

25 - 26 April 2024

Venue

SALÓN DE ACTOS, ESCUELA TÉCNICA SUPERIOR DE INFORMÁTICA,
UNIVERSITAT POLITÈCNICA DE VALÈNCIA, VALENCIA (SPAIN)

1st International conference

Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Online Child Protection

Two days of interdisciplinary and cross-professional presentations and conversations designed to **advance research on online child protection**.

Hosted at the Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia (Spain), the Cross-disciplinary Approaches to Online Child Protection Conference brings together participants working on ensuring that children are and feel safe online across academia, civil society, and government.

This international conference provides a space for cross-disciplinary researchers in fields including linguistics, law, criminology, sociology, psychology, education, and computer sciences to connect with child safeguarding practitioners and policymakers, collaboratively addressing children's digital wellbeing and safety.

In addition to oral presentations and interactive workshops, the conference offers extensive networking opportunities including round tables and a conference dinner.

Research areas included:



stoponsexgroom



DAY 1

Thursday 25th April

9:30 – 9:45 OPENING SESSION: Academia, institutional representatives

9:45 - 10:45 PLENARY SESSION

NURIA LORENZO-DUS (Swansea University, United Kingdom)

From linguistics research to scalable technology for child protection: A focus on online child sexual exploitation and abuse

Chair: Carmen Pérez-Sabater (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Coffee break

PANEL 1 (11:15-12:30)

CHAIR: Enrique Carbonell (Universitat de València)

Hanna Lahtinen (University of Eastern Finland) & Anna Ovaska (Protect Children Finland)

Exploring disparities among dark web child sexual abuse material users: Self-reports of offenders

Sergio Maruenda (IULMA/Universitat de València) & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

News narratives of child sexual abuse in the UK press: A corpus-informed approach to the discursive construction of newsworthiness

María José Garrido (Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad) & Neus Mascaró (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

Ciberviolencia de género en mujeres menores de edad

Marc Salat (Universitat de Lleida)

La IA como herramienta útil en la investigación policial y judicial de delitos de sex grooming

PANEL 2 (12:30-13:30)

Chair: Enrique Carbonell (Universitat de València)

Omar Abdedaim Herrera (Universitat d'Alacant)

Understanding online sexual contact with minors: A case law study

Virginia Soldino (Universitat de València)

Descriptive analysis of online child sexual grooming cases investigated by Spanish law enforcement agencies

Andrea García-Montes (Universitat Politècnica de València), Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University) & Carmen Pérez-Sabater (Universitat Politècnica de València)

“pero me debes una por los regalos”: Exploring CSAM solicitation in online child sexual grooming interactions

Lunch break (cafeteria la Vella)

15:15 - 16:15 PLENARY SESSION

CAROLINA VILLACAMPA (Universitat de Lleida, Spain)
Grooming and sexting: Spanish criminal policy versus data

Chair: Javier Guardiola (Universitat de València)

16:30-17:45 ROUND TABLE

Chair: Marc Salat (Universitat de Lleida)

*Challenges of and opportunities in integrating insights from different research areas into
child safeguarding practice:
Perspectives from academia, law enforcement and policy making*

Participants:

Santiago Escobar (VRAIN, Cátedra INCIBE, Universitat Politècnica de València)

María José Garrido (Dirección General de Coordinación y Estudios, Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad, Ministerio del interior)

Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

Ethel Quayle (University of Edinburgh)

Paolo Rosso (ValgrAI, Universitat Politècnica de València)

Carolina Villacampa (Universitat de Lleida)

18:45-20:00 CULTURAL EVENT

Visit to the [Arts Centre Hortensia Herrero](#)
Palau de Valeriola, C/ del Mar 31, 46003 Valencia

20:30 CONFERENCE DINNER

[Le Marquis Restaurant – Hotel Boutique Inglés](#)
C/ del Marques de Dos Aigües 6, 46004 Valencia

DAY 2

Friday 26th April

9:30 - 10:30 PLENARY SESSION

ETHEL QUAYLE (University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom)

Technology-assisted sexual abuse: Digital tools for psychological approaches to managing distress and reducing further victimization

Chair: Virginia Soldino (Universitat de València)

Coffee break

PANEL 3 (11:00-12:30)

Chair: Andrea García-Montes (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Thuy Nguyen Vo, Berta Franch Martínez & Jorge Piqueras (Universitat Internacional de Catalunya)

Recursos terapéuticos en línea para usuari@s de material de explotación sexual infantil: el proyecto STOP-CSAM

Silvia Sempere Faus (Universitat Catòlica de València)

El acceso a la justicia de las personas menores de edad ante la violación de sus derechos en el entorno digital

Craig Evans & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

Investigating child resistance and groomer counter-resistance in online grooming interactions

Eva Mestre-Mestre (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Exploring criminal intent: A corpus pragmatics analysis of explicit language and emotion in online sexual grooming

Ruth Mullineux-Morgan & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

'it's made me feel sad and confused. im scared to go to school and i feel humiliated and ashamed': Children's discourse about their experiences of being groomed online

12:45-14:00. ROUND TABLE

Chair: Sergio Maruenda (IULMA/Universitat de València)

Protección del menor en entornos educativos y de prevención: estrategias y realidades

Participants:

Gloria Bonet Moreno (IES Benlliure)

Rubén Fernández Bleda (Oficina Proyectos Europeos Policía Local de Valencia)

Esmeralda Llorca (Direcció General d'Innovació i inclusió Educativa, Secció Igualtat, Convivència i Compensació de desigualtat, Generalitat Valenciana)

Teresa Martínez Peral (Fundación ANAR)

Alejandra Ramírez González (Instituto de derechos humanos, Universitat de València, Proyecto europeo EDUCAP: Multiplying educational capacities to combat sexual violence against children)

Joaquín Sanz de Galdeano Armero (Inspección Educativa)

Closing Ceremony: 14:00

Venue

Salón de actos de la Escuela Técnica Superior de Informática, building 1H (Universitat Politècnica de València).

Bus: numbers 18, 93, 40 and 19

Metro Valencia: line 4, stop Universitat Politècnica



Committees

Conference Convenor:

Carmen Pérez-Sabater (Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain)

Organising Committee:

Andrea García-Montes (Universitat Politècnica de València)

Sergio Maruenda Bataller (IULMA/Universitat de València)

Marc Salat Paisal (Universitat de Lleida)

Virginia Soldino Garmendia (Universitat de València)

Scientific committee:

Enrique Carbonell Vayá (Universitat de València)

Jan Chovanec (Masaryk University)

Craig Evans (Swansea University)

Manuel Gámez Guadix (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

María José Garrido Antón (Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad, Ministerio del Interior)

Javier Guardiola García (Universitat de València)

Malin Joleby (Karolinska Institutet)

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Paolo Rosso (Universitat Politècnica de València)

María Sánchez-Vilanova (Universitat de València)

Kathryn Seigfried-Spellar (Purdue University)

Teresa Martínez Peral (Fundación Anar)

Plenary speakers

Nuria Lorenzo-Dus is Professor of Linguistics at Swansea University, Wales, UK. She specialises in using Linguistics methods, synergising them with methods from other Social and Computer Sciences, to develop ethically responsible and scalable technology to counter technology assisted child sexual exploitation and abuse. Her research has benefitted from substantial funding from government and charity organisations globally.

She is the author of several books, including a 2023 monograph titled *Digital Grooming: Discourses of Manipulation and Cybercrime* (Oxford University Press) and over 80 journal articles and book chapters in English and Spanish. She has received distinguished teaching awards and visiting professorships internationally. Prof. Lorenzo-Dus currently leads a research programme – Project DRAGON-S that brings together interdisciplinary research and practitioners from across the global to develop, evaluate and scale up technology to detect and prevent online sexual harassment between children and online child sexual grooming.

Carolina Villacampa is full Professor of Criminal Law and Victimology at the University of Lleida (Spain), where she has been teaching since 2002, when she became a senior lecturer. She has been director of the Department of Public Law and secretary general of this academic institution, where she currently acts as director of the Master's Degree in criminal justice system. Since September 2022, Prof. Villacampa chairs the Law area of the Spanish State Agency of Research (AEI). She also acts as coordinator of the Victimology working group of the Spanish Society of Criminology. She obtained the Catalan Government ICREA Award in 2022 in recognition to her research activity. She is one of the most outstanding specialists in criminal law of her generation, being the sixth most cited researcher in Spain in the field of criminal law, procedural law and criminology, and the third by her h index according to Dialnet metrics.

She has participated in 25 national and international research projects, having coordinated 13 of them. She has authored or co-authored around 200 national and international scientific publications, both in Spanish and English, dealing with the general and special part of criminal law, as well as victimological and criminal policy issues.

During the last decade, her research has focused on gender-based violence, human trafficking, legal policy on prostitution, online victimisation of minors and recognition of victim rights.

Ethel Quayle is Professor of Forensic Clinical Psychology in the School of Health in Social Science at the University of Edinburgh. A clinical psychologist who has worked with both sex offenders and victims, for over 20 years she has researched technology-mediated crimes against children, collaborating internationally with government and non-government agencies in the context of research, policy and practice.

Recent EU-funded research examined the function of coercive and non-coercive self-produced sexual images, NSPCC-funded research on deterrence of online sexual offending and current NIHR-funded research, i-MINDS, a digital intervention for OCSA victims. She plays an active role in a number of UK Home Office and Scottish government organisations.

Abstracts

1. Plenary conferences

Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

From linguistics research to scalable technology for child protection: A focus on online child sexual exploitation and abuse

Language – including words and other semiotic (e.g. image-based) means – is a key vehicle for the sexual exploitation and abuse of children in digital environments, whether this be in grooming, paedophile community or child-to-child sexual harassment contexts. This presentation will start by demonstrating how conducting sophisticated language analysis adds unique value to research-informed efforts at countering online child sexual exploitation and abuse (O-CSEA). It will then describe the integration of language analysis with both AI and participatory research methods, leading to the development and testing of technology for countering O-CSEA. Two such technologies will be discussed in detail. First, an online grooming content classifier that supports prioritization work by, and improve welfare within, police forces. Second, an online training platform that supports child safeguarding practitioners' prevention and support work with children (at risk of) being groomed. The presentation will conclude by reflecting on lessons learnt and opportunities taken throughout the journey from linguistics research to the development of scalable technology for child protection.

Carolina Villacampa (Universitat de Lleida)

Grooming and sexting: Spanish criminal policy versus data

The incrimination of behaviours such as consensual sexting and grooming is a consequence of a punitive criminal policy originating in the United States in the 1980s, which permeated supranational European regional instances such as the Council of Europe and the European Union. This led both the Lanzarote Convention and Directive 2011/93/EU to require the criminalization of online sexual solicitations to minors. Such criminal policy, grounded in the notion that the widespread use of information and communication technologies has led to an exponential increase in online sexual and gender-based

violence, does not always correspond with what is deduced from empirical data, at least regarding online sexual solicitations. In this presentation, alongside reflecting on the appropriateness of this type of criminal policy applied to cases of grooming and sexting, the effectiveness of the legal-penal regulation of these behaviours in Spain will be assessed in light of the results of a quantitative investigation conducted with adolescents.

Ethel Quayle (University of Edinburgh)

Technology-assisted sexual abuse: digital tools for psychological approaches to managing distress and reducing further victimization

There is growing evidence that Technology Assisted Sexual Abuse (TASA) represents a serious problem for large numbers of children and many clinicians struggle to understand and address this abuse. To date, there are very few evidence-based interventions available to young people after they have been exposed to this form of abuse, and in most countries access to support services remains a challenge. Digital tools such as smartphones have the potential to increase access to mental health support and may provide an opportunity for young people to both manage their distress and reduce the possibility of further victimization.

2. Papers

Omar Abdedaim Herrera (Universitat d'Alacant)

Understanding online sexual contact with minors: A case law study

The present research aims to conduct a jurisprudential study on child grooming with the purpose of obtaining child pornography (article 183.2 of the Penal Code), in order to comprehend its incidence and phenomenology. To achieve this, the study proceeds with a prior statistical contextualization of national official data and a review of minimal empirical investigations. It then delves into the analysis of 30 resolutions issued by our courts on this matter between 2015 2023.

The main findings align with the consulted data and studies, revealing the consistent growth of this offense. Additionally, it outlines the profile of the perpetrator, characterized by being male, of legal age, and without a criminal record. On the other hand, offenders typically target victims aged between 12 and 14 of both sexes, often employing flattery techniques or creating a false profile to establish trust. In some cases, coercion is used to obtain pornographic material.

In conclusion, a prevention plan is proposed targeting professionals, parents, and young people to mitigate the risks associated with these types of sexual practices on the internet.

Craig Evans and Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University)

Investigating child resistance and groomer counter-resistance in online grooming interactions

The manipulative nature of online grooming means that when children resist groomers it is rarely a simple matter of them needing to say 'no'. In this study, we investigate what they do say, or more precisely, how they say it, addressing the question: How do children use language to resist groomers in online grooming interactions, and what challenges do they face when doing so, specifically, the interactional challenges represented by groomers' communicative counter-resistance?

We identified 150 samples (conversation fragments) of child resistance in approximately 80 chatlogs representing online grooming between an adult and a child, provided by UK Law Enforcement. We analysed the samples, then identified and quantified types of child resistance based on politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and impoliteness (Culpeper, 2011). In the passage of interaction following each instance of child resistance, we also identified and quantified types of groomer response to resistance (primarily counter-resistance) based on emergent patterns. Finally, using a third of the samples, we created a visualisation depicting the types of resistance and counter-resistance in the order in which they occur in each conversation fragment, the purpose of this being to consider the dynamics of resistance and counter-resistance.

This study reveals that children produce a similar amount of impolite and polite resistance. Positive impolite resistance (e.g., evading, rebuffing or expressed disinterest), represents

relatively non-confrontational resistance that is favoured over twice as often as negative impolite resistance (e.g., expressing contempt or blocking) which is more face targeted. Negative polite resistance, primarily apologising, minimising imposition and using hedges and questions, is notably less frequent than positive polite resistance, which mostly involves giving reasons, making offers (e.g., compromises) and expressing sympathy or concern.

In 81% of the samples, groomer responses to child resistance were found to represent counter-resistance. Five main types of counter-resistance, 'Pleading/Negotiating', 'Arguing Against/Rejecting', 'Emotional Manipulation', 'Not Acknowledging', and 'Joking Around', were identified, with the first four occurring a similar amount, reflecting the diverse tendency of groomers' tactical response to child resistance. The visualisation created in this study revealed the complex and unpredictable nature of child resistance / groomer counter-resistance dynamics, though within that evidence of non-obvious patterns that warrant further research.

References:

- Brown, G. & Levinson, P. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., Evans, C., & Mullineux-Morgan, R. (2023). *Online Child Sexual Grooming Discourse*. Elements in Forensic Linguistics.
- Lorenzo-Dus, N., Kinzel, A., & Di Cristofaro, M. (2020). The communicative modus operandi of online child sexual groomers: Recurring patterns in their language use. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 155, 15-27.

Andrea García-Montes (Universitat Politècnica de València), Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (Swansea University), and Carmen Pérez-Sabater (Universitat Politècnica de València)

“pero me debes una por los regalos”: Exploring CSAM solicitation in online child sexual grooming interactions

According to Crisp data insights (see WeProtect Global Alliance's Global Threat Assessment 2023), it takes an average of 45 minutes to lock a child into a high-risk online grooming interaction within a social gaming environment. This includes groomers' requesting child sexual abuse material (CSAM), which is the focus of this presentation. Specifically, we report and discuss the findings of a study of the discourse of, and around, groomers' first CSAM requests. This is important given the link between obtention of coerced 'self-generated' sexual material and both sextortion and barriers to child disclosure (Webster et al., 2012; Lorenzo-Dus & Mullineux-Morgan, forthcoming).

Our study approaches online grooming as a two-way interaction practice between a child, who is never to be blamed, and an abusive adult, the groomer (Lorenzo-Dus, 2023; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2023). The data comprises 70 digital sexual grooming chat logs in Spanish

(103,396 words and 27,500 messages). We identified the number of CSAM requests per chat log and their location therein. We also conducted a detailed discourse analysis of the first CSAM request sequence per chat log. This included drawing upon speech act theory (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Lorenzo-Dus, 2023) to identify the level of in/directness in the requests head act and facework in any accompanying support moves. The analysis also examined children's facework in the request sequences.

Our results show a mean of 5.8 (SD=5.2) groomer requests before CSAM is first sent. Groomers favour direct requests (58%), which they support with strategic use of politeness and impoliteness. As for children's use of facework in these request sequences, the analysis shows that it generally consists of positive politeness (78%). In 80% of the cases, CSAM is not sent immediately upon it being requested, and children give reasons for not sending it. From an applied research perspective, our findings may be used to inform ongoing development of targeted interventions against digital sexual grooming for professionals with child-safeguarding roles.

References

- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. & Kasper, G. (1989). The CCSARP coding manual: Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, and G. Kasper (Eds.), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*, pp. 273-294. Ablex.
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- Webster, S., Davidson, J., Bifulco, A., Gottschalk, P., Caretti, V., Pham, T., Grove-Hills, J., Turley, C., Tompkins, C., Ciulla, S., Milazzo, V., Schimmenti, A. & Craparo, G. (2012). European online grooming project. Final report. European Commission Safer Internet Plus Programme. <https://europeanonlinegroomingproject.com/wp-content/uploads/European-Online-Grooming-Project-Final-Report.pdf>

María José Garrido (Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad) and Neus Mascaró (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid)

Ciberviolencia de género en mujeres menores de edad

Introducción

La ciberviolencia de género (en adelante CVDG) es aquella cometida por cualquier medio (incluido Internet), por un hombre hacia una mujer con la que mantiene o ha mantenido una relación de afectividad (L.O. 1/2004). También se conoce como violencia digital (Carmona, 2023) y/o violencia 2.0. (Garrido, 2023). Los estudios realizados según el Instituto Europeo de Igualdad de Género (EIGE, 2017) señalan que una de cada diez mujeres ha sido víctima de ciberviolencia de género desde los 15 años. Otros autores estiman que el 90% de las víctimas de distribución digital no consentida de imágenes íntimas son mujeres y que una de cada cinco usuarias de Internet vive en países donde es muy poco probable que la violencia en línea sea castigada (Román y Jagić, 2021). Todos estos datos muestran la necesidad de haber incluido la CVDG en el listado de crímenes de la Unión Europea (Observatorio Nacional de Tecnología y Sociedad, 2022) y fuerzan de alguna manera a la aprobación y publicación de la propuesta de Directiva Europea sobre la lucha contra las mujeres y la violencia doméstica (dedicando extenso contenido a la CVDG). Esta investigación tiene como propósito analizar la violencia de género (denunciada) a través de las Tecnologías de la Información y la Comunicación (TIC) en niñas y jóvenes que han presentado denuncias ante las Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad. El objetivo final es ofrecer una radiografía a nivel nacional tanto cualitativa como cuantitativa de esta tipología delictiva.

Método

Participantes

La muestra corresponde con 12 mujeres adolescentes de 14 a 18 años que han denunciado experiencias de violencia de género con componente TIC entre 2015 y 2022. Siendo la media de estas jóvenes de 17 años (DT= 1,27).

Instrumentos

Diccionario de variables creado ad hoc por la Dirección General de Coordinación y Estudios (DGCD) de la Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad del Ministerio del Interior, que sirvió de guía para extraer la información de la documentación policial.

Diseño y Procedimiento

Diseño no experimental, transversal y retrospectivo con un alcance exploratorio y descriptivo. Forma parte del proyecto nacional "Análisis Pormenorizado de la Ciberviolencia de Género recogida por el Ministerio del Interior en España", coordinado por la Secretaría de Estado de Seguridad, específicamente la Dirección General de Coordinación y Estudios. Tras la aprobación del proyecto, se solicitó al Servicio Estadístico de Criminalidad la extracción de la información sobre el fenómeno delictivo incluyendo el

componente TIC. Sobre esos listado se hizo una selección proporcionada y representativa por cuerpo y demarcación policial.

Análisis de datos

La base de datos se creó con el programa estadístico SPSS. Se realizaron análisis descriptivos para conocer la distribución de las frecuencias y los porcentajes de las variables en cada categoría de análisis.

Resultados

Los resultados destacan que la dinámica relacional víctima - agresor en su totalidad es una relación previa de pareja. Del total de mujeres que denunciaron, el 75% sufrió otros episodios de violencia con el agresor. El delito predominante es el descubrimiento y revelación de secretos en un 58,3% y, principalmente a través de WhatsApp (40%) e Instagram (35%). La media de edad del agresor es 19 años, superando la de las víctimas. El 33,3% de los agresores comete más de un acto violento a través de TIC, y el 33% presenta antecedentes policiales y judiciales. Los celos están presentes en el 50% de los agresores, y el acoso hacia la víctima se observa en el 91,4% de los casos.

Discusión

La sociedad y la tecnología avanzan más rápido que el Derecho y las políticas de prevención. La falta de formación, sensibilización y conciencia en cuestiones de ciberseguridad derivan en brechas de protección que en materia de violencia de género puede dar lugar a la comisión de ilícitos como violaciones a derechos fundamentales como el de intimidad y/o el secreto de las comunicaciones, ad exemplum. Esta investigación arroja luz sobre la complejidad de este fenómeno delictivo con alta complejidad social como es la violencia de género 2.0 en relaciones de pareja previas, subrayando la importancia de abordar este fenómeno de manera multidisciplinar para proteger los derechos de las mujeres jóvenes.

Referencias

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Hanna Lahtinen (University of Eastern Finland) and Anna Ovaska (Suojellaan Lapsia ry / Protect Children Finland)

Exploring disparities among dark web child sexual abuse material users: Self-reports of offenders

Background: The alarming surge in the utilization of the dark web for accessing child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is a pressing concern, with a 155% increase reported from 2019 to 2020 (IWF Annual Report 2020). To comprehensively grasp the patterns, characteristics, and contemporary trends of online sexual violence against children, research data from offenders on the dark web is urgently needed.

Research Question: This study aims to investigate potential differences between CSAM users who admit to being charged for a sexual offense and those who assert no such charges.

Method: Data was collected through a survey from anonymous offenders actively seeking child sexual abuse material or searching for help for their use of CSAM on the dark web. The survey explores their help-seeking behavior, motivations for CSAM use, sexual interest in children, CSAM victim demographics, pornography consumption, offline and online child sexual abuse, CSAM perpetration, recent sexually abusive behavior toward children (SCHIMRA-B), and adverse childhood experiences. The survey, available in twelve languages, remains open.

Results: With 2656 respondents to date, preliminary findings reveal that 69% of the respondents identify themselves as male, 10% as female, and 6% as non-binary (15% preferred not to disclose gender). Most participants (71%) fall within the 18-34 age range, and 31% reported being charged for a sexual offense. Notably, female participants reported charges more often compared to their male counterparts. Non-binary respondents often chose not to disclose their charge status, and the youngest respondents (18-24 years old) reported the highest frequency of charges. Variations in behaviors and beliefs were also identified between those charged and those without charges.

Conclusions: Preliminary results indicate significant differences in demographic profiles, behaviors, and beliefs between CSAM users reporting charges for sexual offenses and those who do not. The implications for preventive work and further research will be discussed.

News narratives of child sexual abuse in the UK press: A corpus-informed approach to the discursive construction of newsworthiness

Despite the growing prevalence of OG, research on media representations of this phenomenon remains limited and fragmented. This paucity of research is particularly concerning given the potential influence of media portrayals on public perceptions and policy responses. Extant research on media representations of OG has predominantly used quantitatively content analysis methodologies, often failing to delve into the discursive and linguistic aspects of these representations (see Döring & Walter 2020; Nair 2019; Saewyc et al. 2013). By analysing the linguistic choices employed in media coverage, researchers can gain valuable insights into the underlying frameworks and biases that inform these representations. While a few studies have taken a more linguistic approach (e.g., Cheit, 2003; Cheit et al. 2010), these exceptions highlight the need for a more systematic and comprehensive examination of linguistic patterns in OG discourse. The application of news values theory (Bednarek & Caple 2017) has been largely overlooked in the context of OG research. Understanding the news values that drive OG coverage provides valuable insights into the motivations and biases that shape media portrayals, enabling a more critical evaluation of these representations.

Driven by our extensive experience in analysing OG discourse, in this paper we scrutinize media portrayals of this crime. Our aim is to critically appraise how the media frames and presents online grooming as another form of gendered violence, identifying potential biases and stereotypes that may hinder effective prevention and intervention efforts. We therefore shed light on the linguistic choices, naming practices and narrative structures employed by the media when covering this sensitive topic. This analysis enables us to pinpoint areas where media discursive representations can be improved to promote more accurate, responsible reporting. Our findings serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators and social advocates, providing insights into how media portrayals can influence public perceptions and inform strategies for combating online grooming.

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Exploring criminal intent: A corpus pragmatics analysis of explicit language and emotion in online sexual grooming

The protection of minors from potential harm, including online sexual harassment, resulting from their access to the internet remains a paramount social concern. This study examines the discourse of sexual grooming using a corpus pragmatics approach and aims to help characterise the strategies used by perpetrators. While some discourse analysis studies have primarily focused on patterns associated with persuasive strategies (Lorenzo-Dus, 2023; McLeod & Grant, 2021) or conversational moves (Kinzel, 2021; Gupta et al., 2012; Carmody et al., 2016), other corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) have used computational approaches, machine learning and NLP (Agarwal et al., 2021; Borj et al., 2022a; Kiran et al., 2023) to describe this type of language. This study is in line with research focusing on online contexts (Kinzel, 2021; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2022), which suggests that the use of explicit language is one of the four strategies groomers use to seek sexual gratification: sexual acts, physical contact, appearance, and contraception (Kinzel, 2021). Specifically, an in-depth analysis of the conversations of ten convicted offenders was conducted, focusing on explicit sexual language, but also on any expression related to the language of emotions used in the chats to see if and what kind of emotions are expressed in them. The results show that explicit language and a very simple expression of emotions is predominantly used in these interactions, suggesting that the groomers' intentions are articulated bluntly in the conversations from the outset, but that there is very little emotional connection. By deciphering the linguistic intricacies associated with grooming behaviours, vulnerable populations can be better protected and educated to identify perpetrators.

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‘it’s made me feel sad and confused. im scared to go to school and i feel humiliated and ashamed’: Children’s discourse about their experiences of being groomed online

Research into online child sexual grooming (OCSG) discourse has focused on offenders (see, e.g., Lorenzo-Dus et al., 2016; 2020; 2023; Chiang & Grant, 2018; Lorenzo-Dus, 2023). What is lacking is an understanding of how child victims of OCSG interpret offenders’ discourse, including the affective impacts it has on them. This paper contributes to fill this gap in knowledge through an analysis of children’s emotions in a counselling context via a UK national helpline (chat counselling sessions= 30; number of words ~ 35,000). To do so, the analysis adapts established Appraisal Theory frameworks (Bednarek, 2008; Martin & White, 2005), focusing on the Affect dimension (Hidalgo-Tenorio and Benitez-Castro, 2019). Results reveal that children’s discourse of emotions (Affect) is directed towards one of three main ‘entities’: groomer (34.4%); sources of support (34.1%) and themselves (20.5%) (a further 11% were generic references). Across all three entities, emotions that impact on the pursuit of personal, goals, needs and values (i.e. the Appraisal category of goal achievement emotions) are most frequently referenced (75.6%) and, within these, negative emotions linked to the Affect categories ‘insecurity’ (groomer=74.0%; support= 71.5%; self=69.6%) and ‘unhappiness’ (groomer=14.6%; support= 17.8%; self=15.2%) are the most frequent. When directed towards the groomer and sources of support, these categories revolve around the emotions of fear, anxiety and confusion; when self-directed, they mainly revolve around the emotions of shame, self-blame, unhappiness and misery.

The predominance of disquiet and insecurity emotions in children’s discourse highlights the devastating impact OCSG has on children’s self-constructions at a critical time in their development. The passage from childhood into adolescence triggers fundamental shifts in the evolution of self, particularly neurophysiological systems that regulate affect and self-identity (Gilbert & Irons, 2009; Shore, 1994). Moreover, sexual abuse trauma is known to trigger a shame-self fusion (MacGinley et al., 2019). These two factors combine to create fertile ground for ‘face fragility’, as explored in this study. Our findings have implications for the development of child sexual abuse preventative approaches to better protect and acknowledge children’s face fragility through child pro-agency and de-shaming discourses.

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Recursos terapéuticos en línea para usuari@s de material de explotación sexual infantil: el proyecto STOP-CSAM

Introducción

La proliferación del Material de Explotación Sexual Infantil (M.E.S.I.), comúnmente conocido como "pornografía infantil", en Internet es un problema en constante crecimiento. Según datos del National Center for Missing & Exploited Children de Estados Unidos, en 2022 recibieron más de 32 millones de informes de presuntos casos relacionados con la explotación sexual infantil, el 99.5% de los cuales se referían a posible M.E.S.I. (NCMEC, s.f.). Este fenómeno plantea desafíos urgentes, ya que alimenta una demanda que perpetúa el abuso sexual infantil.

Las estrategias preventivas e intervenciones tempranas centradas en el victimario son cruciales, especialmente en personas con preferencia sexual hacia menores, un factor de riesgo para la comisión de actos de violencia sexual (Hanson y Morton-Bourgon, 2005; Mann, Hanson y Thornton, 2010). Aunque aproximadamente el 75% de estas personas ha buscado ayuda formal (Levenson & Grady, 2019), existen barreras internas y externas (Levenson et al., 2017) que dificultan el acceso a recursos limitados y a veces inaccesibles (Piché et al., 2018).

Enfoque y Justificación

Presentaremos los recursos de autoayuda y terapia en línea dirigidos a consumidores de Material de Explotación Sexual Infantil (CSAM), una solución accesible y potencialmente efectiva para aquellos individuos no detectados por las autoridades o incapaces de acceder a la terapia presencial. Además, se detallará el Servicio de Terapia en Línea por Chat (TCS) del proyecto europeo STOP-CSAM, disponible desde noviembre de 2023, que atiende casos en español.

Metodología

Nuestro estudio analizará si la Terapia en Línea a través del Chat (TCS) reduce la demanda, circulación y difusión de M.E.S.I. en consumidores no detectados (N esperada = 630). Los participantes se asignarán aleatoriamente a dos grupos: (1) TCS o (2) lista de espera seguida de TCS. Las evaluaciones se realizarán en varios momentos, siguiendo los principios de los Ensayos Controlados Aleatorizados (ECA).

Resultados y Perspectivas Futuras

La recopilación de datos comenzó en octubre de 2023, esperando obtener resultados primarios en diciembre de 2024. La presentación se centrará en describir el diseño y la metodología, resaltando la relevancia global y la utilidad práctica del TCS para abordar esta problemática.

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La IA como herramienta útil en la investigación policial y judicial de delitos de sex grooming

Este trabajo se enfoca en la integración de la Inteligencia Artificial (IA) como una herramienta estratégica en la investigación y persecución policial y judicial de delitos de sex grooming. El objetivo de ello es responder a la pregunta de si y cómo la IA es capaz de fortalecer la capacidad del sistema legal para abordar los casos de sex grooming y garantizar una persecución efectiva.

La metodología adoptada se basa en un análisis jurídico exhaustivo de la legislación actual y de las propuestas normativas a nivel europeo, así como de casos previos, con el objetivo de identificar las posibilidades legales y lagunas en la persecución de estos delitos. En concreto, sobre la legalidad de utilizar IA para el análisis de chats para determinar el riesgo de que estos sean casos de sexual child grooming y su posterior uso en el seno de las investigaciones policial o judiciales penales.

Los resultados apuntan a 1) la necesidad de adoptar algún mecanismo eficaz en la lucha contra los casos de online sex grooming, que 2) la IA puede servir como una herramienta valiosa en la identificación de pruebas digitales relevantes y en la evaluación de la autenticidad de la información presentada y que 3) todavía se debe trabajar a nivel jurídico para crear un marco legal que aporte seguridad jurídica a esta cuestión.

Las conclusiones destacarán la importancia de equilibrar la innovación tecnológica con los principios fundamentales del sistema legal, centrándose en la necesidad de salvaguardar los derechos constitucionales y la privacidad de los individuos involucrados. Se ofrecerán recomendaciones para la implementación efectiva de la IA en el ámbito jurídico de la investigación de sex grooming.

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El acceso a la justicia de las personas menores de edad ante la violación de sus derechos en el entorno digital

¿La legislación española garantiza suficientemente los derechos de las víctimas menores de edad ante la violencia digital? Los niños, niñas y adolescentes son víctimas especialmente vulnerables que requieren del respeto y protección de sus derechos en entornos digitales. En su Observación núm. 25, el Comité de los Derechos del Niño destaca la necesidad de asegurar el acceso a la justicia, garantizando que tanto los menores que hayan sido víctimas de la violencia digital como sus representantes estén debidamente informados y tengan acceso a mecanismos judiciales para abordar las violaciones de sus derechos.

La Ley Orgánica 8/2021, de 4 de junio, de protección integral a la infancia y la adolescencia ha supuesto un hito en la lucha contra la violencia contra la infancia. En su Título I, aborda los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes frente a la violencia (arts. 9-14). Nuestro principal análisis se circunscribe al derecho a la información y asesoramiento, el derecho de las víctimas menores a ser escuchadas, el derecho a la atención integral, así como su legitimación para la defensa de sus derechos e intereses en los procedimientos judiciales que traigan causa de una situación de violencia digital, y el derecho a la asistencia jurídica gratuita.

Método: Se realiza un análisis de las construcciones teóricas normativas, doctrinales y jurisprudenciales, así como de la experiencia y práctica forense, a partir de un análisis integrador con nuestro ordenamiento jurídico, fundamentalmente con la vigente Ley de Enjuiciamiento Criminal y la Ley del Estatuto de la Víctima del delito, así como la normativa europea.

Resultado/conclusiones: Se adopta una perspectiva jurídica pero también victimológica, de conformidad con las investigaciones existentes en la materia y se proponen buenas prácticas que garanticen el adecuado cumplimiento de los derechos de las víctimas menores.

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Descriptive analysis of online child sexual grooming cases investigated by Spanish law enforcement agencies

Background: Online child sexual exploitation has become a global concern, yet there exists a significant dearth of empirical research focusing on police samples from non-English speaking countries, notably including Spain. Addressing this research gap, our study investigates the criminological characteristics of online child sexual grooming (OCSG) cases through the analysis of de-identified data sourced from law enforcement investigations in Spain.

Methods: We systematically coded data from 257 OCSG cases, comprising unique chat logs between suspects and minors, extracted from 98 police reports spanning the investigative years 2008-2021. The dataset involved 120 suspects, 234 victims, and a comprehensive analysis of 101,391 messages.

Results: Most police reports only included one victim. Similarly, 88% of the reports featured a single suspect. However, some reports revealed a concerning number of victims (ranging from 1 to 61). Law enforcement investigations, on average, spanned 96 days (ranging from 1 to 503). In 72% of cases, suspects exclusively used a single online platform for communication. Reporting was primarily initiated by the victims' parents. The suspects, predominantly Spanish men aged 14 to 73 (including 9 suspects aged 14-17), were categorized as 66% online-focused and 34% contact-driven. Most suspects did not send sexually explicit content to their victims. Victims, predominantly female and Spanish, ranged in age from 7 to 17, with 48% of cases involving victims sending explicit images to the suspects.

Conclusions: Our findings offer valuable insights into the profiles of offenders and victims, shedding light on the dynamics of OCSG. This research contributes essential knowledge that can significantly augment police training programs, refine and strengthen prevention strategies, and enhance support systems.