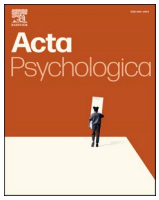
Acta Psychologica 255 (2025) 104946

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Acta Psychologica

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/actpsy



Understanding how survivors of non-consensual intimate image dissemination are perceived by UK and Norwegian respondents

Dean Fido *, Anny C. Hesbøl, Anthony Danby

University of Derby, UK

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Revenge pornography
Non-consensual sharing of intimate images
Image-based sexual abuse
Victim-blame
Psychopathy

ABSTRACT

Purpose: In popular media, '*revenge pornography*' refers to the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCSII) of another. Despite survivors of NCSII facing long-term consequences, they still face victim-blaming attitudes. Extant literature has typically sampled from countries where NCSII has long been illegal, such as the United Kingdom (UK); neglecting perspectives from countries lacking NCSII-specific legislation, such as Norway at the time of data collection.

Methods: Participants ($n = 477$) from the UK and Norway responded to vignettes depicting NCSII, which differed by the survivor-perpetrator relationship depicted (i.e., casual vs. committed).

Results: Controlling for participant sex and psychopathic personality traits (previously implicated in judgements of image-based sexual abuse), UK citizens perceived NCSII to have worse impacts on survivors than Norwegian citizens. Moreover, data trends suggested participants attributed increased victim-blame in vignettes featuring casual relationships, with higher self-reported psychopathic personality traits predicting judgements associated with viewing NCSII as less criminal in nature.

Conclusion: These findings emphasise a need to better understand the role of legislation in public perceptions of NCSII (and image-based sexual abuse more broadly) and the need to be conscious about further exploring technology-facilitated crime internationally.

1. Introduction

In the United Kingdom (UK), calls to the *Revenge Porn Helpline* increased by 106 % between 2022 and 2023 (Revenge Porn Helpline, 2024). Despite the non-consensual sharing of intimate images (NCSII) having existed for many decades in offline arenas (Hall et al., 2022; Salter & Crofts, 2015), technological developments and common access to camera phones and social media platforms have facilitated ones' capacity for instantaneous and far-reaching distribution of private sexual media in a digital space. Although true prevalence rates of NCSII are difficult to determine with victims often reluctant to come forward due to fears of re-victimisation (Bothamley & Tully, 2018; Fido & Harper, 2020), data is congruent with physical modes of sexual abuse (Cecil, 2014; Franks, 2017) in that women are more likely to be targeted than men (Bates, 2017; McGlynn & Rackley, 2016).

Consequences of NCSII are pervasive across social-, professional-, and health-related domains (Aborisade, 2022; Campbell et al., 2022), with survivors facing long-term mental health impacts such as anxiety, depression, shame, and post-traumatic stress (Bates, 2017; Blancaflor et al., 2023) and even experiencing stalking and harassment (Franks, 2017). Such consequences are perhaps worsened by reactions from the public who provide harsh judgements and victim-blaming attitudes (Cooper, 2016). Survivors of NCSII are considered partially responsible for their intimate images being circulated online if they initially (and consensually) captured and sent images to the perpetrator by both the public and by law enforcement (Attrill-Smith et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2017; Zvi & Bitton, 2020, 2021), with harsher judgements given to survivors of NCSII where heightened levels of nudity are displayed (McKinlay & Lavis, 2020). Negative judgements are further substantiated by the continued use of improper terminology in popular media, such as '*revenge pornography*', which both fail to convey the true nature and extent of injuries inflicted on the survivors and detract focus away from the perpetrator (Magaldi et al., 2020; McGlynn & Rackley, 2016). In practice, survivors may be deterred from seeking support as a result of such judgements (Bates, 2017; Jaffe et al., 2019; Monroe et al., 2005). Victim-blaming might be explained through Just World (Lerner & Miller, 1978) and Attribution (Weiner, 1980) theories. In the former, one believes the world to be a 'just and orderly' place where everyone

* Corresponding author at: University of Derby, Kedleston Road, Derby DE22 1GB, UK.
E-mail address: deanfido.psych@gmail.com (D. Fido).

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2025.104946
Received 19 December 2024; Received in revised form 12 March 2025; Accepted 26 March 2025
Available online 29 March 2025

ultimately gets what they deserve, and in the latter, responsibility for events (and associated sympathy) arise through internal attributions of perceived motives, circumstances, and individual differences (Grubb & Harrower, 2008). In the context of NCSII, individuals who express their sexuality by taking nude images may be seen as more blameworthy, promiscuous, and less deserving of protection and/or police intervention.

Such attributions might be further complicated through the nature of the survivor-perpetrator relationship. In cases of physical sexual abuse, individuals attribute significantly more blame to survivors of acquaintance rape (i.e., a known sexual partner) than to survivors of stranger rape (Abrams et al., 2003; Krahé et al., 2007). Seemingly, the perception of an intimate, personal relationship between the perpetrator and the survivor increases the amount of responsibility that is assigned to the survivor, whilst simultaneously decreases the blame attributed to the perpetrator (Bieneck & Krahé, 2011; Wyer et al., 1985). Inconsistency exists, however, regarding perceptions of survivors of NCSII as a function of the duration of their relationship with the perpetrator. Whilst Starr and Lavis (2018) identified harsher judgements where images were willingly shared after a month of knowing the perpetrator compared to after a year, Bothamley and Tully (2018) found that neither the length of the survivor-perpetrator relationship nor the reason for the relationship breakdown influenced victim-blame. Differences may be partially explained through the specific terms “one month” and “one year” facilitating more meaningful interpretations than the broader phrase of a “short time”. Nevertheless, such variation warrants further exploration.

The magnitude of NCSII-related impact has contributed to many countries taking legislative measures to tackle this issue. Countries such as Australia, the majority of the United States of America and the European Union, as well as the UK have made the non-consensual distribution of sexually explicit images a punishable criminal offence (Fido & Harper, 2020; Mania, 2022). For example, the UK's Criminal Justice and Courts Act (2015) positions the non-consensual dissemination of sexually explicit images a criminal act carrying a sentence of up to two years' imprisonment. However, despite limited empirical work from the social sciences in regions wherein NCSII remains legal (e.g., Ghana; Ofei & Fido, *in prep*), there is a noticeable gap in the literature as to whether public perceptions of NCSII differ between regions where NCSII-related legislation does and does not exist. As such the present study collected comparative samples from the UK and Norway, wherein, at the time, there were parliamentary rejections to punish those engaging in NCSII. Importantly, at the time of publication, NCSII is now illegal in Norway and follows similar conviction guidelines to the UK (*see* Jansen, 2021), making it an ideal comparator group.

Research into the interactions between behaviour and law is of importance. Laws affect behavioural norms understood by the public whereby the social stigma attached to certain actions increases as fewer people participate in said actions (Benabou & Tirole, 2011). Laws also provide information on societal values when there is uncertainty about universal norms, thus deterring citizens by the prospect of guilt and self-sanctioning effects (Benabou & Tirole, 2011). In the context of sex-related crime, and a driver for our focus on Norway, Norwegian citizens (where prostitution-related legislation had only recently been implemented), were less agreeable towards the criminalisation of prostitution than Swedish citizens (where prostitution-related legislation had been established more than a decade earlier) (Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2011). Such findings indicate that legislation can influence public attitudes towards illegal behaviour, which would likely map on to technology-facilitated crimes such as NCSII and the survivors thereof.

1.1. Covarying impact of participant sex and psychopathic personality

For methodological rigour, research into judgements of NCSII should control for covarying demographics and traits that have previously been associated with judgements of image-based sexual abuse more broadly. First, whereas men have a greater propensity to allocate blame to survivors (Black & Gold, 2008; Grubb & Harrower, 2009), women tend to be more sympathetic (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Seelau & Seelau, 2005). In the context of NCSII, females blame survivors less (Bothamley & Tully, 2018), attributed greater negative impact towards survivors (Uhl, 2017), and are more likely to view NCSII as a sexual offence (Harper et al., 2023). Such judgements also interplay with the survivor's sex, with both male and female participants sometimes trivialising male survivors or viewing offences against them as less serious (Gavin & Scott, 2019). Across other manifestations of image-based sexual abuse, women were also found to be more likely than men to see both the production of deepfaked sexual media and acts of upskirting as sexual offences that require criminal justice intervention (Fido et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2023), whilst reporting greater perceptions of harm to individuals who have been sexually deepfaked (Fido et al., 2022). As such, women are expected to hold more survivor-positive judgements in the context of NCSII within this study.

Second, within the general population, psychopathic personality traits manifests on a continuum, with high scorers characterised by shallow emotion processing, inappropriate affect, and reduced empathic capacity (Hare & Neumann, 2008). Psychopathic personality traits have been implicated in digital antisocial behaviour (Clancy et al., 2019; Lyons et al., 2022), and have long-standing relationships with victim-blaming attitudes and pro-rape myth beliefs related to physical sexual abuse (Abbey et al., 2011; Debowska et al., 2015). A growing body of literature has also associated higher levels of self-reported psychopathic personality traits with more lenient judgements of (Fido et al., 2021, 2023; Harper et al., 2023), and greater proclivity to commit (Harper et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017) NCSII. Similar associations are also mirrored across the creation and dissemination of deepfaked sexual media (Fido et al., 2022) and engaging in upskirting (Fido et al., 2023). In part, these associations might be explained through the pleasure gleaned from inflicting distress on others (Kircaburun et al., 2018), and should be controlled for when assessing judgements of image-based sexual abuse-related crimes (though see Fido et al., 2024 for discussion of mixed effects of psychopathic personality traits on judgements of image-based sexual abuse).

1.2. Overview of study

Taken together, this study aims to contribute knowledge to both the presence of NCSII-related legislation on survivor judgements (through comparing responses from UK and Norwegian samples) as well as whether such judgements differ as a function of the nature of the survivor-perpetrator relationship. Based on extant evidence we hypothesised that citizens of countries with established NCSII-related legislation (i.e., the UK) would show more survivor-positive judgements than citizens of countries that did not at the time of data collection (i.e., Norway). Further, we hypothesised that survivors depicted in vignettes featuring a non-committed, short-term relationship with the perpetrator would be judged more negatively than those featuring survivors who had been in a committed, long-term relationship with the perpetrator. No interaction effects were expected, but these were tested in an exploratory manner. Finally, we expected that being male and self-reporting higher rates of psychopathic personality traits would predict more negative survivor views (treated as covariates within our planned analyses).

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G*Power (version 3.1.9.4; Faul et al., 2007) with an anticipated small-to-medium effect size ($f = 0.125$) and standard alpha level of 0.05, to identify the need for around 505 participants to be required to have 80 % power in our

planned analyses. After removing cases with over 5 % missing data (n = 15), the final sample comprised 477 UK (n = 239, M_{age} = 44.12 years, SD = 15.91; 72.8 % female) and Norwegian (n = 238, M_{age} = 32.46 years, SD = 12.21; 53.4 % female) citizens. Participants were recruited through social media websites (e.g., Instagram, Reddit) as well as existing professional networks known to the researchers (e.g., LinkedIn). Participants were required to hold British or Norwegian citizenship (no dual citizenship to avoid potential confounds of legislative variance), be fluent in either English or Norwegian, and aged 18 years or over. Participants who deemed themselves survivors of NCSII were asked to refrain from participating to control for victimisation-related bias, and were directed to support services and information about other research projects being conducted by our group. All participants provided written informed consent in accordance with approved university research protocols and national ethical guidelines by ticking a box on both the first and last pages of an online survey.

2.2. Materials

2.2.1. Demographics

Participants reported their age (in years), biological sex (male/female/other), and citizenship (UK/Norway).

2.2.2. NCSII Vignettes

Participants read one of two randomly allocated vignettes outlining the breakdown of a heterosexual relationship that resulted in sharing intimate images (see supplementary files: https://osf.io/t8pjr/?view_only=355e5b9bd47e48deb858140ef3c965db). Both vignettes featured a male perpetrator and a female victim but differed as a function of whether their relationship was casual and short term, or long-term of two years. Vignettes followed a similar structure and mode of dissemination to those used in aligned projects (e.g., Fido et al., 2021; Fido et al., 2024; Harper et al., 2023), and were informed by media documented accounts of survivors of NCSII (e.g., Anonymous, 2015).

2.2.3. Judgements of NCSII (Fido et al., 2022 (adapted from Bothamley & Tully, 2018))

Judgements were measured using the procedure outlined in Fido et al. (2022). Specifically, after viewing their designated vignettes, participants answered 8 items using a 7-point scale anchored from "*Not at all/Very unlikely*" to "*Definitely/Very likely*". Four items (1. "How much do you think [victim's name] is to blame for the incident?", 2. "How much do you think that [victim's name] had control over the situation?", 3. "How likely do you think it is that [victim's name] could have avoided the incident?", 4. "Do you feel sorry for [victim's name]?") were averaged to create a Victim-Blame subscale (Cronbach's α = 0.66), two items (5. "How much do you consider the behaviour of [perpetrator's name] to be an offence?", 6. "To what extent do you feel like police intervention is necessary for a resolution of the situation?") were averaged to create a Perceived Criminality subscale (Cronbach's α = 0.72), and two items (7. "How likely do you think it is that [perpetrator's name]'s behaviour will cause mental harm to [victim's name]?", 8. "Do you think that [perpetrator's name] will create fear or apprehension in [victim's name]?") were averaged to create a Anticipated Harm subscale (Cronbach's α = 0.86).

2.2.4. Self-report psychopathy scale – short form (SRP4-SF; Paulhus et al., 2015)

The SRP4-SF comprises 29 items that measure psychopathic personality in forensic and non-forensic populations using a 5-point self-report scale (anchored from "*Disagree Strongly*" to "*Agree Strongly*"). Responses were calculated for total scores (Cronbach's α = 0.87), as well as across four subdomains: 'interpersonal' (e.g., "I purposely flatter people to get them on my side"; Cronbach's α = 0.74); 'affective' (e.g., "People sometimes say that I'm cold hearted"; Cronbach's α = 0.67); 'lifestyle' (e.g., "I rarely follow the rules"; Cronbach's α = 0.75); and 'antisociality' (e.g., "I have tricked someone into giving me money"; Cronbach's α = 0.59). High scores indicated greater levels of psychopathic personality.

2.3. Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from an institutional ethical review panel prior to data collection (Ref: ETH2021–2243). Participants were presented with an online survey hosted via survey software, Qualtrics and were required to select their citizenship from a drop-down menu, which allowed the software to present them with an appropriately translated survey. After providing informed consent, participants were asked to input their age and sex before being randomly presented with one of two vignettes depicting an instance of NCSII (varying only by the nature of the survivor-perpetrator relationship) as well as accompanying judgement questions. Participants then completed the SRP4-SF before being debriefed. On average, the study took 20 min to complete.

2.4. Analysis plan

Data were analysed using the IBM SPSS version 26. In instances of missing data (n = 3), sample means were calculated. Three analyses of covariance (ANCOVA) were performed to investigate differences in judgement scores associated with perceived victim-blame, criminality, and anticipated harm (the dependent variables) as a function of citizenship and nature of the relationship (the independent variables), after controlling for variation in participant sex and psychopathic personality traits (the covariates). For the broader benefit of our readers who might have additional interest in our variables, Pearson correlations were computed between the focal variables of interest for the whole sample as well as within each nationality. Baseline comparisons between UK and Norwegian citizens were computed using t-tests for descriptive purposes.

3. Results

3.1. Citizenship differences

Means and standard deviations for questionnaire data are reported in Table 1. Independent t-tests were used to delineate citizenship differences within our sample. Participants from the UK were on average older ($t(473) = 8.97$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.82$) and scored higher on the lifestyle facet of the SRP4-SF ($t(475) = 3.89$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.36$). Conversely, participants from Norway scored higher on average on the interpersonal ($t(475) = 3.49$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.32$) and affective ($t(475) = 2.48$, $p = .013$, $d = 0.23$) facets of the SRP4-SF. No significant differences were seen in either the antisocial facet of the SRP4-SF ($t(475) = 1.65$, $p = .099$, $d = 0.15$) or in its composite score ($t(475) = 0.26$, $p = .799$, $d = 0.02$) between citizenship.

3.2. Correlation analysis

Bivariate Pearson correlations were computed between the independent and dependent variables, and the covariates across the whole sample (see Table 2) as well as between UK and Norwegian citizens, specifically (see Table 3). Victim-blaming attitudes were positively associated with age and scores on the interpersonal, affective, antisocial facets of the SRP4-SF (but neither the lifestyle facet nor the composite score) in the whole sample. However, when broken down as a function of citizenship, only the relationships between victim-blaming attitudes and age and the antisocial facet held true (in UK citizens specifically). Perceived criminality was negatively correlated with age, as well as all psychopathic personality trait metrics except for the lifestyle facet in the whole sample. However, notwithstanding the exception of the relationship with the interpersonal facet, which was present in both groups of citizens, these relationships appear to be driven by UK citizens.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics for UK and Norwegian responders.

	Total M (SD)	UK M (SD)	Norway M (SD)	*p*	*d*
Age	38.28 (15.32)	44.12 (15.91)	32.46 (12.21)	< 0.001	0.82
Interpersonal	12.88 (4.16)	12.22 (3.96)	13.54 (4.26)	0.001	0.32
Affective	12.27 (3.97)	11.82 (3.87)	12.72 (4.04)	0.013	0.23
Lifestyle	14.07 (4.41)	14.84 (4.60)	13.29 (4.07)	< 0.001	0.36
Antisocial	9.60 (2.57)	9.79 (2.76)	9.40 (2.35)	0.099	0.15
SRP - Total	48.82 (11.97)	48.68 (12.13)	48.96 (11.84)	0.799	0.02

Note. SRP = Self-Report Psychopathy Scale v4 - Short Form.

Table 2
Pearson correlations between variables for the whole sample.

	Whole Sample								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
[1] Age	–	0.148***	−0.166***	−0.95*	−0.171***	−0.263***	−0.079	0.011	−0.173***
[2] Victim-Blame		–	−0.322***	−0.342***	0.097*	0.110*	−0.038	0.113*	0.080
[3] Perceived Criminality			–	0.425***	−0.149***	−0.138**	−0.047	−0.122**	−0.141**
[4] Anticipated Harm				–	−0.102**	−0.081	0.023	−0.079	−0.071
[5] Interpersonal					–	0.657***	0.489***	0.377***	0.826***
[6] Affective						–	0.548***	0.405***	0.849***
[7] Lifestyle							–	0.401***	0.806***
[8] Antisocial								–	0.628***
[9] SRP - Total									–

Note. SRP = Self-Report Psychopathy Scale v4 - Short Form.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Pearson correlations between UK and Norwegian Citizens.

	Whole Sample								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
[1] Age	–	0.243***	−0.245***	−0.162*	−0.124	−0.247***	−0.121	−0.074	−0.182**
[2] Victim-Blame	0.100	–	−0.336***	−0.420***	0.116	0.088	−0.020	0.189**	0.101
[3] Perceived Criminality	−0.036	−0.312***	–	0.446***	−0.159*	−0.189**	−0.022	−0.161*	−0.157*
[4] Anticipated Harm	−0.178**	−0.261***	0.439***	–	−0.088	−0.091	0.008	−0.177**	−0.095
[5] Interpersonal	−0.124	0.065	−0.160*	−0.074	–	0.613***	0.522***	0.344***	0.798***
[6] Affective	−0.236***	0.123	−0.090	−0.044	0.685***	–	0.621***	0.452***	0.857***
[7] Lifestyle	−0.219***	−0.043	−0.067	−0.014	0.548***	0.541***	–	0.422***	0.843***
[8] Antisocial	0.06	0.024	−0.055	−0.001	0.458***	0.384***	0.360***	–	0.644***
[9] SRP - Total	−0.188**	0.055	−0.123	−0.047	0.873***	0.850***	0.797***	0.617***	–

Note. SRP = Self-Report Psychopathy Scale v4 - Short Form. UK citizens above the diagonal and Norwegian citizens below the diagonal.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

Finally, perceptions of anticipated harm were negatively correlated with age across all sample permutations; however, a negative correlation was only seen with the affective facet of psychopathic personality in the whole sample and the antisocial facet of psychopathic personality in the UK sample, specifically. As expected, all facets of the SRP4-SF shared medium-to-large correlations with one another and the composite SRP4-SF score for the whole sample as well as for both UK and Norwegian subsamples.

3.3. ANCOVA analyses

We conducted three 2 (citizenship; UK vs. Norway) x 2 (relationship type; short-term vs. long-term) between group ANCOVAs to predict judgement scores on a NCSII vignette, whilst controlling for participant sex and composite psychopathic personality. Across all analyses, data met the necessary assumptions and Levene's tests of equality of error variances were non-significant (*p*'s = 0.343, 0.063, and 0.374, respectively).

3.4. Victim-blame

There was no main effect of citizenship, $F(1,471) = 1.23$, $p = .267$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$, nor interaction between citizenship and relationship type, $F(1,471) = 1.20$, $p = .273$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.003$, on victim-blame after controlling for the participant's sex, $F(1,471) = 0.08$, $p = .775$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$, and psychopathic personality, $F(1,471) = 2.14$, $p = .144$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.005$. However, there was a significant main effect of relationship type on victim-blame, $F(1,471) = 5.39$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.011$, with a greater prevalence of victim-blaming attitudes for vignettes featuring short term (M = 2.45, SD = 1.06) versus long term (M = 2.23, SD = 1.03) relationships ($d = 0.21$).

3.5. Perceived criminality

There was no main effect of citizenship, $F(1,471) = 1.02$, $p = .313$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$, relationship type, $F(1,471) = 0.07$, $p = .799$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$, nor interaction thereof, $F(1,471) = 0.323$, $p = .570$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.001$, on perceived criminality. However, whilst participant sex was not a significant covariate, $F(1,471) = 0.16$, $p = .689$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$, higher levels of psychopathic personality was associated with significantly less perceived criminality, $F(1,471) = 9.041$, $p = .003$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.019$.

3.6. Anticipated harm

There was no main effect of relationship type, $F(1,471) = 0.73$, $p = .788$, $\eta_p^2 < 0.001$, nor any interaction between relationship type and citizenship, $F(1,471) = 0.72$, $p = .396$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$, on anticipated harm after controlling for participant sex, $F(1,471) = 1.11$, $p = .292$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.002$, and psychopathic personality, $F(1,471) = 1.95$, $p = .164$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.004$. There was, however, a significant main effect of citizenship, $F(1,471) = 10.99$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.023$, such that UK citizens (M = 6.39, SD = 0.87) versus Norwegian citizens (M = 6.12, SD = 0.96) reported greater anticipated harm ($d = 0.29$). Data for all analyses and analysis outputs are available here: https://osf.io/t8pjr/?view_only=355e5b9bd47e48deb858140ef3c965db.

4. Discussion

This research contributes to a growing body of literature seeking to understand variation in judgements of image-based sexual abuse and survivors thereof. Whilst controlling for factors previously found to impact judgements (i.e., participant sex and psychopathic personality traits), we compared responses to vignettes depicting NCSII between citizens of countries where NCSII-related legislation was either established or (at the time) non-existent, and when relationship depicted within said vignettes was either short- or long-term.

Though no statistically significant differences were identified between scores on either victim-blame or perceived criminality of the NCSII depicted, on average, respondents from the UK (where NCSII had been illegal for half a decade) attributed higher rates of anticipated harm than respondents from Norway (where NCSII was legal at the time of data collection). Of note, items pertaining to anticipated harm specifically related to *mental harm* (Q7) and the creation of *fear* and *apprehension* (Q8). While our specific judgement measure has not been used to test legislative differences in other physical or image-based sexual abuse research, findings reported here add to broader literature (e.g., Jakobsson & Kotsadam, 2011) demonstrating changes in perceptions of crime following the implementation of legislation. However, whereas Jakobsson and Kotsadam (2011) and Sgarbi et al. (2015) found legislation-based differences in agreeableness towards the criminalisation of prostitution and misconceptions about stalking, respectively, differences in the current study were based solely around perceptions of anticipated harm. On average, participants reported equivalent victim-blame and perceived criminality of NCSII, which might reflect influences from international television and film, news reports, and social media discussions wherein substantial information pertaining to the seriousness of NCSII might be conveyed. Indeed, at the time of data collection, NCSII had been legislated against within many countries for over half a decade, thus, allowing a substantial amount of time for relevant information to be shared. The benefit of sharing forensic psychological knowledge with the general public on an international scale has recently been discussed in relation to violent and sexual offending (Hammond et al., 2024; Rothwell et al., 2021).

We also hypothesised that vignettes featuring survivors in a casual and short-term relationship with the perpetrator would be judged more negatively than those featuring survivors within a long-term relationship with the perpetrator of two years. This was realised in our data with survivors depicted to be in casual relationships being attributed more blame. Though relationship status was not deemed to be of statistical importance in Bothamley and Tully (2018), our results map on to the greater levels of blame attributed to survivors of NCSII whose sexual images were shared after a month of knowing the perpetrator compared to after a year in Starr and Lavis (2018). In practice, this might reflect people viewing the 'early' sharing of sexual images within a relationship as being promiscuous; factor 1 of Harper et al.'s (2023) *Beliefs about Revenge Pornography Questionnaire*, which in turn was associated with viewing NCSII victimisation as being avoidable for the survivor. Of interest, although Harper et al. (2023) also found associations between viewing survivors as promiscuous and lower judgements of criminality and anticipated harm, there was no main effect of relationship status specifically and either of these outcome variables in the current study. Logically, we expected our results given that the time one is in a relationship with another has little impact on the crime of NCSII itself.

Stemming from extant literature in the field of image-based sexual abuse, we ensured to control for variation in both the sex of the participant and psychopathic personality traits within our analyses. Unexpectedly, across all of our dependent variables of victim-blame, perceived criminality, and anticipated harm, participant sex was not found to be a statistically significant covariate. Though positive from a civic perspective, this largely conflicts with long-standing findings documenting a greater propensity for males to allocate blame to survivors of crime more broadly (Black & Gold, 2008; Grubb & Harrower, 2009), as well as survivors of NCSII, specifically (Bothamley & Tully, 2018). Moreover, males have previously been found to attribute lower impact for victims of NCSII (Uhl, 2017), and are, on average, less likely to view both NCSII (Harper et al., 2023) and other image-based sexual offences as requiring criminal justice intervention (Fido et al., 2022; Fido et al., 2023). As highlighted within our limitations section, this might reflect a disproportionate number of female respondents (72.8 %) in our study. Further, and in line with our hypotheses, increased levels of psychopathic personality traits were positively associated with both attribution of victim-blame as well as lower perceptions of criminality. In the general population, psychopathic personality traits are characterised by inappropriate affect and reduced empathic capacity (Hare & Neumann, 2008) and have long been implicated in victim-blaming attitudes to both physical (Abbey et al., 2011; Debowska et al., 2015) and image-based (Fido et al., 2021, 2022; Fido et al., 2023; Harper et al., 2023; Pina et al., 2017) sexual abuse.

4.1. Limitations of the study

Our results should be discussed in light of limitations. First, our vignettes only described situations featuring female survivors and male perpetrators within heterosexual relationships. Despite women being disproportionately targeted by NCSII (Amico & Steinberger, 2015; Bates, 2017; Bloom, 2014; McGlynn & Rackley, 2016), and NCSII commonly (Branch et al., 2017), but not always (Hall & Hearn, 2017) occurring within heterosexual couples, it is important to replicate these findings within survivor-perpetrator relationships comprising different characteristics. More broadly, we must also acknowledge that despite vignettes being valuable tools allowing us to easily manipulate our experimental conditions, they are unable to fully capture social realities and so may not evoke realistic affective responses to the proposed situations (Erfanian et al., 2020). Future research should explore other ways to action these experimental manipulation.

Second, we note a disproportionate balance of participant sex (72.8 % female), which might impact on the variance of psychopathic personality traits (Tully et al., 2023; Wynn et al., 2012) as well as perceptions of survivors and perpetrators of image-based sexual abuse (Fido et al., 2021). During the peer-review process, we conducted unplanned ad-hoc analyses to further explore the potential effects of disparities of sex and age within our sample, wherein we used randomisation functions within SPSS to stratify our samples, thus, allowing us to evenly distribute participant sex between our four conditions ($n = 65$ in each

group). Through this process, although the effect of relationship status on victim blame was reduced, all other statistically significant effects, such as psychopathic personality predicting less perceived criminality and nationality (being from the UK) predicting greater anticipated harm remained. Such findings (available in full within our data files linked above) suggest we can have greater confidence in our data not being down to variation in sex and age. Nevertheless, combining these two limitations, and drawing upon the *defensive attribution hypothesis*, wherein negative perceptions of others decrease as a function of the observer's perceived similarity to said other (Grubb & Turner, 2012), this might further explain some of the non-significant group differences reported here.

Third, as with much of the work reported in the area of judgements towards IBSA, findings of this study are cross-sectional in nature; meaning that we can only infer the role of legislation, with no causality assumed. Of course, though temporally, we cannot replicate the precise international aspects of this study owing to legislative advancements in both the UK and Norway since data were collected, we issue a call to arms for academics in this area to work with collaborators from nations wherein IBSA-related legislation is not currently present in the hope of addressing the limitations documented above.

5. Conclusion

Unexpectedly, legislative differences pertaining to NCSII appear to have limited impact on judgements of NCSII as a crime, and survivors thereof. Where differences were found (anticipated harm), this might reflect the implementation of legislation indicating a given act has severe consequences for its survivors. However, data presented within this study also highlights that ones' relationship, and in turn sexual behaviour, does indeed play a role in the blame attributed to survivors of NCSII. Operationally, this further highlights the need to share forensic psychology-related knowledge more broadly within the general public, as well as to ensure processes are in place to enable individuals to feel able to seek support following image-based sexual abuse.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dean Fido: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Anny C. Hesbøl:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Project administration, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Anthony Danby:** Writing – review & editing.

Informed consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Funding

This work was not supported via funding.

Declaration of competing interest

The author(s) declare no potential competing interests with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

Data is linked within the manuscript

References

Abbey, A., Jacques-Tiura, A. J., & LeBreton, J. M. (2011). Risk factors for sexual aggression in young men: An expansion of the confluence model. *Aggressive Behavior, 37*(5), 450–464. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20399

Aborisade, R. A. (2022). Image-based sexual abuse in a culturally conservative Nigerian society: Female victims' narratives of psychosocial costs. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy, 1-13*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13178-021-00536-3

Abrams, D., Viki, G. T., Masser, B., & Bohner, G. (2003). Perceptions of stranger and acquaintance rape: The role of benevolent and hostile sexism in victim blame and rape proclivity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 84*(1), 111. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.111

Amico, E., & Steinberger, L. (2015). Fighting for online privacy with digital weaponry: Combating revenge pornography. *NYSBA Entertainment, Arts and Sports Law Journal, 26*(2), 24–36.

Anonymous. (2015). Experience: I was the victim of revenge porn. *The Guardian.* Retrieved from: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2015/feb/06/experience-i-was-victim-of-revenge-porn.

Attrill-Smith, A., Wesson, C. J., Chater, M. L., & Weekes, L. (2021). Gender differences in videoed accounts of victim blaming for revenge porn for self-taken and stealth-taken sexually explicit images and videos. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace, 15*(4), Article 3. https://doi.org/10.5817/CP2021-4-3

Bates, S. (2017). Revenge porn and mental health: A qualitative analysis of the mental health effects of revenge porn on female survivors. *Feminist Criminology, 12*(1), 22–42. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085116654565

Benabou, R., & Tirole, J. (2011). Laws and norms. *National Bureau of Economic Research, No. w17579*. http://www.nber.org/papers/w17579.

Bieneck, S., & Krahé, B. (2011). Blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in cases of rape and robbery: Is there a double standard? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 26*(9), 1785–1797. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510372945

Black, K. A., & Gold, D. J. (2008). Gender differences and socioeconomic status biases in judgments about blame in date rape scenarios. *Violence and Victims, 23*(1), 115–128. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.23.1.115

Blancaflor, E., Ong, A. P., Navarro, A. L. E., Sudo, K. F., Villasor, D. A., & Valero, C. (2023). *An in-depth analysis of revenge porn and blackmailing on Philippine social media and its effects on the people affected.* In proceedings of the 2023 6th international conference on information science and systems (pp. 107-112). doi:https://doi.org/10.1145/3625156.3625172.

Bloom, S. (2014). No vengeance for revenge porn victims: Unraveling why this latest female-centric, intimate-partner offense is still legal, and why we should criminalize it. *Fordham University School of Law, 42*, 233. https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/ulj/vol42/iss1/2.

Bothamley, S., & Tully, R. J. (2018). Understanding revenge pornography: Public perceptions of revenge pornography and victim blaming. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 10*(1), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-09-2016-0253

Branch, K., Hilinski-Rosick, C. M., Johnson, E., & Solano, G. (2017). Revenge porn victimization of college students in the United States: An exploratory analysis. *International journal of cyber. Criminology, 11*(1). https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.495777

Campbell, J. K., Poage, S. M., Godley, S., & Rothman, E. F. (2022). Social anxiety as a consequence of non-consensually disseminated sexually explicit media victimization. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37(9–10), NP7268-NP7288. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520967150.

Cecil, A. L. (2014). Taking back the internet: Imposing civil liability on interactive computer services in an attempt to provide an adequate remedy to victims of nonconsensual pornography. *Washington & Lee Law Review, 71*, 2513. https://scholarlycommons.law.wlu.edu/wlulr/vol71/iss4/9.

Clancy, E. M., Klettke, B., & Hallford, D. J. (2019). The dark side of sexting–factors predicting the dissemination of sexts. *Computers in Human Behavior, 92*, 266–272. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.11.023

Cooper, P. W. (2016). The right to be virtually clothed. *Washington & Lee Law Review, 91*, 817. https://digitalcommons.law.uw.edu/wlr/vol91/iss2/20.

Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015. (2015). Retrieved from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/2/contents/enacted.

Debowska, A., Boduszek, D., Dhingra, K., Kola, S., & Meller-Prunska, A. (2015). The role of psychopathy and exposure to violence in rape myth acceptance. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 30*(15), 2751–2770. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514553

Erfanian, F., Latifnejad Roudsari, R., Heydari, A., Bahmani, N. D., & M.. (2020). A narrative on using vignettes: Its advantages and drawbacks. *Journal of Midwifery and Reproductive Health, 8*(2), 2134–2145. https://doi.org/10.22038/jmrh.2020.41650.1472

Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Lang, A. G., & Buchner, A. (2007). G*power 3: A flexible statistical power analysis program for the social, behavioral, and biomedical sciences. *Behavior Research Methods, 39*, 175–191. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193146

Fido, D., & Harper, C. A. (2020). *Image-based sexual abuse: A psychological perspective.* London, UK: Palgrave.

Fido, D., Harper, C. A., Davis, M. A., Petronzi, D., & Worrall, S. (2021). Intrasexual competition as a predictor of women's judgments of revenge 24ornography offending. Sexual Abuse, 33(3), 295–320. doi:https://doi.org/10.1177/1079063219894306.

Fido, D., Harper, C. A., Duff, S., & Page, T. E. (2023). Understanding social judgments of, and proclivities to commit upskirting. Doi:10.31234/osf.io/yvsxz.

Fido, D., Rao, J., & Harper, C. A. (2022). Celebrity status, sex, and variation in psychopathy predicts judgements of and proclivity to generate and distribute

deepfake pornography. *Computers in Human Behavior, 129*, Article 107141. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.107141
Fido, D., Rushton, A., Allen, E., & Williams, J. (2024). Judgement differences of types of image-based sexual harassment and abuse conducted by celebrity perpetrators and victims. *Behavioral Science, 14*(11), 1021. https://doi.org/10.3390/bs14111021
Franks, M. A. (2017). Revenge porn reform: A view from the front lines. *Florida Law Review, 69*, 1251. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2853789.
Gavin, J., & Scott, A. J. (2019). Attributions of victim responsibility in revenge pornography. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research, 11*(4), 263–272. https://doi.org/10.1108/JACPR-03-2019-0408
Grubb, A., & Harrower, J. (2008). Attribution of blame in cases of rape: An analysis of participant gender, type of rape and perceived similarity to the victim. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 13*(5), 396–405. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2008.06.006
Grubb, A., & Turner, E. (2012). Attribution of blame in rape cases: A review of the impact of rape myth acceptance, gender role conformity and substance use on victim blaming. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 17*(5), 443–452. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2012.06.002
Grubb, A. R., & Harrower, J. (2009). Understanding attribution of blame in cases of rape: An analysis of participant gender, type of rape and perceived similarity to the victim. *Journal of Sexual Aggression, 15*(1), 63–81. https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600802641649
Hall, M., & Hearn, J. (2017). Revenge pornography: Gender, sexuality and motivations. *Routledge*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315648187
Hall, M., Hearn, J., & Lewis, R. (2022). Digital gender-sexual violations: Violence, technologies, motivations. *Taylor & Francis.*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003138273
Hammond, C., Knošková, K., Fido, D., & Wallace, L. (2024). A comparative analysis of public educational needs in the rehabilitative care of individuals who have committed serious criminal offences: A cross cultural study. *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law, 5*, Article 100130. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsiml.2024.100130
Hare, R. D., & Neumann, C. S. (2008). Psychopathy as a clinical and empirical construct. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology, 4*, 217–246. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.3.022806.091452
Harper, C. A., Smith, L., Leach, J., Daruwala, N. A., & Fido, D. (2023). Development and validation of the beliefs about revenge pornography questionnaire. *Sexual Abuse, 35*(6), 748–783. https://doi.org/10.1177/10790632221082663
Henry, N., Powell, A., & Flynn, A. (2017). Not just 'revenge pornography': Australians' experiences of image-based abuse. *A summary report. Melbourne: RMIT University.*. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29903.59045
Jaffe, A. E., DiLillo, D., Gratz, K. L., & Messman-Moore, T. L. (2019). Risk for revictimization following interpersonal and noninterpersonal trauma: Clarifying the role of Posttraumatic Stress symptoms and trauma-related cognitions. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 32*(1), 42. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22372
Jakobsson, N., & Kotsadam, A. (2011). Gender equity and prostitution: An investigation of attitudes in Norway and Sweden. *Feminist Economics, 17*(1), 31–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/13545701.2010.541863
Jansen, S. (2021, June 9). Two years in prison for sharing private photos without consent. Barne Vakten. https://www.barnevakten.no/straff-ved-bildedeling/.
Kircaburun, K., Jonason, P. K., & Griffiths, M. D. (2018). The Dark Tetrad traits and problematic social media use: The mediating role of cyberbullying and cyberstalking. *Personality and Individual Differences, 135*, 264–269. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2018.07.034
Krahé, B., Temkin, J., & Bieneck, S. (2007). Schema-driven information processing in judgements about rape. *Applied Cognitive Psychology: The Official Journal of the Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition, 21*(5), 601–619. https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1297
Lerner, M. J., & Miller, D. T. (1978). Just world research and the attribution process: Looking back and ahead. *Psychological Bulletin, 85*(5), 1030. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.85.5.1030
Lyons, M., Rowe, A., Waddington, R., & Brewer, G. (2022). Situational and dispositional factors in rape cognitions: The roles of social media and the dark triad traits. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 37(11−12), NP10345-NP10361 https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520985499.
Magaldi, J. A., Sales, J. S., & Paul, J. (2020). Revenge porn: The name doesn't do nonconsensual pornography justice and the remedies don't offer the victims enough justice. *Oregon Law Review, 98*, 197. https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/25136.
Mania, K. (2022). Legal protection of revenge and Deepfake porn victims in the European Union: Findings from a comparative legal study. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse, 1*, 13. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3527819.
McGlynn, C., & Rackley, E. (2016). Not "revenge porn," but abuse: Let's call it image-based sexual abuse. Inherently Human*:* Critical Perspectives on Law, Gender & Sexuality, 41.
McKinlay, T., & Lavis, T. (2020). Why did she send it in the first place? Victim blame in the context of 'revenge porn'. *Psychiatry, Psychology and Law, 27*(3), 386–396. https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2020.1734977
Monroe, L. M., Kinney, L. M., Weist, M. D., Dafeamekpor, D. S., Dantzler, J., & Reynolds, M. W. (2005). The experience of sexual assault: Findings from a statewide victim needs assessment. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 20*(7), 767–776. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260505277100
Paulhus, D. L., Neumann, C. S., Hare, R. D., Williams, K. M., & Hemphill, J. F. (2015). *Self-report psychopathy scale* (4th ed.). Toronto, ON: Multi-Health Systems.
Pina, A., Holland, J., & James, M. (2017). The malevolent side of revenge porn proclivity: Dark personality traits and sexist ideology. *International Journal of Technoethics IJT, 8*(1), 30–43. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJT.2017010103
Revenge Porn Helpline. (2024). *Reports to the revenge porn helpline increased by 106% in 2023*. Revenge Porn Helpline. Retrieved from: https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/news/reports-to-the-revenge-porn-helpline-increased-by-106-in-2023/.
Rothwell, M., Fido, D., & Heym, N. (2021). Perceptions around adult and child sex offenders and their rehabilitation varies mainly as a function of forensic education independent of perpetrator sex and traditionalism. *Forensic Science International: Mind and Law, 2*, Article 100039. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsiml.2020.100039
Salter, M., & Crofts, T. (2015). Responding to revenge porn: Challenges to online legal impunity. *New views on pornography: Sexuality, Politics, and the Law*, 233–256. http://UWSAU.eblib.com.au/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=1930115.
Seelau, S. M., & Seelau, E. P. (2005). Gender-role stereotypes and perceptions of heterosexual, gay and lesbian domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence, 20*(6), 363–371. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-005-7798-4
Starr, T. S., & Lavis, T. (2018). Perceptions of revenge pornography and victim blame. *International Journal of Cyber Criminology, 12*(2), 427–438.
Tully, J., Frey, A., Fotiadou, M., Kolla, N. J., & Eisenbarth, H. (2023). Psychopathy in women: Insights from neuroscience and ways forward for research. *CNS Spectrums, 28*(2), 120–132.
Uhl, C. A. (2017). The impact of gender, victim weight, and victim responsibility on attributions of blame and responsibility in a case of nonconsensual pornography. *The University of North Dakota.* https://commons.und.edu/theses/2369.
Weiner, B. (1980). A cognitive (attribution)-emotion-action model of motivated behavior: An analysis of judgments of help-giving. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39*(2), 186. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.39.2.186
Wyer, R. S., Bodenhausen, G. V., & Gorman, T. F. (1985). Cognitive mediators of reactions to rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 48*(2), 324.
Wynn, R., Høiseth, M. H., & Pettersen, G. (2012). Psychopathy in women: Theoretical and clinical perspectives. *International Journal of Women's Health, 4*, 257–263. https://doi.org/10.2147/IJWH.S25518
Zvi, L., & Bitton, M. S. (2020). Police officer perceptions of non-consensual dissemination of intimate images. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 2148. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02148
Zvi, L., & Bitton, M. S. (2021). Perceptions of victim and offender culpability in non-consensual distribution of intimate images. *Psychology, Crime & Law, 27*(5), 427–442. https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2020.1818236