

**Comparing Characteristics of Senders and Non-Senders of Unsolicited Sexual Images**

Rebecca Fisico, BA (Hons)  
Leigh Harkins, PhD  
Ontario Tech University

The sending of unsolicited sexual images (USI), often referred to as “dick pics” and “nudes,” has become a hot topic online within recent years. A USI is a digital image that contains sexual subject matter, often a naked body in full or in part, that is sent to an unsuspecting or non-consenting recipient using technological means. This behaviour could be considered a form of technology-facilitated sexual violence, and it has been theorized that sending USIs may be the online manifestation of exhibitionism. Despite these concerns, academic research examining the act of sending USIs and the characteristics of those who send USIs remains scarce. Thus, research efforts need to begin to expand our knowledge and understanding of this reportedly widespread phenomenon.

This research project aims to address this gap in the literature by examining if those who report sending USIs differ significantly from non-senders. The primary analyses involve comparing senders of USIs to non-senders with regards to demographic and personality characteristics, as well as their history of engaging in sexual perpetration behaviours, particularly exhibitionism. To do this, an anonymous survey was administered to community participants via social media in a snow-ball sampling manner.

This study provides insight into the characteristics of those who send USIs and considers whether this behaviour does indeed overlap with traditional forms of sexual offending, like exhibitionism. Future directions include conducting a similar study with people who have committed sexual offences, as well as examining the impacts USIs have on recipients.

**Rebecca Fisico** completed her Bachelor’s degree majoring in Forensic Psychology and minoring in Criminology and Justice at Ontario Tech University (OTU). She is currently in the process of completing her Master’s in Forensic Psychology at OTU. Rebecca has worked at two mental health hospitals in Ontario, Canada and gained invaluable research experience at both. Her current research interests include technology-facilitated sexual violence, technology-facilitated intimate partner and dating violence, and dating applications. She hopes that her research initiatives will encourage people to have conversations about important, but sometimes uncomfortable topics, as well as inform prevention efforts, treatment, and policy change.