

Power, Credibility, and the Politics of Recognition in Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV)

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Abstract

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV) is often discussed in terms of its forms and prevalence, while less attention is given to how it is recognised, believed, or dismissed in digital spaces. Credibility in these contexts is not neutral, but shaped by how harm is interpreted and by the social conditions in which it is communicated. This work draws on Stuart Hall's theory of representation, which explains how meaning is produced through language and framing and how this shapes what is understood as real or credible, and Harding's Feminist Standpoint Theory, which argues that knowledge is socially situated and that women's lived experiences are an important but often marginalised source of understanding violence and power. Within this framing, TFSV can be understood as contributing to forms of women's erasure. As harm is dispersed across digital platforms, it becomes harder to name, evidence, and collectively respond to. This fragmentation disproportionately affects women, queer persons, activists, and women human rights defenders, limiting visibility and constraining collective forms of resistance. These patterns are reinforced through gendered norms, institutional practices, and dominant ways of interpreting harm, which shape whose accounts are trusted and whose are questioned, minimized, or ignored. Together, these dynamics influence how TFSV is acknowledged within digital environments and whether it is acted upon or dismissed. Focusing on credibility and recognition positions TFSV as a matter of harmful content or behavior, and also as a question of how experiences of violence are made legitimate and comprehensible in digital spaces.

Keywords

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV), women, online safety

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