

Hedonistic Utilitarianism: The Strategic Use of Digital Media along the Online-Offline Continuum of Sexualised Violence

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Abstract : The present study examines how offenders targeting children and adolescents strategically use digital media when committing acts of sexualised violence along the online-offline continuum. Even offenders who are previously known to their victims use digital media extensively. The choice to instrumentalise digital media in order to initiate, threaten, exploit and humiliate victims demonstrates the rationale of offenders when committing acts of digitally supported violence. Through digital media, offenders can assume the power of interpretation over their victims' situations. The ways in which digital media is used to commit violence along the online-offline continuum are a direct manifestation of the hedonistic utilitarianism demonstrated by offenders: a disposition characterised by the weighing of pleasures ("mental states") and intrinsic value expected from using digital media against the risk of an outcome subjectively experienced as uncomfortable. Thus, sexualised violence using digital media goes beyond the traditional understanding of sexual online grooming.

Keywords : sexualized violence, offender strategy, grooming, children and adolescents, qualitative research, methodology

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