

Image-based abuse perpetration: A scoping review

What do we know about

image-based abuse perpetrators?

Image-based sexual abuse (IBSA) or image-based abuse (IBA) refers to the non-consensual taking, creating, or sharing of intimate images, including threats to share intimate images ("sextortion"). It can also include coercing someone into sharing intimate images ("sexting coercion"), or sending unwanted intimate images ("cyberflashing"). Intimate images are nude or sexual photos or videos. Sometimes images are digitally altered or manipulated (e.g., "deepfakes") or created or shared consensually by the victim. While there has been growing attention to this issue, we still don't know very much about those who perpetrate this form of abuse.

What did we do?

- We conducted a "scoping review" of studies published between 2013 and 2023 that examined IBSA perpetration among adults aged 16 and over.
- A scoping review is a type of research that seeks to understand what research has already been done and what gaps still exist.
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- We focused on:
 - Terminology
 - Prevalence,
 - Risk factors
 - Offender characteristics and
 - Offender motivations.

What did we find?

- A range of different terms for IBSA are used in the literature, including "revenge porn" and "non-consensual intimate images" (NCII).
- Prevalence of IBSA subtypes varies across studies. For instance, for non-consensual sharing, studies reported prevalence of between 2.7% and 28.0%.
- Perpetrators are more likely to be:
 - Men
 - Younger adults
 - LGBTIQ+ individuals
- Motivations for perpetration include:
 - Social status or peer approval
 - Power and control
 - Sexual gratification
 - Retaliation or revenge
- Dark Tetrad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy, sadism) are linked to higher rates.
- There is an overlap between being a victim and a perpetrator of IBSA.
- IBSA perpetration is associated with other forms of offending, including intimate partner violence.

Key recommendations

- Adopt broad, standard definitions to ensure consistency.
- Prioritise cross-jurisdictional coordination.
- Invest in early and primary prevention strategies for gender-based violence (GBV), including digital literacy and online safety.
- Recognise technology-facilitated abuse as a central issue in GBV policy frameworks.
- Develop prevention programs that challenge harmful attitudes, beliefs and gendered norms.
- Create targeted interventions that address the digital tools, environments and structural enablers of IBSA.
- Expand therapeutic responses and improve training for justice professionals to understand perpetrator motivations.
- Conduct more in-depth studies on perpetrator behaviours, motivations and risk factors.
- Include the perspectives of victims, bystanders, and frontline stakeholders in future research.
- Explore less-studied forms of IBSA, including non-consensual filming, sextortion, and deepfake abuse.



Where can I find out more?

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