FROM ONLINE VIOLENCE TO DIGITAL RESPECT

Safer Internet Forum, November 21, 2019
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THORDIS ELVA: BRIEF

- Author of two books on gender-based and sexual violence, published in 14 countries
- Author of three award-winning, educational short films about online abuse and image-based sexual exploitation, bodily integrity and sexual consent
- Member of parliamentary committee overseeing the national action plan against violence against women and children
- Commissioned by the Icelandic govt to make educational material for children and teenagers to prevent sexual abuse
- Chair of the Board of the shelter for battered women and girls in Reykjavik 2012-2014 (board member since 2010)
- Public speaker for two decades, with a TED talk about my personal connection to the issue of sexual violence, with over 5 million views
- Given workshops to 18,000 people in 5 countries about image-based sexual abuse online.
- Working within media for 15 years, including television, print and online
THE CONTEXT: GENDER INEQUALITY OFFLINE

- Women hold 24% of the world’s parliamentary seats
- Even in the most gender-equal countries in the world, the gender pay gap is in double digits
- A quarter of people who are featured in European news media are women
- Globally, one in three women is subject to physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of a man in her lifetime
- Unpaid labour and housework are still largely in the hands of women
- The fact that women own less and have less influence than men is a result of laws and traditions that made it impossible for women to inherit property, educate themselves, vote or otherwise have full citizenship and civil liberties
According to the UN Broadband Commission, women are 27 times more likely to be abused online than men.

73% of women have endured cyber violence.

Women aged 18-24 are at heightened risk of being abused online.

In the EU-28, 18% of women have experienced a form of serious Internet violence since the age of 15, which corresponds to about 9 million women.

41% of women who experienced online harassment felt that their physical safety was threatened.

1 in 2 women experienced lower self-esteem or loss of self-confidence as well as stress, anxiety or panic attacks as a result of cyber violence and hate speech online. (Amnesty International)

The risk of suicide attempt is 2.3 times higher for a victim of cyber harassment compared to non-victims. (UNICEF, 2014)

Illegal hate speech online targeting gender identity is equivalent to 3.1% of reports to internet platforms in the EU, which suggests it's a underreported problem (FEMM Committee)
THE DEFINITION OF CONTINUUM IS A “CONTINUOUS SERIES OF ELEMENTS OR ITEMS THAT VARY BY SUCH TINY DIFFERENCES THAT THEY DO NOT SEEM TO DIFFER FROM EACH OTHER.”
The pyramid of gender-based violence

Source: Mentors in Violence Prevention
VERBAL VIOLENCE

- Sexist hate speech: expressions which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred based on sex. Also the use of sexist and insulting comments, slut-shaming and victim-blaming.
- Mob attacks
- Cyber bullying: repeated aggressive online behavior with the objective of frightening and undermining someone’s self-esteem or reputation, which sometimes pushes vulnerable individuals to depression and suicide.
- Cyber harassment: Including unwanted sexually explicit emails, text (or online) messages; inappropriate or offensive advances on social networking websites or internet chat rooms; threats of physical and/or sexual violence by email, text (or online) messages; hate speech, meaning language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on her identity (gender) and other traits (such as sexual orientation or disability).
- Cyber stalking: Monitoring someone using electronic means with the intent to cause fear and/or distress.
- Doxxing: Publishing personal information without consent

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

- Image based sexual abuse (also known as revenge porn), including fakes and up-skirting
- Unsolicited nudes: Includes “dick pics”
- Sextortion: Using intimate material as a means of blackmail
- Hacking, i.e. web-cam hacking
- Impersonation: Stealing someone’s identity and using it for example to advertise prostitution
- Trafficking and recruitment / sale*
- Child sexual abuse (“grooming”)

*Note: Trafficking includes sexual exploitation of children, children sold or trafficked for domestic service or other economic exploitation.
Online harassers are more likely to be men, or nearly 70% according to BRÅ (The Swedish Center of Crime Prevention).

Men are also affected by online abuse (44%), but it’s more surface level (with name-calling being the most frequently reported form, 30%). Men are less likely to find it upsetting (only 16% found it “very” or “extremely upsetting). (Pew Research Center)

Meanwhile, 63% of women who had experienced online abuse said they had not been able to sleep well as a result of it. (75% in New Zealand reported this effect.)

Well over half (56%) of women said online abuse or harassment had meant that they had been unable to concentrate for long periods of time. (Amnesty International)
1 in 3 women will experience violence in her lifetime.
Research by Amnesty International shows that over three quarters (76%) of women who said that they had experienced abuse or harassment on a social media platform made changes to the way they use the platforms.

This included restricting what they post about: 32% of women said they’d stopped posting content that expressed their opinion on certain issues.
WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

- Some costly consequences of violence against women online include:
  - lost wages;
  - reduced participation in society,
  - chronic physical conditions and loss of life expectancy,
  - mental health conditions,
  - sexual and sexual health issues, sometimes causing problems with reproductive health;
  - substance abuse and associated crimes;
  - social isolation,
  - and individual and public expenditure on medical protection, judicial and social services.

- Regarding cyber violence happening in the context of intimate partner violence, researchers have estimated the cost associated with responding to technology-based victimization “to $1,200 compared to $500 for survivors of non-technological abuse.” (YWCA, 2017)
Things That Substitute “Feeding The Troll” While Female Online

- **Having a female name:** A study by the University of Maryland's A. James Clark School of Engineering found that chatroom participants with female usernames received 25 times more threatening and/or sexually explicit private messages than those with male or ambiguous usernames.

- **Expressing an opinion:** Particularly on subjects such as politics, religion and feminism, as seen in higher levels of abuse towards female journalists, bloggers, politicians and activists.

- **Uploading a picture of yourself:** (as demonstrated later)

The only guaranteed way to avoid abuse is **not existing at all**
THE TROLL MYTH

• By calling a person who shares hateful views towards women and girls online a "troll", we're giving them a name we wouldn’t give them in the offline world. This creates the misconception that “trolling”, which involves trying to install fear in women and girls via threats, humiliation and silencing tactics, thereby undermining their agency and right to participate in democratic society, is an online phenomenon. But there are no trolls. What we have are people with sexist beliefs, misogynists who threaten women’s rights online as well as offline.
BOYS WILL BE BOYS
HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS. JUST LIKE GIRLS.
snekistar 1 month ago
Her parents should've drowned her at birth.

stinky_feminists
Sugg my cock · 1 d

nigga6159 Shut up object
4 h 1 like  Reply

jahseh_lovee make me a sandwich
7 h 1 like  Reply
WHEN I SAY SEXTING, I MEAN...

- Consensual sexual communication, often photographs, that depict nudity or have a sexual undertone.
- Sexual texting = sexting.
- 54% of young people in a US study received or sent sexting messages before the age of 18.
- STIR results: A third of teenage girls in Norway send intimate photos to boys they’re dating.
HAVE YOU SENT A PROVOCATIVE PICTURE OR NUDE PHOTO OF YOURSELF TO ANOTHER PERSON USING THE INTERNET?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>8. grade (13 y. old)</th>
<th>9. grade (14 y. old)</th>
<th>10. grade (15 y. old)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>girls</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
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<tr>
<td>boys</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
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WHY DID YOU SEND SUCH A PICTURE? BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO, YOURSELF.

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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boys</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
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WHY DO THEY DO IT?

• Participants mentioned many additional positive aspects of this practice, such as its use as a way to express sexual desire in a consensual relationship (girl, FR); boys, IT, 16, FR, 17, 18, 17), having sexual relationships without the risks of sexual acts in person, obtaining sexual pleasure easily (boy, FR, 17) and, more generally, discovering one’s sexuality (girls and boys, FR, 17 and 18).

• Some girls also mentioned that sending nude photos is a form of initiation into sexual maturity and girls feel pressured into doing it: ‘It’s like a secret society … to be initiated inside you have to like oh send a nude or do this or do that then you’re like a woman or something’ (girl, IE, 15). (Gender equality and youth: opportunities and risks of digitalisation, EIGE, 2018)
WHY DID YOU SEND SUCH A PICTURE? BECAUSE YOU WERE PRESSURED INTO DOING IT.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
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GIRLS EXPERIENCE UP TO SIX TIMES MORE PRESSURE THAN BOYS TO SEND NUDE PHOTOS

WHY DID YOU SEND SUCH A PICTURE? BECAUSE YOU WERE THREATENED AND FELT LIKE YOU HAD NO OTHER CHOICE.

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<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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88% of sexually explicit material takes off when uploaded to the internet

- 17.5% of sexually explicit photos online depict children under the age of 15.
- 7.5% depict children under the age of 10, some as young as 7 years old.
- A growing number of children post such photos, a majority of them girls. (Internet Watch Foundation)
SHARING NUDE/SEXUAL IMAGERY WITHOUT CONSENT

• Nude photos or videos that are distributed without the photographed individuals’ consent.

• ”Revenge porn” is a misnomer, as well as “non-consensual pornography”

• A result of hacking or theft. (Bella Thorne, June. ‘19)

• A result of photos that were shared with consent being forwarded or distributed without consent/knowledge.

• A result of coercion, grooming, blackmail/sextortion or violence.

• It can be taken/filmed without the photographed individual’s knowledge or be the result of digital manipulation.

• Next generation of sexual violence, where all forms of online GBV intersect
Anyone got any pics of this one?

No, gross man, she’s got fucking fat thighs and disgusting calves.

Fucking disgustingly ugly whore, please someone rape her hahahahahahaha!

Wouldn’t rape that filthy skank even if I was a virgin!
WHEN IBSA MEETS DOXXING: A REPUTATION HIJACK THAT CAN LIMIT EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS
FAKES: THE REASON WHY “SIMPLY NOT TAKING NUDES” IS NOT A SOLUTION
In Denmark, 1,152 people are facing child pornography charges for distributing a sexual video of a 15 year old girl without her consent, known as Operation Umbrella.
IN TERMS OF EDUCATION

• EDUCATE CHILDREN ON THE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES THAT COME WITH THEIR CYBER CITIZENSHIP BY PUTTING IT ON THE CURRICULUM IN SCHOOLS. Replace words like “trolling” with words like “hate speech” and “harassment”.

• MAKE MEDIA LITERACY A PART OF THE CURRICULUM (if it isn’t already.)

• MAKE AGE-SPECIFIC DIGITAL SEX EDUCATION A PART OF TRADITIONAL SEX EDUCATION, with an emphasis on consent (if it isn’t already).

• Invest in AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS for parents and wider society IN COLLABORATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS (NGOS, VICTIM SUPPORT GROUPS, ETC.) ABOUT
  • WHAT ONLINE ABUSE / HARASSMENT IS
  • WHAT CYBER CIVIL RIGHTS ARE
  • HOW TO REPORT ONLINE ABUSE / HARASSMENT
  • WHERE SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE CASE OF ONLINE ABUSE/HARASSMENT
IN TERMS OF LOCAL RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS OF ONLINE VIOLENCE

• INVEST IN RESOURCES FOR VICTIMS BY:
  • Strengthening organisations/NGOs/initiatives that offer support services to victims, including psychological help.
  • Maintain a hotline or 24/7 reporting service that can help victims of online abuse, with skilled staff who can react immediately to help stop the spreading of harmful material.
  • MAKE REMOVAL HELP AVAILABLE in the local language for victims of image-based sexual abuse. Removal guides from the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative can be found here: http://www.cybercivilrights.org/online-removal/s
IN TERMS OF LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

• Apply a gender-perspective when writing and adapting existing laws that criminalize all forms of online violence, including re-sharing of harmful content, as well as of threats to do so.

• Criminal and civil causes of action should protect the privacy of victims, avoiding secondary victimization that comes with having their case made even more public.

• Treat Image Based Sexual Abuse as a sex crime and extend anonymity to victims.

• As online abuse consists of cross-border crimes, synchronizing the definitions of online abuse would be helpful in terms of collaborating in the pursuit of perpetrators, swapping best practices and conducting international comparisons.

• Ensure effective regulation on internet intermediaries that prohibit any forms of violence against women, in accordance with local law and international treaties. Hold social media platforms to account when it comes to preventing and removing online abuse.

• Equip law enforcement with the funding, technical equipment, knowledge and manpower needed to effectively handle cases of online abuse.
IN TERMS OF SYNERGISING TREATIES AND COLLECTING DATA

• **The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and additional protocol (2001)** Three articles of the Budapest Convention can apply to cyber violence against women, including article 4, 5 and 9.

• **The Istanbul Convention (2017)** Several articles of the Convention can be applied to the specific topic of digital violence, including articles 33, 34 and 40.

• **The Lanzarote Convention:** The Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse requires criminalization of all forms of abuse against children, including online abuse.

• Image-based sexual abuse could fall under the **GDPR provision** on “processing of personal data” and would consequently trigger application of the Regulation. The individual responsible for uploading image-based sexual abuse material as well as the publisher of such material could be considered joint data controllers, and hence fall under the obligations and sanctions imposed by the GDPR.154

• **The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)** includes the possibility to develop legislation on violence against women in the framework of judicial cooperation. (source: Cyber violence and hate speech online against women, European Parliament’s Policy Department for Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs)

• Last but not least: Both the **Istanbul Convention** and the **Victims’ Rights Directive** require Member States to report statistical data and to produce gender-disaggregated data on cyber violence and hate speech.
THANK YOU!

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