

Digital Sexual Violence Among University Students in Ecuador: A Socio-Technical Analysis of Perceptions, Risks and Social Media Use

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Abstract

Digital sexual violence is one of the most severe and currently on-the-rise forms of online aggression, which has led many victims to further revictimization, in addition to being a social problem with inadequate intervention by the authorities. For this reason, the research question of this study was whether or not the youth population of the city of Loja was aware of this type of violence, as well as to assess the importance they placed on this issue. Qualitative methods were used to collect data: first, a literature review, and second, a semi-structured interview administered to 60 university students. One of the main findings was that young people lack a clear understanding of what this type of violence is, how it occurs, and its risk factors, which makes it difficult to identify and subsequently report. As a result, the main conclusion is that young people's perceptions tend toward tolerance of digital sexual violence, as well as a lack of awareness regarding this type of violence.

Keywords

Violence, Human rights, Social media, Perception, Education

1. Introduction

Gender-based violence has been, par excellence, one of the longest-standing and most frequently addressed social problems throughout history; however, even though victories have been achieved, a gap of inequality and a latent threat of a rollback of guarantees and rights still persist, due to two distinct characteristics: it is universal because no state can claim it does not fight against it, and it is particular because, although violence exists worldwide, it does not manifest in the same way [1].

As a key area of interest in understanding how and why it manifests, the United Nations General Assembly [1] developed a series of risk factors in an attempt to explain and understand certain patterns that may or may not predict scenarios of violence; as such, this research has taken as a reference these classifications across five levels: at the individual level, at the couple and family level, at the community level, at the societal level, and at the state level.

Gender-based violence stems from structural violence, and according to [2], it is rooted in a sex-gender system reinforced by stereotypes and gender roles that, in turn, adapt to contexts, individuals, and even the media. It would be a mistake to view gender-based violence as an individual problem; on the contrary, it must be treated as a collective issue, and social intervention strategies must focus on diverse settings and contexts, such as the technological sphere [3]. Thus, we are currently witnessing the spillover of violence from the physical world into the virtual world, where the victims are still predominantly women and girls [4].

This new type of violence was already on the radar when the United Nations General Assembly [1] predicted that violence against women could extend to other spaces such as the internet, and

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twelve years later, the Human Rights Council recognized and established a new category of “online gender-based violence”. However, this type of violence presents various challenges; one of them is that the terminology and typology are not consistent across authors and studies, so the terms or titles may vary [4, 5, 6]. For this reason, the terminology used in this research will be “digital sexual violence,” as it will address online assaults with a purely sexual connotation.

The Taller de Comunicación Mujer [5] has defined digital sexual violence as follows: It refers to harassment, threats, assault, defamation, or extortion of a sexual nature and/or for sexual purposes. It includes acts that affect the victims’ free exercise of their sexuality, including those that may have been consented to through intimidation and manipulation to achieve a specific outcome.

For this reason, digital sexual violence seeks to humiliate, denigrate, threaten, and control its victims [7]; but what sets it apart is the degree of obscurity it entails, as it is a form of violence that is difficult to mitigate. Online attacks offer various advantages, such as anonymity, the creation of fake profiles, and the difficulty of completely removing the material from the internet, in addition to sensationalism and constant revictimization [8]. Victims face devastating consequences in various areas, including physical, psychological, and even economic; aftereffects such as depression, anxiety, fear, guilt, and shame are some of the feelings they experience, driving them to leave their place of study, home, or work to escape the harassment and mockery. Even more devastatingly, some victims resort to harming themselves [9].

As mentioned in the typology, there is no consensus, but the most common types of digital sexual violence include: non-consensual pornography (deepfakes), online sexual harassment, sexual defamation, sextortion, and the dissemination of non-consensual intimate material [4, 5]. Given that online harassment, sextortion, and the dissemination of non-consensual intimate material are the most recurrent forms, they have even come to constitute a *modus operandi* [7, 10].

This research complements other documentary studies by examining the presence or absence of this type of violence among young people through a field study to gather their perceptions, thereby laying the groundwork for future qualitative and quantitative research. This is why the central question guiding this study is: How do university students perceive digital sexual violence, and how are these perceptions related to their use of social media and the socio-technical characteristics of digital platforms?

Hence, this research is guided by the following general objective: To analyze university students’ perceptions of digital sexual violence and their relationship with social media use, digital risk factors, and the socio-technical characteristics of online platforms; and from this, two specific objectives have emerged: first, to identify risk factors for digital sexual violence among university students, and second, to investigate the level of knowledge university students possess regarding digital sexual violence.

Through a review of the literature, empirical, and theoretical knowledge, the hypothesis of this article is based on the premise that there is a lack of awareness regarding this new form of violence, which prevents victims from fully grasping the severity of the assaults, much less taking action against them, thereby creating a cycle of normalization and impunity surrounding these incidents. Consequently, this would create a link with certain risk factors such as normalization, stereotypical attitudes, and a sexist system, among others.

2. Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, grounded in the subjectivity of social issues such as digital sexual violence; thus, it aims to gather real and natural information on the perception and importance of this issue in the university world [11]. To this end, three methods were used: first, a literature review of national and international studies and research, with the aim of identifying established parameters and existing gaps in knowledge [12].

As a second method, field research was conducted; following Sanca Tinta’s theory [13], a case study was chosen to theorize and understand each response and stance in greater detail. Finally, qualitative field research was conducted through semi-structured interviews to explore participants’ perceptions and experiences in depth [12, 14].

This semi-structured interview was based on a script of 19 questions covering three categories: 1. use of social media, 2. perception of digital sexual violence, and 3. risk factors: a) at the individual level, b) at the couple and family level, c) at the community level, d) at the societal level, and e) at the state level. This script was validated by legal and psychology professionals at the Centro Integral Violeta “Acción Feminista por la Paz” in the city of Loja. At the suggestion of experts in gender-based violence, it was recommended that the interviews be conducted individually, using both in-person and virtual modalities, with Google Meet serving as the tool for the latter.

Since the sample is a subset of the population [11], the population was defined as the 3,050 students of the Faculty of Education, Art, and Communication (FEAC) at the National University of Loja [15], and the sample was determined to consist of 33 fifth year education majors and 36 eighth-cycle students, for a total of 73 participants; however, 60 properly recorded interviews were obtained, as 13 university students expressed a lack of interest in participating, privacy, confidentiality, and informed, signed consent were ensured at all times.

To protect the confidentiality of the participants, each interview was assigned a sequential alphanumeric code ranging from P01 to P60, where “P” stands for “participant.” These codes were used when presenting excerpts from the interviews. Information regarding the participants’ gender and academic level was retained in the analytical database but omitted from the identification codes to minimize the risk of indirect identification. Throughout the study, the term “participants” is used to refer to the college students who took part in the interviews.

Since we used the Google Meet platform to record each virtual interview, we also utilized the automatic transcription feature offered by this tool. Subsequently, each response was manually reviewed to ensure accuracy and correct any potential inconsistencies. To process the information, a matrix was created in Microsoft Excel, where each response was organized and categorized by question block.

Through multiple readings and iterative analyses of the matrix, patterns, convergences, and divergences were identified in the participants’ accounts, which allowed for the coding and selection of the most significant and representative responses for each question and category, prioritizing the protection of sensitive data.

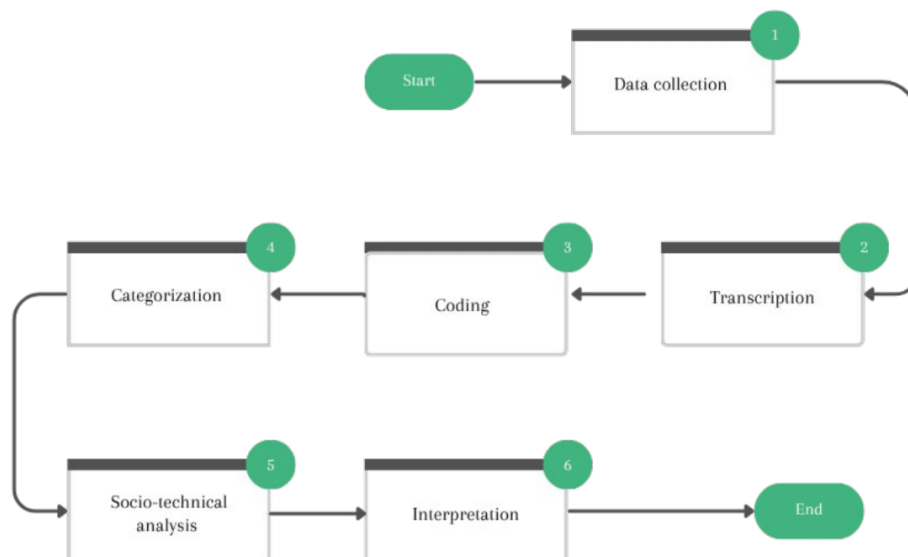


Figure 1: Flowchart showing the methodology steps from data collection to interpretation.

3. Results

3.1. First Category: Use of Social Media

It was found that all interviewees use social media, with WhatsApp, TikTok, and Instagram being the most common; some people also mentioned Facebook, and very few mentioned using X and YouTube. They use these social media platforms for communication, entertainment, and sharing content.

3.2. Second Category: Perception of Digital Sexual Violence

Responses regarding the first encounter with the concept of digital sexual violence were divided into three groups. First, a significant number of students stated that this topic was entirely new to them and that they knew nothing about it. A second group indicated they were aware of some basic issues, attempting to connect or link related topics.

“What I know is that, well, it’s a type of sexual act, I mean, where photos or videos are sent without the other person’s consent (...)” (P03).

On the other hand, a third group remained unaware of the topic; however, as the interview progressed, they recounted experiences—either their own or those of others—that constituted this type of violence, though they were unable to recognize the act as aggression or their status as victims.

I haven’t heard of digital violence (...) at school, though, of course, I did hear about a close case where intimate photos of a classmate were leaked by her ex-partner” (P10).

This indicates that digital sexual violence exists in the participant’s context, as their testimonies support this premise, demonstrating that the dissemination of non-consensual intimate material is the most common form.

“Yeah, when people start harassing others online—like, they know how to ask for racy photos, so to speak—or if that person already has them, they start telling the other person, “I have these photos of you, and if you don’t give me what I want, I’m going to post them.” I know of a case involving a friend; she trusted her partner and sent him intimate photos, and when they broke up, he said he was going to share them” (P56).

On the other hand, some interviewees recounted their own experiences as victims of digital sexual violence.

“Several years ago, you could say, listen, a friend of mine had gone to do her homework at an internet café and had forgotten to log out of her Facebook account, and some person with bad intentions had taken advantage of that and posted messages promoting sexual things and all that—that caused her problems later on” (P53).

“Well, it’s happened to me, you know? Like, online—for example, on TikTok—someone uploads a video or something like that, sends messages, I don’t know, a little risqué. So I think most of us women go through that—where they always try to harass us just for the simple fact of uploading a photo, I don’t know, in a bikini or a swimsuit” (P13).

3.3. Third Category: Risk Factors

3.3.1. At the Individual Level

a) **Age:** Participants identified being young or a teenager as a risk factor because this population may be more “manipulable” and “inexperienced” due to a lack of digital responsibility and caution, as well as excessive use of social media.

“In my opinion, it’s young people and children, since they lack experience; parents don’t teach them about using social media, and schools don’t instruct them on how to use these platforms appropriately either. So they don’t know how to apply or use them properly. That makes young people and children more vulnerable” (P51).

b) **Gender:** Most interviewees identified women as the group most likely to be victimized due to the sexualization of the female figure, voyeurism, and stereotypes.

“These days, I think it’s mostly women, honestly, because sometimes there are cases where you meet people—men, especially—who, based on my own experiences, try to overstep boundaries, sending messages, photos, and everything that might make a woman feel uncomfortable” (P55).

Interestingly, other perspectives also emerged, where while women are still viewed as a vulnerable group, there is also concern about the potential invisibility or minimization of men’s experiences as victims.

“Yes, I do think so. It’s not that only women are victims; men can be victims too, because aggressors don’t have a gender. So, women just as much as men can hurt others” (P06).

- c) **Past Experiences of Violence:** Regarding the influence of having been a victim of a past episode of violence as a risk factor, participants commented that this situation depends on each individual, since while feelings such as distrust, fear, guilt, shame, and depression may surface after a violent incident, the truth is that the victim’s character and subsequent decisions may or may not lead to a new experience of violence.

“I think that, well, it might be true in some cases, but not in others, because it’s possible that from that experience they’ve become, let’s say, aware of what could happen if it were to occur again, but in other cases, they might have been left, I don’t know, traumatized, or something like that, and they don’t feel equipped to handle similar situations that might happen to them, so they might repeat those actions again” (P40).

On the other hand, the interviewees also focused on how the victim might adopt a more defensive attitude in order to avoid another instance of aggression, but in that regard, it was emphasized that sometimes this isn’t enough, since issues like anonymity and fake profiles create an environment conducive to aggressors continuing their violence.

“As I said, anonymity already helps the person hide behind their cell phone and allows them, well, let’s say, to communicate with the other person multiple times by creating various accounts. Therefore, let’s say, even when the person has tried to stop a certain harasser, it can still happen again” (P31).

3.3.2. At the Couple and Family Level

- a) **Socioeconomic Status:** Some interviewees did not consider this parameter a risk factor for digital sexual violence, while others did view it as such because they link it to education—specifically digital education and the digital divide.

“I think so, because, I mean, well, because a person who doesn’t have this—I mean, who has fewer resources—has less access to digital education, right? So, I think that having less knowledge” (P03).

“Uh, yeah, I think so. So, let’s say it’s a person with limited financial resources— well, I mean, they won’t have, say, for example, a phone or a computer to be able to participate in social media” (P18).

On the other hand, socioeconomic status was linked to the decision that forces some people to sell explicit content on digital platforms.

“I’d say partly yes, because, I mean, there are people who choose to use social media to share content with the intention of making some money, that is, for financial gain, but that would be more a matter of choice, or of course, it also happens in cases where they may have been victims of harassment or threats and blackmail” (P24).

- b) **Family Support and/or Involvement:** We explored the role of family participation as support for the victim in their process of coping with this experience, to which all participants affirmed that this family support is especially important for the stages of recovery, but also for the early stages of prevention.

“The family has a big influence, because of how we were raised—sometimes they normalize the idea that a person, let’s say, has to endure violent situations and all that in order to have a good marriage and keep it together” (P41).

But, of course, an open and trusting dialogue with the family is not something everyone can attempt or have, so it becomes a gap in many cases.

“The family has a significant influence since they are, let’s say, the closest people a person has to turn to, but, well, whether it’s because of the cultures or customs within each type of family, that differs a

bit because there are certain types of families where these topics aren't discussed and simply aren't brought up, and people don't tend to be able to talk about them, but in other types of families there is an opportunity to talk about it, so there's also an opportunity to improve that, to seek help as such" (P15).

3.3.3. At the Community Level

- a) **Normalization, Tolerance, and Justification of Violence:** Regarding the tolerance and justification of digital sexual violence, participants stated that this does not happen within their family circles; however, it does occur among their friends, and alongside the normalization of this type of violence, it appears disguised in jokes, pranks, or comments such as “that girl is being harassed because she’s asking for it” or “it’s her fault for letting herself be recorded.”

“I believe this issue is still very much present today because, fundamentally, the most common forms of violent behavior stem from sexist ideas that normalize control, pressure, and the objectification of women’s bodies. And that leads some people to believe they have the right to ask for photos, to harass, to share content without permission, as if it were normal. And I see that more in men, from my perspective” (P10).

But a group of interviewees doesn’t see telling these jokes as something worrisome or serious.

“Well, in my family circle, I mean, sometimes it happens, but not that much. I mean, the jokes, the gossip—I don’t think they’re seen as serious anymore, but, I mean, it’s not like it goes beyond attitudes of digital sexual violence” (P19).

However, some interviewees expressed a unique perspective on the normalization of violence against men specifically.

“I’ll give an example in this case regarding men. Violence against men is normalized. Why? Because, well, certain men—I could include myself—have a fear, so to speak, of telling other people what’s happening to us. Why? Because there’s already this stereotype that men can endure anything” (P05).

- b) **Gender Inequality and Machismo:** Some interviewees indicated that they believe society is no longer sexist because today both men and women have the same rights and opportunities.

“I don’t think society is macho or that gender inequality exists, because as you can see, the mayor is the one currently leading our city, so we women already have a little more authority and power to do the things we want and not depend on others” (P06).

Another viewpoint maintained that society is and continues to be sexist, but at the same time expressed a rejection of the feminist movement.

“Well, I think so, yes, it is sexist. I’m not saying this because I’m a feminist or anything like that, but there are men who, perhaps because they want women to do what they want, simply impose themselves on a woman and expect her to do everything they say. I think this happens in family settings, and also in social settings” (P50).

- c) **Harassment and Bullying of Victims of Digital Sexual Violence:** In a hypothetical example involving the leak of a sexually explicit video featuring a man and a woman, participants were asked who would face the most harassment. Their responses, consistent with previous findings, indicated that the woman is the most likely to be targeted, while acknowledging that the man may also suffer repercussions, though not to the same extent.

“In this case, obviously, uh, the woman is going to be the one who receives the most harassment. And this is where machismo comes in because the man is going to view it with pride. On the other hand, the woman is going to be completely denigrated; she’s going to be the one who’s going to suffer harassment, the one who’s going to be harassed; she’s going to receive all kinds of harassment, even threats” (P17).

3.3.4. At the Societal Level

- a) **Gender Stereotypes and Roles:** The participants have a clear understanding of this topic; thus, the most frequently mentioned stereotypes regarding women were that they must be submissive, domestic, demure, loyal, and discreet; on the other hand, a man should be a provider, strong, impulsive, and not express his feelings.

“From what I know, regarding both men and women: in the case of men, who are expected to be strong and the head of the household, they must suppress or set aside their feelings for the sake of their family; in the case of women, who are seen as a bit more sensitive, they are expected to have the gift of listening and offering advice” (P45).

Since there is a belief rooted in a stereotype that women should be more demure than men regarding their sex lives, there were some very interesting positions and opinions where, for example, people agreed with this for the sake of prevention.

“Yeah, yeah, I agree with, like, what’s it called? Well, women are, let’s say, more prone to, you know, other people doing, like, what’s it called, bullying and all that stuff, I mean, just because of the simple fact of, let’s say, whether or not they’ve had sex” (P18).

And there was also a group of people who disagreed with this statement, pointing out that it is based on sexist ideals of inequality and stereotypes.

“I think it’s unfair and unequal, mostly because, I mean, it’s like the simple fact of saying that women should be demure is like a form of injustice and inequality. Why not say that to a man? Why impose more control? So I think this amounts to a double standard, doesn’t it? Where sexual freedom is more accepted in men than in women, because, I mean, women are criticized more, and it’s the woman who’s to blame. So I think this idea that women should be demure contributes to the normalization of digital violence, because women would be suffering more digital sexual violence” (P19).

In this regard, it was determined that gender stereotypes and roles negatively influence victims of digital sexual violence; for example, when intimate videos are shared on social media and the media coverage gains significant traction, particularly in messages and comments directed at women such as “slut,” “easy,” “doesn’t command respect,” etc., whereas comments directed at men tend to be flattery or compliments. The consequences of digital sexual violence are devastating for victims, many of whom have to resort to various measures to mitigate the harassment and abuse. The consequences of digital sexual violence are devastating for victims, many of whom are forced to resort to various measures to mitigate the harassment and abuse.

“In the case of a friend of mine, they really hurt her in the end; she even left that little town, went off to study elsewhere, and to this day she hasn’t come back because people always see her and point at her, saying she’s a slut and things like that” (P28).

3.3.5. At the State Level

- a) **Perception of the Ecuadorian Justice System:** The vast majority of interviewees have not had any contact with state institutions, but those who have had such experiences describe the processes as overly bureaucratic, lengthy, tedious, corrupt, and inconclusive, so their perception of the credibility and trustworthiness of the justice system and its officials is quite weak.

“Yes, my experience was very overwhelming; it’s really scary, especially because of what people will say, how embarrassing it is, or that they won’t do anything, or they’ll look at me strangely, or they won’t believe me. So you just file the report, and as always, they just take it, review it, make a call, take a statement, but since there’s no evidence or maybe too much time has passed, then that’s where it ends” (P20).

The lack of empathy, human sensitivity, and a commitment to service on the part of some officials was also mentioned, which, in many cases, leads to revictimization.

“Yeah, well, it was mine. It was for the child welfare case, which was child abuse. And it’s very tedious because to collect evidence, they have to take photos of you. And as a girl, you feel very vulnerable and don’t know what’s going on. I think they should be a little more flexible or empathetic in those situations, because it’s like what they tell the girl: ‘Take off your clothes, just wear your underwear’ so they can take the photos as evidence of the abuse. I think in that regard it is very cruel to a girl. And the trial, well, unfortunately, they even—even there in court they end up downplaying a blow, an act of abuse, a shove, a slap, and as for evidence, they’ve downplayed the bruises” (P56).

Similarly, the perception of the usefulness of current laws and legal processes in Ecuador aligns with the previous responses, most of which state that while the enactment of laws is fine, their implementation is not, meaning there is no clear connection to justice.

“I think that, if they exist, well, simply because laws exist, one could say we’re protected against these kinds of cases, but there’s also the other side of the coin, which is how those laws are enforced and how they’re applied. I think there’s a shortcoming there as well, when it comes to applying those laws” (P25).

- b) **Awareness of the Criminalization of Digital Sexual Violence and the Implementation of Public Policies:** The vast majority of interviewees stated that they did not know that digital sexual violence was already a crime in Ecuador; and the few people who were aware of it learned about it through social media.

“Of course, I did see in the media that, sadly, in recent years it has been considered a crime” (P17).

Furthermore, the data shows that the interviewees have not participated in campaigns, workshops, classes, or training sessions on the prevention and reporting of digital sexual violence, unlike with other, more contemporary forms of violence. Finally, their messages on preventing digital sexual violence are part of a comprehensive educational approach, including digital education, enforcement of laws, and mental health recommendations.

“Well, the message I would give is that to protect oneself and prevent sexual violence to some extent, I consider it important to set clear boundaries and not normalize any behavior that makes you uncomfortable, whether in physical or digital spaces. It is also important—and I believe it is essential—to inform oneself about one’s rights and protect one’s privacy, especially on social media, and to seek support from trusted individuals or institutions if something were to happen” (P13).

4. Discussion

This research has corroborated the initial hypothesis regarding a lack of awareness and the normalization of digital sexual violence, based on the most significant findings. First, it confirms that women are the most vulnerable group to have experienced digital sexual violence, because all the reported experiences involved women as victims in various settings and contexts, but also because they are exposed to structural violence rooted in stereotypes of a patriarchal society where responsibility does not fall on the perpetrator, but on them. This finding is consistent with the observations of Gómez Cruz [16], who identified that structural inequalities and sexism in matters of violence were prevalent among both men and women, and this type of violence is no exception.

On the other hand, there is a form of digital power over women’s bodies that fosters their sexualization; the research by Salazar Aguilar et al. [17] concluded that women who are exposed to public life are direct targets of digital sexual violence. In this study, several interviewees indicated that they received obscene comments and propositions for posting photos on social media, turning social media into a hostile environment. However, another key finding of this research is men’s stance regarding a potential downplaying of their experience as victims and their discomfort with being labeled as innate aggressors. This premise is supported by the theory of Palta Velasco and Restrepo Rodríguez [18], who emphasize that anyone can be a victim, as well as by the study of Frezzotti [10], who demonstrated that both men and women commit acts of aggression in the virtual world. In light of this, it is important to emphasize that digital sexual violence affects anyone regardless of sex or gender; however, due to structural violence, women will face the most severe repercussions, and this does not diminish the importance of both groups receiving public prevention policies.

Second, a lack of awareness and ignorance regarding digital sexual violence was evident; however, the participants’ accounts revealed real cases of sexual extortion, digital sexual harassment, and the non-consensual dissemination of intimate material. These patterns were also highlighted by Martínez Bacaicoa et al. [6] and Frezzotti [10]. This lack of awareness leads people to be unaware of their rights and the contexts in which they operate, which in turn fosters impunity regarding this crime; in several testimonies, participants stated that they did not know what to do, much less that these assaults had legal implications.

As a third point, regarding risk factors, the most prominent parameters in this study were young age, gender, previous experiences of violence, socioeconomic status, and the normalization of violence; regarding the latter, Del Petrel and Rendón Patoja [2] and Salazar Aguilar et al. [17] found high rates of

normalization of digital sexual violence, as well as the presence of stereotypical comments and attitudes; similarly to this study, a sexist stance was evident in many encounters, as participants supported stereotypical notions and made comments that placed the blame on the victim.

Finally, the interviewees reflect a declining level of trust in the Ecuadorian justice system and its institutions, meaning that turning to them is not one of the first options victims would choose, thereby reinforcing the cycle of impunity. According to Andrade Perdomo [7], the scarcity of protective measures, lack of data, and support from officials—combined with a lack of empathy, efficiency, and transparency in processes—leads to deficiencies in comprehensive reparations for victims. Thus, like Fuentes and Muñoz [19], it is argued that Ecuador’s legislative progress on digital sexual violence has been considerable, but insufficient to meet the demands and needs of victims. On the other hand, it is important to address the limitations of this research, starting with the study’s approach and sample size, which, as such, do not provide a broad representation or allow for universal generalizations regarding perceptions of digital sexual violence; therefore, with full awareness of this, the objective was to delve deeper into the selected sample. Second, the information and experiences shared by the participants reflect a specific temporal and sociocultural context; consequently, the findings are subject to bias with respect to these factors and the two items described above.

Table 1

The Relationship Between Technological Characteristics, Associated Risks, and Manifestations of Digital Violence.

Technological feature	Associated risk	Manifestation of violence
Anonymity	Difficulty identifying the perpetrator	Harassment and threats
Fake profiles	Identity theft	Deception, extortion, and recruitment
Viral spread	Rapid spread of content	Revictimization
Digital persistence	Difficulty removing information	Long-term harm
Screenshots and forwards	Loss of control over content	Non-consensual sharing
Recommendation algorithms	Increased public exposure	Sexual comments and harassment
Private messaging	Invasive and repeated contact	Digital sexual harassment

5. Conclusion

This research study demonstrated that digital sexual violence is an emerging problem among university students, yet they lack awareness of the issue, making it difficult for them to recognize when they are being victimized or when such attacks are occurring, as well as to identify available support and reporting channels. The presence of risk factors such as the normalization of violence, stereotypes, and gender roles, and the requires social intervention through education for their eradication. Meanwhile, risk factors related to mistrust and a lack of credibility in the justice system fall under the jurisdiction of state authorities.

Furthermore, it is concluded that women are the most vulnerable group to becoming victims of digital sexual violence and are more likely to receive hateful, sexist comments that blame them for the assault, based on the sexualization of female bodies. However, it was also evident that the male population can also be victims of this type of violence and that there is a risk that their experience as victims could be minimized. Similarly, this research has identified that the issue of digital sexual violence has not been a priority in public prevention policies, as students have not received any information on this type of violence. This constitutes a failure on the part of the State and highlights the urgency of establishing networks and programs that disseminate information and create a knowledge network capable of raising awareness and providing training regarding digital sexual violence.

Declaration on Generative AI

The authors have not employed any Generative AI tools.

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