sparks et al., 2023). Two studies identified a positive relationship between sexual preoccupation, the tendency to be obsessed with sex, and IBSA via sharing (Califano et al., 2022; Clancy, Howard, et al., 2021). Whilst positively correlated, Clancy, Howard, et al. (2021) found that inclusion of sexual preoccupation in their logistic regression model (alongside demographics, pornography use and risky sexual behaviours) did not significantly improve it. In addition to sexual preoccupation, Califano et al. (2022) explored sexual esteem and sexual satisfaction but found no significant relationship between these and IBSA perpetration.

Sparks et al. (2023) explored more clinical psychosexual variables: sexual compulsivity and paraphilia. They identified no significant differences between perpetrators, victims and those with no prior IBSA experience in paraphilic measures (sadism and exhibitionism). They did however report that victim-perpetrators have significantly greater sexual compulsivity than non-victim-non-perpetrators but do not differ to victim only or perpetrator only groups.

Body Esteem. Two studies explored body esteem as predictive of IBSA perpetration (Califano et al., 2022; Sesar et al., 2021). Sesar et al. (2021) explored three facets of body esteem: appearance esteem, weight esteem and attributions to others about one's body and appearance (e.g. "people my age like my looks"). Whilst they found that appearance and weight esteem did not significantly differ between forwarders and non-forwarders of either photographs or video recordings, attribution body esteem significantly differed between forwarders and non-forwarders of photographs but not video recordings. Forwarders of photographs had higher attribution to one's body and appearance than those who had not forwarded a photograph. Attribution also significantly predicted forwarding of photos and of videos in their model. On the other hand, Califano et al. (2022) did not find a significant relationship between body esteem and forwarding of sexts.

Self-Esteem. Self-esteem was explored in two studies. Both of which identified the significance of self-esteem in predicting IBSA perpetration (Klein & Cooper, 2019; Sesar et al., 2021). More specifically, it was identified that non-perpetrators have higher self-esteem than those who have forwarded private images (Sesar et al., 2021). However, this finding did not extend to sharing of video recordings, only images. Although Sesar et al. (2021) did not identify self-esteem as a significant predictor in their logistic regression model, Klein and Cooper (2019) did. They identified that every one-unit increase in self-esteem and online duration predicted a 9% decreased likelihood of non-consensual intimate image sharing.

Expected Outcomes. Expected outcomes, described as behavioural incentives that serve to motivate and guide behaviour were explored in one study (Sirianni & Vishwanath, 2016). They hypothesised that expected outcomes for both self and partner were predictive of the likelihood to share revenge pornography. This relationship was significant for expected partner-outcomes, and this was not mediated by the level of provocation from the victim. On the other hand, the relationship between expected self-outcomes and likelihood to share

revenge pornography was not significant; however, this was moderated by provocation, as a significant effect was found between expected self-outcomes and the likelihood to share revenge pornography for those individuals in the low provocation group.

Social Learning Processes. One study explored processes of social learning as predictors of IBSA (Klein & Cooper, 2019). More specifically, they measured differential association, differential reinforcement, definitions favourable and imitation/modelling. All but imitation/modelling were significant predictors in the model. For every unit increase in each of the social learning variables, participants had a 211% increased likelihood (differential association), 137% increased likelihood (differential reinforcement), and a 71% increased likelihood (definitions favourable) of sending a suggestive or nude photograph of another.

Moral Disengagement. Moral disengagement refers to the process of muting moral standards when conducting immoral behaviour to reduce cognitive dissonance (Bandura, 1990). Califano et al. (2022) explored the relationship between perpetration and online moral disengagement and identified a positive correlation. Furthermore, Pina et al. (2021) explored moral disengagement specifically in the context of IBSA. It both positively correlated with proclivity and was a significant positive predictor of IBSA proclivity in the model.

Mental Health. Only one study investigated mental health as a predictor of IBSA perpetration; exploring anxiety, stress and depression separately (Clancy et al., 2023). They found that those who had disseminated private sexual images reported significantly higher levels of anxiety and stress, although did not differ in levels of depression symptomatology. However, none of the mental health variables were significant in regression.

Emotional Empathy. Two studies explored empathy as a predictor of IBSA perpetration proclivity (Harper et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023). Both identified a significant correlation between perpetration proclivity and lower levels of empathy. Additionally, Maes

et al. (2023) presented that this same relationship was true of existing perpetration too. Despite there being a moderate relationship, Harper et al. (2023) did not find empathy to be a significant independent predictor in their regression model.

IBSA Myth Acceptance Findings

Prevalence of IBSA Myth Acceptance

There were 49 studies included in this review that reported the prevalence of IBSAMA (Attrill-Smith et al., 2021; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Branch et al., 2017; Call, 2021; Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke et al., 2021; Dekker et al., 2019; Fido et al., 2021, 2022; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Lageson et al., 2019; Maes et al., 2023; Mandau, 2020; McMahon, 2020; Mussap et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022; Rollero et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Salter, 2016; Scott & Gavin, 2018; Serpe & Brown, 2022; Sparks et al., 2023; Stal, 2022; Starr & Lavis, 2018; Walker et al., 2021; Wang & Kim, 2022; Zvi, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021; Zvi & Shechory-Bitton, 2020). This primarily involved facets measuring victim blaming, excusal of the perpetrator, minimisation of harm caused and not viewing IBSA behaviour as a real crime. Due to the non-standardisation of measures for IBSAMA, there is not yet a clear identification of how to quantify the prevalence. The studies identified by this review, that present some measure(s) representative of IBSAMA, frequently report that overall levels of target measures (be that victim blame or minimisation of harm etc.) are at the mid-lower end of scales but are still present to some degree (e.g. Flynn et al., 2023; Harper et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019).

There are two measures that have been created to specifically measure IBSAMA: the Sexual Image-based Abuse Myth Acceptance Scale (SIAMA; Powell et al., 2019) and the Beliefs About Revenge Pornography Questionnaire (BRPQ; Harper et al., 2023). The SIAMA

is an 18-item scale comprised of a 12-item minimise/excuse subscale and a 6-item victim blame subscale. Scores are presented on a 7-point scale of agreement from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly Agree*) and average scores generally range between disagreement and neutral (Powell et al., 2019). For instance, Powell et al. (2019) reported average scores of 2.30 on *harm minimisation and excusal* and average scores of 3.70 on *victim blame*.

The BRPQ is a 45-item scale measuring 4 factors: victims as promiscuous, victim harm, avoiding vulnerable behaviour, and offence minimisation (Harper et al., 2023). Each factor is measured using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly Disagree*) to 6 (*Strongly Agree*). It has not yet been used in additional research but was extensively validated in this initial study. The scores present varying degrees of prevalence for the different facets, for example victim harm (which is negatively coded) presents a mean score of 4.97 whilst offence minimisation presents a mean score of 3.43 (Harper et al., 2023).

See Table F in the supplementary tables linked in Appendix A for a summary of the related findings of each study that measures prevalence of IBSAMA or some aspect(s) of. Whilst prevalence varies across studies, measures, and participant groups, it can be deduced that there is a presence of victim blaming, negative attitudes towards victims, offence minimisation, excusal of perpetrators and minimisation of victim harm.

Demographic Predictors of IBSA Myth Acceptance

Gender. The relationship between gender and IBSAMA was the most prevalent in the literature featuring in 38 studies (Attrill-Smith et al., 2021; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Call, 2021; Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Dekker et al., 2019; Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 & 2; Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva et al., 2023; Kugler & Pace, 2021, Study 1; Lageson et al., 2019; Mandau, 2020; Maes et al., 2023; McMahon, 2020; Mussap et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Rollero et al., 2023; Rollero &

Pagliaro, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018; Serpe & Brown, 2022; Stal, 2022; Walker et al., 2021; Wang & Kim, 2022; Zhong et al., 2020; Zvi, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021; Zvi & Shechory-Bitton, 2020). Only three of these did not identify any significant relationships between IBSAMA and gender (Dekker et al., 2019; Pina et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2021).

One study was qualitative and provided nuance regarding the gendered nature of IBSAMA (Mandau, 2020). Mandau (2020) did not identify that IBSAMA was more greatly endorsed by a specific gender but rather presented that viewing shared sexting pictures was characterised by different male and female homosocial positionings. For men, the responses reflected status-enhancing and homosocial bonding, whilst for women, it was a form of gossiping.

None of the studies identified that IBSAMA was more prevalent in women, instead all 34 remaining studies identified that IBSAMA (or some facet of) was significantly more prevalent in male participants (Attrill-Smith et al., 2021; Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Call, 2021; Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 & 2; Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva et al., 2023; Kugler & Pace, 2021, Study 1; Lageson et al., 2019; Maes et al., 2023; McMahon, 2020; Mussap et al., 2023; Rollero et al., 2023; Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018; Serpe & Brown, 2022; Stal, 2022; Wang & Kim, 2022; Zhong et al., 2020; Zvi, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021; Zvi & Shechory-Bitton, 2020). For example, Henry et al. (2019a) presented that men (49%) were significantly more likely than women (32%) to hold IBSAMA attitudes. Furthermore, the odds that a woman supports criminalisation of IBSA are more than 3 times that of men (Lageson et al., 2019). That said, 13 of those studies were exploring multiple measures of IBSAMA so did present non-significant findings also

(Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Call, 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Rollero et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018; Stal, 2022; Zhong et al., 2020; Zvi, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021; Zvi & Shechory-Bitton, 2020).

One study explored gender beyond a male-female binary, including transgender participants (Mussap et al., 2023). They identified that cismen (M = 2.15, SD= 0.80) held significantly more positive views of sext dissemination (greater IBSAMA) than ciswomen (M = 1.76, SD = 0.74) or transgender adults (M = 1.60, SD = 0.49).

Age. Eighteen studies explored age as a predictor of IBSAMA (Call, 2021; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 1–4; Hasinoff & Shepherd, 2014; Lageson et al., 2019; Maes et al., 2023; McMahon, 2020; Mussap et al., 2023; Rollero et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Stal, 2022; Wang & Kim, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021). Nine studies presented that endorsement of IBSAMA significantly increased with age (Call, 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 1–4; Lageson et al., 2019; Mussap et al., 2023; Rollero et al., 2023). For example, Call (2021) found that older respondents were more likely to agree that victims were partially responsible and less likely to support criminalisation of IBSA. Similarly, Harper et al. (2023) identified that age positively predicted beliefs that victimisation is avoidable and negatively predicted perceptions of victim harm.

Conversely, three studies presented findings that IBSAMA decreased with age, particularly among younger cohorts (Maes et al., 2023; McMahon, 2020; Rollero et al., 2023). Maes et al. (2023), for instance, found that younger participants (16–18) endorsed more victim blaming attitudes than older participants (19–30), although both groups fall within the broader category of young adults, which may explain this divergent finding. One study presented a curvilinear pattern with the youngest (18) and oldest participants (24) being

more accepting of privacy violations than the central age of 21 (Hasinoff & Shephard, 2014). The remaining five studies did not find any significant relationships between age and IBSAMA (Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Said & McNealey, 2023; Stal, 2022; Wang & Kim, 2022; Zvi & Bitton, 2021).

Overall, while the relationship between age and IBSAMA is not uniform, the majority of studies suggest that age is a meaningful demographic factor. The distinctions in relationships are likely a result of variation in participant age ranges as IBSAMA was consistently found to be lower in young adult samples. This may suggest generational shifts in attitudes. Younger cohorts have grown up in a digital environment where conversations around consent, sexual autonomy, and online safety are more prevalent, which may foster more informed attitudes and normalisation of digital intimacy (Scott & Gavin 2018; Rollero et al., 2023). See Table G in the supplementary tables (Appendix A) for a summary of the key findings of each study that explores the relationship between age and IBSAMA.

Sexual Orientation. Five studies explored the relationship between sexual orientation and IBSAMA and all reported a significant relationship (Fido et al., 2022, Study 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2016; Karasavva et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023). Two studies explored sexual orientation with the SIAMA scale and identified that heterosexual respondents were more likely to blame IBSA victims and minimise harm compared to LGB+ respondents (Flynn et al., 2023; Karasaava et al., 2023). Although Karasaava et al. (2023) did find sexuality significantly predicted the total SIAMA scale and the victim blame subscale, it did not significantly predict the minimise/excuse subscale. Breaking victim blaming down into responsibility-based victim blaming and characteristic-based victim blaming in Maes et al. (2023) yielded opposite findings in relation to sexual orientation. The Kinsey scale (ranging from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual) positively related to

characteristic-based victim blaming but negatively related to responsibility-based victim blaming.

Fido et al. (2022, Study 2) explored sexual orientation from the gynephilic versus androphilic perspective, identifying that gynephilic individuals (heterosexual men and homosexual women) were more likely to see deepfake pornography production as a criminal offence than were androphilic individuals (heterosexual women and homosexual men). But sexuality measured in this way did not predict victim blame or victim harm perceptions.

The remaining study explored IBSAMA in the context of harm caused to victims in four distinct categories: reputation, career, self-esteem and relationships (Garcia et al., 2016). It was identified that heterosexual participants were nearly 1.5 times more likely than bisexual, gay, or lesbian participants to feel reputation could be harmed. Gay and lesbian participants were 1.5 times as likely to think sexting could hurt their career than were heterosexual or bisexual participants. However, sexuality did not predict perceptions of harm to self-esteem or relationships.

Education. Seven studies explored education as a predictor of IBSAMA, but findings were largely non-significant (Call, 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Kugler & Pace, 2021, Study 1; Maes et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023). Three of the studies found no significant results in relation to education (Call, 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Study 3; Kugler & Pace, 2021) and the remaining studies presented mixed findings. For example, one study found that education only weakly negatively related to the BRPQ offence minimisation factor but no other facets of the BRPQ and it was not a significant independent predictor of any BRPQ factors in regression models (Harper et al., 2023, Study 2). A further study found that education only significantly (negatively) predicted attributions of victim harm under the condition that the victim is conservatively dressed (opposed to provocatively dressed or unspecified) (Harper et al., 2023, Study 4). Said and McNealy (2023) found that being an

upperclassman decreases the perceived likelihood of a perpetrator being caught by 6% compared to being a freshman but does not predict attributed legal or school consequences or if the victim should file a police report. Finally, Maes et al. (2023) found that education related to characteristic-based victim blaming and responsibility-based victim blaming inversely. Responsibility-based victim blaming significantly negatively correlated with education level, whilst characteristic-based victim blaming significantly positively correlated with education level. Except for characteristic-based victim blaming, the studies that present significant findings demonstrate negative relationships between education level and measures of IBSAMA (Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 & 4; Maes et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023).

Ethnicity. Ethnicity or race was explored as a predictor of IBSAMA in only four studies (Call, 2021; Lageson et al., 2019; Said & McNealey, 2023; Stal, 2022). One of the studies, that measured support for criminalisation of revenge pornography, did not find race to be a significant predictor (Lageson et al. 2019). Furthermore, Call (2021) did not find race to predict support for criminalisation of IBSA via sharing. However, they did find that non-white participants were significantly more likely to support that sharing sexually explicit photos or videos of someone without their permission should be illegal only if the victim did not intend to share the photos or videos with anyone. Non-White participants were also significantly more likely to agree that if an individual receives sexually explicit photos or videos from someone and shares the content without permission, the victim is at least partially responsible. Similarly, Black participants were less likely to agree that perpetrators would face school consequences compared to White participants in Said and McNealey (2023). But on the other hand, compared to being White, being Asian or Hispanic increased perceived likelihood that a perpetrator would be caught by about 8%, and being in the "other"/Mixed Race category increased perceived likelihood of being caught by 12%. However, the measures perhaps more central to IBSAMA, odds of facing legal consequences

and whether a victim should report the behaviour, were not significantly predicted by ethnicity (Said & McNealey, 2023).

A final study found that ethnicity was a significant covariate to 'willingness to hire victims' measures (Stal, 2022). Caucasian participants compared to African American participants were more likely to hire individuals based on qualifications alone (not negatively biasing based on victimisation status) for teaching, cashier and legal roles. There were no significant differences between Hispanic participants and other ethnic groups or willingness to hire for a call-centre role. Overall, the limited research so far infers that endorsement of victim-based myths may be more strongly endorsed by BAME groups.

Culture/Country. A single study compared IBSAMA across countries but did not find significant differences. Clancy, Klettke, et al. (2021) did not find that subjective norms and attitudes surrounding sext dissemination differed between Australian participants and participants from the US. However, culturally these countries are both westernised, so it is possible that endorsement of IBSAMA may not vary between countries with more differentiation in culture.

Parental Status. Parental status was also only explored in a single study (Call, 2021). Parents (compared to individuals without children) were less likely to agree that *an individual receiving sexually explicit photos or videos should not share that material without permission* and more likely to agree that a victim is *at least partially responsibly if they shared the sexually explicit content originally*. Parental status did not significantly predict perceptions of the legality of sharing though.

Attitudinal and Belief Predictors of IBSAMA

Perceived IBSA Myth Acceptance. One study explored how the perceived IBSAMA endorsement of parents and peers related to own IBSAMA endorsement (Maes et al., 2023). It was identified that victim blaming is significantly positively predicted by perceived victim

blaming by peers and parents specific to the victim gender. Despite the positive prediction in the structural equation model, correlations demonstrated that characteristic-based victim blaming was negatively related to perceived characteristic-based victim blaming of peers and parents. The expected positive relationships were found for responsibility-based victim blaming.

Perceived IBSA Prevalence. An additional perception measure identified in one study is perceived prevalence of IBSA (Said & McNealey, 2023). Said and McNealey (2023) identified that perceptions of victimisation prevalence did not relate to any measures whilst perception of perpetration prevalence only negatively predicted '*odds a perpetrator would face legal consequences*.'

Rape Myth Acceptance. Four studies investigated the relationship between IBSAMA and the offline adjacent: RMA (Dekker et al., 2019; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2-4). As would be expected, based on both reflecting attitudes towards sexual abuse, all four studies presented significant relationships between RMA measures and IBSAMA measures. For example, endorsement of modern myths about sexual aggression negatively predicted perceived unpleasantness of IBSA victimisation (Dekker et al., 2019). The series of studies from Harper et al. (2023) all identified the significant relationship between RMA and the seeing victimisation as avoidable, victim harm and viewing victims as promiscuous factors of the BRPQ, however, offence minimisation was not consistently found to significantly relate to RMA. Furthermore, additional measures of *greater anticipated victim harm*, *perceptions of the criminal nature*, *victim blaming*, and *disapproval* were found to relate to RMA (Harper et al., 2023, Studies 3 & 4). Across these studies RMA is highlighted to negatively predict perceived unpleasantness of IBSA, victim harm, disapproval and perceived criminal nature of IBSA behaviour, whilst positively predicting, victim blame, seeing victimisation as avoidable, viewing victims as promiscuous, and (inconsistently) offence minimisation.

Synthesising these findings, there is a clear positive relationship between RMA and IBSAMA.

Attitudes Towards Sexual Behaviour. One study explored attitudes towards sex as a predictor of IBSAMA (Stal. 2022). Additionally, another study explored attitudes towards sexting behaviour (Rollero et al., 2023). Stal (2022) identified that sexual permissiveness (openness towards sex) was negatively related with all four employability variables; participants who were less sexually permissive (i.e. more sexually conservative) were more likely to give harsh sanctions to victims and not consider them for employment. This remained significant after controlling for gender. However, sexual permissiveness was not correlated with legal repercussions variables or the perceived emotional consequence for victims.

Rollero et al. (2023) explored the relationship between positive sexting attitudes and IBSAMA. They found that positive attitudes towards sexting increased empathy toward the victim, and decreased victim blaming and negative affective reactions towards the victim. This indicates that positive attitudes towards sexting behaviour can decrease IBSAMA. Nevertheless, sexting attitudes did not significantly predict severity perceptions.

Sexism. Two studies explored the relationship between sexism and IBSAMA (Pina et al. 2017; 2021). In an earlier study, Pina et al. (2017) identified that ambivalent sexism yielded a positive correlation with revenge pornography approval, but this did not remain an independent predictor when entered into a regression model with Machiavellianism. In a later study, Pina et al. (2021) explored hostile and benevolent sexism separately. Whilst benevolent sexism significantly correlated with victim blaming, there was no significant relationship between hostile sexism and victim blaming.

Sexual Double Standards. Further to sexism, four studies discussed sexual double standards in relation to IBSAMA (Dodaj et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2023; Mckinlay & Lavis,

2020; Salter, 2016). Sexual double standards refer to socially constructed norms that judge individuals differently, based on gender, in relation to sexual behaviour.

One study measured the relationship between sexual double standards and victim blame (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020). Mckinlay and Lavis (2020) found that scores on the sexual double standards scale (SDSS; Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 1998) positively correlated with blame attributions towards the victim. This indicated that those with a high endorsement of the sexual double standard (reflecting more traditional gender roles) placed more blame onto victims than those with a lower endorsement of the sexual double standard.

Three studies were qualitative discussing themes of sexual double standards (Dodaj et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2023; Salter, 2016). These highlighted that sexual double standards inform IBSA myths (Dodaj et al., 2022; Flynn et al., 2023; Salter, 2016). For example, a quote from a participant in Dodaj et al., (2022) highlights that "women are usually ‘show dolls’ … and the ‘shame’ is bigger if someone sees a naked woman than seeing a man.” Furthermore, Salter (2016) noted the different moral position assigned of men versus women regarding nude images, which are more likely to be seen as a breach of appropriate feminine but not masculine sexuality.

Objectification. Objectification was investigated in one study (Serpe, 2020; Serpe & Brown, 2022). The four indicators of objectification that they measured: competence, morality, humanity, and warmth, were all inversely correlated to victim blame. Specifically, the less competent, moral, and warm the victim was perceived to be and the less humanity they were perceived to possess, the more blame was assigned to them.

Just World Beliefs. BJW is a common theory of victim blaming, proposing that individuals believe that the world is just, and therefore, negative experiences are deserved (Lerner, 1980). BJW was explored in relation to IBSAMA in five studies (Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 & 2; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4). All five studies presented significant

relationships between BJW and the victim blame measures, as expected. For example, Fido et al. (2022, Studies 1& 2) identified that greater BJW predicted victim blaming in deepfake cases. Furthermore, Harper et al. (2023, Studies 2 - 4) identified BJW to positively correlate with victim blaming. The relationship between BJW and other facets of IBSAMA were less consistent. Whilst it negatively correlated with criminality judgments in Fido et al. (2022, Study 2) and Harper et al. (2023, Study 4), it did not significantly relate in Fido et al. (2022, Study 1). Moreover, BJW negatively predicted perceptions of victim harm in Harper et al. (2023, Studies 2 - 4), but it failed to reach significance in Fido et al., (2022, Studies 1and 2). The relationship between BJW and victim blaming is well supported in the literature, but the relationship with other facets of IBSAMA are less clear.

Political Beliefs. Seven studies explored the relationship between IBSAMA and political beliefs (Call, 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Kugler & Pace, 2021, Study 1; Lageson et al., 2019; Stal et al., 2022). Six studies presented that greater endorsement of IBSAMA was related to right-leaning political beliefs (or republican/conservative), whilst *support for criminalisation* and *perceptions of victim harm* were related to left-leaning political beliefs (or liberal/democrat; Call, 2021; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Lageson et al., 2019; Stal et al., 2022). Right-leaning political beliefs or affiliations predicted *victim blame*, *viewing victimisation as avoidable*, *viewing victims as promiscuous*, *minimisation of harm* and reduced *perpetrator sanctions*. Nonetheless, some measures did not present significant findings. For example, the *offence minimisation* factor of the BRPQ was only significantly related to political beliefs in Study 4 of Harper et al., (2023) but not the other studies. Furthermore, the belief that *IBSA should only be illegal if not shared by the victim in the first place* is not significantly predicted by political beliefs (Call, 2021).

It is interesting to note that in Stal et al., (2022), political beliefs no longer predicted IBSAMA when sexual modesty was controlled for. Moral beliefs about sexual behaviour,

particularly modesty, are reflected in conservative political ideology. It may be sexual modesty directly influencing judgments about victim culpability and perceived legitimacy of IBSA, thereby mediating or suppressing the influence of political identity.

The remaining study did not have significant findings but only pertained to deepfake scenarios (Kugler & Pace, 2021, Study 1). IBSAMA is less pervasive in relation to deepfake images than other forms of IBSA which may explain this discrepancy (Kugler & Pace, 2021). This suggests that deepfake-specific IBSA may evoke more universal condemnation, potentially reducing the influence of ideological biases that typically shape myth acceptance in other IBSA contexts.

Taken together, these findings suggest that while political ideology is a meaningful predictor of IBSAMA, its influence is not uniform across all myth dimensions or IBSA contexts. Moral beliefs, particularly those surrounding sexual modesty, may mediate or even override political identity in shaping attitudes toward victims and perpetrators.

Perceptions of Police. General abilities of the police, as well as perceptions of the ability of the police to deal with IBSA cases, was explored in relation to IBSAMA in one study (Said & McNealey, 2023). It was identified that the perceived likelihood a perpetrator would be caught, odds a perpetrator would face legal consequences, face school consequences and, whether victims should file a police report, were significantly positively predicted by perceived *police ability to deal with IBSA*. On the other hand, *general perceptions of police ability*, only predicted whether victims should file a police report and no other measures of IBSAMA. Contrastingly, perceptions of police ability in general negatively predicted whether a victim should file a police report.

Unconditional Respect for Persons. Clancy, Klettke, et al. (2021) explored unconditional respect for persons in relation to IBSAMA as well as IBSA perpetration. They

identified that subjective norms and attitudes towards sext dissemination negatively correlated with unconditional respect for persons.

Behavioural Predictors of IBSA Myth Acceptance

IBSA Perpetration. Fifteen studies explored IBSA perpetration in relation to IBSAMA (Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 1; Flynn et al., 2023; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Maes et al., 2023; Mussap et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sparks et al., 2023). Ten of these studies only explored correlations and have therefore been outlined already (see Table C in the supplementary tables linked in Appendix A). All presented positive relationships between IBSAMA and perpetration measures (Clancy et al., 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2022, Study 1; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2019; 2022; Sparks et al., 2023).

Mussap et al. (2023) explored gender differences and identified that IBSAMA attitudes correlated with non-consensual sexting perpetration (a composite measure that also includes pressured sexting, seeking IBSA imagery and cyberflashing) across cis-women, cis-men and transgender/gender diverse participants. Additionally, two studies presented significant findings, identifying that IBSA perpetration predicted IBSAMA (Clancy et al.,2019; Flynn et al., 2023). Clancy et al. (2019) also found an interaction effect with gender, demonstrating that men who have disseminated private sexual images agreed more strongly with subjective norms and attitudes about IBSA than women and participants who have not disseminated.

Furthermore, Henry et al. (2019a) presented that IBSA perpetrators (77%) were somewhat less likely to agree that IBSA should be a crime than non-perpetrators (81%), but the difference was not statistically significant. The remaining study did not find IBSA

perpetration to significantly predict any IBSAMA measures (*perpetrator likelihood of being caught, victims should file police report, perpetrator should face school consequences, perpetrator should face legal consequences*; Said & McNealey, 2023).

IBSA Victimisation. Ten studies explored IBSA victimisation as a predictor of IBSAMA (Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 and 2; Flynn et al., 2023; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Mussap et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Stal, 2022). However, one of these did not have a large enough sample of victims to be able to test the relationship (Stal, 2022). studies reported no significant findings (Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 and 2; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). One study demonstrated that victimisation was a significant predictor of IBSAMA with IBSA victims being more likely to victim blame and minimise harm (Flynn et al., 2023). A further two studies also found significant relationships between victimisation and attitudes, but these were specific to sub-populations of the sample based on country and gender (Clancy, Klettke et al., 2021; Mussap et al., 2023). Clancy, Klettke et al. (2021) found that dissemination victimisation was positively correlated with IBSA-supportive attitudes in the US sample, while Mussap et al. (2023) identified significant correlations for cisgender men and women but not for transgender or gender-diverse participants.

Two studies report inconsistent findings that mostly do not support a relationship between victimisation and IBSAMA (Sparks et al., 2023; Said & McNealy, 2023). Sparks et al. (2023) found that victim-perpetrators had significantly greater offence-supportive attitudes than the victim-only group and no experience group, but were not significantly different to perpetrators without victim experience. Said and McNealey (2023) found that victimisation predicted support for filing police reports but did not influence perceptions of perpetrator consequences. The final four studies reported no significant findings (Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 and 2; Henry et al., 2019a; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Overall, these findings

suggest that the impact of victimisation on myth endorsement is not uniform and may be shaped by gender, cultural context, and the specific myth dimensions being measured.

IBSA Awareness. One study explored how awareness of the existence of websites dedicated to IBSA via sharing predicted IBSAMA (Lageson et al., 2019). However, they did not find that awareness of revenge pornography sites was related to support for criminalisation of revenge pornography.

Sexting Behaviour. The relationship between IBSAMA and sexting behaviours was explored in seven studies (Call, 2021; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Flynn et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023; Rollero et al., 2023; Said & McNealey, 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018). All studies presented significant relationships between various sexting experiences and IBSAMA, but there were some inconsistencies. For example, one study found that sexting behaviours positively related to *minimisation of harm* but negatively related to *victim blame* (Flynn et al., 2023).

The finding that 'sexters' are less likely to endorse victim blaming was consistent across four of the studies (Call, 2021; Flynn et al., 2023; Rollero et al., 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018). Maes et al. (2023) nuanced this further by showing that responsibility-based victim blaming negatively correlated with sexting, while characteristic-based victim blaming positively correlated. This suggests that while sexters may reject the idea that victims are responsible for their abuse, they may still hold stereotypes about victims' reputations or sexual behaviour, potentially as a self-protection mechanism to distance themselves from the potential of victimisation (Shaver, 1970).

Having received unsolicited sexual images is shown to have similar relationships with IBSAMA as active engagement in sexting (Clancy, Klettke et al., 2021; Said & McNealey., 2023). Clancy, Klettke et al. (2021) found that receiving unsolicited sexts was negatively associated with offence-supportive attitudes in their Australian sample. Furthermore, Said and

McNealey (2023) reported that receiving unsolicited sexual images predicted greater support for victims filing police reports, though other sexting behaviours did not significantly predict IBSAMA-related measures.

Synthesis of these findings suggest that personal involvement in sexting may foster greater understanding of digital intimacy and reduce endorsement of harmful myths. A summary of individual study findings regarding sexting behaviour can be found in Table H of the supplementary tables (Appendix A).

Pornography Use. Use of pornography is frequently researched in relation to attitudes towards sexual behaviour, and two studies explored its relationship with IBSAMA (Maes et al., 2023; Wang & Kim, 2022). The first study found that anger towards deepfakes (an inverse measure of IBSAMA) was negatively predicted by pornography watching (Wang & Kim, 2022). Maes et al. (2023), on the other hand, did not find that pornography use significantly correlated victim blaming (neither characteristic-based nor responsibility-based blame).

Engagement with Police. The specific occurrence of having been stopped by a police officer (but not arrested and for reasons other than a traffic stop) was explored as a predictor of IBSAMA in one study (Said & McNealey, 2023). It did not significantly predict any of the measures related to IBSAMA though.

Technology Use. One study explored how general video media consumption related to reactions to deepfake pornographic videos (Wang & Kim, 2022). However, general video media consumption did not significantly predict anger towards deepfakes in this study.

Online Privacy. A single study explored a series of measures related to online privacy as a predictor of IBSAMA, more specifically, an inverse measure of *support for the criminalisation of revenge pornography* (Lageson et al., 2019). Concern for online privacy and previous experience with an online privacy breach predicted support for criminalisation

of revenge pornography. Interestingly, whilst ‘sometimes worrying’ about online privacy positively predicted support for criminalisation, having experienced a privacy beach negatively predicted support for criminalisation. Knowing someone else that has experienced an online privacy breach did not significantly relate to support for criminalisation though.

Cyber-abuse. Experiences of other forms of technology-facilitated abusive behaviours, such as cyberbullying and cyberflashing, have been found to relate to IBSAMA (Mussap et al., 2023; Sparks et al., 2023). Both perpetration and victimisation of cyberbullying were significantly positively related to IBSAMA in cismen and ciswomen, but not significantly related to IBSAMA in transgender or gender diverse participants (Mussap et al., 2023). Attitudes towards cyberbullying significantly positively related to attitudes towards non-consensual sexting in all participants. Cyberflashing has also been explored in relation to IBSAMA (Sparks et al., 2023). Individuals that have experience with both victimisation and perpetration of cyberflashing have significantly greater offence-supportive attitudes than those with no experience.

Romantic Relationships. Relationship status was explored as a predictor in just one study (Said & McNealey, 2023). It was found that single participants were 77% more likely to suggest victims should file a police report compared to participants in relationships. However, relationship status did not relate to any other IBSAMA related measures (regarding consequences and likelihood of perpetrator being caught).

Other Psychological Predictors of IBSA Myth Acceptance

Dark Personality. There were eleven studies across 7 papers that explored facets of dark personality as predictors of IBSAMA (Fido et al., 2021, 2022; Harper et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). All presented a significant relationship between at least one dark personality trait and a facet of IBSAMA, but with some discrepancies. Although there is variation across studies in exactly which of the dark

personality traits predict different IBSAMA facets, it is consistently presented that the relationship is positive: greater scores of dark personality traits predict greater endorsement of IBSA myths.

The Dark Tetrad of psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism and sadism were explored in six of the studies (Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Karasavva et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). The relationships varied slightly across studies and measures. For example, in Pina et al. (2017) and Karassava et al. (2023) psychopathy was the strongest predictor of revenge pornography approval and IBSAMA, respectively. Harper et al. (2023) found that sadism and psychopathy significantly predicted IBSAMA, while Machiavellianism was negatively associated with offence minimisation beliefs.

Psychopathy was explored in more depth in two of the studies (Fido et al., 2022, Studies 1 and 2). They identified that the sub-measures of psychopathy: *lifestyle, antisocial, interpersonal* and *affective* psychopathy related to victim blame, perceived victim harm and perceived criminality of IBSA in varying ways. For example, victim blame was most strongly related to antisocial whilst interpersonal psychopathy was related to perceptions of criminality and victim harm.

Two studies explored the relationship between judgments of IBSA and callous unemotional traits (Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 & 2). Both studies identify a significant positive correlation between callous-unemotional traits and judgments about revenge pornography (i.e., greater levels of IBSAMA). However, callous unemotional traits were only predictive of judgments for women, with higher levels of callous unemotional traits being associated with more lenient judgments of IBSA behaviour (Fido et al., 2021, Study 1). Meanwhile, in the second study callous unemotional traits did not significantly predict judgments about IBSA for men or women (Fido et al., 2021, Study 2).

Pina et al. (2021) reported that while psychopathy and sadism correlated with victim blaming attitudes, neither emerged as independent predictors when controlling for moral disengagement. These findings suggest that while dark personality traits are consistently linked to IBSAMA, their predictive power may be moderated by other cognitive and attitudinal factors. **Trauma.** Trauma was explored as a predictor of victim harm in one study (Stal, 2022). Type of trauma history (interpersonal or not) did not significantly relate to any IBSAMA variables. Number of high magnitude stressors experienced significantly positively correlated with levels of expected *emotional symptoms*, *impact* and *expected symptom duration* for victims of IBSA. It also displayed a significant negative correlation with willingness to hire a victim for high school teaching positions, but did not relate to hiring in the other career options given. Furthermore, trauma measures did not relate to IBSAMA measures concerning recommended criminal punishments.

Moral Disengagement. Moral disengagement relative to IBSAMA was explored in one study (Pina et al., 2021). It was found to significantly correlate with victim blame, which is unsurprising considering the conceptual similarity between the constructs (Pina et al., 2021). The authors identified that further research would be required to explore this relationship and discriminate their moral disengagement in image-based sexual abuse scale (MDiISA) from measures of IBSAMA.

Moral Foundations. One study explored moral foundations as a predictor of IBSAMA (Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022). Moral foundations are clustered into two juxtaposing principles: individualising (highlighting the importance of other individuals) and binding (highlighting the importance of protecting the group as a whole) foundations (Clark et al., 2017). The prioritisation of individualisation over binding moral foundations is known as progressivism. Research has shown that progressivism is positively related to perpetrator blame and victim empathy, and negatively related to victim blaming (Rollero & Pagliaro,

2022). Furthermore, the relationships between progressivism and victim blaming and perpetrator blaming were partially mediated by victim empathy (Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022).

Empathy. Seven studies explored the relationship between empathy and IBSAMA (Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 & 2; Harper et al., 2023, Studies 2 - 4; Maes et al., 2023; Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022). All studies presented a significant negative relationship between empathy and IBSAMA. For example, empathy related to more lenient judgments of revenge pornography perpetrators (Fido et al., 2021; Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022), lower levels of victim blaming (Maes et al., 2023 Harper et al., 2023; Rollero & Pagliaro, 2022) and greater attributions of victim harm (Harper et al., 2023).

Harper et al. (2023, Study 2) modelled empathy as a predictor of judgment of revenge pornography and identified that it positively predicted perceptions of *victim harm* and negatively predicted *viewing victims as promiscuous* but did not predict *offence minimisation* or *viewing victimisation as avoidable*. In their follow up study using alternative IBSAMA measures they identified that empathy negatively predicted *victim blame* and positively predicted *perceived criminality* but did not significantly predict *perceived victim harm* (Harper et al., 2023, Study 4).

On the other hand, Maes et al. (2023) presented mixed findings when differentiating between characteristic-based and responsibility-based victim blaming. They identified that empathy was significantly positively correlated with responsibility-based victim blaming towards female victims but not male victims. Whereas it was negatively correlated to characteristic-based victim blaming of both male and female victims.

Interpersonal Trust. Willingness to be vulnerable to others on the basis that there is an expectation that they will behave positively, is termed interpersonal trust (Starr & Lavis, 2018). Starr and Lavis (2018) identified a small, negative correlation between interpersonal

trust and victim blame, whether the victim's relationship to the perpetrator had been one month or one year. Yet, this relationship was fully mediated by perceived breach of trust.

Intrasexual Competition. Intrasexual competition refers to competition between persons of the same sex for the evolutionary purpose of mating opportunities (Fido et al., 2021). Two studies, from one journal article, explored intrasexual competition as predictive of IBSAMA (Fido et al., 2021, Studies 1 and 2). Both studies found that intrasexual competition positively correlated with judgments about revenge pornography, demonstrating a positive relationship with IBSAMA. There were, however, differences in the predictive value of intrasexual competition. It did not significantly predict judgments about revenge pornography in men in either study. However, one study did find that intrasexual competition positively predicted lenient judgments in women (Fido et al., 2021, Study 2). Furthermore, contrary to expectations, the interaction between intrasexual competition and victim sex demonstrated more lenient judgments of the offense when the victim was male rather than the same sex. These findings are both inconsistent and contradictory to what the theory of intrasexual competition would suggest.

Discussion

This systematic literature review provides a comprehensive synthesis of the prevalence and predictors of IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance, contributing to an emerging body of knowledge on these rapidly evolving social issues. By addressing the four primary research questions, this review highlights key patterns in perpetration rates, associated predictors, and prevailing myths, as well as their implications for public perception and victim impact.

In total, 88 unique studies were included in the systematic literature review following a thorough screening process that was deliberately broad, in an attempt to include all available resources regardless of differing terminology. After applying the weight of evidence

criteria, 76 studies were included in the synthesis of findings. The majority of studies were weighted a medium score with 10 being rated highly. This is largely the result of the two-part research questions but also due to the lack of distinct IBSA variables. Each research question was addressed by between 36 and 49 studies.

Research Question 1: Prevalence of IBSA Perpetration

The prevalence of IBSA perpetration is highly variable, ranging from 1% to as high as 35.2% across different behaviours, including creation, distribution and threats of image dissemination. For example, overall perpetration rates typically lie between 10.1% and 17.5%, indicating a significant prevalence of this behaviour among study samples. Sharing appears to be the most commonly reported form, with deepfake and image creation less prevalent but still notable. However, this may be due to most of the research focusing on dissemination of private sexual images and revenge pornography as opposed to other forms of IBSA. These rates underscore a substantial, though often underreported, social issue impacting individuals worldwide. Proclivity studies, similarly, indicate that a meaningful proportion of individuals express some degree of inclination toward IBSA perpetration, with up to 48.2% of respondents in one study indicating at least some likelihood of engagement beyond complete deterrence (Karasavva et al., 2023).

Research Question 2: Predictors of IBSA Perpetration

Predictors of IBSA perpetration reflect complex intersections of demographic, attitudinal, behavioural and psychological variables. Gender is the most prominent demographic predictor that was explored in the literature, with evidence suggesting that men are generally more likely to perpetrate or express proclivity toward IBSA, though exceptions and non-significant findings do exist. Age was another significant factor predominant in the review, with most findings pointing to higher prevalence among younger individuals. Other demographic variables, such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, and disability, also demonstrate

significant predictive relationships, often indicating higher risks among marginalised groups. These findings point to the need for nuanced and inclusive prevention strategies that acknowledge these demographic complexities.

Attitudinal predictors, particularly acceptance of IBSA myths, are strongly correlated with perpetration. Myth-accepting attitudes, including victim blaming, minimisation of harm, and excusal of perpetrator behaviours, exacerbate the prevalence of IBSA by normalising or justifying harmful behaviours (Flynn et al., 2023). Studies consistently indicate that these beliefs foster environments conducive to IBSA perpetration. Notably, a one-point increase in myth-accepting attitudes can significantly elevate the odds of engaging in IBSA behaviours (Powell et al., 2019; 2022). The perceptions of IBSA as "not a real crime" further contribute to the normalisation and trivialisation of these actions, emphasising the critical role of educational interventions (Branch et al., 2017; Fido et al., 2022). IBSAMA may function as a cognitive distortion, allowing individuals to justify or neutralize abusive behaviour. This aligns with models of sexual offending that emphasize the role of distorted beliefs in facilitating harm (Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013). For example, beliefs that victims “deserve” abuse due to sexting behaviour reflect schema-driven processing that shifts blame and reduces perceived moral responsibility (Flynn et al., 2023).

In the category of other psychological predictors, several studies explored the impact of dark personality traits. Findings revealed that higher scores in dark personality traits, especially Machiavellianism and psychopathy, consistently predicted a proclivity toward IBSA. The pleasure derived from controlling or hurting others, which is characteristic of these traits, is conceived to be a common motive of IBSA behaviour. Scholz et al. (2023) noted that shared attributes across dark personality traits, such as manipulation and a lack of empathy, are collectively predictive of IBSA proclivity rather than one of the dark traits specifically. These traits reflect deeper psychological processes. For example, psychopathy is

associated with emotional detachment and reduced guilt, which may facilitate IBSA by removing internal barriers to causing harm (Van Vugt et al., 2012). Machiavellianism, with its strategic manipulation and disregard for others, may drive calculated forms of IBSA such as sextortion or revenge pornography (Blötner et al., 2021). Sadism, which involves deriving pleasure from others' suffering, may explain why some perpetrators report feelings of amusement or thrill during IBSA acts (Fedoroff, 2008). These traits collectively impair empathic concern, disrupt moral reasoning, and promote instrumental aggression, making IBSA a psychologically rewarding act for some individuals. Anonymity, lack of immediate consequences, and dissociation from real-world norms, synonymous with online behaviour, can reduce empathy and increase the likelihood of perpetrating harm (Suler, 2004). This may amplify existing dispositional risk factors, such as narcissism or Machiavellianism, by removing social constraints that typically inhibit abusive conduct (Kurek et al., 2019).

Research Question 3: Prevalence of IBSA Myth Acceptance

The prevalence of IBSAMA remains widespread, with studies indicating varying levels of endorsement across different populations. Myths typically revolve around minimising the harm of IBSA, shifting blame to victims, and excusing perpetrators' actions. Such myths serve to silence victims, reduce their willingness to seek help, and ultimately hinder efforts to hold perpetrators accountable. IBSA myths are not only damaging on an individual level but also perpetuate systemic barriers to addressing and preventing IBSA (McGlynn et al., 2019).

The psychological impact of widespread myth acceptance is profound. These beliefs contribute to secondary victimisation, where victims not only suffer from the initial abuse but also from societal responses that invalidate their experiences (Bond & Tyrell, 2021). This can lead to internalised shame, avoidance of help-seeking, and long-term psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, and PTSD (Henry et al., 2019a; McGlynn et al., 2019; Short et

al., 2017). The persistence of these myths reflects entrenched cognitive schemas that associate sexual expression with culpability, particularly for women, and perpetuate gendered power dynamics (Fido et al., 2021; Naezer & Van Oosterhout, 2021; Scott & Gavin, 2018).

Research Question 4: Predictors of IBSA Myth Acceptance

Predictors of IBSAMA currently addressed in the literature are mostly focused on demographic factors such as gender. A dominant conclusion of the literature included in this review was that men were more likely to endorse myth-accepting beliefs. Other demographic factors, including sexual orientation and cultural background, exhibited varying influence, reflecting complex intersections with broader sociocultural norms.

Attitudinal predictors were also particularly salient, with individuals who express broader adherence to traditional gender norms and myth acceptance of other sexual or technology-based abusive behaviours more likely to accept IBSA myths. These findings indicate that addressing myth acceptance necessitates challenging ingrained societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality and victim blaming narratives (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Furthermore, the failure to address IBSAMA can facilitate the perpetuity of the existence of myths, for instance, Maes et al. (2023) demonstrated that perceived victim blaming attitudes among parents and peers predicted individuals' own myth acceptance.

These predictors suggest that IBSAMA is not simply a matter of ignorance but reflects deeper social-cognitive processes. Individuals who endorse traditional gender norms may possess rigid belief systems that frame sexual autonomy as deviant, thereby justifying victim blaming (McKinlay & Lavis, 2020; Naezer & Van Oosterhout, 2021; Salter, 2016; Scott & Gavin 2018). Moreover, moral disengagement mechanisms, such as displacement of responsibility and distortion of consequences, allow individuals to excuse perpetrators and minimise harm (Pina et al., 2021). The role of perceived peer and parental attitudes highlight the social learning aspect of myth endorsement, where beliefs are shaped and reinforced by

close social networks (Klein & Cooper, 2019; Maes et al., 2023). Schema-driven processing influences how individuals interpret sexual abuse scenarios. When victims deviate from stereotypical expectations (e.g., stranger assault or taking nude 'selfies'), they are more likely to be blamed due to cognitive schemas that shape perceptions of credibility and responsibility (Flynn et al., 2023; McKimmie et al., 2020).

Implications and Future Directions

The synthesis of findings in this review highlights critical avenues for research and intervention. Firstly, the significant prevalence of IBSA and associated myths necessitates the implementation of comprehensive educational programs aimed at shifting societal norms, particularly those that enable and excuse IBSA. Effective prevention strategies must consider the diverse demographic predictors that contribute to both perpetration and myth acceptance. Second, the demographic predictors of IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance indicate the need for targeted interventions focusing on at-risk populations, including young men and marginalised groups. Engaging these populations with preventative measures can help reduce perpetration rates and challenge harmful myths. Furthermore, this review highlighted that the present literature has narrowly focused on the 'sharing' element of IBSA. Future research must explore the multiple modes of IBSA to determine the universality of findings.

Predictors of IBSA have been addressed in this review emphasising the demographics of importance but also highlighting the need for future research to continue exploring predictors beyond demographics to provide further clarity to the inconsistencies in the literature at present. While demographic predictors have dominated early IBSA research, psychological mechanisms offer deeper explanations. As outlined above, traits such as psychopathy and sadism may contribute to IBSA perpetration through disinhibition, lack of empathy, and moral disengagement. These traits can impair the capacity to consider the emotional impact on victims, particularly in anonymous online contexts (Henry & Beard,

2024). Moreover, attitudes and schemas that normalise IBSA play a role in facilitating its perpetration. Identifying these underlying psychological processes of IBSA can inform evidence-based programmes.

Finally, future research and policy must work to develop more standardised definitions and measures to address IBSA behaviours and beliefs. The current lack of consistency in terminology, operationalisation, and measurement tools across studies hinders meaningful synthesis and comparison of findings. Establishing unified frameworks would not only enhance the reliability of prevalence estimates and predictor analyses but also support the development of targeted interventions and cross-cultural research.

Limitations

This systematic literature review, while thorough in its synthesis of studies on IBSA is not without limitations. Firstly, the rapidly evolving nature of IBSA terminology and conceptualisation presented challenges, as studies used a wide range of definitions and operationalisations. This variability limited the ability to make direct comparisons across studies. Furthermore, most of the included research relied on self-reported data, which carries inherent risks of underreporting due to social desirability bias, fear of disclosure, or lack of self-awareness in perpetrators. The cross-sectional design of many studies also hindered the ability to establish causal relationships among predictors and IBSA. Measurement inconsistency posed another challenge; studies utilised various tools to assess IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance, often without validated scales. The newly developed instruments for IBSA myths lack widespread use and testing, limiting confidence in their comparative results.

The literature primarily focused on Western, English-speaking countries, leaving significant gaps in understanding cultural and regional differences in IBSA prevalence, predictors, and myth acceptance. Consequently, findings may not generalise to non-Western

or less-studied regions, limiting the cross-cultural applicability of conclusions. Additionally, studies frequently involved young, university-based samples, raising concerns about representativeness. Whilst this review intended to focus on adults, it was clear in the screening stages that the field has heavily focused on youth samples.

Finally, while the review sought to include only high-quality studies, the application of WoE criteria revealed that the trustworthiness of included studies varied. While a majority achieved medium to high scores, some lower rated studies were still assessed, even though their focus was less relevant, to ensure the inclusion of insights that might contribute to more nuanced key findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this systematic literature review accentuates the urgent need for a multi-faceted approach to researching and combating IBSA. By enhancing our understanding of the prevalence and predictors of IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance, we can better design interventions that address both the root causes and the damaging effects of this pervasive form of abuse. Collaborative efforts between researchers, policymakers, educators, and community advocates are essential to fostering a societal shift that promotes accountability, reduces harm, and empowers victims (Henry et al., 2019a; Maddocks, 2018; McGlynn et al., 2017, 2019; McGlynn & Rackley, 2017; Powell et al., 2019) .

Chapter 2

Study 1: Predictors of Image-Based Sexual Abuse Myth Acceptance: Is Victim Blaming Underpinned by the Same Factors for Online Sexual Abuse and Offline Sexual Abuse?

Introduction

The increasing role of technology in our everyday lives has exacerbated image-based sexual abuse (IBSA). The phenomenon had been colloquially labelled as revenge pornography, which actively depreciates the seriousness and harmful consequences of the behaviour, as well as attributes negative connotations to victims (Maddocks, 2018; McGlynn et al., 2017; Walker & Sleath, 2017). Furthermore, IBSA interventions often target victims as opposed to perpetrators by discouraging sexting; this not only encourages a victim blaming mentality but also restricts sexual liberation (Naezer & Van Oosterhout, 2021). Acceptance of false beliefs around sexual abuse that include victim blaming, minimisation of harm suffered, and excusal of the perpetrator contribute to myth acceptance. Whilst myth acceptance in offline sexual abuse scenarios has been widely researched, there is limited research for myth acceptance in online sexual abuse.

McGlynn and colleagues (2017) theorise that sexual abuse online is influenced by the same characteristics as offline, suggesting that the myth-accepting attitudes would be influenced by the same predictors. Additionally, after conducting in-depth interviews, Bates (2017) confirmed that the type of victim blaming that occurs during the reporting of rape was comparable to that experienced by IBSA victims. Mckinlay and Lavis (2020) identified that victims of IBSA are subjected to victim blaming in a terribly similar way to victims of rape; even levels of dress depicted contributed to perceptions of blameworthiness and promiscuity.

Therefore, it can be predicted that IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA) and rape myth acceptance (RMA) are underpinned by the same variables.

Predictors of Sexual Abuse Myth Acceptance

Just World Beliefs

Belief in a Just World (BJW) theory posits that individuals fundamentally wish to believe they live in a just world in which outcomes are deserved; this is a psychological buffer to protect oneself from vulnerability to negative outcomes (Lerner & Miller, 1978). As a result of this, victims are blamed instead of perpetrators, to preserve the perception of a just world. A literature review conducted by Van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014) found mixed results surrounding the relationship between BJW and RMA. They concluded that it could not fully explain the phenomenon but still identified some evidence of support. Additionally, a rapid evidence assessment by Russell and Hand (2017) reported a positive relationship between BJW and RMA. Victim blaming in scenarios of IBSA have been theoretically attributed to BJW due to the identification of dispositional explanations that protect feeling unsafe (Zvi & Bitton, 2021). For example, in a study carried out by Zvi and Bitton (2021), individuals utilised the scenario of a self-taken image (as opposed to a perpetrator-taken image) to attribute the blame towards the victim. Identifying this difference denies the possibility that they themselves could be a victim. Additionally, a small body of research has identified a significant relationship between BJW and victim blaming but less consistent relationships with other facets of IBSAMA, such as minimisation of harm and excusal of perpetrators (Fido et al., 2022; Harper et al., 2023).

Experience of Victimisation

Theory suggests that an individual's own similarities to a victim will impact their perception of responsibility. Perceived similarity to victims is strongly negatively related to attribution of blame in offline sexual violence (Grubb & Harrower, 2008) The defensive

attribution hypothesis posits that an individual is less likely to blame a victim with which they identify similarities as a self-protective mechanism (Shaver, 1970). For example, individuals who partake in sexting are less likely to blame a victim of IBSA than non-sexters (Scott & Gavin, 2018). This theory would infer that an individual who has experienced victimisation of IBSA themselves would be less likely to blame other victims.

Whilst theory predicts a decrease in IBSAMA and victim blaming for individuals who have experienced IBSA themselves, empirical research suggests otherwise (Henry et al., 2019b; Powell et al., 2019). Henry et al. (2019b) for instance, found the opposite effect; participants who had experienced victimisation reported significantly higher scores of IBSAMA overall as well as minimisation and excuse subscales. There remained no significant difference in 'victim blaming' between victims and non-victims. Powell et al. (2019) found that victimisation positively predicted both facets of the sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance (SIAMA).

Knowing a victim of rape or sexual assault also contributes to reduced endorsement of rape myths (McMahon, 2010; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Talbot et al., 2010). A significant predictive model presented by Navarro and Tewksbury (2017) found that knowing a victim of rape predicted less endorsement of rape myths and was one of the strongest predictors in the model. Their study focused on more situational variables, such as alcohol consumption and fraternity membership (both of which were non-significant) instead of attitudes or beliefs. Interestingly, in a study conducted by Crall and Goodfriend (2016), RMA was significantly lower in participants who knew a victim than those who did not, however, no such difference was found for participants who had been victims or non-victims themselves.

Sexism and Traditional Gender Role Beliefs

Research has shown that individuals who hold more traditional gender norms are more likely to endorse rape myths than those with more liberal beliefs around gender norms

(Grubb & Turner, 2012; Talbot et al., 2010; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Furthermore, those who hold more conservative views are more likely to recommend lower sentences for perpetrators of sexual assault (Viki et al., 2004). More recently, gendered sex norms have been associated with IBSAMA (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021). In their interviews with 21 Dutch students (15 perpetrators, 2 victims and 4 bystanders of IBSA), Naezer and Van Oosterhout (2021) found that sexual double standards played an important role; participants 'slut-shamed' female victims, whereas boys who shared and received images were admired. Slut-shaming refers to the persecution of women for displaying sexiness or participating in sexual behaviour and often intertwines with victim blaming in cases of sexual assault (Hackman et al., 2017). Interestingly, Naezer and Van Oosterhout (2021) found that female perpetrators felt they benefitted in popularity from slut-shaming others. This is explained by the competitive environment between women that leads them to judge each other and exacerbates victim blaming (Fido et al., 2021). This suggests that individuals who endorse sexual double standards of sexually expressive women being promiscuous whilst sexually expressive men are to be lauded, will justify IBSA myths by blaming the victim for promiscuous behaviour and excusing the perpetrator. Research has demonstrated a significant correlation between sexual double standards and perceived promiscuity and blameworthiness of IBSA victims (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020). It is significant to note that Mckinlay and Lavis (2020) identified that while their sample consisted of 'the least victim blaming demographic', namely liberal women in their twenties, victim blaming was still rife.

Beyond traditional sexual gender roles, sexism has also been researched in respect to both RMA and IBSAMA. In a meta-analysis conducted by Suarez and Gadalla (2010) oppressive attitudes towards women were found to have significant positive relationships with RMA. This included hostile attitudes towards women, measures of sexism and low

feminist identity. Viki et al. (2004) identified that benevolent sexism was negatively related to perpetrator *blame attribution* and *recommended sentence length* but only in situations of acquaintance rape and non-stranger rape. This is of particular interest when considering IBSA, as more commonly perpetrators are (or were) in close relationships with the victims. This suggests that sexism will have a strong relationship with IBSAMA. On the other hand, research suggests that hostile, but not benevolent, sexism is predictive of RMA and victim blaming (Hockett et al., 2009). Hostile sexism is a key driving factor in sexual violence perpetration and beliefs according to the Confluence Model of Sexual Aggression (Bruera et al., 2023; Malamuth et al., 2021; Malamuth & Hald, 2016). In the context of revenge pornography, Pina et al. (2017) identified ambivalent sexism as a predictor of victim blaming in their exploratory research. Whilst there is some variation in the literature on the nature of the relationship between sexual violence myth acceptance and sexism, a relationship is clear. Further research is required to explore this in the context of IBSAMA.

Sexual Aggression

Sexual aggression and adversarial sexual beliefs have been found to increase RMA (Hockett et al., 2009; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Using the Sexual Experiences Survey, Bohner et al. (2005) identified that individuals that are more sexually coercive endorse rape myths to a greater extent. The majority of their sample that reported sexually coercive behaviour had used more deceptive and manipulative techniques rather than violence. This area of research in relation to IBSA is understudied but due to the relationship with RMA, it is predicted that sexual aggression may have a significant role.

Sexual Consent

Sexual consent has become a key focus in society as well as sexual abuse research in more recent years. As above, research has shown that there is a significant positive relationship between sexual coercion and RMA (Bohner et al., 2005). Additionally, positive

attitudes towards establishing consent are negatively related to RMA (Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018). Again, this is another area that has a dearth in the IBSA literature, however, understanding, and breaching consent is a substantial element of IBSA.

Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

Research by Hockett et al. (2009) has found that both RWA and SDO are significantly positively correlated to RMA and attitudes towards rape victims. Additionally, when entered in predictive models RWA was a significant unique predictor of attitudes towards rape victims, with higher scores predictive of more negative attitudes towards rape victims, and SDO a significant unique predictor of RMA, with higher levels indicating greater endorsement of RMA. These are additional measures that are yet (to my knowledge) to be explored in relation to IBSAMA.

Sexting Behaviour

Recent literature that focuses on IBSAMA centres around sexting behaviour (e.g. Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Flynn et al., 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018). Negative sexting scripts, that regard sexting as something dirty or stupid, make victims more blameworthy (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021). Naezer and Van Oosterhout (2021) found that these scripts are more strongly held by individuals without sexting experience who saw victims as weak, stupid, and desperate. Research has shown that observers who frequently partake in sexting themselves are less likely to blame victims than non-sexters (Gavin & Scott, 2019; Scott & Gavin, 2018).

Pornography Usage

A relationship between pornography usage and myth accepting beliefs is well established in the offline sexual violence literature (Borgogna et al., 2022; Foubert et al., 2011; Hedrick, 2021). Increased use of pornography, particularly hardcore or violent pornographic media, is associated with increased endorsement of rape myths (Borgogna et

al., 2022; Foubert et al., 2011; Hedrick, 2021). On the other hand, there have been mixed findings in the small body of literature that has observed pornography usage in relation to IBSAMA. Whilst pornography usage has been shown to predict emotions towards IBSA (Wang & Kim, 2022), a direct relationship between pornography usage and IBSAMA has not yet been established (Maes et al., 2023).

The Present Study

This study expands on existing research by empirically examining the relationship between RMA and IBSAMA, offering one of the first direct comparisons of their shared and distinct predictors. While prior literature has explored these constructs independently, this study explores whether they are underpinned by overlapping attitudinal and ideological mechanisms, thereby providing empirical support for the theoretical positioning of IBSA within the continuum of sexual violence. A key novel contribution is the inclusion of multidimensional consent beliefs as predictors of IBSAMA, which have not been previously examined in this context. Additionally, the study incorporates a broad range of psychological variables, including BJW, SDO, RWA, sexual double-standard gender role beliefs, ambivalent sexism and sexual aggression, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and moral frameworks that sustain myth endorsement. It was hypothesised that:

1. IBSAMA would be positively related to RMA.
2. Experiences with IBSA victimisation would negatively relate to IBSAMA.
3. Partaking in sexting behaviour would negatively relate to IBSAMA.
4. IBSAMA would be related to and predicted by (a) BJW, (b) SDO, (c) RWA, (d) sexual double standards, (e) ambivalent sexism, (f) sexual aggression, (g) pornography usage and (h) sexual consent understanding.
5. The same predictors would significantly predict IBSAMA and RMA.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using the online social networking website Reddit. The only inclusion requirements were that the participants were over the age of 18, live in the UK and could understand English fluently. Participants took part on a voluntary basis and did not receive any compensation or reward. Of the 1,351 participants who took part in the study, 459 participants were excluded from analysis due to missing all responses on one or more of the key variables. Eight participants were also excluded on suspicion of unrepresentative responses due to outliers on multiple measures as well as unusual responses to written response questions. The final sample comprised of 884 participants, 538 men, 328 women. Participant ages ranged from 18 to 71 (M=29.63, SD=8.88). The demographic characteristics are presented in Table 3.

Measures

IBSA Victimisation

Participants self-reported whether they had ever had a private sexual image of themselves shared without their consent. They also self-reported whether a close friend or family member had ever had a private sexual image of themselves shared without consent. These questions each elicited a dichotomous yes or no response.

Sexting Activity

Participants self-reported their participation in sexting activity and exposure to sexual images. Three yes or no questions asked whether participants had ever *sent a sexual image*, *received a sexual image* and if they had *received an unsolicited sexual image that they did not consent to.*

Table 3

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	538	60.9%
Female	328	37.1%
Non-Binary	11	1.2%
Gender Fluid	1	0.1%
Transgender Male	2	0.2%
Undisclosed	4	0.5%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	349	39.5%
Homosexual	41	4.6%
Bisexual	157	17.8%
Other	31	3.5%
Undisclosed	306	34.6%
Ethnicity		
White	811	91.7%
Black	8	0.9%
Asian	10	1.1%
Mixed or Multiple	36	4.1%
Middle Eastern/Arabian	7	0.8%
Other	4	0.5%
Undisclosed	8	0.9%
Highest Education Level		
Less than High School	8	0.9%
High School	60	6.8%
College/A-Levels	305	34.5%
Undergraduate Degree	331	37.4%
Master's degree	158	17.9%
Doctoral Degree	20	2.3%
Undisclosed	2	0.2%
Employment Status		
Employed Full Time	482	54.5%
Employed Part-Time	58	6.6%
Unable to Work	29	3.3%
Student	182	20.6%
Retired	5	0.6%
Self-Employed	58	6.6%
Unemployed - Looking	47	5.3%
Unemployed - Not Looking	23	2.6%
UK Location		
England	674	76.3%
Scotland	107	12.1%
Wales	55	6.2%
Northern Ireland	47	5.3%
Undisclosed	1	0.1%

Just World Belief

BJW was measured using the seven-item global belief in a just world scale (Lipkus, 1991; α =.88). Participants were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the seven statements using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). An example item is '*I feel that people get what they deserve*'. The seven items were averaged to represent an overall BJW score with higher scores representative of more strongly held beliefs.

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

A short version of the SDO_7 scale was used to measure SDO (Ho et al., 2015). Participants indicated the extent to which they opposed or favoured the ideas outlined in each of the eight items on a Likert scale of 1 (*strongly oppose*) to 7 (*strongly favour*; α =.83). The ideas represented dominance and anti-egalitarianism, four items were pro-trait (e.g. '*some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups*') and four were con-trait (e.g. '*no one group should dominate in society*'). Once the con-trait measures were reverse coded, item scores were averaged to represent a single SDO measure. Stronger SDO is indicated by higher scores.

Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)

Participants completed a shortened nine-item scale to measure RWA (originally from Duckitt et al. (2010) but shortened by Peitz et al. (2018); α =.83). Agreement with each item was recorded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). This included positively-keyed items such as '*what our country needs most is discipline, with everyone following our leaders in unity*' and negatively-keyed items such as '*it's great that many young people today are prepared to defy authority*'. The four negatively phrased items were reverse-coded, and all nine scores were averaged to give a single overall RWA measure. Higher scores reflected greater RWA.

Sexual Aggression

Sexual aggression was measured using the 19-item post-refusal sexual persistence scale which asks respondents to indicate if they have ever used any of the tactics listed to have sexual intercourse with someone after they indicated 'no' to sexual advances (Struckman-Johnson et al., 2003). This measure was gender neutral in phrasing to allow for responses from all participants regardless of gender or sexuality. Participants responded in a dichotomous (*yes* or *no*) format to each tactic. The tactics are divided into four categories of coercion: sexual arousal (3 items), emotional manipulation and deception (8 items), exploitation of the intoxicated (2 items) and physical threats (6 items). Each category is coded dichotomously with a score of '1' given to each participant that reported using one or more tactics from the given category.

Traditional Sexual Gender Role Beliefs

Participants completed the sexual double standard scale (SDSS) to measure their endorsement of traditional sexual gender roles (Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 1998). These traditional beliefs give men more sexual freedom surrounding sexual behaviour. The scale includes 26 statements that participants must indicate their agreement with on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 4 (*agree strongly*). Six of the items compare male and female's sexual behaviour in one statement, half keyed negatively (favouring the female over the male) and half keyed positively (favouring the male over the female). The remaining 20 items are 10 pairs of parallel statements, one to favour male sexual freedom and one to favour female sexual freedom. For example, one statement reads '*I kind of admire a guy who has had sex with a lot of girls*', whilst another states '*I kind of admire a girl who has had sex with a lot of guys*'. The difference in scores between the two paired items indicates the discrepancies in beliefs held about the standards for men and women.

The overall score was calculated by totalling the three positively-keyed individual items, the three negatively-keyed individual items once reverse-coded and the 10 difference scores. The outcome score can range between -30 (indicating a belief in greater sexual freedom for women) and 45 (indicating a belief in greater sexual freedom for men thus a stronger endorsement in traditional gender beliefs about sex). A score of 0 indicates no difference in standards held between men and women.

Sexual Consent

The participant reported their beliefs around sexual consent using the short sexual consent scale formed by Hust et al. (2014). The scale consisted of 10 statements that participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with using a 7-point Likert scale (1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The statements reflected three subscales: seeking sexual consent (four statements including '*I would ask my partner for consent before engaging in sexual activity*', α =.75), refusing unwanted sexual activity (three statements including '*I would feel confident refusing someone's sexual advance*s', α =.83) and adhering to sexual consent (three statements including '*I would always stop the first time my date says "no" to sexual activity',* α =.76). Scores were given for each of the three subscales by averaging the scores of the respective statements.

Pornography Usage

Pornography usage was measured in two ways: frequency of watching pornography and type of pornography viewed. Firstly, a single frequency question indicated how often a participant watched pornography on average (modelled after the measure used in the New Family Structures Study reported in Regnerus et al. (2016)). Available responses included (1) *never*, (2) *once a month or less*, (3) *2-3 times a month*, (4) *1-2 times a week* and (5) *daily or almost daily*.

A second measure was used to record the extent to which participants used paraphilic or non-mainstream pornography. Hald and Štulhofer (2016) identified five categories to include such as violent sex (*simulated rape, aggression* and *coercion)* and fetish. Participants were asked to report the extent to which they have used each type of pornography listed on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*an extreme extent*). The scores for all items were averaged to represent an overall paraphilic pornography usage score in which higher scores indicate a more extreme extent of usage (α =.86).

Ambivalent Sexism

The short version of the ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI), originally devised by Glick and Fiske (1996), was used to measure ambivalent sexism (Glick & Whitehead, 2010). The participants indicated their agreement with each item on the 12-item scale using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The items include six hostile sexism statements (e.g. '*women seek to gain power by getting control over men*') and six benevolent sexism statements (e.g. '*women should be cherished and protected by men'*). All responses were averaged to give an overall score (α =.87). Higher scores indicated a greater endorsement of ambivalent sexism.

Rape Myth Acceptance

Participants completed the 20-item short version of the Illinois RMA scale (Payne et al., 1999). The items were representative of commonly held rape myths such as *'many women secretly desire to be raped'* and '*a lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape*'. Participants responded by indicating the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Three of the items were filler items used to provide negatively worded statements without contradicting any rape-myths (e.g. '*it is preferable that a female police officer conduct the questioning when a woman reports a rape*'), these were removed before

analysing the data. The remaining 17 items were averaged to demonstrate level of RMA, with higher scores indicative of greater endorsement of rape myths. The scale demonstrated strong internal consistency (α =.82).

IBSA Myth Acceptance

IBSAMA was measured using the SIAMA scale devised by Powell et al. (2019). The 18-item scale is made up of a 12-item minimise/excuse component and a 6-item blame component. Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with each of the items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All items were averaged to give an overall IBSAMA score; higher scores are indicative of increased blame towards the victim, minimisation of harm suffered and excusal for the perpetrator. The full scale demonstrated strong internal consistency (α =.86)

Procedure

All the materials were compiled into one questionnaire. The link to the questionnaire along with a brief description of what the research entailed was posted on 155 subreddits for cities/towns all over the UK. Participants could follow the link to the questionnaire if they so wished. Upon following the link, participants were first presented with an information sheet and consent form which had to be completed before they could proceed to the questionnaire. The demographics including sexting activity and IBSA victimisation were delivered first. Following this, all the other measures outlined above were delivered in a randomised order. The study was then completed with a debrief sheet explaining the background of the research and it's aims. This also included the contact for a revenge pornography helpline if they felt they needed any advice or support on the topic.

Data Analysis Plan

The data analyses were conducted using SPSS 28. Once negatively-keyed items were reverse-coded, scales were averaged or totalled, as outlined in the measures, to represent single scores for each scale or subscale. When calculating the average for total scale scores, there was a tolerance for one missing response per scale, this allowed for the inclusion of data where single items had been accidentally missed. In these cases, the scores were averaged across the items that had been responded to.

Data was then analysed for outliers. Eight participants were excluded due to multiple extreme outliers and unusual responses to open questions; it was determined that these datasets were not realistic responses. Before further analysis, datasets with multiple missing responses to variables were excluded as they could not provide pairwise comparisons for analysis. This left 884 remaining sets of data for analysis.

Initially, descriptives were explored to identify the prevalence of RMA and IBSAMA in the sample. Non-parametric comparisons and correlations between predictors and both RMA and IBSAMA were assessed to determine which variables would be entered into the regression models. Those that demonstrated significant relationships (or differences) were entered into multiple regression models predicting RMA and IBSAMA.

Results

Prevalence

The prevalence of IBSA victimisation and sexting participation in the sample can be seen in Table 4. IBSA was experienced by more than one in ten and more than one in five witnessed the victimisation of someone close to them. Participation in sexting was also highly prevalent with three in four individuals disclosing that they have sent sexual images.

Table 4

Prevalence of IBSA and Sexting Behaviour

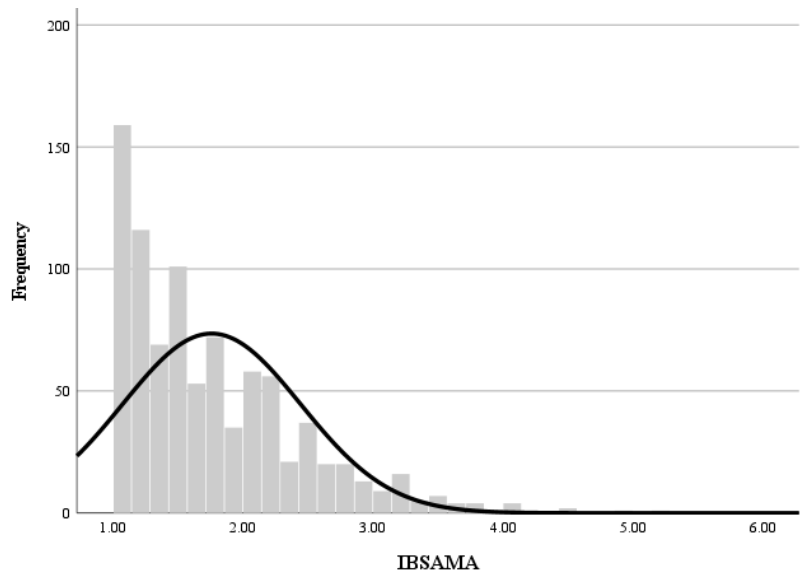
Variable		*n*	%
IBSA			
	Victim Self	125	14.1%
	Know a Victim Closely	206	23.3%
Sexting			
	Sent Sext	665	75.2%
	Received Sext	749	84.7%
	Received Unsolicited Sext	400	45.2%

Note. N=884

The prevalence of IBSAMA scores were low with an average score of 1.76 (*SD*=0.69). The scores ranged from 1.00 to 5.28 (on a 1-7 scale). Despite average scores being extremely low, 90.3% of participants had an IBSAMA score greater than 1 indicating some endorsement of myth acceptance beyond absolute disagreement. The scores were right-skewed (skewness=1.28), and a significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality demonstrated a non-normal distribution (p<.001). See Figure 2 for the distribution of IBSAMA scores.

Figure 2

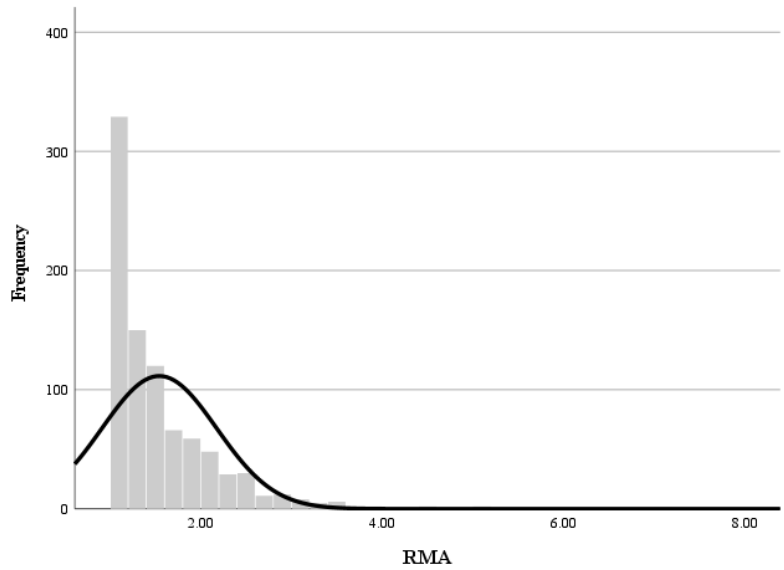
Histogram of the Distribution of IBSAMA Scores



The prevalence of RMA scores was also low with an average score of 1.54 (*SD*=0.63). The scores ranged from 1.00 to 7.00 (on a 1-7 scale). Despite average scores being very low, 85.5% of participants had an RMA score greater than 1 indicating some endorsement of RMA beyond absolute disagreement. The scores were right-skewed (skewness=2.45) and a significant Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality demonstrated a non-normal distribution (p<.001). See Figure 3 for the distribution of RMA scores.

Figure 3

Histogram of the Distribution of RMA Scores



Non-Parametric Comparisons

The dichotomous variables measuring victimisation, sexting behaviours and coercive behaviours (sexual aggression) were analysed using the Mann-Whitney U test due to the non-normal distribution of RMA and IBSAMA data (see Table 5). There were no significant differences found in IBSAMA or RMA for any of the victimisation experience measures. This is in contradiction of hypothesis 2 as victimisation experiences did not demonstrate lower IBSAMA prevalence as expected.

Table 5

Non-Parametric Comparisons of IBSAMA and RMA for Categorical Measures of Sexting Experience and IBSA Victimisation

Variable	Yes		No		Mann-Whitney U	
	n	*M*	*n*	*M*	Statistic	*p*
			IBSAMA			
IBSA Sharing Victimisation						
Victim Self	125	1.73	758	1.77	45549.5	.489
Know a Victim Closely	206	1.79	676	1.75	72049.5	.449
Sexting						
Sent Sext	665	1.70	219	1.95	59287	<.001
Received Sext	749	1.74	135	1.88	45876.5	.086
Received Unsolicited Sext	400	1.65	483	1.85	78237.5	<.001
Coercive Behaviours						
Coercion by Arousal	130	1.91	754	1.73	55076	.024
Coercion by Manipulation	147	1.96	737	1.72	63943	<.001
Coercion by Intoxication	21	1.99	863	1.75	10055	.390
Coercion by Force	20	1.89	864	1.76	9684.50	.354
			RMA			
IBSA Sharing Victimisation						
Victim Self	125	1.52	758	1.54	43792	.174
Know a Victim Closely	206	1.56	676	1.54	68042.5	.619
Sexting						
Sent Sext	665	1.52	219	1.62	67467	.102
Received Sext	749	1.52	135	1.65	50112.5	.870
Received Unsolicited Sext	400	1.43	483	1.63	77181.5	<.001
Coercive Behaviours						
Coercion by Arousal	130	1.81	754	1.50	62322	<.001
Coercion by Manipulation	147	1.76	737	1.50	67320.5	<.001
Coercion by Intoxication	21	1.89	863	1.53	11415.50	.041
Coercion by Force	20	1.65	864	1.54	8476.50	.885

Note. N=884

However, there were significant differences in both IBSAMA and RMA scores based on experience receiving unsolicited sexual images. Individuals who had received an unsolicited sexual image reported less endorsement of IBSA and rape myths than those who had not. Additionally, IBSAMA was significantly different between sext senders and those who have never sent a sext, with non-senders reporting higher IBSAMA scores. No other sexting behaviours presented significant differences in RMA or IBSAMA. Finally,

individuals that divulged sexual aggression through coercion by arousal and coercion by manipulation reported higher levels of both RMA and IBSAMA compared to those that had not. Additionally, coercion by intoxication was also significantly indicative of greater RMA. Coercion by force did not present any significant differences in RMA or IBSAMA.

The differences in RMA and IBSAMA across frequency of pornography use were explored using the Kruskal-Wallis test. There were significant differences in both RMA and IBSAMA between categories of pornography frequency. Pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni corrections demonstrated the higher two categories as significantly different to the lower three categories for RMA with a similar pattern (with fewer significant differences) for IBSAMA (see Table 6).

Table 6

Pairwise Comparisons of IBSAMA and RMA for Categorical Measures of Pornography Frequency

Frequency of Pornography Use	*n*	RMA(*M*)	IBSAMA(*M*)
Never	72	1.44^{a}	1.65^{ab}
Once a month or less	158	1.39^{a}	1.61^{bc}
2-3 times a month	151	1.44^{a}	1.69^{ac}
1-2 times a week	227	1.61^{b}	1.79^{ad}
Daily or almost daily	226	1.67^{b}	1.91^{d}

Note. N=884, Notations indicate significant pairwise comparisons: Means within a column that do not share a superscript differ significantly (p <.05).

Correlation Analysis

All remaining variables were entered into a Pearson's correlation analysis (see Table 7). The results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between IBSAMA and RMA supporting Hypothesis 1. All variables were significantly related to IBSAMA except paraphilic pornography usage. All variables that were related to IBSAMA were also significantly related to RMA, suggesting that IBSAMA and RMA may have the same predictors. The related variables were entered into regression analyses.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. IBSAMA	1.76	0.68	-										
2. RMA	1.54	0.63	.669**	-									
3. RWA	2.58	0.98	.359**	.412**	-								
4. SDO	2.08	1.05	.436**	.544**	.548**	-							
5. SDSS	4.32	3.66	.390**	.516**	.355**	.422**	-						
6. Consent Seeking	5.66	1.12	-.365**	-.411**	-.246**	-.295**	-.295**	-					
7. Consent Refusal	5.46	1.32	-.111**	-.101**	.001	-.024	-.036	.108**	-				
8. Consent Adherence	6.77	0.50	-.388**	-.479**	-.221**	-.271**	-.306**	.369**	.196**	-			
9. Paraphilic Porn Use	1.82	0.83	-.006	.070*	-.109**	.014	-.019	-.014	-.092**	-.013	-		
10. ASI	2.24	0.83	.534**	.635**	.529**	.503**	.474**	-.270**	-.056	-.310**	-.023	-	
11. JWB	2.51	0.86	.286**	.343**	.447**	.408**	.253**	-.158**	.069*	-.186**	-.047	.380**	-

Note. N=884, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Regression Analysis

The variables that were significantly related to IBSAMA were entered into two regression analyses to determine significant independent predictors of IBSAMA (see Table 8) and RMA (see Table 9). Pornography frequency was recoded as a binary variable based on pairwise comparisons. The 'never', 'once a month or less' and '2-3 times a month' were recoded as *infrequent pornography use* and '1-2 times a week' and 'daily or almost daily' were recoded as *frequent pornography use*. Collinearity statistics determined that there were no issues of multicollinearity.

Table 8

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSAMA

Variable	R- Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.425						<.001
Intercept			3.14	.376	2.530	3.746	<.001
Sext Sent		-.142	-.230	.047	-.315	-.146	<.001
Sext Unsolicited		-.019	-.026	.039	-.102	.049	.499
Porn Frequency		.006	.008	.038	-.066	.082	.829
RWA		-.007	-.005	.026	-.052	.043	.857
SDO		.138	.090	.027	.046	.134	<.001
Coercive Arousal		-.038	-.075	.061	-.184	.033	.217
Coercive Manipulation		.023	.043	.062	-.063	.148	.490
SDSS		.068	.013	.007	.001	.024	.080
Consent Seeking		-.149	-.092	.022	-.127	-.057	<.001
Consent Refusing		-.047	-.025	.014	-.053	.002	.073
Consent Adhering		-.161	-.217	.052	-.297	-.137	<.001
ASI		.310	.259	.032	.203	.315	<.001
JWB		.058	.047	.026	-.001	.094	.068

Note. N=515

The model significantly predicted 42.5% of variance in IBSAMA, $F(13, 891) = 34.12$, $p<.001$. The model also significantly predicted 58.7% of variance in RMA, $F(13, 891) = 47.33$, $p<.001$. Seeking consent, adhering to consent, SDO and ambivalent sexism remained

independent significant predictors in both models. Additionally, sending sexts remained an independent significant predictor in the IBSAMA model whilst SDSS remained an independent significant predictor in the RMA model. This provides partial support for hypothesis 4 as many of the variables were significant independent predictors. Finally, hypothesis 5 was also supported, as the same variables formed significant predictive models for both RMA and IBSAMA. Almost identical independent predictors were found providing further support for a relationship between predictors of IBSAMA and RMA.

Table 9

Multiple Regression Model Predicting RMA

Variable	R- Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.587						<.001
Intercept			2.735	.46	2.255	3.214	<.001
Sext Sent		-.038	-.057	.037	-.122	.008	.128
Sext Unsolicited		-.012	-.016	.030	-.074	.043	.607
Porn Frequency		.008	.011	.028	-.047	.068	.704
RWA		-.038	-.025	.022	-.061	.012	.274
SDO		.199	.120	.026	.086	.154	<.001
Coercive Arousal		.036	.065	.048	-.019	.149	.174
Coercive Manipulation		-.003	-.006	.045	-.087	.076	.900
SDSS		.166	.029	.008	.020	.037	<.001
Consent Seeking		-.127	-.072	.017	-.100	-.045	<.001
Consent Refusal		-.019	-.009	.011	-.030	.012	.414
Consent Adherence		-.198	-.252	.070	-.315	-.189	<.001
ASI		.357	.273	.029	.229	.316	<.001
JWB		.041	.031	.021	-.006	.067	.145

Note. N=515

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrated that IBSAMA and RMA are significantly related, in line with the first hypothesis. It was also hypothesised that experiences with IBSA victimisation and sexting would negatively relate to IBSAMA.

However, victimisation or knowing a victim of IBSA was not significantly related to IBSAMA in this study and thus the second hypotheses was not supported. The third hypothesis was partially supported as IBSAMA was significantly greater in those that did not send sexts and those that have not received an unsolicited sext compared to those that have. However, receipt of sexts was not significantly related to IBSAMA.

Furthermore, IBSAMA was significantly predicted by sending sexts, SDO, consent seeking, consent adherence, and ambivalent sexism. These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 4, as some anticipated predictors, such as BJW, sexual double standards, RWA, pornography usage, and sexual aggression, did not emerge as significant. Interestingly, the overlap in significant predictors between IBSAMA and RMA lends strong support to Hypothesis 5, affirming that similar psychological characteristics underpin attitudes toward both online and offline sexual abuse. This alignment reinforces the theoretical framing of IBSA within the broader continuum of sexual abuse. While IBSAMA and RMA share cognitive foundations, they are not identical. IBSAMA includes technology-specific myths and minimisation of digital harm, which differ from traditional rape myths. Therefore, while overlap exists, distinctions must be acknowledged to avoid overgeneralisation.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The significant relationship between RMA and IBSAMA aligns with prior claims that victim blaming manifests similarly in offline and online sexual abuse contexts (McGlynn et al., 2017). This study provides empirical evidence for this theoretical connection, marking one of the first direct demonstrations of a link between these constructs. Subsequent research by Harper et al. (2023) further supports this relationship, showing that RMA is positively associated with perceptions of *victim culpability*, *harm minimisation*, and *presumed promiscuity of the victim*. However, the absence of a relationship with *offense minimisation* in their study contrasts with findings here, as minimisation is substantial to the SIAMA scale.

This suggests that myth endorsement mechanisms may vary across contexts or scales and may warrant further investigation to clarify these nuances.

The absence of a significant relationship between IBSA victimisation or knowing a victim and IBSAMA challenges expectations derived from defensive attribution theory, which posits that similarity to a victim reduces blame attribution (Shaver, 1970). However, prior research has often reported non-significant or contradictory findings in this domain (see Chapter 1). For instance, studies employing the SIAMA scale have shown higher IBSAMA among IBSA victims compared to non-victims (Flynn et al., 2023; Henry et al., 2019b). This paradox may reflect a psychological coping strategy, wherein victims minimise harm or excuse perpetrators to rationalise their own experiences (Weiss, 2011). Additionally, the framing of questions in this study focuses on non-consensual image-sharing experience, rather than self-identification as a victim, which might have influenced attitudes. Egan and Wilson (2012), found that rape victims who did not report their abuse disclose significantly more RMA than those who did report. This suggests that the different responses to victimisation are important in subsequent relationships with myth acceptance. Furthermore, victimisation of IBSA has been shown to increase the odds of perpetration, which further highlights why it may not have a negative relationship with IBSAMA (Powell et al., 2019)., It is theorised that victimisation should negatively predict IBSAMA whilst perpetration should positively predict IBSAMA; therefore the victim-perpetrator overlap may moderate the relationship between victimisation and IBSAMA (Sparks et al., 2023). Future work should explore how different dimensions of victimisation (e.g., reporting behaviour and self-perception) interact with myth acceptance.

The observed negative relationship between sexting behaviour and IBSAMA parallels prior research, indicating that individuals with sexting experience are less likely to engage in victim blaming (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Scott & Gavin, 2018) . This finding

provides compelling evidence that normalisation of consensual sexting may mitigate the stigmatising narratives that underpin IBSA myths. By fostering a broader acceptance of sexual self-expression, sexting may reduce perceptions of victims as deviant (Gavin & Scott, 2019). This highlights the potential for public education campaigns to focus on de-stigmatising sexting as a strategy to reduce victim blaming and improve societal responses to IBSA (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021).

Contrary to expectations, pornography usage, both in terms of frequency and paraphilic content, did not emerge as a significant predictor of IBSAMA in the regression models. While frequency of pornography consumption revealed group differences in myth acceptance, these effects were not robust when controlling for other variables. Similarly, paraphilic pornography use did not significantly differentiate IBSAMA scores, a finding potentially attributable to the high proportion of participants reporting BDSM-related interests. Klement et al. (2017) suggest that BDSM's ingrained culture of consent might explain lower levels of sexual abuse myth acceptance within this subgroup. This interpretation is further supported by the significance of seeking and adhering to consent in predicting RMA and IBSAMA within this study.

Consent, in this context, reflects underlying cognitive and moral frameworks. Individuals who actively seek and adhere to consent demonstrate higher levels of empathy and moral reasoning, traits that are inversely related to myth acceptance (Blake & Gannon., 2008; Kumar et al., 2024; Longobardi et al., 2025). Conversely, low consent adherence may stem from impulsivity, entitlement, or cognitive rigidity, where individuals fail to recognise or respect boundaries due to distorted beliefs about sexual norms or power dynamics (Ward et al., 2006). This pattern of results may contribute to interventions, as positive consent practices could significantly decrease sexual abuse myth acceptance both online and offline (Klement et al., 2017).

It can be interpreted that there is a gendered nature to IBSAMA as well as RMA, given that sexual double standards and ambivalent sexism presented as significant positive predictors. In accordance with previous research, sexist beliefs and double standards were found to be associated with victim blaming, minimisation of harm and perpetrator excusal (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Pina et al., 2017; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Talbot et al., 2010; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Naezer and van Oosterhout (2021) identified that general taboos around sexting and gendered sexual norms were important themes in all interviews concerning IBSAMA. With traditional gender norms discouraging promiscuous sexual behaviour in women, it is unsurprising that this influences the level of blame attributed towards victims in a gendered sexually abusive behaviour.

Cognitive schemas shaped by patriarchal norms lead individuals to interpret female sexual expression as deviant or irresponsible, thereby justifying victim blame (Naezer & Van Oosterhout., 2021; Talbot et al., 2010). Low empathy toward female victims, particularly those perceived as sexually expressive, reduces affective concern and facilitates moral disengagement (Page & Pina, 2015). Socially, these beliefs are sustained through peer reinforcement and cultural narratives that valorise male sexual agency while policing female sexuality (Naezer & Van Oosterhout., 2021). The interaction of these cognitive, emotional, and social mechanisms contributes to a psychological climate in which IBSA is rationalised.

Limitations and Future Research

Whilst the present research has important implications for intervention and understanding of IBSAMA it is not without limitations. The reliance on online data collection via Reddit provided access to a diverse sample of UK adults, offering greater generalisability compared to student-only surveys. However, the self-reported nature of sensitive measures, such as RMA and pornography use, may have introduced socially desirable responding. As a result of these sampling limitations, some caution is warranted in interpreting prevalence

rates. Moreover, the absence of neutral response options in some scales (such as the ASI) elicited feedback from participants who felt constrained by binary choices, potentially limiting the nuance and accuracy of their responses. Future iterations of this research should consider incorporating more flexible response formats and optional open-ended items to capture a broader range of participant perspectives. Additionally, while the demographic diversity was greater than typical student samples, the predominance of White participants (91.7%) may limit the cultural applicability of findings.

Future research should continue to focus on utilising the predictors of IBSAMA to inform interventions. Effective IBSA deterrence strategies should shift focus from policing victim behaviour toward promoting comprehensive consent education and normalising consensual sexual self-expression, including sexting. This approach may reduce stigma and mitigate victim blaming by fostering a more empathetic understanding of sexual behaviour. Additionally, interventions should focus on reframing gendered sexual norms to minimise sexual double standards and conservative views that encourage victim blaming. Moreover, future research would benefit from exploring the impact myth acceptance has on perpetration to further inform interventions to prevent the behaviour taking place.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study empirically supports the conceptualisation of IBSA as part of the continuum of sexual abuse, driven by shared predictors of IBSAMA and RMA. Both behaviours perpetuate a culture of myth acceptance rooted in gendered norms and sexism. However, the findings highlight the transformative potential of consent education in challenging these attitudes. By uncovering the mechanisms that sustain harmful societal beliefs, this research provides a robust foundation for developing targeted interventions and educational initiatives to promote informed perspectives on sexual abuse in both online and offline contexts.

Chapter 3

Study 2: Image-Based Sexual Abuse Myth Acceptance and Revenge Pornography Proclivity: Is there a relationship between attitudes and propensity to perpetrate online abuse?

Introduction

The previous chapter established that image-based sexual abuse myth acceptance (IBSAMA) and rape myth acceptance (RMA) are predicted by similar variables. This reflects the theoretical view that image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) is a behaviour on the continuum of sexual abuse (McGlynn et al., 2017). Based on this, it is assumed that IBSAMA may influence the propensity to perpetrate IBSA. Given the established relationship between RMA and rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2023) it can be inferred that there would be a relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity. This inference is grounded in the understanding that myth acceptance functions as a cognitive distortion, one that enables individuals to justify harmful behaviour by minimising perceived harm, excusing perpetrator actions, and shifting blame onto victims (Powell et al., 2019). In the context of IBSA, these distortions may be particularly salient due to the perceived ambiguity surrounding digital consent and the social trivialisation of image-based abuse. If individuals endorse myths that normalise or excuse IBSA, they may be more likely to engage in such behaviours themselves, either through reduced moral inhibition or accountability (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Harper et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Suler., 2004).

Study 2 was conducted to determine firstly whether there is a relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity, and secondly, to examine predictors of these variables. Sexual consent was also a focus as prior literature has not explored sexual consent beliefs in the

context of IBSA proclivity, and Study 1 highlighted its relevance in predicting IBSAMA. Exploring the predictive relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity is essential to understanding how attitudinal frameworks translate into behavioural intent in technology-facilitated sexual abuse. As has been established in the literature and the previous study, IBSAMA is related to factors such as sexism, sexual double standards, certain aspects of sexting behaviour, and consent beliefs. The present study re-examines these variables to determine their predictive value for both IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity models.

The Role of Myth Acceptance in Image-Based Sexual Abuse Perpetration

As identified in Chapter 2, it is theorised that sexual abuse online is parallel to sexual abuse offline and is underpinned by the same characteristics (McGlynn et al., 2017). It is assumed therefore that myths regarding IBSA would influence the propensity to perpetrate IBSA, since a relationship has been established between RMA and rape proclivity in the literature (e.g., Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2022).

Existing literature suggests a significant relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA behaviour, with individuals reporting higher IBSAMA levels being more likely to have perpetrated IBSA (Powell et al., 2022). Powell et al. (2019) found that victim blaming beliefs positively predicted IBSA perpetration but did not find a relationship between IBSA perpetration and beliefs that minimised the harmful consequences for victims. Victim blaming was also found to positively predict revenge pornography proclivity in Pina et al. (2021). On the other hand, a relationship has been found between harm minimisation beliefs and revenge pornography proclivity (Karasavva et al., 2023). It is evident that a relationship is occurring between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity; but existing research has focused on either revenge pornography scenarios (Karasavva et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021) or has mixed findings for the independent myth acceptance facets (Karasavva et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019). The relationship between these beliefs and someone's likelihood to perpetrate

IBSA therefore warrants further investigation. A relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA behaviour suggests that examining these variables together could provide valuable insights into the predictors of IBSA proclivity.

Predictors of Image-Based Sexual Abuse Perpetration and Myth Acceptance

To comprehensively explore the relationship between myth acceptance and the likelihood to perpetrate IBSA, it is necessary to identify how these interact with other predictors. There is a dearth in the literature surrounding predictors of IBSA proclivity beyond demographics, and existing research shows inconsistent findings.

Sexting Behaviour

Prior sexting experience is theorised to reduce victim blaming attitudes and IBSAMA, due to perceived similarity with victims. According to the defensive attribution hypothesis (Shaver, 1970), individuals are less inclined to blame victims whose experiences mirror their own (Gavin & Scott, 2019; Scott & Gavin, 2018). In contrast, individuals without such experience are more likely to endorse negative sexting scripts that portray it as shameful or reckless, thus increasing victim blame and endorsement of IBSAMA (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021).

A small body of literature has also begun to link sexting behaviour to IBSA perpetration, finding positive relationships (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Clancy et al., 2019; Powell et al., 2022). Powell et al. (2019) found that individuals who participated in sexting behaviours had 210% greater odds of self-reporting IBSA perpetration. In a later study, Powell et al. (2022) found a significant difference in prevalence of IBSA perpetration in individuals who have partaken in sexting self-image behaviours and those who have not. Frequent sexting behaviour may reduce perceived boundaries around image sharing, especially in peer contexts where sharing is framed as humorous or retaliatory. The contrast

between sexting behaviour negatively predicting IBSAMA while positively predicting IBSA perpetration needs to be examined in more depth.

Experiences of Victimisation

Research has demonstrated that individuals who have experienced IBSA victimisation are significantly more likely to self-report IBSA perpetration (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). This concomitant relationship has been found in each individual type of IBSA victimisation (taken, distributed, or threatened). Victimisation experience, however, produces mixed results since it has been shown as a positive predictor, a negative predictor, and a non-significant predictor of IBSAMA across different studies (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2021).

As outlined above, defensive attribution theory suggests that an individual's own similarities to a victim will impact their perception of responsibility. This theory would also infer that an individual that has personally experienced victimisation of IBSA would be less likely to blame other victims. Whilst theory proposes a decrease in IBSAMA and victim blaming for individuals who have experienced IBSA, empirical research suggests otherwise (Henry et al., 2019a; Powell et al., 2019). Henry et al. (2019a) found the opposite effect; participants who had experienced victimisation reported significantly higher scores of IBSAMA overall as well as on minimisation and excuse subscales. There remained no significant difference in 'victim blaming' between victims and non-victims. Meanwhile, the findings of Study 1 (Chapter 2) found no significant differences in IBSAMA between victims and non-victims of IBSA. These mixed findings merit further investigation.

Sexism and Sexual Double Standards

Sexism has been identified as a predictor associated with the propensity to perpetrate IBSA (Pina et al., 2017). Hearn and Hall (2018) identified that men's posts on revenge pornography websites are expressions of sexism and misogyny suggesting sexist attitudes are

prevalent in perpetrators. Research has shown that non-consensual sharing of sexual images is significantly positively correlated with both hostile and benevolent sexism individually as well as ambivalent sexism (Morelli et al., 2016; Pina et al., 2017). Although existing literature regarding sexism and IBSA is limited, it does suggest that there is an association between these beliefs.

As outlined in Chapter 2, sexism is also theorised to predict myth acceptance (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Pina et al., 2017). Research indicates that adherence to traditional gender norms and sexual double standards is associated with increased justification of IBSA and victim blaming attitudes (Mckinlay & Lavis, 2020; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021). Whilst the relationship between sexism and IBSAMA is underexplored in the literature, the established relationship between RMA and sexism is salient (Hockett et al., 2009; Viki et al., 2004). Furthermore, Study 1 determined a strong predictive relationship between IBSAMA and ambivalent sexism. Additional research will enable the consolidation of these findings.

Sexual double standards contribute to IBSA perpetration by reinforcing gendered expectations around sexual behaviour that excuse male sexual assertiveness while condemning female sexual expression (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021). Individuals may perceive women who engage in sexting as violating social norms, thereby rationalising non-consensual image sharing as deserved or trivial (Trottier et al., 2025). Furthermore, sexism promotes antagonism toward women who defy these roles to reinforce power and control (Trottier et al., 2025). These attitudes reduce empathy and increase moral disengagement, allowing perpetrators to justify IBSA as corrective or disciplinary behaviour.

Sexual Consent Beliefs

Individuals who do not value or seek consent may be more likely to perceive IBSA behaviours as acceptable or inconsequential, due to impulsivity, entitlement, or cognitive

schemas influenced by power and control (Ward et al., 2006). Although the very nature of IBSA behaviour revolves around lack of consent, the relationship between sexual consent beliefs and IBSA perpetration or myth acceptance has been overlooked in the literature. There is, however, an existing body of literature observing this relationship in offline sexual abuse. Positive attitudes towards establishing consent are negatively related to RMA (Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018). Furthermore, when comparing a group with an affirmative consent subculture (BDSM practitioners) to community adult and college student samples, the former report significantly lower levels of RMA and victim blaming (Klement et al., 2017).

In addition to being predictive of myth acceptance, consent comprehension has been related to likelihood to perpetrate sexual aggression (Warren et al., 2015). With IBSA theorised as part of the continuum of sexual abuse it can be posited that the predictors of offline abuse will be relevant to online abuse. Since significant relationships were found between consent beliefs and IBSAMA in Study 1 (Chapter 2), it is essential to investigate how consent beliefs may relate to IBSA proclivity and myth acceptance. The present study adapted consent scales to include IBSA-specific contexts and explore how this phenomenon relates to endorsement of myths and likelihood of perpetration.

The Present Study

Although the literature has begun to explore various predictors of IBSA proclivity, significant gaps remain. Moreover, while few factors, like sexting, have been consistently linked to IBSA, other predictors show inconsistent results, suggesting a need for further investigation. This study contributes novel insights by empirically testing the predictive relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity. While prior research has established the role of rape myth acceptance in facilitating sexual violence offline (Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2023), this study extends that framework to technology-facilitated abuse, offering evidence that IBSA-related myths similarly underpin behavioural intent. The

inclusion of a broader range of behavioural and attitudinal predictors, such as sexual double standards and consent beliefs, adds depth to existing demographic-focused research. By examining IBSAMA as both a direct predictor and a potential mediator, this study advances understanding of how distorted beliefs translate into proclivity, and lays the groundwork for targeted interventions that address the attitudinal roots of IBSA perpetration. It was hypothesised that:

1. IBSAMA would be positively related to IBSA proclivity.
2. IBSAMA would be related to and predicted by ambivalent sexism, sexting behaviour, IBSA victimisation, sexual double standards, and sexual consent beliefs.
3. IBSA proclivity would be related to and predicted by ambivalent sexism, sexting behaviour, sexual double standards, sexual consent beliefs, and IBSAMA.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using the online social networking website Reddit. The only inclusion requirements were that the participants were over the age of 18, reside in the UK and understand English fluently. Participants took part on a voluntary basis and did not receive any compensation or reward. A sample of 821 initially participated in the study, however, due to incomplete surveys, the final dataset consisted of 506 participants. The sample comprised 264 men (52.4%), 214 women (42.5%), and 24 participants who categorised as other (3%; this included 15 non-binary participants, three gender-fluid participants, three gender non-conforming participants and three transgender participants). Two participants did not disclose their gender. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 76 (M = 31.63, SD= 9.90); with three participants choosing not to disclose their age. Further demographic characteristics are summarised in Table 10.

Table 10

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic		*n*	%
Gender			
	Male	264	52.4%
	Female	214	42.5%
	Non-Binary	15	3%
	Gender Fluid	3	0.6%
	Gender Non-Conforming	3	0.6%
	Transgender	3	0.6%
	Undisclosed	2	0.4%
Sexuality			
	Heterosexual	289	57.3%
	Homosexual	35	6.9%
	Bisexual	132	26.2%
	Other	44	8.7%
	Undisclosed	4	0.8%
Ethnicity			
	White	460	91.3%
	Black	4	0.8%
	Asian	13	2.6%
	Mixed or Multiple	13	2.6%
	Other	10	2.0%
	Undisclosed	4	0.8%
Highest Education Level			
	Less than High School	3	0.6%
	High School	44	8.7%
	College/A-Levels	153	30.4%
	Undergraduate Degree	184	36.5%
	Master's Degree	105	20.8%
	Doctoral Degree	14	2.8%
	Undisclosed	1	0.2%
Employment Status			
	Employed Full Time	283	56.2%
	Employed Part-Time	49	9.7%
	Unable to Work	22	4.4%
	Student	78	15.5%
	Retired	7	1.4%
	Self-Employed	35	6.9%
	Unemployed - Looking	15	3%
	Unemployed - Not Looking	14	2.8%
	Undisclosed	1	0.2%
UK Location			
	England	409	81.1%
	Scotland	38	7.5%
	Wales	34	6.7%
	Northern Ireland	21	4.2%
	Undisclosed	2	0.4%

Design

The outcome variables were revenge pornography proclivity and IBSAMA. The predictor variables measured were IBSA victimisation, sexting activity, traditional sexual gender-role beliefs, sexual consent, and ambivalent sexism. IBSAMA was also a predictor variable for revenge pornography proclivity.

Measures

IBSA and Sexting Experience

IBSA victimisation and sexting activity were measured using the same self-report 'yes' or 'no' questions from Study 1 (see Chapter 2). Participants were asked *whether they have ever had a private sexual image of themselves shared without their consent* and *whether a close friend or family member had ever had a private sexual image of themselves shared without consent*. To measure sexting activity participants were asked if they had ever *sent a sexual image*, *received a sexual image* and if they had ever *received an unsolicited sexual image that they did not consent to*.

Sexual Double Standards and Sexism

As with Study 1, participants completed the SDSS to measure their endorsement of traditional sexual gender roles (Muehlenhard & Quackenbush, 1998). The short version of the ASI was also used again to measure ambivalent sexism (Glick & Whitehead, 2010, see Chapter 2 materials for more detail on these scales).

Sexual Consent

Beliefs regarding sexual consent were assessed using a 15-item version of the Sexual Consent Scale (Hust et al., 2014) , adapted for the current study to include five additional items to consent surrounding intimate images as well as physical sexual behaviour (for example *'I would ask for consent before sending a sexual image to someone*'). See Appendix

B for the full adapted scale. The statements reflected three subscales: behaviour around seeking sexual consent (seven statements), refusing unwanted sexual activity (four statements), and adhering to sexual consent (four statements). Participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with the statements using a 7-point Likert scale (1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*). Scores for each of the three subscales (consent seeking, consent adherence, and consent refusal) were computed by averaging the responses to the corresponding statements. Higher scores indicate greater endorsement of the respective belief about sexual consent. All three scales demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from .74 to .84.

IBSA Myth Acceptance

IBSAMA was again measured using the sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance (SIAMA) scale devised by Powell et al. (2019). The 18-item scale is made up of a 12-item minimise/excuse component and a 6-item blame component. Participants rated their agreement or disagreement with each of the items on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All the items were averaged to give an overall IBSAMA score (α =.85); higher scores are indicative of increased blame towards the victim, minimisation of harm suffered and excusal for the perpetrator.

Revenge Pornography Proclivity

The revenge porn proclivity scale (RPPS) developed by Pina et al. (2017) was utilised to measure the propensity to perpetrate IBSA in the context of 'revenge pornography'. The RPPS includes five vignettes describing a situation in which the reader has been betrayed by their partner and subsequently posts a naked photo of them online. An example scenario includes:

> *'You have recently begun dating someone. During this time, you have been out for meals, to the cinema and for social occasions, just as many couples do. One evening*

whilst you are out for a meal, your partner goes to the toilet leaving their phone on the table. Whilst waiting for them to return you notice they have received a message from a name you recognise as their ex-partner. Curious, you check to see what the message says and find that multiple messages have been exchanged. You place the phone back and continue the evening as normal. Over the next few days, you begin to think more about how this has made you feel. You then decide to upload onto the internet a photo of your naked partner that they sent to you when you first begun dating.'

Following each vignette participants are asked if they would have done the same in the situation. They are also asked to what extent they would feel excited, amused, regretful, angry, blame and in control, in the situation. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*completely*).

The scores for each question on the five vignettes were averaged to present overall scores. The average for proclivity presented the overall proclivity score. A revenge pornography enjoyment subscale was computed by averaging overall amusement, excitement, and control scores, and a revenge pornography approval subscale was computed by averaging overall regret (reverse-coded), blame, and anger scores. In accordance with previous research, the RPPS demonstrated strong internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha score of .77 (Pina et al., 2017).

Procedure

The procedure was almost identical to Study 1 (see Chapter 2). The study materials were consolidated into a single questionnaire. A link to the questionnaire, accompanied by a brief overview of the research objectives, was shared across 120 subreddits representing various cities and towns in the UK. Individuals interested in participating could access the questionnaire via this link. Upon accessing the link, participants were first presented with an

information sheet detailing the study's aims, potential risks, and their right to withdraw without repercussions. Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were assured. Participants then completed a consent form, which was required before proceeding. They were asked to create a unique participant code to enable withdrawal of their data if desired. The initial section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information and included the questions pertaining to sexting behaviours and experiences of IBSA victimisation. Subsequently, the remaining measures were presented in a randomised sequence. The study concluded with a debrief sheet outlining the research purpose and goals in detail, along with contact information for a revenge pornography helpline for participants needing support or advice on the subject.

Data Analysis Plan

All scales were averaged or summed as outlined in the measures to present overall variable scores for each scale or subscale. When calculating averages, analysis allowed for one missing item per scale so that representative scores could still be computed for these participants. In these cases, the scores were averaged across the items that had been responded to. Before further analysis, data entries containing missing scores on the key variables, IBSAMA and revenge pornography proclivity, were also removed as they could not be entered into regression analyses. Responses that included proclivity scores that were statistical outliers were reviewed for any indication of ingenuine response (such as patterned responses or inappropriate responses in text-input questions). Although it is standard practice to exclude outliers, when measuring criminal tendency those indicating higher proclivity are expected socially and statistically to be a deviation from the average. Therefore, to exclude scores indicating proclivity, would not allow for meaningful analysis. All outliers were deemed to be true responses and were therefore included in analyses.

Initially, descriptives were explored to identify the prevalence of IBSAMA and proclivity in the sample. Non-parametric comparisons and correlations between predictors and both proclivity and IBSAMA were assessed to determine which variables would be entered into the regression models. Those that demonstrated significant relationships (or differences) were entered into multiple regression models predicting IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity.

An overall model, informed by the regression models predicting IBSAMA and proclivity, was produced and path analysis testing was conducted using AMOS. This was an additional exploratory analysis to identify whether IBSAMA mediated relationships between the predictors and proclivity.

Results

Prevalence

The prevalence of IBSA victimisation and sexting participation in the sample can be seen in Table 11. IBSA was experienced by more than one in ten and more than one in four witnessed the victimisation of someone close to them. Participation in sexting was also highly prevalent with almost three quarters of individuals disclosing that they have sent sexual images.

Table 11

Prevalence of IBSA and Sexting Behaviour

Variable		*n*	%
IBSA			
	Victim Self	74	14.7%
	Know a Victim Closely	136	27%
Sexting			
	Sent Sext	373	74%
	Received Sext	426	84.5%
	Received Unsolicited Sext	230	45.6%

Revenge pornography proclivity was assumed where participants answered with any response other than absolute disagreement (Pina et al., 2017). In previous research, this corresponded to a sum score greater than 5; in the present study, where proclivity was measured as an average score, this threshold was greater than 1.This process is frequently used for proclivity scales in IBSA research (Pina et al., 2017, 2021) and other criminal behaviour proclivity research (Gannon & O'Connor, 2011; Parfitt & Alleyne, 2018). Using this method, 15.3% of participants presented some degree of revenge pornography proclivity. Though, the mean proclivity score was only 1.08, which is extremely close to strong disagreement on the 1 to 5 scale (*SD*=0.28; see Table 12). Revenge pornography *approval* was endorsed to some extent beyond absolute disagreement by 97% of participants. Revenge pornography *enjoyment* was also endorsed by a high percentage of participants with 80.5% providing responses other than absolute disagreement. The average IBSAMA score was also relatively low with a mean of 1.78 (*SD*=0.68; see Table 12), which sits closest to 'disagree' on the 1-7 scale. However, 61.7% of participants agreed with at least one IBSA myth.

The prevalence of revenge pornography proclivity and IBSAMA were compared across gender and sexuality (see Table 12). There were significant differences in IBSAMA across gender and sexuality, whilst significant differences in proclivity were only demonstrated across gender.

Post hoc analyses with Bonferroni corrections were conducted (see Table 12). Comparisons across gender demonstrated that men reported significantly greater proclivity and IBSAMA than women, and significantly greater IBSAMA than those identifying as another gender. Comparisons across sexuality identified no significant differences in proclivity but did highlight that heterosexual participants reported significantly greater IBSAMA compared to bisexual participants. No other differences across genders and sexualities were found.

Table 12

Differences in Prevalence of Proclivity and IBSAMA Across Gender and Sexuality

Variable	*n*	Proclivity *M*	IBSAMA *M*	*H* Proclivity	*H* IBSAMA
Gender				14.98***	52.49***
Men	264	1.11[ac]	1.98[ac]		
Women	214	1.04[b]	1.55[b]		
Other	24	1.05[bc]	1.51[b]		
Sexuality				2.24	11.00*
Heterosexual	289	1.08	1.84[a]		
Bisexual	132	1.10	1.69[b]		
Homosexual	35	1.03	1.74[ab]		
Other	44	1.05	1.62[ab]		
Total Sample	504	1.08	1.78		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p<.001$, Means that do not share the same subscript letter differ at $p < .05$ according to post hoc pairwise comparisons with Bonferroni correction.

Non-Parametric Comparisons

The dichotomous variables measuring victimisation and sexting behaviours were analysed using the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test due to the non-normal distribution of data and inclusion of outliers. There were no significant differences found in revenge pornography proclivity for any of the victimisation experience or sexting behaviour measures. Similarly, IBSA victimisation experience and knowing a victim of IBSA, as well as experience in the sending or receiving of sexts did not illicit any significant differences in IBSAMA. However, individuals who had received an unsolicited sexual image (M=1.67, SD=.64) reported significantly lower IBSAMA scores than individuals that had never received an unsolicited sexual image (M=1.87, SD=.71), U=25598, $p<.001$.

Correlation Analysis

All variables were entered into a Pearson's correlation analysis (see Table 13). The results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between IBSAMA and revenge pornography proclivity ($r(502) = .418$, $p<.001$).

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations of Study Variables

	Variable	*n*	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	IBSAMA	504	1.78	0.68	-								
2	Proclivity	504	1.08	0.28	.418**	-							
3	Revenge Porn Enjoyment	502	1.61	0.57	.336**	.377**	-						
4	Revenge Porn Approval	500	2.28	0.61	.375**	.251**	.342**	-					
5	Consent Seeking	504	6.09	0.88	-.442**	-.261**	-.213**	-.193**	-				
6	Consent Refusal	504	5.72	1.20	-.144**	-.088*	-.043	-.092*	.139**	-			
7	Consent Adherence	504	6.72	0.58	-.441**	-.367**	-.274**	-.147**	.595**	.225**	-		
8	ASI	504	2.30	0.85	.479**	.232**	.209**	.377**	-.218**	-.079	-.174**	-	
9	SDSS	504	4.17	3.55	.423**	.185**	.130**	.249**	-.281**	.010	-.186**	.501**	-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Ambivalent sexism, sexual double standards, consent seeking, consent refusal and consent adherence significantly correlated with both IBSAMA and revenge pornography proclivity. Therefore, all variables were entered into multiple regression analyses.

Regression Analysis

Predicting IBSAMA

A regression analysis was computed to measure predictors of IBSAMA. Consent seeking, consent refusal, consent adherence, ambivalent sexism, sexual double-standards, and unsolicited sexts were entered as predictors. Due to the heteroscedasticity of the data the HCREG macro for SPSS developed by Andrew Hayes was used to conduct the regression analysis with heteroscedastic standard errors (Hayes & Cai, 2007). Due to highly correlated variables multicollinearity was assessed, all VIF values were less than 1.64 and tolerance values were greater than .61. The regression model was significant and predicted 42.6% of variance, F (6,496) =48.90, p<.001 (See Table 14). All variables remained significant independent predictors in the model except consent refusal.

Table 14

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSAMA.

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.426						<.001
Intercept			4.08	.768	3.484	4.670	<.001
Consent Seeking		-.185	-0.144	.032	-0.211	-0.078	<.001
Consent Refusal		-.058	-0.033	.022	-0.073	0.006	.137
Consent Adherence		-.233	-0.276	.037	-0.376	-0.175	.010
ASI		.306	0.246	.040	0.183	0.308	<.001
SDSS		.162	0.032	.008	0.016	0.046	<.001
Unsolicited Sext		-.119	-0.163	.048	-0.256	-0.070	<.001

Note. N=506, ASI= ambivalent sexism, SDSS= sexual double-standards.

Predicting Revenge Pornography Proclivity

A regression analysis was also computed to identify predictors of revenge pornography proclivity. Consent seeking, consent refusal, consent adherence, ambivalent sexism, sexual double-standards and IBSAMA were entered as predictors. Again, due to the heteroscedasticity of the data the HCREG macro for SPSS was used to conduct the regression analysis with heteroscedastic-consistent standard errors (Hayes & Cai, 2007). There were no multicollinearity concerns, all VIF values were less than 1.7 and tolerance values were greater than .58. The regression model was significant and predicted 21.9% of variance, $F(6,497) = 3.63$, $p < .001$ (see Table 15). Only IBSAMA remained a significant independent predictor in the model.

Table 15

Multiple Regression Model Predicting Revenge Pornography Proclivity

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.219						<.001
Intercept			1.541	.655	1.220	1.863	.019
Consent Seeking		.024	0.008	.015	-0.024	0.039	.621
Consent Refusal		.011	0.003	.009	-0.016	0.021	.788
Consent Adherence		-.243	-0.116	.104	-0.165	-0.067	.265
ASI		.056	0.018	.021	-0.013	0.049	.395
SDSS		-.008	-0.001	.008	-0.008	0.007	.933
IBSAMA		.300	0.121	.058	0.080	0.162	.034

Note. *N*=506, ASI= ambivalent sexism, SDSS= sexual double-standards.

As the variables in this model significantly predict IBSAMA also, IBSAMA was removed to determine if it is mediating predictive relationships between the other variables and proclivity. This model predicted 16.6% of variance in revenge pornography proclivity, $F(5,498) = 3.94$, $p = .002$ (see Table 16). Ambivalent sexism remained a significant independent predictor in this model signifying a mediation involving IBSAMA.

Table 16

Multiple Regression Model 2 Predicting Revenge Pornography Proclivity

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.166						.002
Intercept			2.021	.873	1.734	2.307	.021
Consent Seeking		-.029	-0.009	.016	-0.041	0.023	.563
Consent Refusal		-.002	-0.005	.009	-0.019	0.019	.959
Consent Adherence		-.315	-0.150	.124	-0.199	-0.102	.224
ASI		.149	0.048	.021	0.018	0.078	.024
SDSS		.044	0.003	.007	-0.004	0.011	.613

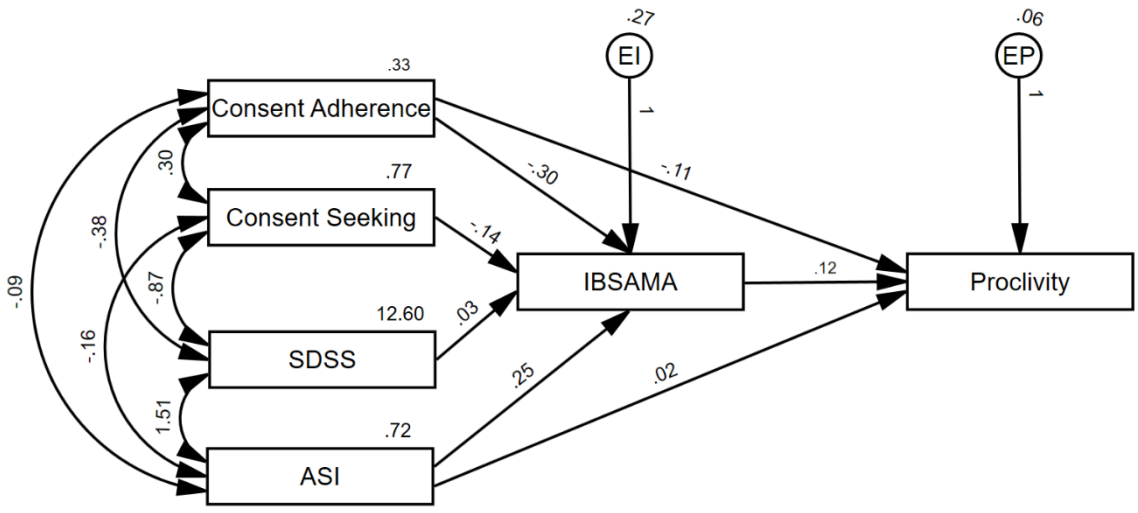
Note. *N*=506

Mediation Analysis

A SEM model was formed using AMOS representing the relationships found in the correlation and regression analyses and analysed using bootstrapping to account for the non-normal data (see Figure 4).

Figure 4

SEM Predicting Revenge Pornography Proclivity and Demonstrating the Mediating Role of IBSAMA



The model presented excellent fit (X^2 (2, N =574) = .270, p=.874; CFI=1; RMSEA<.001). However, the predictive relationship between proclivity and ASI was fully mediated by IBSAMA as the direct effect was non-significant (β=0.017, p=.246). This suggests individuals who endorse sexist beliefs are more likely to accept IBSA myths, which in turn increases their likelihood of engaging in IBSA behaviours. This suggests that distorted beliefs serve as a cognitive bridge between sexist attitudes and behavioural intent. All other regression weights and covariances in the model were significant (p<.001).

Discussion

This study demonstrated a significant relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity, in line with the first hypothesis. It was also hypothesised that experiences with sexting behaviour would predict IBSAMA and proclivity. However, participation in sexting behaviour did not relate to IBSAMA or proclivity and, therefore, this prediction was unsupported. The remaining variables: ambivalent sexism, sexual double standards, and sexual consent beliefs, were significantly correlated with IBSAMA as well as significant independent predictors. This provides partial support for hypothesis 2. Finally, hypothesis 3 was partially supported. Whilst IBSAMA, ambivalent sexism, sexual double standards, and sexual consent beliefs, were significantly correlated with proclivity, only IBSAMA remained an independent significant predictor. An additional finding from this study was the mediating relationship IBSAMA had between predictors and proclivity. The predictive relationship between ambivalent sexism and proclivity was explained by IBSAMA.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The central finding of this study is the significance of the relationship between IBSAMA and the proclivity to perpetrate IBSA. IBSAMA had the strongest correlation and the strongest predictive relationship with proclivity above all other variables. This corresponds with the relationship between myth acceptance and proclivity to perpetrate that is

well-established in the offline sexual abuse literature (Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2023). Furthermore, as identified in the systematic literature review in Chapter 1, five studies exploring the relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity have been published since the present study took place (Fido et al., 2022; Harper et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Maes et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2021); all of which found a significant positive relationship between the two. These repeated parallel findings highlight that the relationship between 'myth accepting beliefs' and the 'propensity to perpetrate sexual abuse' online (via technology) is analogous with offline sexual abuse (via physical methods e.g. sexual assault and rape). These findings align with cognitive distortion models of sexual aggression, which posit that attitudinal distortions facilitate moral disengagement and reduce perceived accountability, enabling perpetration behaviour (Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013; Ward et al., 2006). IBSAMA appears to serve this function in the context of technology-facilitated sexual abuse.

On the other hand, the lack of significant relationships found between sexting behaviour and both IBSAMA and proclivity is not consistent with previous literature or the findings of Study 1 (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Scott & Gavin, 2018). The literature, as supported by Study 1, proposes a negative relationship between sexting and IBSAMA which provides compelling evidence that the normalisation of sexting behaviour mitigates victim blaming surrounding IBSA (Gavin & Scott, 2019). The absence of these findings in this study may be due to the ubiquity of sexting behaviour within the sample. Most participants had experience in sending or receiving sexts which does not draw a large control sample. Perhaps the normalisation of sexting behaviour in society has become so widespread as to no longer provide such significant differences in attitudes by those who partake in sexting and those who do not. This warrants further investigation to understand how this potential shift in societal norms around sexting may have influenced attitudes toward IBSA.

It can be interpreted from the findings that there is a gendered nature to IBSAMA (and subsequently proclivity) as sexual double standards and ambivalent sexism were positive predictors. In accordance with previous research sexist beliefs and double standards were found to be associated with IBSAMA (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Pina et al., 2017; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Talbot et al., 2010; Van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). Naezer and van Oosterhout (2021) identified that general taboos around sexting and gendered sexual norms were important themes in all interviews concerning IBSAMA. With traditional gender norms discouraging promiscuous sexual behaviour in women, it is unsurprising that this influences the level of blame attributed towards victims of a sexually abusive behaviour. These beliefs operate through schema-driven processing, where individuals rely on pre-existing gendered scripts to evaluate behaviour (McKimmie et al., 2020; Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013; Ward et al., 2006). When victims deviate from these scripts, they are judged more harshly, and perpetrators may feel justified in their actions (Flynn et al., 2023; McKimmie et al., 2020). These schemas also interact with moral disengagement mechanisms and IBSAMA, allowing individuals to excuse or minimise the consequences of IBSA. The findings of this study suggest that sexism and sexual double standards actively shape the cognitive and moral landscape in which IBSA behaviours are legitimised.

In addition to the influence of gendered norms and sexism, this study also explored the role of consent beliefs in shaping IBSAMA and proclivity to perpetrate IBSA. The findings highlighted that strong beliefs around seeking and adhering to consent during sexual interactions are negatively related to IBSAMA and proclivity; individuals with lower intentions for seeking and adhering to consent, had greater levels of IBSAMA and proclivity. Lack of consent is an integral part of sexual abuse, however, its relationship with IBSAMA and proclivity is a novel finding that remains unexplored in IBSA literature. Nevertheless, the

findings of the present study are reflected in the offline sexual abuse field. Moyano et al. (2023) identified significant relationships between rape supportive attitudes and measures of consent (using the Sexual Consent Scale-Revised; Humphreys & Brousseau, 2010). They identified that positive attitudes towards establishing consent were negatively related to endorsement of rape supportive attitudes whilst norms of sexual consent and lack of perceived control were positively related. Furthermore, research has linked sexual consent (beliefs, knowledge, or comprehension) to the perpetration of sexual assault (Schipani-McLaughlin et al., 2023; Warren et al., 2015; Zinzow & Thompson, 2019). The findings demonstrated in the present study shed light on the importance of consent in myth acceptance and perpetration proclivity, but further research is required to affirm these relationships in the online realm and cases of IBSA.

Limitations and Future Research

The significance of consent beliefs and IBSAMA in predicting IBSA proclivity has important implications for educational interventions. By identifying IBSAMA as a mediating factor, this study highlights a critical target for educational and preventative efforts. Reducing myth endorsement may disrupt the attitudinal pathway that leads to IBSA proclivity. These findings suggest that myth acceptance and poor understanding of consent reflect deeper cognitive processes that enable the justification of IBSA behaviour. In efforts to combat this, consent should be taught not only as a legal concept but as a relational and ethical practice, emphasising mutual respect, emotional awareness, and boundary recognition (Klement et al., 2017). By integrating consent literacy with myth-debunking strategies, interventions can disrupt the cognitive pathways that lead from distorted beliefs to behavioural intent. This approach is especially relevant in digital contexts, where ambiguity around image sharing and online norms may obscure the importance of consent and accountability (Suler, 2004).

Whilst the present research has important implications for understanding the relationship between myth acceptance and proclivity it does not provide a holistic scope of IBSA proclivity. The methods relied on the pre-existing RPPS which exclusively focuses on revenge pornography scenarios, omitting other forms of IBSA, such as sextortion or non-consensual image sharing for financial gain. This limitation restricts the generalisability of the findings and highlights the need for a more comprehensive IBSA proclivity scale. The next stage of research required the development of a more nuanced IBSA proclivity scale that encapsulates a fuller scope of IBSA behaviours.

Due to a similar research design, some of the methodological limitations from Study 1 remain considerations. In particular, the focus on likelihood to perpetrate criminal behaviour in this study means that self-report measures are especially vulnerable to social desirability bias. Although, participants were assured of their anonymity, and that data would be confidential in attempt to circumvent this. While prevalence rates are reported, caution is warranted due to sampling limitations. In addition to the potential of social desirability bias, the use of online convenience samples may not fully represent the general population. Participants also continued to express disfavour of the ASI scale not having a middle response option. As sexism is a central focus of this research, future studies shall include a neutral response option in the scale to ensure that 'forced' agreement or disagreement does not have an impact on the findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the present research has provided empirical support for the relationship between IBSAMA and revenge pornography proclivity. IBSA incites a culture of myth acceptance due to gendered norms and sexism, but it is also shown that this can be improved by positive consent beliefs. Additionally, this study was among the first to examine the mediating role of IBSAMA in the context of IBSA proclivity, adding a novel dimension to the

existing literature. The mediating role of IBSAMA suggests that myth acceptance may serve as a cognitive framework through which predictors, such as ambivalent sexism and sexual double standards, shape proclivity. It is now important to explore this model of IBSAMA and proclivity whilst addressing a wider range of IBSA behaviours.

Chapter 4

Developing and Validating the Image-Based Sexual Abuse Proclivity Scale

Introduction

Proclivity research thus far has been highly focused on revenge pornography scenarios which do not cover the full range of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) behaviours. It is important to identify the psychological underpinnings of IBSA as an umbrella term, to have more preventative interventions that apply in scenarios beyond revenge motivated abuse. There was therefore a pressing need for the development of an IBSA proclivity scale to measure the propensity to perpetrate the main types of IBSA (e.g., sextortion, deepfakes, taking, sharing, and threatening to share intimate images without consent), and extend the utility of the existing revenge pornography proclivity scale (RPPS; Pina et al., 2017). Before proceeding with the next stage of research, it was imperative to develop and validate an IBSA proclivity scale that could be used to explore predictors of IBSA. This chapter presents the development and validation of the Image-Based Sexual Abuse Proclivity Scale (IBSAPS).

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using the participant recruitment website Prolific. Prolific has been highlighted as having some of the most high-quality data in comparison to other online data collection methods and student samples (Douglas et al., 2023). The only inclusion requirements were that the participants were over the age of 18, live in the UK and can understand English fluently. Participants of all ages were included to capture a broad spectrum of attitudes and behaviours. This decision reflects the diverse nature of IBSA perpetration, which, although more common, is not confined to youth populations (Henry et al., 2019a). Participants were rewarded £3 for participation (an average payment rate of £11

per hour). A total of 526 participants signed up for the study, however, 10 participants were excluded for incompletion and one participant was excluded due to an exceptionally quick response time (a statistical outlier).

We opted for a larger sample size as this will result in more precise estimates of the correlation coefficient and a smaller margin of error. Additionally, it is presumed that the target population, those with higher proclivity to perpetrate and/or greater endorsement of IBSA myths, will be a smaller proportion of the general population. A priori analysis using G*Power was used to determine required sample size for regression analyses (analyses conducted in Chapter 5). To detect medium to large effect sizes (with 80% power and $p<.05$), a sample size of 68-139 is required. Based on the existing literature, there is an expectation of skewness with a floor effect as uses of revenge pornography proclivity scales report only around 1 in 4 participants demonstrating proclivities beyond absolute refusal (Karasavva et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017). Accounting for this ratio, it would proportionately suggest a required sample of 272-556 for regression analyses. Furthermore, the selection of 500 participants also supports the required sample size for scale validation; the rule of thumb would require a minimum of 50 participants to validate a 10-item scale (5 participants per item; Kyriazos, 2018), proportionately suggesting a required sample of 200 participants, thus allowing the splitting of the sample to conduct both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, whilst still meeting minimum sample requirement thresholds.

The final dataset included a sample of 515 participants, comprised of 165 men, 343 women, and 6 participants who categorised as other (this included three non-binary participants, one gender-queer participant, one agender participant and one participant who did not specify beyond ‘other‘). One participant did not disclose their gender. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 77 (M = 37.34, SD= 12.69). Further demographic characteristics are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Demographic Characteristics

Demographic	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	165	32.0%
Female	343	66.6%
Non-Binary	3	0.6%
Gender Queer	1	0.2%
Agender	1	0.2%
Undisclosed	2	0.4%
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	431	83.7%
Homosexual	21	4.1%
Bisexual	48	9.3%
Pansexual	8	1.6%
Undisclosed	7	1.4%
Ethnicity		
White	458	88.9%
Black	15	2.9%
Asian	22	4.3%
Mixed or Multiple	17	3.3%
Other	1	0.2%
Undisclosed	2	0.4%
Highest Education Level		
Less than High School	3	0.6%
High School	57	11.1%
College/A-Levels	143	27.8%
Undergraduate Degree	191	37.1%
Master's Degree	102	19.8%
Doctoral Degree	15	2.9%
Undisclosed	4	0.8%
Employment Status		
Employed Full Time	244	47.4%
Employed Part-Time	83	16.10%
Unable to Work	23	4.50%
Student	51	9.90%
Retired	30	5.80%
Self-Employed	33	6.40%
Unemployed - Looking	23	4.50%
Unemployed - Not Looking	27	5.20%
Undisclosed	1	0.2%

Procedure and Materials

Scale Conceptualisation

The IBSAPS was developed by adapting the RPPS (Pina et al., 2017). As outlined in the previous chapter, the RPPS is a 5-vignette scale describing different 'revenge pornography' scenarios, each followed by a single proclivity question asking participants '*in this situation would you do the same?*'. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from *definitely would not do the same* (1) to *definitely would do the same* (5). It also includes additional questions for optional further analysis that explore feelings of amusement, excitement, control, anger, blame and regret.

The open feedback received following Study 2 (in Chapter 3) was screened for comments pertaining to the RPPS. There were a few comments that also identified a need for this topic to include scenarios that are focused on a wider breadth of IBSA behaviours e.g. "I also think in general we should make a distinction between revenge pornography… in my experience most nudes that are shared of another person without their consent, is not done out of spite." Furthermore, the remaining comments relating to the RPPS referred to the question structure causing confusion. In particular, the proclivity question being asked first and the revenge pornography approval/enjoyment questions being subsequent confused participants. Those who indicated that they *definitely would not* do the same in response to the proclivity question were unsure in the follow-up questions whether to imagine how they would feel if they had done the behaviour (as stated in the vignette) or if they had not (as responded in the proclivity question). Furthermore, some participants highlighted that sometimes the questions were ambiguous, and they were unsure if referring to their feelings for having done the behaviour or for the situation leading up to it. Finally, one comment found the excitement question ambiguous, questioning whether it referred to sexual excitement or anticipation.

In response to this feedback, a slightly different approach was utilised for the IBSAPS as compared to the RPPS. Firstly, the additional questions pertaining to approval and enjoyment were delivered prior to the proclivity question instead of after. Secondly, the additional questions were clearer in specifying the feeling direction e.g. *how angry would you feel **at the person depicted**?* Furthermore, each question was delivered in the same format but respecified the behaviour in the scenario e.g. *how amusing would you find **taking the photo**?* Or *how thrilling would you find **sharing the photo**?* Moreover, the proclivity measure slightly differs from the original RPPS, recording 'likelihood' to carry out the behaviour as has been used in more recent research for better clarity (Fido et al., 2022; Harper et al., 2023).

To capture a more complete range of IBSA behaviours the scale was expanded to 10 vignettes that capture the creation, distribution, and threat of distribution of private sexual images as well as including specific IBSA behaviours such as upskirting, sextortion and deepfakes. The additional questions that capture enjoyment were adapted for more clarity and to reflect the enjoyment-based 'motivations' identified in the literature: replacing *excitement*, *amusement* and *in control* with *thrill*, *amusement* and *sexual arousal* (Powell et al., 2018).

The questions capturing approval of IBSA behaviour were retained from the original RPPS: *blame,* anger and *regret*. Blame of the victim overtly measures the victim blame aspect of IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA). The 'anger' item was included to capture affective responses that may reflect moral disengagement or retaliatory motives. Anger toward victims or situations may indicate underlying hostility and justification for abusive behaviour. Finally, the regret item was included to capture post-behavioural moral evaluation, providing an indirect indicator of anticipated guilt or moral conflict.

Scale Development

The development of the vignettes was initially formulated with experts from the Centre of Research and Education of Forensic Psychology at the University of Kent, many of

whom have developed and published Proclivity scales. The scenarios were discussed and developed based on clarity, realism, and how well the full scale captured a range of IBSA behaviours. A key focus was ensuring that the scenarios were not heavily weighted towards romantic relationships and revenge motivations to distinguish from revenge pornography proclivity. The adaptions made based on the feedback to the RPPS were also discussed and approved by the expert group.

A pilot study of the scale was then conducted on a small sample to assure the clarity and interpretability of the scale. This included 10 participants (aged 18-25, 60% female) that were students or graduates from the University of Kent. All participants reported no clarity concerns with the vignettes or the structure of the questions. This reassured the final version of the IBSAPS.

The IBSA Proclivity Scale

The IBSAPS contained a series of 10 short vignettes describing an IBSA scenario in which the participants are to imagine that they are the individual described (the perpetrator). These vignettes describe (1) revenge pornography, (2) sharing an image of a stranger with friends, (3) sharing online, (4) upskirting, (5) voyeurism, (6) sextortion, (7) sexploitation, (8) sharing an unsolicited sexual image received, (9) sharing image of a current partner with friends, and (10) creating and distributing a deepfake image. See Appendix C for the full scale, but an example scenario includes:

> '*You have an attractive neighbour, whose bedroom you have direct view of. Your neighbour is not aware and often forgets to close their curtains when changing. On one occasion you decide to take photos of the neighbour through the window while they are naked so that you can keep the photos on your phone.'*

Following each vignette, participants were asked a series of questions to determine potential motives and levels of victim blame, in addition to their likelihood to have perpetrated

the IBSA behaviour described. The first three questions targeted IBSA enjoyment by asking the participant "imagining you were in this situation, how (1) thrilling / (2) amusing/ (3) sexually arousing would you find taking the photos?". The latter half of the question was altered depending on the scenario and referred to either the sharing, uploading, sending, threatening to share, or taking the photo(s)/image(s). Responses are recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Not at All* (1) to *Very* (5). These three items were averaged across vignettes to present an IBSA enjoyment score.

The following three questions targeted the level of approval for the behaviour by asking participants how angry they would be with the person depicted, how much they would blame the person depicted and how regretful they would feel. This was asked in the same format as the first three questions, for example, 'Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about taking the photos?'. Responses were also recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Not at All* (1) to *Very* (5). These three items were averaged across vignettes (after reverse-coding regret) to calculate an IBSA approval score representing victim blame and behaviour justification.

Proclivity was measured in the final question by asking participants, if they were in the situation, how likely it is that they would have taken/uploaded/shared/threatened to share the photos. The latter half of the question was altered depending on the scenario and referred to either the sharing, uploading, sending, threatening to share, or taking the photo(s)/image(s). Responses were reported using a five-point Likert scale ranging from *Extremely Unlikely* (1) to *Extremely Likely* (5). Total scores for IBSA proclivity were calculated by averaging the scores of the 10 vignettes.

The present analyses only focused on validating the proclivity scale, more exploration of the additional IBSA approval and IBSA enjoyment elements of the scale are discussed in the following chapter.

Procedure

Data collection for this scale validation formed part of a larger study that explored predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA (see Chapter 5). The procedure was identical to Studies 1 and 2 apart from participant recruitment. All the materials were compiled into a single questionnaire, and then linked to Prolific which recruited participants with the offer of a £3.00 reward. Upon following the link to the questionnaire, participants were first presented with an information sheet and a consent form that had to be completed before they could proceed. Participants were asked to provide their Prolific ID, both for reward purposes and to allow their data to be identified in case they chose to withdraw later. The questionnaire presented the measures for predictor variables first in a randomised order (see Chapter 5 for further detail) and then the IBSAPS was presented. The IBSAPS scenarios were presented in the order shown in Appendix C. The study was completed with a debrief sheet explaining the background of the research and its aims. This also included the contact for a revenge pornography helpline if they felt they needed any advice or support on the topic.

Data Analysis Plan

Whilst Prolific and Qualtrics provide measures to prevent bots and repeat participation, as data was collected using an online resource, additional scrutiny of the data was carried out. The time taken to complete the questionnaire, response patterns and completion of the attention check requiring them to input a unique code from the questionnaire were all assessed. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was 16 minutes.

The analyses were conducted using R studio with the Lavaan and Psych packages. Whilst a single-factor structure is theorised, due to the inclusion of different types of IBSA behaviour, an EFA was conducted first to confirm. This was followed by CFA to determine

whether the data fitted the factor solution presented by EFA. Finally, the reliability of the scale was analysed using Cronbach's alpha and Guttman's split-half reliability testing.

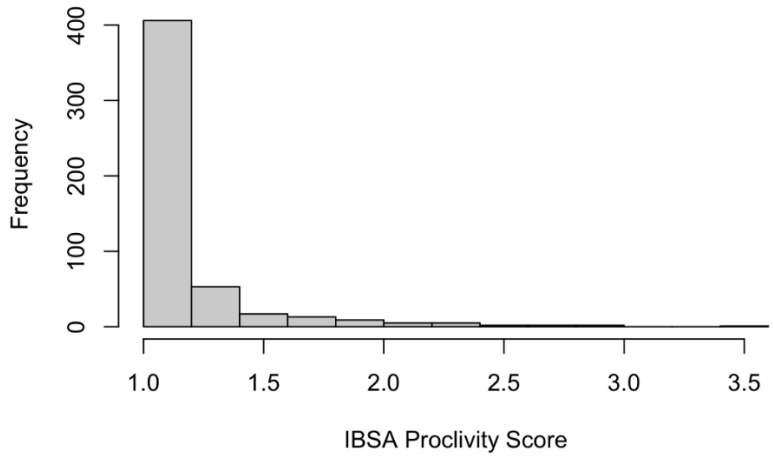
Results

Data Preparation

A histogram (see Figure 5) and a Q-Q plot were used to visualise the distribution and interpret the normality of the data. The histogram demonstrated that the data is skewed to the right, and the Q-Q plot indicated deviations from normality, suggesting a non-normal distribution. A Shapiro-Wilk normality test was conducted to confirm these observations, and results indicated a significant departure from normality (W=.58, p < .001).

Figure 5

Histogram of IBSA Proclivity Scores



Participants with missing data on any of the proclivity items were also inspected and excluded. Eight participants had each missed a single proclivity question, seemingly by mistake. Therefore, 507 participants were retained for the scale validation. To conduct both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) the data file was then split at random. This resulted in a sample size of 253 for EFA and 254 for CFA.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Suitability for Factor Analysis

The suitability of the dataset for EFA was assessed using Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure. Bartlett's test was significant ($\chi^2 = 873.45$, df = 45, $p < .001$), indicating that correlations among items were sufficiently large for EFA. The overall KMO value was 0.78, with individual item KMO values ranging from 0.72 to 0.87, suggesting sampling adequacy.

Factor Extraction

A scree plot was produced to determine the number of factors (see Figure 6). The scree plot suggested a single-factor solution, which accounted for 35% of variance. Factor loadings ranged from 0.37 to 0.71, with most items demonstrating moderate to high loadings (see Table 18), supporting that all items contributed sufficiently to the unidimensional structure.

Figure 6

Scree Plot Representing the Number of Factors to be Extracted from the EFA

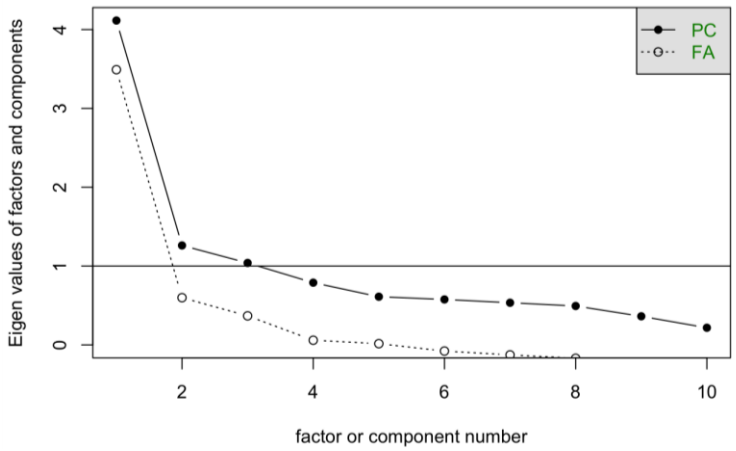


Table 18

Factor Loadings of IBSAPS Items onto a Single Factor

Item	Factor Loading (Standardised)
Item 1 – Revenge pornography	.37
Item 2 – Sharing an image with friends	.52
Item 3 – Sharing an image online	.54
Item 4 – Upskirting	.63
Item 5 – Voyeurism	.61
Item 6 – Sextortion	.60
Item 7 – Sexploitation	.71
Item 8 – Sharing an unsolicited sexual image	.55
Item 9 – Sharing an image of partner with friends	.71
Item 10 – Creating and distributing a deepfake image	.60

Note. N=253

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted with the second half of the dataset to assess the one-factor structure of the IBSAPS identified in the EFA. This was conducted using the Lavaan package in R. Due to the non-normal distribution of the data the Maximum Likelihood Robust estimator was used. The model included a single latent variable (IBSA Proclivity) with ten observed indicators (the 10 proclivity items from the IBSAPS).

Initial Model and Modification Indices

The fit indices for the initial model indicated an inadequate fit to the data ($\chi 2(35) = 69.19$, $p = .001$; see Table 19). Whilst the SRMR is within an acceptable range (<.08), the RMSEA, CFI, TLI and chi-square suggest a degree of misfit and a need for model modification.

Modification indices were examined to identify areas of misfit that would improve the model. The largest suggested modification was to allow items 4 and 5 to covary (*MI*=66.66). Items 4 and 5 of the proclivity scale are the two examples of non-consensual capturing of

images. It is theoretically supported that these items would covary and therefore the model was re-specified to allow for this.

Table 19

Fit Indices of CFA of the One-Factor Models of the IBSAPS

Model	χ^2 (df)	*p*	CFI	TLI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR
Initial	69.19(35)	.001	.83	.77	.09 (.06, .12)	.076
Final	31.27(34)	.623	1.00	1.02	.00 (.00, .06)	.048

Note. *N*=254, Thresholds of acceptability include >.90 for CFI and TLI, and <.08 for RMSEA and SRMR.

Final Model

The final model re-estimated the CFA, following the model modification. This modification led to adequate model fit, $\chi2(34) = 31.27$, $p=.602$ (see Table 19). The non-significant chi-square and modification indices within thresholds demonstrates model fit and supports the validity of the one-factor structure of the proclivity scale. The items demonstrated moderate factor loadings to the single factor (see Table 20). This indicates that each item contributes meaningfully to the measurement of the overall construct of IBSA proclivity, although Item 4 was borderline.

Table 20

Factor Loadings of IBSAPS Items onto a Single Factor.

Item	Factor Loading (Standardised)
Item 1 – Revenge pornography	.54
Item 2 – Sharing an image with friends	.59
Item 3 – Sharing an image online	.47
Item 4 – Upskirting	.28
Item 5 – Voyeurism	.35
Item 6 – Sextortion	.30
Item 7 – Sexploitation	.61
Item 8 – Sharing an unsolicited sexual image	.54
Item 9 – Sharing an image of partner with friends	.59

Item 10 – Creating and distributing a deepfake image	.55

Note. N=254

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha was calculated using the full sample to assess the internal consistency of the IBSAPS. The raw alpha was 0.78, and the standardised alpha was 0.81 (95% Confidence Intervals = .76, .81), indicating good reliability. Corrected item-total correlations for the 10 items ranged from .41 to .64 (see Table 21), indicating that all items sufficiently correlated with the overall construct in both samples. The values of the Cronbach's alpha if items were removed only ranged from .76 to.77 (see Table 21), demonstrating that no single item substantially detracted from the scale's reliability. This confirms that all items contribute meaningfully to the overall construct and that the internal consistency of the scale is supported. Split-half reliability was also assessed, using Guttman's lambda coefficients. The Guttman's split-half coefficient was .80 (ranging from .69 to .86), indicating good internal consistency above the generally accepted threshold of .70.

Table 21

Item-Statistics for Cronbach's Alpha Analysis of the Proclivity Scale

Item	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's α if Item Removed
Item 1 – Revenge pornography	.41	.77
Item 2 – Sharing an image with friends	.55	.76
Item 3 – Sharing an image online	.52	.76
Item 4 – Upskirting	.52	.77
Item 5 – Voyeurism	.56	.77
Item 6 – Sextortion	.49	.77
Item 7 – Sexploitation	.64	.76
Item 8 – Sharing an unsolicited sexual image	.53	.77
Item 9 – Sharing an image of partner with friends	.64	.76
Item 10 – Creating and distributing a deepfake image	.58	.76

Note. *N*=507

Discussion

The IBSAPS represents a significant advancement in measuring IBSA proclivity. The scale successfully captures multiple dimensions of IBSA behaviours, distinguishing itself from previous measures like the RPPS. By encompassing multiple facets of IBSA, including coercion, deepfakes and voyeurism, this scale offers a more comprehensive tool for assessing IBSA proclivity across diverse scenarios. The results from EFA and CFA, in addition to theoretical coherence, demonstrate strong evidence for the unidimensionality of the IBSAPS, with acceptable model fit and good reliability. The scale also shows good internal consistency, supporting its use in assessing IBSA. The single-factor construct reflects a general proclivity toward IBSA behaviours across different modalities.

Although the psychometric properties are supported, it is essential to acknowledge the shortcomings of the scale. Most notably, the scale is particularly skewed with most participants selecting the lowest available response option. Whilst this would usually be a concern in scale development, it is important to recognise that the aim of the scale is to identify those that are likely to perpetrate a criminal behaviour. Therefore, it is expected that the majority of the general population would respond with absolute disagreement. Similar proclivity scales have been utilised in forensic psychology research for many years and have been effective in identifying predictors of deviant behaviours (Gannon & O'Connor, 2011; Parfitt & Alleyne, 2018; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). Though proclivity scales have been used successfully and some have been preliminarily validated, few are validated as rigorously as presented here.

It is also important to note that proclivity is an abstruse construct that is difficult to limit to a parsimonious scale as it can be influenced by a multitude of moral decisions. Additionally, it is very vulnerable to noise when using vignette-based items. Therefore, the IBSAPS does not explain a large amount of the variance. Whilst there are no defined

thresholds, a scale that explains a larger amount of variance is favourable. Though the scale is validated, future research may seek to strengthen the IBSAPS further to increase the amount of variance in proclivity that can be explained.

The validated IBSAPS provides a valuable resource for researchers investigating IBSA and related online sexual offences. By identifying key predictors of IBSA proclivity, future research can explore psychological, social, and contextual factors that contribute to these behaviours. The newly devised scale allows for assessment of the whole gamut of IBSA behaviours, whilst single vignettes could also be utilised independently to explore individual IBSA behaviours (for example deepfake proclivity has been explored using single vignettes e.g. Fido et al., 2022).

Beyond academic research, the IBSAPS also has significant practical applications. The scale could be used in educational and awareness programs aimed at preventing IBSA by identifying and addressing cognitive distortions that normalise such behaviours. This would be as part of broader assessment and teaching rather than a diagnostic tool for individuals. For example, the vignettes can aid interventions, such as workshops or counselling sessions, by identifying and challenging harmful beliefs and promoting ethical digital behaviour. Using the IBSAPS as a tool to highlight individuals at risk would carry moral and ethical concerns and could have the unintended consequence of reinforcing the behaviour.

The IBSAPS offers a robust and comprehensive measure of IBSA proclivity, addressing gaps in previous research and providing a foundation for future investigations into digital sexual offences. Its applications in both research and practice have the potential to contribute to the prevention and intervention of IBSA, ultimately supporting efforts to combat online sexual harm. Now that there is a psychometrically validated measure of IBSA proclivity, the next stage of research can explore predictors of IBSA.

Chapter 5

Study 3: The Role of Myth Acceptance in Predicting Image-Based Sexual Abuse Perpetration Proclivity

Introduction

Whilst steps are being taken to explore the characteristics associated with image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) proclivity this has been limited in scope. Proclivity research has been very focused on revenge pornography scenarios, which do not cover the full range of IBSA behaviours. As outlined in Chapter 4 it is important to identify the psychological underpinnings of IBSA to have more preventative interventions that apply in scenarios beyond revenge motivated abuse.

The following study utilised the new IBSA proclivity scale (IBSAPS, reported in Chapter 4) to measure the influence of certain predictors on the propensity to perpetrate the main types of IBSA. Specifically, as identified by previous literature and empirical findings in earlier chapters, sexism, sexting behaviour, sexual consent beliefs, and victim experiences were explored again as predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA; Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Walker et al., 2021; refer to Chapter 3 for a comprehensive review of these variables and their application to IBSA).

The Dark Tetrad was also introduced as a predictor variable due to the literature emphasising its significance in online sexual abuse (e.g. Pina et al., 2017) and other forms of violence. In addition, this chapter examines gender differences in the relationships between the variables of interest and both IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity. This is particularly important given the inconsistent findings in the literature regarding gendered patterns of IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance (e.g., Powell et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2021).

Sexting Behaviour

In Study 2, sexting behaviour was significantly correlated with both IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA. Participants who reported more frequent engagement in sexting also tended to score higher on both outcome measures. This aligned with previous research suggesting that sexting can be a risk factor for both victimisation and perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019; Walker et al., 2021).

Sexting may normalise the digital exchange of sexual content, potentially blurring boundaries around consent and privacy. When sexting becomes trivialised, individuals may be more likely to minimise the harm associated with non-consensual sharing, or to perceive such behaviours as less serious (Clancy et al., 2020). Moreover, frequent sexting may reflect broader sensation-seeking tendencies, which have been linked to online sexual aggression and aggravated forms of sexting and sexual abuse (Dodaj & Sesar, 2020). Given these associations, sexting behaviour is included in Study 3 as a behavioural predictor that may interact with attitudinal and personality variables to influence IBSA proclivity.

Victim Experiences

Study 2 revealed that individuals with prior experiences of IBSA victimisation reported significantly higher levels of myth acceptance and, in some cases, proclivity. One possible explanation is cognitive dissonance, victims may adopt myth-endorsing beliefs to rationalise or minimise their own experiences, especially in contexts where victim blaming is prevalent (Pijlman et al., 2023). Alternatively, prior victimisation may lead to desensitisation or internalised stigma, which could increase tolerance for IBSA-related behaviours (Flynn et al., 2023). This somewhat counterintuitive finding suggests a complex relationship between victimisation and attitudes toward IBSA, warranting further investigation in the present study.

Sexual Consent Beliefs

Distorted beliefs about sexual consent were significantly associated with both outcome variables in Study 2. These beliefs likely reflect broader cognitive distortions that normalise or excuse IBSA. Such beliefs are well-documented in the literature on rape myth acceptance and have been shown to predict both offline and online sexual aggression (Masser et al., 2006; Viki et al., 2004). Moreover, these beliefs may interact with other attitudinal variables, such as sexism or moral disengagement, to reinforce permissive attitudes toward IBSA.

The Dark Tetrad

The Dark Tetrad of trait narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, and sadism has been highlighted in the literature as predictive of IBSA perpetration and proclivity but with varying outcomes (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). The first study to measure proclivity to perpetrate IBSA (limited to *revenge pornography* behaviours) explored the Dark Tetrad and, whilst all the traits were strongly related to proclivity, only psychopathy remained a significant predictor (Pina et al., 2017). Later research using the same proclivity scale found only sadism and psychopathy to be correlated with proclivity and only sadism to remain a significant predictor in a regression model (Pina et al., 2021). Karasavva et al. (2023) found significant correlations between the Dark Tetrad and revenge pornography proclivity, however, none of the dark personality traits were independent predictors of non-consensual intimate image dissemination.

Research carried out by Clancy et al. (2019, 2020) also had mixed findings. Both studies found a significant difference in levels of the dark triad traits between individuals that had and had not disseminated sexts (specifically containing explicit images) without consent. Meanwhile, the initial research found there to be no independent significant predictors amongst the dark triad characteristics once controlling for attitudes towards sexting behaviour and sexting behaviour. The later study found narcissism to be an independent predictor of

non-consensual sext dissemination in a regression model controlling for sexting behaviour, age and gender. Finally, more recent research measuring existing perpetration has demonstrated the significance of sadism and narcissism as predictors of sharing private sexual images without consent in a model controlling for demographics and attitudes (Karasavva & Forth, 2022).

The overlapping nature of the multi-dimensional Dark Tetrad traits (particularly Machiavellianism and psychopathy) may contribute to the disparity in findings across different samples (Miller et al., 2019). Furthermore, the relationship between the Dark Tetrad characteristics and attitudinal variables that are conceptually related (such as myth acceptance and moral disengagement) may further explain the different findings due to the exclusion of shared variance in regression analyses. When modelled with different attitudinal variables across studies it is likely that attitudinal facets are mediating relationships between the Dark Tetrad and proclivity, resulting in varied outcomes dependent on additional variables measured.

The present landscape of research on the Dark Tetrad and IBSA bestows inconclusive findings on the predictive value it holds. The present paper aims to investigate the relationship further whilst also ensuring that all identified IBSA behaviours are being considered rather than just dissemination in revenge pornography scenarios.

Hostile versus Benevolent Sexism

So far, the research in this thesis has explored ambivalent sexism as a predictor associated with the propensity to perpetrate IBSA. The present study aimed to differentiate between hostile (prejudicial and unequivocally negative) and benevolent sexism (subjectively positive and prosocial) to determine any unique relationships each has with proclivity and myth acceptance. Whilst previous studies in the literature (Pina et al., 2017) have found the

significant role of ambivalent sexism in IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance, research has yet to identify the specific roles of hostile and benevolent sexism (Pina et al., 2021).

The available literature, focusing predominantly on offline sexual abuse, commonly associates victim blaming and myth acceptance with benevolent sexism whilst proclivity is associated with hostile sexism (Abrams et al., 2003; Masser et al., 2006, 2010; Viki et al., 2004). Theoretical frameworks suggest that the forms of sexism may influence IBSA attitudes and behaviours in distinct ways. Hostile sexism is linked to aggression, dominance, and the justification of violence against women, making it a likely driver of IBSA proclivity (Abrams et al., 2003; Masser et al., 2006). Individuals high in hostile sexism may be more likely to perceive IBSA as a legitimate means of punishing or controlling women who violate traditional gender norms, such as by engaging in sexting or sexual self-expression. Benevolent sexism, while superficially positive, reinforces traditional gender roles and can subtly legitimise victim blaming (Masser et al., 2010; Viki et al., 2004). In the context of IBSA, those high in benevolent sexism may be more likely to excuse perpetrators or minimise the harm experienced by victims, particularly if the victim is perceived as having transgressed gendered expectations.

Although existing literature regarding hostile versus benevolent sexism and IBSA is limited, it does suggest that there may be discrepancies in the association with IBSA proclivity between these beliefs.

The Role of Gender

It has been found that perpetration of IBSA is significantly more likely to be reported in men compared to women (Barrense-Dias et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020). This holds true across all types of IBSA: taking, distributing, and threatening to distribute private sexual images of another without consent. Similarly, research has demonstrated that men report significantly greater IBSAMA and victim blame than women

(Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Zvi & Bitton, 2021). On the other hand, there is research that has found no significant differences in IBSA perpetration between genders (Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Walker et al., 2021). The present study will investigate gender differences in prevalence and also explore gender differences in predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA.

The Present Study

In the present study, as identified by previous literature, the variables of interest were IBSAMA, hostile and benevolent sexism, sexting behaviour, victim experience, sexual consent beliefs, and the Dark Tetrad (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Walker et al., 2021). In addition to exploring the predictors of IBSA proclivity using the newly formed IBSAPS, IBSAMA was examined to determine the predictive relationships these variables have. The following hypotheses/aims were established:

1) It was hypothesised that IBSA proclivity would be significantly positively related to IBSAMA, sexism, sexting, IBSA victimisation, and the Dark Tetrad; and negatively related to sexual consent beliefs.
2) Secondly, it was hypothesised that IBSAMA would be significantly related to these same variables, however, a negative relationship with IBSA victimisation is also anticipated.
3) A significant regression model for IBSA proclivity was expected with (a) IBSAMA, (b) sexism, (c) consent seeking, (d) consent adherence and (e) the Dark Tetrad (Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism, and sadism) as significant predictors.
4) A similar significant model was expected for IBSAMA with (a) IBSA proclivity, (b) sexism, (c) consent seeking, (d) consent adherence, (e) the Dark Tetrad, (f) sexting behaviours, and (g) IBSA victimisation as significant predictors.

5) Finally, this study aimed to explore the gendered nature of IBSA proclivity to establish gender differences in prevalence as well as any gender differences in predictors.

Method

Participants

This study was carried out concurrently with the validation of the IBSAPS and therefore included the same 515 participants outlined in the participants section of the previous chapter. For more details on the sample, refer to Chapter 4.

Measures

IBSA and Sexting Experience

IBSA victimisation and sexting activity were measured using the similar measures as studies one and two (see Chapter 2). Participants were asked dichotomous 'yes or no' questions to determine if they have ever *sent a sexual image*, *received a sexual image*, and if they had *ever received an unsolicited sexual image* that they did not consent to. Participants were also asked if they had ever *had a private sexual image of themselves shared without their consent* and whether *a close friend or family member had ever had a private sexual image of themselves shared without consent*, these had an additional 'don't know' response option as well as a '*yes*' or '*no*'.

In addition, participants were asked *if someone had ever threatened to share a private sexual image of them without their consent* (with '*yes*' or '*no*' response options) and *whether a close friend or family member had ever been threatened to have a private sexual image of themselves shared without consen*t (with '*yes*', '*no*' and '*don't know*' response options).

Building on the set of questions that were used in the previous studies, this research also asked participants if they *have ever sent a private sexual image of another without consent* and whether they *have ever sent an unsolicited sexual image to another*. These

questions measured existing perpetration of technology-facilitated sexual violence: IBSA behaviour via sharing and cyberflashing.

Sexism

As with studies one and two, ambivalent sexism was measured using the 12-item short version of the ASI (Glick & Whitehead, 2010; outlined in Chapter 2). Differing to the previous studies and the original scale, participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7) instead of the 6-point Likert scale. This allowed participants to respond with 'neutral' where desired instead of being forced into agreement or disagreement. The scale was divided into the subscales of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism by averaging the according six variables. Higher scores indicated a greater endorsement of (hostile and/or benevolent) sexism. Both subscales demonstrated good reliability in the sample, with Cronbach's alpha scores of .81 for the benevolent sexism subscale and .90 for the hostile sexism subscale.

Sexual Consent

Sexual consent was measured using the adapted version of the short sexual consent scale formed by Hust et al. (2014) as reported in Study 2 (see Chapter 3). This includes consent items that pertain to intimate images as well as physical sexual behaviour. As previously, scores were calculated for each of the three sub scales (*consent seeking*, *consent adherence* and *consent refusal*) by averaging the scores of the respective statements.

The consent seeking and consent refusal subscales demonstrated reliability, with Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from .77 to .79, the additional items did not detract from the reliability of the overall scales. The adherence subscale presented a lower internal consistency of .6, however, due to the low number of items (<5) this was deemed acceptable.

Dark Tetrad

The Dark Tetrad traits of narcissism, psychopathy, Machiavellianism, and sadism were measured using the Short Dark Tetrad (SD4; Paulhus et al., 2021). The 28-item scale measures participants level of agreement with statements on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The 28-items of the SD4 are representative of four 7-item subscales measuring each of the dark personality constructs. Example items include: 'watching a fist-fight excites me' (sadism), 'people often say I'm out of control' (psychopathy), 'I know that I am special because people keep telling me so' (narcissism), and 'Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side' (Machiavellianism). Scores for each construct were calculated by averaging the responses of the subscale items. Paulhus et al. (2021) demonstrated construct validity (based on correlates of personality traits consistent with previous research) as well as adequate reliability for the SD4 with α's ranging from .74 to .83. The reliability of the subscales in the present study was identical with Cronbach's alpha scores also ranging from .74 to .83.

IBSA Myth Acceptance

IBSAMA was again measured using the sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance (SIAMA) scale devised by Powell et al. (2019). The 18-item scale (α = .85), made up of a 12-item minimise/excuse component (α = .79) and a 6-item blame component (α = .90), is scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All the scores were averaged to give an overall IBSAMA score; higher scores are indicative of increased blame towards the victim, minimisation of harm suffered and excusal for the perpetrator.

IBSA Proclivity

The new IBSAPS was developed to measure IBSA proclivity in this study (see Appendix C). As outlined in Chapter 4, the scale presents 10 vignettes describing various IBSA scenarios, including creation, distribution, and threats related to private sexual images, as well as upskirting, sextortion, and deepfakes. Following each vignette, participants responded to

seven questions assessing IBSA enjoyment, approval, and proclivity. Enjoyment was measured through perceptions of thrill, amusement, and arousal (Cronbach's α = .96), while approval was assessed via anger, victim blame, and regret (Cronbach's α = .79). Proclivity was determined by participants' self-reported likelihood of engaging in the described behaviour (Cronbach's α = .78). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale, and total scores were calculated by averaging responses across vignettes. Refer to Chapter 4 for an in-depth description of the scale and its psychometric properties.

Procedure

As outlined in Chapter 4, the materials were compiled into a single questionnaire which was then linked to Prolific. Participants were first presented with an information sheet, consent form and asked to include their Prolific ID for reward purposes and so that their data could be identified later if they decided to withdraw. The demographics as well as questions regarding sexting activity and IBSA victimisation were delivered first. Following this, the ASI, sexual consent and SD4 measures were delivered in a randomised order with roughly equally distributed combinations. The participants then completed the SIAMA and finally the IBSAPS. The study was completed with a debrief sheet explaining the background of the research and its aims. This also included the contact for a revenge pornography helpline if they felt they needed any advice or support on the topic.

Data Analysis Plan

Whilst Prolific and Qualtrics provide measures to prevent bots and repeat participation, as data was collected using an online resource, additional scrutinization of the data was carried out. The time taken to complete the questionnaire, response patterns and completion of the attention check requiring them to input a unique code from the questionnaire were all assessed. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was 16 minutes.

Data analyses were conducted using SPSS 28. All scales were averaged as outlined in the materials to present overall variable scores for each participant. When calculating averages, analysis allowed for one missing item per scale so that representative scores could still be computed for any participants that mistakenly missed a single item. Initially, descriptives were explored to identify the prevalence of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA in the sample.

To measure relationships between predictor variables and both IBSA Proclivity and IBSAMA multiple regressions were conducted. To determine which variables would be entered into the regression models, non-parametric comparisons and correlations between predictors and IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA were assessed first. Only those that demonstrated significant relationships were included in the models.

As IBSA is cited as a gendered issue (e.g. Powell et al., 2022), the gender differences in prevalence and relationships with predictor variables were explored. This replicated the core analyses by assessing non-parametric comparisons and correlations and then entering significantly related variables into multiple regression analyses.

On an exploratory basis, analyses were also conducted to compare relationships between the predictor variables and the additional IBSAPS measures. Whilst it was beyond the scope of the aims of this thesis, the development of the IBSAPS included measures of IBSA approval and enjoyable feelings towards IBSA, including thrill, amusement and arousal. These findings are reported but are not discussed further for brevity. The analyses replicated the core analyses by assessing correlations and then entering significantly related variables into multiple regression analyses. IBSA approval was explored as a single construct, however, the components of IBSA enjoyment: thrill, amusement and sexual arousal were explored separately to determine any potential motive-based differences in predictors.

There was use of stepwise regression analyses for the proclivity, IBSAMA and gendered models. This was guided primarily by the number of predictors included in each model. In analyses involving a large number of potential predictors, stepwise regression was employed to identify the most statistically significant variables and reduce model complexity. This approach allowed for a more parsimonious model by excluding predictors that did not meaningfully contribute to the outcome, thereby improving interpretability and minimising the risk of multicollinearity. Conversely, in models with fewer predictors, stepwise regression was not used. This dual approach reflects a balance between data-driven model refinement and theory-informed analysis.

Results

Prevalence

To report prevalence in the sample, a degree of IBSA proclivity was assumed where participants answered with any response other than absolute disagreement on the IBSA proclivity scale. This process is frequently used for proclivity scales in IBSA research (Pina et al., 2017, 2021) and other criminal behaviours (Gannon & O'Connor, 2011; Parfitt & Alleyne, 2018). Using this method, 42.1% of participants presented some degree of IBSA proclivity. It must be noted however, that the mean IBSA proclivity score was 1.17 (*SD*=0.33) which is only slightly above 'strongly disagree' on the 1-5 scale. The average IBSAMA score was also relatively low with a mean of 1.89 (*SD*=0.72, range = 1 – 4.72), which sits closest to 'disagree' on the 1-7 scale. However, 65% of participants agreed with at least one IBSA myth in the scale.

The prevalence of IBSA victimisation, IBSA perpetration and sexting participation can be seen in Table 22. IBSA was experienced by more than 10% of the participants. More than 3% of participants reported perpetrating IBSA via the sharing of intimate images.

Table 22

Prevalence of IBSA and Sexting Behaviour

Variable	Yes		No		Don't Know	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
IBSA- Share						
Victim Self	32	6.2%	388	75.3%	94	18.3%
Know a Victim Closely	88	17.1%	268	52.0%	159	30.9%
Perpetration	17	3.3%	498	96.7%	-	-
IBSA-Threat to Share						
Victim Self	60	11.7%	452	87.8%	-	-
Know a Victim Closely	84	16.3%	268	52.0%	163	31.7%
Sexting						
Sent Sext	306	59.4%	209	40.6%	-	-
Received Sext	358	69.5%	157	30.5%	-	-
Unsolicited Sext						
Received Unsolicited Sext	235	45.6%	280	54.4%	-	-
Sent Unsolicited Sext	7	1.4%	508	98.6%	-	-

Aims 1 and 2: Non-Parametric Comparisons and Correlations

To test hypotheses one and two, initial analyses involved testing the relationships between both IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA with all predictor variables. The dichotomous and categorical variables measuring victimisation and sexting behaviours were analysed using non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis) due to the non-normal distribution of data and inclusion of outliers. As with prior studies, outliers were retained in this study as elevated indicators of criminal propensity are, by definition, deviations from normal behaviour.

Differences in IBSA Proclivity

IBSA Proclivity was compared to determine any differences between individuals who responded 'yes', 'no' or 'I don't know' to the measures of sexting experiences or IBSA victimisation experiences (see Table 23). There was a significant difference in IBSA proclivity for sending of sexts, with individuals who have sent a sext reporting significantly greater IBSA proclivity (M=1.18, SD=0.34) than individuals who have not (M=1.15,

SD=0.31), *U*=35308.50, *p*=.025. No other measures of sexting experiences or IBSA victimisation experiences demonstrated any significant differences in IBSA proclivity.

Table 23

Non-Parametric Comparisons of IBSA Proclivity for Categorical Measures

Variable	Yes		No		Don't Know		Non-Parametric Test Statistic
	n	*M*	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*	
IBSA- Share							
Victim Self	32	1.27	388	1.16	94	1.15	*H*=5.61
Know a Victim Closely	88	1.19	268	1.16	159	1.16	*H*=4.51
IBSA-Threat to Share							
Victim Self	60	1.19	452	1.17	-	-	*U*=15256
Know a Victim Closely	84	1.19	268	1.16	163	1.16	*H*=2.95
Sexting							
Sent Sext	306	1.18	209	1.15	-	-	*U*=35308.5*
Received Sext	358	1.16	157	1.18	-	-	*U*=28280.5
Unsolicited Sext							
Received Unsolicited Sext	235	1.16	280	1.18	-	-	*U*=33287.5
Sent Unsolicited Sext	7	1.21	508	1.17	-	-	*U*=1970.5

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Differences in IBSAMA

IBSAMA was also compared using non-parametric tests to determine any differences between individuals who responded 'yes', 'no' or 'I don't know' to the measures of sexting experiences or IBSA victimisation experiences (see Table 24). Significant differences in IBSAMA scores were found across responses to the IBSA victimisation via sharing measure, $H(2) = 11.06$, p=.004. Pairwise comparisons were made using the Dunn-Bonferroni post-hoc method. Individuals who responded with 'I don't know' did not significantly differ from the 'yes' (p=.481) or the 'no' (p=.120) groups. There was a significant difference between the 'yes' and 'no' groups such that individuals that had experienced IBSA victimisation (via sharing) reported significantly lower IBSAMA scores (*M*=1.62. *SD*=.75) compared to individuals who had not (*M*=1.94, *SD*=.73), p=.013.

There were also significant differences in IBSAMA scores for many of the sexting experience measures. Participants that reported that they have sent sexual images report lower levels of IBSAMA (*M* =1.78, *SD*=.67) compared to individuals who have not (*M* =2.05, *SD*=.77), *U*=25452.50, *p*<.001. Similarly, participants who have received sexual images report lower levels of IBSAMA (*M*=1.81, *SD*=.69) compared to participants that have not (*M*=2.06, *SD*=.77), *U*=22497, *p*<.001. This same significant difference is found between individuals that have received an unsolicited sexual image (*M*=1.75, *SD*=.66) compared to those who have not (*M*=2.00, *SD*=.76), *U*=26718, *p*<.001. All other measures of sexting and IBSA victimisation did not present any significant differences in IBSAMA scores.

Table 24

Non-Parametric Comparisons of IBSAMA for Categorical Measures

Variable	Yes		No		Don't Know		Non-Parametric Test Statistic
	n	*M*	*n*	*M*	*n*	*M*	
IBSA- Share							
Victim Self	32	1.62 [a]	388	1.94[b]	94	1.76[ab]	*H*=11.06**
Know a Victim Closely	88	1.79	268	1.89	159	1.93	*H*=3.22
IBSA-Threat to Share							
Victim Self	60	1.89	452	1.89	-	-	*U*=13517
Know a Victim Closely	84	1.81	268	1.91	163	1.88	*H*=0.96
Sexting							
Sent Sext	306	1.78	209	2.05	-	-	*U*=25452.5***
Received Sext	358	1.81	157	2.06	-	-	*U*=22497.5***
Unsolicited Sext							
Received Unsolicited Sext	235	1.75	280	2.00	-	-	*U*=26718***
Sent Unsolicited Sext	7	2.17	508	1.88	-	-	*U*=2298.5

Note. * *p* < *.05,* ** *p* < .01, ***p<.001, superscripts represent post-hoc significant differences.

Correlation Analysis

All remaining predictor variables were analysed using a Pearson's correlation to determine significant relationships (see Table 25).

Table 25

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations

Variable		*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	IBSAMA	1.89	0.72	-										
2	IBSA Proclivity	1.17	0.33	.309**	-									
3	Benevolent Sexism	3.44	1.16	.368**	.264**	-								
4	Hostile Sexism	2.81	1.31	.567**	.249**	.540**	-							
5	Consent Seeking	6.02	0.80	-.213**	-.113**	-.05**	-.176**	-						
6	Consent Refusing	6.03	0.92	-.105*	-.016	.025	-.018	.165**	-					
7	Consent Adhering	6.74	0.43	-.237**	-.176**	-.102*	-.128**	.415**	.242**	-				
8	Machiavellianism	4.51	0.84	.276**	.174**	.345**	.382**	-.072	-.058	.302**	-			
9	Narcissism	3.29	1.03	.151**	.142**	.258**	.186**	-.094*	.001	-.051	.291**	-		
10	Psychopathy	2.26	0.96	.276**	.258**	.198**	.274*	-.175**	-.199**	-.061	.269**	.455**	-	
11	Sadism	2.72	1.10	.232**	.197**	.168**	.258**	-.133**	-.169**	.021	.297**	.211**	.460**	-

Note. *N=515, * p < .05, ** p <* .01

The results demonstrated a strong positive correlation between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity. All variables were significantly related to IBSA proclivity except for consent refusal, as was expected based on the previous study. The correlation analyses did not present any collinearity concerns between variables so related variables were then entered into regression analyses to identify significant predictors.

Aim 3: Predicting IBSA Proclivity

A regression analysis was computed to identify predictors of IBSA proclivity (see Table 26). Hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, consent seeking, consent adherence, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, sadism, IBSAMA and Sext Sent were entered as predictors. Due to the heteroscedasticity of the data the HCREG macro for SPSS was used to conduct the regression analysis with heteroscedastic-consistent standard errors (Hayes & Cai, 2007). There were no multicollinearity concerns, all VIF values were less than 1.95 and tolerance values were greater than .6.

Table 26

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSA Proclivity

Variable	R- Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.161						<.001
Intercept			1.037	.292	.536	1.538	<.001
Hostile Sexism		.014	0.003	.012	-.025	.031	.781
Benevolent Sexism		.143	.041	.013	.013	.069	.002
Consent Seeking		.000	0.000	.019	-.037	.037	1
Consent Adherence		-.070	-0.05	.037	-.124	.016	.148
Machiavellianism		.016	0.007	.023	-.030	.043	.774
Narcissism		-.016	-0.005	.017	-.035	.025	.759
Psychopathy		.122	0.042	.022	.007	.077	.057
Sadism		.051	0.015	.015	-.013	.043	.299
IBSAMA		.197	0.090	.025	.043	.137	<.001
Sext Sent		.070	0.047	.029	-.010	.103	.107

Note. N=515

The regression model was significant and predicted 16.1% of variance, $F(10,504)=6.66$, $p<.001$ (see Table 26). Benevolent sexism and IBSAMA remained independent significant predictors of IBSA proclivity. Psychopathy was marginally significant.

Due to the numerous predictors in the model, a stepwise regression was conducted, this allows for the most important predictors to be retained that can otherwise be obscured due to shared variance with other predictors. It was expected that benevolent sexism, psychopathy and IBSAMA would be the most important predictors in the model. This was confirmed with this model predicting 14.9% of variance in IBSA proclivity, $F(3,511)=18.72$, $p<.001$ (see Table 27). Psychopathy was retained as an independent significant predictor in this model, likely due to the shared variance with other Dark Tetrad variables that were no longer included.

Table 27

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSA Proclivity

Variable	R- Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model 1	.096						<.001
IBSAMA		.309	.141	.025	.103	.173	<.001
Model 2	.128						<.001
IBSAMA		.257	.117	.023	.079	.156	<.001
Psychopathy		.187	.064	.018	.035	.093	<.001
Model 3	.149						<.001
IBSAMA		.205	.093	.024	.053	.134	<.001
Psychopathy		.171	.059	.018	.030	.087	.001
Benevolent Sexism		.155	.044	.012	.019	.069	<.001

Note. N=515

Aim 4: Predicting IBSAMA

A regression analysis was also computed to measure predictors of IBSAMA. The same variables were entered as predictors with the addition of IBSA proclivity, sending and receiving sexts, receiving an unsolicited sext and, IBSA victimisation (via sharing). The model compared individuals who confirmed that 'yes', they had experienced IBSA victimisation (via sharing) compared to those who had not or did not know, as theory denotes that the victimisation experience itself can influence IBSAMA (Shaver, 1970). The data was also heteroscedastic and thus the HCREG macro for SPSS was used again to conduct the regression analysis with heteroscedastic-consistent standard errors (Hayes & Cai, 2007). Again, despite highly correlated variables there were no multicollinearity concerns, all VIF values were less than 2.2 and tolerance values were greater than .52. The regression model was significant and predicted 42.3% of variance, $F(13,501)=28.41$, $p<.001$ (see Table 28). Hostile sexism, consent adherence, psychopathy, IBSA proclivity, sending sexts and IBSA victimisation (via sharing) all remained significant independent predictors in the model.

Table 28

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSAMA

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Model	.423						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.407	0.224	.027	0.176	0.271	<.001
Benevolent Sexism		.064	0.040	.029	-0.012	0.091	.171
Consent Seeking		-.064	-0.057	.038	-0.124	0.010	.131
Consent Adherence		-.109	-0.184	.082	-0.312	-0.056	.026
Machiavellianism		.033	0.029	.034	-0.038	0.095	.392
Narcissism		-.031	-0.022	.026	-0.077	0.033	.401
Psychopathy		.107	0.080	.038	0.15	0.146	.033
Sadism		.032	0.021	.031	-0.030	0.073	.494
IBSA Proclivity		.138	0.302	.097	0.143	0.461	.002
Sext Sent		-.133	-0.196	.065	-0.332	-0.061	.003
Sext Received		-.030	-0.046	.082	-0.202	0.109	.569
Unsolicited Received		-.049	-0.071	.058	-0.183	0.040	.218
Victimisation (Share)		-.068	-0.203	.097	-0.412	0.006	.038

Note. N=515.

A stepwise regression analysis was conducted here also, due to the large number of predictors. It was expected that hostile sexism, consent adherence, psychopathy, IBSA proclivity, sending sexts and IBSA victimisation (via sharing) would be the most important predictors in the model. This was confirmed and the refined model predicted 41.15% of variance, $F(6,508)=55.81$, $p<.001$ (see Table 29).

Table 29

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSAMA

Variable	R- Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE (HC)	LL	UL	
Model 1	.326						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.571	0.314	.024	.275	.353	<.001
Model 2	.355						
Hostile Sexism		.527	0.289	.024	.250	.329	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.175	0.383	.112	.225	.542	<.001
Model 3	.375						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.509	0.279	.024	.240	.319	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.188	0.412	.110	.255	.568	<.001
Sext Sent		-.144	-0.212	.053	-.314	-.110	<.001
Model 4	.399						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.493	0.271	.024	.232	.310	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.165	0.361	.103	.206	.517	<.001
Sext Sent		-.157	-0.230	.052	-.331	-.130	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.157	-0.266	.072	-.383	-.149	<.001
Model 5	.407						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.471	0.259	.024	.219	.298	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.149	0.327	.100	.170	.483	.001
Sext Sent		-.171	-0.252	.051	-.353	-.151	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.138	-0.234	.073	-.353	-.115	.001
Psychopathy		.099	0.074	.031	.019	.130	.018
Model 6	.412						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.467	0.257	.024	0.217	0.296	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.154	0.337	.096	0.181	0.493	<.001
Sext Sent		-.160	-0.236	.051	-0.338	-0.133	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.134	-0.226	.076	-0.345	-0.108	.003
Psychopathy		.106	0.080	.031	0.024	0.136	.012
Victimisation (Share)		-.071	-0.213	.095	-0.418	-0.007	.026

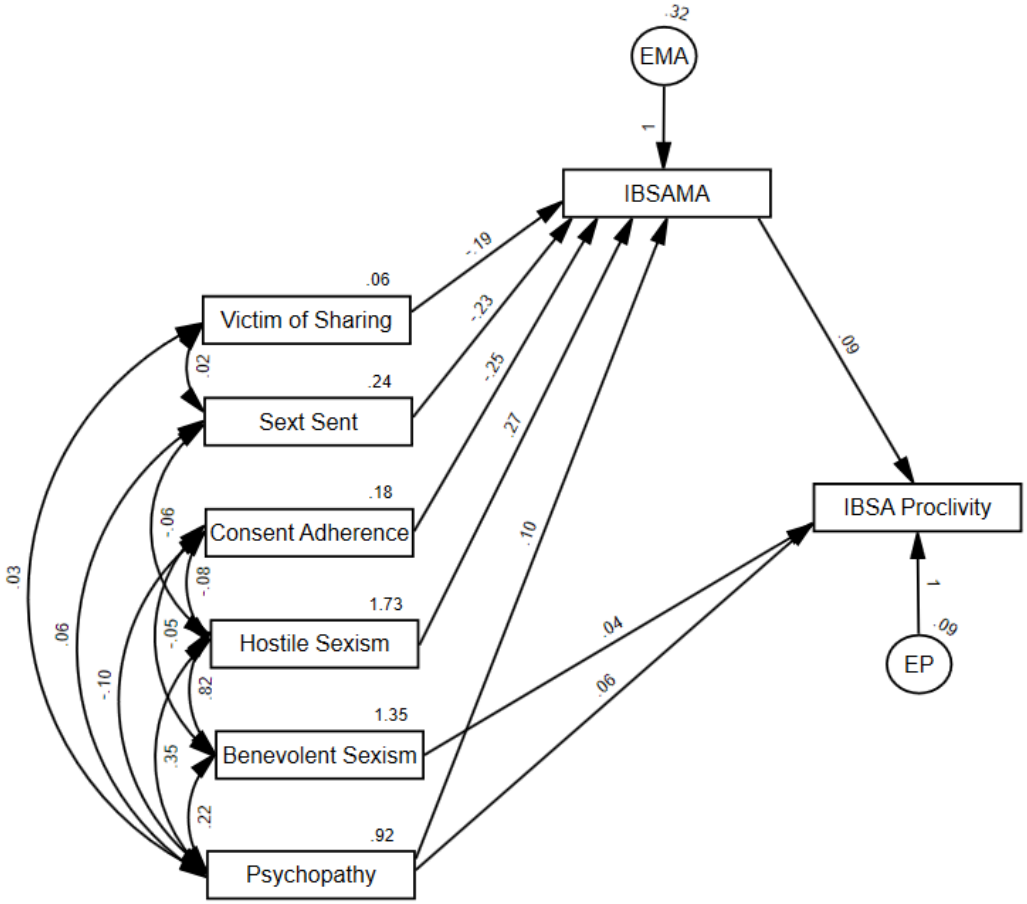
Note. N=515.

A Mediation Model of IBSAMA and IBSA Proclivity

Due to the strength of IBSAMA as a predictor of IBSA proclivity and that the predictive models for IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity are cognate, the mediating relationship of IBSAMA was explored. Figure 7 presents the significant pathways which mirrors the relationships identified in the regression models. The path analysis demonstrated good model fit X^2 (10, N =515) =18.11, p=.053; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .04). These findings support the role of dispositional traits (psychopathy) and attitudinal distortions (sexism and IBSAMA) in shaping behavioural intent.

Figure 7

Significant Path Model for IBSA Proclivity



Aim 5: Exploring Gender Differences

The datafile was split by gender to evaluate differences in predictor relationships between genders. As the 'other gendered' category was too small to assess, only men and women were compared. Replicating the full sample analysis, non-parametric comparisons and correlations were conducted initially to determine the significantly related variables to include in regression analyses (see Table 30).

Table 30

Correlations and Non-Parametric Tests for IBSA Proclivity and IBSAMA Across Gender

Variable	Men		Women	
	Proclivity	IBSAMA	Proclivity	IBSAMA
	Non-Parametric Tests (*U* or *H*)			
Victimisation (Share)	2.42	2.11	5.40	7.59*
Victimisation (Threat)	1252.5	1193	7512	6462.5
Know Victim (Share)	3.01	1.13	4.72	.589
Know Victim (Threat)	2.24	0.06	1.02	1.16
Sext Sent	3780	2768*	15196	10703***
Sext Received	2709	2163*	13074.5	10296**
Unsolicited Sent	506.5	478	204	382
Unsolicited Received	2916	2557.5	14687.5	11731**
	Correlations (*r)*			
IBSAMA	.401***	N/A	.266***	N/A
IBSA Proclivity	N/A	.401***	N/A	.266***
Benevolent Sexism	.265***	.321***	.266***	.358***
Hostile Sexism	.320***	.554***	.233***	.553***
Consent Seeking	-.062	-.259***	-.127*	-.222***
Consent Refusing	-.067	-.162*	.025	-.049
Consent Adhering	-.158*	-.330***	-.174**	-.146**
Machiavellianism	.220**	.176*	.155**	.288**
Narcissism	.276***	.150	.069	.102
Psychopathy	.337***	.260***	.215***	.245***
Sadism	.201**	.152	.204***	.201***

Note. N (Men)=165, *N* (Women)= 343, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Gender Differences in IBSA Proclivity

Slightly different variables were significantly related with the proclivity to perpetrate IBSA for men versus women (see Table 30). Both were significantly related to IBSAMA,

hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism, and consent adherence. However, for women there was also a significant relationship between consent seeking and IBSA proclivity, whilst for men there was a relationship between narcissism and IBSA proclivity. Given the large number of interrelated predictors and small samples, stepwise regression analyses were conducted to identify the most significant contributions (see Table 31). There were no multicollinearity concerns (VIF >.88 , Tolerance <.1.14) and the HCREG macro for SPSS was used to account for heteroscedasticity (Hayes & Cai, 2007).

Table 31

Stepwise Regression Model Predicting IBSA Proclivity by Gender

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
		Men					
Model 1	.161						<.001
IBSAMA		.401	.157	.040	.101	.212	<.001
Model 2	.219						<.001
IBSAMA		.337	0.131	.036	.076	.187	<.001
Psychopathy		.249	0.075	.031	.032	.118	.016
		Women					
Model 1	.071						<.001
IBSAMA		.266	.135	.033	.083	.187	<.001
Model 2	.104						<.001
IBSAMA		.196	.099	.034	.044	.154	.003
Benevolent Sexism		.195	.060	.016	.027	.093	<.001
Model 3	.126						<.001
IBSAMA		.166	.085	.034	.029	.140	.012
Benevolent Sexism		.191	.059	.016	.026	.091	<.001
Sadism		.153	.054	.021	.018	.091	.010
Model 4	.139						<.001
IBSAMA		.154	0.078	.033	.023	.133	.017
Benevolent Sexism		.186	0.057	.015	.024	.090	<.001
Sadism		.140	0.050	.021	.014	.086	.018
Consent Adherence		-.115	-0.101	.049	-.190	-.013	.039

Note. N (Men)=165, *N* (Women)= 343.

The model for men significantly predicted 22% of variance in IBSA proclivity (M=1.18), F(2,162)=10.44, p<.001. Only IBSAMA and psychopathy remained significant independent predictors of IBSA proclivity in men. The model for women significantly predicted 13.9% of variance in IBSA proclivity (M=1.16), F(4,338)=9.88, p<.001. IBSAMA, consent adherence, sadism and benevolent sexism remained significant independent predictors of IBSA proclivity in women.

Gender Differences in IBSAMA

There were differences in the variables that were significantly related to IBSAMA for men and women (see Table 30). Both were significantly related to IBSA proclivity, consent seeking, consent adherence, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, benevolent sexism, hostile sexism, sexts sent, and sexts received. In addition, IBSAMA was related to consent refusal in men, as well as IBSA victimisation (by sharing), receipt of unsolicited sexual images and sadism in women. These variables were entered into multiple regression analyses, respectively. Due to the large number of predictors included, stepwise regression analyses were conducted to ascertain the key predictive variables for each gender (see Table 32). There were no multicollinearity concerns (VIF>.88 , Tolerance<.1.14).

The model for men significantly predicted 43.6% of variance in IBSAMA (M=2.08), F(4,160)=30.89, p<.001. Hostile sexism, consent adherence, IBSA proclivity and receipt of sexts remained significant independent predictors of IBSAMA in men. The model for women significantly predicted 39% of variance in IBSAMA (M=1.81), F(6,336)=35.75, p<.001. Hostile sexism, psychopathy, sending of sexts and IBSA victimisation (via sharing) remained significant independent predictors of IBSAMA in women. Consent seeking was retained in the stepwise regression analyses but was not a significant independent predictor when using the HCREG macro accounting for heteroscedasticity.

Table 32

Stepwise Regression Model Predicting IBSAMA by Gender

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE(HC)	LL	UL	
Men (*n*=165)							
Model 1	.307						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.554	.324	.039	.249	.400	<.001
Model 2	.370						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.517	.303	.038	.230	.376	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.254	-.419	.148	-.624	-.214	.005
Model 3	.414						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.450	.263	.040	.189	.337	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.229	-.377	.129	-.577	-.178	.004
IBSA Proclivity		.221	.568	.147	.243	.892	<.001
Model 4	.436						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.446	.261	.040	.188	.334	<.001
Consent Adherence		-.232	-.381	.126	-.577	-.185	.003
IBSA Proclivity		.211	.541	.147	.221	.861	<.001
Sext Received		-.149	-.261	.116	-.468	-.055	.025
Women (*n*=343)							
Model 1	.306						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.553	.293	.031	.246	.340	<.001
Model 2	.329						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.526	.279	.030	.232	.326	<.001
Psychopathy		.153	.115	.043	.048	.181	.008
Model 3	.354						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.505	.267	.030	.221	.314	<.001
Psychopathy		.176	.132	.042	.066	.198	.002
Sext Sent		-.162	-.222	.061	-.342	-.102	<.001
Model 4	.370						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.477	.253	.030	.205	.300	<.001
Psychopathy		.153	.115	.041	.049	.181	.006
Sext Sent		-.170	-.234	.061	-.353	-.115	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.133	.261	.122	.086	.436	.033
Model 5	.382						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.468	.248	.030	.201	.295	<.001
Psychopathy		.166	.125	.042	.059	.191	.003
Sext Sent		-.156	-.214	.061	-.333	-.095	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.139	.274	.113	.100	.448	.016
Victim (Share)		-.113	-.309	.092	-.543	-.074	<.001
Model 6	.390						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.453	.240	.031	.193	.287	<.001
Psychopathy		.152	.114	.044	.047	.180	.010
Sext Sent		-.158	-.217	.061	-.336	-.099	<.001
IBSA Proclivity		.134	.265	.110	.091	.438	.016
Victim (Share)		-.114	-.309	.091	-.543	-.076	<.001
Consent Seeking		-.089	-.070	.042	-.139	-.002	.094

Exploratory Analysis of Additional IBSAPS Measures

Predictors of IBSA Approval

Based on correlations and significant non-parametric tests, the following variables were entered as predictors of IBSA approval: sext sent, consent seeking, consent approval, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, sadism, IBSA proclivity, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (see Table 33). IBSAMA was left out of the model as theoretically it is largely the same construct as IBSA approval. The assumption of homoscedasticity was also met for this regression. This model significantly predicted 27.4% of variance in IBSA approval, $F(10,504)=18.99$, $p<.001$. Hostile sexism, consent adherence and IBSA proclivity remained significant independent predictors in the model.

Table 33

Multiple Regression Model Predicting IBSA Approval

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE	LL	UL	
Model	.274						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.167	.064	.019	.028	.101	<.001
Benevolent Sexism		-.042	-.018	.020	-.059	.022	.372
Consent Seeking		-.066	-.042	.027	-.094	.011	.119
Consent Adherence		-.088	-.104	.051	-.204	-.004	.041
Machiavellianism		.076	.046	.026	-.006	.098	.080
Narcissism		.056	.027	.022	-.015	.070	.208
Psychopathy		-.048	-.025	.026	-.075	.026	.332
Sadism		.007	.003	.020	-.037	.043	.879
IBSA Proclivity		.391	.599	.063	.476	.722	<.001
Sext Received		-.070	-.076	.043	-.161	.008	.077

Note. N=514.

Predictors of feelings of thrill, amusement and arousal surrounding IBSA

Finally, regression analyses were computed for the additional dependent variables from the IBSA proclivity scale that target feelings associated with enjoying the behaviour:

thrill, amusement, and arousal. Each were entered into a multiple regression model with the following predictors: hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, consent seeking, consent adherence, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, sadism and IBSA proclivity. Having received unsolicited sexts was a significant finding in non-parametric tests comparing arousal (U=29475.5, p=.032), therefore this was additionally included in the model for feelings of arousal. Non-parametric tests did not find any significant differences in sexting or victimisation experiences across feelings surrounding IBSA. The HCREG macro for SPSS was used again to conduct the regression analyses with heteroscedastic-consistent standard errors for each of the models (Hayes & Cai, 2007).

Thrill.

The model predicted 12.8% of variance in feelings of thrill (M=1.65, SD=.83) towards IBSA behaviour, $F(9,504)=16.27$, $p<.001$ (see Table 34). There were no concerns for multi-collinearity (VIF<1.63, Tolerance>.613). IBSA proclivity, consent seeking, Machiavellianism, sadism and benevolent sexism remained significant independent predictors in the model.

Table 34

Multiple Regression Model Predicting Feelings of Thrill Towards IBSA Perpetration

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE	LL	UL	
Model	.225						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.031	.025	.031	-.037	.086	.424
Benevolent Sexism		.035	-.109	.036	-.177	-.041	.002
Consent Seeking		.045	-.113	.044	-.201	-.024	.010
Consent Adherence		.086	-.094	.091	-.262	.074	.298
Machiavellianism		.044	.177	.046	.090	.264	<.001
Narcissism		.037	.053	.038	-.019	.125	.160
Psychopathy		.043	-.068	.051	-.153	.018	.189
Sadism		.034	.099	.037	.032	.166	.008
IBSA Proclivity		.106	.841	.131	.634	1.049	<.001

Note. N=513.

Amusement.

The model predicted 21.1% of variance in feelings of amusement (*M*=1.59, *SD*=.77) towards IBSA behaviour, $F(9,504)=13.54$, $p<.001$ (see Table 35). There were no concerns for multi-collinearity (VIF<1.64, Tolerance >.610). IBSA proclivity, consent seeking, Machiavellianism, sadism and benevolent sexism remained significant independent predictors in the model.

Table 35

Multiple Regression Model Predicting Feelings of Amusement Towards IBSA Perpetration

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE	LL	UL	
Model	.211						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.049	.029	.028	-.029	.086	.307
Benevolent Sexism		-.107	-.071	.032	-.134	-.007	.028
Consent Seeking		-.103	-.099	.040	-.182	-.016	.013
Consent Adherence		.002	.004	.080	-.154	.162	.963
Machiavellianism		.168	.154	.041	.072	.235	<.001
Narcissism		.062	.046	.035	-.021	.113	.187
Psychopathy		-.101	-.081	.046	-.160	-.001	.079
Sadism		.142	.099	.034	.036	.161	.004
IBSA Proclivity		.337	.784	.137	.589	.978	<.001

Note. N=514.

Arousal.

The model predicted 14.4% of variance in feelings of arousal (*M*=1.35, *SD*=.53) towards IBSA behaviour, $F(10,504)=14.31$, $p<.001$ (see Table 36). There were no concerns for multi-collinearity (VIF<.1.68, Tolerance>.611). Hostile sexism, consent adherence, Machiavellianism and sadism remained significant independent predictors.

Table 36

Multiple Regression Model Predicting Feelings of Arousal Towards IBSA Perpetration.

Variable	R-Squared	β	Unstandardised		95% CI		*p*
			B	SE	LL	UL	
Model	.253						<.001
Hostile Sexism		.094	.038	.020	-.001	.076	.062
Benevolent Sexism		-.088	-.040	.022	-.082	.003	.076
Consent Seeking		-.009	-.006	.029	-.061	.049	.843
Consent Adherence		-.108	-.132	.053	-.237	-.027	.014
Machiavellianism		.101	.064	.027	.009	.118	.021
Narcissism		.095	.048	.025	.003	.093	.052
Psychopathy		-.070	-.038	.029	-.092	.015	.190
Sadism		.159	.076	.024	.034	.117	.002
IBSA Proclivity		.341	.543	.102	.413	.673	<.001
Unsolicited Sext Received		-.091	-.096	.043	-.178	-.014	.026

Note. N=514.

Discussion

The present study set out to examine significant predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA and whether there were any gender differences in these factors. As was expected, IBSA proclivity was related to (hostile and benevolent) sexism, consent seeking, consent adherence, IBSAMA and the Dark Tetrad. In line with expectations, our regression model found that proclivity was significantly predicted by these variables. However, only IBSAMA, psychopathy and benevolent sexism remained significant independent predictors. Similarly, in line with hypotheses, IBSAMA was significantly correlated with the same variables as well as additionally related with sexting behaviour and IBSA victimisation. As anticipated, these formed a significant predictive model of IBSAMA with hostile sexism, consent adherence, psychopathy, IBSA proclivity, sending sexts and IBSA victimisation (via sharing) all remaining significant independent predictors. These findings provide more insight into the specific types of sexism and dark personality traits involved in IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA.

Interpretation of Key Findings

Whilst significant relationships were found in line with hypotheses, the variables that remained significant independent predictors of IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA in the models are worthy of discussion. Firstly, the distinction between hostile and benevolent sexism is an interesting novelty in this study. Whilst previous studies in the literature have found the significant role of ambivalent sexism in IBSA perpetration and myth acceptance (Pina et al., 2017), research has yet to identify the specific roles of hostile and benevolent sexism (Pina et al., 2021). The present study identified that benevolent sexism was a significant predictor of IBSA proclivity whilst hostile sexism predicted IBSAMA. This may appear contrary to expectations as the available literature, focusing predominantly on offline sexual abuse, commonly associates victim blaming and myth acceptance with benevolent sexism whilst proclivity is associated with hostile sexism (Abrams et al., 2003; Masser et al., 2006, 2010; Viki et al., 2004). Whilst benevolent sexism in the literature is the focus in myth acceptance, due to its interaction with context (e.g., stranger vs acquaintance rape), such research still demonstrates a stronger relationship between hostile sexism and myth acceptance in correlation analysis (Abrams et al., 2003; Masser et al., 2010). Definitionally, the punishment of women violating traditional gender norms is in accordance with IBSAMA as these beliefs would elicit more blame towards the (female) victim.

Benevolent sexism, despite its superficially positive tone, reinforces traditional gender hierarchies and prescribes narrow roles for women. When women are perceived as stepping outside these roles, such as by engaging in sexting or other non-traditional behaviours, individuals high in benevolent sexism may rationalise or excuse IBSA as a form of “correction” or “protection.” This can manifest as a greater willingness to perpetrate IBSA, particularly in scenarios where the behaviour is framed as a response to perceived transgressions.

Nevertheless, when split by gender, benevolent sexism was found to be a significant predictor of IBSA proclivity only among women, not men. Importantly, the proclivity measures used in the study were gender-neutral, meaning that participants considered both male and female victims in the scenarios presented. This gender-neutral framing may have influenced women's responses, as they were likely to imagine men in many of the scenarios. Women internalising the gendered stereotypes of women being vulnerable and men as "strong", justify such abuses towards them, particularly when relationship expectations are not realised, as it challenges the idealised notions of men protecting women (Overall et al., 2011). Additionally, women who endorse benevolent sexism may view men as less vulnerable or less deserving of protection, and thus may be more accepting of IBSA perpetration against them, especially when traditional relationship expectations are not met. However, the significant finding of benevolent sexism predicting IBSA proclivity above hostile sexism is unexpected. Following the same definition, a strong belief in punishing women for breaching traditional gender roles, would presume hostile sexism as a predictor of proclivity.

On the other hand, trait psychopathy as an independent significant predictor of IBSA perpetration proclivity is a finding in line with the original RPPS, which also found psychopathy to be the only independent predictor of revenge pornography proclivity from the Dark Tetrad (Pina et al., 2017). Characterised by lack of empathy, callousness, and poor impulse control it may come as no surprise that this personality trait be predictive of IBSA perpetration proclivity (Patrick et al., 2009). Fido et al. (2022) explored psychopathy as a predictor of proclivity to create and distribute deepfakes finding the interpersonal subscale of psychopathy independently predicted proclivity for deepfake creation and sharing, whilst antisocial elements of psychopathy independently predicted deepfake sharing proclivity. Furthermore, in offline sexual abuse, psychopathy has also been established as a significant

independent predictor of perpetration behaviour further supporting this finding (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013).

Existing research in the offline sexual abuse arena has focused on the interaction between psychopathy and myth acceptance in predicting sexual abuse proclivity, indicating that both significantly correlate with proclivity and that there is a strong positive interaction between them (Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022). Psychopathy has also been highlighted as the Dark Tetrad characteristic that is most strongly related to antisocial online behaviour (Moor & Anderson, 2019). However, this refers to a wide range of behaviours including cyberstalking, trolling, social media addiction and problematic internet use as well as technology facilitated sexual violence. Considering the literature and present findings it is supported that trait psychopathy is an important predictor in sexual behaviour online as well as offline.

It is interesting to note that of the Dark Tetrad, psychopathy was also the only significant independent predictor of IBSAMA. The lack of empathy and callousness that is synonymous with psychopathy is also a key component in myth acceptance endorsement (Patrick et al., 2009). Furthermore, in a structural equation model, callous effect was the most significant characteristic of psychopathy to predict myth acceptance in situations of offline sexual abuse (Debowska et al., 2015). This finding may further support that the escalation of myth acceptance in IBSA is synonymous with offline sexual abuse.

The predictive relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity is the core finding of this research in line with predictions. It both supports and emphasises the parallels online sexual abuse has with offline sexual violence, in which RMA is also strongly interrelated with perpetration as well as proclivity (e.g., Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2022). Additionally, IBSAMA remained an independent significant predictor of proclivity in both men and women, highlighting the universal relationship.

Although IBSAMA was initially modelled as a predictor of IBSA proclivity, the reciprocal relationship between attitudes and behavioural intentions is well-established in psychological theory. Therefore, proclivity was also examined as a predictor of IBSAMA to explore whether individuals with higher perpetration propensity are more likely to endorse myths that justify or minimise IBSA. This bidirectional approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between attitudes and behavioural intentions in the context of IBSA. Each remained an independent predictor when controlling for other key variables in the regression models. This may suggest a potential feedback loop in which IBSAMA, and behavioural intentions inform each other.

IBSAMA was correlated with most of the experiential and behavioural variables in this study with sending of sexts and victimisation of IBSA (via sharing of private sexual images) being independent significant predictors. Engaging in sexting behaviour and having experienced IBSA victimisation both negatively predict endorsement of IBSAMA. This is in support of the defensive attribution hypothesis that purports that an individual that shares similarities with a victim will blame them less (Shaver, 1970). Individuals who can foresee themselves in the position of an IBSA victim due to their involvement in sexting behaviour or existing victimisation will be less likely to blame those victims. Concordantly, individuals who do not engage in sexting behaviour will attribute more blame to the victims' behaviour to justify the occurrence of IBSA and distance themselves from potential victimisation (Just World Belief Theory; Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978). IBSAMA was also negatively predicted by level of consent adherence; thus, individuals who do not adhere to consent throughout sexual encounters are more likely to endorse IBSA myths. This can also be explained by the defensive attribution hypothesis from an alternative perspective; individuals that can relate to perpetrators (through not adhering to consent themselves) are more likely to

excuse the behaviour of perpetrators and find alternative blame (i.e., the victim), which are two key factors of IBSA myth endorsement.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research has begun to characterise some of the predictors that influence the likelihood of IBSA perpetration but does not account for the reasons why or the motivations behind perpetration. The motivations behind IBSA have been theorised to include revenge, financial gain, sexual gratification, social status, humiliation and control (Henry et al., 2017, 2019b). Future research could explore how motivations contribute to the relationships between the predictors identified in this study and IBSA perpetration.

In this study, only the total score of the SIAMA (IBSAMA) scale was used throughout analyses, rather than examining the victim blame and minimise/excuse subscales separately. This decision was based on both theoretical and statistical considerations. Conceptually, the total score provides a more holistic measure of attitudes toward image-based sexual abuse, capturing the overall tendency to justify, excuse, or downplay such behaviour. Statistically, the use of the total score helped to reduce model complexity and avoid issues of multicollinearity that might arise from including highly correlated subscales in the same model. Additionally, given the primary aim of the analysis was to explore general attitudinal predictors of IBSA-related outcomes, the total score was deemed the most appropriate and parsimonious representation of the construct. That said, future research may benefit from exploring the subscales independently, particularly in studies with larger samples or more targeted hypotheses.

Future research could also focus on applying the knowledge gained from the present study on IBSA proclivity to existing perpetration. Utilising proclivity scales is a great first step to explore predictors of behaviours that are more difficult to locate, but the ultimate objective is to apply this in future research using perpetrators. Additionally, the development

of the IBSA proclivity scale captures the three different modes of IBSA: creation, distribution and threat of distribution of private sexual images; it would be a great development to the field to explore these modes independently to determine if they are underpinned by different predictors or motives. Research has begun to look at IBSA behaviours separately but have not yet (to the authors knowledge) compared predictors of these in a single study (Fido et al., 2022, 2023; Powell et al., 2019).

Conclusion

A valuable aspect of the present research is the implications of the findings surrounding IBSAMA. Most notably, the strength of its predictive relationship with IBSA proclivity above all other variables. If an individual endorses myths or false beliefs surrounding IBSA, that makes them more likely to report a propensity to engage in IBSA. IBSAMA also plays an important part in the relationships between consent adherence, sexting behaviour, hostile sexism and IBSA victimisation and IBSA proclivity. Furthermore, IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA were both predicting each other in regressions. This feedback loop further demonstrates the symbiotic relationship between myth acceptance and perpetration, highlighting the need for intervention at the level of perceptual and belief systems to prevent repeat offending. Additionally, targeting consent and sexism beliefs can also decrease IBSA proclivity through reducing IBSAMA.

Finally, an important contribution of this chapter is that we have shown that the same relationships between myth acceptance and proclivity found in previous research in offline sexual abuse, exist in online abuse. This further demonstrates that IBSA is part of a continuum of sexual violence and thus supporting the calls to attribute “sexual abuse” to its name in legislation (McGlynn et al., 2017). These combined findings can inform education and rehabilitation programmes to reduce IBSA perpetration through acknowledging and challenging the formation and proliferation of the myths that surround it.

Chapter 6

Study 4: From IBSA Myth Acceptance to Actual Perpetration

Introduction

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between the predictors of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) perpetration proclivity highlighted in prior studies, and IBSA perpetration. The previous empirical studies in this thesis have identified important predictors of the propensity to perpetrate IBSA, nevertheless research to explore predictors associated with actual perpetration was in its infancy. IBSA proclivity demonstrated significant predictive relationships with the Dark Tetrad, (some) IBSA victim experiences, (some) sexting behaviours, sexism, sexual consent and IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA).

Predictors of IBSA Perpetration

The next section will briefly readdress the notable predictors of IBSA perpetration highlighted in this thesis, with specific focus on the current literature on *existing perpetration*. See previous study chapters for discussions of literature addressing the *propensity to perpetrate* IBSA, and for a more detailed outline of all predictors present in the literature see Chapter 1.

IBSA Myth Acceptance

Research has begun to explore attitudinal characteristics predictive of IBSA perpetration. The impact of IBSAMA on IBSA perpetration has been explored using the sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance (SIAMA) scale (Powell et al., 2019) with slightly mixed findings (Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Powell et al. (2019), for instance, initially found that the blame subscale of the SIAMA, but not the minimise and excuse subscale, was predictive of lifetime prevalence of IBSA perpetration. However, their later research in a more diverse sample found the opposite in that the minimise and excuse subscale

predicted perpetration of IBSA but not the blame subscale (Powell et al., 2022). This finding was reaffirmed in research focusing on non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery with the overall SIAMA scale and the minimise and excuse subscale predicting perpetration but, again, not the blame subscale (Karasavva & Forth, 2022).

In further research exploring just non-consensual sharing of intimate imagery (or sext dissemination), myths surrounding IBSA have been found to predict perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2023). Individuals who have perpetrated IBSA by sharing private sexual images more strongly endorsed a series of IBSA myths: believing that the behaviour can *enhance social status*, is *funny*, is *acceptable after relationship breakdown*, it is *not a big deal* and that *sexts are usually inevitably seen by more people than intended* (Clancy et al., 2019). Interestingly, men more strongly endorsed the beliefs that sext dissemination can *enhance social status*, that it is *acceptable to do after a relationship breakdown*, and that it can be *funny.* There were not significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators in the belief that *the behaviour can have serious consequence*s or the belief that *women have to worry about forwarding of images more than men*.

When entered into a logistic regression only strongly agreeing *sexts are usually disseminated*, and that *its funny*, remained independent significant predictors of IBSA perpetration via sharing of intimate images (Clancy et al., 2019). Later research by the same authors highlighted certain myths surrounding IBSA as predictive of IBSA perpetration (via sext dissemination) (Clancy et al., 2023). The belief that the behaviour is funny was reiterated as a significant independent predictor, as well as the belief that it is acceptable to do after a relationship breakdown. The subjective attitudes that reflect minimisation of the behaviour (that it is '*no big deal*' and the reverse-coded '*it can have serious negative consequences*') did not significantly predict perpetration in this research. However, it is important to note that this research included all dissemination of sexts not just non-consensual.

Experiential Predictors

Much of existing research surrounding IBSA perpetration focuses on experience-based predictors such as prior victimisation, sexting behaviour, dating behaviour and sexual experience. Most prominent in the literature is the relationship between IBSA perpetration and IBSA victimisation (Clancy et al., 2020, 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). It has been demonstrated that each type of IBSA victimisation (via taking, sharing or threatening to share private sexual images) independently predicts perpetration of IBSA (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Focusing solely on the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (IBSA via sharing), research has also demonstrated that victimisation is a significant predictor of perpetration (Clancy et al., 2020, 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Individuals with no history of victimisation have been shown to be 65% less likely to be a perpetrator of IBSA via sharing (Karasavva & Forth, 2022).

Sexting behaviour has also been associated with existing IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Sexual self-image behaviours are consistently found to significantly predict IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Sexual self-image behaviours include the sending of sexts, taking intimate selfies, requesting sexts, receiving unsolicited images, having been pressured to send sexts and being a victim of deep-fake imagery. Individuals that have been involved in sexual self-image behaviour are more than twice as likely to perpetrate IBSA than those who have not (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). Exploring sexting behaviour more specifically, mistakenly receiving a sext, receiving a disseminated sext, receiving a sext and requesting a sext have all demonstrated significance in predicting perpetration of IBSA (via sharing) (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023). Sending sexts has been shown to be significantly more prevalent in perpetrators compared to non-perpetrators but does not remain an independent predictor in regression models (Clancy et al., 2020). Clancy et al. (2019, 2020) also identified being sexually active as a predictor of

IBSA but these findings are unclear and likely skewed by the young adult sample with an average age of only 21-22.

Dark Personality

Investigation of psychological predictors of IBSA is still limited but a small body of research has explored the Dark Tetrad as predictive of IBSA perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). The current literature is limited to perpetration of non-consensual sharing of intimate images and sext dissemination, so it only focuses on perpetration of IBSA via sharing. Perpetration of IBSA via sharing is significantly related to all traits of the Dark Tetrad but only narcissism and sadism have presented as significant independent predictors of IBSA via sharing perpetration (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Whilst greater levels of Dark Tetrad traits are significantly related to IBSA perpetration, their significance as independent predictors of perpetration are inconclusive.

The Dark Tetrad traits are unified by a lack of empathy, interpersonal manipulation, and a disregard for others' wellbeing, but each trait may contribute uniquely to the perpetration of IBSA. Psychopathy, marked by impulsivity and callousness, may facilitate IBSA through a lack of empathic concern and poor impulse control, enabling individuals to act without regard for the emotional consequences of their behaviour (Van Vugt et al., 2012). Sadism, which involves deriving pleasure from others' suffering, may drive IBSA behaviours that are intentionally humiliating or harmful, such as public dissemination or threats to share intimate content (Fedoroff, 2008). Narcissism, characterised by entitlement and ego sensitivity, may lead individuals to perpetrate IBSA in response to perceived rejection or disrespect, using image-sharing as a form of retaliation or self-enhancement. Machiavellianism, may contribute to IBSA when the behaviour serves a strategic or reputational goal, reflecting calculated manipulation rather than impulsive aggression (Blötner et al., 2021). These traits may also

interact with attitudinal variables, such as myth acceptance or moral disengagement, to justify or rationalise harmful actions, further reinforcing the likelihood of perpetration.

The present study expands on previous research by examining the Dark Tetrad traits in relation to a broader range of IBSA behaviours, not limited to revenge pornography or sext dissemination. By doing so, it aims to clarify the psychological mechanisms through which these traits contribute to perpetration and to identify which traits remain significant when controlling for attitudinal and behavioural predictors.

Sexism

Sexism may act as a cognitive facilitator that shapes how individuals interpret, justify, or minimise their actions. Psychologically, sexist beliefs contribute to IBSA perpetration through mechanisms such as moral disengagement, entitlement, and victim-blaming (Martínez-Bacaicoa, Real-Brioso, et al., 2024). Hostile sexism, which reflects antagonistic views of women as manipulative or inferior, may foster a sense of justification or retribution when women are perceived to violate traditional norms (e.g., by engaging in sexting or asserting sexual autonomy). Benevolent sexism, while superficially protective, reinforces gendered expectations that women should be modest, passive, and dependent. When these expectations are violated, individuals high in benevolent sexism may rationalise IBSA as a corrective or disciplinary act (Overall et al., 2011).

Despite, sexism being associated theoretically with IBSA perpetration, there is limited existing empirical research examining sexism with actual perpetration in adult populations (Martínez-Bacaicoa et al., 2023; Morelli et al., 2016). Morelli et al. (2016) explored the relationship between sexism and the non-consensual sharing of sexts in adolescents and young adults aged 13 to 30 and identified significant correlations between both hostile and benevolent sexism, and non-consensual sharing of sexts. However, these were much smaller than those found between sexism and IBSA proclivity in the previous studies presented in this

thesis (*r*=.07-.10 compared to *r*=.23-.26). It is also unusual that hostile and benevolent sexism were only weakly correlated in their study (*r*=.18), compared to their strong relationship found in the previous study presented in this thesis (*r*=.54). Martínez-Bacaicoa, Sorrel, et al. (2024) found a significant relationship between ambivalent sexism and perpetration of 'non-consensual pornography', although weak.

Moreover, the gendered nature of IBSA, with men more frequently identified as perpetrators, and previous findings demonstrating significant relationships between sexism and propensity to perpetrate IBSA warrant further investigation of the relationship between sexism and IBSA perpetration (Henry et al., 2019; Pina et al., 2017). As demonstrated in Studies 2 and 3, sexism was significantly associated with IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA, highlighting psychological processes that enable and sustain IBSA. The current study extends this work by examining how hostile and benevolent sexism relate to IBSA perpetration, moving beyond attitudes and intentions to observed behaviours. By doing so, this research aims to clarify whether different patterns emerge when predicting real-world actions.

Measuring IBSA Perpetration

The existing literature exploring IBSA perpetration, at time of writing, was mostly focused on the proclivity to perpetrate (Karasavva et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). Additionally, much of the research exploring existing perpetration is restricted to IBSA via sharing, focusing on non-consensual sharing or dissemination of sexts (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020, 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022). Scales used by Powell et al. (2019, 2022) measure existing perpetration of IBSA via taking, via sharing, and via threatening to share private sexual images. This method allows the measurement of perpetration of each type of IBSA as well as any IBSA perpetration through combining them. Despite the measurement allowing for the exploration of the different forms of IBSA separately, the current research by Powell et al. (2019, 2022) only explored predictors of IBSA perpetration as a single collective measure.

The Present Study

The present study aimed to expand on the existing literature by exploring predictors of IBSA perpetration beyond demographics. As well as exploring the full range of IBSA behaviours collectively, it aimed to investigate predictors of the three types of IBSA perpetration individually. The outcome variable was IBSA perpetration (as well as the three subscales: via taking, via sharing, and via threats to share). Informed by previous studies (see Chapters 3 and 5) and the literature, the predictor variables measured were IBSA victimisation, sexting behaviour, sexual consent, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, the Dark Tetrad, and IBSAMA. The following aims and hypotheses were investigated:

1. It was hypothesised that predictor variables would be significantly related to IBSA perpetration and significantly predict IBSA perpetration in a regression model.
2. Additionally, as an exploratory research question, analysis aimed to determine if there were differences in predictors between the different types of IBSA Perpetration: (a) via creation, (b) via sharing, and (c) via threats to share.
3. Finally, the gendered nature of IBSA perpetration was to be explored with the prediction that men would perpetrate IBSA more than women, and that there would be differences in the predictors of IBSA perpetration between genders.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited using Prolific and the social networking website Reddit. The only inclusion requirements were that the participants were over the age of 18, live in the UK and can understand English fluently. Responses were excluded for missing responses, failing attention checks, unequivocally fast completion, or nonsensical written responses. The final dataset included 1,335 participants (503 from Prolific and 832 from Reddit); comprised of 669 men, 614 women, and 42 participants who categorised as other (including 29

identifying as non-binary, 3 as gender fluid, 3 as agender, and 2 as transgender). Ten participants did not disclose their gender. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 76 (M = 35.09, SD=11.43), however, there were 2 participants that did not disclose their age. Further demographic characteristics are presented in Table 37.

Table 37

Demographic Characteristics

Variable	*n*	%
Gender		
Male	669	50.1
Female	614	46.0
Non-Binary	29	2.2
Other Gender Identity	13	1.0
Undisclosed	10	0.7
Sexuality		
Heterosexual	944	70.7
Homosexual	63	4.7
Bisexual	260	19.5
Asexual	20	1.6
Pansexual	17	1.3
Other	16	1.2
Undisclosed	15	1.1
Ethnicity		
White	1186	88.8
Black	29	2.2
Asian	50	3.7
Mixed or Multiple	46	3.4
Other	10	0.7
Undisclosed	14	1.0
Highest Education Level		
Less than High School	17	1.3
High School	128	9.6
College/A-Levels	406	30.4
Undergraduate Degree	500	37.5
Masters Degree	236	17.7
Doctoral Degree	43	3.2
Undisclosed	5	0.4
Employment Status		
Employed Full Time	732	54.8
Employed Part-Time	147	11.0
Unable to Work	79	5.9
Student	133	10.0
Retired	39	2.9
Self-Employed	102	7.6
Unemployed - Looking	58	4.3
Unemployed - Not Looking	45	3.4

Measures

IBSA Perpetration

Perpetration of IBSA was measured using an adapted version of perpetration measures used in Powell et al. (2019), see Appendix D. This measures the lifetime prevalence of perpetration whilst specifically identifying the content of the images (e.g. semi-nude, completely nude or up their skirt etc.), as well as the method of abuse (taking, sharing or threatening to share). Eight items pertaining to the content of images were presented for each of the three IBSA methods with a dichotomous '*yes*' or '*no'* response option. An additional ninth item referring to a deepfake image content was presented for the sharing and threatening to share sub-scales. For taking and sharing measures, participants were first asked if they have taken or shared images of this nature and then subsequently asked if they had permission from the person depicted where they have done so. This allows participants to consider their actions more accurately rather than promoting socially desirable responses.

As frequency of image content types does not necessarily equate to more serious or prolific behaviour, the data was dichotomised for each eight item sub-scale to indicate perpetration via (1) taking, (2) sharing or (3) threatening to share. A response of '*yes*' to any of the items equates to a '*yes*' for lifetime prevalence of the associated IBSA perpetration behaviour. An overall dichotomous IBSA perpetration score was also determined, with a '*yes*' response to any item on the scale indicating IBSA perpetration.

Predictor Variables

IBSA Victimisation and Sexting Experience. IBSA Victimisation was measured using the same format as the perpetration measure but instead asking if participants had ever had an image of themselves (1) taken, (2) shared or (3) threatened to be shared in each of the image contexts (see Appendix D). Gendered items referring to breasts, cleavage and up-skirting were only presented to female participants.

Sexting activity was measured using the same measures as previous studies. Participants were asked dichotomous '*yes* or *no*' questions to determine if they have ever sent a sexual image, received a sexual image and if they had received an unsolicited sexual image that they did not consent to. Additionally, as was introduced in Study 3, this study also asked participants if they have ever sent an unsolicited sexual image to another.

Sexism. As with the previous studies, sexism was measured using the 12-item short version of the ASI (Glick & Whitehead, 2010). Participants responded using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7). Hostile sexism (α =.90) and benevolent sexism (α =.79) scores were calculated by averaging the corresponding 6 items.

Sexual Consent. Sexual consent was measured using the adapted version of the short sexual consent scale formed by Hust et al. (2014) that was used in Studies 2 and 3 (see Chapter 3). Scores of corresponding items were averaged to present subscale of Consent Seeking (α =.79), Consent Refusal (α =.84) and Consent Adherence (α =.66).

Dark Tetrad. The 28-item Short Dark Tetrad (SD4; Paulhus et al., 2021) was utilised again to measure the Dark Tetrad traits of Machiavellianism, psychopathy, narcissism, and sadism. Scores for each construct were calculated by averaging the responses of the 7 subscale items (see Study 3 for more elaboration on this scale). In the present study, the subscales demonstrated strong internal consistency (α =.71 - .80).

IBSAMA. As with all previous studies, IBSAMA was measured using the SIAMA scale devised by Powell et al. (2019). See Study 1 (Chapter 2) for more detail on this 18-item scale. IBSAMA scores were calculated as an average of all SIAMA items (α =.87).

Procedure

The procedure was identical to previous studies with all scales presented in a single online questionnaire. A target of 500 participants were sourced through Prolific. Additionally, the study was advertised on subreddit pages for towns and cities all over the UK. Upon

following the link to the questionnaire, participants were first presented with an information sheet and a consent form that had to be completed before they could proceed. Participants were also asked to include their Prolific ID or to create a memorable ID (on Reddit) so that their data could be identified later if they decided to withdraw. All participants were presented with demographic information first. A randomised split of participants (*N*=762) was then presented with the IBSA perpetration and victimisation first followed by the remaining predictor variable measures in a randomised order. The remaining participants (*N*=573) were presented with the predictor variable measures in a randomised order first and then presented with the IBSA perpetration and victimisation measures. This was in attempt to reduce order effects. The study was completed with a debrief sheet explaining the background of the research and it's aims. This also included the contact information for the revenge pornography helpline and stopncii.org.

Data Analysis Plan

Data Preparation

In line with previous studies scrutinisation of the data was carried out as an additional check of trustworthiness of online data. The time taken to complete the questionnaire, response patterns and completion of the attention checks were all assessed. All scales were averaged as outlined in the materials to present overall variable scores for each participant. When calculating averages, analysis allowed for one missing item per scale so that representative scores could still be computed for any participants that mistakenly missed a single item.

Predicting IBSA Perpetration

Initially, descriptives were explored to identify the prevalence of IBSA perpetration and victimisation in the sample. To measure relationships between predictor variables and IBSA perpetration a logistic regression was conducted. To determine which variables would

be entered into the regression model, chi-square tests and t-tests were conducted to identify significant differences between IBSA perpetrators and non-perpetrators. Only those that demonstrated significant differences were included in the model.

Exploring IBSA Perpetration by Method

The predictors of IBSA were explored within each method of IBSA perpetration: taking, sharing and threatening to share private sexual images. This followed the same process as the core analyses (chi-squares and t-tests, followed by logistic regressions) but was carried out for each method of IBSA resulting in three final logistic regression models.

Exploring Gender

In line with previous studies, and the gendered focus of IBSA (e.g. Powell et al., 2022), the gender differences in prevalence and predictor variables were explored. This replicated the core analyses by assessing significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators (of any IBSA behaviour) within each gender and then entering significant variables as predictors into logistic regression analyses for each gender. This resulted in a model predicting perpetration in men and a model predicting perpetration in women.

Results

Prevalence

The prevalence of IBSA perpetration and victimisation was explored. Almost 9% of the sample disclosed that they have perpetrated at least one form of IBSA. On the other hand, over 34% of the sample disclosed that they have been a victim of at least one form of IBSA. See Table 38 for a further breakdown of perpetration and victimisation prevalence measures.

Prevalence was also investigated between genders. IBSA victimisation is experienced by significantly more women than men ($\chi2(1,1283) = 16.91$, $p<.001$). This is true of each individual type of IBSA victimisation: via taking ($p<.001$), sharing ($p=.002$) and threatening

to share (p<.001) private sexual images. Correspondingly, significantly more men than women perpetrate IBSA ($\chi2(1,1283) = 11.31$, p<.010). When investigating by type of IBSA only perpetration via sharing of private sexual images significantly differs between genders, with men perpetrating significantly more than women ($\chi2(1,1283) = 10.29$, p=.001. Taking and threatening to share private sexual images did not significantly differ between genders (see Table 38).

Table 38

Prevalence and Gender Differences in Measures of the IBSA Perpetration and Victimisation

Variable	Total		Men		Women		Gender Difference	
	n(Yes)	*%*	*n*(Yes)	*%*	*n*(Yes)	*%*	*χ2*	*p*
Perpetration								
Any IBSA	117	8.8%	74	11.1%	42	6.8%	11.31	.010
Taken	35	2.6%	22	3.3%	13	2.1%	1.655	.198
Shared	85	6.4%	58	8.7%	26	4.2%	10.293	.001
Threatened	14	1%	8	1.2%	6	1%	0.142	.707
Victimisation								
Any IBSA	456	34.2%	193	28.8%	244	39.7%	16.907	<.001
Taken	337	25.2%	130	19.4%	192	31.3%	23.869	<.001
Shared	234	17.5%	97	14.5%	129	21%	9.351	.002
Threatened	154	11.5%	55	8.2%	90	14.7%	13.233	<.001

Note. N=1,355, N(Men)=669*, N(Women)*=614.

Aim 1: Predictors of IBSA Perpetration

Chi-Square Analyses

The binary predictor variables were explored using chi-square analyses (see Table 39). Gender was dichotomised into *Male* or *Not Male* for the purposes of this research (pre-test chi-square post hoc analyses found that men were significantly different to women and 'other', whilst women and 'other' were not different to each other).

Table 39

Frequencies and Chi-Square Analyses for Binary Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration

	Yes		No		Total		χ2	
Variable	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*
Gender (Male)							8.85	.003
Yes (Male)	74	11.1%	595	88.9%	669	50.1%		
No	43	6.5%	623	93.5%	666	49.9%		
Sext Sent							6.56	.010
Yes	92	10.1%	817	89.9%	909	68.1%		
No	25	5.9%	401	94.1%	426	31.9%		
Sext Received							3.77	.052
Yes	99	9.6%	935	90.4%	1034	77.5%		
No	18	6.0%	283	94.0%	301	22.5%		
Unsolicited Sext Sent							35.24[a]	<.001
Yes	11	40.7%	16	59.3%	27	2.0%		
No	106	8.1%	1202	91.9%	1308	98.0%		
Unsolicited Sext Received							0.027	.870
Yes	50	8.9%	511	91.1%	561	42.0%		
No	67	8.7%	707	91.3%	774	58.0%		
IBSA Victimisation (Any)							15.09	<.001
Yes	59	12.9%	397	87.1%	456	34.2%		
No	58	6.6%	821	93.4%	879	65.8%		
IBSA Victim (Taken)							10.39	<.001
Yes	44	13.1%	293	86.9%	337	25.2%		
No	73	7.3%	925	92.7%	998	74.8%		
IBSA Victim (Shared)							8.56	.003
Yes	32	13.7%	202	86.3%	234	17.5%		
No	85	7.7%	1016	92.3%	1101	82.5%		
IBSA Victim (Threatened)							0.207	.649
Yes	15	9.7%	139	90.3%	154	11.5%		
No	102	8.6%	1079	91.4%	1181	88.5%		

Note. *N=1355*, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted for accuracy as 1 cell (25%) presented an expected cell count less than 5: $p < .001$.

The findings presented significant differences in all variables except IBSA victimisation via threats, having received sexts and having received unsolicited sexts. A significantly higher proportion of participants who responded '*yes*' to being male, having sent sexts, having sent unsolicited sexts, being a victim of any IBSA, being a victim of IBSA via

taking of images and being a victim of IBSA via sharing of images, were perpetrators of IBSA. for more detail.

T-Tests

The remaining predictor variables that were measured using scales were analysed using t-tests. There were significant differences in all measures between perpetrators and non-perpetrators except for consent refusal, and benevolent sexism (see Table 40). Perpetrators of IBSA demonstrated significantly lower scores in consent seeking and consent adherence compared to non-perpetrators. They also demonstrated significantly higher scores in Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism, narcissism, hostile sexism and IBSAMA, than non-perpetrators.

Table 40

Descriptives and T-Test Analyses for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration

Variable	Perpetrator		Non-Perpetrator		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	5.44	1.06	6.14	0.78	6.08	0.83	6.89	<.001
Consent Refusal	5.72	1.13	5.85	1.15	5.83	1.15	1.13	0.131
Consent Adherence	6.50	0.77	6.77	0.44	6.74	0.48	3.75	<.001
Machiavellianism	4.59	0.83	4.39	0.90	4.41	0.89	-2.31	0.011
Psychopathy	2.86	1.12	2.45	1.01	2.49	1.02	-4.13	<.001
Sadism	3.53	1.23	3.03	1.21	3.07	1.22	-4.21	<.001
Narcissism	3.52	1.08	3.28	1.06	3.30	1.06	-2.32	0.01
Benevolent Sexism	3.25	1.24	3.14	1.20	3.15	1.20	-1.01	0.155
Hostile Sexism	3.11	1.56	2.67	1.36	2.71	1.38	-2.95	0.002
IBSAMA	2.25	0.98	1.82	0.71	1.86	0.75	-4.68	<.001

Note. N=1355.

Logistic Regression Model

The variables that demonstrated significant differences between IBSA perpetrators and non-perpetrators were entered into a logistic regression model. The overall

model (Model 1; see Table 41) was significant, $\chi 2(12) = 106.76$, $p < .001$, and explained between 7 and 17% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.077, Nagelkerke R=.172). The model correctly sorted 91.6% of cases, 99.5% of non-perpetrators, 9.4% of perpetrators.

Male gender, having sent unsolicited sexts, consent seeking, IBSAMA and IBSA victimisation remained significant independent predictors in the model. These variables were retained and entered into a refined logistic regression model (Model 2; see Table 41). This model significantly predicted IBSA perpetration, $\chi 2(5) = 99.83$, $p < .001$, and explained between 7 and 16% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.072, Nagelkerke R=.161).

The refined model correctly sorted 91.8% of cases; 99.7% of non-perpetrators and 9.4% of perpetrators. All the variables remained significant independent predictors. Consent seeking negatively predicts IBSA perpetration. Having sent an unsolicited sexual image was the greatest predictor of IBSA perpetration with nearly three times greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA if an unsolicited sexual image has been sent in the past. Men also have 1.74 greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA compared to others (women or 'other' genders). Finally, victims of IBSA have more than two times greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA compared to individuals that have not experienced IBSA victimisation.

Table 41

Logistic regression model predicting IBSA Perpetration

Variable	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	SE	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	B	SE(HC)	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	0.005	1.39	.997	1.005		0.587	0.746	.431	1.799	
Male Gendered	0.553	0.24	.020	1.739	[1.09, 2.77]	0.555	0.217	.011	1.741	[1.14,2.67]
Sext Sent	0.349	0.26	.177	1.417	[0.85, 2.35]	-	-	-	-	-
Unsolicited Sext Sent	1.001	0.47	.032	2.72	[1.09, 6.78]	1.086	0.463	.019	2.963	[1.20, 7.34]
Consent Seeking	-0.735	0.13	<.001	0.479	[0.37, 0.62]	-0.711	0.11	<.001	0.491	[0.40, 0.61]
Consent Adherence	-0.013	0.19	.947	0.987	[0.68, 1.44]	-	-	-	-	-
Machiavellianism	0.152	0.13	.255	1.164	[0.90, 1.51]	-	-	-	-	-
Narcissism	-0.017	0.11	.878	0.983	[0.79, 1.22]	-	-	-	-	-
Psychopathy	0.04	0.12	.733	1.04	[0.83, 1.31]	-	-	-	-	-
Sadism	0.052	0.11	.627	1.053	[0.86, 1.30]	-	-	-	-	-
Hostile Sexism	-0.174	0.10	.073	0.841	[0.70, 1.02]	-	-	-	-	-
IBSAMA	0.369	0.16	.021	1.446	[1.06, 1.98]	0.276	0.127	.030	1.318	[1.03, 1.69]
IBSA Victimisation (Any)	0.675	0.22	.002	1.964	[1.28, 3.01]	0.737	0.21	<.001	2.091	[1.39, 3.15]

Note. N=1335.

Aim 2: Perpetration by Method

The different methods of IBSA perpetration: (a) taking, (b) sharing, and (c) threatening to share private sexual images were also explored individually.

A. IBSA via Taking

As above, the predictor variables were analysed using t-tests and chi-square analyses to determine those that were significantly different between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA via non-consensual taking of private sexual images (see Table 42 and Table 43). Significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators were found in the sending of unsolicited sexts, IBSA victimisation (any), IBSA victimisation (via taking), consent seeking, consent adherence, Machiavellianism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism and IBSAMA.

Table 42

Frequencies and chi-square analyses for binary predictor variables of IBSA perpetration via Taking.

Variable	Yes (Perpetrated)		No (Not Perpetrated)		χ2		Exact[a]
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*	(*p*)
Gender (Male)					2.34	0.126	-
Yes	22	3.3%	647	96.7%			
No	13	2.0%	653	98.0%			
Sext Sent					2.35	.126	-
Yes	28	3.1%	881	96.9%			
No	7	1.6%	419	98.4%			
Sext Received					0.133	.715	-
Yes	28	2.7%	1006	97.3%			
No	7	2.3%	294	97.7%			
Unsolicited Sext Sent					7.78	.005	.031
Yes	3	11.1%	24	88.9%			
No	32	2.4%	1276	97.6%			
Unsolicited Sext Received					0.883	.347	-
Yes	12	2.1%	549	97.9%			
No	23	3.0%	751	97.0%			

IBSA Victimisation (Any)					8.44	0.004	-
Yes	20	4.4%	436	95.6%			
No	15	1.7%	864	98.3%			
IBSA Victim (Taken)					16.07	<.001	-
Yes	19	5.6%	318	94.4%			
No	16	1.6%	982	98.4%			
IBSA Victim (Shared)					3.032	.082	-
Yes	10	4.3%	224	95.7%			
No	25	2.3%	1076	97.7%			
IBSA Victim (Threatened)					<0.001	.984	1.00
Yes	4	2.6%	150	97.4%			
No	31	2.6%	1150	97.4%			

Note. *N=1355*, *N*(Taken)=35, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted for accuracy where 1 cell (25%) presented an expected cell count less than 5.

Table 43

Descriptives and T-Tests for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration via Taking

Variable	Yes		No		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	4.96	1.21	6.11	0.80	6.08	0.83	5.56	<.001
Consent Refusal	5.54	1.07	5.84	1.15	5.83	1.15	1.52	.130
Consent Adherence	6.24	1.00	6.75	0.46	6.74	0.48	3.02	.005
Machiavellianism	4.80	0.70	4.40	0.89	4.41	0.89	-2.63	.009
Psychopathy	3.42	0.96	3.30	1.06	2.49	1.02	-0.65	.514
Sadism	2.71	1.16	2.48	1.02	3.07	1.22	-1.29	.198
Narcissism	3.44	1.17	3.06	1.22	3.30	1.06	-1.82	.069
Benevolent Sexism	3.62	1.36	3.13	1.20	3.15	1.20	-2.36	.018
Hostile Sexism	3.30	1.38	2.69	1.38	2.71	1.38	-2.61	.009
IBSAMA	2.48	1.12	1.84	0.73	1.86	0.75	-3.35	.002

Note. *N=1,355*, *N*(Taken)=35.

The variables that showed significant differences between individuals who have perpetrated IBSA via taking and those that have not were entered into a logistic regression analysis. '*IBSA victimisation (any)*' was not entered due to it representing overlapped data as '*IBSA victimisation (via taking)*' (see Table 44).

Table 44

*Logistic Regression Model Predicting IBSA Perpetration via Taking***.**

Variable	B	SE	*p*	OR	95% CI
Constant	-0.313	1.994	0.875	0.731	
Unsolicited Sext Sent	0.269	0.75	.720	1.309	[0.30, 5.69]
Consent Seeking	-0.957	0.201	<.001	0.384	[0.26, 0.57]
Consent Adherence	-0.189	0.271	.485	0.827	[0.49, 1.41]
Machiavellianism	0.452	0.251	.072	1.571	[0.96, 2.57]
Sadism	0.002	0.165	.989	1.002	[0.73, 1.39]
Benevolent Sexism	0.157	0.166	.344	1.170	[0.85, 1.62]
Hostile Sexism	-0.279	0.18	.122	0.757	[0.53, 1.08]
IBSA Victim (Taken)	1.348	0.373	<.001	3.851	[1.85, 8.01]
IBSAMA	0.469	0.249	.060	1.599	[0.98, 2.61]

Note. N=1,355.

The model was significant, $\chi2(9) = 71.57$, $p<.001$, and explained between 5.2% and 24.2% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.052, Nagelkerke R=.242). The model correctly sorted 97.4% of cases, 99.8% of non-perpetrators, 8.6% of perpetrators. Only consent seeking and IBSA victimisation (via taking) remained significant independent predictors in the model. Victims of IBSA via taking had 3.85 greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA via taking.

B. IBSA via Sharing

Again, predictor variables were analysed using t-tests and chi-square analyses to determine those that were significantly different between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA via non-consensual sharing of private sexual images (see Table 45 and Table 46).

Table 45

Frequencies and Chi-Square Analyses for Binary Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration via Sharing

Variable	Yes (Perpetrated)		No (Not Perpetrated)		χ2		Exact[a] (*p*)
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*	
Gender (Male)					11.93	<.001	-
Yes	58	8.7%	611	91.3%			
No	27	4.1%	639	95.9%			
Sext Sent					7.16	.007	-
Yes	69	7.6%	840	92.4%			
No	16	3.8%	410	96.2%			
Sext Received					3.69	.055	-
Yes	73	7.1%	961	92.9%			
No	12	4.0%	289	96.0%			
Unsolicited Sext Sent					54.62	<.001	<.001
Yes	11	40.7%	16	59.3%			
No	74	5.7%	1234	94.3%			
Unsolicited Sext Received					0.27	.604	-
Yes	38	6.8%	523	93.2%			
No	47	6.1%	727	93.9%			
IBSA Victimisation (Any)					8.00	0.005	-
Yes	41	9.0%	415	91.0%			
No	44	5.0%	835	95.0%			
IBSA Victim (Taken)					3.79	.052	-
Yes	29	8.6%	308	91.4%			
No	56	5.6%	942	94.4%			
IBSA Victim (Shared)					8.87	.003	-
Yes	25	10.7%	209	89.3%			
No	60	5.4%	1041	94.6%			
IBSA Victim (Threatened)					0.18	.675	-
Yes	11	7.1%	143	92.9%			
No	74	6.3%	1107	93.7%			

Note. *N=1,355*, *N*(Shared)=85, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted for accuracy where 1 cell (25%) presented an expected cell count less than 5.

Table 46

Descriptives and T-Tests for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration via Sharing

Variable	Yes		No		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	5.47	1.07	6.12	0.80	6.08	0.83	5.44	<.001
Consent Refusal	5.63	1.13	5.85	1.15	5.83	1.15	1.70	.090
Consent Adherence	6.53	0.66	6.76	0.47	6.74	0.48	3.08	.003
Machiavellianism	4.50	0.87	4.40	0.89	4.41	0.89	-0.92	.356
Psychopathy	2.99	1.11	2.45	1.01	2.49	1.02	-4.71	<.001
Sadism	3.68	1.26	3.03	1.21	3.07	1.22	-4.75	<.001
Narcissism	3.55	1.12	3.28	1.06	3.30	1.06	-2.21	.027
Benevolent Sexism	3.16	1.21	3.14	1.20	3.15	1.20	-0.12	.905
Hostile Sexism	3.05	1.57	2.68	1.37	2.71	1.38	-2.13	.036
IBSAMA	2.31	1.02	1.83	0.72	1.86	0.75	-4.30	<.001

Note. *N=1,355*, *N*(Shared)=85.

Significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators were found in gender, sending of sexts, sending of unsolicited sexts, consent seeking, consent adherence, psychopathy, sadism, narcissism, hostile sexism, IBSA victimisation (any), IBSA victimisation (via sharing) and IBSAMA. These variables were entered into a logistic regression analysis model (see Table 47). As above, ‘IBSA victimisation (any)’ was not entered due to it overlapping with ‘IBSA victimisation (via sharing)’.

Table 47

Logistic Regression Model Predicting IBSA Perpetration via Sharing.

Variable	*Model 1*					*Model 2*				
	B	SE	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	B	SE(HC)	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	-1.842	1.664	.268	0.158		0.102	0.895	.909	1.107	
Male Gendered	.649	.277	.019	1.914	[1.11, 3.30]	0.789	0.26	.002	2.2	[1.32, 3.66]
Sext Sent	.503	.311	.106	1.653	[0.90, 3.04]	-	-	-	-	-
Unsolicited Sext Sent	1.45	.468	.002	4.263	[1.70,10.67]	1.568	0.462	<.001	4.797	[1.94,11.86]
Consent Seeking	-.684	.148	<.001	0.504	[0.38, 0.67]	-0.663	0.129	<.001	0.515	[0.40, 0.66]
Consent Adherence	0.173	0.236	.463	1.189	[0.75, 1.89]	-	-	-	-	-
Psychopathy	0.136	0.131	.299	1.146	[0.89, 1.48]	-	-	-	-	-
Sadism	0.144	0.12	.230	1.155	[0.91, 1.46]	-	-	-	-	-
Narcissism	-0.020	0.125	.876	0.981	[0.77, 1.25]	-	-	-	-	-
Hostile Sexism	-0.278	0.115	.015	0.757	[0.60, 0.95]	-0.237	0.111	.034	0.789	[0.63, 0.98]
IBSA Victim (Shared)	0.63	0.278	.023	1.878	[1.09, 3.24]	0.766	0.272	.005	2.151	[1.26, 3.67]
IBSAMA	0.509	0.185	.006	1.663	[1.16, 2.39]	0.513	0.175	.003	1.67	[1.19, 2.35]

Note. N=1,335.

The model (see Table 47; Model 1) was significant, $\chi2(11) = 93.81$, $p<.001$, and explained between 6.8% and 18% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.068, Nagelkerke R=.180). The model correctly sorted 93.6% of cases, 99.4% of non-perpetrators, 8.2% of perpetrators. Male gender, sending of unsolicited sexts, consent seeking, hostile sexism, IBSA victimisation (via sharing) and IBSAMA remained significant independent predictors in the model.

An improved model containing the significant independent predictors is presented in Table 47, Model 2. This model significantly predicted IBSA perpetration via sharing ($\chi2(6) = 85.10$, $p<.001$) and explained between 6.2% and 16.4% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.062, Nagelkerke R=.164). Model 2 correctly sorted 93.9% of cases, 99.7% of non-perpetrators, 9.4% of perpetrators.

C. IBSA via Threatening to Share

Finally, predictors of perpetration of 'IBSA via threatening to share' were explored. Firstly, chi-squared and t-test analyses determined any significant differences between those that have and those that have not perpetrated IBSA via threats (see Table 48 and Table 49).

Table 48

Frequencies and Chi-Square Analyses for Binary Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration via Threatening to Share

Variable	Yes (Perpetrated)		No (Not Perpetrated)		χ2		Exact[a] (*p*)
	N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*	
Gender (Male)					0.28	.597	-
Yes	8	1.2%	661	98.8%			
No	6	0.9%	660	99.1%			
Sext Sent					0.07	.788	1.00
Yes	10	1.1%	899	98.9%			
No	4	0.9%	422	99.1%			
Sext Received					0.01	.920	1.00
Yes	11	1.1%	1023	98.9%			

No	3	1.0%	298	99.0%			
Unsolicited Sext Sent					26.89	<.001	.002
Yes	3	11.1%	24	88.9%			
No	11	0.8%	1297	99.2%			
Unsolicited Sext Received					0.00	.949	-
Yes	6	1.1%	555	98.9%			
No	8	1.0%	766	99.0%			
IBSA Victimisation (Any)					3.32	0.068	.088
Yes	8	1.8%	448	98.2%			
No	6	0.7%	873	99.3%			
IBSA Victim (Taken)					0.82	.365	.361
Yes	5	1.5%	332	98.5%			
No	9	0.9%	989	99.1%			
IBSA Victim (Shared)					1.19	.275	.286
Yes	4	1.7%	230	98.3%			
No	10	0.9%	1091	99.1%			
IBSA Victim (Threatened)					8.11	.004	.016
Yes	5	3.2%	149	96.8%			
No	9	0.8%	1172	99.2%			

Note. N=1,355, *N*(Threatened)=14, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted for accuracy where 1 cell (25%) presented an expected cell count less than 5.

Table 49

Descriptives and T-Test Analyses for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration via Threatening to Share

Variable	Yes		No		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	5.36	1.31	6.08	0.82	6.08	0.83	2.06	.060
Consent Refusal	5.45	1.53	5.84	1.15	5.83	1.15	1.27	.206
Consent Adherence	6.04	1.11	6.75	0.47	6.74	0.48	2.39	.032
Machiavellianism	4.45	0.47	4.41	0.90	4.41	0.89	-0.31	.761
Psychopathy	3.15	1.46	2.48	1.02	2.49	1.02	-1.72	.109
Sadism	3.33	1.41	3.07	1.22	3.07	1.22	-0.78	.438
Narcissism	3.52	1.10	3.30	1.06	3.30	1.06	-0.78	.436
Benevolent Sexism	3.49	1.04	3.14	1.21	3.15	1.20	-1.07	.285
Hostile Sexism	3.69	1.80	2.69	1.37	2.71	1.38	-2.69	.007
IBSAMA	2.41	1.44	1.85	0.74	1.86	0.75	-1.46	.168

Note. N=1,355, *N*(Threatened)=14.

Significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators were found in the sending of unsolicited sexts, IBSA victimisation (via threats), consent adherence and hostile sexism. These variables were entered into a logistic regression analysis (see Table 50). The model was significant, $\chi 2(11) = 26.84$, $p < .001$, and explained between 2% and 18% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.020, Nagelkerke R=.181). The model correctly sorted 99% of cases, 100% of non-perpetrators, 0% of perpetrators. Sending of unsolicited sexts, consent adherence and IBSA victimisation (via threatening to share) remained significant independent predictors in the model.

Table 50

Logistic Regression Model Predicting IBSA Perpetration via Threats to Share

Variable	B	SE	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	0.649	2.088	.756	1.913	
Unsolicited Sext Sent	2.028	0.727	.005	7.596	[1.83, 31.55]
Consent Adherence	-0.974	0.281	<.001	0.378	[0.22, 0.66]
Hostile Sexism	0.217	0.201	.282	1.242	[0.84, 1.84]
IBSA Victim (Threatened)	1.249	0.599	.037	3.488	[1.08, 11.29]

Note. N=1,335.

Aim 3: Gender Comparisons

The data file was split by gender into men and women. There were not enough 'other' gendered participants to include this category. Analyses were repeated to determine any significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators in each specific gender.

Men

For men the chi-square analysis demonstrated significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA in sending of sexts, receiving of sexts, sending of unsolicited sexts, IBSA victimisation (via sharing), IBSA victimisation (via taking) and IBSA victimisation (of any form) (see Table 51).

Table 51

Frequencies and Chi-Square Analyses for Binary Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration in Men

Variable	Yes		No		Total		χ2	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*
Sext Sent							4.00	.045
Yes	58	12.7%	398	87.3%	456	68.2%		
No	16	7.5%	197	92.5%	213	31.8%		
Sext Received							5.67	.017
Yes	67	12.5%	469	87.5%	536	80.1%		
No	7	5.3%	126	94.7%	133	19.9%		
Unsolicited Sext Sent							29.45[a]	<.001
Yes	10	47.6%	11	52.4%	21	3.1%		
No	64	9.9%	584	90.1%	648	96.9%		
Unsolicited Sext Received							1.18	.277
Yes	23	13.3%	150	86.7%	173	25.9%		
No	51	10.3%	445	89.7%	496	74.1%		
IBSA Victimisation (Any)							8.98	.003
Yes	37	19.2%	156	80.8%	193	28.8%		
No	37	7.8%	439	92.2%	476	71.2%		
IBSA Victim (Taken)							8.98	.003
Yes	24	18.5%	106	81.5%	130	19.4%		
No	50	9.3%	489	90.7%	539	80.6%		
IBSA Victim (Shared)							10.53	.001
Yes	20	20.6%	77	79.4%	97	14.5%		
No	54	9.4%	518	90.6%	572	85.5%		
IBSA Victim (Threatened)							1.71	.191
Yes	9	16.4%	46	83.6%	55	8.2%		
No	65	10.6%	548	89.3%	614	91.8%		

Note. *N=669*, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted for accuracy as 1 cell (25%) presented an expected cell count less than 5.

T-test analyses demonstrated significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA in consent seeking, consent refusal, consent adherence, Machiavellianism, narcissism, psychopathy, sadism, hostile sexism and IBSAMA (see Table 52).

Table 52

Descriptives and T-Test Analyses for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration in Men

Variable	Yes		No		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	5.52	1.03	6.12	0.76	6.05	0.82	4.82	<.001
Consent Refusal	5.54	1.14	5.92	1.14	5.88	1.15	2.72	.003
Consent Adherence	6.50	0.71	6.73	0.50	6.70	0.53	2.75	.004
Machiavellianism	4.69	0.79	4.49	0.87	4.51	0.86	-1.89	.030
Psychopathy	3.01	1.17	2.68	1.02	2.71	1.04	-2.59	.005
Sadism	3.92	1.25	3.53	1.18	3.57	1.20	-2.69	.004
Narcissism	3.70	1.10	3.44	1.05	3.47	1.06	-1.94	.026
Benevolent Sexism	3.46	1.24	3.26	1.22	3.28	1.23	-1.32	.093
Hostile Sexism	3.43	1.48	3.02	1.41	3.06	1.42	-2.35	.010
IBSAMA	2.40	0.93	1.96	0.74	2.01	0.78	-4.65	<.001

Note. *N=669*.

The variables that demonstrated significant differences between male perpetrators of IBSA and non-perpetrators were entered into logistic regression analyses. The overall model (Model 1; see Table 53) was significant, $\chi 2(13) = 65.40$, $p<.001$, and explained between 9.3% and 18.6% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.093, Nagelkerke R=.186). The model correctly sorted 89.4% of cases; 99% of non-perpetrators, 12.2% of perpetrators. Having sent unsolicited sexts, consent seeking, IBSAMA and IBSA victimisation remained significant independent predictors in the model. These variables were retained and entered into a refined logistic regression model (Model 2; see Table 53). This model significantly predicted IBSA perpetration, $\chi 2(4) = 59.17$, $p<.001$, and explained between 8.5% and 16.9% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.085, Nagelkerke R=.169). The refined model correctly sorted 89.5% of cases; 99.2% of non-perpetrators and 12.2% of perpetrators. All the variables remained significant independent predictors.

Table 53

Logistic Regression Model Predicting IBSA Perpetration in Men

Variable	*Model 1*					*Model 2*				
	B	SE	*p*	*OR*	95% CI	B	SE(HC)	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	-1.130	1.84	.540	0.323		1.013		.756	1.37	
Sext Sent	-0.025	0.39	.948	0.975	[0.46, 2.08]	-	-	-	-	-
Sext Received	0.712	0.52	.168	2.037	[0.74, 5.60]	-	-	-	-	-
Unsolicited Sext Sent	1.096	0.53	.039	2.992	[1.06, 8.47]	0.517		.018	3.41	[1.24, 9.39]
Consent Seeking	-0.641	0.17	<.001	0.527	[0.38, 0.73]	0.148		<.001	0.54	[0.41, 0.73]
Consent Refusal	-0.074	0.12	.521	0.929	[0.74, 1.17]	-	-	-	-	-
Consent Adherence	0.087	0.26	.741	1.091	[0.65, 1.83]	-	-	-	-	-
Machiavellianism	0.193	0.18	.282	1.213	[0.85, 1.73]	-	-	-	-	-
Narcissism	0.040	0.14	.779	1.041	[0.79, 1.38]	-	-	-	-	-
Psychopathy	-0.034	0.15	.814	0.966	[0.73, 1.29]	-	-	-	-	-
Sadism	0.057	0.13	.668	1.058	[0.82, 1.37]	-	-	-	-	-
Hostile Sexism	-0.116	0.12	.334	0.891	[0.71, 1.13]	-	-	-	-	-
IBSAMA	0.416	0.20	.041	1.516	[1.02, 2.26]	0.161		.027	1.43	[1.04, 1.96]
IBSA Victimisation (Any)	0.858	0.28	.002	2.358	[1.37, 4.06]	0.270		<.001	2.46	[1.45, 4.18]

Note. N=669.

Women

For women, the chi-square analysis only demonstrated significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA in IBSA victimisation (via taking) (see Table 54).

Table 54

Frequencies and Chi-Square Analyses for Binary Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration in Women

Variable	Yes		No		Total		χ2	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*χ2*	*p*
Sext Sent							3.21	.073
Yes	34	8.1%	387	91.9%	421	68.6%		
No	8	4.1%	185	95.9%	193	31.4%		
Sext Received							0.10	.749
Yes	32	7.0%	423	93.0%	455	74.1%		
No	10	6.3%	149	93.7%	159	25.9%		
Unsolicited Sext Sent							- [a]	ns.
Yes	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5	0.8%		
No	41	6.7%	568	93.3%	609	99.2%		
Unsolicited Sext Received							0.773	.379
Yes	27	7.6%	328	92.4%	355	57.8%		
No	15	5.8%	244	94.2%	259	42.2%		
IBSA Victimisation (Any)							3.01	.083
Yes	22	9.0%	350	91%	244	39.7%		
No	20	5.4%	222	95.6%	370	60.3%		
IBSA Victim (Taken)							5.61	.018
Yes	20	10.4%	172	89.6%	192	31.3%		
No	22	5.2%	400	94.8%	422	68.7%		
IBSA Victim (Shared)							1.55	.213
Yes	12	9.3%	117	90.7%	129	21.0%		
No	30	6.2%	455	93.8%	485	79.0%		
IBSA Victim (Threatened)							0.005	.944
Yes	6	6.7%	84	93.3%	90	14.7%		
No	36	6.9%	488	93.1%	524	85.3%		

Note. *N=614*, [a] Fisher's exact test conducted as 2 cells (50%) presented expected cell counts less than 5: *p*=.299.

T-test analyses demonstrated significant differences between female perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA in consent seeking, consent adherence, psychopathy, sadism and IBSAMA (see Table 55).

Table 55

Descriptives and T-Test Analyses for Scale Predictor Variables of IBSA Perpetration in Women

Variable	Yes		No		Total		*t*	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
Consent Seeking	5.28	1.11	6.12	0.80	6.06	0.85	4.83	<.001
Consent Refusal	6.01	1.05	5.80	1.15	5.81	1.15	-1.15	.126
Consent Adherence	6.48	0.88	6.80	0.38	6.77	0.44	2.32	.013
Machiavellianism	4.44	0.88	4.29	0.90	4.30	0.90	-1.00	.160
Psychopathy	2.59	1.00	2.19	0.93	2.22	0.94	-2.67	.004
Sadism	2.82	0.84	2.53	1.01	2.55	1.01	-1.78	.038
Narcissism	3.17	0.96	3.13	1.04	3.13	1.04	-0.28	.391
Benevolent Sexism	2.91	1.20	3.06	1.16	3.05	1.17	0.80	.213
Hostile Sexism	2.58	1.57	2.36	1.22	2.38	1.25	-0.90	.187
IBSAMA	2.00	1.02	1.67	0.62	1.69	0.66	-2.08	.022

Note. *N=614*.

The variables that demonstrated significant differences between perpetrators of IBSA and non-perpetrators were entered into logistic regression analyses (see Table 56). The model was significant, $\chi 2(6) = 38.29$, $p<.001$, and explained between 6% and 15.4% of variance (Cox and Snell R=.060, Nagelkerke R=.154). The model correctly sorted 93.5% of cases, 100% of non-perpetrators, 4.8% of perpetrators. Only consent seeking remained a significant independent predictor in the model.

Table 56

Logistic Regression Model Predicting IBSA Perpetration in Women

Variable	B	SE	*p*	*OR*	95% CI
Constant	2.80	0.19	0.167	16.494	
Consent Seeking	-0.757	0.30	<.001	0.469	[0.32, 0.68]
Consent Adherence	-0.22	0.19	0.468	0.803	[0.44, 1.45]
Psychopathy	0.22	0.18	0.245	1.249	[0.86, 1.82]
Sadism	0.00	0.349	0.988	1.003	[0.70, 1.43]
IBSA Victim (Taken)	-0.59	0.234	0.094	0.557	[0.28, 1.10]
IBSAMA	0.12	2.029	0.596	1.132	[0.72, 1.79]

Note. N=614.

Discussion

The present study extends the current literature on IBSA by examining the predictors of perpetrators in greater depth and by distinguishing between methods of IBSA. It was hypothesised that (a) sexism, (b) the Dark Tetrad, (c) consent behaviours, (d) sexting behaviour, (e) IBSA victimisation, and (f) IBSAMA, would predict IBSA perpetration. All (or some aspects of, where there were sub-measures) were significantly different between perpetrators of IBSA and individuals who have never perpetrated IBSA. The findings demonstrated that IBSAMA, consent seeking behaviours, sending unsolicited sexts and having experienced IBSA victimisation were all independent predictors of IBSA perpetration.

Exploratory analyses revealed that the predictors of IBSA perpetration varied depending on the method of perpetration, suggesting that different psychological and behavioural processes may underlie each form of IBSA. Furthermore, the predictors of IBSA perpetration differed by gender. These findings underscore the gendered dynamics of IBSA and suggest that tailored approaches may be necessary to address the unique risk factors and psychological processes operating within each gender group. These exploratory findings are discussed in more detail below.

Interpretation of Key Findings

The findings highlight the complex interplay of cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioural processes that underlie IBSA. For example, high levels of IBSAMA may facilitate perpetration by providing cognitive justifications that minimise the perceived harm or blame the victim, thereby lowering psychological barriers to harmful action. Similarly, deficits in consent-seeking behaviours and the tendency to send unsolicited sexts reflect both attitudinal and behavioural disregard for boundaries and autonomy, which are central to IBSA perpetration. The association between prior victimisation and perpetration suggests possible cycles of normalisation or internalisation of harmful norms, where individuals who have experienced IBSA may become desensitised or more accepting of such behaviours.
By identifying these independent predictors, the study not only clarifies the psychological mechanisms that sustain IBSA but also points to potential targets for intervention and prevention.

The present study aimed to compare predictors of IBSA perpetration across genders. Previous research has determined a gendered nature of IBSA, with men more likely to report perpetration (Clancy et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022; Ruvalcaba & Eaton, 2020). The present findings supported the literature as male gender was a significant independent predictor of IBSA perpetration and men demonstrated 74% greater odds of having perpetrated IBSA. Expanding on the existing literature, the gender differences in underlying predictors of IBSA perpetration were explored. The same variables were found to be independent significant predictors of IBSA perpetration in men as IBSA perpetration across all genders. However, in women less significant differences were found between perpetrators and non-perpetrators and only consent seeking remained an independent predictor of IBSA perpetration. This disparity may be due to the smaller sample size of

perpetrators (42 out of 614 participants) compared to non-perpetrators in women. All of the mean differences and percentage differences across variables between perpetrators and non-perpetrators were in the expected direction but did not have enough power to reach significance.

Findings also suggested that the gendered nature of the behaviour may vary across types of IBSA. When looking at the types of IBSA independently, men were only significantly more likely to perpetrate IBSA (via sharing); there were not significant differences in perpetration between genders in IBSA via taking or IBSA via threatening to share. This pattern may reflect the way social norms and gender roles shape the acceptability and motivations for different IBSA behaviours. For example, sharing may be more closely tied to masculine norms around dominance, status, or sexual conquest, while taking or threatening to share may involve more covert or relational dynamics that are less strongly gendered (Henry & Beard, 2024). However, this again may be due to the sample size being smaller for the other types of IBSA, as the prevalence rates are still higher in men (although not statistically significant). Interestingly, the only existing literature to explore gender differences between types of IBSA found that men were significantly more likely to report existing perpetration of each type of IBSA compared to women (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). It is important to note that these studies had substantially larger perpetration rates for the non-consensual taking of private images and threatening to share private images (four to five times greater).

Following from this, the relevance of sexism as a predictor of IBSA perpetration contributes to an under-explored area of this field. Research has explored the significance of ambivalent sexism in relation to IBSA perpetration, but there is limited literature on hostile and benevolent sexism independently (Martínez-Bacaicoa et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). Whilst Pina et al. (2021) did explore the relationship between revenge pornography

proclivity and both hostile and benevolent sexism, the findings did not demonstrate any significant correlations. The present study is the first (to my knowledge) to investigate sexism across the different methods of IBSA. The findings demonstrated that perpetrators of each type of IBSA (via sharing, via threatening to share and via taking) have significantly greater hostile sexist attitudes compared to non-perpetrators. Hostile sexism was also a significant independent predictor of IBSA via sharing. Furthermore, our findings demonstrated that hostile sexism was significantly different between male perpetrators and non-perpetrators of IBSA but, there was not a significant difference in sexism across female perpetrators and non-perpetrators. These findings highlight the crucial role of hostile sexism in IBSA perpetration, particularly among men, aligning with broader research on offline sexual aggression (Abrams et al., 2003; Masser et al., 2006). Given the limited exploration of sexism as an independent predictor of IBSA, this study provides novel insights into the gendered nature of these behaviours. Hostile sexism may facilitate IBSA perpetration by fostering cognitive justifications for violating others' privacy or autonomy, especially when the victim is perceived as challenging traditional gender roles (Martínez-Bacaicoa, Real Brioso et al., 2024). For men, in particular, hostile sexist beliefs may lower empathy and increase the likelihood of rationalising or excusing harmful behaviour, aligning with broader psychological models of aggression and entitlement (e.g. Bruera et al., 2023).

The final novel element of the present research is the exploration of predictors of the types of IBSA perpetration independently. The most note-worthy finding from this analysis is the significance surrounding victimisation experience. Individuals who had experienced a specific type of IBSA victimisation were significantly more likely to have perpetrated that same type of IBSA. This pattern held true for IBSA involving image taking, sharing, and threatening to share. However, victimisation in one form of IBSA did not significantly predict perpetration of other types. It is also interesting that there were variations in findings

surrounding consent across the different types of IBSA perpetration. Consent seeking remained an independent significant predictor in IBSA via taking and IBSA via sharing, but in contrast, consent adherence instead remained an independent predictor in IBSA via threatening to share. This may be due to the nature of the behaviour, with adhering to (or not adhering to) consent of keeping an image private being a key aspect of threatening to share. The current literature has not explored the variation in predictors of the different types of IBSA perpetration beyond the gender differences referred to in the previous paragraph and exploration of epidemiology (Powell et al., 2019, 2022). This study thus offers a novel view that can be explored further and infers a potential typology in perpetrators by type of IBSA.

Limitations

The present research, as is common case with research in the field of forensic psychology is limited by the sample size of the target population. Perpetrators, being the target population, represent just 8.8% of the general population sampled in this study. Statistically, this imbalance favours the majority group (non-perpetrators), which explains the lower accuracy for correctly sorting perpetrators and very high accuracy for correctly sorting non-perpetrators (Oommen et al., 2011; Owen, 2007; Van Den Goorbergh et al., 2022). However, research has shown that correcting imbalanced samples grossly overestimates the probability of rare events and does not improve discrimination (Van Den Goorbergh et al., 2022). Although it is a strength that the analysis utilises the unbalanced data, this does increase the chance that predictors may be incorrectly classified as non-significant (Abd Rahman & Yap, 2016). This could explain why some of the expected predictors were not found to be significant, particularly in regression models with small minority classes (such as the women-only or IBSA by type models).

Conclusion

This research has advanced our understanding of the prevalence of IBSA behaviours in the UK and highlighted important predictors of the behaviour. The emphasis on dangerous sexting behaviours (sending of unsolicited sexual images), intentions around consent seeking and adherence, and endorsement of IBSA myths as significant predictors of IBSA perpetration can inform risk assessments and interventions surrounding the behaviour. In addition, the reaffirmation of the significance of gender and previous IBSA victimisation as predictors of IBSA perpetration can continue to inform research and practice in the field. As the legal context develops and the mainstream understanding of IBSA as a criminal behaviour continues to grow, it is important that research continues to explore the underpinnings in a hope to prevent its growth, support its victims, and sufficiently address the issues presented by the perpetrators of this behaviour.

Chapter 7

General Discussion

The primary aim of this thesis was to advance understanding of image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) by examining the psychological, behavioural and attitudinal mechanisms that underpin both endorsement of IBSA-related myths and perpetration of IBSA behaviours. At the commencement of this programme of research, empirical attention to IBSA was limited, with a particular dearth of research investigating the cognitive and dispositional factors associated with perpetration. Despite legislative and media recognition of IBSA as a growing social concern, the psychological processes contributing to such behaviours remained largely unexplored. This thesis sought to address that gap by examining how attitudes, including IBSA myth acceptance (IBSAMA), relate to IBSA perpetration, and by identifying key individual differences that may predict these outcomes.

The thesis comprised a systematic review and four empirical studies. The systematic literature review (Chapter 1) synthesised the extant empirical evidence regarding the prevalence and predictors of both IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA. This review highlighted significant gaps in the literature, including the limited exploration of psychological constructs beyond demographic variables, inconsistencies in measurement, and an over-reliance on student samples. These limitations informed the theoretical and empirical rationale for the programme of research. Whilst Chapter 1 reports an up-to-date systematic review that was conducted after the empirical studies, these issues were still prevalent.

The empirical component of the thesis comprises four studies. Study 1 examined whether RMA and IBSAMA shared common predictors, thereby exploring the extent to which IBSA attitudes mirror those found in offline sexual violence contexts. Study 2 assessed the relationship between IBSAMA and self-reported proclivity to perpetrate IBSA in the context of revenge pornography scenarios, while also exploring the role of attitudinal and

behavioural factors such as sexting, sexual consent beliefs, and victimisation experiences. In Study 3, a new measure of IBSA proclivity, the IBSAPS, was developed and validated, enabling more comprehensive assessment of the range of behaviours encompassed by IBSA. The scale was then utilised to investigate psychological and behavioural predictors of both IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity, including hostile and benevolent sexism, dark personality traits, and sexual consent beliefs, with an additional focus on gender differences. Finally, Study 4 examined predictors of actual IBSA perpetration, disaggregated by perpetration method (taking, sharing and threatening to share), and provided the first empirical evidence on the distinct profiles associated with different forms of IBSA. This study also explored gender differences in predictors of IBSA perpetration.

Collectively, the studies presented in this thesis contribute novel insights to the field, particularly at the intersection of sexual violence, attitudinal endorsement, and technology-facilitated offending. By empirically demonstrating that IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration are underpinned by similar psychological constructs to those associated with offline sexual abuse, the findings reinforce conceptualisations of IBSA as part of the broader continuum of sexual violence. Moreover, the development of a validated measure of IBSA proclivity, alongside identification of robust psychological predictors, provides a foundation for future research, prevention strategies, and policy interventions aimed at reducing technology-facilitated sexual abuse.

Consolidation of Key Findings

Objective 1: Does IBSA perpetration and IBSA myth acceptance mirror sexual abuse offline?

A central objective of this thesis was to examine the extent to which IBSA and IBSAMA reflect the dynamics of offline sexual violence. This question has become increasingly relevant as both scholars and legal theorists have called for the conceptualisation

of IBSA as a form of sexual abuse situated on a continuum with more traditionally recognised forms of sexual violence (McGlynn et al., 2017; Powell & Henry, 2017b). The findings presented in this thesis provide empirical support for this view, demonstrating that both IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration are underpinned by psychological and attitudinal predictors that strongly mirror those found in offline sexual offending.

In Study 1 (Chapter 2), the relationship between rape myth acceptance (RMA) and IBSAMA was examined, revealing significant overlap. Specifically, both constructs were predicted by similar individual differences, including social dominance orientation (SDO), ambivalent sexism, and consent behaviours. These findings suggest that the cognitive distortions that facilitate justification of offline sexual abuse, such as beliefs that victims are responsible for their own victimisation or that harm is exaggerated, also underpin attitudes towards IBSA. The results lend empirical weight to theoretical arguments positing that online sexual abuse is not a distinct phenomenon but rather an extension of entrenched sexual violence ideologies adapted to digital contexts (Henry et al., 2020; McGlynn et al., 2017; Powell & Henry, 2017b).

Furthermore, the thesis identified that IBSAMA is a key predictor of both proclivity to perpetrate IBSA (Studies 2 and 3) and actual IBSA perpetration (Study 4). This mirrors longstanding findings in the literature on offline sexual violence, where RMA has been consistently associated with increased risk of sexually aggressive behaviour (Abrams et al., 2003; Bohner et al., 1998, 2005, 2006; O'Connor, 2020, 2023; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Notably, IBSAMA functioned both as an independent predictor and as a mediating mechanism through which other psychological traits, such as dark personality characteristics and sexual consent beliefs, influenced IBSA-related outcomes which is also noted in offline sexual abuse (Debowska et al., 2015; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022). For example, Study 3 identified that IBSAMA and psychopathy were the strongest

independent predictors of proclivity, this three-way relationship has been highlighted in offline sexual abuse literature (Debowska et al., 2015; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022). This finding further supports the idea that IBSA and offline sexual violence are underpinned by similar attitudinal and dispositional frameworks.

In summary, this body of research provides strong empirical evidence that IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA mirror offline sexual violence in both form and function. The findings highlight that the same cognitive distortions and gendered ideologies that facilitate offline sexual abuse operate in digital contexts. These insights have significant implications for both theoretical models of sexual violence and the development of interventions, suggesting that strategies used to address offline sexual abuse may be effectively adapted to prevent and respond to IBSA. Programmes that target bystanders, understanding consent, reducing hostile masculinity, and tackling myths have been shown to reduce sexual violence through changing attitudes and eliciting empathy for victims (Park & Kim, 2023; Porat et al., 2024). It is strongly recommended that IBSA is considered as an abusive behaviour on the continuum of sexual violence.

Objective 2: What is the prevalence of IBSA proclivity, IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA in the UK?

Understanding the prevalence of IBSA and IBSAMA is essential for assessing the scale of the issue and for informing public policy, legal reform, and targeted prevention efforts. Despite growing societal recognition of IBSA as a significant harm, reliable prevalence data have remained limited, particularly in the UK (Powell et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2021). Available statistics are heavily focused on victim experience and thus the prevalence of perpetrators was unclear (Papachristou, 2023). Furthermore, many research estimates are confined to university samples or adolescents and young adults and largely focused on IBSA via sharing (Henry & Beard, 2024; Walker et al., 2021; Walker & Sleath,

2017). The present thesis addressed this gap by reporting both cross-sectional estimates of self-reported perpetration and proclivity, and attitudinal endorsement of IBSA myths across multiple empirical studies involving UK-based adult participants.

Prevalence as Outlined in the Literature

Chapter 1 systematically reviewed the existing literature to assess the prevalence rates of IBSA and IBSAMA previously reported. Overall perpetration was cited between 10.1% and 17.5%. Perpetration rates of IBSA via sharing were recorded between as low as 1% and as high as 35.2%. Perpetration of IBSA via creation was recorded between 8.7% and 15.8% (only three studies reported on this). Finally, IBSA perpetration via threatening to share was reported between a rate of 4.9% and 14.1%. Reporting of proclivity to perpetrate varied between mean scores on Likert scales and percentage of participants indicating some inclination beyond absolutely would not. In the three studies that reported a percentage score, between 17.5% and 48.2% of participants presented a response beyond absolute disagreement (Karasavva et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017, 2021). Mean scores demonstrate that proclivity trends towards the bottom end of scales, highlighting that very few respondents report an affirmative proclivity to perpetrate IBSA behaviour.

The prevalence of IBSAMA was even more challenging to assess across the literature due to the wide range of operationalising myth acceptance. Studies that have used the sexual image-based abuse myth acceptance scale (SIAMA) presented that IBSAMA was endorsed at low to moderate levels (Flynn et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). On the blame subscale, mean scores ranged from $M = 3.70$ to 4.20 on the 1–7 scale, reflecting attitudes that hovered between '*slightly disagree*' and '*neither agree nor disagree*'. However, between 32.1% and 34.7% of participants scored at or above 5 (agreement), indicating substantial victim blaming in a notable portion of respondents. In contrast, minimisation/excuse subscale scores were consistently lower, with means ranging

from *M* = 2.30 to 3.49, generally reflecting disagreement with attitudes that downplay the seriousness of IBSA. Only 6.4% of participants scored above the threshold of 5, suggesting relatively low levels of harm minimisation or justification of perpetrator behaviour. Mean scores on the SIAMA measure, though generally trending towards disagreement, did not fall at the extreme ends of the scale, suggesting a degree of ambivalence or subtle endorsement.

Prevalence of IBSA Proclivity

Across the empirical studies presented, prevalence rates for proclivity to perpetrate IBSA were consistent with, and in some cases exceeded, those reported in the wider literature. The thesis examined the prevalence of proclivity to perpetrate IBSA, measured both via the established RPPS (Pina et al., 2017) and the newly developed IBSAPS. In Study 2, approximately 15.3% of participants indicated at least some proclivity to engage in IBSA behaviours in 'revenge pornography' scenarios, with lower average scores suggesting that most individuals strongly disavowed such actions, but a meaningful minority did not. Study 3 introduced and validated the IBSAPS, allowing for a more comprehensive assessment of proclivity across taking, sharing, and threatening behaviours. This measure revealed similar trends, with 42.1% of participants reporting responses that indicated a non-zero likelihood of engaging in at least one IBSA behaviour. These findings highlight that while most individuals do not endorse such behaviours, a significant minority display concerning levels of behavioural intent or lack of complete eschewing of the behaviour. A staggering 1 in 5 in the general population are not absolutely against perpetrating IBSA.

Prevalence of IBSA Perpetration

Prevalence rates for IBSA perpetration reported in the empirical research were consistent with, and in some cases exceeded, those reported in the wider literature. In Study 4, which utilised a detailed self-report measure capturing different forms of IBSA, 8.8% of participants reported engaging in at least one IBSA behaviour. Disaggregated analysis

revealed variation across perpetration types: 6.4% reported non-consensual sharing of sexual images, 1% reported threatening to share such images, and 2.6% reported engaging in the non-consensual taking or creation of sexual images. These findings are somewhat aligned with data presented in the systematic review (Chapter 1), which indicated that IBSA perpetration ranged between 1% and 35.2% across studies. The inclusion of multiple perpetration modalities within Study 4 provides a more nuanced understanding of how IBSA is enacted and demonstrates that it is not a singular behaviour, but rather a constellation of abusive acts facilitated by digital technology.

Prevalence of IBSAMA

IBSAMA prevalence was also assessed across all four empirical studies presented in this thesis, with findings indicating low to moderate endorsement of IBSA-supportive myths. The SIAMA was used in all four empirical studies, and participants consistently demonstrated some degree of endorsement of beliefs that minimised harm, excused perpetrators, or blamed victims (M=1.76 - 1.89). These findings demonstrate a lower degree of IBSAMA than has been reported in prior research (Flynn et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). This may be due celebrity cases in the UK, which were covered extensively in the media, bringing IBSA to the forefront of discussion and raising awareness (e.g., Zara McDermott and Georgia Harrison). Additionally, the increase in sexting behaviour during the pandemic may have normalised sexting and reduced scrutiny for sexters (Morelli et al., 2023). Despite lower overall average scores in the studies presented in this thesis, the majority of individuals still reported endorsement beyond absolute disagreement. For example, in Study 1, 90.3% of participants presented SIAMA scores that were greater than 1 (strongly disagree). Additionally, in Studies 2 and 3, 62-65% of participants ‘agreed’ with at least one myth on the SIAMA scale. Overall, in line with the studies reported in the systematic literature review in Chapter 1, IBSAMA endorsement is

generally low on average but there is still a degree of endorsement and a noteworthy proportion of individuals actively endorsing myths.

Conclusion

Taken together, these findings suggest that IBSA is a relatively common form of sexual abuse in the UK context, with meaningful levels of both actual perpetration and behavioural intent. Further, attitudes that serve to justify or minimise such abuse, are endorsed at levels comparable to those observed in the literature on offline sexual violence. These patterns indicate that IBSA is embedded within broader social norms and cognitive frameworks that tolerate or justify sexual harm in digital contexts.

Objective 3: What are the predictors of IBSAMA?

A principal aim of this thesis was to identify the factors that predict endorsement of IBSAMA. Drawing on findings from Studies 1, 2, and 3, several consistent and theoretically meaningful predictors emerged, including sexism and sexual double standards, dark personality, prior victimisation, sexting experiences, and beliefs about sexual consent. These results significantly advance the literature by demonstrating that the psychological, attitudinal and behavioural antecedents of IBSAMA mirror those found in research on RMA, while also highlighting unique predictors relevant to the digital nature of IBSA.

Sexism consistently emerged as a key predictor of IBSAMA. In Studies 1 and 2 ambivalent sexism remained an independent significant predictor of IBSAMA. When exploring hostile and benevolent sexism separately in Study 3, both were significantly related to IBSAMA, but hostile sexism remained an independent significant predictor of IBSAMA. Even when split by gender, hostile sexism remained the strongest significant predictor of IBSAMA in both men and women, explaining over 30% of variance in IBSAMA. This pattern mirrored findings in RMA research, where both forms of sexism have been shown to predict myth acceptance (Chapleau et al., 2007; Hockett et al., 2009; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010;

Viki et al., 2004), and extend this relationship into the context of digitally mediated sexual abuse. In addition, sexual double standards presented a significant relationship with IBSAMA in both Studies 1 and 2 and remained a significant independent predictor of IBSAMA in Study 2. Sexual double standards also significantly predicted RMA (as identified in Study 1). Participants who endorsed the belief that men and women should be judged by different standards for the same sexual behaviours, were more likely to endorse IBSA myths. This was evident across both male and female respondents, although higher SDSS scores were more common among male participants. These findings suggest that sexual double standards operate in tandem with sexist ideologies to reinforce cognitive distortions that blame victims and excuse perpetrators, particularly when the victim is female and has engaged in consensual sexual self-presentation (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Ringrose et al., 2013; Scott & Gavin, 2018).

Dark personality traits, including psychopathy, narcissism, Machiavellianism, and sadism, were also explored in Study 3. Among these, psychopathy emerged as a significant independent predictor of IBSAMA. This is in line with the literature that identifies the role of psychopathy in predicting myth acceptance in both image-based and offline sexual abuse contexts (Debowska et al., 2015; Fido et al., 2022). Characteristics of trait psychopathy, such as callousness, impulsivity, and a lack of empathy may foster cognitive distortions that excuse or trivialise harmful behaviours such as IBSA (Moor & Anderson, 2019; Patrick et al., 2009).

Behavioural experiences also contributed to IBSAMA. Sexting behaviours were positively associated with myth acceptance in Studies 1, 2 and 3. Individuals with a history of having received an unsolicited sext or have sent sexts were significantly less likely to endorse IBSAMA, possibly reflecting attempts to rationalise their own or others' experiences. Having sent sexts remained an independent significant predictor of IBSAMA in both Studies 1 and 3,

whilst having received an unsolicited sext remained an independent significant predictor of IBSAMA in Study 2. This is consistent with the literature identifying that individuals with sexting experience are less likely to endorse IBSA myths (Call, 2021; Flynn et al., 2023; Gavin & Scott, 2019; Rollero et al., 2023; Scott & Gavin, 2018). Individuals without sexting experience are more likely to hold negative sexting scripts that observe sexting as something dirty or reckless and subsequently are more likely to blame victims (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021).

Whilst it was expected that victim experiences would impact IBSAMA, only one of the three studies (Study 3) identified that IBSA victimisation significantly predicted IBSAMA. In Study 3, participants that reported they had been a victim of non-consensual sharing of private sexual imagery endorsed significantly lower levels of IBSAMA. On the other hand, knowing a victim of IBSA did not relate to IBSAMA in any of the studies conducted in this thesis. This finding resonates with the literature on IBSAMA and RMA, where sexual experience and prior victimisation have sometimes been linked to greater myth endorsement, but results are often mixed and context-dependent (Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Flynn et al., 2023; McMahon, 2010; Mussap et al., 2023; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Said & McNealey, 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Talbot et al., 2010). Victimisation is not a uniform experience; its impact on attitudes may depend on whether the individual self-identifies as a victim, whether the incident was reported, and the perceived severity of harm. In addition, defensive attribution and coping mechanisms may produce opposite effects: for some, similarity to victims reduces blame (as predicted by defensive attribution theory), whereas for others, minimising harm or endorsing myths may serve as a psychological buffer against perceived vulnerability (Grubb & Harrower, 2008; Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017; Talbot et al., 2010: Shaver, 1970). These interacting factors help explain why associations

between sexual experience, victimisation, and myth acceptance are often mixed and context-dependent.

Furthermore, and a novel aspect of the empirical research in this thesis, is the important role of sexual consent beliefs in IBSAMA. Lower endorsement of consent principles was associated with greater myth acceptance in Studies 1, 2 and 3, suggesting that individuals who reject clear and enthusiastic consent standards are more likely to excuse or minimise IBSA. Holding higher standards about adhering to consent significantly negatively predicted IBSAMA in all studies, and higher standards about seeking consent significantly negatively predicted IBSAMA in Studies 1 and 2. Whilst consent is an integral component of IBSA, its relationship with IBSAMA has not (to knowledge) previously been explored. However, the relationship is mirrored in the offline sexual abuse literature where positive attitudes towards consent and norms of sexual consent are negatively related to RMA (Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018; Klement et al., 2017; Moyano et al., 2023).

Objective 4: What are the predictors of IBSA perpetration and proclivity to perpetrate IBSA?

Identifying the psychological, attitudinal, and behavioural predictors of IBSA perpetration is essential for informing risk assessment, early intervention, and prevention strategies. Findings from Studies 2, 3, and 4 highlighted individual differences associated with both proclivity to perpetrate IBSA and self-reported perpetration, with several predictors emerging consistently across studies. Similar to those outlined above, these included IBSAMA, dark personality traits, sexual consent beliefs, sexting behaviours, prior victimisation, and gendered ideologies such as sexism and sexual double standards.

Across all studies, IBSAMA emerged as a strong and consistent predictor of both IBSA proclivity and perpetration. In Study 2, higher IBSAMA scores were significantly associated with greater self-reported proclivity to engage in revenge pornography scenarios.

Study 3 extended these findings using the IBSAPS, showing that individuals who endorsed IBSA myths were more likely to express a willingness to take, share, or threaten to share sexual images without consent. In Study 4, IBSAMA also significantly predicted actual IBSA perpetration, reinforcing the literature that myth acceptance functions as a cognitive enabler of abusive behaviour (Clancy et al., 2019, 2023; Clancy, Klettke, et al., 2021; Karasavva et al., 2023; Karasavva & Forth, 2022; Powell et al., 2019, 2022). These findings reflect a broader pattern observed in sexual violence literature, where myth acceptance is understood to reduce internal barriers to offending by justifying or minimising harm (Bohner et al., 2005, 2006; Karasavva et al., 2023; Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022). The relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration is explored in more depth under Objective 5 below.

Dark personality traits were also significant predictors of IBSA perpetration. In Study 3, psychopathy emerged as the strongest trait predictor, overall and among male participants, aligning with previous literature linking psychopathic traits to increased sexual aggression (Clancy et al., 2019, 2020; Fido et al., 2022; Harper et al., 2023; Karasavva et al., 2023; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Pina et al., 2017, 2021; Scholz et al., 2023; Sparks et al., 2023; Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022). However, among women, sadism was the most prominent predictor, suggesting a gendered divergence in disposition towards IBSA perpetration. Karasavva and Forth (2022) and Pina et al. (2021) also identified sadism as a significant independent predictor of IBSA perpetration in their samples that were majority female, highlighting the importance the sample gender has on predictor models in IBSA research. This gender-specific profile underscores the importance of moving beyond male-centric models of offending and recognising the distinct psychological mechanisms that may drive IBSA behaviour across genders.

Sexual consent beliefs were also found to play a critical role in predicting IBSA perpetration. Across empirical studies (Studies 2 and 3), there was a significant relationship between consent standards and proclivity towards perpetrating IBSA. However, in regression models it was only in Study 3 that consent adherence remained an independent predictor of IBSA proclivity and only in women. Study 4 also identified that both consent seeking and consent adherence were significantly lower in IBSA perpetrators compared to non-perpetrators. In the regression model of IBSA behaviour, it was consent seeking that remained an independent significant (negative) predictor, and this remained true for both IBSA via taking and IBSA via sharing. However, consent adherence remained an independent significant predictor of IBSA via threatening to share. These findings suggest that misunderstandings or deliberate misinterpretations of consent may facilitate digital sexual offending, particularly in contexts where perpetrators perceive implied consent through prior sexual or romantic engagement. Despite sexual consent being inextricably linked to sexual abuse by the very nature of the definition including the absence of consent, research focusing on the link between the two has been scarce (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Warren et al., 2015). The findings across these empirical studies highlight a clear relationship but one that requires further exploration across genders and different behaviours.

Sexting behaviours and prior victimisation also emerged as behavioural predictors of IBSA perpetration. Although, Study 2 did not identify any relationships between revenge pornography proclivity and sexting behaviour or prior victimisation, Study 3 and Study 4 both found that individuals who reported engaging in consensual sexting were more likely to report IBSA proclivity or perpetration, a finding that may reflect greater familiarity with or access to sexual images. However, consensually sending sexts did not remain an independent significant predictor in regression models. The most notable findings came from Study 4 investigating predictors of actual perpetration. Firstly, this study highlighted the significance

of cyberflashing or sharing of unsolicited sexual images which remained a significant independent predictor across all IBSA perpetration behaviours. This was a novel finding, which had not previously been explored in the literature. Furthermore, prior experiences of IBSA victimisation were associated with increased likelihood of perpetration relative to the behaviour experienced (i.e. *sharing* victimisation predicted *sharing* perpetration and so on), suggesting the potential for cyclical or retaliatory dynamics. These findings align with prior research highlighting the complex interplay between victimisation and perpetration in digital abuse contexts (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2023; Powell et al., 2019; Sparks et al., 2023).

Finally, sexism was predictive of IBSA perpetration across all studies presented in this thesis. In Study 2 ambivalent sexism presented a significant predictor of revenge pornography proclivity, though this was mediated by IBSAMA. Studies 3 and 4 explored hostile and benevolent sexism separately but with differing outcomes. When predicting IBSA proclivity in Study 3 it was benevolent sexism that was a significant predictor, although only among female participants. This may suggest that traditional gender norms around purity, modesty, and female sexual responsibility may paradoxically contribute to offending behaviour when those norms are perceived to be violated. Hostile sexism was associated with greater actual IBSA perpetration in Study 4, with perpetrators reporting significantly greater endorsement of hostile sexism than non-perpetrators. Hostile sexism was particularly strongly related to IBSA perpetration via sharing and remained a significant independent predictor in the model. However, when split by gender, these findings were exclusive to men. Women did not present any significant differences in hostile sexism across IBSA perpetrators and non-perpetrators. These findings reinforce the role of gendered social norms in shaping offending behaviour and further support the argument that IBSA is situated within broader systems of gender-based violence (Gámez-Guadix et al., 2023; Martínez-Bacaicoa et al., 2023).

In summary, the findings from this thesis indicate that IBSA perpetration is predicted by a multidimensional set of factors, spanning cognitive distortions (IBSAMA), dark personality traits, sexual scripts surrounding consent, behavioural histories, and sexist ideologies. Furthermore, the development of the IBSAPS allowed for IBSA proclivity to be measured more comprehensively for the first time. Whilst there were some variations in the predictor models, the same variables that significantly related to IBSA proclivity using the IBSAPS demonstrated significant differences between perpetrators and non-perpetrators in Study 4. These results offer further empirical support for the theoretical view that IBSA is not a uniquely digital impulsive act, but a form of intentional sexual violence shaped by entrenched social and psychological mechanisms (McGlynn et al., 2017). Understanding these predictors provides a valuable foundation for developing educational, reformatory and legal responses to prevent IBSA and intervene with those at risk of perpetration.

Objective 5: What is the relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration or proclivity to perpetrate IBSA?

A key objective of this thesis was to explore the relationship between IBSAMA and self-reported IBSA perpetration, to better understand how attitudinal endorsement of abuse-supportive beliefs translates into behavioural outcomes. Across Studies 2, 3, and 4, IBSAMA emerged as a consistent and robust predictor of both IBSA proclivity and actual perpetration, supporting the theoretical proposition that cognitive distortions serve as mechanisms of justification and harm minimisation in sexual offending (Bohner et al., 2005, 2006; Karasavva et al., 2023; Kilimnik & Humphreys, 2018; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Süssenbach & Euteneuer, 2022).

In Study 2, IBSAMA was the only significant independent predictor associated with greater proclivity to engage in revenge pornography behaviours. This relationship was further substantiated in Study 3 using the IBSAPS, which allowed for the measurement of proclivity

across multiple IBSA modalities. Here, IBSAMA predicted 10% of the variance in proclivity to take, share, and threaten to share sexual images, demonstrating the breadth of its influence across different forms of IBSA beyond just revenge pornography. In both Studies 2 and 3, exploratory mediation path analyses were conducted to demonstrate that many of the variables significantly related to IBSA perpetration are mediated through IBSAMA (e.g. victim experiences, sexting behaviours and consent beliefs). Whilst proclivity measures are measuring future likelihood and so are a good indicator, it is still technically cross-sectional data and not the longitudinal data necessary for mediation analyses. Study 4 extended this relationship to actual self-reported perpetration, with individuals who more strongly endorse IBSA myths more likely to report engaging in an IBSA behaviour and even more likely to report engaging in IBSA via sharing specifically. These findings confirm that IBSAMA is a significant attitudinal driver of both behavioural intent and action.

The findings also support cognitive theories of offending, in which attitudes function as precursors to behaviour, particularly when they serve to excuse or reframe harmful actions in a more socially or morally acceptable light (O'Connor, 2020). The role of IBSAMA as a mediating or facilitating factor suggests that individuals who accept myths about IBSA are more likely to perceive such behaviours as less harmful, less criminal, or even justified and in turn more likely to perpetrate such behaviour. While formal mediation analyses were beyond the scope of the empirical studies, the consistent associations observed across multiple studies and behavioural outcomes suggest that IBSAMA may serve as a cognitive bridge between dispositional traits and offending behaviour. Moreover, the predictive utility of IBSAMA remained significant even when controlling for other variables such as dark personality traits, sexism, and sexual consent beliefs, indicating its independent contribution to understanding IBSA perpetration.

Taken together, the findings provide strong empirical support for the inclusion of IBSAMA in theoretical and applied models of IBSA perpetration. They also underscore the importance of targeting myth acceptance in prevention programmes, educational campaigns, and offender interventions, particularly given its clear link to both intent and action. The present programme of research utilised cross-sectional methods of data collection so the causal direction of this strong relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration cannot be definitively concluded. Longitudinal research in the offline sexual abuse literature suggests that myth acceptance is an antecedent to perpetration rather than a by-product of perpetration (Lanier, 2001; O'Connor, 2020). This may be mirrored in the present research as Studies 2 and 3 that measure future likelihood of offending demonstrate IBSAMA as a very strong predictor. However, although perpetrators endorse significantly higher levels of IBSAMA, the predictive relationship between IBSAMA and existing IBSA perpetration was less strong. On the other hand, there is also the perspective that the relationship between IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration is cyclical, forming a feedback loop in which they continually reinforce each other (Blankenship et al., 2019). Throughout this programme of research both IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity were significant predictors of each other.

Objective 6: Are there gender differences in IBSA perpetration, proclivity to perpetrate IBSA and IBSAMA??

Gender emerged as a central factor throughout this thesis, with differences observed in predictors of IBSAMA, IBSA proclivity and self-reported IBSA perpetration. Across all empirical studies, male participants reported significantly higher levels of IBSAMA. These findings are consistent with a broader body of literature demonstrating that men are more likely than women to endorse rape myths, justify sexually aggressive behaviour, and minimise harm in sexual abuse contexts (Bohner et al., 2005; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). The gender gap in IBSAMA may reflect broader sociocultural dynamics, including socialised

entitlement to sexual access, endorsement of traditional masculinity norms, and reduced empathy for female victims; these patterns have been well-documented in the sexual violence literature (Bouffard, 2010; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016; Hill & Fischer, 2001; McGlashan & Mercer, 2023; Newton & Stanfill, 2020).

Gender differences were also evident in IBSA perpetration. In Study 4, male participants were significantly more likely than women to report engaging in IBSA, and when disaggregating IBSA behaviours, the significant gender difference was only observed for the non-consensual sharing of images. However, this may be due to small perpetration samples for non-consensual taking and threatening to share. Most importantly, male gender significantly predicted IBSA perpetration with men 43% more likely to perpetrate IBSA compared to any other gender.

The exploration of gender-specific predictors was unique to this programme of study and gender differences in the underlying predictors of IBSAMA and IBSA perpetration were identified. For example, sadism, benevolent sexism and consent adherence were stronger predictors of proclivity to perpetrate IBSA in women, whilst psychopathy was a stronger predictor in men. This suggests that while men may be more likely to offend overall, the psychological profiles associated with female-perpetrated IBSA are both distinct and meaningful. This was also the case in IBSAMA: sending sexts and IBSA victimisation predicted IBSAMA in women, whilst receipt of sexts uniquely predicted IBSAMA in men. This reflects sexting practices across genders and gendered sexual scripts in which women are expected to send sexual images whilst men are expected to be more demanding of sexual behaviours (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021; Ringrose et al., 2013; Symons et al., 2018).

These findings challenge simplistic or gendered assumptions about perpetration and reinforce the need for gender-sensitive approaches to IBSA prevention and intervention. While men represent many IBSA perpetrators, women are also capable of engaging in this

form of abuse, and often do so through different motivational and dispositional pathways. Interventions should therefore be tailored to reflect these differences, incorporating gender-specific content that addresses the particular social norms and psychological traits associated with IBSA in both men and women.

Methodological Reflections

This thesis employed a range of quantitative methods across five studies (four empirical and one systematic review), including psychometric development, multiple regression, logistic regression, mediation, and path analysis. Several methodological strengths enhance the validity and generalisability of the findings. First, the use of large and diverse samples, including UK adult participants beyond student populations, improves the ecological validity of the results. Second, the development of a new measure, the IBSAPS, represents a significant methodological contribution, enabling a more nuanced and behaviourally grounded assessment of proclivity across different forms of IBSA. The inclusion of validated measures such as the SIAMA and ASI allowed for robust assessment of cognitive, ideological, and behavioural constructs. Furthermore, the integration of variables related to psychological, behavioural and attitudinal factors enabled a multifactorial exploration of IBSA beyond demographics. Finally, the exploration of gender differences in predictors enhances our understanding of the gendered nature of IBSA beyond differences in prevalence. This is an important contribution with the increasing presence of technology-based sexual behaviour in both genders.

However, some key limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the studies limits causal inference. Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias, especially given the sensitivity of the subject matter. Although efforts were made to anonymise data collection and reduce response biases, it is possible that actual rates of perpetration or myth endorsement were underreported. Moreover,

the studies did not account for the potential influence of peer dynamics, media exposure, or cultural context, all of which may shape IBSAMA and IBSA behaviours.

Reflections on Social Change During Research Period

This research was conducted during a period of marked conceptual, legal, and cultural shift. Terminologically, the field moved decisively from media-driven "revenge pornography" framings to IBSA, centring non-consent and better capturing the breadth of behaviours (taking, sharing, threatening; deepfakes; voyeuristic capture; sexualised photoshopping). This linguistic shift reframed public understanding, policy conversation, and measurement, mirrored here in the adoption of IBSA-specific myth scales and development of the IBSAPS.

Legally, the Online Safety Act 2023 integrated intimate-image offences within sexual-offences, removed motive requirements for base sharing offences, and captured threats even where no image exists; deepfake sharing was also explicitly addressed. Government has signalled further reform to criminalise the creation (including deepfakes) and to align this with the sharing/threat offences, an evolution that directly answers the motivational challenges evidenced in this thesis. These changes narrowed the historic gap between lived harm and statutory reach and provide stronger support for myth-disruptive messaging: it is a sexual offence regardless of motive.

Socially, awareness accelerated: helpline volumes and public discourse increased sharply, while research output diversified beyond victimology into perpetration predictors and myth acceptance. Yet the evidence here suggests that myths remain resilient, particularly around victim responsibility and harm minimisation, and that gendered patterns in perpetration and attitudes persist even as digital intimacy normalises. The period thus saw meaningful progress in naming, criminalising, and measuring IBSA, alongside clear targets for the next phase: embedding consent-centred digital norms, resourcing enforcement and support, and tackling myth-based secondary victimisation.

Theoretical Implications

This programme of research makes several contributions to existing theoretical models of sexual violence, particularly in relation to cognitive distortions, attitudinal predictors, and the socio-cultural contexts that shape IBSA. The findings consistently demonstrate that IBSA is underpinned by similar psychological and ideological mechanisms as offline sexual abuse, including myth acceptance, hostile and benevolent sexism, sexual double standards, and dark personality traits. These results support the integration of IBSA into dominant models of sexual offending, while also highlighting the need to account for the gendered and socially mediated nature of abuse in digital contexts.

The findings resonate with male peer support theory (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2016, 2018), which posits that misogynistic peer groups can legitimise and reinforce abusive behaviours. Additionally, digital platforms can amplify these dynamics by providing mechanisms for validation (e.g., 'likes' and 'shares') and anonymity, which can embolden perpetrators and diffuse accountability. While this thesis did not measure peer group influence directly, the prevalence of IBSA myths and sexist ideologies indicate shared justifications for harm, and suggest that social norms, particularly those rooted in hegemonic masculinity, play a critical role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. Characteristics of hegemonic masculinity, namely competitiveness, sexual dominance and the objectification of women, are purported to significantly relate to IBSA proclivity and IBSAMA (Berlin & Rollero, 2025). As Durston (2024) argues in her conceptual model of networked IBSA, perpetration is often embedded within social and technological systems that facilitate repetition, validation, and concealment. The present findings support this framing, as attitudes such as IBSAMA are not only individually held but also culturally reinforced, particularly through gendered expectations of sexual behaviour and entitlement (Naezer & van Oosterhout, 2021).

Furthermore, the gendered dynamics of IBSA align closely with frameworks, such as the Power and Control Wheel, traditionally used to conceptualise intimate partner violence (Eaton et al., 2021). Eaton et al. (2021) identified that, in the context of a relationship, IBSA perpetration can be used as each of the eight tactics of the Power and Control Wheel, including emotional abuse (90.7% of all cases), minimising/denying/blaming (28% of all cases), coercion and threats (24.8% of all cases), male privilege (18.6% of all cases), economic abuse (18% of all cases), intimidation (13.7% of all cases), the use of children (5% of all cases), and isolation (1.2% of all cases). The use of threats, coercion, image-based humiliation, and reputational damage through IBSA reflects clear strategies of domination and control, often embedded within broader patterns of gender-based violence. This thesis contributes to these models by showing how such control mechanisms are supported by psychological traits and cognitive distortions (e.g. psychopathy and IBSAMA), thereby linking individual-level factors with broader structural understandings of abuse. By linking dispositional risk factors with structural mechanisms of control, the research advances an integrated theoretical perspective that explains how personal propensities interact with socio-cultural norms to sustain IBSA.

Importantly, this thesis also extends understanding of moral disengagement mechanisms in technology-facilitated sexual violence. Drawing on Martínez-Bacaicoa, Real-Brioso, et al. (2024), who found that moral disengagement processes such as victim dehumanisation and denial of harm are critical to online sexual abuse, the current findings indicate that IBSAMA reflects these mechanisms in practice. Beliefs that blame victims or minimise harm, particularly when victims have engaged in consensual sexting, allow perpetrators to neutralise the moral weight of their actions. These findings support the argument that online-specific abuse dynamics require adaptation of existing psychological models to account for the decontextualised, anonymous, and replicable nature of digital harm.

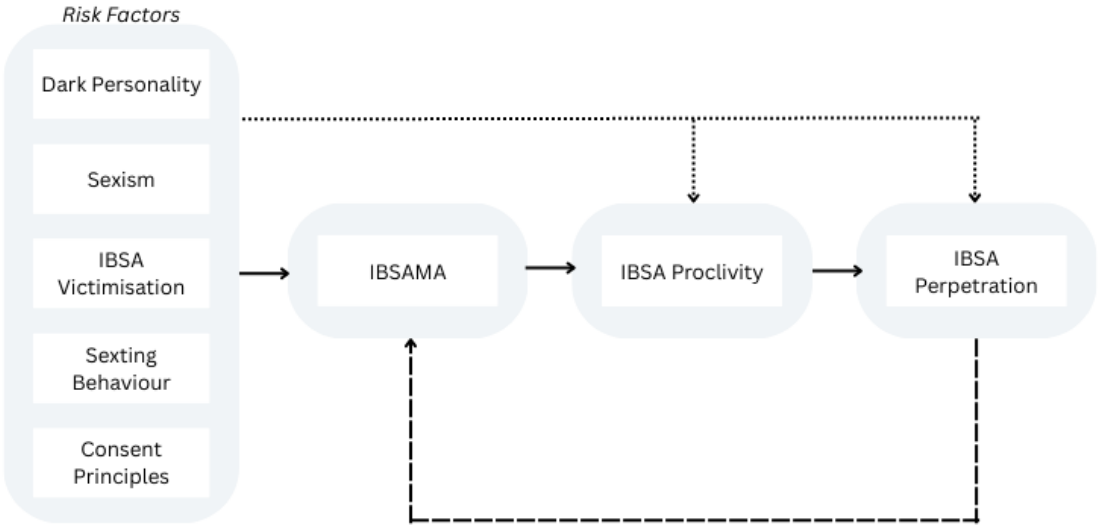
The anonymity, dissociation and minimisation of authority in online spaces shift cognition and exacerbate toxic behaviours; this is known as the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004).

The Confluence Model of sexual aggression (Bruera et al., 2023; Malamuth et al., 1995;2021; Malamuth & Hald, 2016), which highlights the role of hostile masculinity and impersonal sex in fostering sexually coercive behaviour, appears equally applicable to IBSA. The model is flexible in that it accounts for 'risk factors' that predict general sexual aggression and deviance, with examples such as Psychopathy and peer pressure. Additionally, the Confluence Model acknowledges the role of attitudes towards sexual aggression in predicting perpetration (Malamuth et al., 2021). This further coincides with the findings of this thesis in which approval of IBSA in the form of myth acceptance is significant in predicting perpetration.

Furthermore, the findings from this thesis suggest that IBSAMA may serve as a cognitive bridge between individual differences (e.g., dark personality traits, sexist attitudes) and sexually abusive behaviour, aligning with other cognitive distortion models that have been widely applied to understand offline sexual offending (Ó Ciardha & Ward, 2013; Ward et al., 2006). Drawing on models of sexual aggression and cognitive distortion models, the findings from this thesis collectively propose the theoretical model presented in Figure 8. It posits that the risk factors investigated predict IBSA perpetration via IBSAMA whilst acknowledging some direct effects of risk factors also. The model is not an exhaustive list of risk factors but rather a starting point for further research, allowing for flexibility across contexts such as gender, age-groups and specific IBSA behaviours. The model depicts a feedback loop between IBSA perpetration and IBSAMA but, as outlined above, further longitudinal research is required to strengthen the empirical support for this theoretical model.

Figure 8

Theoretical Model of IBSA Perpetration



Practical and Policy Implications

The findings of this thesis have significant implications for education, criminal justice, and public policy. First and foremost, the identification of IBSAMA as a key cognitive predictor of IBSA perpetration highlights the need for targeted educational interventions. Existing consent education programmes should be expanded to explicitly address IBSA myths, particularly those that minimise harm or blame victims who engage in consensual sexting. These interventions should incorporate affirmative consent principles, gender norm critique, and digital behaviour education, tailored to adolescents and young adults who are most at risk of both perpetrating and experiencing IBSA (Powell et al., 2022). The consistent protective role of seeking and adhering to consent, across myth measures and perpetration, supports embedding consent literacy explicitly within education programmes. Additionally, where feasible, education programmes may benefit from being segmented by behaviour (creation, sharing, threats), because the present work indicates slight nuances in the underlying mechanisms predicting these. Furthermore, norm correction and

bystander efficacy should be integrated, given the strong links between vicarious exposure (receipt/viewing of non-consensual images) and perpetration. Exercises that surface misperceived peer approval and practice refusal or reporting routes help to interrupt normalisation and subsequently change internal scripts that support IBSA.

From a criminal justice perspective, the findings suggest that law enforcement and legal professionals require further training in recognising and challenging IBSAMA. Attitudes that trivialise or excuse IBSA may influence investigative priorities, victim credibility assessments, and prosecution decisions. Embedding education on IBSA myths into police and judicial training could reduce secondary victimisation and improve outcomes for those reporting these crimes (Zvi & Shechory-Bitton, 2020). Furthermore, the victim-perpetrator overlap highlights further that it is essential police handle victims with care and without judgment, because mishandling can reinforce harmful myths and perpetuate cycles of harm. Individuals who have experienced IBSA may also have perpetrated, often due to normalisation or retaliatory dynamics; if police responses are dismissive or blame-laden, this can entrench shame, reduce reporting, and even increase the likelihood of future offending. Conversely, trauma-informed, myth-aware practice can break this cycle by validating victims' experiences, reducing secondary victimisation, and signalling that accountability lies with perpetrators rather than victims.

Policy implications also extend to technology platforms and digital governance. Given the documented prevalence of IBSA and the role of online environments in enabling abuse, social media companies and image-sharing platforms must be held accountable for content moderation, swift takedown mechanisms, and proactive prevention. The findings of this thesis support recent legislative developments such as the Online Safety Act (2023), but also highlight the need for ongoing regulatory pressure to ensure platforms implement user protections informed by empirical evidence on perpetration and attitudinal risk factors.

Methodological Reflections

This thesis employed a range of quantitative methods across five studies (four empirical and one systematic review), including psychometric development, multiple regression, logistic regression, mediation, and path analysis. Several methodological strengths enhance the validity and generalisability of the findings.

First, the studies deliberately moved beyond single-site student pools, combining community samples (Reddit) with panel recruitment (Prolific). This produced large, mixed-gender samples with broad age ranges, substantial sexting exposure, and both victim and perpetrator experiences represented. These features increased statistical power for multivariable modelling (e.g., isolating the unique roles of IBSAMA, consent practices, and dark traits) and improved ecological validity for UK-based inferences about attitudes and behaviours.

Second, the development of a new measure, the IBSAPS, represents a significant methodological contribution, enabling a more nuanced and behaviourally grounded assessment of proclivity across different forms of IBSA. The inclusion of validated measures such as the SIAMA and ASI allowed for robust assessment of cognitive, ideological, and behavioural constructs. Furthermore, the integration of variables related to psychological, behavioural and attitudinal factors enabled a multifactorial exploration of IBSA beyond demographics. Finally, the exploration of gender differences in predictors enhances our understanding of the gendered nature of IBSA beyond differences in prevalence. This is an important contribution with the increasing presence of technology-based sexual behaviour in both genders.

However, some key limitations must be acknowledged. The cross-sectional nature of the studies limits causal inference. Additionally, the reliance on self-report measures may be subject to social desirability bias, especially given the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Although efforts were made to anonymise data collection and reduce response biases, it is possible that actual rates of perpetration or myth endorsement were underreported. Online recruitment also introduces self-selection (e.g., greater digital engagement or comfort disclosing online) and platform skews (e.g., Reddit's demographics and increased engagement with online material), which may inflate exposure to digital intimacy. Furthermore, whilst general samples were large, target samples of perpetrators were comparably small. This limited statistical power in more focused models such as by gender or by IBSA behaviour. Moreover, the studies did not account for the potential influence of peer dynamics, media exposure, or cultural context, all of which may shape IBSAMA and IBSA behaviours.

Directions for Future Research

This thesis lays the groundwork for several important future research directions. First, longitudinal studies are needed to assess whether IBSAMA and IBSA proclivity change over time and how early attitudes may predict later behaviour. Second, experimental and intervention-based research could test whether education targeting myth eradication and attitudinal change reduce IBSA intentions and actions. Third, future work should examine peer influence, online community norms, and media representations as potential contextual factors that shape IBSAMA. Peer influence and online community norms, such as exposure to misogynistic subcultures or "slut-shaming" discourse, may amplify IBSAMA, while media portrayals of sexting could either normalise or stigmatise digital intimacy (Naezer & Van Oosterhout. 2021). Research should also address the underexplored experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, ethnically diverse populations, and those in non-Western contexts, whose experiences with IBSA may be shaped by distinct cultural, social, and legal frameworks. Comparative studies across jurisdictions could clarify how structural factors interact with individual-level predictors. This programme of study has begun to

identify dispositional predictors of IBSA, but further research should continue to develop the predictive model of IBSA perpetration, particularly across genders. Further development and validation of the IBSAPS across broader populations will also strengthen its utility. It would be beneficial to expand the IBSAPS to measure the individual IBSA behaviour types: creation, distribution and threat of distribution, as well as overall IBSA proclivity, given the differences identified between the different modes in the final study.

Conclusion

This thesis provides a comprehensive psychological analysis of IBSA, offering novel insights into its attitudinal foundations, behavioural predictors, and perpetration patterns. Across four empirical studies, it demonstrates that IBSA is not merely a product of digital innovation, but a continuation of entrenched gendered violence, shaped by the same cognitive distortions, ideological biases, and dispositional traits that underlie offline sexual abuse. The development of the IBSAPS, coupled with detailed analysis of predictors, including IBSAMA, sexism, consent beliefs, and dark personality traits, provides a robust empirical foundation for future research and practical intervention. By bridging the gap between attitudes and behaviour, and between offline and online abuse, this thesis contributes meaningfully to the literature of IBSA perpetration and digital harm prevention. In doing so, it advances not only academic understanding, but also the urgent conversation around how society can better prevent, respond to, and ultimately reduce the harm of IBSA.

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Appendix A

Systematic Literature Review Supporting Documents

The following documents present the data extracted from studies included in the systematic literature review presented in Chapter 1. They are not required to understand the content presented in the systematic literature review, but they will provide extra nuance for any key studies or findings of particular interest.

Firstly, *the systematic review data extraction database* presents a searchable database that summarises each study, including: the general study information, which research questions are addressed, and which aspects of each research question are addressed. The first worksheet presents a glossary that defines each column of the database. The second worksheet presents the searchable extraction database with table rows representing each study. The columns can be filtered to identify the studies that pertain to that content. The third worksheet presents the data extracted for the 11 studies that were excluded due to a low WoE score.

The second supporting document presents a table of *the key research findings* relevant to the systematic review. Each row represents a single study, and these are presented alphabetically to aid searching. The columns are split into IBSA perpetration findings and IBSAMA findings and are sub-headed with prevalence and predictors to address the separate research questions.

Finally, document three includes the *additional supporting tables*. Whilst this information can be found within the date extraction database and/or key findings document, these tables collate the relevant findings for ease of interpretation for each point of discussion.

Full web addresses for hyperlinks:

Data Extraction Database:
https://1drv.ms/x/c/92e027b24e01f910/EWmbyG8J8F1KjjHMDhFVCDgBYC9zYEAE35G42zXGpoqKeA?e=JZBeSQ

Key Research Findings:
https://1drv.ms/w/c/92e027b24e01f910/EWhWcwAL581HrxCQN2CY-_sBy1bJe0_2j_OZdsqQzffMyg?e=O95nrd

Additional Supporting Tables:
https://1drv.ms/w/c/92e027b24e01f910/ESW8ROlPl4dElrlw4Xd2RzMBvYe730WbpJdY-msq2P4bnw?e=RBABeK

Appendix B

The Adapted Sexual Consent Scale from Hust et al. (2014)

*Additional items that were included in the adaptation are italicised.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree to the following statements.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I would ask my partner for consent before engaging in sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would stop and ask if everything is okay if my partner doesn't respond to my sexual advances.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would verbally confirm that my partner consents before engaging in sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not have sex when my partner and I are too intoxicated to give consent.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would ask for consent before sending a sexual image to someone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not share a sexual image without the consent of the person depicted.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not capture a sexual image of another without their consent.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would feel confident refusing someone's sexual advances.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I would refuse unwanted sexual intimacy with my date even if it may destroy the romantic atmosphere.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not give in to pressure - either verbal or physical - to have sex.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would refuse to send a sexual image if I did not want to.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would rather have no sex than force myself on someone.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would respect my partner and stop sexual activity when asked to even when I am already aroused.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would always stop the first time my date says “no” to sexual activity.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would not send a sexual image to someone if they haven't asked for one.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix C

The IBSA Proclivity Scale (IBSAPS)

Vignette 1
Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You have been in a happy relationship for some time now. You rarely argue with your partner and seem to have a good relationship. One evening whilst socialising with a friend, your friend tells you that they believe your partner is cheating on you. That evening you confront your partner, questioning whether this is true, upon which they confess it is. You consequently abruptly end the relationship. You react by uploading a naked photo online of your now ex-partner that they previously sent to you.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have uploaded the photo online?

o Extremely Unlikely o Somewhat Unlikely o Neither Likely nor Unlikely o Somewhat Likely o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 2

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You and your friends send each other messages every day which often include memes and images. One evening your friend sends you a message which includes a nude photo of one of their previous partners. Although you didn't know this person, you decided to forward this photo on to some of your other friends so that they could also see it.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find sending the photo to others?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find sending the photo to others?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find sending the photo to others?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about sending the photo to others?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have sent the photo to others?

o Extremely Unlikely	o Somewhat Unlikely	o Neither Likely nor Unlikely	o Somewhat Likely	o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 3

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You are currently in a relationship and have been for a few months. It doesn't always run as smoothly as you would like but you feel a relationship is something that should be worked on. One evening your partner's friend, who has recently been flirting with them and sending them text messages, sends your partner a nude photo of themself. In reaction to this, you send this photo to your own phone and then upload it online for others to see.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about uploading the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have uploaded the photo online?

o Extremely Unlikely	o Somewhat Unlikely	o Neither Likely nor Unlikely	o Somewhat Likely	o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 4

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You are out in public with friends climbing some steps and notice a woman wearing a skirt ahead of you. As she climbs some of the steps, her skirt bounces up and you can see her underwear. Your friends point it out and are laughing. You quickly get your phone out and take a photo up her skirt.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find taking the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find taking the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find taking the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about taking the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have taken the photo?

o Extremely Unlikely o Somewhat Unlikely o Neither Likely nor Unlikely o Somewhat Likely o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 5

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You have an attractive neighbour, whose bedroom you have direct view of. Your neighbour is not aware and often forgets to close their curtains when changing. On one occasion you decide to take photos of the neighbour through the window while they are naked so that you can keep the photos on your phone.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find taking the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find taking the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find taking the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about taking the photos?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have taken the photos?

o Extremely Unlikely o Somewhat Unlikely o Neither Likely nor Unlikely o Somewhat Likely o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 6

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

An acquaintance of yours accidentally sends a naked picture to your phone instead of their partner's. In need of money, you come up with an idea to exploit this opportunity. You threaten to upload the image online and to groups of your mutual friends if the person does not pay you a sum of money.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have threatened to share the image?

o Extremely Unlikely o Somewhat Unlikely o Neither Likely nor Unlikely o Somewhat Likely o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 7

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You receive a naked picture from another social media account. You have no idea who the person in the picture is, but you find them attractive. You use this opportunity to get the person to send more naked pictures of themselves. You keep this up for a few weeks but then notice that the person is sending less and less content to you, and from a point onwards they stop sending you messages altogether. You message them asking why they stopped, and they respond that they are no longer interested. You threaten to post the original naked image online if they don't keep sending you more images of themselves.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about threatening to share the image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have threatened to share the image?

o Extremely Unlikely	o Somewhat Unlikely	o Neither Likely nor Unlikely	o Somewhat Likely	o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 8

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You have an online profile with lots of followers, many of which you do not personally know. One day a stranger sends you a private message including an explicit photo of themselves. You did not ask for this image and don't even know the person. In response, you screenshot the image and expose them on your online profile with a caption explaining what happened.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find sharing the photo online?

o Not at All	o Not Particularly	o Neutral	o Fairly	o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find sharing the photo online?

o Not at All	o Not Particularly	o Neutral	o Fairly	o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find sharing the photo online?

o Not at All	o Not Particularly	o Neutral	o Fairly	o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All	o Not Particularly	o Neutral	o Fairly	o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All	o Not Particularly	o Neutral	o Fairly	o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about sharing the photo online?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have shared the photo online?

o Extremely Unlikely	o Somewhat Unlikely	o Neither Likely nor Unlikely	o Somewhat Likely	o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 9

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You are currently in an exciting new relationship and are very proud of your partner especially how attractive they are. One night you and your partner each send some nude images whilst you are messaging. You decide to send one of the nude images of your partner to a group chat you have with your close friends to show them how attractive your partner is.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find sending the photo to your friends?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find sending the photo to your friends?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find sending the photo to your friends?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person in the photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about sending the photo to your friends?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is that you would have sent the photo to your friends?

o Extremely Unlikely	o Somewhat Unlikely	o Neither Likely nor Unlikely	o Somewhat Likely	o Extremely Likely

Page Break

Vignette 10

Please read the following text carefully and imagine yourself in the situation presented:

You and your friends have a strong dislike for someone that you know. One day you decide to get back at them by photoshopping an image of their face onto an existing nude photo to look like a naked image of them. The image is very convincing, and you share it with all your friends and post it on social media anonymously.

Now please answer the following questions, selecting the answer most applicable to yourself:

Imagining you were in this situation; how thrilling would you find sharing the altered image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how amusing would you find sharing the altered image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how sexually arousing would you find sharing the altered image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how much would you blame the person whose face is in the altered photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how angry would you be with the person whose face is in the altered photo?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

Imagining you were in this situation; how regretful would you feel about sharing the altered image?

o Not at All o Not Particularly o Neutral o Fairly o Very

If you were in this situation, how likely is it that you would have shared the altered image?

o Extremely Unlikely o Somewhat Unlikely o Neither Likely nor Unlikely o Somewhat Likely o Extremely Likely

Appendix D

The Items Used to Measure IBSA Perpetration and Victimisation

Have you ever taken a photo or video of someone

	Yes	No
Where they are partially clothed or semi-nude?	○	○
Where they are completely nude?	○	○
Where their breasts, including their nipples, are visible?	○	○
Where their genitals are visible?	○	○
Where they are engaged in a sex act?	○	○
Where they are showering, bathing or toileting?	○	○
Which is up their skirt?	○	○
Which is down their blouse, of their cleavage?	○	○

The following items were only presented if the participants responded 'yes' to that item in the previous question.

When you captured this image or video of another, did the person in the image give you permission to take the photo (if images taken on more than one occasion did the person give permission on every occasion).

	Yes (They Gave Permission)	No (They Did not Give Permission)
Where they are partially clothed or semi-nude?	○	○
Where they are completely nude?	○	○
Where their breasts, including their nipples, are visible?	○	○
Where their genitals are visible?	○	○
Where they are engaged in a sex act?	○	○
Where they are showering, bathing or toileting?	○	○
Which is up their skirt?	○	○
Which is down their blouse, of their cleavage?	○	○

Have you ever shared an image or video of someone?

	Yes	No
Where they are partially clothed or semi-nude?	○	○
Where they are completely nude?	○	○
Where their breasts, including their nipples, are visible?	○	○
Where their genitals are visible?	○	○
Where they are engaged in a sex act?	○	○
Where they are showering, bathing or toileting?	○	○
Which is up their skirt?	○	○
Which is down their blouse, of their cleavage?	○	○
In which you superimposed their likeness to appear as if they were nude or semi-nude?	○	○

The following items were only presented if the participants responded 'yes' to that item in the previous question.

Where you have shared an image or video of someone, did the person in the image give permission for the image/video to be shared (if images have been shared on more than one occasion did the person give permission on every occasion).

	Yes (They Gave Permission)	No (They Did not Give Permission)
Where they are partially clothed or semi-nude?	○	○
Where they are completely nude?	○	○
Where their breasts, including their nipples, are visible?	○	○
Where their genitals are visible?	○	○
Where they are engaged in a sex act?	○	○
Where they are showering, bathing or toileting?	○	○
Which is up their skirt?	○	○
Which is down their blouse, of their cleavage?	○	○
In which you superimposed their likeness to appear as if they were nude or semi-nude?	○	○

Have you ever threatened to share an image or video of someone

	Yes	No
Where they are partially clothed or semi-nude?	○	○
Where they are completely nude?	○	○
Where their breasts, including their nipples, are visible?	○	○
Where their genitals are visible?	○	○
Where they are engaged in a sex act?	○	○
Where they are showering, bathing or toileting?	○	○
Which is up their skirt?	○	○
Which is down their blouse, of their cleavage?	○	○
In which you superimposed their likeness to appear as if they were nude or semi-nude?	○	○

Victimisation:

Has someone ever taken a private sexual image of you without your consent?

	Yes	No
Where you are partially clothed or semi-nude	○	○
Where you are completely nude	○	○
*Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible	○	○
Where your genitals are visible	○	○
Where you are engaged in a sex act	○	○
Where you are showering, bathing or toileting	○	○
Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to	○	○
*Which is up your skirt?	○	○
*Which is down your blouse, of your cleavage?	○	○

Have you ever had a private sexual image of yourself shared without your consent?

	Yes	No
Where you are partially clothed or semi-nude	○	○
Where you are completely nude	○	○
*Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible	○	○
Where your genitals are visible	○	○
Where you are engaged in a sex act	○	○
Where you are showering, bathing or toileting	○	○
Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to	○	○
*Which is up your skirt?	○	○
*Which is down your blouse, of your cleavage?	○	○
In which your likeness was superimposed to appear as if you were nude or semi-nude?	○	○

Has someone ever threatened to share a private sexual image of you without your consent?

	Yes	No
Where you are partially clothed or semi-nude	○	○
Where you are completely nude	○	○
*Where your breasts, including your nipples, are visible	○	○
Where your genitals are visible	○	○
Where you are engaged in a sex act	○	○
Where you are showering, bathing or toileting	○	○
Which is of a sex act that you did not agree to	○	○
*Which is up your skirt?	○	○
*Which is down your blouse, of your cleavage?	○	○
In which your likeness was superimposed to appear as if you were nude or semi-nude?	○	○