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Technology's Role in Facilitating Violence and Aggression in Dating and Intimate Partner Relationships

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People increasingly rely on technology for many of their interpersonal interactions and indeed, the number of people meeting their sexual or romantic partners online has risen exponentially. Although there are tremendous benefits that come from this increased ease of connecting with others, there are also a number of opportunities for misuse of technology to harm others. Little is known about how these misuses might be manifested specifically in relation to dating and intimate partner relationships. There is the potential for technology to facilitate indirect aggression in these interactions, which could potentially progress to direct, physical and sexual aggression, and violence. Thus, research efforts need to improve our understanding of peoples' experiences as victims and perpetrators of a variety of types of aggression and violence facilitated by technology and how these types relate to one another.

This research project aims to begin to fill this gap in the literature by examining the extent to which technology is used to facilitate aggression and violence in dating and intimate partner relationships. In order to do this, an anonymous survey was administered to a sample of 245 community participants. The prevalence rates of aggression and violence facilitated through the use of technology in dating and intimate partner relationships was higher than expected. It was also found that there was a high level of overlap between perpetration related to dating applications, in intimate partner relationships, and in cyber-obsessional pursuits.

This research project aims to create an improved understanding of those who perpetrate and are victimized through technology facilitated means. Ultimately, this information could be used to inform prevention efforts and provide better support for individuals who have experienced these forms of victimization.

Rebecca Fisico has completed her Bachelors degree majoring in Forensic Psychology and minoring in Criminology and Justice at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT). During the year of 2018, she took a year off and has gained research experience at two mental health hospitals within Ontario, Canada. Starting in September 2019, she will be pursuing her Masters in Forensic Psychology at UOIT. Her research focus is on delving into little known world of dating applications and exploring the prevalence of perpetration and victimization on this platform. Due to the preliminary nature of this research she hopes to add to the limited literature on this topic and begin to better understand what occurs on, and off these applications. She hopes to use her education and research initiatives to help facilitate positive change within the world by informing new prevention efforts, improvements in policy, as well as, systemic change.