

# A Study On Online Sextortion Which Targets Students On Higher Education

Sub-title: Bullying And Cyberbullying

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## ABSTRACT

Sextortion is a serious problem in this online pandemic era. It's a type of blackmail, in which someone threatens to share or publish private, sensitive material unless you send them sexually explicit images, perform sexual favors, or demand them money. With the growing use of social media apps by the youth leading to the increase of online sextortion. This is due to the lack of awareness about this crime in our society. The study was conducted in higher educational institutions. Also we focus on the psychological effects of victims through this kind of crime. The use of social media apps and their awareness about this crime and also the psychological impacts are explained in detail using statistical data.

The focus of this research is to calculate how many students are the victims of this crime without even knowing the traps. The result of this study is that many of the perpetrators are not aware of this term "Sextortion". But in other ways they are getting harassed. This serious crime doesn't have a particular section to punish the culprits. Many of the cases are still hidden under the dark webs. Victims should raise their voice against this. By this research study many of the victims can come out from this also many will get aware about these crimes.

Keywords: Sextortion, Online, Cybercrimes, Victims, Psychological impacts.

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## Introduction

### Sextortion

Sextortion is a malicious online crime whereby cyber criminals threaten to distribute or 'make viral', private, sensitive and sexually explicit material pertaining to the victim if he is not furnished with sexual favours, images of a sexual nature or money (Yadav, 2022)

### Evolution of sextortion

From 2006 to 2022, extortion has incarnated into the following four avatars, Sextortion is a serious problem in this online pandemic era. It's a type of blackmail in which someone threatens to share or publish private, sensitive material unless you send them sexually explicit images, perform sexual favours, or demand money. The growing use of social media apps by the youth has led to an increase in online sextortion. This is

due to our society's lack of awareness about this crime (Yadav, 2022).

**First gen Sextortion 1.0:** Primarily women were victims perpetrated by estranged lovers who threatened to release their intimate pictures as 'revenge porn'. Primitive recording devices were used.

**Second gen Sextortion 2.0:** Fake profiles of attractive girls were created by male scammers and a make-believe world was created with use of technological tools like voice modulation apps, which converted male voice into female voice over VOIP calls. Money mule bank accounts (bank accounts opened with forged documentation), were used to demand ransom, sexting over WhatsApp followed by strip video calls were used to honey trap victims.

**Third Gen Sextortion 3.0:** The male extortionists started employing and training beautiful girls to entrap victims during this phase. This groundbreaking development catapulted sextortion to an organized crime syndicate status. Money mule bank accounts were supplanted by cryptocurrency wallets, which provided a higher degree of impunity and anonymity.

**Fourth Gen Sextortion 4.0:** Innovative, latest and pioneering phase. 'Deep-fake' and 'Deep-nude' technologies have ensured that anyone can be made a victim of sextortion without he/she indulging in any sort of online sexual talk or misdemeanour.

In this project, the first part is related to the study on sextortion that targets students in higher education. Then to find new online methods on this sextortion, and to know about the psychological effects of students by this act. It is pertinent to note that the internet never 'forgets and forgives' and its reach and spread is lightning fast and enormous. Our young generation with impressionable minds should be groomed to ensure that they should never indulge in lewd video calls. If a stranger blames a rush to develop intimacy, alarm bells should ring. The racketeers need to be reported and fearlessly brought to justice. (Yadav, 2022)

### ***Research Question***

1. To find how much students are targeted for online sextortion and psychological impact on them?

### **Objectives On Online Sextortion**

1. A study on sextortion, the new online offence that targets students.
2. To find how many students are the victims of online sextortion in this pandemic online era.
3. To know how the victims are psychologically affected and what are public solutions regarding this.

### **Material And Methods**

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Self-structured questionnaire is distributed via hard copies to the students of higher institutions of coimbatore. It is a self-structured questioning sheet of general information and the data needed for the research study.

#### **Sampling Method**

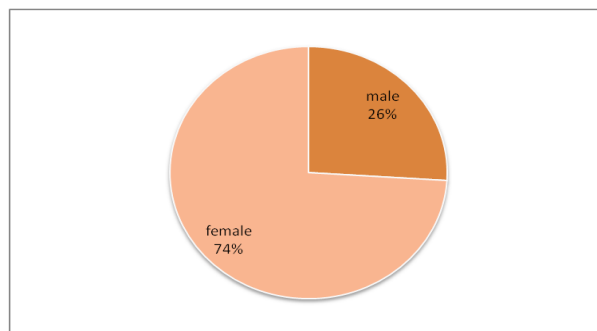
Purposive random sampling method . This method is used in this study as it totally depends upon the will and wish of the respondents.

#### **Sample**

Students of higher education institutions of coimbatore, TN.

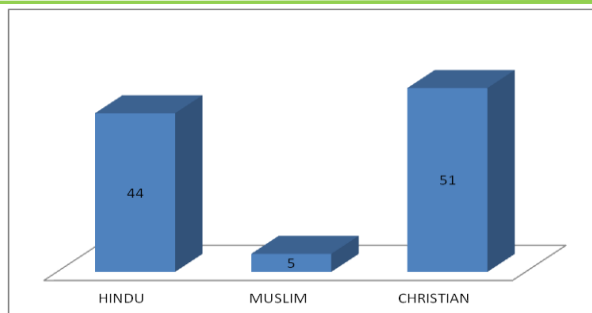
### **Results**

#### **Part 1: GENERAL INFORMATION OF THE RESPONDENT**



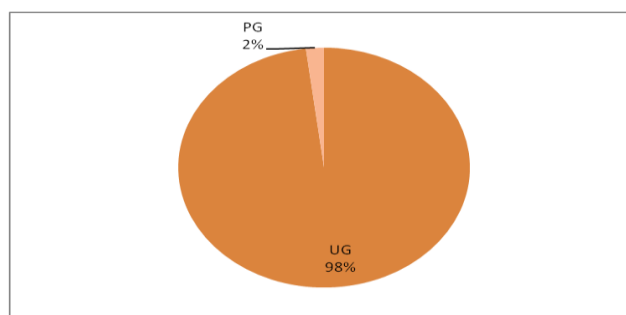
**Figure 1** Gender description of the respondent

The above diagram shows the percentage of our respondents on gender basis. 74% is of female respondents and 26% is of male respondents.



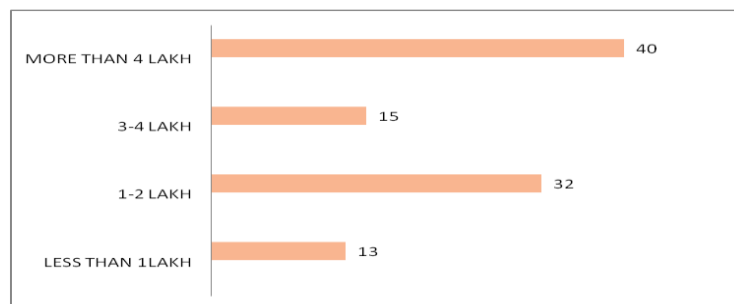
**Figure 2 Religion**

The above bar diagram depicts the percentage of the respondents as per religion, 51% of respondents belongs to Christianity, 44% of respondents belongs to Hinduism and 5% of the respondents belongs to Islam.



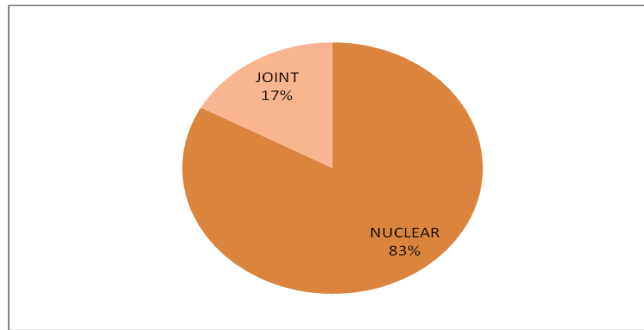
**Figure 3 Education**

The above pie diagram depicts the percentage of students that are doing UG and PG currently. Mostly we collected the data from UG students (98%), and the minor part was from PG students (2%).



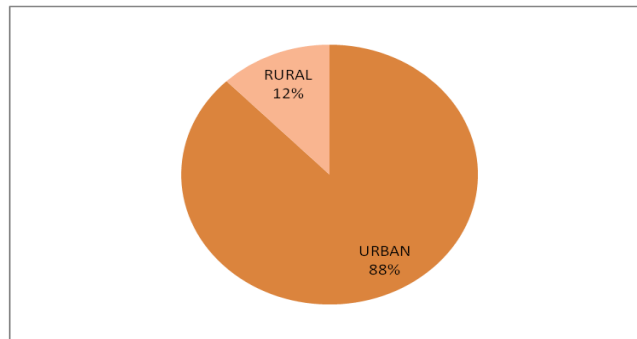
**Figure 4 Annual Income**

The above bar diagram depicts the annual income of each respondent. 40% of the respondent's family have an annual income which is more than 4 lakhs, 32% have 1-2 lakhs per annum, 15% of them have 3-4 lakhs per annum and 13% of the respondent's family income is less than 1 lakh..



**Figure 5 Family Type**

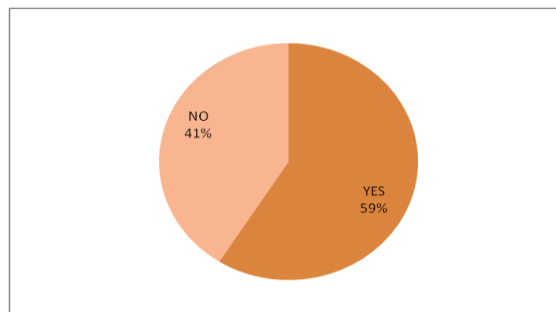
The above pie diagram depicts the family type of respondents. 83% of the respondents were from the Nuclear family and 17% were from the Joint family.



**Figure 6 Nativity**

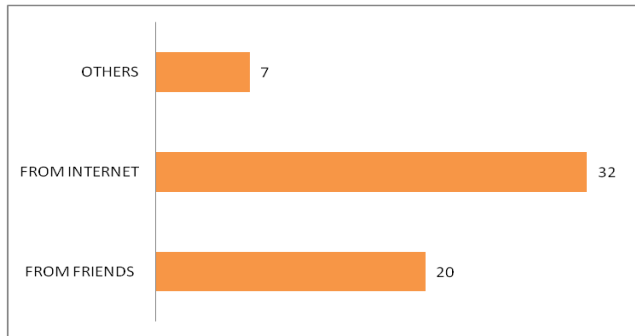
The above pie diagram depicts the Nativity of each respondent. 88% of respondents are from Urban and 12% are from Rural.

***PART 2: OBJECTIVE ONE, A STUDY ON SEXTORTION, THE NEW ONLINE OFFENSE THAT TARGETS ON STUDENTS***



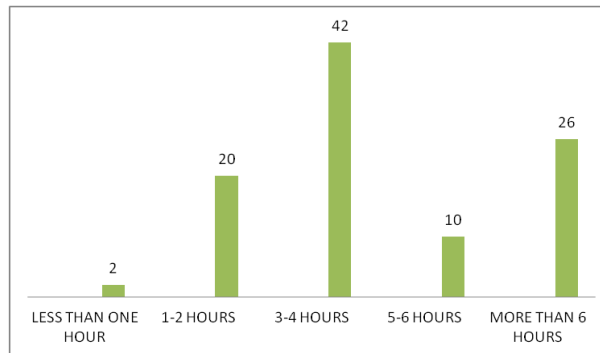
**Figure 7 Have You Heard About The Term Sextortion?**

According to the responses we got, 59% of the respondents have heard about the term Sextortion and the rest of the 41% have not heard.



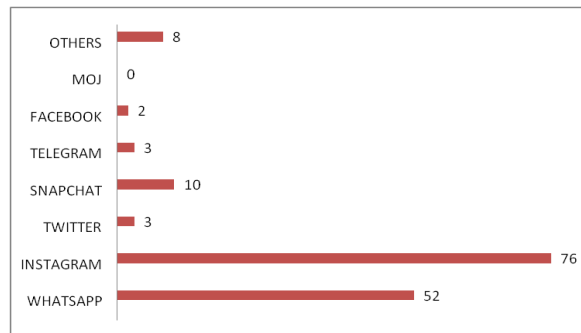
**Figure 8** *If Yes, From Where You Got To Know About This Term?*

From this diagram we can see 33% of the respondents got to know about the term sextortion from the internet, 19% of them know this from their friends and 12% of them got to know from other sources.



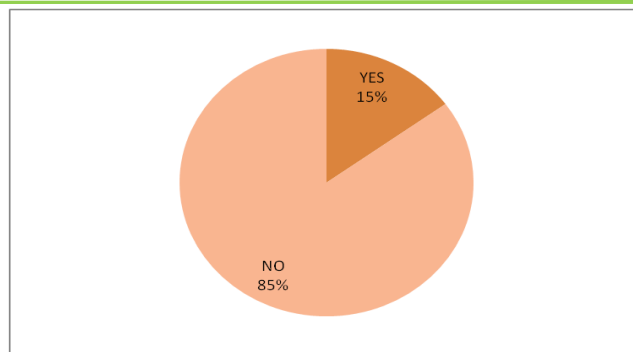
**Figure 9** *How Much Time Will You Spend Online?*

According to the responses we got so far, 42% of the respondents are spending 3-4 hours online per day, 26% of them are spending more than 6 hours a day, 20% of them are spending 1-2 hours a day and 2% of them are spending less than 1 hour per day.



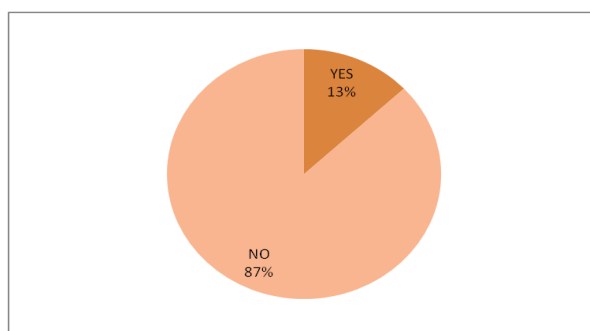
**Figure 10** *Which Social Media Application Are You Using The Most?*

According to the responses we got, 76% of the respondents are using Instagram the most, 52% are using Whatsapp the most, 10 of them using Snapchat the most, 8% of them are using some other social media application the most, 3% of them using Twitter the most, 3% of them using Telegram the most and 2% of them are using Facebook the most.



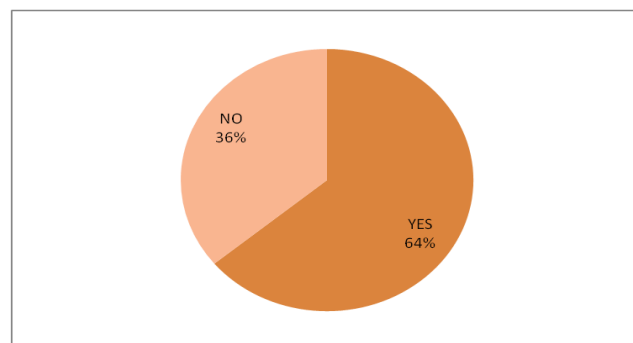
**Figure 11** *Will You Accept The Request From Strangers On Social Media?*

According to the responses we got, 85% of the respondents will not accept the request from strangers on social media and the rest of the 15% of the respondents will accept the request from the strangers on social media.



**Figure 12** *Have You Ever Texted First To Strangers?*

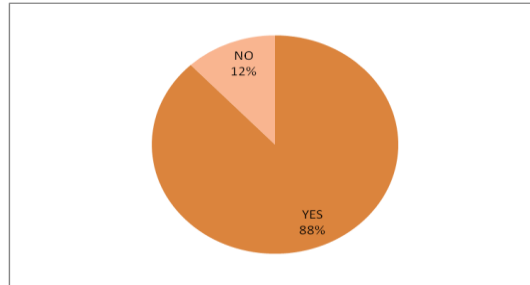
According to the responses we got, 87% of the respondents had never texted first to strangers on social media and the rest of the 13% of the respondents had texted first to strangers.



**Figure 13** *Are You Interested In Posting Of Your Pictures In Social Media?*

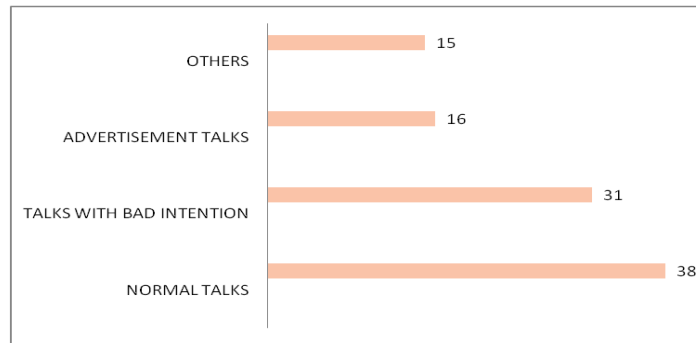
According to our responses, 64% of the respondents are interested in posting their pictures on social media, and the rest of the 36% are not interested.

**PART 3: TO FIND HOW MANY STUDENTS ARE THE VICTIMS OF ONLINE SEXTORTION IN THIS PANDEMIC ONLINE ERA**



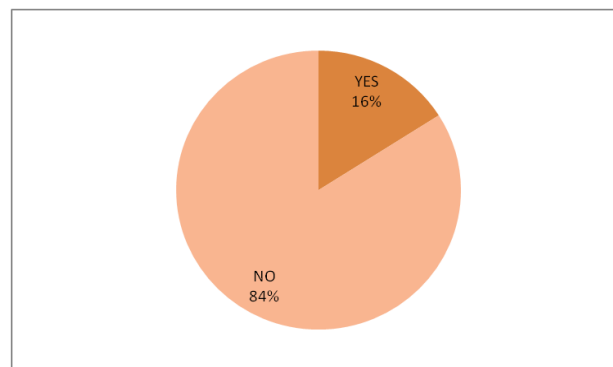
**Figure 14** *Have You Ever Gotten Texts From Strangers On Social Media?*

According to the responses we got, 88% of the respondents have gotten texts from strangers on social media, and the rest of them have not gotten any texts from strangers.



**Figure 15** *If Yes, What Kind Of Messages Have You Received?*

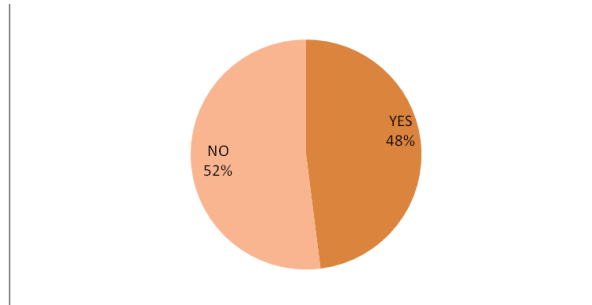
According to the responses we got, 38% of the respondents have gotten texts like normal talks, 31% of them had received the texts with some bad intention, 16% of them have gotten texts in the advertisement manner, 15% of them had received some other kind of text.



**Figure 16** *Will You Download Pictures Or Videos That Are Sent By Strangers?*

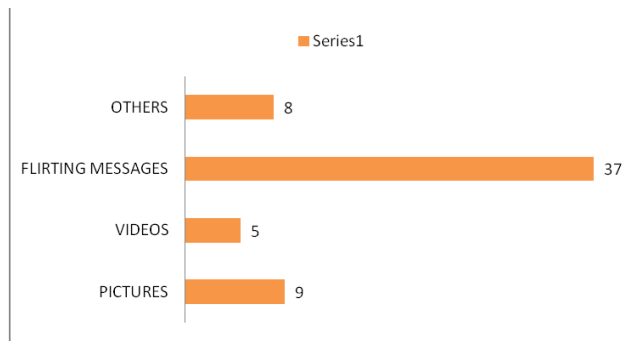
According to the responses we got, 84% of the respondents will not download the pictures or videos that are sent by strangers, and the rest of the 16% will not download them.





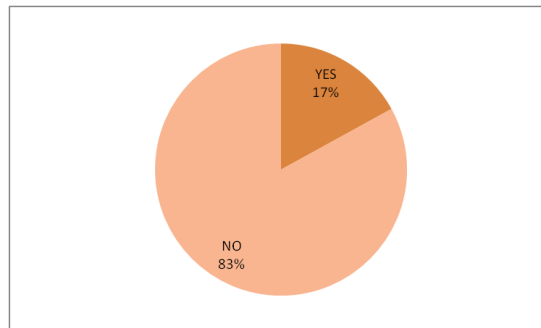
**Figure 17** *Have You Ever Received Any Messages From Anyone With Bad Intentions?*

According to the responses we got, 48% of the respondents had received messages from someone with bad intentions, and the rest of the 52% had never received any text with the bad intentions.



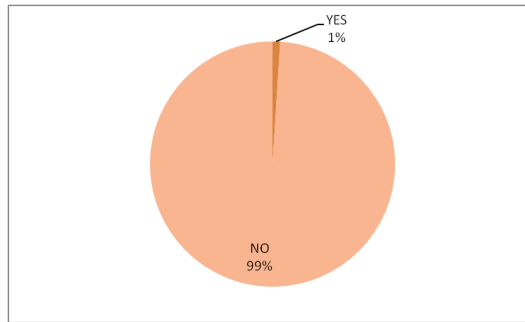
**Figure 18** *If Yes, What Type Of Message Did You Receive?*

According to the responses we got, 48% of the respondents had received messages from someone with the bad intention, so in the total of 48%, 37% of them had received Flirting messages, 9% of them had received pictures, 8% of them had received messages with bad intentions in some other manner, and rest of the 5% of them had received videos.



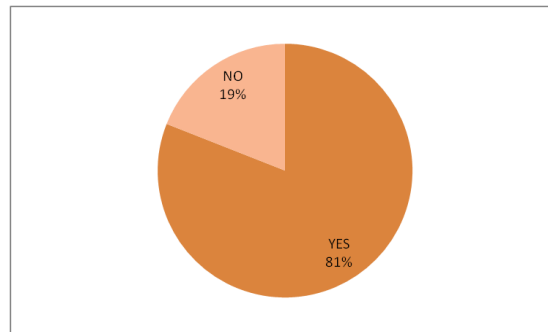
**Figure 19** *If Anyone Close To You Asks For Your Personal Pictures, Will You Share It Through Social Media?*

According to the responses we got, 83% of the respondents had responded that they'll not share their personal pictures to someone through social media, and the rest of the 17% responded that they'll share their personal pictures through social media.



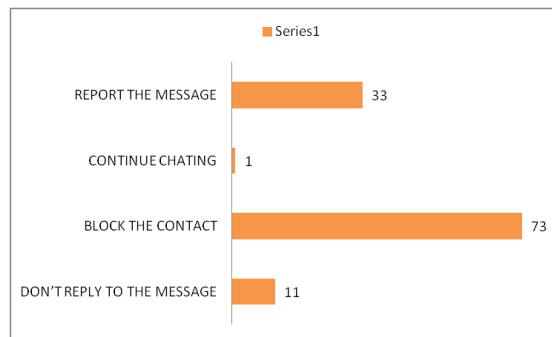
**Figure 20** *Are They Blackmailing You With Your Personal Pictures?*

According to the respondents from the diagram only 1% is blackmailed through social media. 99% are the respondents who are not blackmailed through any social media.



**Figure 21** *HAVE YOU FELT UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THAT KIND OF ACT?*

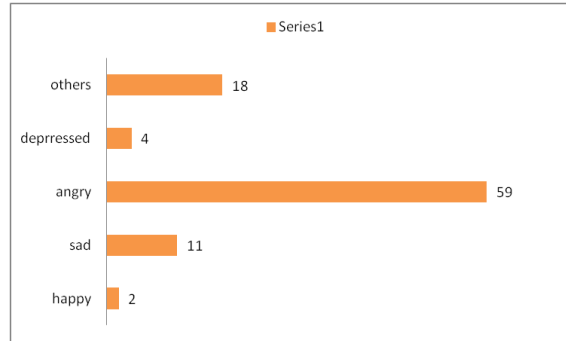
According to respondents 81% of them are feeling uncomfortable with these kinds of acts and messages. 19% of the respondents feel no worries by such kinds of acts through social media.



**Figure 22** *After You Feel Discomfort By That Kind Of Message, What Will Be Your Act?*

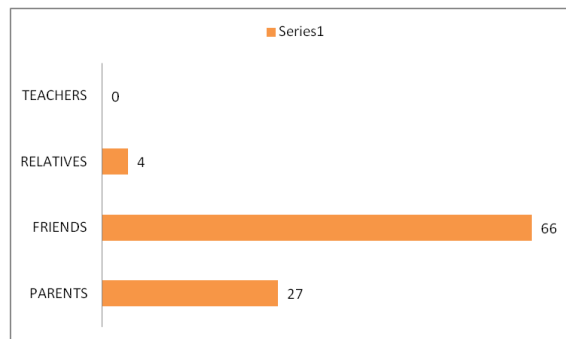
According to the respondents 73% will block the contact immediately, 33% of the respondents will report the message quickly, 11% will never reply to the messages and 1% still continue the chatting. By this we can see that most of them take proper action when these kinds of situations happen.

**PART 4: TO KNOW HOW THE VICTIMS ARE PSYCHOLOGICALLY AFFECTED AND WHAT ARE THE PUBLIC SOLUTIONS REGARDING THIS**



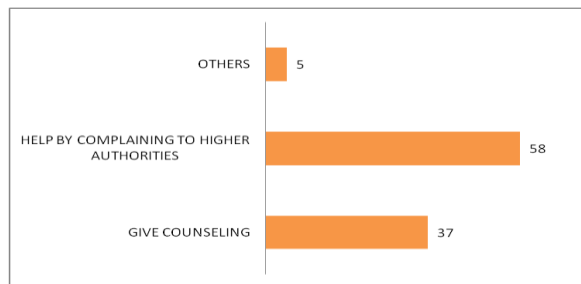
**Figure 23** *If Someone Is Making Bad Comments Such As Jokes Or Remarks On You What Will Be Your Reaction?*

According to the respondents 59% of them got angry and 18% had some other reaction. 11% of the respondents will be sad, 4% get depressed and 2% are happy, when bad texts are received.



**Figure 24** *If Someone Is Making A Bad Comment On You, To Whom Would You Share This First?*

According to respondents, if someone makes a bad comment on them, 66% of them will share it with their friends, 27% will share it with their parents and 4% of them will share it with their relatives.



**Figure 25** *When Your Friends Face This Problem, What Will You Do?*

When the respondent's friends face problems like getting bad comments, 58% of them will help their friends by complaining to the higher authorities, 37% of them will give counseling, and the rest of the 5% will help their friends in some other way.

## **Discussion**

In this Online era we found many students using many kinds of social media apps, such as Instagram, twitter, facebook, whatsapp, snapchat, telegram etc. Some of them are sharing their personal information through these apps and some of them are keeping their personal information private. By this study we came to know that many of them don't know the term Sextortion. Sextortion scams sometimes begin with seemingly innocuous contacts on social media or dating services. The victim will eventually be forced to transmit obscene photographs, get naked on camera, or perform sexual actions while on video by the offender. The photographs and videos that result can then be kept for ransom (Ligget, et. al., 2020).

By our study we also came to know that some respondents are unknowingly being the victim of a small kind of online sextortion. But many of them are aware of privacy but some of the respondents have an "I don't care" mindset. Still females are getting more victimized in this online sextortion other than men.

## **Conclusion**

The main purpose for this research study entailed investigating the dynamic between engaging in sexting behaviours and sextortion among emerging adults. What lay at the study's core encompassed examining emerging adults' experiences to uncover if and how they endure psychological distress from the phenomenon.

Hence, sextortion is a serious crime and one should take it seriously. If one has been a victim of sextortion, he/she must report it immediately so that legal proceedings can start soon after the incident. One must follow the safety precautions mentioned earlier to save oneself from extortion. After analyzing different legal provisions related to sextortion, one may note that there is still a long way to go before we get equipped with handling such complex technical crimes. One can easily find loopholes in our legal machinery due to the lack of any specific definition. Our constitution must grant us various fundamental rights that run parallel with the changing society. Society should also gain a new perspective instead of ostracizing the victim. If we keep silencing the victims, naming and criminalization will never take place (Hong & Jimenez, 2020).

All societal members such as adolescents, young adults, mental health professionals, law enforcement, criminal justice system, and policymakers would likely reap benefits. Informing diverse members would open the eyes of society to a phenomenon that may have unnoticeably affected a significant number of individuals in a harmful manner. Research of this caliber could make a positive impact on society as a whole. Bringing sextortion to the forefront and

disseminating data throughout various channels would ensure social order and change (Patchin & Hindhuja, 2020)

The study's main conclusions can be presented in a short section, which should present the results achieved in the study, which science gap was able to contribute, the limitations of the research, the expected findings and unexpected findings, if any, and suggestions for future studies.

### Limitation and Suggestions

1. The research may be used by students and researchers about online sextortion in Coimbatore.
2. The study helps for the awareness of new-generation students about crime.
3. The research may help for the new implications of laws to the lawmakers.
4. The study analyzes the psychological impacts of victims and helps the future researchers.
5. This study helps the students to be alert, those who are poor in the field of online sextortion.

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### Web Links From research articles,

1. [\*Sextortion: the new online sexual offense that's targeting men \(abc4.com\)\*](#)
2. <https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=sextortion+case+studies&qpv=sextortion+case+studies&FORM=VDRE>.
3. <https://www.casequiz.com/facebook-sextortion-73890/>
4. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/sextortion-cybersecurity-teenagers-and-remote-sexual-assault/>
4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/india-becoming-sextortion-capital-of-the-world/>
5. <https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=2&ik=65c22ece97&attid=0.1&permmsgid=msg-f:1727547555028162203&th=17f97b592e0c569b&view=att&disp=inline&realattid=17f97b5447b47d762e51>